

Proposal

Housing Outreach Support Program (1 F.T.E.)

Employed by Quadra Village Community Centre (QVCC)

Rationale

Quadra Village Community Centre, other Centres and Community Associations and other local agencies have encountered an overwhelming rise in the number of single people and couples that are losing their housing. In our experience, there is an intense need to rally resources and one to one support to attempt to find short and long term housing options, before folks end up living outside, in vehicles etc. While trying to support folks in whatever they can, organizations have been overwhelmed by this issue and feel like they are fighting a losing battle. The extremely difficult housing market is particularly difficult for individuals competing for the most affordable rentals in the city when they are contending with challenges like low literacy, limited support, social isolation and moderate anxiety and depression.

Based on our successes this year, we believe the a Housing Outreach worker, employed through Quadra Village Community Centre and connected to the other Community Centres/Neighbourhood Associations will help increase the skillsets of staff and volunteers in those organizations. As well, it will offer the opportunity to provide tailored one to support to folks who don't meet current emergency housing definitions but are in peril of losing access to shelter. Through past experience and this Housing Outreach Pilot project that has been supported by the City, we have developed a great deal of experience in assisting single adults and couples in these situations. We believe that Quadra Village Community Centre continues to be well situated to provide this critical service at this critical moment and the annual cost of service at *\$45,000 (plus \$30, 000 from the Victoria Foundation) is a worthwhile investment.

Housing Outreach Worker Overview

The Issues:

- Single adults and couples losing their housing with limited time, opportunity (affordable housing stock), resources.
- Limited affordable market housing stock, long waits for affordable housing and narrow. definition of eligibility for emergency housing.
- People on the precipice of homelessness who lack the knowhow to navigate such a competitive housing market.

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- Busy staff in Community Centres and other organizations who have great relationships with folks in the community, but are busy with other mandates central to their roles.
- Access to housing supports for newcomers, BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour), S2LGTBQ+ and other Equity seeking individuals is crucial given additional barriers to accessing quality affordable housing.

The Solution:

- Building on the success of year one pilot project, the Housing Outreach Project (staffed with 35 hours of weekly Housing Outreach Support) is facilitated by QVCC with referrals from the other Community Centres, Neighbourhood Associations and nearby agencies. This program assists adults (single and couples) who are at risk of homelessness, couch surfing, newly homeless etc. Referrals are encouraged through connections including and not limited to VIRCS, ICA, Victoria Native Friendship Centre and organizations supporting S2LGTBQ+**
- Building and bridging the skills and confidence to get the process of finding housing started (and keep it going). This happens mainly through one to one work but also through group sessions.
- Helping people navigate the housing system including locating low rent options and seeking long term solutions through waitlists.
- Raising awareness among Community Centre and Neighbourhood Association staff/volunteers in order to ensure that folks have easy access to information to provide housing access support at the neighbourhood level.

(* **Quadra Village Community Centre has an active Equity (Diversity and Inclusion) Committee that aims to ensure that QVCC has useful, diverse, respectful services across the full spectrum of lived experience and identity).

Deliverables:

- One qualified, 35 hour a week Housing Outreach Worker employed by Quadra Village Community Centre employed over a 12 month period (October 24, 2022 through October 22, 2023). This Worker will have office hours and will also be mobile for outreach in the community and to other Community Centres/organizations.
- Access through self referral, Community Centre referral and referral through connections including and not limited to VIRCS, ICA, Victoria Native Friendship Centre and organizations supporting S2LGTBQ+, which will ensure access to this service for a range of individuals in need, including newcomers, Indigenous, Black, Asian and other persons of colour. Primary focus is on adults, couples and others who cannot easily/effectively access other housing support programs.

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Downtown Blanshard Advisory Committee
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- A set of housing information and referral resources for Community Centre staff that will be updated and distributed by March 31, 2023 and through a training for community centre and other professionals, some time between the 9 and 12 month mark for this position.
- A final report to City of Victoria Council following completion of year 2 of the Housing Outreach project, including information about the demographic of people who access the service, subject to privacy legislation.

*Our goal for year 3 is to persuade BC Housing to fund an expanded version of this project and to annually decrease the amount of the City's contributions

Thank you for consideration of this request that will make a huge difference to the people of the City of Victoria at this moment in the housing affordability and availability crisis.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in green ink, appearing to read 'Kelly Greenwell'.

Kelly Greenwell, Executive Director
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