



Council Report

For the Meeting of April 21, 2016

To: Council Report **Date:** April 18, 2016

From: Katie Hamilton, Director of Citizen Engagement and Strategic Planning
Jonathan Tinney, Director of Sustainable Development and Community Planning

Subject: Summary of Public Feedback Regarding Proposed Lease Extension for My Place Transitional Housing at 1240 Yates Street

RECOMMENDATION

1. That Council receive this report for information.

PURPOSE

This report is to share the public input received from a community meeting held on April 11, 2016, and email correspondence received, regarding the proposed lease extension with BC Housing at 1240 Yates Street. It also updates Council on feedback from BC Housing regarding Council's desire to see seasonal shelter beds extended beyond April 30, 2016. The lease itself will be appropriately dealt with in camera per Section 90, sub-section (1), (e) of the Community Charter.

BACKGROUND

On March 24, 2016 City Council passed the following the motions:

1. *That Council indicate its support to BC Housing for an extension to the lease at 1240 Yates Street, under its current operating model, to September 30, 2016, subject to comments from Central Middle School, its PAC, School District 61, and the Neighbourhood Associations, and upon hearing results of the April 11, 2016 community meeting.*
2. *That the City of Victoria urges BC Housing to extend the closing dates for all other seasonal shelters being currently being provided.*

On Monday, April 11, 2016 a community meeting was held in the gymnasium of Central Middle School. The meeting was advertised widely, and notices were delivered to all properties within 200 metres of the My Place transitional Housing facility. Approximately 50 people attended the meeting, and 22 commented on the proposed lease.

The majority of speakers were in support of the lease extension citing in many cases that their initial concerns expressed in December were unfounded. Some expressed concerns about process related to the earlier commitment by the City that this was to be a temporary location until April 30, 2016. Other speakers commented about the activities and impacts at the courthouse tent city site

and the temporary housing being provided at Mt. Edwards in Fairfield. In addition, three emails were received about the proposed lease extension.

The notes from the meeting and the three emails are attached as Appendix A.

In addition to the community consultation, the City's intention to consider a lease for this property will be advertised on April 22 and April 26, in the Times Colonist newspaper.

In terms of City Council's request of BC Housing, staff have been in contact with BC Housing staff and have been informed that a number of extensions to existing seasonal shelters have been made to the non-profit operators of each facility. BC Housing has made funding available for the provision of 100 seasonal spaces through the summer months. This is in addition to the 40 spaces requested as part of the lease extension at 1240 Yates and in addition to 60 beds that are being proposed to be maintained at the Choices facility in View Royal. In total this equates to 150-200 shelter spaces that were not available last summer, post April 30.

The status of proposed extensions for seasonal shelter beds through the summer months and beyond is outlined in the table below.

Facility	Scheduled Closing	Ext. Request	No. of Mats	Status
Out of the Rain/Beacon	April 15, 2016	May 31, 2016	15 or 30 TBC	Beacon Is Taking Forward Request To Extend To May 31st - Decision April 19th
Salvation Army - ARC	April 30, 2016	August 31, 2016	15 or 30 TBC	Extension Currently Being Considered By Salvation Army
First Metropolitan	June 30, 2016	August 31, 2016 or longer	30 to 40	Approved To August 31, Longer Term Still Under Consideration By Church
My Place	April 30, 2016	March 31, 2017	40	City Considering Lease Extension To September 30th, 2016
Choices	August 30, 2016	March 31, 2017	50 current, 60 for Sept.	Township View Royal/Community Consultation Mid-June Request To Extend

Respectfully submitted,



Katie Hamilton
Director of Citizen Engagement and Strategic Planning



Jonathan Tinney
Director of Sustainable Development and Community Planning

Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager:



Date: April 19, 2016

List of Attachments:

Appendix A: Notes from April 11, 2016 community meeting and three related emails

Lisa Lynam

From: Victoria Mayor and Council
Sent: Thursday, April 14, 2016 1:39 PM
To: Lisa Lynam
Subject: FW: Email to Mayor and Council re: My Place Transitional Home Lease Extension

From: Victoria Mayor and Council
Sent: Thursday, April 07, 2016 1:07 PM
To: 'Bharat C' <[REDACTED]>
Subject: RE: Email to Mayor and Council re: My Place Transitional Home Lease Extension

Dear Bharat,

Thank you for your email to Mayor and Council regarding the proposed lease extension for My Place Transitional Home. Your email has been shared with Mayor and Council.

The City of Victoria has been approached by BC Housing to extend the lease for My Place Transitional Home at 1240 Yates Street. Currently, the lease is set to expire April 30, 2016. City Council will consider the lease extension, under its current operating model, subject to comments from the community. Thank you for sharing yours today.

A meeting has been scheduled for Monday, April 11 to hear from the concerns and interests from the community to help inform Council's decision.

What: Community Meeting: Proposed Lease Extension for My Place Transitional Home
When: Monday, April 11, 2016 at 7 p.m. (Doors open at 6:30 p.m.)
Where: Central Middle School, 1280 Fort Street

While the City consults the community about their experience over the past four months since My Place opened, and the potential lease extension, the City has expressed their desire to see BC Housing extend the duration of other seasonal shelters currently being provided.

The long-term future of the property at 1240 Yates Street is actively being explored and is being considered as part of the redevelopment of the Victoria Fire Department Headquarters. A Request for Qualifications for the Fire Hall #1 Development Project, including this property, was issued on Tuesday, March 29, 2016.

Council is committed to addressing the complex issue of homelessness and the City of Victoria has reaffirmed its support for a Housing First Strategy, as extensive research shows that housing with support services is essential to ending homelessness. Mayor and Council continue to advocate to other levels of government to increase funding and services related to housing and support services through a variety of initiatives, including a [Regional Housing First Strategy](#) through the CRD.

Thank you for taking the time to write.

Sincerely,

Bridget Frewer
Correspondence Coordinator
Citizen Engagement and Strategic Planning
City of Victoria
1 Centennial Square, Victoria BC V8W 1P6

T 250.361.0545

From: Bharat C [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, April 07, 2016 7:37 AM
To: Victoria Mayor and Council <mayorandcouncil@victoria.ca>
Subject: My Place Transitional Home Lease Extension

Dear Mayor and Council:

As a neighbour who lives in the same block as My Place, I am writing in to strongly support the extension of the transitional home lease to September 30. This is a valuable and much needed resource that provides a temporary respite to our homelessness crisis. In addition, I strongly urge you to keep up the pressure on the provincial and federal governments to do more to solve homelessness in Greater Victoria and Canada.

Regards.

Bharat Chandramouli

Lisa Lynam

From: Victoria Mayor and Council
Sent: Thursday, April 14, 2016 1:39 PM
To: Lisa Lynam
Subject: FW: Email to Mayor and Council re: Shelter Extension
Attachments: My Place Transitional Shelter Extension.pdf

From: Victoria Mayor and Council
Sent: Monday, April 11, 2016 4:15 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: FW: Email to Mayor and Council re: Shelter Extension

Dear Kam,

Thank you for your email to Mayor and Council regarding the proposed lease extension for My Place Transitional Home. Your email has been shared with Mayor and Council.

City Council will consider the lease extension, under its current operating model, subject to comments from the community. Thank you for sharing yours today.

A meeting has been scheduled for tonight (Monday, April 11) to hear from the concerns and interests from the community to help inform Council's decision.

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Thank you for taking the time to write.

Sincerely,

Bridget Frewer
Correspondence Coordinator
Citizen Engagement and Strategic Planning
City of Victoria
1 Centennial Square, Victoria BC V8W 1P6

T 250.361.0545

From: Kam Lidder [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, April 11, 2016 10:49 AM
To: Victoria Mayor and Council <mayorandcouncil@victoria.ca>
Subject: Shelter Extension

Attached is a letter regarding this shelter extension.
Regards,
Kam Lidder

My Place Transitional Shelter Extension

The mayor and council should vote NO to extending this lease.

I find it stunning that Mayor Helps stood at a community meeting in December and said this shelter was going to only be open temporarily because it was needed to move residents from tent city.

All of those statements have proven to be false and now you want permission to extend the lease.

- The shelter has never been full since it opened.
- Very few residents from tent city moved there.
- Tent City still has 100 plus residents.

Every level of government says there is no funding for many things that are needed at a municipal, provincial or federal level. Yet when it comes to the homeless, the pocket books get opened and millions are spent, I believe the count is well over \$6million in the last four months, not to mention annually operating costs.

If on the off chance there are 5,000 homeless residents in Victoria. That still leaves more than 73,000 residents who live in Victoria. At some point, the rest of us need to matter also. Our costs of living also need to be considered.

Rather than trying to solve the homeless issue, perhaps you should consider offering an alternative to the current location. Throwing more and more funding at it is not solving the problem.

How about Stadacona Park? It's has washroom facilities on site. It's close enough to the city core to get services. Not close to a school. Not the whole park needs to be used but a portion of it could offered as an alternative.

The ideal would have been to use the St Andrews school lot as it's across the street from Our Place and other services, except it's now going to be a shopping centre instead.

Please start paying attention to the wishes of tax payers in this city. You were not elected to run a NGO for the homeless. You were elected to run a city which quite honestly you get a grade of average to below average at best.

Develop a backbone and say No to BC Housing and any other agency that asks for money time or more funding.

Sincerely,

Kam Lidder – 1252 Wils Spencer Place.

Lisa Lynam

From: Victoria Mayor and Council
Sent: Thursday, April 14, 2016 1:37 PM
To: Lisa Lynam
Subject: FW: email to Mayor and Council re: My Place Transitional Home - Lease Extension

From: Victoria Mayor and Council
Sent: Thursday, April 14, 2016 10:30 AM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: email to Mayor and Council re: My Place Transitional Home - Lease Extension

Dear Carmen,

Thank you for your email to Mayor and Council regarding the proposed lease extension for My Place Transitional Home. Your email has been shared with Mayor and Council.

The City of Victoria has been approached by BC Housing to extend the lease for My Place Transitional Home at 1240 Yates Street. Currently, the lease is set to expire April 30, 2016. Next week City Council will consider a report from staff regarding the lease extension.

While the City consults the community about their experience over the past four months since My Place opened, and the potential lease extension, the City has expressed their desire to see BC Housing extend the duration of other seasonal shelters currently being provided.

The long-term future of the property at 1240 Yates Street is actively being explored and is being considered as part of the redevelopment of the Victoria Fire Department Headquarters. A Request for Qualifications for the Fire Hall #1 Development Project, including this property, was issued on Tuesday, March 29, 2016.

Council is committed to addressing the complex issue of homelessness and the City of Victoria has reaffirmed its support for a Housing First Strategy, as extensive research shows that housing with support services is essential to ending homelessness. Mayor and Council continue to advocate to other levels of government to increase funding and services related to housing and support services through a variety of initiatives, including a [Regional Housing First Strategy](#) through the CRD.

Thank you for taking the time to write.

Sincerely,

Bridget Frewer
Correspondence Coordinator
Citizen Engagement and Strategic Planning
City of Victoria
1 Centennial Square, Victoria BC V8W 1P6



From: Carmen Spagnola [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, April 13, 2016 4:56 PM

To: Victoria Mayor and Council <mayorandcouncil@victoria.ca>

Subject: My Place Transitional Home - Lease Extension

Dear Mayor Helps and Council,

I want to express my support for extending the lease to My Place Transitional Home at 1240 Yates St.

I live in the 1300 block of Balmoral Rd and work in the 1100 block of Fort St. As such, I walk past the transitional housing site several times per week, at varying hours of the day. I have observed almost no activity at the location during the day, other than the smiling, friendly security people who stand sentinel outside all day long. On nights when I've walked by, it's very quiet still.

My daughter attends Central Middle School and I've asked her what she thinks of having transitional housing across the from the school and whether she's ever noticed any people there or activity. She had nothing to say other than nothing ever happens there and it's great for people to have a warm place to sleep.

In short, it's a model of neighbourhood integration. I don't think there could be a more ideally situated building (beside emergency services with the firehall there, across from a school that sits empty all night when residents are coming in from the cold, close to the downtown core for residents to access amenities and services without requiring a bus pass, etc). If you are receiving negative feedback about the lease extension, I'd be truly shocked. From months of frequent close-up observation, there has been nothing but positive impact. I feel a rush of pride for our neighbourhood whenever I walk by: Victoria is compassionate and caring. As a community, we want direct action to house our homeless.

I hope you'll agree to their request for an extension.

Sincerely,
Carmen Spagnola

Carmen Spagnola, RCH
Registered Clinical Hypnotherapist + Intuitive Coach

[Click here to book an appointment now](#)



Creator,
The Numinous School
of Intuition



Producer + Host,
The Numinous Podcast



Community Leader
G Day for Girls Victoria

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**MY PLACE TRANSITIONAL HOME PROPOSED LEASE EXTENSION
COMMUNITY MEETING NOTES
MONDAY, APRIL 11, 2016**

Key Speakers

Mayor Helps

- Previous meeting concerns voiced – this meeting to hear from the community how we are doing, and how can we move forward. We are looking to address fears community may have.

Charlayne Thornton-Joe, Councillor

- Everyone has done a tremendous job on the project
- Weekly meetings, resolving issues
- Full council present tonight

Roger Butcher, BC Housing

- There was a lot of anxiety initially about the effect on the neighbourhood
- Has been a successful partnership with the schools, students and residents wanting to become involved
- 14 people housed, another 5 in detox so far
- My Place operations what we were hoping to achieve
- Thanks for being accepting and working with us

Don Evans, Our Place Executive Director

- We thank the neighbourhood for doing this important work. It has made a huge impact on many people. We hope the community supports this extension.
- Our interest is to continue to have a positive impact on the neighbourhood and leave it as good or better. We've taken on having volunteers clean up the neighbourhood. We appreciate the relationship we have with the neighbours.
- Students have been doing projects including fundraising and creating care packages for My Place residents who are leaving.

Charlayne Thornton-Joe, Councillor Liaison for Fernwood

- Creating the My Place Neighbourhood Agreement stakeholders came together to share/discuss concerns, fears, perceptions, and make sure they are addressed.
- Neighbourhood Group includes immediate neighbours, police, members of homelessness who have met each week since first week of January and addressed issues that come up. At meetings, we also heard about events and lives that were impacted positively.
- There were concerns that were conveyed on Dec 30 at the community meeting that we weren't aware of and we wanted to address as well.
- My Place staff responded quickly to issues.

Invited Guest Speakers

Toper Macintosh, Principal

- I had reservations about the My Place shelter across the road. I felt strongly given I represent the children and parents of this school.
- Our experience has been entirely positive. I'm trying to think if there have been any negatives.
- Great for our students and staff. We've incorporated our neighbours into our learning curriculum. We've even had a class that has taken on fundraising. Generally very positive thing for the school.
- No reservations now. Gratitude to Don and his staff for the work they've done. I don't think there's been an issue come to the table at the NG that hasn't been addressed. It is working well.
- The meeting is about getting things done. The tone of the meeting is excellent. Successful project.

Diane McNally, Vice Chair Greater Victoria School Board

- I attended all meetings. Kudos to Don for addressing every concern. There was good listening at the meetings.
- The School Board went in with a lot of apprehension especially given the experience with a destructive community with the old Boy and Girls club
- Not one of our fears has materialized. Credit to Our Place staff. They fulfilled every promise.
- We are ok with the extension if staffing and support stays the same.
- Thank you to everyone involved.

Terry Healy, VicPD Constable

- One of four community representatives for My Place Neighbourhood Group
- Attended bi-weekly meetings with My Place residents, staff and neighbours.
- Excellent relationships
- We don't support one group or another – our role is to establish public safety and offer police perspective.
- The group exceeded my expectations. No doubt there was angst but the community rose to the occasion and we witnessed the community offering an accepting heart.
- Concerns in the community we want to hear about. If you are not satisfied with what we are doing, we want to hear about it.

June Jolie, Neighbour

- In December I was very concerned about my property. There was lots of anxiety about dealing with needles, vandalism and campers.
- I decided to come be part of the meetings. All the concerns I had never materialized. There are still occasionally campers and needles, garbage and shopping carts on my property – not from My Place residents -- but they are dealt with (thank you Anna). Even some My Place residents have helped. Being part of the group has assisted me in dealing with it. I've even had graffiti I didn't know about pointed out to me and had fixed, and when it was re-graffited that was pointed out to me.
- My personal experience with the shelter was very positive.
- I've received help I never had before.
- You have my full support. Thank you for all of your work.

Raquel, Neighbour next door building

- Given my past experiences with Pandora Street shelter, I had some concerns.
- Our property is right next door.
- My experience is not as rosy.
- Smoking and noise levels have been an issue.
- Tenants main concerns voiced to neighbourhood group and smoking area was moved to front in the evening so tenants can sleep at night. Still, tenants are not able to be at home during the day when there is smoke coming in the windows. During the daytime they can't enjoy their home.

Tony Sprackett, Fernwood Community Association rep

- The Neighbour Group has been very solution oriented. Problems were allowed to be heard. Gone better than we hoped for.
- The Fernwood Community Association has not positioned itself on one side or the other.
- Concerned of notice to re-lease
- Language from province has been too soft. Lacking a cohesive housing policy. Result is this facility (My Place) – not appropriate to jam a facility like this on the neighbourhood but we worked to do the right thing.
- The funding needs to be the same for the lease extension to be approved.
- I'm not going to provide a full endorsement when there are still victims – the building next store has challenges with it. Everyone else is doing ok.
- Issue of too much police a little alarming. Had them back off.
- Concerns about slamming doors and the noise to neighbours next door. Our Place worked hard to address it and it is now fixed.
- Smoking challenges.
- We learned in the meetings about the people at My Place – members that needed to drink boost because they couldn't digest still and how the school students helped provide. We learned 14 people moved out to find homes.
- Agree to proposal with same funding and supports and that other shelters remain open.

Residents:

Student of Central Middle School

- There were a lot who were apprehensive at first and people who were saying we, as students, were uncomfortable. I have not been uncomfortable, and have not come across anyone at school who is uncomfortable.
- I'm glad that there is help for these people and they are given a home.
- I'm thinking that we don't want our taxes used for more costs on the street but instead helping people get a home.

Former resident of My Place

- Give these people a chance. Give them support.
- We've moved into our home and my husband has a job now. That's why he can't be here tonight – he's working.

Neighbour near Tent City

- I wish this shelter was in my neighbourhood
- Presently there is a neighbourhood group for Mt Edwards shelter. It doesn't seem to be going as well as what has gone on here with My Place?

Response by Roger Butcher, BC Housing

- We're having challenges and there is a strong group of community members. It's run by Cool-Aid and the group is also attended by City Police, Parishnors from Church
- We're hoping to get to the same place as My Place.
- Because it is so close to Tent City there are other challenges.
- Councillor Coleman could provide more on the Neighbourhood Group

Heather, Neighbour

- I was at the meeting in December. I was very upset. I was concerned for my son who attends the school. There have been no problems or stress. I've never had any problems.

Community Member

- Support for more mental health workers needed.

Member of Neighbourhood Group

- Nothing but praise for the work of My Place team
- Still at the start there was so little info about what format, how it would operate – it was a black box. A lot was to be addressed. A lot of people happy now.
- Concern about getting people into homes – is this just a band-aid solution. What level of strategy do we have moving forward?

Response by Roger Butcher, BC Housing

- Province has committed \$355 million in affordable rental housing
- BC Housing and the CRD and Capital Region Health have agreement where the province will match 30 million over 5 year period
- My Place committed to same level of staffing and support as today. Moving forward we will be able to move more people to housing.

Mayor Helps

- The number of units of affordable housing being constructed from December 2015 to Oct 2017 – 364 new units will open in that one year period.

Community Member

- What is the housing strategy for youth?

Response by Charlayne Thornton-Joe

- Youth are included as part of the regional Housing First strategy with 30 million coming from Capital Region Health and CRD with the matching amount from BC Housing
- The Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness helping establish a Capital Plan to build with Island Health with three groups targeted for Housing First – youth is one of those groups.

Community Member

- Question to BC Housing – My Place Home was one of the responses to Tent City?

Response by Roger Butcher, BC Housing

- Yes

Community Member

- People in the community that are trying to address Tent City. There has been no dialogue (by BC Housing) with people and neighbours in the community around Tent City. People are not feeling safe around Tent City.
- Question to Our Place – was any money (Our Place donor money) given to neighbours/home owners nearby as compensation for inconvenience?
- For Mt Edwards, will there be any property taxes reduced for neighbours like there has been property taxes reduced for those around Tent City? The issues at Tent City need to have police around 24/7. Will neighbours' concerns be compensated?

Response by Don Evans, Our Place

- One of the home owners/neighbours was going to lose a tenant and we offered to rent the unit during the period of unoccupancy. It was not the province. Our Place rented and used for additional office space temporary.

Parent of Central Middle School student

- I was really opposed back in December. I have changed my mind on this now.

Community Member

- I was sold it was only temporary. Now it proposed to turn into permanent, or not temporary.
- My question is to the integrity of the politicians. Feels like fraud.

Response by Mayor Helps

- This is a request for an extension of the lease until September 30, 2016. Long term view is that it will be considered as part of Fire Hall redevelopment.

Community Member

- Is it true the cost for housing people in the facility is \$12,000 a person? (based on money input by BC Housing)

Response by Mayor Helps

- The same level of service and support is required so it will be.

Community Member

- There are ample agencies in place to help people with needs. Would it not make more sense to provide homeless individuals in need with \$15/hr guaranteed paid income so they could be independent on their own?

Response by Mayor Helps

- Supporting the move to independence is the point of what My Place provides
- It is expensive to move people from outside to inside and get them re-integrated into normal life

Response by Don Evans, My Place

- It is expensive no doubt to provide these services. However, the cost of health care and policing for homeless is far higher.
- Once they are housed it is easier for them to get back to work
- There are a lot that want to work.
- They have to stabilize. They have lived on the street a long time.

Community Member

- Give my gratitude for the Tent City residents.

Community Member

- Concern about Mt Edwards as an appropriate facility. Central Baptist building would be much better. Can there not be a conversation with them?

Response by Roger Butcher, BC Housing

- To our knowledge it is still owned by the Baptists and not on the market. We can have a conversation with them.

Response by Charlayne Thornton-Joe, Councillor

- From the day it become vacant, I have been in conversation with them if they were interested in leasing.

Parent of Central Middle School student

- Happy with what went on – it was positive experience.
- As a home owner, there is a cost saving here – how can we as voters get the money to the right people?

Responses by Charlayne Thornton-Joe, Councillor and Mayor Helps

- There is a gap – if we keep the status quo it is \$55,000 per person to serve them on the street, or half that -- \$23,000 -- if we put in housing with support.

Community Member

- We need to have a housing strategy

Response by Mayor Helps

- Encouraged with the new federal government on expectation of a national housing strategy. In the federal budget we do see some budget money and the \$30 million from CRD to be matched. There are over 300 units coming in the next year.

Community member

- Is the province going to hire more mental health workers?

Response from Mayor Helps

- There is no one from Island Health here to speak to that. These conversations are only about the housing. Hope to see mental health spending on workers.

Response by Charlayne Thornton-Joe

- Service groups with specialized teams in each group

Resident of Tent City

- We've been looking for BC Housing to Mount Edwards
- Of those 300 housing units, how many can support those with mental health issues or criminal pasts?
- Not a lot of consultation with the community – just directed that shelters would be established.

Community Member

- Was here for last meeting. Hoped it would be a good learning experience for the community. I was impressed.
- Neighbourhood has been cleaner
- I attended neighbourhood group meetings and it was a safe place to address concerns

Community Member

- Question on flood and fire victims and concern about lack of entitlement insurance as a serious problem contributing to homelessness.

Response by Mayor Helps

- Does not know legislation around entitlement – not able to answer that question.

Community Member

- Endorse My Place and encourage more housing to end homelessness.