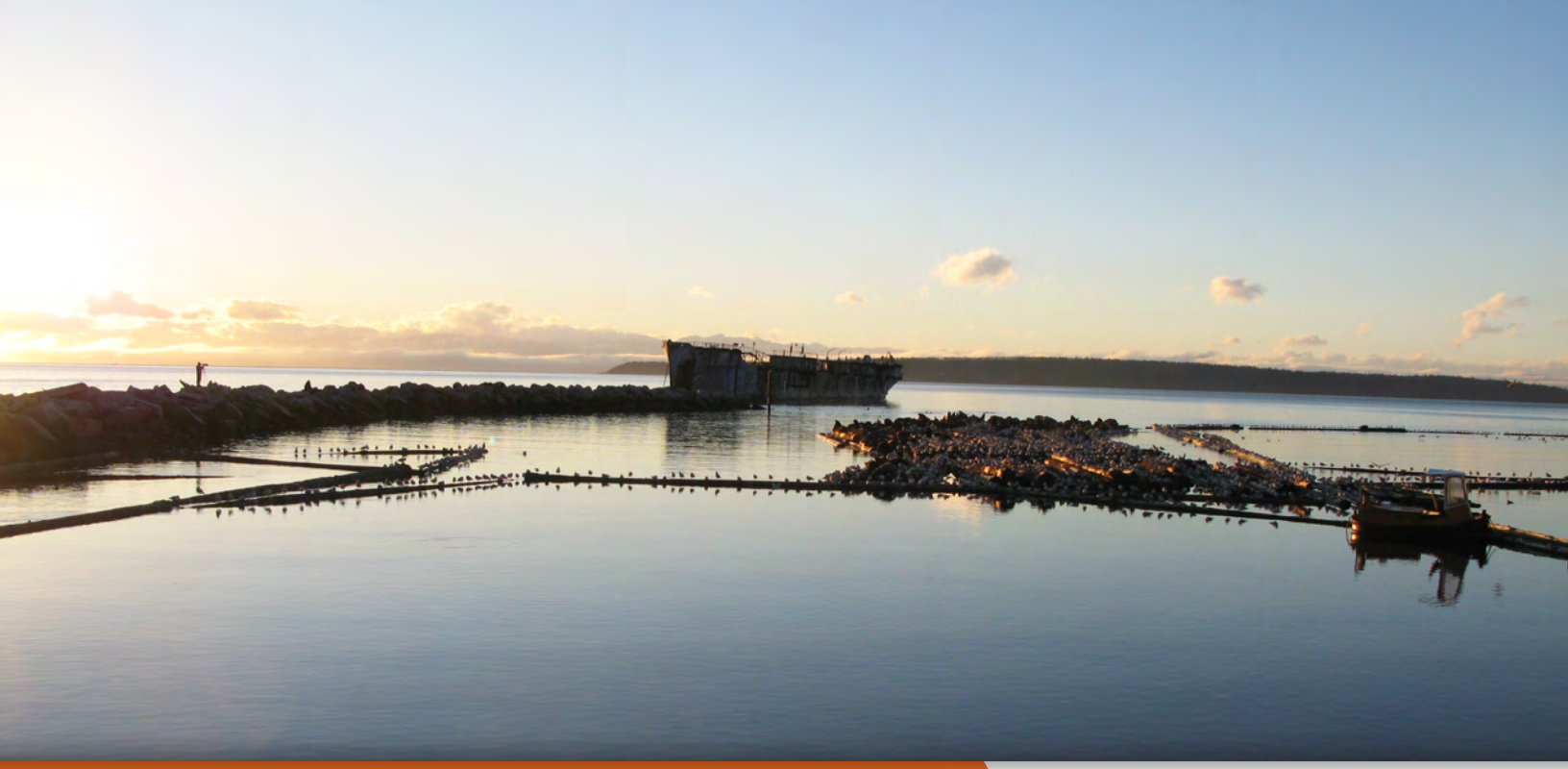


Powell River Homelessness Partnering Strategy

Final Report



April 14, 2011 – revised August 2, 2011
Christien Kaaij, Robbert Visscher
and Geoff Allan

Alof!i Consultancy a division of Alof!i Enterprises inc. ▪ www.alofii.com

Powell River Homelessness Partnering Strategy

Final Report

PREPARED UNDER DIRECTION OF THE CITY OF POWELL RIVER

Christien Kaaij, Robbert Visscher and Geoff Allan



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Words of thanks…

This report would not have been possible without the contribution of all the passionate professionals and volunteers in our region who dedicate many hours to reduce the homelessness issue in our region. A special thanks to all of the following for their commitment to be part of the homelessness committee:

- **Councillor Debbie Dee** of the City of Powell River
- **David Morris** of the Powell River Model Community Project
- **Chris King** of the Ministry of Housing and Social Development
- **Councillor Maggie Hathaway** of City of Powell River/MLA
- **Lyn Adamson** of Career Link
- **Shainil Jessa** of Vancouver Coastal Health, Mental Health and Addictions

We would like to thank everyone who participated in the workshops to help us shape our vision and actions. This is your report.

Executive Summary

Over the past two decades, cutbacks in social housing and related programs have moved Canada into a homelessness crisis. Powell River research (Alof!i Consultancy, 2008) (Rentz, 2008) has indicated that many people in our region are homeless, have been homeless in the past and/or are at risk of becoming homeless. In July 2010 the City of Powell River received funding from Human Resources and Skills Development Canada for the Homelessness Partnering Strategy project to address the homelessness situation in Powell River. A homelessness committee was formed and in October 2010 Alof!i Consultancy and Infocus Facilitation were contracted to undertake research to provide a comprehensive listing of services and develop both a Strategic Plan and a local Action Plan.

Powell River has many resources for people who are (at risk of being) homeless, from a drop-in centre to referral services and skill training, but there are also challenges. There is a long wait list for affordable housing, the only transitional housing offered is for women and there is no emergency housing within the community. There is a lack of community awareness about homelessness issues and solutions, and, partly due to the lack of service coordination, information sharing and seamless service delivery have been a challenge. Due to limited funding, services are often supplied 'off the side of the desk', resulting in limited availability and only short term support.

The homelessness committee, supported by the organizations working with people who are (at risk of being) homeless is committed to work towards the following vision:

VISION STATEMENT:

Powell River is a unified, caring, supportive community where everyone has access to an affordable and sustainable place to live.

To ensure coordinated action and project continuity, a housing leadership entity needs to be created with strong political anchoring. The entity needs to coordinate the creation of more (affordable) low-barrier housing solutions, together with the implementation of more integrated client centred support and prevention strategies. Broad community awareness is needed about the homelessness issues and solutions.

The committee recommends that the City of Powell River:

- makes homelessness prevention a strategic goal for the City;
- establishes a Standing Committee on Homelessness in Powell River;
- creates a 0.25 FTE City position for a minimum of a year;
- appoints a person to coordinate the committee to research grants and support a public campaign;
- identifies and implements policies to address housing issues in the City, building on the City report of 2008, *Overview of Affordable Housing Strategies* (City of Powell River Development Services, 2008);
- identifies and creates a solution for emergency housing in Powell River;
- communicates to and educates the general public on the issue of homelessness.

Based on the best practices research, the committee recommends that the new, to be established, Homelessness Entity/Standing Committee on Homelessness:

- implements a Housing First Strategy;
- implements Assertive Community Treatment, and Housing Support Teams;
- develops regional-wide integrated prevention strategies and data sharing;
- develops a housing continuum through creating emergency housing options and more affordable housing;
- measures results.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Over the past two decades, cutbacks in social housing and related programs have moved Canada into a homelessness crisis (Dupuis, 2001; Laird, 2007; Hulchanski, 2009; Gaetz, 2010). Starting in the 1980s, more and more individuals and families could not afford housing, find jobs or income support at a living wage, or obtain appropriate addiction or mental health support. Federal spending on the construction of social housing terminated and the responsibility for most existing federal social housing has been transferred to the provinces in the following years.

Currently most resources and professional attention are focused on supporting people in their homelessness (Hulchanski, 2009) even though it is generally known that the cost of homelessness is higher than the cost of housing someone. In 2001 a B.C. Government study concluded that housing homeless people leads to a 33% decrease in cost to society, with the savings ranging from $8,000 to $12,000 a year per person. Prevention of homelessness and providing permanent supportive housing would be the best way to minimize government costs according to this study (Eberle, 2001).

People become homeless because of serious problems arising in one or more of the three key necessities of an adequate standard of living: housing, income, and support services. (Hulchanski, 2009). Unfortunately, these are the very areas where government funding has been radically cut.

So, where to start to address a problem that appears so complex?

We know from research, and from common sense, that acting only at the local community level and individual level of the problem, without addressing the larger dynamics that are causing the problem in the first place, does not solve the problem (Hulchanski, 2009). We could try to influence federal and provincial governments, but unless we take action at a local level while waiting for the big wheels of bureaucracy to begin to turn, many more people will become homeless.

So, what can a small isolated community such as Powell River do? What actions could result in a difference for our community?

In July 2010 the City of Powell River received funding from Human Resources and Skills Development Canada for the Homelessness Partnering Strategy project to address the

homelessness situation in Powell River. A committee was formed out of key service providers[1] dealing with people who are (at risk of being) homeless, and in October 2010 Alof!i Consultancy and Infocus Facilitation were retained by the City of Powell River to undertake research to provide a comprehensive listing of services and develop both a Strategic Plan and a local Action Plan. This is the final project report.

1.2 Approach

To come up with a local response to the homelessness issue in Powell River, the following approach was taken:

- *Workshops:* Three meetings with organizations[2] providing services to people who are (at risk of being) homeless were organized. The first meeting focused on the available services and service gaps in our region. The second meeting was a full day strategic planning session. During the third meeting, strategic priorities were turned into an action plan (see Appendix C to F for the reports).
- *Committee meetings:* The Homelessness Committee met four additional times. During the first meeting the project work plan was finalized. At the second meeting – half way through the project – progress was evaluated and directions were slightly adjusted (see Appendix C for the report). The third meeting was used to finalize the vision and strategic priorities, and the fourth and final meeting was used to finalize the action plan.
- *Homelessness Interviews:* To get an indication about the current homelessness situation, the Community Resource Centre surveyed 17 of their visitors about their recent experiences of being homeless (see Appendix F).
- *Service providers information-gathering:* Organizations providing services to people who are (at risk of being) homeless were asked to fill in a questionnaire. Additional information was gathered through telephone interviews (see Appendix H).
- *Best Practices Research:* From November 2010 until February 2011 comprehensive internet research was conducted on the background of homelessness in Canada, the best practices in homelessness reduction and examples of strategies from other cities and countries (see report Powell River Homelessness Partnering Strategy, Best Practices Research (Alof!i Consultancy, 2011)

1.3 Outline of the Report

Following this introduction, Chapter 2 provides a brief overview of our community, Powell River. Chapter 3 provides a summary of the best practices research findings. Chapter 4 describes the established vision and suggested approach to deal with homelessness in our community. Chapter 5 closes with the conclusion and recommendations.
A comprehensive resource list can be found in Appendix A.

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1 See Appendix B for an overview of homelessness committee members and workshop participants.
2 In this report 'organizations' is used to describe agencies, faith communities and other organized groups that participated in this project. See Appendix B for an overview.

2. Our Community

2.1 Our region

The City of Powell River is located roughly 130 km north of Vancouver on the coast of the Salish Sea and is part of the Powell River Regional District. Most of the regional population of 20,000[3] people live on the coast, which stretches over 60 km. Approximately 13,000 people live within the City boundaries.

The region is only accessible by ferry or plane. There is public transportation, but rural areas are not served frequently.

2.2 Homelessness

For many years, affordable housing in Powell River has been an issue. Due to rising housing prices a few years ago, many rental properties have been sold to be made into condominiums and renters have been forced to relocate. With low vacancy rates, especially for affordable housing, landlords have the luxury to carefully select or screen new renters, placing renters perceived as undesirable or those with poor references on the lowest step of the ladder in terms of rental options. The average rent for a private apartment unit was $585 in April 2010 (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2010), far above the affordability level of many people on Income Assistance.

Homelessness in rural communities is often not as visible as homelessness in urban areas where people can be found sleeping on the street. In rural communities like Powell River, people are more likely to stay with friends – moving from couch to couch - or sleeping in the forest or abandoned cabins, out of sight of the public eye.

During a housing needs assessment in Powell River in 2007/2008, 7% of the respondents fell under the category "absolute or hidden homelessness", and at least 9% under the category "relative homelessness[4]", as they spend over 70% of their income on housing (Alof!i Consultancy, 2008). A Powell River Youth Needs Survey conducted in the same year surveyed 21 youth who had been homeless or were homeless at the time of the interview. It revealed the vulnerability of homeless youth and the barriers they have accessing services (Rentz, 2008).

During the last few years the situation has not improved. The number of people receiving Income Assistance (IA) benefits has increased from 5.8 % in September 2006 to 8.5 % in September 2009[5]. Interviews conducted during one week in November 2010 at the Community

3 BC Stats Regional District 2007 – Powell River, Statistical Profile 2009

4 Absolute homelessness: people on the street/in emergency shelters; Hidden or concealed homelessness: people without a place of their own; Relative homelessness: people in substandard shelter and/or at risk of losing their home.

Resource Centre revealed that fifteen of the seventeen people interviewed had been homeless during the last couple of years, partly due to lack of available housing (see Appendix G). Translating the housing needs assessment data [6] into concrete numbers, we can predict for our region that more than 250 people fall in the category of 'absolute or hidden homelessness'. On top of that, more than 275 people fall in the category 'relative homelessness[4]' and are just one paycheque away from becoming homeless.

2.3 Resources

A large group of organizations and volunteers provide services for people who are (at risk of being) homeless. A summary of community resources is provided below. A more detailed overview can be found in Appendix G.

Community Resource Centre: The Community Resource Centre provides a range of services including a café/drop-in, four days a week, public access computers, volunteer tax-help, information and referral services, and laundry facilities. There is an on-site Poverty Law Advocate, a CAP II counsellor and free legal advice clinics.

Skill Training: A variety of organizations provide training and skills development to deal with some of the underlying issues of homelessness. These skills range from life coaching to employment readiness and problem solving. Different groups are targeted from youth and young moms to persons with (developmental) disabilities.

Housing: A not-for-profit housing society owns three different social housing units. The society has a long wait list. There is one transition house for women and children to escape domestic violence and abuse. There are services to support youth and people with developmental disabilities who are living independently.

Low-Cost Food, Clothing and Furniture Sources: Faith communities provide free lunch or dinner from Monday to Thursday. Together with the food bank the faith communities provide hampers and access to food pantries week days and every other Saturday. The school district provides breakfast and hot meals at some elementary schools. Powell River has a food security program and a few community gardens. Some faith communities provide clothes and furniture, and another organization provides second hand furniture to youth. There is a local Economy Shop – part of the hospital auxiliary – which sells second hand clothes and household items for very low cost. There are a few other second hand stores in the community.

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5 BC Stats, Local Health Area 47 – Powell River, Statistical Profile 2009 and 2006

6 Data were collected from a total survey sample of 266 people, 1.6 % of the population of the Powell River Regional District of 18 years or older. This falls within a 90 % confidence level and a 5 % margin of error. A higher number of the respondents received an income of less than $ 20,000 per year and a higher number rented their homes. Data were modified according these two reference indicators.

Other Services: The Ministry of Social Development and other organizations provide referral services, and many have indicated they provide emergency funds, i.e. for transportation to a shelter, and help find people emergency shelter. Often this is not their mandate.

2.4 Gaps and challenges

Although many services are provided, gaps and challenges were identified by the organizations that participated in this project.

Coordination: Better coordination across organizations is essential to ensure the ability for immediate response, to provide seamless service delivery, to stop duplication of tasks, and provide ongoing information regarding available services and programs. Presently, each organization is left to look after its own segment of the issue resulting in an appearance of competition for both dollars and commitment. While coordination and integration remains a challenge, many organizations have been able to make some of the connections necessary to assist each other in dealing with common issues.

Awareness and Attitudes: There is a general lack of awareness in the community about the homelessness issue and the challenges people face on an ongoing basis. Societal attitudes are built on negative stereotypes and the stigma attached to marginalized persons in general. Not only does the general community need to be informed about the homelessness issue, but also politicians, landlords, local builders and people at risk of losing their home. Approaching the issue from an economic perspective which impacts us all could help bring the message into focus, for example highlighting the cost of homelessness versus the cost of housing people or the cost and effects of holding a hospital bed longer than medically necessary. Education also needs to happen around prevention mechanisms as well as local opportunities, i.e. secondary suites. Even among the organizations there is a lack of awareness as to the breadth of each other's activities. While awareness could be improved through education, there is no centralized means or funding to coordinate these efforts.

Emergency and Transitional Housing: There is no emergency shelter within the region. The closest shelter is in Courtenay, a 1 hour and 20 minute ferry ride away. The lack of emergency housing solutions means that people are unable to find a stable, local, short term solution in case of emergencies, where they would have the opportunity to deal with some of the underlying issues related to their housing situation.

Sustainable Funding: There remains a large gap between the funds allocated for operations and the real cost of providing these services. This funding challenge affects the ability of all organizations to provide the level of service required to have a significant impact on this issue.

Skills Development: Many of the skill development services are being supplied 'off the side of the desk' meaning that they are over and above the direct mandate of the organizations, resulting in limited availability and only short term support.



3. Promising Approaches

From November 2010 until February 2011 comprehensive internet research was conducted on the background of homelessness in Canada, the best practices in homelessness reduction, and examples of strategies from other cities and countries (Alof!i Consultancy, 2011). This chapter provides an overview of the key findings. A full bibliography is included in Appendix A.

3.1 Key elements of success

Many successful approaches from Canada, the US and Europe were reviewed[7]. Although they had slightly different points of focus, nine key elements for successfully reducing homelessness emerged:

- availability of a continuum of housing and support services;
- region-wide collaborative planning, prevention and referral processes;
- flexible and client-centred approach, including housing support, life skills, and vocation training;
- low demand/low barrier models – such as "Housing First" (see 3.3.1 for a short description of this approach);
- prevention – such as a 'no discharge into homelessness' approach;
- performance and outcomes orientation with measurable results;
- research and data-driven approach;
- focus on the most chronically homeless population;
- focus on permanent solutions.

These elements led to strategies in two major areas (1) Housing – including implementation of a 'Housing First' model and the increase of affordable permanent (supportive) housing, and (2) Prevention and Supportive Services.

3.2 Housing Solutions

"Homelessness may not be only a housing problem, but it is always a housing problem"
(Dolbeare, 1996, p.34)

3.2.1 Housing

Providing housing to homeless people will reduce the homelessness situation, but to effectively deal with homelessness, a housing and support continuum is needed, ranging from emergency shelter, through temporary housing solutions to permanent affordable housing.

7 See Appendix A for an overview of the reviewed material.

Shelters provide temporary emergency housing, and are part of the housing continuum. Long term follow-up after leaving a shelter is essential for success in homelessness prevention. Without adequate affordable housing, shelters can turn into a type of affordable housing. A shelter is the first step taken by some people to get off the street. Others prefer to sleep outside rather than in a shelter for a variety of reasons including: the rules and the institutional feeling of shelters, the lack of safety and privacy, and the unsuitability of shelter hours. Offering many services within a shelter can contribute to an individual's dependence on shelters and could lead to a form of institutionalization known as 'shelterization'.

Transitional housing combines short term housing and support services with the objective to establish residency stability. Transitional housing programs are more effective in ending homelessness than leaving people on the street and providing services, although the evidence is limited. Low-demand models, where tenants don't have to participate in services, have proven to be more successful to end homelessness than high-demand models, and permanent housing and services are critical to (long term) success.

Transitional housing is highly controversial as a solution for homelessness. Critics view it as stigmatizing and a drain on resources better used towards permanent housing. Newer, more efficient models help people access permanent housing and provide transitional support services to enhance stability and self-sufficiency.

There are experiments with *alternative approaches*. A rural youth project in the U.K. has successfully used volunteer 'hosts' households to provide emergency overnight accommodation and trained volunteers that offer a room and some support (Commission for Rural Communties, n.d.).

3.2.2 Municipal Strategies and Barriers

Since the mid 1990's municipalities in BC have looked at ways to resolve social issues around homelessness and affordable housing. Some of the strategies that have increased the affordable housing stock are legislating secondary suites, contributing surplus land for non-market housing, and implementing density bonusing which allows developers to build additional dwelling units beyond the zoning limits in exchange for providing affordable units. The main barriers are generally lack of financial resources and limited staff capacity to deal with these issues. Often there is a lack of knowledge at council levels about options and a lack of municipal mandate for affordable housing. This is exacerbated by a lack of political and developer interest as well as resistance in the community.

3.3 Prevention that works

Homelessness prevention is an essential element of any effort to end homelessness. Providing prevention assistance to people who would not otherwise become homeless is an inefficient use of limited homelessness dollars. The central challenge of prevention is targeting efforts toward those people who will become homeless without the intervention.

Research indicated that key elements for successful prevention are a community's ability to target and motivate the right people (using existing data strategically and sharing data), maximize resources, cultivate (community) leadership, and use community-wide prevention strategies.

Six effective homelessness prevention activities were identified:

- housing subsidies
- supportive services coupled with permanent housing
- mediation in housing courts
- cash assistance for rent or mortgage arrears
- rapid exit from a shelter
- discharge planning

3.4 Leading Practices

Based on the best practices research two leading theories are utilized in the fight to reduce homelessness: (1) Housing First Approach, and (2) Client Centred Continuum of Support.

3.4.1 Housing First

The Housing First Approach involves:

- immediate access to permanent housing
- a full range of services to move homeless people from the street or shelter to a stable and secure life and to prevent the cycle of homelessness from repeating itself
- support services that are available to tenants, but housing does not depend on active participation
- tenants are not required to be drug or alcohol free and relapse does not result in clients losing their housing

Results of a Housing First Approach are overwhelmingly positive with a success rate of up to 90 % for program participants still housed when followed up five years later.

3.4.2 Client Centred Continuum of Support

Multidisciplinary teams that provide client centered support have proven to be very successful in improving housing stability, reducing hospitalization and maintaining better retention in mental health services. Not only do they lead to a higher client satisfaction, they are also cost effective. Basic services include discharge planning, assistance with housing search, budget counseling, landlord mediation and other outreach services.

Assertive Community Treatment (ACT), developed in the 1970s, is designed for individuals with serious and persistent mental illness. The team provides support, treatment, and rehabilitation services to clients where they live and work, rather than in an agency setting. The team consists of professionals with backgrounds in social work, substance abuse treatment, counseling, vocational rehabilitation, nursing, and psychiatry. They are responsible for assisting clients in all areas of life and they provide a full range of medical, psychosocial and rehabilitative services. The team is on call 24 hours a day to support clients through crises and emergencies.

A Housing Support Team is the equivalent of an ACT team, but provides non-clinical services.

4. Vision and Approach

4.1 Vision

During a full day strategic planning session, organizations envisioned a community of respect with and dignity for individuals affected by homelessness and recognition of diversity. In the envisioned future there is a sustainable approach and there are sufficient resources. They finalized their vision as follows:

VISION STATEMENT:

Powell River is a unified, caring, supportive community where everyone has access to an affordable and sustainable place to live.

4.2 Strategic Priorities

The organizations identified six strategic priorities to reduce homelessness in Powell River and to reach the stated vision:

Increase Affordable Housing Stock: We will improve our access to all levels of government and build stronger community relations to increase stock of affordable housing [8].

Keep People Housed: We will improve information sharing and collectively develop prevention strategies to keep people housed.

Create a Homelessness Leadership Team: We will establish a leadership entity to build inter-agency unity and address homelessness and affordable housing issues.

Increase Public Awareness: We will increase public awareness of homelessness issues and solutions through new approaches to communication and education

Implement Housing First Strategy and Support Teams: We will work with all organizations to develop interdisciplinary support teams and harm reduction strategies.

Identify Municipal Issues & Solutions: We will improve municipal awareness of opportunities to improve affordable housing and reduce homelessness.

8 With "stock of affordable housing", a continuum of affordable housing options is meant.

4.3 Leadership "Entity" critical to success

Organizations indicated that leadership is needed and that this work can no longer be done 'off the side of our desks'. For many years organizations have been talking about the homelessness and affordable housing issue, but with no or limited mandate, multiple players, lack of coordination, limited resources and competing interest initiatives have died an early death. There is a high fear that this current initiative will die without an ongoing (political) commitment and additional resources.

Resources need to be found to assign staff to this cause and an organizational entity needs to be established to bring people, resources and actions together. The entity needs to find a political anchor in the city, to ensure organizational continuity and political support.

With this in mind, the homelessness committee chose to focus on one strategic priority, the creation of a Homelessness Leadership Team, and to approach the other identified priorities as strategic goals.

Strategic Priority – Create a Homelessness Leadership Team

We will establish a leadership entity to build interagency unity and address homelessness and affordable housing issues.

4.4 Making it happen

Based on previous experience, the homelessness steering committee decided that, until a leadership entity is in place and funding is secured, no other (coordinated) initiatives will be undertaken. Several key steps were agreed upon to move this intitiative forward:

- The homelessness steering committee has committed to continue work on this priority until they have reached their goal.
- An action plan is developed to ensure a team will be created.
- Championed by one of the city councillors, the initial goal will be to ensure a 0.25 FTE position at the city for a coordinator and grant researcher, and to establish a Standing Committee on Homelessness.
- Alternative funding will be researched by the current homelessness committee members if a position cannot be secured.

Although the homelessness committee is aware that many steps are needed to reduce homelessness, no further action will be taken until a leadership entity is created and funding secured. Some action steps have been identified to allow for a quick start after creation of the entity and possible sub committees. The Vision, Strategic Priority and Strategic Goals are visualized on the next page.

Powell River Homelessness Strategic Plan 2011

VISION STATEMENT

Powell River is a unified, caring, supportive community where everyone has access to an affordable and sustainable place to live.

Strategic Priority – Create a Homelessness Leadership Team

- Identify Key Agencies
- Appoint a Staff Member
- Find Funding – City or external
- Create a standing committee – appointed by council
- Reach out to community for committee members

- Create Sub Committees
- Identify Key Agencies
- Establish Volunteer List

- Lobby for increased funding
- Join Existing Lobby Groups

Strategic Goals

Increase Affordable Housing Stock

Keep People Housed

Increase Public Awareness

Implement Housing First Strategy

Identify Municipal issues and Solutions

Action Steps

- Investigate existing options
- Prepare List of local builders

- Identify People at Risk
- Promote rental subsidies
- Educate Local landlords
- Create housing registry
- Establish landlord tenant support strategy

- Engage Professional Publicists
- Develop Message
- Prepare Town Hall Informational Session
- Post Information on Website
- Publish Articles
- Prepare Spokesperson List

- Define Mandate and Membership
- Research Existing Implementation Models
- Determine Need and Potential Clients

- Present Municipal Best Practises to Council
- Create Housing Policy
- Review and amend OCP
- Raise Profile in Municipal Election
- Identify Opportunities
- Lobby City for Bylaw Changes



5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

There is a significant need for coordination of the services and actions for people who are (at risk of being) homeless in Powell River. To ensure coordinated action and project continuity, a housing leadership entity needs to be created with strong political anchoring. The entity needs to coordinate the creation of more (affordable) low-barrier housing solutions together with the implementation of more integrated client centred support and prevention strategies. Broad community awareness is needed about the homelessness issues and solutions.

5.2 Recommendations to the City of Powell River:

The homelessness committee, supported by the organizations working with people who are (at risk of being) homeless, recommends that the City of Powell River:

- makes homelessness prevention a strategic goal for the City;
- establishes a Standing Committee on Homelessness in Powell River;
- creates a 0.25 FTE City position for a minimum of a year;
- appoints a person to coordinate the committee, research grants and support a public campaign;
- identifies and implements policies to address housing issues in the City, building on the City report of 2008, *Overview of Affordable Housing Strategies* (City of Powell River Development Services, 2008);
- identifies and creates a solution for emergency housing in Powell River;
- communicates to and educates the general public on the issue of homelessness.

5.3 Recommendations to the Homelessness Entity:

Based on the best practices research, the homelessness committee, supported by the organizations working with people who are (at risk of being) homeless, recommends that the new to-be-established Homelessness Entity/Standing Committee on Homelessness:

- implements a Housing First Strategy;
- implements Assertive Community Treatment — and Housing Support Teams;
- develops regional-wide integrated prevention strategies and data sharing;
- develops a housing continuum through creating emergency housing options and more affordable housing;
- measures results.



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Appendix B: Homelessness Committee and Workshop Participants

Homelessness Committee

Contact	Organization
Lyn Adamson	Career Link
Councillor Debbie Dee	City of Powell River
Councillor Maggie Hathaway	City of Powell River/MLA
Shainil Jessa	Mental Health and Addictions
Chris King	Ministry of Housing and Social Development
David Morris	Powell River Model Community Project

Workshop Participants:

Aron Strumecki	Career Link
Jason Van Ankum	Community Resource Centre
Caroline-Tashish Rentz	Child Youth and Family Services
Pastor Sam	Four Square Church
Breanne Marlat	Four Square Church
Lynn Roberts	Powell River Association for Community Living
Lilla Tipton	Powell River Association for Community Living
Colin Palmer	Powell River Regional District
Cam Muir	RCMP
Captain Rick Robins	Salvation Army
Jay Yule	School District
Mary James	School District
Doug Skinner	School District
Jeannie MacKay	Stop the Violence
Pat Ackerman	Transition House Society

Appendix C: Results of the workshop November 30, 2011

Appendixes with raw data are not included.

1. Introduction

This report summarizes the results of the first workshop conducted on November 30, 2010. Following up on a quantitative survey distributed to all service providers in the City, this workshop was designed to gather qualitative data relative to the issue of homelessness in Powell River.

Alof!i Consultancy was retained by the City of Powell River to undertake research to provide a comprehensive listing of services and develop both a Strategic Plan and Action Plan for dealing with the issue of homelessness in Powell River. Part of the approach to this project was to conduct a series of workshops with service providers and others to explore ideas and solutions. Participants at this first workshop represented 8 agencies currently operating in Powell River. A list of workshop participants is included in Appendix A.

2. Process

This half day workshop was divided into three parts.

The first part comprised a summary context presentation of some early information relative to a previous study by Alofii Consultancy from 2007/08, results from a homelessness forum held in Sechelt on the Lower Sunshine Coast in the last month, and preliminary polling results from surveys done at the Community Resource Centre. Copies of the slides are contained in Appendix B.

The second part comprised an Interview Matrix process to gather qualitative information relative to the state of services for homelessness in the City.

The third part comprised a debriefing of the summaries resulting from the interviews conducted during the workshop.

Following the context presentation, participants offered the following comments:

- In terms of rental accommodation, some landlords are setting eligibility thresholds based on age.
- Many renters move south of town as there is cheaper accommodation to be found there; however, transportation to and from town becomes an issue.

- Most landlords require that prospective renters provide references which are not always available to those who are homeless.
- Many who are homeless may also require support in developing basic living and interpersonal skills.

The Interview Matrix process was based on exploring 4 key questions.

- What are 2-3 services or programs that you would like to provide to deal with homelessness in Powell River?
- What are 2-3 successful programs or services that your organization has seen, is aware of, or has delivered?
- Regarding the issue of homelessness, what does success look like for your organization?
- What are 2-3 obstacles/challenges in our community to addressing the issue of homelessness?

Participants were divided into groups of 4 with each member assigned one of the questions to interview the others in their group. Participants were guided through a rotation process for conducting the interviews. Following the completion of the interviews, participants gathered at flip charts to prepare respective summaries for the 4 questions. The raw data from these summaries is contained in Appendix C.

3. Results

This section provides an executive summary of the results of the interviews on the 4 questions.

1. **What are 2-3 services or programs that you would like to provide to deal with homelessness in Powell River?**

The purpose of this question was to explore some of the gaps that exist in dealing with the issue of homelessness in Powell River. While many of these programs exist to some degree now, there was a general sense that sustainable operational funding was necessary to address the ongoing needs of the community. The majority of responses were related to 4 key areas:

- the need for integration across the service providers and a more centralized access for information and services;
- the ability to provide immediate as well as transitional housing;
- an increased support framework to access training, employment and other services related to the underlying issues contributing to homelessness;
- the recognition by all levels of governments (federal, provincial, and municipal) of their role in providing sustainable funding to support ongoing operations.

2. **What are 2-3 successful programs or services that your organization has seen, is aware of, or has delivered?**

This question was designed to identify the positive work that needs to continue and to recognize those services and programs that are essential to continue when looking at strategies around this issue.

The use of the word 'successful' when referring to programs relating to this issue was generally seen as having two dimensions. While many agencies have some success in addressing the immediate needs of the community, they were unable to deal sufficiently with the underlying issues of homelessness over the long term. One comment related to the challenge of not creating a culture of dependency on these programs and services but to seek longer term solutions. It was pointed out also that the people of Powell River have a very strong practice of giving when needed which should be considered part of the description of success. While many of the agencies had unique approaches to some services and programs, they generally fell into 4 key areas.

a. *Immediate, short term responses:* Many agencies have programs to deal with immediate short term requirements from safe housing to food supply and distribution and transportation.

b. *Transitional Housing:* Agencies work to provide housing to carry people through to the point where they can move on. The increased availability of safe housing would allow them to put clients in a more stable short term environment so they can have a chance to deal with some of the underlying issues related to their situation.

c. *Skills training:* Many agencies are working to provide training and skills development to assist clients to provide a more stable housing environment. These skills range from life coaching and skills to employment readiness and problem solving. However, many of these services are being supplied 'off the side of the desk' meaning that they are over and above the direct mandate of the agencies but necessary for dealing with some of the underlying issues of homelessness.

d. *Networking:* While coordination and integration remain a challenge, many agencies have been able to make some of the connections necessary to assist each other in dealing with common issues.

3. **Regarding the issue of homelessness, what does success look like for your organization?**

This question was designed to explore the breadth of vision and possibility across the service providers for positioning themselves strategically to deal with this issue. Not surprisingly, the

answers ranged from increasing the number and depth of services and programs to eliminating the need for them at all. Most responses took a more pragmatic view recognizing that the issue will be around for some time. With that said, the responses fell generally into 3 main groups.

a. *Skills Development and Education:* Many answers focused on the desire to help their clients to improve their capacity for dealing with the underlying issues that produce homelessness and to limit their dependency on short term services. This education ranged from basic living skills, such as budgeting and home maintenance, to relationship skills, such as maintaining friendships and problem solving, to creating stability in their lives by becoming more employable and reliable. This support was recognized as going beyond individuals to include families as well where children and youth were involved.

b. *Coordination and Integration:* There was a consistent recognition across interviews of the need for better seamlessness and coordination across agencies to be able to respond to immediate needs, as well as provide to ongoing information regarding the services and programs that are available.

c. S*ustainable programs and services:* Funding was an issue across the board relative to supporting the ability of all agencies to do the best job they can. Responses spoke to having enough food and shelter to ensure that no one is left out in the short term while providing time for clients to find their own way.

4. What are 2-3 obstacles/challenges in our community to addressing the issue of homelessness?

This question asked participants to look beyond their organization and identify some of the environmental factors that affect their work. Discussion revealed that while some may be within their control or influence given sufficient time or funding, there are a number of areas over which they have no control. Responses fell into 4 main areas.

a. *Awareness:* Participants felt that there is a general lack of awareness in the community of the need for the work they do and the challenges that they and their clients face on an ongoing basis. While awareness could be improved through education, there is no centralized means or funding to coordinate these efforts. Each group is subsequently left to look after its own segment of the issue resulting in an appearance of competition for both dollars and commitment. It is also worthy to note that even among the agencies there was a lack of awareness as to the breadth of each other's activities.

b. *Attitudes:* Challenges in this area can be further aggravated when societal attitudes are built on negative stereotypes and the stigma attached to marginalized persons in general. This can be enhanced when a community loses its commitment to engage in social issues,

thinking that others are in place to deal with it. One of the problems related to social housing is the NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) effect. While many recognize the need to deal with it, there is always a problem finding suitable locations for constructing new facilities or finding existing landlords who are willing to participate.

c. *Coordination:* The difficulty here relates to the lack of clarity around whose role it is to provide this function. Comments related to issues with funding, politics and government policy at all levels.

d. *Sustainable Funding:* Responses identified that while funds are available to study the problem and do the requisite planning, there remains a large gap between the funds allocated for operations and the real cost of providing these services. This funding challenge affects the ability of all agencies to provide the level of service required to have a significant impact on this issue.



Appendix D: Results of the Workshop January 28th, 2011

Appendixes with raw data are not included.

1. Introduction

Alof!i Consultancy was retained by the City of Powell River to undertake research to provide a comprehensive listing of services and develop both a Strategic Plan and Action Plan for dealing with the issue of homelessness in Powell River. Part of the approach to this project was to conduct a series of workshops with service providers and others of influence to explore ideas and solutions. For the purpose of simplicity, the word "community" is used in this report to encompass both individual organizations within the community as well as the City itself. The first workshop, held on November 30, 2010, was designed to gather qualitative data relative to the issue of homelessness in Powell River by interviewing key agencies and partners. The second workshop was specifically designed to initiate the development of a strategic plan for dealing with homelessness in Powell River. This report summarizes the results of the second workshop conducted on January 28, 2011. A list of workshop participants is included in Appendix A.

2. Process

Strategic planning can be an important opportunity in the life of a community. Through a series of guided processes, it is possible to uncover the issues, concerns or factors that impact a community's ability to achieve a future it describes for itself. For it is true that "if you don't know where you are going, any road will take you there." As there will never be "enough" resources to do everything that needs to be done, it is especially critical in positioning the community to use what resources they have in the most effective way possible. Establishing a shared view of the future is a critical first step in developing a plan to move forward.

This project also included a best practices research component. Prior to beginning the strategic planning process, participants received an update on the results of this research. The processes used in this workshop were designed to generate information relative to:

- developing a vision statement;
- conducting an Environmental Scan and SWOT analysis; and
- developing Strategic Priorities and/or Goals.

The third workshop, for which a date has yet to be set, will use the results from the first two workshops to develop an action plan to address the homelessness situation in Powell River.

2.1 Vision Statement

A vision statement is a critical tool in assisting communities to make decisions on the best use of people, time, money and energy. A common vision can bring groups within a community together to work towards a future that serves them all. It is critical that this exercise begin the strategic planning process. By synthesizing the hopes and dreams of all participants, whether they be individuals or organizations, it is possible to define a path along which all efforts can be effectively channelled and, more importantly, resources shared. In tight economic times this is especially critical.

The development of this stage began with a series of processes designed to reveal the key words and concepts that are important to participants when describing a vision for this work. The key words that emerged are noted in Appendix B of this report. From this list, participants were asked to synthesize these ideas into key overall concepts important to describing a vision for the future of homelessness in Powell River.

Vision Key Concepts

- commitment, especially of resources, time and energy
- recognition of citizen responsibility and duty
- working together in unity and support
- need for new ideas and approaches to the problem
- respect without judgment
- recognition of diversity
- sustainability, of approach and resources
- dignity for the individuals affected by homelessness
- need for a whole community approach
- action and movement
- education

Participants were split into two groups and asked to reflect on these concepts and develop some vision statement wording that captured the collective ideas of their group.

GROUP 1 quickly came to consensus on a single draft statement: PR is a caring community committed to a unified approach that inspires the provision of safe, affordable and sustainable housing with a system of support and education that results in a sense of belonging and worth for all. Following some refinement, they settled on the following wording:

Powell River is a caring unified community committed to the provision of safe affordable and sustainable housing with a system of support and education that inspires a sense of belonging and worth for all.

GROUP 2 synthesized four separate statements to develop their draft statement.

- *Together as a whole community we commit to creating a sustainable homeless strategy that respects our diverse population.*
- *The City of Powell River and partnering agencies commit to creating a community where every citizen has access to a sustainable place to live.*
- *Together we adopt an integrated approach that draws on best practice to build a sustainable plan that addresses the diverse needs of homeless members of our Powell River community.*
- *The Community of Powell River commits to developing and implementing a unified, sustainable homelessness strategy ensuring each individual's right to safe housing while respecting diversity.*

The Community of Powell River commits to creating an environment where every citizen has access to a sustainable and affordable place to live.

These two statements were brought together and, in plenary, participants discussed the similarities and differences between these statements. The following draft vision statement emerged.

Powell River Homelessness Strategy Draft Vision Statement: Powell River is a unified, caring, and supportive community where everyone has access to an affordable and sustainable place to live and experiences a sense of belonging.

2.2 Environmental Scan

An environmental scan is a process useful in identifying some of the key factors that can affect decision making across a community. While some, or many of these factors may be mere awareness of these concerns, they can result in a collective strategy to uncover the areas that are within their control and influence, and develop strategic priorities to deal with them.

The exercise explored the political, economic, societal, and technological environments. The raw data from the exercise is contained in Appendix C. This section will present the summation of the exercise results.

A. POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

The key observations concerned three impacts:

Abdication of Responsibility: Comments regarding the abdication and/or downloading of government responsibility spoke to the resulting reductions in funding that result when the issue is lined up against other more "pressing" political issues. Comments also raised the fact that this situation has been further aggravated by the ongoing lack of consultation to understand the extent of social and economic impact on marginalized inidividuals and by extension the homelessness issue.

The Truth Isn't Sexy: The concerns around the political palatability of the homelessness issue spoke to the fact that social issues have received a low priority in government in favour of those associated with economic growth.

Poverty - Individual Income Issues: Lastly, the concern was expressed that low minimum wages, clawbacks and reductions in income assistance has had a direct impact on the ability of people to take charge of their situation. Several other comments were raised addressing more local issues highlighting the lack of a municipal housing policy and a general lack of leadership up until now. Throughout the comments raised under the political lens was the overall concern that there always appeared to be money to plan and study the issue but not to take concrete action.

B. ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

There were of course many linkages between the economic and political environments with many overlaps in concerns. However, when sorted there were five key areas of concern.

Not Enough Government Support For Services: There is a need for, but lack of, government support for key services vital to dealing with the homelessness issue. The competition for priorities and the resultant changes in resource distribution have a social impact when support is diminished or withdrawn. Challenges also exist for local governments concerning the availability of jobs and labour pool as well as a lack of incentives and/or legislation to increase affordable housing.

Not Enough $$$: There is a general decline in personal financial resources and low minimum wages which impacts the individual's options for making changes in their lives.

Attitudes: Societal attitudes towards those dealing with poverty and homelessness as well as the competition for charitable donations can directly affect the degree of support that is provided to assist people in making positive changes in their lives.

Globalization: Trends towards globalization in businesses can impact the financial viability of small communities thereby reducing options for dealing with social problems.

C. SOCIETAL ENVIRONMENT

This factor broke down under 6 key areas.

Barriers: There are barriers to finding adequate solutions that range from general lack of awareness and education to outright apathy and discrimination against those that are less fortunate. This is further aggravated by the NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) attitude which may acknowledge the problem but is not willing to make room for a solution in a community.

Poverty: The cycle of poverty resulting from low wages and escalating costs can enslave families and individuals to a perpetual struggle for the basic needs of life and dignity.

Youth Confusion: While social issues are discussed more openly in schools, there may be opportunities to increase engagement of young people through increasing awareness of the causes and solutions in the local community.

Changing Communication: In an increasingly digital society, the inability to connect to information and services by not having access to tools such as phones or computers can impact an individual's ability to seek the support they need as well as an organization's ability to reach all who need help.

Changing Family Dynamics: Changing family dynamics and models can exert pressure on families that can affect their functionality and result in breaking down familial support systems. This disfunctionality is further aggravated by resultant poverty and homelessness.

Wealth: The societal focus on wealth generation and management can widen the gulf between the haves and have-nots.

D. TECHNOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENT

The advent of and access to technology have both positive and negative impacts on those struggling with the issue of homelessness.

Positive Effects: Access to technology such as phones and computers increases the ability for some to find accommodation, employment and services in general. Communication is also enhanced despite not having a mailing address.

N*egative Effects:* Conversely, unfamiliarity with or lack of access to technology and communication can distance people from services they may require and can enhance feelings of naivety, vulnerability and isolation.

2.3 Current State Assessment

A SWOT Analysis can be very revealing when considering an assessment of where a community or its organizations are with respect to their readiness to deal with the environmental factors that surround their work or to achieve the vision,. SWOT is an acronym for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. The strengths and weaknesses that are explored are internal to an organization or community and look at their capacity for dealing with the factors affecting business and life in the community. Opportunities and threats considers external factors key to developing strategies for achieving the vision that has been developed by a community. The raw data from the exercise are listed in Appendix D of this report.

A. STRENGTHS

Two broad areas emerged through this exercise. The organizations involved in dealing with homelessness in Powell River have collective expertise in many hard and soft skills and collective resources.

Expertise (hard and soft): The listing of hard skills ranged from broad management and organizational expertise to skills in writing grant applications and proposals. Comments acknowledged that not all of these skills were resident in all organizations and there was an opportunity to come together to explore areas where expertise could be shared to mutual benefit.

Attitudes: By virtue of the area of work that the participants are involved in, they identified strong capacities for empathy, commitment, risk taking and collaboration across agencies. These attitudes or values enhance their ability to appreciate and understand the challenges faced by their clientele as well as indicate a great willingness to assist in support and problem solving. As in the exploration of hard skills, there was a recognition of an opportunity to harness the collective strength across the community of service providers to the benefit of all.

Community Resources: Board support, fundraising and volunteer capacity and existing food distribution are seen as strengths which can be built on in the community.

B. WEAKNESSES

Four key areas emerged during the exploration of internal weaknesses of the organizations involved.

Capacity: Caseloads for organizations involved in social support are often large and diverse. The numbers of staff available or trained enough to work in this field are usually significantly smaller than that which is required to deal effectively with these issues. Staff is also stretched too thin, or they are required to spend a disproportionate amount of time focusing on trying to sustain the organization financially through chasing grants and fundraising rather than working with clients. Sustainability, in terms of funds, staffing capabilities and energy is a large challenge for all agencies.

Engagement and Continuity: The ability to engage the community at large in this work is an area where agencies struggle against demographic changes. It is seen that the younger generations are less aware and less likely to engage in this work yet need to become more involved to offset the attrition from an older generation of volunteers.

Agency/Group Collaboration and Trust: Although there are many skill strengths across the breadth of groups working on this issue, there is also recognition that collaboration, communication and trust are not as prevalent as they need to be to make this happen. Many groups feel that they are working in isolation and forced to compete with each other for skills and funding. Ideological differences between secular and faith based groups can also affect the willingness to collaborate and trust each other.

Mandates: The fact that many groups working on this issue have very narrow mandates results from the need to focus on small segments of the issue to maximize their capacity and resources. This tight focus can cause some groups to over-identify with their support segment making it difficult for them to step back and see a broader picture and possible solutions. Housing is generally an offshoot of the direct work that many are involved in and is usually managed managed off the side of their desks.

C. OPPORTUNITIES

When the group considered the opportunities they saw to advance their progress towards their vision for a solution to homelessness in Powell River they identified six areas of attention.

Municipal Involvement: The City has lead this process and is starting to look at the housing portfolio. Initiatives related to carriage houses and secondary suites are seen as positive steps. The cross community approach of this planning session was viewed also as a positive sign for the future. The Sustainability Charter recently adopted by the city and region speaks to an emerging sensibility towards a general approach to looking for sustainable solutions on a variety of issues.

Local and Provincial Leadership: With recent developments in local and provincial politics, and the possibility of elections, there may be an opportunity to influence policy and rebuild relationships as the governments evolve or change.

Community Spirit: Powell River is generally known for its community spirit, and comments emerged that therein lies an opportunity to harness this energy to future advantage.

Economics: Although we are experiencing challenging economic times, there may be opportunities to take advantage of low interest rates and the relatively low cost of land and housing to seek sustainable solutions.

Organizational Cooperation: The relationship between agencies has shown up as a strength, a weakness and an opportunity. There was recognition that this relationship could be strengthened if agencies would work more closely together.

Communities and Resources: Small communities have opportunities for enhanced interagency relationships because of their close proximity and common issues and clientele. Better visibility for the Community Resource Centre, the Youth Resource Centre and the Salvation Army present opportunities to create focal points for awareness and access to services and information concerning the social issues in the community and solutions.

D. THREATS

There are four key areas that the group raised that could seriously impact success in this initiative and in reaching the collective vision.

Federal/Provincial Government: Cutbacks in funding, downloading of responsibility and lack of commitment from governments could hamper progress by drawing energy and capacity from client service to focus on fundraising.

Municipal Involvement: The municipal government has to show leadership by considering policies that can support housing alternatives and by partnering with agencies to lobby other levels of government for funding and support.

Financial: The misalignment of financial policy with the market reality creates a wage policy that does not allow persons to support themselves in a sustainable way. This coupled with funding cuts may force existing resource centers to close and may threaten the ability to move forward.

Prejudice, Apathy, Denial: There is a need to change community attitudes towards these issues by increasing their visibility and improving understanding of the complexities. It is generally considered that the community is not aware of the size of the issue in Powell River.

2.4 Strategic Priorities

Strategic priorities are those activities that allow an organization or community to focus their energies and resources to position themselves to realize the vision that they have described for themselves. Having built a large database of information through the Scan and SWOT exercises, participants were asked to develop their key strategic priorities.

These were vetted for redundancy and then brought forward to look for areas of affinity and commonality. The raw data is contained in Appendix E. The proposed draft statements of priority offered below are offered as a way to capture the intent of the group's reflections. These are not presented in any specific order of importance.

PRIORITY A: INCREASE PUBLIC AWARENESS

We will create approaches to communication and education to increase the awareness of the community to the issue of homelessness.

PRIORITY B: IMPROVE INTERAGENCY COMMUNICATION

We will work to develop a network of unity across agencies to build capacity and connectedness.

PRIORITY C: IMPROVE PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND CONTINUITY OF ACTIVITIES

We will work to improve leadership in the community to build and maintain government and corporate relationships.

PRIORITY D: IMPROVE CAPACITY FOR POLITICAL LOBBYING

We will work to focus collective efforts to improve access to all levels of government.

PRIORITY E: CONTINUE RESEARCH

We will establish methods to support ongoing research and improve understanding of both the issues and solutions.



Appendix E: Results of the homelessness committee meeting of February 28th, 2012

Appendixes with raw data are not included.

1. Introduction

In the development of a strategic plan there are several key outcomes. Two of these are the vision statement and the strategic priorities. The Vision Statement is a clear inspiring statement of the future that is desired for the community or organization. The strategic priorities are the main areas that participants collectively agree to focus on to position their community or organization both to deal with the unknowns in the future and to achieve the future they have described.

As participants develop the strategic plan, it is very important to constantly check that the vision and strategic priorities are aligned. If there is a disconnect between these two elements in that the priorities do not support the achievement of the vision then adjustments need to be made.

The homelessness committee was asked to review the outcomes of Workshop 1, all building blocks of Workshop 2 and the Best Practices report, to identify the following:

Do the Vision Statement and the Priorities reflect the best practices and our current environment?
If we reach the Vision, do we reach the outcome we want to reach?

Do the Strategic Priorities support the Vision Statement?

This memo reflects the outcomes

2. Observations from the reviewed information

The Homelessness Committee was asked to reflect on what emerged from the reviewed information. The following section presents a summary of the results.
The raw data from this dialogue is contained in the Appendix.

Housing First: Comments expressed the high success rate of the Housing First Strategy. Although overall excitement was expressed, concerns were raised regarding how to implement the method with tight budgets and mandates.

Increase of (Affordable) Housing Stock: Comments were made that housing is needed to reduce homelessness. Currently this is not one of the strategic priorities. A place is needed to discharge

people to and housing is necessary in order to implement a housing first strategy. Comments also reflected the need for a range of housing to free up housing on the bottom of the ladder, and expressed the opportunities that are currently out there (secondary suite) but are not used. Ideas were expressed to look at tax (or other) incentives for the creation of affordable housing. Concerns were expressed around the lack of data: do we know our target? Many people at-risk are visiting the Community Resource Centre. Losing the CRC would lose the connection.

Assertive Community Treatment Teams and Housing Support Teams: The need was expressed for teams like this in Powell River. Due to the scale, these teams would work more on a 'as needed' basis. Comments expressed that it is currently not in people's mandate to find and maintain housing. There are some programs offering support, such as the Youth Independent Living Program, but this program has a narrow mandate. Again comments reflected the concerns for funding to run a team.

Community Awareness: Lack of community awareness about the issue was raised, but also the lack of awareness about the solutions that are there. People at risk of losing their home might not be aware of rental subsidies or services available for them, and home owners may not be aware of the possibility to have a secondary suite. The Community Resource Centre was mentioned as a well-known resource in the community where people go for peer support and to get information and help.

Prevention: Comments were made about the need for financial housing subsidies, sometimes short-term, but often long term, to keep people housed and not have people forced to choose between housing and food. Discharge planning is needed, but currently it's not clearly anyone's mandate.

Housing entity: Currently a lot of time is spent hunting for a house for a client, due to the lack of one central housing registry. The Community Resource Centre serves as an informal place for people to connect around housing issues and make connections with possible renters/roommates.

3. Review of the Vision Statement

DRAFT 1: VISION STATEMENT

Powell River is a unified, caring, and supportive community where everyone has access to an affordable and sustainable place to live and experiences a sense of belonging

After reviewing the information, the committee suggests deleting the last part of the draft vision, as this is captured in the words unified, caring and supportive and is not directly related to the homelessness issue.

DRAFT 2: VISION STATEMENT
Powell River is a unified, caring, and supportive community where everyone has access to an affordable and sustainable place to live.

4. New Strategic Priorities

During Workshop 2, the following Strategic Priorities emerged.

DRAFT 1: STRATEGIC PRIORITIES				
Increase Public Awareness	Improve Inter-agency Communication	Improve Project Management and Continuity of Activities	Improve Capacity For Political Lobbying	Continue Research

After reviewing all information the committee suggests the following new Strategic Priorities (in order of importance)

PRIORITY A: INCREASE AFFORDABLE HOUSING STOCK

We will focus collective efforts to improve access to all levels of government and build stronger community relations to improve the affordable housing stock.

PRIORITY B: KEEP PEOPLE HOUSED

We will develop integrated methods to work together and share information to prevent people from losing their home.

PRIORITY C: CREATE AN ENTITY TO COMBAT HOMELESSNESS AND ADDRESS ISSUES OF AFFORDABLE

We will establish an entity to improve leadership in the community and to build a network of unity across agencies to improve understanding of both the issues and solutions.

PRIORITY D: INCREASE PUBLIC AWARENESS

We will create approaches to communication and education to increase the awareness of the community to the issue of homelessness.

PRIORITY E: IMPLEMENT HOUSING FIRST STRATEGY AND SUPPORT TEAMS

We will work to develop interdisciplinary teams and harm reduction methods using the strengths of all existing organizations to house people as soon as possible.

PRIORITY F: IDENTIFY MUNICIPAL ISSUES & SOLUTIONS

We will work to improve municipal awareness of opportunities to improve the affordable housing stock and reduce homelessness.



Appendix F: Results of the workshop March 4th, 2011

Appendixes with raw data are not included.

1. Introduction

Alof!i Consultancy was contracted by the City of Powell River to provide a comprehensive listing of services, conduct a best practices research and develop both a strategic plan and action plan for dealing with the issue of homelessness in Powell River. Part of the approach to this project was to conduct a series of workshops with service providers and others of influence to explore ideas and solutions. For the purposes of simplicity, the word "community" is used in this report to encompass both individual organizations within the community as well as the City itself.

The first workshop, held on November 30, 2010, was designed to gather qualitative data relative to the issue of homelessness in Powell River by interviewing key agencies and partners. The second workshop, held on January 28th, 2011, was specifically designed to initiate the development of a Strategic Plan for dealing with Homelessness in Powell River, which was reviewed and adjusted during a committee meeting on February 28th. The third workshop was designed to initiate the development of an Action Plan.

The meeting was sparsely attended; however some basic action planning steps were developed following confirmation of the revised strategic priorities developed at the Steering Committee meeting held February 28th.

This report summarizes the results of the third workshop conducted on March 4, 2011. A list of workshop participants is included in Appendix A.

2. Finalizing Strategic Priorities

Participants were invited to review the revised Strategic Priorities (see Appendix B). Overall, the suggested changes were accepted, but a request for plain language was made. Group comments lead to the following strategic priorities:

PRIORITY A: INCREASE AFFORDABLE HOUSING STOCK

We will improve our access to all levels of government and build stronger community relations to increase stock of affordable housing.

PRIORITY B: KEEP PEOPLE HOUSED

We will improve information sharing and collectively develop prevention strategies to keep people housed.

PRIORITY C: CREATE HOMELESSNESS LEADERSHIP TEAM

We will establish a leadership entity to build interagency unity and address homelessness and affordable housing issues.

PRIORITY D: INCREASE PUBLIC AWARENESS

We will increase public awareness of homelessness issues through new approaches to communication and education

PRIORITY E: IMPLEMENT HOUSING FIRST STRATEGY AND SUPPORT TEAMS

We will work with all organizations to develop interdisciplinary support teams and harm reduction strategies.

PRIORITY F: IDENTIFY MUNICIPAL ISSUES & SOLUTIONS

We will improve municipal awareness of opportunities to improve affordable housing and reduce homelessness.

3. Action Plan versus Strategic Goals

Participants were asked to indicate their most important action for each priority item. This process yielded 8 action items for each priority. These were subsequently discussed and arranged in order of task completion.

When analyzing the workshop output, it became clear that it would be difficult to build a comprehensive action plan with so few elements. Many of the action items raised were actually closer to being strategic goals than specific action items in that they were broad statements of activity that were strategic to the success of the priorities.

From the discussion and presentation, two themes emerged:

'Entity' critical to success: People indicated that leadership is needed and that this work can no longer be done 'off the side of our desks'. Resources need to be found to assign staff to this task and an entity needs to be established to bring people, resources and actions together. Although an entity was identified as one of the first steps needed, people expressed the fear the continuation of the project would stop while waiting for an entity to be established. The entity could be a home for a housing first/support team.

Educate and Inform: A significant need for broad community education and information was expressed. The general community needs to be informed about the homelessness issue, as do politicians, landlords, local builders and people in risk of losing their home. Approaching the issue from an economic perspective which impacts us all, could help bring the message across. For example we could examine the cost of homelessness versus the cost of housing people

or the cost and effects of holding a hospital bed longer than medically necessary. Education also needs to happen around fairly easy prevention mechanisms and local opportunities, i.e. secondary suites.

Appendix B contains the result of the exercise. Action Items and Strategic Goals are both listed. It is presented in action planning format through which the items can be further developed, recorded and monitored as the plan evolves in the future.



Appendix G: Community Resource Centre - Homelessness Interview

Survey time from November 22 – 28, 2010

1. **Have you been homeless in the last couple of years?**
   -15 out of 17 interviewed said yes, 1 said 5 years ago, 1 said no

2. **How did you become homeless?**
   a. Lack of funds/not affordable
   b. Shared housing/ relationship breakdown
   c. Addiction
   d. Reputation –barred from some locations
   e. Mental Illness (depression,…)
   f. Lack of available housing
   g. Restrictions around rental accommodations for drug traffic and safety
   h. Eviction (taken advantage of)
   i. Illness/ hospitalization
   j. Loss of employment

3. **Do you have a long term place to live now?**
   a. No -8
   b. Yes -8 (yes, if things work out with roommate)

4. **What could be done to prevent you being homeless?**
   a. More funding ($525 allowed for shelter allowance while it costs more like $750 for respectable housing)
   b. Low cost/subsidized housing
      i. No waiting list
   c. Temporary shelters
      i. Low or zero cost
      ii. Especially for men
      iii. Mental health assistance housing
   d. Employment
   e. Addiction recovery services
   f. Preventative Mental health awareness/teaching (medical support)
   g. Emotional Support and stability
   h. Transportation to find a place to live
   i. Someone to contact who will know what is available
   j. Ministry of housing could actively help to find a new place

5. **Is your living situation better or worse than it was?**
    a. Same – 5
    b. Better -7 (1 better for a week)
    c. Worse-4 (couch surfing)

Appendix H: Services for people who are (at risk of being) homeless

ORGANIZATION	PROGRAM	TARGETED POPULATION	SHORT DESCRIPTION	MAIN FUNDER	PARTNERS	# PEOPLE SERVED A YEAR	# YEARS OPER-ATING	LOCATION
Brain Injury Society	Advocacy	Adults with acquired brain	Services and support to adults with acquired brain injury			150	8	201-4741 Marine Avenue
Grace House	Transition House	Abused women & Kids	A safe place from domestic violence & 1 recovery bed	BC Housing			17	confidential
Ministry of Children and Family Development	Child and Youth Mental Health	Children and Youth	• Includes Sexual Abuse Intervention Program • Youth Forensic Services • Psychiatric Services	MCFD		3 clients with homelessness issues in 2010		202 7373 Duncan Street
Ministry of Social Development	Income assistance & assistance for Persons with Disabilities		Income assistance for eligible citizens, advocacy & referral to service providers	Province of BC		Current caseload of 900+ individuals/ families		6944 Alberni Street, Powell River
Powell River Association for Community Living	Lifeskills	30 yrs plus	Support to adults with a developmental disability	Community Living BC		30	25	PRACL #201 4675 Marine Ave
Powell River Association for Community Living	CrossRoads	19- 30 yrs	Support to young adults with a developmental disability	Community Living BC		25	17	PRACL #201 4675 Marine Ave
Powell River Association for Community Living	HomeSharing	19 plus	Support to adults with a developmental disability	Community Living BC		15	4	PRACL #201 4675 Marine Ave
Powell River Association for Community Living	Supported Apartments	19 plus	Support to adults with a developmental disability	Community Living BC		3	3	PRACL #201 4675 Marine Ave
Powell River Association for Community Living	Child and Family Services	Infants to 18 yrs and their families	Resources and support to families which may include support for housing	Ministry for Children and Families		247 children and families	56	Jean Pike Center 7055 Alberni St
Powell River Child Youth and Family Services Society	Independent Living Support Program	Youth	The program provides practical support and skill training to youth making the transition to independent living and adulthood. One-on-one, individualized support is offered to youth in the areas of nutrition, housing, budgeting, self-care, social development and vocational planning, self advocacy and problem solving skills.	MCFD		47 in 2009 80% with housing issues		202 7373 Duncan Street
Powell River Child Youth and Family Services Society	Brook's Student Mom's Program	Student Moms	Educationally based to support pregnant and parenting young moms to complete High School, and provides outreach supports to help overcome barriers to education and employment opportunities.	MCFD/ SD47	SD #47	13 total in 2009, 6 with housing issues		Books Secondary School

ORGANIZATION	PROGRAM	TARGETED POPULATION	SHORT DESCRIPTION	MAIN FUNDER	PARTNERS	# PEOPLE SERVED A YEAR	# YEARS OPERATING	LOCATION
Powell River Child Youth and Family Services Society	Supports for At Risk Youth	Youth	2year 8 month program to enhance existing programs and services for at-risk youth and develop services and programs needed for at-risk youth	Social Development Partnership Program Canada			Staring date Jan. 2010	202 7373 Duncan Street
Powell River Employment Program Society	Community Resource Centre - Drop-in referral service	(at risk of) Homeless, multi-barriered, low income	Referral service, social support, food.	MHSD		Estimate only – 60-100 people per day	3	4500 Joyce Avenue
Powell River Employment Program Society	Career Link	Age 18 - 65	A wide range of free employment services for job seekers, including job search assistance and career counselling.	Ministry of Social Development		1400 per year	26	4511 Marine Ave
Powell River Model Community Project	Employment Assistance Services	Age 18 - 65	Employment supports for persons with disabilities or multiple barriers largely on disability pension or no income	Province of BC	Ministry of Social Development, Career Link, Brain Injury Society and others	Approx. 100	22	4476A Marine Ave
Powell River Model Community Project	Employment Program for Persons With Disability	Age 18 – 65, with identified physical disability	Provides skills training, work experiences and job placement for persons with identified physical disability and on a disability pension	Province of BC via Triumph Vocational	Triumph Vocational Services	Approx. 35	3	4476A Marine Ave
Salvation Army	Family Services		Distribution of food, clothing, blankets, sleeping bags, furniture, other personal products, referral services	Community Donations		8,000	54	4500 Joyce Ave.
School District #47	Hot Meal Program		Provides breakfast and hot meals to (some) elementary schools					

Overview of Low-Cost Food, Clothing and Furniture Sources Powell River (Updated January 4, 2011)

ORGANIZATION	SHORT DESCRIPTION	LOCATION
Powell River Food Bank	• Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM (September through June) • Open only 2 days per month in July and August (call to confirm) • Closed for the week of cheque day • Hampers filled with sugar, rice, oats and non-perishables • You must bring a bag and identification for each person you are getting food for, including children (Care Cards are acceptable ID)	6812D Alberni St. (at the back) (604) 485-9166
United Church	• Monday 4:30 PM to 6:00 PM: Spaghetti dinner (closed June to September) • $2.00 per person or $5.00 per family • If you can't afford the price come anyway-everyone is welcome!!	6932 Crofton St. (604) 485-5724
Salvation Army	• Wednesday 11:30 AM to 1:00 PM: Soup kitchen • Monday and Friday 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm: Food Pantry • Food Basket available once every three months (apply to staff)	4500 Joyce Ave. (604) 485-6067
Seventh Day Adventist Church	• Tuesday and Thursday 12:00 noon to 1:30 PM: Free soup lunch and food pantry • Career Closet' (clothing), Furniture, Community Garden, and volunteer opportunities • Thanksgiving and Christmas Day at 2:00 PM: Turkey dinner	4880 Manson Ave. (604) 485-7106
Faith Lutheran Church	• Every 2nd and 4th Saturday 12:00 till 2:00 pm Food cupboard • Pick up a bag of food and have a coffee while you wait	4811 Ontario Ave. (604) 485-2000 Pastor Carolyn Clemens
Community Resource Centre	• Provides coffee and snacks Mondays from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM, and Tuesdays through Thursday from 12:00 noon to 4:00 PM	4752 Joyce Ave. (604) 485-0992
Economy Shop	• Monday to Friday 10:00 AM to 4.00 PM • Low priced second hand cloth, toys and furniture.	6-7030 Alberni (604) 485-0110

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