

Strathcona Park Neighbours: Update 3

February 10, 2021

Direction and overall plans

- As mentioned in our last email, it is the City, Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation and BC Housing's shared goal to move people who are sleeping in Strathcona Park into indoor accommodation by the end of April and to bring the encampment to a close.
- The three organizations continue to work together to develop and implement the plans for moving people who are experiencing homelessness and sleeping in the park indoors.

Indoor space creation

- We have started renovations to create a 60-bed shelter, and all three partners are working closely to secure the necessary funding, leases and operators to allow us to open additional indoor spaces for people in the Park and experiencing homelessness in Vancouver.

Park access for neighbours during decampment

- Yesterday the General Manager of the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation issued a GM Order, effective Wednesday, Feb. 10, that temporary shelters and structures will not be permitted in the west side of Strathcona Park to allow for the remediation of the space to return the area to recreational use and programming for all park users.
- The GM Order falls under the authority granted through the Parks Control By-law. The Order states that all existing tents, temporary shelters, and structures must be removed from the west side of the park, as indicated by a map on the Order, by 10 am Wednesday, February 17, 2021.
- The GM Order was issued to the individuals who are currently sheltering on the west side of the park on February 10, and signage was installed in several locations inside the park today.
- Outreach work will continue with those currently in the west side of the park to connect individuals with shelter and housing if available, as well as other services.
- Once people have been relocated from the west side of the park and structures have been taken down, staff from the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation will erect a fence barrier to close off portions of the west side temporarily for remediation. While we expect this work will take approximately two to three months in total to complete, the community will still access to the park during this time.

Fire safety

- An updated Fire Chief's Order was posted in the park on Friday, February 5 and the City continues to work with BC Housing to educate people living in the park on fire risk and support safe warming practices. Enforcement activities related to the Fire Chief's order are being reassessed at this time.

Questions arising since last update

- **The last update said most people will be out of the park by the end of April, is that still the case?**

We've received several questions regarding the timing we mentioned in our last update. To clarify, Minister Eby has committed to opening enough spaces to accommodate people living in the park by the end of April. The number of people sleeping overnight in the encampment fluctuates based on a range of circumstances. BC Housing has requested funding to support the creation of 350 spaces to support moving people indoors, which includes spaces to provide sufficient options for people in the park and for the broader neighbourhood to ensure equitable access to housing and to prevent the encampment from growing.
- **What spaces have been identified?**

As mentioned above, we are beginning renovation work on a 60-bed shelter, which we hope to open in March and have other properties that can be opened in the coming weeks. Jericho Hostel and 2400 Kingsway are two of the properties that the City has requested provincial operating funding for but these locations will not necessarily be used for housing people who are moving from Strathcona.
- **What's happening with the Navigation Centre?**

The RFP process for the Navigation Centre is now completed, and BC Housing will have an update soon regarding the operator and the location of the site. The Navigation Centre, which will be located in or near the DTES, will provide additional levels of support not offered in many traditional shelters. The 60-bed centre will be referral only and provide integrated clinical health supports, as well as culturally appropriate services for Indigenous peoples.
- **Has a survey been conducted of people living in the park?**

Partners working in the park are speaking with people sleeping there to identify their needs. The results of these conversations will inform our housing work but will not be shared publicly to protect the privacy of people experiencing homelessness.
- **Are VPD officers still attending incidents in the park?**

VPD officers attend and respond to calls for services within the park and surrounding area as required, whether the reporter of the incident is someone staying in the encampment or a neighbour to the Park. Should you be concerned for your safety or the safety of others, call 911. It is important that all incidents are reported.
- **Can residents be involved with shaping the future of the park?**

Staff from the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation will be seeking input and engagement from the community to enhance the park's use and to create more opportunities for programming and activations in the space. While there is no firm timeline on this work at this time, there will be an opportunity for residents and community members to share their feedback and ideas about the future of the park.

If you have any questions, or would like to be added to our mailing list, please email homelessness@vancouver.ca.