

2009

Homelessness & the Howe Shelter

*City of Vancouver Community
Consultation*

July 16-23, 2009

ABSTRACT: This report summarizes feedback and insights provided by Vancouver citizens on homelessness and the future of the Howe Street Shelter in downtown Vancouver. Views are broken out by community, including the Howe Shelter neighbourhood, and the downtown core.

The City contracted with Edgemont Strategies to provide advice on the consultation form design, integrate the consultation questions into the City website, and collate the feedback results.



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Online Community Consultation on Homelessness *and the Howe Shelter*:

Summary of Results

Overview

From July 16 to July 22, 2009, the City of Vancouver hosted an online community consultation for feedback on homeless solutions and the Howe Shelter -- a time-sensitive issue that has implications the specific neighbourhood as well as all Vancouverites.

The consultation feedback form -- hosted on the City of Vancouver website -- was open to all members of the public and designed to encourage open-ended access, with minimal restrictions. A total of 1,656 consultation forms were submitted from the City of Vancouver. Based on reported postal code, forms were submitted from the following areas:

- 210 from participants that live or operate a business within 4 blocks of the Howe Shelter;
- 617 from elsewhere in the downtown core;
- 819 from elsewhere in the City of Vancouver;
- 10 who did not report a location;

The online feedback form included 10 sections that asked citizens to respond to a mix of facts and questions. The objective of the consultation format was to focus citizen input on key issues while at the same time allowing people an ongoing open-ended opportunity to say whatever they wanted.

1. Residential or business postal code
2. Importance of solving homelessness
3. The Vancouver Interim Housing Strategy
4. Proximity to the Howe Street Shelter
5. Impacts on Neighbourhood
6. Effectiveness of Mitigation
7. Insights on Solutions
8. Position on Keeping the Howe Shelter Open
9. Feedback on Additional Mitigation Required
10. Additional Open-Ended Comments

Vancouver citizens were informed of the opportunity to take part in the consultation by newspaper advertisement in two newspapers¹ on Wednesday, July 15 and Friday, July 17, by postcards handed out in the vicinity of the Howe Shelter on Friday, July 17 and Monday July 20, by a notice on the City of Vancouver website, and by word-of-mouth. Notice by email was also provided to people who had contacted the City about this issue.

Feedback is summarized on the following pages, broken out by community, as defined by self-reported postal code. Verbatim comments are provided in a separate "Appendix A".

This summary is not a scientific poll, and it is absolutely not a referendum. Similar to a face-to-face public consultation process, some participants in this online process may have chosen to speak more than once, some may speak more forcefully and other voices may have joined in at the behest of their friends and networks. As such the results summarized are only taken to represent the views of those members of the Vancouver public that have chosen to take part in the online consultation process.

Verbatim comments are provided in Appendix A. All comments are strictly anonymous, unless a participant indicated otherwise.

¹ The newspapers were *24Hours* and *The Vancouver Courier*.

CONSULTATION RESULTS:

SECTION 1: Survey Validation by Postal Code

To validate your survey, please enter your postal code(s).

	#	%
Residential /or/ Business		
Postal Codes within 4 Blocks of Howe Shelter	210	13
Postal Codes elsewhere in the Downtown Core	617	37
Postal Codes elsewhere in City of Vancouver	819	49.5
<i>None</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>0.6</i>
TOTAL *	1656	100%

**Numbers may add up to slightly more or less than 100% due to rounding.*

A total of 158 feedback forms were received from individuals who say they operate a business in Vancouver: 3 forms from within 4 blocks, 92 from the rest of the downtown core, and 63 from elsewhere in Vancouver.

This section did not include a comments box.

SECTION 2: Importance of Solving Homelessness

FACT: On any given night in Vancouver, over 1,600 people are homeless and living on the street. Homelessness can be solved by ensuring people have a decent income, a place to live, and access to support services like mental health, disability and addiction treatment services when needed.

QUESTION: In your personal opinion, how important is it to solve the problem of homelessness in Vancouver?

Percent (%)	Vicinity of Shelter	Rest of Downtown Core	Rest of City	Total
Very important	66	80	88	82
Somewhat important	22	12	7	11
Not so important	5	3	1	2
Not important at all	3	1	1	1
<i>No Answer</i>	4	4	2	3
Total Percent*	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Numbers may add up to slightly more or less than 100% due to rounding.*

Comments Summary (see Appendix for verbatims):

A total of 396 comments were made following this question.

SECTION 3. Views on the Vancouver Interim Housing Strategy

FACT: To address homelessness, the Province and the City of Vancouver are developing 1,500 units of long-term supportive housing in Vancouver. However, before these long-term solutions can be put in place there will be a gap of 2-5 years.

QUESTION: The goal of the Vancouver Interim Housing Strategy is to move people currently living on the street to short-term accommodation while a long-term housing solution is put in place. Do you agree or disagree with the overall approach of bridging the gap with an interim solution to ensure people who are homeless are not left on the street?

Percent (%)	Vicinity of Shelter	Rest of Downtown Core	Rest of City	Total
Strongly Agree	22	51	68	56
Somewhat Agree	26	20	17	20
Neither	8	8	4	6
Somewhat Disagree	10	6	4	5
Strongly Disagree	25	9	4	9
No Answer	9	6	4	5
Total Percent*	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Numbers may add up to slightly more or less than 100% due to rounding.*

Comments Summary (see Appendix for verbatims):

A total of 441 comments were made following this question.

SECTION 4. Place of Residence or Business

QUESTION: Do you live or operate a business in the immediate vicinity of the Howe Shelter at 1442 Howe Street?

Count of Responses	#	%
Yes, within four blocks of the Howe Street Shelter	492	30
No, but in the Vancouver downtown core (e.g. West End, Yaletown)	422	26
No, in the City of Vancouver outside the downtown core	654	39
<i>No Answer</i>	<i>88</i>	<i>5</i>
Total*	1656	100%

**Numbers may add up to slightly more or less than 100% due to rounding.*

This section did not include a comments box.

SECTION 5. Impacts of Howe Shelter on Neighbourhood

NOTE: *This specific question was asked only to those living in the downtown core and within the vicinity of the Howe Shelter. Results are summarized by postal code location.*

FACT: Some residents living in the vicinity of the Howe Shelter have expressed strong concerns about the impacts of the shelter on their neighbourhood.

QUESTION: How would you rate the impacts of the shelter on your neighbourhood?

Percent (%)	Vicinity of Shelter	Rest of Downtown Core	Rest of City	Total
Very Positive	3	17	n/a	13
Somewhat Positive	1	11	n/a	9
Neutral	2	16	n/a	12
Somewhat Negative	8	8	n/a	8
Very Negative	76	26	n/a	38
UNSURE	1	8	n/a	6
<i>No Answer</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>13</i>
Total Percent*	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Numbers may add up to slightly more or less than 100% due to rounding.*

Comments Summary (see Appendix for verbatims):

A total of 348 comments were made following this question.

SECTION 6. Effectiveness of Shelter Mitigation Efforts

NOTE: *This specific question was asked only to those living in the downtown core and within the vicinity of the Howe Shelter. Results are summarized by postal code location.*

FACT: The City of Vancouver and its partners have taken steps to reduce the impacts of the Granville and Howe shelters in local neighbourhoods, including closing the Granville Shelter.

QUESTION: Would you say that these steps have made the situation...

Percent (%)	Vicinity of Shelter	Rest of Downtown Core	Rest of City	Total
Much Better	2	6	n/a	5
Somewhat Better	13	14	n/a	14
No/Little Difference	39	20	n/a	24
Somewhat Worse	7	11	n/a	10
Much Worse	24	15	n/a	17
UNSURE	6	20	n/a	16
<i>No Answer</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>13</i>
Total Percent*	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Numbers may add up to slightly more or less than 100% due to rounding.*

Comments Summary (see Appendix for verbatims):

A total of 304 comments were made following this question.

SECTION 7. Insights on Solutions

FACT: The City and its partners will consider additional steps to address the concerns about the Howe Shelter and to improve the situation for all parties involved.

QUESTION: What ideas or insights do you have to help the Howe Shelter better integrate into the neighbourhood?

Up to 3 comments

1. 724 comments
2. 497 comments
3. 356 comments

Comments Summary (see Appendix for verbatims):

A total of 1,577 comments were made on this question.

SECTION 8. Future of the Howe Shelter

FACT: A number of local residents have asked that the Provincial Government close the Howe Street Homeless Shelter. Some of these residents have indicated that while they don't support the shelter remaining open in the summer, they understand the need for the shelter during the winter months. Others have said the shelter is now acceptable, or would be acceptable if some issues are resolved.

QUESTION: The Howe Shelter is part of the City of Vancouver's Interim Housing Strategy for homeless people. In your view, should the Howe Shelter...

Percent (%)	Vicinity of Shelter	Rest of Downtown Core	Rest of City	Total
Remain open through next winter to April 2010	6	45	63	49
Remain open through next winter if neighbourhood issues are resolved	6	14	15	13
Neutral / Not sure	1	4	4	4
Close now and open again next winter to operate to April 2010; or,	4	4	2	3
Close now and not reopen	72	26	11	25
<i>No Answer</i>	10	8	5	6
Total Percent*	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Numbers may add up to slightly more or less than 100% due to rounding.*

Comments Summary (see Appendix for verbatims):

A total of 474 comments were made following this question.

SECTION 9. Specific Solutions Sought

NOTE: This question was asked only to the 222 residents who in Section 8 say “Remain open through next winter if neighbourhood issues are resolved”.

QUESTION: If the Howe Shelter is to remain open, what neighbourhood issues specifically need to be resolved?

Comments Summary (see Appendix for verbatims):

A total of 176 comments were made on this question.

SECTION 10. Final Comments



Please provide us with any final comments or feedback in the space below.

Comments Summary (see Appendix for verbatims):

A total of 651 comments were made in this section.

For more information contact:

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