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Date: 2/2/2021 2:50:02 PM
Subject: Update: Strathcona Park encampment

Good afternoon Mayor and Council,

Please find below this week's update regarding the work of the City and Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation in responding to the encampment in Strathcona Park.

Maintenance and use of the park

- City and Park Board staff are continuing to refine and implement operational plans to limit encampment growth and ensure park access to the Strathcona community.
- Park Board Rangers will begin increased support for the decampment of the west side of the park on Thursday. Moving forward, the Rangers will be connecting with any individuals who are currently in the west side of the park and ensure they are in touch with outreach and any services they may require. The goal is to relocate individuals to the east side of the park where the encampment is situated to allow for greater access to the west side of the park and community use.

Fire safety

- For several weeks, the City has been working with BC Housing to improve fire safety education and increase access to safe warming alternatives. A series of fire safety assessments related to compliance with the existing Fire Chief's Order are scheduled to begin this week. In tandem with the City's efforts, BC Housing will be providing additional blankets and a tip-sheet on how to stay warm.
- Reinforcing the imperative for this work, a 65-year-old man sustained burns last Friday night. His tent caught fire after a candle was knocked over.

Relations in the park

- Staff and BC Housing representatives met with encampment leadership and others sleeping in the park on Monday to explain the Fire Chief's Order and steps that need to be taken to ensure compliance, discuss our ongoing work in the park, and outline expectations for ongoing relations in the park.
- A flyer outlining how staff and people sleeping in the park can get along better will also be shared with encampment leadership and posted by the warming tent.

Indoor accommodation

- We are still awaiting confirmation of operating funding from BC Housing for our potential emergency accommodation locations. In confidence, we have been advised that the request went to Treasury Board last week and has now been referred to Cabinet for final approval. Additional information regarding the provincial funding submission is provided below.
- City staff continue to advance work on renovations to 875 Terminal.

Community relations

- Last Wednesday morning, staff issued a community update to 170 people who have previously enquired about the park. We have received additional questions from a small number of recipients and these will be answered in next week's community update.
- We are aware of ongoing enquiries from the neighbourhood regarding the number of people camping in Strathcona Park. The number of people staying in the park is fluid, has changed significantly over time and is likely to evolve further over the coming weeks pending weather changes, other unanticipated circumstances, and approval of spaces by the Province. Please see some context below.

Number of spaces for people in the park:

- In order to support the decampment of Strathcona Park, BC Housing has advanced a request for 350 spaces from the Province, which includes the spaces the City identified for part of the decampment. This number of spaces is critical to ensure a thoughtful and peaceful decampment process.
- When planning for a decampment, BC Housing aims to have access to more capacity than the number of people in the encampment to ensure a range of choices for people. Not all spaces can work for every person, depending on their unique circumstances. The potential for a successful and voluntary decampment increases with the options available.
- Based on information provided by PHS, BC Housing is currently working to identify 230 spaces to accommodate individuals in the park, along with another 120 spaces for others who may be living outdoors around the park and across the city. The additional 120 spaces to support the broader decampment of the area is critical to the decampment process to ensure that the Park does not swell with people looking for housing or shelter offers during the decampment process.
- From the work that Carnegie Outreach staff have done to connect with individuals staying in the park and assess their circumstances and housing needs, we are very confident that the number of spaces targeted by BC Housing for this decampment process is sufficient for people in the park and to mitigate the risk of people migrating to the park during the decampment.

Public Response

- If asked for the number of people in the encampment, we recommend that you respond that the number fluctuates based on a range of circumstances and that BC Housing has requested funding to support the creation of 350 spaces to support this decampment ☐ 230 spaces to provide options for people in the park and an additional 120 spaces to support people who may be living outdoors around the park and in surrounding neighbourhoods.

Please let me or Sandra know if you have any questions or concerns at this time.

Best,
Paul

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The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the xʷməŋəm (Musqueam), lóóvú 7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətał (Tseil-Waututh) Nations.