

From: "Levitt, Karen" <karen.levitt@vancouver.ca>
To: "Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"
Date: 7/31/2023 3:33:39 PM
Subject: Memo - Better Together: Neighbourhood Collective Action Pilot – RTS 14811
Attachments: ACCS - GM - Memo (Council) - Better Together Update - RTS 14811 (2023-7-21).pdf

Dear Mayor and Council,

Attached please find a memo from Sandra Singh, GM, Arts Culture and Community Services regarding an update on the implementation of the Better Together: Neighbourhood Collective Action Pilot – RTS 14811. A few key points:

- This initiative is a 2 year pilot project currently being implemented in 3 neighbourhoods: Mount Pleasant, Downtown South and Olympic Village.
- Utilizing a collective action approach, this pilot brings community together and aims to provide a proactive and collaborative response to neighbourhood concerns/issues around homelessness, poverty, mental health and addiction.
- There are 5 key components to the pilot:
 1. **Resident and agency neighbourhood collective action tables** designed to increase communication and information sharing
 2. **Peer Stewardship Programs** that give extra support for businesses and people in the neighbourhood
 3. **Education and training** to build skills and confidence to improve communication and understanding and reduce stigma
 4. **Enhanced outreach and coordination** to provide additional support for people experiencing unsheltered homelessness
 5. **Sanitation and neighbourhood cleanliness** through existing City street cleaning services and micro-cleaning grants to non-profits
- The pilot is also being evaluated and the attached memo includes highlights of the interim evaluation findings.

Should Council have any further questions please contact Sandra directly at sandra.singh@vancouver.ca and she will make sure to respond through the regular weekly Q&As.

Thanks,

Karen

Karen Levitt, Deputy City Manager (she/her)
karen.levitt@vancouver.ca

The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm/Musqueam, Skwxwú7mesh/Squamish and səlilwətaʔ/Tsleil-Waututh nations

MEMORANDUM

July 21, 2023

TO: Mayor & Council

CC: Paul Mochrie, City Manager
Armin Amrolia, Deputy City Manager
Karen Levitt, Deputy City Manager
Maria Pontikis, Chief Communications Officer, CEC
Rosemary Hagiwara, Acting City Clerk
Teresa Jong, Administration Services Manager, City Manager's Office
Mellisa Morphy, Director of Policy, Mayor's Office
Trevor Ford, Interim Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office
Lon LaClaire, General Manager, Engineering Services

FROM: Sandra Singh, General Manager, Arts, Culture and Community Services

SUBJECT: Better Together: Neighbourhood Collective Action Pilot Update

RTS #: 14811

PURPOSE

This memo provides an update on the implementation of the [Better Together: Neighbourhood Collective Action Pilot](#) (RTS 14811) approved by Council on March 2, 2022.

BACKGROUND

On March 2, 2022 City Council approved the *Better Together: Neighbourhood Collective Action Pilot* in the neighbourhoods of Mount Pleasant, Downtown South and Olympic Village. The approximately two-year Pilot builds on existing partnerships to collectively address specific neighbourhood concerns/issues, increase community engagement and awareness, and problem solve issues related to the impacts of poverty, unsheltered homelessness, mental health and addiction.

DISCUSSION

After being approved at Council, further developmental work occurred as well as the hiring of a temporary full-time staff resource to lead the coordination of this dynamic, multi-tiered pilot. The pilot has been fully operational since September 2022.

The Better Together Pilot consists of five components that together look to address the impacts of poverty, unsheltered homelessness, mental health and addictions via a collective impact approach that builds up and supports neighbours, community agencies and business to advance common goals and create positive change in their neighbourhood.

There are five core components to the Pilot:

1. Neighbourhood Collective Action Tables ('Tables')
2. Peer Stewardship Program
3. Education and Training
4. Outreach and Coordination
5. Neighbourhood Cleanliness

The Pilot also includes an evaluation through an external consultant, an internal advisory committee, and a communications strategy. Table 1 provides an implementation status update by neighbourhood.

Table 1: Status of Core and Supplementary Components Underway

Core Components	Pilot Neighbourhoods			Key Milestones
	Mount Pleasant	Downtown South	Olympic Village	
Agency-Led Tables	✓	✓	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meets bi-monthly
Resident-Led Tables	✓	In development*	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meets monthly • Rolling recruitment for Downtown South
Peer Stewardship Program	✓	✓	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24 active peer stewards
Education and Training	✓	✓	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over 135 participants as of April 2023
Outreach and Coordination	In progress	In progress	In progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 71 baseline surveys completed • In limited operation due to other urgent priorities • Second survey planned for Summer 2023
Neighbourhood Cleanliness	✓	✓	✓	

**While recruitment efforts were consistent across all 3 neighbourhoods, there has been interest from only 1 member of the downtown south neighbourhood, impacting ability to start a resident roundtable. Staff are re-evaluating this engagement component for the DT South neighbourhood.*

Supplementary Components	Pilot Neighbourhoods			Key Milestones
	Mount Pleasant	Downtown South	Olympic Village	
Pilot Evaluation	✓	✓	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mid term evaluation report in June 2023
Internal Advisory Committee	✓	✓	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meets bi-monthly
Communications	✓	✓	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications strategy in place, includes website and email address • Printed, virtual and social media content developed monthly

More detail on these components is provided below. See [Appendix A](#) for a one-page community fact sheet.

Better Together Core Components Updates

Component 1: Neighbourhood Collective Action Tables ('Tables')

Purpose: To promote communication, information sharing and positive collective neighbourhood actions.

Description: The Better Together Project uses a community development approach to facilitate two Tables in each of the Pilot neighbourhoods: an Agency-led Table and a Resident-led Table.

The Tables support a strong neighbourhood-based approach for the Better Together Pilot. They are a grassroots initiative that represents the diversity of the neighbourhood, are action-oriented, and provide a space for information sharing, collaboration, and relationship building. Members design the direction of each Table to respond to specific neighbourhood priorities.

Agency-led Tables:

Consist of neighbourhood agency stakeholders including non-profit housing and shelter operators, homeless outreach programs, Neighbourhood Houses, Parks Board, VPL, Community Policing Centres, businesses and BIAs. The Tables provide a setting for information sharing, collaboration, and action amongst the organizations that currently operate in each neighbourhood.

Resident-led Tables:

Consist of a core group of local residents and focus on initiatives that can be activated in the neighbourhood. A strategic recruitment process ensures there is a diversity of action-oriented members including People with Lived Experience of homelessness and/or housing precarity.

Current Status: There have been six meetings of the Agency-led Table in each neighbourhood. For the Resident-led Tables there have been five meetings of the Resident-led Table in Olympic Village, three meetings of the Mount Pleasant Table, and the Downtown South Table is currently accepting participant applications.

Highlights:

Agency-led Tables

- Six sessions in each Pilot neighbourhood.
- Mapping session and foundational work identifying challenges and opportunities for collaboration in each neighbourhood around the issues of homelessness, poverty, mental health and addictions.
- Priority actions identified by each table to implement during the Pilot period
- Representation of two BIAs (representing over 7,400 business members), over 35 agencies and service providers (including municipal partners such as VPL, Parks), and one developer.
- Cross-collaboration between businesses and agencies is growing, for example, businesses are sharing resources and collaborating on implementing priority actions.
- Positive feedback received from many agencies about their partnerships with the City of Vancouver on the Pilot project.

Table 2: Agency-led Table Priority Actions by Neighbourhood

	Priority Actions Identified By Each Neighbourhood		
	Mount Pleasant	Downtown South	Olympic Village
<p>Neighbourhood Collective Action Tables:</p> <p>Agency-led Tables</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Complete:</i> Hosted a Resource Fair at Kingsgate Mall for the community in May to educate businesses and neighbours about available resources, build connections, and create positive relationships between residents, businesses and agencies. 21 tables/booths and over 200 participants attended • <i>Underway:</i> Establish a Mount Pleasant network to address local issues around homelessness, mental health and addictions • <i>Planned:</i> A 2nd Resource Fair in Fall 2023 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>On hold</i> until member capacity increases: Create a Downtown South community coalition similar to Urban Core/CCRN in the DTES • <i>On hold</i> until member capacity increases: Implement a Talking Circle series in Emery Barnes Park to contribute to reconciliation • Note: The above actions were identified by the Agency Table, however are on hold until capacity increases. Table members prefer a roundtable approach where they can share information and emerging challenges and explore opportunities for collaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Underway:</i> Host a Community Connection Day in the Fall of 2023 and develop a Resource Directory for community-wide distribution • <i>Underway:</i> Establish an Olympic Village Food Security Working Group, conduct resource mapping, and connect with local food businesses about surplus food items

Resident-led Tables

- In Olympic Village and Mount Pleasant, community members with lived experience of homelessness share experiences and collaborate with other neighbours on actions to impact homelessness, poverty, mental health and addictions in their neighbourhoods. Members living in market housing are learning first-hand from those in less fortunate circumstances, removing the bias and stigma around this population.
- This table also serves in an advisory capacity to the Agency Table and other Pilot components on emerging issues around homelessness, poverty, mental health and addictions.

Component 2: Peer Stewardship Program

Purpose: To provide extra neighbourhood-level support for people, service providers, and businesses in the Pilot areas.

Description: The program, led by Eastside Movement for Business and Economic Renewal Society (EMBERS), supports low-barrier employment, neighbourhood and community engagement, additional support for people experiencing and at-risk of homelessness, and enhanced liaison with businesses. To ensure that the Peer Stewardship program is anchored within each neighbourhood, a local non-profit organization in each of the three neighbourhoods acts as a home base for the stewardship program.

Current Status: Lookout Housing and Health Society has been operating the Peer Stewardship program in Olympic Village since December 2022, Coast Mental Health in the Downtown South since March 2023, and Connective Support Society in Mount Pleasant since April 2023.

Highlights:

- While the rollout was incremental by neighbourhood, the training programs for the Stewards is fully developed and implemented with continual supports and training from EMBERS.
- There are currently twenty-four Peer Stewards engaged in the pilot program, with five in Mount Pleasant, twelve in the Downtown South, and seven in Olympic Village.
- Peer Stewards are in community performing shifts 4-5 days per week connecting with people experiencing unsheltered homelessness, referring to services such as Extreme Weather Response and Warming Centre spaces, representing the Better Together program in the neighbourhood and supporting local residents and businesses.

Table 3: Peer Stewardship Highlights by Neighbourhood

	Peer Stewardship Highlights by Neighbourhood		
	Mount Pleasant	Downtown South*	Olympic Village
Peer Stewardship Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Working with the Mount Pleasant BIA to engage and support people experiencing homelessness ▪ Mount Pleasant BIA staff plan to accompany and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Connections with business being developed; including a donations drive for Coast Mental Health’s Resource Centre ▪ Peers providing additional support to businesses struggling with various user groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 50+ businesses visited and introduced to the Better Together program in the Olympic Village neighbourhood (*does not have a BIA) ▪ High retention rate of Stewards who signed

	Peer Stewardship Highlights by Neighbourhood		
	Mount Pleasant	Downtown South*	Olympic Village
	introduce peer stewards to areas and business in need of more support	by offering referrals to local resources. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Collaboration with DVBIA Safety Ambassadors where Peer Stewards are joining the Ambassadors on routes and sharing information on hotspots 	up at the beginning of the program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High involvement of Stewards in other components of the Better Together program ▪ Stewards and partner agencies report that the Stewards feel empowered, have increased, self-esteem, confidence and pride in their duties and employment. Some Stewards report that they are building skills to use as a pathway to more formal employment opportunities

* Peer Stewards and CMH Outreach team are aware of the issues at 1107 Seymour OPS. Engagement will occur after training needs are assessed and appropriate training is provided.

Component 3: Education and Training

Purpose: To reduce stigma, build skills and confidence for improved communication and understanding.

Description: This training program is led by the Homelessness Services Association of BC (HSABC) and consists of five learning modules comprising:

- Mental Health, Addictions and Trauma,
- Indigenous Cultural Safety,
- Gender-Based Violence,
- Poverty and Trauma, and
- Trauma-Informed De-escalation and Helping Skills.

Training is provided by subject matter experts and occurs at community hubs in each neighbourhood. As this training series proceeds, HSABC will further tailor the training for local participants.

Current Status:

Training sessions are delivered monthly in each neighbourhood (starting October 2022) on a five-month module cycle. Twenty-five sessions have taken place. The next cycle will begin in September 2023.

Highlights:

- Approximately nine training sessions in each neighbourhood.
- Over 135 participants as of April 2023.
- Participants comprise a cross section of business, public and service providers.
- Interest from some participants in receiving a certificate upon completing the full series.
- Overwhelmingly positive feedback with the majority of participants having increased their understanding of issues related to homelessness, built connections with others in their community and learned ways to make their neighbourhood better.
- Registration numbers continue to steadily increase.

Component 4: Outreach and Coordination

Purpose: To provide enhanced outreach and coordination via the City's Homelessness Services Outreach Team.

Description: The City's Homelessness Services Outreach Team ('Outreach Team') conducts targeted early morning outreach to people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in each Pilot neighbourhood. The Outreach Team provides a variety of supports, including accessing income and health supports, obtaining ID, and exploring shelter and housing options.

External outreach teams (funded by BC Housing) also provide outreach services in each of the Pilot neighbourhoods. Staff will facilitate increased collaboration among these teams to better apply resources to support individuals in need.

To assess the general level of need and gather baseline data (basic demographics, length of time homeless and reason for housing loss), staff surveyed unsheltered individuals in each Pilot neighbourhood. Staff will continue to collect this data throughout the Pilot to determine if there are changes within the composition of individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness and determine potential neighbourhood-specific gaps in service

Current Status: The Outreach Team began this enhanced outreach component, however competing priorities have limited this response to date. More substantial outreach will recommence as priorities allow.

To date, our baseline data includes completed surveys with over 70 people in the three Pilot neighbourhoods.

Component 5: Neighbourhood Cleanliness

Purpose: To maintain cleanliness in the Pilot neighbourhoods.

Description: This component of the Better Together Pilot is being delivered through existing City Sanitation street cleaning services, supplemented through existing annual Street Cleaning Grants to non-profit agencies for ongoing micro-cleaning.

Current Status: Work is ongoing.

Better Together Supplementary Components

Pilot Evaluation

An evaluation consultant is conducting an evaluation of the Pilot. The goals are to determine its overall effectiveness including achieving the Pilot's objectives in each neighbourhood through a mixed-methods approach. A mid-term evaluation was completed in July 2023. See Appendix B for a summary of highlights from the mid-term evaluation.

Internal Advisory Committee

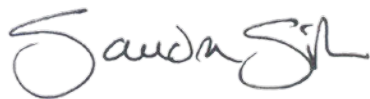
An internal advisory committee consisting of staff from Engineering Services, Social Policy and Projects, Communications, Housing and Homelessness, and Parks has been established. The purpose of the committee is to share information, collaborate with other City departments, garner feedback and identify areas for cross-departmental actions.

Communications

Project staff are working closely with ACCS's Communications team to develop appropriate materials and opportunities for engagement through [website](#) and social media presence. Communications also supported the development of materials for a strategic recruitment process for the Resident Tables.

FINAL REMARKS

If Council requires further information, please feel free to contact me directly at sandra.singh@vancouver.ca and we will provide response through the weekly Council Q&A.



Sandra Singh, General Manager
Arts, Culture, and Community Services
sandra.singh@vancouver.ca

Better Together

Neighbourhood Collective Action Pilot

Better Together is a neighbourhood-based pilot that is working to collectively problem-solve issues related to poverty, unsheltered homelessness, mental health and addiction. Together, we work to increase awareness, collaborate on solutions, improve a sense of belonging and develop positive relationships.

Pilot Neighbourhoods

Better Together is a two-year pilot taking place in three neighbourhoods.



There are five key parts to the pilot:



Neighbourhood Collective Action Tables
Increase communication and information sharing



Peer Stewardship Program
Extra support for businesses and people in the neighbourhood



Education and Training
Build skills and confidence to improve communication and understanding



Outreach and Coordination
Additional support for people experiencing unsheltered homelessness



Neighbourhood Cleanliness
Enhance sanitation through existing micro-cleaning grants to non-profits

For more information:

better.together@vancouver.ca
vancouver.ca/better-together



Appendix B: Better Together Evaluation

Better Together Interim Evaluation Findings

The stated purpose of the evaluation, developed in collaboration with the evaluation consultants and the Better Together Pilot team, is to determine the pilot project's overall effectiveness in achieving the pilot objectives, as well as focusing on learnings. The evaluation is developmental in nature and is designed to respond to changes in the pilot project roll out. This evaluation process is supported by a framework, methodology and work plan, which were developed at the outset of the project.

The findings of the interim evaluation report is the first in a series for the Better Together Pilot Project. A second interim Report is planned for Fall 2023 and a Final Evaluation Report will be produced in Spring 2024. This sequence of reports will allow for learnings to be identified and incorporated as the pilot project unfolds.

To date, data for the evaluation has been collected through:

- Attending roundtable meetings
- Conducting focus groups
- Interviewing partners and pilot program facilitators, including reviewing meeting notes
- Reviewing course evaluations for each education and training session and conducting a post-training online survey
- Regular weekly meetings with Better Together coordinators
- Review of background documents

Highlights from each component of the pilot have been provided in above sections of the memo. The following is a high level summary of outcomes and early learnings identified to date.

Component 1: Neighbourhood Collective Action Tables ('Tables')

- Roundtable participants helped identify baseline challenges and opportunities in each neighbourhood early on in the process
- The neighbourhood focus allows them to engage more in the issues of poverty, homelessness, mental health and addictions because the scale is not so overwhelming

Component 2: Peer Stewardship Program

- The Peer Stewardship Program provides a positive way for service providers to build relationships with business in the neighbourhood
- Peer stewards are out in the neighbourhood regularly and they are constantly noticing and hearing about emerging trends and changes

Component 3: Education and Training

- Positive feedback, especially in relation to the positive learning environment, knowledge of the presenters and increasing understanding of the workshop topic
- Recruitment for the training sessions has been challenging despite being offered free of charge in highly accessible venues, with refreshments and snacks available

Component 4: Outreach and Coordination

- Due to an unanticipated workload increase for the Outreach Team only limited implementation of outreach and coordination has occurred to date
- Evaluation of this component has not yet been initiated

Component 5: Neighbourhood Cleanliness

- Feedback from participants in all components of the pilot indicate that cleanliness is important to everyone at the neighbourhood level
- Evaluation of sanitation programs had not occurred but will be included in the next phase of the evaluation

Early Learnings

- *Staff Resources:* All components are relationship based requiring extensive staff time and effort
- *Crossover between Components:* Some people who first got involved through training and education are now active members of the Resident Roundtable. Peer stewards are also involved in the Resident Roundtables and the education and training sessions.
- *Neighbourhood Based Connection:* A sense of place in the neighbourhood may (including geographic scope and social infrastructure) have an impact on which neighbourhood residents and businesses identify as being part of the neighbourhood
- *Business Involvement:* Business engagement is occurring differently in each neighbourhood. Some individual businesses attend the Agency Roundtables and local BIAs are collaborating with peer stewardship programs in some neighbourhoods.
- *Pilot Interest:* There is broad interest in the Better Together concept, including interest from other Vancouver neighbourhoods.