



## City of Victoria COVID-19 Update

Date: Friday, September 4, 2020

For Immediate Release

VICTORIA, BC – Victoria City Council continues to monitor the COVID-19 pandemic and explore ways to support the community.

Residents, businesses, and commuters are invited to participate in online activities to help select a new cycling route in the Jubilee neighbourhood. Consultation opened August 15 and opportunities to provide input will be ongoing until the end of October. Three route options are being considered and one will be selected as part of the priority network. The route that is selected will connect to planned infrastructure on Pandora Avenue and Fort Street and extend to City limits.

“I encourage all Victoria residents – whether you walk, bike, wheel or drive in the area to go online to watch the video and take the survey,” said Mayor Lisa Helps.

The first installation of Victoria’s new Zero Waste stations were also installed today on the corner of Government and Humboldt. In the coming months they will spread across downtown, urban villages and parks, and will reduce waste going to landfill by improving composting and recycling options.

Yesterday, staff provided Council new options for addressing homeless encampments in the City. Staff are now working on new bylaw amendments that will:

- Limit the size of temporary shelters in parks to three square metres and require a four metre distance between shelters to reduce density and improve emergency access
- Create buffer zones around park areas where sheltering is prohibited and near school properties
- Restrict open flame appliances and combustibles

City staff also proposed adding several locations to the list of parks where sheltering is prohibited, including Summit Park, Moss Rocks Park, MacDonald Park, South Park, Robert Porter Park, David Spencer Park, garden beds and community gardens.

Additional funding was also approved for new Bylaw Officers to support the concerns of housed and unhoused residents related to sheltering in parks. Finally, Council approved a grant to the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness to engage with people sheltering in parks to work together on these collaborative solutions.

“We all recognize that people sheltering outdoors comes with challenges. It is not an ideal circumstance for anyone – for neighbours, for businesses, for the people who have to shelter outside because they don’t have a home,” said Helps. “We have received hundreds of emails from residents about sheltering in parks. We hear you. We know that the current situation is not sustainable, and that’s why we are making these changes.”

This morning the Province announced they have purchased a property at 1176 Yates to build new permanent supportive housing with wraparound supports for people experiencing homelessness. The Province's continued efforts add to the work the City has also been doing.

Since 2018, the City has contributed approximately \$2 million to support the delivery of affordable housing projects with more than 200 new units of affordable rental housing that have been approved since 2018 – this includes housing specifically for people who are lower income. The City also recently purchased a site earmarked for affordable housing on Pandora Avenue.

“The City provides \$650,000 annually to the Housing Reserve Fund to support affordable housing projects in Victoria, with \$900,000 being provided in 2020 and in the past two years, nearly 900 new units of rental housing have been approved for construction,” said Helps. “We’re going to continue to do our part as we focus on our Housing Strategy, but only by working together at every level of government and across the community can we rise to these challenges that have been exacerbated by the pandemic.”

The City of Victoria is actively contributing land to affordable housing, including:

- A recently approved rental housing project that includes 130 affordable and below market units at the Fire Hall site in partnership with BC Housing and Pacifica Housing
- Two BC Housing affordable housing projects entering the rezoning process in the Burnside (87 units) and Fernwood (155 units) neighbourhoods
- Land and buildings provided at nominal cost to support a 48-bed transitional shelter

Find out more about the [Victoria's Housing Strategy](#)

To view the new cycling video and take the survey visit [engage.victoria.ca](https://engage.victoria.ca)

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