

VCC INITIATIVES LTD. (VIBRANT COMMUNITIES CALGARY)

Mission: We will create opportunities to align and leverage the work of hundreds of organizations and thousands of Calgarians to reduce poverty in our city.

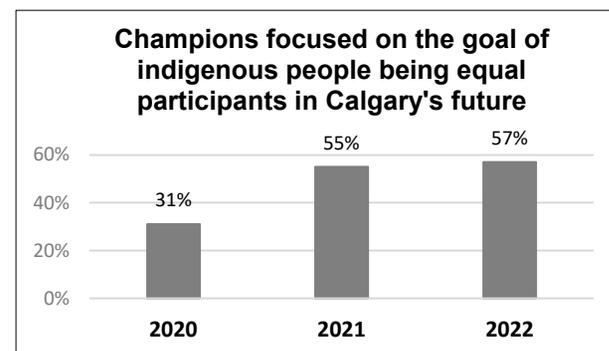
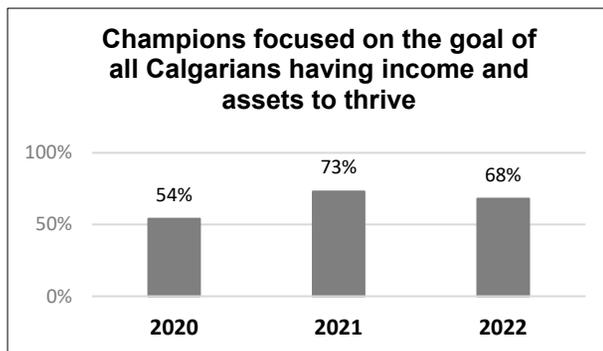
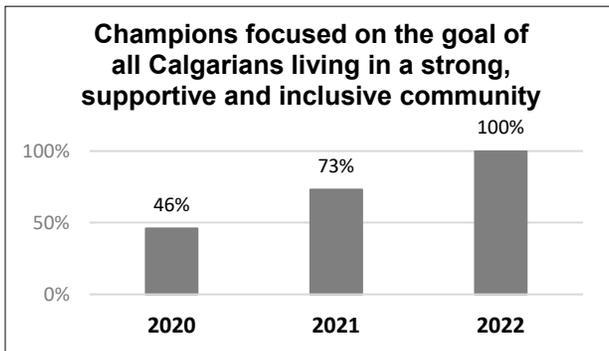
Line of Service: Community Strategies

2023 City Investment

Operating Grant: \$503,000

Operating Grant: \$500,000 (one time)

2023 Results



The story behind the numbers

- Data is provided up to 2022. 2023 organizational outcomes will be provided in the annual *Enough for All* Strategy (E4A) external evaluation from the University of Calgary to be released in June 2024.
- E4A is a collective impact, systems change strategy that uses a third-party evaluation that engages stakeholders in a series of surveys, focus groups and interviews. The City of Calgary is a member of the evaluation committee. Survey participants were asked which of the E4A goals their organization aligns with.
- In 2022, 100 per cent of Champions who participated in the survey focused on the goal specific to strong, supportive and inclusive communities.

Benchmarks

- 2023 was the fourth year of a Principles Focused Evaluation E4A that examined strategies, advocacy campaigns, policy and system change and complex interventions.
- Benchmarks in the 2023 evaluation included the per cent of E4A Champions that thought there was effective coordination among the Champions, that Vibrant Communities Calgary (VCC) helped Champions share and access resources and helped raised awareness of poverty, convened regular community conversations and facilitated sharing between organizations.

Looking ahead: 2024 highlights

- In January, VCC launched a social media campaign to raise awareness for need for affordable housing that featured a “Risk of Homelessness” storytelling project with four scenarios of people and families at risk of losing their housing. The scenarios have been viewed by 11,000 so far.
- A *Social Disorder on Transit* report will be released in May 2024 based on a literature review and over 20 interviews with Calgary Police Service officers, peace officers, members of the Calgary Transit HELP team and people living in shelters. The report indicates that social disorder is driven in part by limited daytime options of people experiencing homelessness, insufficient treatment and harm reduction services, inadequate health care options, insufficient medical respite options upon discharge from hospital and suboptimal coordination among street outreach providers.



**VCC INITIATIVES LTD. (VIBRANT COMMUNITIES CALGARY)
2023 Civic Partner Audit Report**

Civic Partner Name: Vibrant Initiatives Ltd. (Vibrant Communities Calgary)

Legal Structure: Non-profit entity (Part 9 Companies Act)

Fiscal Year End: December 31

Manage/operate a City-owned asset: No

Mission: VCC works to achieve a substantial and sustained reduction in the number of Calgarians living in poverty. VCC works to grow the social, economic and political engagement of Calgarians in their community, and believe that everyone has a right to fully participate in their communities. There are important systemic factors that contribute to poverty, and VCC believes that the whole community has a vital role to play in changing these conditions.

1. What 3-5 key results did your organization achieve in 2023 that contributed to:

- a) **one or more Council Strategic Directions- economic resilience, social resilience, climate resilience?**

Social resilience:

a) **Beneath the Surface research report:** After several months of collaboration and engaging over a dozen leading experts, VCC published Calgary's Community Well-being report, [Beneath the Surface](#), in March 2023. Poverty is always about income, but it's not only about income, and this report contains information on 50 indicators of well-being to paint a clearer picture of the path we need to take to improve poverty in Calgary. In the lead-up to the report's release, our collaborators knew that the report was more than just an opportunity to share and report on data. It was a springboard to a conversation about solutions and innovative approaches to achieving a city where poverty can't exist. In June 2023 we had that conversation, hearing from six dynamic community leaders who challenged us to explore where we are and where we need to go to get to a city where there is enough for all.

b) **Identifying Calgarians at extreme risk of homelessness:** VCC partnered with the School of Public Policy at the University of Calgary to explore [the total number of people at risk of homelessness and what the circumstances are that brought them there](#). This study uses a multi-faceted approach to identify that a shocking 115,000 housed Calgarians, living in approximately 40,000 households, are at very high risk of losing their housing. The good news is that relatively small policy interventions, such as a 10% reduction in rents or a 10% increase in incomes, can significantly reduce the number of people at risk of becoming unhoused. This study generated a lot of news media attention and provided an opportunity to meet with staff within the Ministry of Seniors and Community Social Services to discuss solutions such as the expansion of the rent subsidy program, improved income supports, and the need for maintenance and repair funding to maintain the stock of social housing we do have.

c) **Working together on public policy:** Vibrant Communities Calgary co-chairs and backbones the [Social Policy Collaborative \(SPC\)](#), a group of community organizations committed to working together to inform the development and implementation of public policy that improves the economic and social well-being of Albertans. In 2023, the SPC shared priorities for the provincial budget and continued to push government for policy change for affordable housing.

Economic resilience:

a) Collaboration to promote tax filing: VCC along with United Way, The City of Calgary, and Momentum launched the E4A Communications Collaborative's annual [tax filing campaign](#) in February 2023. The campaign promotes free tax clinics around the city and the benefits of tax filing. Beyond the social media campaign, we also had an opportunity to discuss how tax filing is an essential step to receiving the Alberta Affordability Payments in 2023 with the media.

b) Calgary's living wage calculation: We're all feeling the pinch of affordability these days, but when your income is \$15, \$16, or even \$20 per hour it means making trade-offs on necessities. VCC has been publishing [Calgary's living wage](#) since 2008 as a resource for policymakers and employers, reflecting what a person needs to earn to maintain a modest standard of living based on the actual costs of living in a specific community. What did we uncover from the calculation this year? Rising rents were the biggest driver of the increase this year and government policy played a role in keeping the living wages lower. Another key takeaway is that the minimum wage are not keeping up with the rising cost of living.

b) Your own organization's strategy?

To date, Vibrant Communities Calgary solely functions to implement the Enough for All poverty reduction strategy. In addition to the key results outlined above, VCC also achieved the following in furtherance of the Enough for All strategy:

a) Enough for All City: On Nov. 29, 2023 the Annual Gathering brought together Enough for All Champions and those working towards the goals of Enough for All, alongside VCC staff and board members. Together, attendees engaged in a creative and playful exercise to envision a future free from poverty and [create E4A Cities](#). Groups designed cities anchored in iih kanii tai staiwa (everything is there) which included things like accessible transit, walkable cities, housing for all, central access to food, and free education. The purpose of this event was to spark hope and work together to build enough for all futures. We know we have the power to help recalibrate the world, and it was an important gathering to step outside of the realities of the day to day challenges and chart a vision to the types of cities we want, were there is enough for all. This event also sparked the creation of a series of zines. The zines are a community engagement tool that will be used throughout 2024.

b) Enough for All Champion network: The [Champion network](#) continues to grow. Champions gathered in a variety of ways throughout 2023, whether it was meaningful one to one exchanges, or through engagement and learning sessions focused on policy priorities or checking in on each others' Reconciliation journeys. Our Champion network has quadrupled since 2019 and boasts the thinking and actions of key experts, leaders and innovators working on multifaceted approaches to poverty reduction. Working together is how we create efficiencies and avoid duplication and in 2023 we created more opportunities for engagement, collaboration, and education.

c) Making the case for childhood literacy: Did you know that childhood literacy is one of the biggest predictors of poverty for adults? A child's ability to read will have a huge impact on their ability to navigate life, find employment, secure housing, and access services as an adult. In support of the 369 Leaders Table, VCC convened leaders who are committed to early childhood literacy to create something that would spark dialogue around the urgent need to address literacy in our community. In exploring how we could address childhood literacy a campaign was created and launched. [Left Unread](#) is a movement, boldly declaring that children deserve the opportunity

to realize their full potential. Emphasizing the no child should be left unread. It leveraged data and created opportunities to bring people together to discuss important literacy challenges and paths forward, to further the collective goal of advancing literacy.

2. Performance measures help demonstrate the return on The City’s investment in a partner’s operations, and support continuous improvement for Partners. What performance measures reflect your organization’s impact in 2023?

NOTE: A detailed accounting of organizational outcomes will be provided in the annual *Enough for All* external evaluation from the University of Calgary which will be released in June 2024.

Performance Measure Name: Policy and Advocacy

What We Will Do (2023)	How much did you do?	How well did you do it?	How are Calgarians better off?
<p>a. Develop and advocate for policies that address systemic barriers contributing to poverty in Calgary.</p> <p>b. Collaborate with all orders of government to integrate poverty reduction measures into policies and programs.</p> <p>c. Engage in ongoing dialogue with community stakeholders to identify emerging policy issues affecting vulnerable populations.</p>	<p>Policy positions for 2023 include the AISH policy brief: Improving the Effectiveness of AISH, Affordable Housing Policy through the SPC, and 2023 living wage policy recommendations.</p>	<p>All policy recommendations are aligned with <i>Enough for All</i>'s poverty-reduction goals and values.</p>	<p>Increased awareness and understanding of poverty-reduction issues among policy makers, government officials, and sector stakeholders.</p> <p>Improved collaboration and coordination among policy initiative partners, resulting in more effective policy and system change efforts.</p>

Performance Measure Name: Community Based Research

What Will Do (2023)	How much did you do?	How well did you do it?	How are Calgarians better off?
<p>a. Conduct in-depth research on the root causes and manifestations of poverty in the City of Calgary.</p> <p>b. Collaborate with academic institutions and research organizations to enhance the depth and breadth of poverty-related studies.</p> <p>c. Disseminate research findings to policymakers, community organizations, and the public to inform evidence-based decision-making.</p>	<p>Research reports generated by VCC in 2023 include: Beneath the Surface Community Wellbeing Report; Risk of Homelessness research, and updated Ward Poverty Profiles.</p>	<p>Each of these reports had significant uptake by media, policy makers, and the general public (VCC conducted over 100 media interviews last year, most of which reference this research).</p>	<p>Increased awareness and understanding of poverty-reduction issues among policy makers, government officials, and sector stakeholders.</p> <p>Improved policies and programs informed by VCC's research, resulting in better outcomes for individuals and families experiencing poverty.</p>

Performance Measure Name: Community Engagement

What Will Do (2023)	How much did you do?	How well did you do it?	How are Calgarians better off?
<p>a. Facilitate regular forums for community members to share their experiences and insights on poverty-related issues.</p> <p>b. Leverage and amplify lived experience through all of VCC's work in Enough for All.</p> <p>c. Develop and implement strategies to ensure diverse representation and inclusion in community engagement activities.</p>	<p>VCC connected with voices of lived experience for different consultations including opportunities to provide insights on grant applications and informing Alberta energy futures conversations.</p> <p>VCC engaged collaboratively with formal collaboratives like the YYC Food Collaborative, the Trauma Informed Care Collective and Fair Calgary Community Voices.</p> <p>Gathering with community for actions like the walk for reconciliation or the launch of the YW's early literacy program Early Talks were opportunities to stay connected to the important work so many are doing in our city to reduce poverty.</p>	<p>VCC engaged thousands of Calgarians in relevant and timely topics throughout 2023.</p>	<p>Inclusion of the lived experience voice of poverty across all areas of this work; Engagement of Calgarians in poverty reduction and systems change.</p>

3. Are there any additional stories or information you wanted to share beyond performance measures that demonstrate the impact of your organization's programs or services?

UNAFORD: Raising awareness about the affordability crisis: VCC launched a parody luxury storefront that treated the items required for everyday living, such as bread, eggs and toilet paper, as luxury items—because, for many Calgarians, they are. The storefront, ironically named [UNAFORD](#) and complete with all the elements of a high-end boutique, including a security guard, drove home the message that basic living shouldn't be a luxury. The installation was active for two weeks and received considerable attention from passers-by, the news media and on social media. It also sparked a conversation about living wages.

4. Does your organization use benchmarks to evaluate and improve performance and operations, and increase your organization's impact?

a) Examples of benchmarks:

Enough for All is a collective impact, systems change strategy that requires a sophisticated evaluation that goes beyond traditional outputs (i.e., number of people served by a program). To do

this, Enough for All is evaluated by an independent third party, Dr. Katrina Milaney, Associate Professor in Community Rehabilitation and Disabilities Studies and Associate Scientific Director of Population Health for the O'Brien Institute for Public Health at the University of Calgary. Dr. Milaney engages stakeholders in a series of surveys, focus groups and interviews and also completes a review of Enough for All Champion research and annual reports to compile indicators across all Levers of Change including employment rates, income support caseloads, and program statistics, to understand how Enough for All is changing systems that hold poverty in place.

2023 will be the fourth year of applying a Principles Focused Evaluation (PFE) for the Enough for All strategy. PFE was developed by Michael Quinn Patten and is a helpful approach when trying to assess complex and dynamic systems approaches to social change. It is an appropriate method as it allows examination of strategies, advocacy campaigns, policy and system change and complex interventions.

Process results are guided by the following evaluation benchmarks:

1. What has changed because of E4A 2.0?
2. What is the value that VCC brings as backbone?
3. Where do we need enhancement or adjustments with the backbone?

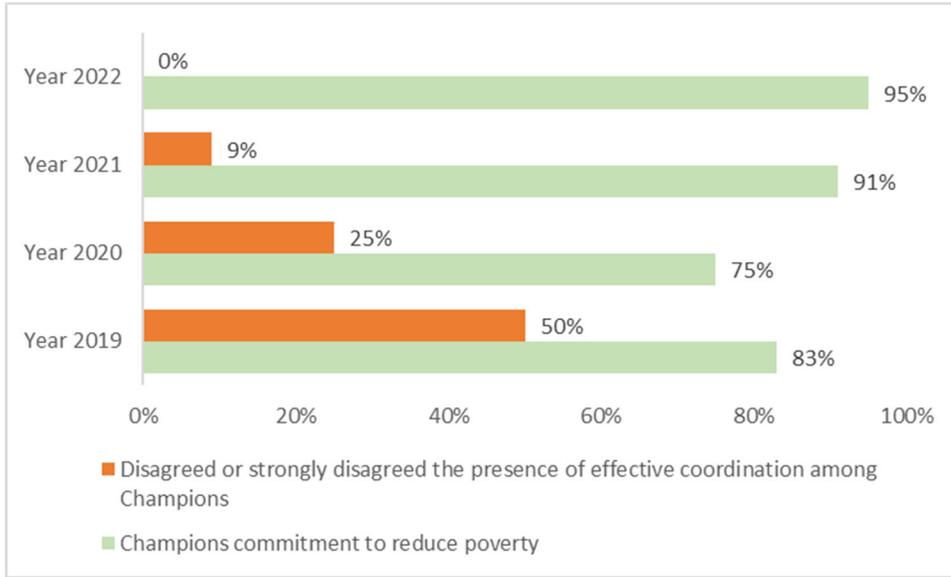
Impact Evaluation Results are guided by the following evaluation questions:

1. To what extent are the Levers and Principles applied/implemented and manifested (and how) through implementation of the E4A strategy?
2. To what extent is the application of the Levers and implementation of Principles effective in contributing to the Goals?
3. To what extent are we reducing poverty?
4. Where do we need enhancement or adjustments in the E4A strategy to fill gaps?

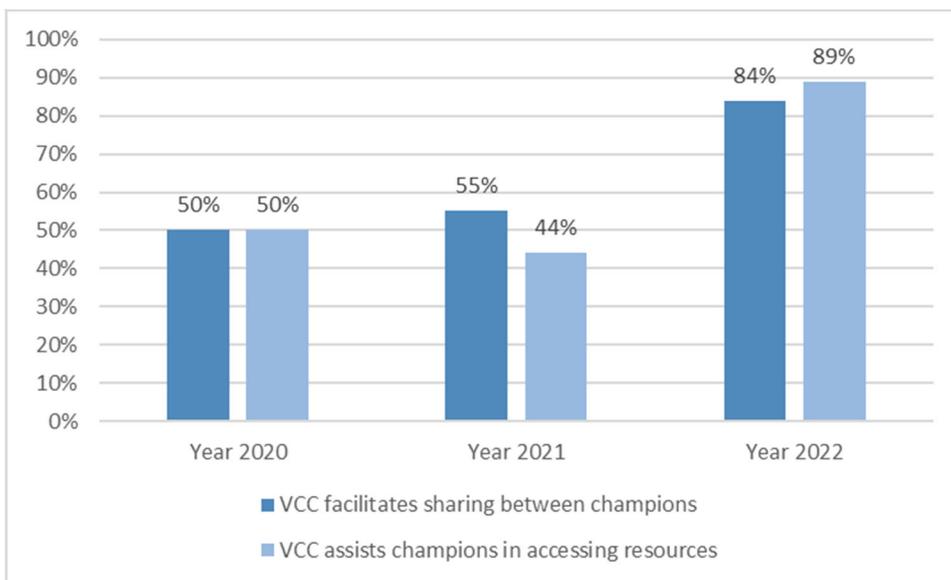
b) What is your current and targeted performance in comparison to these benchmarks?

The formal 2023 evaluation is currently underway, but examples of progress to benchmarks are as follows:

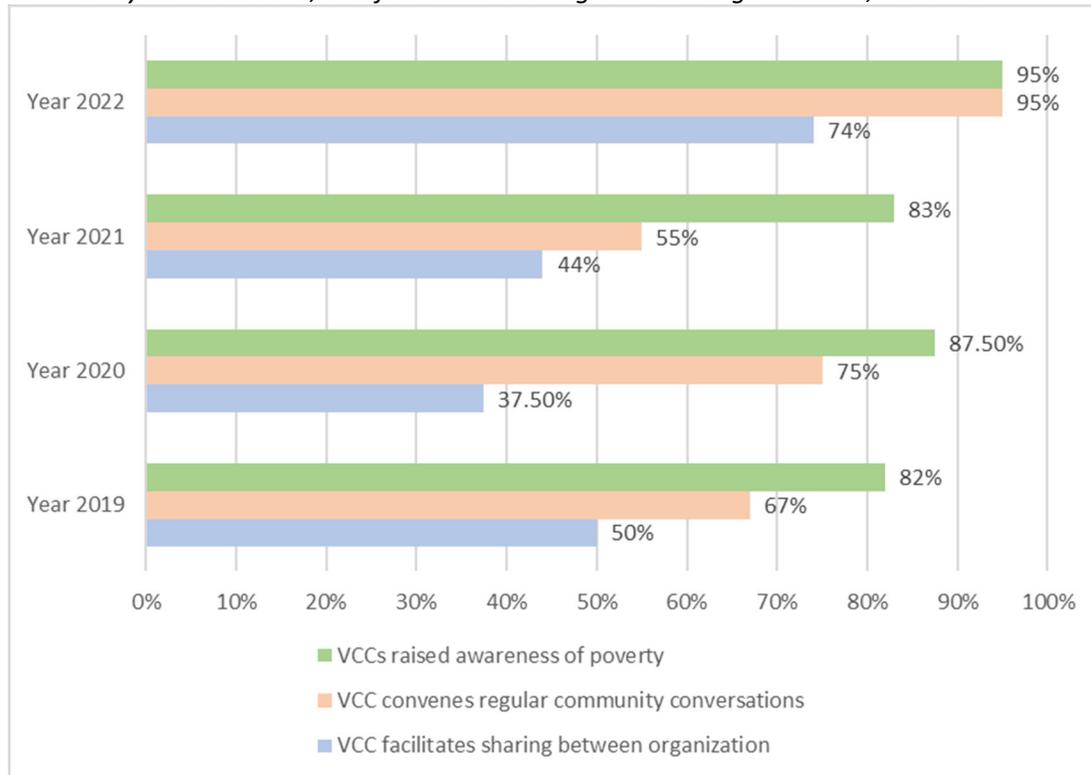
Example one: Percentage E4A Champions committed to reducing poverty, and participants disagreed or strongly disagreed with effective coordination, 2019 – 2022



Example two: Percentage who agreed or strongly agreed that VCC helps Champions share and access resources, 2020-2022



Example three: Percentage who agreed or strongly agreed that VCC raised awareness of poverty, convened regular community conversations, and facilitated sharing between organizations, 2019 -2022



There are significantly more qualitative and quantitative measures that are captured in the annual Enough for All Evaluation.

c) How this information is being used to support continuous improvement?

VCC takes the robust evaluation information provided each year and uses that to inform our implementation of Enough for All in the subsequent year.

5. How does your organization address equity, diversity or inclusion, or support racial equity?

Ensuring equity for equity-denied groups is one of the key tenets of *Enough for All* implementation which considers how the *Levers of Change* may express themselves uniquely for racialized people, Indigenous people, women, youth, seniors, newcomers and refugees, and LGBTQ2S+ people in our community. All of our research, convening, and awareness work integrates our anti-racism, equity, diversity, and inclusion principles.

6. How is your organization advancing Indigenous Truth and Reconciliation? (For example addressing specific calls to action in the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action](#) report or [The City’s White Goose Flying Report](#))

[iih kanii tai staiiwa - Everything is there](#): Vibrant Communities Calgary began the process of further understanding Indigenous ceremonies in relation to the Enough for All strategy. Elder Clement Leather, Elder Wanda First Rider and the Enough for All Indigenous Advisory Committee guided us through this learning, which led to the momentous and significant experience of a naming ceremony in August 2023. As part of the ceremony, the **Enough for All strategy received a traditional Blackfoot name iih kanii tai staiiwa (ee-skunit-des-si)**. The name means everything is there. It always has been and always will be—from belonging to housing to mental and physical health. It’s

accessible and based on the fundamentals of caring for one another. The name is a beautiful complement to the principles of Enough for All. Everything we need in life is there; there is enough for all.

Indigenous Gathering Place: The vision for the Indigenous Gathering Place (IGP) is 'a space where we share, connect, heal, renew and celebrate Indigenous cultures. A place to protect Indigenous practices, languages; and Elders' wisdom, oral and written teachings among all nations and all our relations.' VCC staff have sat on this board for over 5 years and continue to strengthen relationships, support the implementation of guidance from Elders and Knowledge Keepers in respect to the IGP, and work to support the creation of the IGP.

RESOURCES

7. Please estimate how The City's operating funding was allocated in 2023.

0%	Advertising and promotion
10%	Programs or services
3%	Office supplies and expenses
9%	Professional and consulting fees
59%	Staff compensation, development and training
0%	Fund development
2%	Purchased supplies and assets
0%	Facility maintenance (RENT)
6.5%	Evaluation or Research
10.5%	Charitable fiscal agent fee to Momentum

8. Did volunteers support your operations in 2023? (including board and committee members)

How many volunteers?	12
Estimated total hours provided by volunteers:	450

9. Did your organization receive any awards or recognition in 2023, or have any client or participant feedback that you want to highlight? (N/A)

10. How did your organization address climate change in 2023, for example, operational or program changes that reduced green house gas emissions (GHG), air/water pollution, or waste that aligned with [The City's Climate Change Program](#) including Council's Climate Emergency Declaration?

VCC is a key community partner in a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Partnership grant project on designing inclusive, sustainable and healthy cities titled "Quality in the Built Environment". Executed over 5 years, this research project involves 14 cities across Canada with the University of Calgary leading the Calgary project. Calgary's approach to this research will focus on the urban core, and considers the realms of inclusivity, sustainability and health as critical drivers for positive change in our urban environments. VCC also provided feedback to the Climate Change Strategy group in 2023.

11. Are there any projects, initiatives or plans for 2024 that you want to briefly highlight?

- **Social Disorder on Transit Study:** VCC will be releasing a social disorder on transit study in May, 2024. The report compiles over 20 interviews with CPS officers, peace officers, members of the transit HELP team and people living in shelters. The literature review and data analysis

support that issues of social disorder are driven in part by limited day-time options available to people experiencing homelessness; insufficient treatment and harm reduction services; inadequate health care options for persons experiencing homelessness; insufficient medical respite options for vulnerable persons upon discharge from hospital; and suboptimal coordination among organizations providing street outreach.

- **Risk of Homelessness Storytelling project:** On Jan. 31, VCC released four scenarios of people and families at risk of losing their housing and kicked off a social media campaign. The campaign aimed to raise awareness about the need for affordable housing and promote the risk of homelessness report that VCC and the School of Public Policy released in Oct. 2023. We have had approximately 11,000 views of the scenarios since it launched.

THE FOLLOWING SECTION IS FOR CIVIC PARTNERS MANAGING CITY-OWNED ASSETS

12. CAPITAL PROJECTS AND ASSET MANAGEMENT

Asset: N/A