



Press Release -September 9, 2020

Victoria Downtown Residents Association Frustrated by Proposed Resumption of Sheltering in Centennial Square

The Victoria Downtown Residents Association expresses frustration with the decision made by City Council at its meeting on September 3 to resume sheltering in Centennial Square. Centennial Square is a very important open space and gathering place for downtown residents, both housed and unhoused. The DRA has consistently been vocal about the lack of parks and open spaces in the downtown, especially in Chinatown and Old Town.

While we appreciate Council's intention to keep the issue of homelessness firmly front of mind, Centennial Square is not an appropriate space for camping, with no access to cooking facilities, heat or showers. We are appalled by the thought that our fellow downtown residents might be forced to spend the coming winter in this location. It is clearly not an adequate solution to the issue of homelessness, nor does it provide shelter for a Victoria winter.

We strongly urge Council to expand appropriate and safe shelter options for homeless people before the cold, wet weather sets in. We urge City Council to continue advocating for unhoused residents of the Downtown core to have access to safe and supported housing. To that end, we urge Council to seek to have the CRD revisit its decision re. Oak Bay Lodge as a viable short-term housing option.

Further, we urge Council, at its upcoming meeting on September 10, to approve the Amendment to the Parks Regulation Bylaw as it was originally presented by City Staff, including the listing of Centennial Square as one of the parks where sheltering is prohibited.

We look forward to Centennial Square becoming, once again, the open and welcoming place it was designed to be.

Media contact: Sandra Severs, Chair - Urban Livability Committee, Victoria Downtown Residents Association, 778-584-7847, ulc@victoriadra.ca.