



# Surrey Community Cat Coalition Strategic Plan: 2015-2019

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On the cover: KiKi was one of three six-week-old tame kittens rescued from a barn.



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# 1

## About the Coalition

In March 2014, a number of animal welfare organizations operating in Surrey came together at the *Cat Overpopulation in Surrey: Stakeholder Forum* to address the growing number of free-roaming and community cats (stray and feral cats as well as owned outdoor cats) in Surrey. The group discussed the causes of cat overpopulation, what was currently being done to address these causes, new strategies, required resources, and priorities.

One new strategy identified as a priority was forming a coalition. The increasing number of community cats in

Surrey was too much for any of the individual organizations to handle alone. A coordinated effort among the organizations through a coalition would result in a more cohesive, comprehensive, and effective intervention to reduce the number of community cats in Surrey and ultimately prevent the underlying causes of overpopulation.

The Surrey Community Cat Coalition was formed in October 2014. Member organizations are:

- Surrey Animal Resource Centre (SARC);
- BC SPCA Surrey Adoption and Education Centre;
- Vancouver Orphan Kitten Rescue Association (VOKRA);
- Semiahmoo Animal League Inc. (SALI);
- Katie's Place Animal Shelter;
- Paws for Hope Animal Foundation; and
- Cats for Seniors.

Participants at the stakeholder forum agreed that a strategic plan was needed to provide collective direction on how to move forward with the renewed energy of local animal rescue organizations coming together to form a coalition.

This Strategic Plan was developed based on the stakeholder forum, Coalition meetings, and current research in the animal welfare field.

The Coalition's mission, vision, and values, strategic priorities, and objectives shape its activities for the next five years.



When Maxine was rescued, she was pregnant and had a four-month-old kitten from a previous litter. She was thought to be abandoned by her owner. Soon after, Maxine gave birth to 10 kittens, but one later died.

# 2

## Situational Analysis



Cinder was only a few weeks old when she was rescued from a ditch in the countryside where her entire litter was discarded by some cruel people. Cinder was adopted by her foster parent and is now 10 years old.

### a. Cat Overpopulation

According to the BC SPCA, British Columbia has an enormous pet overpopulation problem—especially with cats. The BC SPCA takes in 13,000<sup>1</sup> abandoned cats and kittens every year, and that number doesn't include the thousands taken in by other animal control agencies and rescue organizations across the province.

The lives of these cats—including their kittens—living on the streets are grim:

- lack of food/nutrition and starvation;
- contagious diseases, puncture wounds, broken bones, brain damage, loss of an eye or limb from being attacked by animals or hit by cars;
- no medical attention for the above;
- exposed to extreme weather;
- endless cycle of pregnancy; and
- inhumane death.

These cats are not only feral cats born outdoors but also include stray cats, who once lived in homes but were abandoned by their owners. There are also some owned cats who live mostly outdoors. The problem is that these cats are not spayed or neutered, so the cycle of pregnancy continues again and again, producing more cats living on the streets.

All these cats are referred to as free-roaming and community cats (see [Appendix A: Glossary](#)).

### b. The Numbers in Surrey

Cat overpopulation is not unique. Every community in North America is facing this problem. However, Surrey is the fastest growing city in Metro Vancouver, and one of the fastest growing in Canada, with 800 new residents each month.<sup>2</sup> It has an estimated population of nearly 510,000<sup>3</sup>, an average annual increase of 10,000. This increase in human population correlates to an increase in the cat population—more people, more cat owners.

<sup>1</sup> B.C. approaching 'cat crisis', says SPCA, *The Vancouver Sun*, March 27, 2014

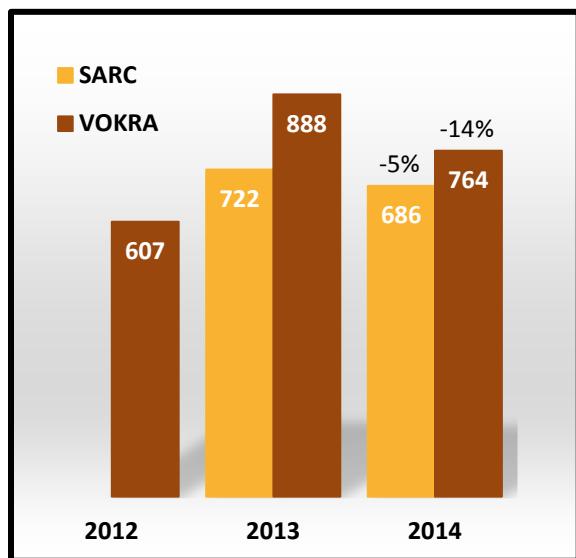
<sup>2</sup> City of Surrey Facts

<sup>3</sup> City of Surrey projected population for 2014 is 509,610

Unfortunately, it is difficult to accurately determine the number of free-roaming cats that currently exist on the streets in any community. Different animal welfare groups across North America use different formulas. Unless significant resources are available to do an actual count, animal welfare groups must rely on estimates and may never truly know the real number. Having said that, the Surrey Community Cat Coalition estimates that Surrey has up to 34,000<sup>4</sup> free-roaming cats living on the streets.

Efforts have been made over the years by Coalition member organizations to reduce this number, including focusing on trap-neuter-return (TNR), which involves humanely trapping these cats, spaying/neutering them, providing them with medical treatment, and returning those unsuitable for adoption to the community where they live out their lives without reproducing.

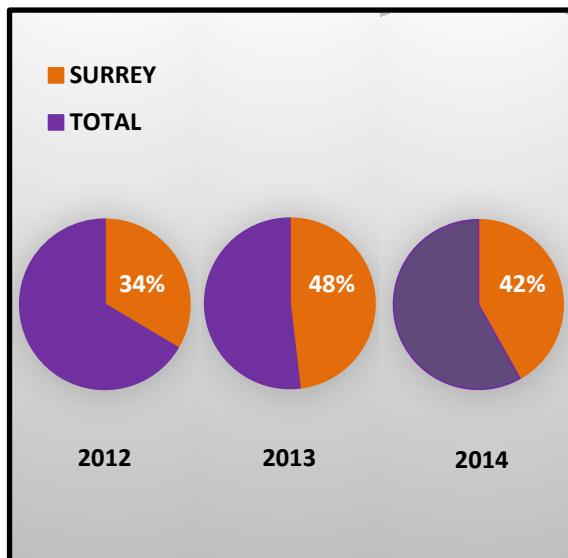
**Figure 3.1 Cat Intake**



Other efforts include paying for vet care, spay/neuter surgeries, transportation, and food for cats whose owners earn low incomes.

As Figures 3.1 shows, the number of Surrey cats taken in by SARC and VOKRA decreased 19% from 2013 to 2014. However, the number of cats in Surrey that are not spayed/neutered or living on the streets remains high. In 2014, SARC took in 686 cats and VOKRA took in 764.<sup>5</sup> In addition, cats from Surrey accounted for 42% of VOKRA's total intake.

**Figure 3.2 Cat Intake at VOKRA**



<sup>4</sup> PetSmart Charities formula to calculate free-roaming cats is human population divided by 15.

<sup>5</sup> Includes owned cats spayed/neutered through grants.

## c. Causes of Cat Overpopulation

During the stakeholder forum, participants identified a number of causes for the cat overpopulation situation in Surrey. They are grouped into four major areas:

### 1. Feral Cats

There are a significant number of feral cat colonies in Surrey. One colony is typically a family of one or two generations that can expand rapidly without intervention.

### 2. Low Income Cat Owners

Many cat owners in Surrey earn low or no incomes and are even homeless (see [Appendix B: Demographics](#)), so they cannot afford to take care of their cats, especially spay/neuter. When these cats go or live outdoors, they are at risk of breeding.

### 3. Lack of Education

There is a lack of knowledge and understanding about the cat breeding cycle and the importance of spay/neuter. Another contributing factor is that cats are not valued as highly as other pets. There is a perception that cats can survive more readily on their own than other pets, so they are often abandoned for a variety of reasons. Surrey also has a diverse cultural demographic, and different cultures have different views about the value of cats.

### 4. Lack of Cat-Friendly Housing

There simply is not enough cat-friendly housing in Surrey and in general. This is the single most important reason for abandoned and surrendered cats, who end up on the streets when their owners move into rental units that don't allow pets. No efforts have been made to date to address this issue of lack of cat-friendly housing.

## d. Contributing Factors

In addition to the above causes, there are a number of factors that create an even more challenging environment in which to operate:

1. There are no facilities in Surrey, such as an intake centre or surgery recovery room, to assist any animal rescue group with TNR. Thus, even if funding was available for TNR, there is no place to take the cats for post-operative recovery, so the animal group has to rely on individual community members to provide privately-owned space for recovery, and there are not many who are comfortable doing that.
2. Surrey has a problem with residents not spaying or neutering their own cats and then letting them go outdoors, where they can produce more homeless kittens. The City of Surrey has a bylaw<sup>6</sup> that requires owners to spay/neuter their cats by the age of six months unless a breeding permit is obtained. However, the bylaw uses the term "while at-large", which applies only to outdoor cats who are not on their owner's property (i.e. if the cat is on public property or another private property, they must be spayed/neutered). But an unspayed/unneutered cat on its own property can still get pregnant or get another cat pregnant if another outdoor cat has access to that property.

In addition, the bylaw is difficult to enforce as it requires either:

- a) a cat being picked up or taken to the shelter while at-large and not being fixed, or
- b) a complaint made about an individual's cat being at-large and not being fixed as well as a willingness to support that evidence in court.

<sup>6</sup> [City of Surrey bylaw 13548](#)

In reality, the bylaw acts more as an education tool to help cat owners understand their responsibility but does not have a significant impact on reducing cat overpopulation.

3. Due to the volume of stray and abandoned cat intakes, animal rescue groups in Surrey are at capacity and not able to accept cats surrendered by owners, which may lead to cat abandonment and increase the volume further. The Surrey branch of the BC SPCA is a small adoption and education centre that does not take in any cats directly (most cats are transferred in from other branches). And the Surrey Animal Resource Centre—a City of Surrey facility and Surrey's only animal shelter—focuses on strays and abandoned cats and accepts owner surrendered cats only as resources permit.
4. There are no low-cost spay/neuter programs for low income cat owners. Animal welfare groups hold sporadic clinics when they can get funding, but there is no ongoing program.

## e. Vulnerable Human Populations

As mentioned, many cat owners are low income residents or homeless. They require specific support which an animal welfare group does not have the expertise or capacity to provide. Therefore, it is important for animal welfare groups to partner with social services agencies, who can connect these cat owners with available resources for their pets. SALI, who works with social agencies if there is a client with a pet in need, believes that working with an agency provides a much better overall approach rather than concentrating solely on the animal.

Another risk is violence. Over the past 30 years, researchers and professionals in a

variety of human services and animal welfare disciplines have established significant correlations between animal abuse and child abuse and neglect, domestic violence, elder abuse, and other forms of violence. Mistreating animals is often an indicator that other family members may not be safe. Animal programs for individuals at risk of violent behaviour builds compassion towards animals and reduces the risk they will act in abusive and violent ways toward animals, children, adults, and seniors.

## f. Other Municipalities

Other municipalities in the Lower Mainland have successfully curbed their numbers of community cats. VOKRA began TNR in Vancouver in 2001, and numbers of free-roaming cats began to decline six years later. VOKRA also did TNR in Burnaby, where it took four years to see a decrease. In Richmond, the Richmond Animal Protection Society has a cat sanctuary for cats who are not suitable for adoption. Instead of returning them to the community after being spayed/neutered, they live at the sanctuary, which is North America's largest cat sanctuary.



Florence is so thankful for the ongoing support she receives to help out with vet care for her beloved cat Belle.

# 3

## Foundational Elements

The foundational elements of this Strategic Plan are the Coalition's mission, vision, and values.

### a. Mission

To end the overpopulation of cats in Surrey and improve their welfare through spay/neuter, adoption, public education, and advocacy.

### b. Vision

A community in which people value the lives of cats and ensure they are healthy and safe, cared for, and have access to food, water, shelter, and medical treatment.



When Spike was just eight weeks old, his owner posted an ad on Craigslist to adopt him out because he had to leave the country. Spike was immediately adopted by a new guardian. Sadly, when Spike was 15 months, he fell ill, and after seeing a number of vets, he passed away in September 2014.

### c. Values

Every cat's life is worthy. All cats and kittens have a right to live and be cared for and treated with respect and compassion.

All animals should enjoy five essential freedoms:

1. Freedom from hunger and thirst
2. Freedom from pain, injury, and disease
3. Freedom from distress
4. Freedom from discomfort
5. Freedom to express behaviours that promote well-being.

Long-term quality care in conjunction with trapping, neutering, and returning adult ferals to their home site (TNR) where appropriate is the best method to control the community cat population.

Education is key in creating and maintaining healthy communities.

A problem in the community requires the entire community to come together and be part of the solution.

Protecting animals from suffering is everyone's responsibility.



Rihanna was humanely trapped at a site where she was living under a backyard deck with her six kittens. She was adopted by her foster.

# 4

## Strategic Priorities

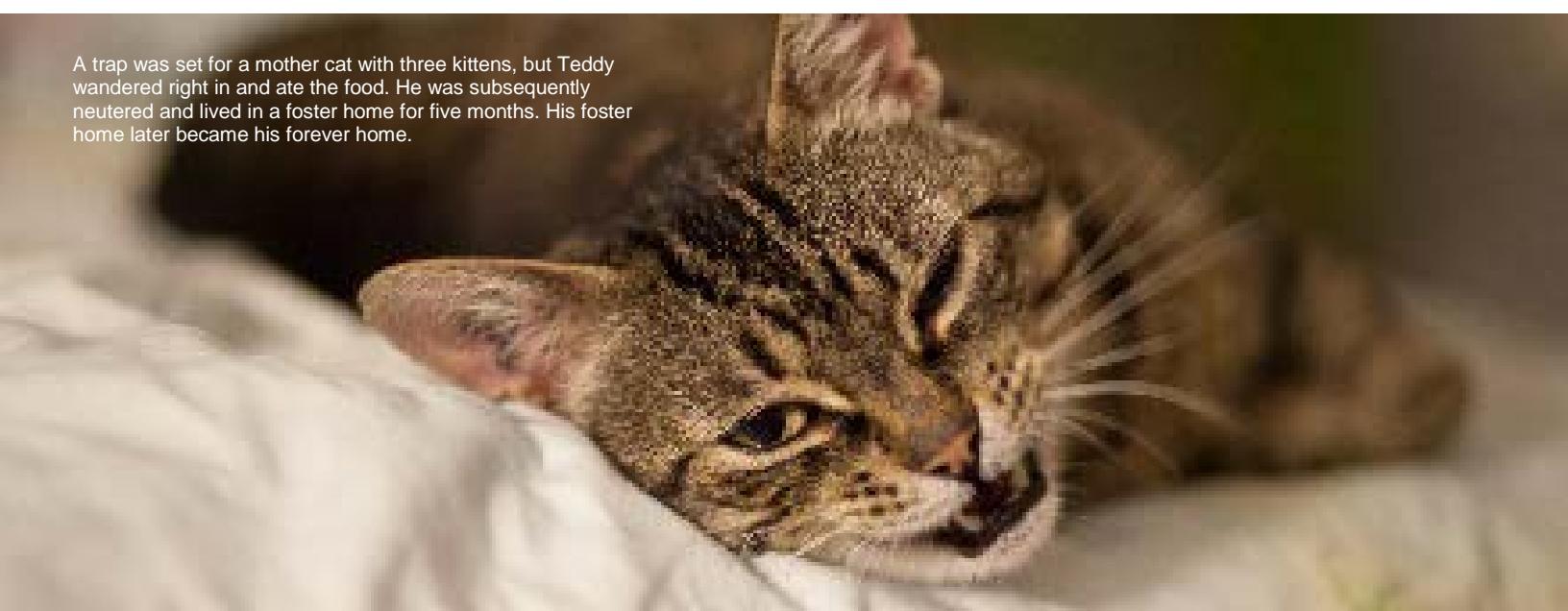
This Strategic Plan has four strategic priorities:

- 1. Increase Awareness**
- 2. Increase Spay/Neuter**
- 3. Improve Welfare of Community Cats**
- 4. Increase Cat-Friendly Housing**

Within each of these four strategic directions, a number of objectives are identified. Outcome measures will be monitored and documented to evaluate success of this plan. During the first year, baseline data will be collected, and specific targets will be set for subsequent years.

Strategic Priority	Objective
1. Increase Awareness	1.1 Educate the public about cat overpopulation and importance of spay/neuter through website, social media, events, and presentations  1.2 Develop capacity of the community and voluntary sectors to become more engaged in the Coalition's activities
2. Increase Spay/Neuter	2.1 Increase financial and human resources for TNR  2.2 Increase access to spay/neuter for low income cat owners
3. Improve Welfare of Community Cats	3.1 Ensure all community cats have regular food, water, shelter, and medical care
4. Increase Cat-Friendly Housing	4.1 Explore opportunities to increase cat-friendly housing  4.2 Help cat owners make informed decisions before surrendering or abandoning their cats

A trap was set for a mother cat with three kittens, but Teddy wandered right in and ate the food. He was subsequently neutered and lived in a foster home for five months. His foster home later became his forever home.



# 5

## Strategic Plan at a Glance



### Our Mission

To end the overpopulation of cats in Surrey and improve their welfare through spay/neuter, adoption, public education, and advocacy.

### Our Vision

A community in which people value the lives of cats and ensure they are healthy and safe, cared for, and have access to food, water, shelter, and medical treatment.

#### Strategic Priority #1 Increase Awareness

##### Objectives

- 1.1 Educate the public about cat overpopulation and importance of spay/neuter via website, social media, events, presentations
- 1.2 Develop capacity of the community and voluntary sectors to become more engaged in the Coalition's activities

#### Strategic Priority #2 Increase Spay/Neuter

##### Objectives

- 2.1 Increase financial and human resources for TNR
- 2.2 Increase access to spay/ neuter for low income cat owners

#### Strategic Priority #3 Improve Welfare of Community Cats

##### Objectives

- 3.1 Ensure all community cats have regular food, water, shelter, and medical care

#### Strategic Priority #4 Increase Cat-Friendly Housing

##### Objectives

- 4.1 Explore opportunities to increase cat-friendly housing
- 4.2 Help cat owners make informed decisions before surrendering or abandoning their cats

#### Outcome Measures

#### Outcome Measures

#### Outcome Measures

#### Outcome Measures

*Measurable progress towards Vision*

# Appendix A: Glossary

## **Pet Cat**

A companion animal with an identifiable owner and home and lives indoors, outdoors, or both.

## **Stray Cat**

Used to be a pet cat and once lived in a home but was lost or abandoned and forced to survive on their own. Strays can usually be quickly re-socialized and adopted, if homes are available.

## **Feral Cat**

Domesticated cat that has returned to the wild or was born outside and has had little or no human contact or socialization. They are fearful of people and not usually suitable for adoption.

## **Feral Cat Colony**

Typically a family of one or two generations of feral cats that can expand rapidly without intervention. A managed colony is one that has cats that were trapped, spayed/neutered, returned to the colony, and provided food, water, and shelter by community volunteers. Cats in a managed colony are healthy and live out their lives without reproducing.

## **Free-Roaming Cat**

Spends most of their time unconfined outdoors. This term focuses on lifestyle rather than temperament or ownership and can include ferals, strays, and pets.

## **Community Cat**

Reflects a belief that when cats are not owned by any individual, such as strays and ferals, they belong to the community, which has collective responsibility for their care.

## **Homeless**

An individual who does not have a place of their own where they can stay for more than 30 days.

## **Spay/Neuter**

Spaying and neutering are safe surgical procedures performed by a veterinarian to prevent pets from reproducing. In a female animal, spaying consists of removing the uterus and ovaries. For a male animal, neutering involves the removal of the testicles. Sterilization, fixing, and altering are also common terms for spay and neuter. Spay/neuter is the most humane and effective method for reducing the number of homeless cats and also provides cats with significant health and behavioral benefits.

## **Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR)**

A program through which unowned, free-roaming cats are humanely trapped, sterilized and medically treated, and returned to the outdoor locations where they were found. If those locations are deemed unsafe or otherwise inappropriate, feral cats are relocated to farmyard homes. Kittens still young enough to be socialized and friendly adult cats are placed in foster care for eventual adoption into homes as companion animals, rather than returned to the outdoors. Cats found suffering with terminal or untreatable illnesses or injuries are humanely euthanized.

# Appendix B: Demographics

## Profile of Surrey Population<sup>7, 8</sup>

<b>Total<sup>9</sup></b>	509,610		
<b>Sex</b>	Male	49%	<b>Education</b>
	Female	51%	No certificate/diploma/degree 19%
			High school diploma/equivalent 31%
			Postsecondary certificate/ diploma/degree 50%
<b>Age</b>	Median	37.5	<b>Labour Force</b>
	15-19 years	7%	Employed 60%
	65+ years	12%	Unemployed 5%
			Not in labour force 34%
<b>Marital Status</b>	Married/ Common-Law	61%	<b>Household by Tenure</b>
	Single	26%	Owner 73%
	Separated/ Divorced	8%	Renter 27%
	Widowed	5%	
<b>Income</b>	<b>Median Income</b> \$26,800		
	No income	7%	<b>Low/No Income</b>
	< \$5,000	12%	< 18 years 44%
	\$5,000-\$9,999	7%	18-64 years 19%
	\$10,000-\$14,999	9%	65+ years 15%
	\$15,000-\$19,999	9%	
	\$20,000-\$29,999	13%	
	\$30,000-\$39,999	11%	<b>Neighbourhoods</b>
	\$40,000-\$49,999	9%	Whalley
	\$50,000-\$59,999	7%	Guildford
	\$60,000-\$79,999	8%	Fleetwood
	\$80,000-\$99,999	4%	Newton
	\$100,000+	4%	Cloverdale
			South Surrey

<sup>7</sup> Statistics Canada. 2012. [Surrey, British Columbia \(Code 5915004\) \(table\)](#). Census Profile. 2011 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-XWE. Ottawa. Released October 24, 2012.

<sup>8</sup> Statistics Canada. 2013. [Surrey, British Columbia \(Code 5915004\) \(table\)](#). National Household Survey Profile. 2011 National Household Survey. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 99-004-XWE. Ottawa. Released September 11, 2013.

<sup>9</sup> City of Surrey projected population for 2014.

<b>Immigrants</b>		<b>Language</b>	
	41%		English 52%
India	15%	Punjabi	20%
Philippines	4%	Hindi	3%
China	2%	Tagalog	3%
Fiji	2%	Korean	2%
UK	2%	Mandarin	2%
Africa	1%	Arabic	1%
Germany	1%	Cantonese	1%
Pakistan	1%	French	1%
South Korea	1%	German	1%
Taiwan	1%	Polish	1%
United States	1%	Spanish	1%
Viet Nam	1%	Urdu	1%
Others	<1%	Vietnamese	1%
		Others	<1%

<b>Visible Minority</b>		<b>Religion</b>	
South Asian	31%	Christian	38%
Chinese	6%	Sikh	23%
Filipino	6%	Hindu	4%
SE Asian	3%	Muslim	4%
Aboriginal	2%		
Korean	2%		
Arab	1%		
Black	1%		
Japanese	1%		
Latino	1%		
West Asian	1%		

## **Homeless Count in Surrey<sup>10</sup>**

Surrey has the second highest number of homeless people (403) in Metro Vancouver (Vancouver has the highest). Some individuals (3%) cannot be accommodated in shelters because they have a pet, and others (4%) have difficulty finding housing because of pets.

Every year, Semiahmoo Animal League Inc. helps approximately 180 cats owned by individuals who earn low incomes or are homeless.

Sheltered Homeless <sup>¶</sup>			Unsheltered Homeless <sup>§</sup>		
Adults and Unaccompanied Youth	Accompanied Children	No Fixed Address	Adults and Unaccompanied Youth	Accompanied Children	Total
195	15	53	140	0	403

<sup>¶</sup> Sheltered homeless includes individuals who stayed overnight in an emergency shelter for the homeless, transition house for women and children fleeing violence, or safe house for youth as well as individuals with no fixed address who were staying temporarily in a hospital, jail, or detox facility.

<sup>§</sup> Unsheltered homeless includes individuals who had no physical shelter (i.e. staying 'outside', in alleys, doorways, parkades, parks, and vehicles). It also includes individuals who were staying temporarily at someone else's place (couch surfing).

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<sup>10</sup> Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness. (2014). [Results of the 2014 Homeless Count in the Metro Vancouver Region](#)

## Appendix C: Map of Surrey

