

Enhanced Encampment Response Plan

Administration has created an Enhanced Encampment Response Plan that will guide collective encampment response efforts for the next two years.

The plan focuses on two key outcomes:

1. People experiencing unsheltered homelessness have clear, consistent and rapid connections to supports and housing; and
2. Encampments do not diminish individual and/or public safety.

Five goals will focus on short-term efforts towards the achievement of these outcomes over the longer term:

1. Increase the number of people housed from encampments.
2. Reduce the time it takes for unsheltered people to be housed.
3. Increase the number of strategies for mitigating encampment safety risks and improving the well-being of encampment occupants.
4. Improve coordination, communication and reporting on outcomes and progress.
5. Maximize the efficiency of all encampment response processes.

Administration's review of the current encampment process found that the model upon which the process is based is sound, evidence-based and effective in utilizing a risk-based approach with all key players involved. The challenge is that the complete implementation of the model has not been fully achieved, due to a number of factors and barriers. With a bias towards action, this summer Administration will test a number of new ideas and tactics to reduce those barriers. In particular, the key action that Administration is planning is the launch of an intensive and highly coordinated effort to house 100 people from encampments as a learning exercise. Central to a number of areas for improvement and learning, this action will involve an active priority list - a subset of individuals from Homeward Trust's By Name List who will be identified as prime candidates for a more efficient and targeted approach to the housing process.

Outlined below are high-level summaries of the two complementary streams of the plan that Administration will use this year to enhance and improve the encampment response.

- The Action Stream is the continuous improvement and pilot stream. It is focused on improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the current response through changes to business processes and the introduction of pilots, with a focus on particular areas that have been identified as key opportunities for improvement.

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- The Prototype Stream is focused on innovation actions. It builds off of work that has already been done using a prototyping process, which tests ideas and potential solutions to understand how it might or might not work, and for whom. Prototypes undergo an iterative process and are designed for rapid testing and learning before investing in larger-scale and permanent implementation.

Action Stream

1.0 - Area for improvement: Accountability

2023
1.1 - Launch an intensive effort to house 100 people from encampments as a learning exercise.
1.2 - Establish a temporary Encampment Response Coordinator position that coordinates Action Plan implementation efforts.
1.3 - Further analysis and design of the structure and resources needed to achieve encampment goals.
2024+ Implementation
1.4 - Establish a dedicated administrative hub for coordinating all aspects of encampment response.
1.5 - Fully implement the evaluation framework, including robust and ongoing data collection and analyses to inform the response.

2.0 - Area for improvement: Data Integration

2023
2.1 - Develop a dashboard prototype for integrating data.
2.2 - Create preliminary data sharing process for an active priority list amongst partners.
2024+ Implementation
2.3 - Develop an integrated data dashboard to support real-time coordination and reporting.
2.4 - Formal data sharing agreement amongst partners.

3.0 - Area for improvement: Encampment Assessment

2023
3.1 - Integrate Homeward Trust’s active priority list into the encampment assessment process.
3.2 - Pilot social worker assessor position.
3.3 - Pilot strategies to reduce site risk in encampments
2024+ Implementation
3.4 - Integrate consideration of risks to encampment residents into the assessment process, for a more comprehensive and human centered approach.
3.5 - Review of encampment enforcement process documents for ongoing improvement.

4.0 - Area for improvement: Coordination Amongst Partners

2023
4.1 Develop a segmented response, starting with people already engaged for housing through an active priority list.
4.2 - Align encampment closure timelines with the active priority list.
2024+ Implementation
4.3 - Develop a further segmented approach to encampments for people with higher acuity and/or staying in Chinatown and Downtown, or other segments of encampment occupants as identified through process learnings.
4.4 - Develop an ongoing approach to using social innovation and service design methodology to enhance strategies for achieving the goals of the response.
4.5 - Develop and integrate best practices and protocols in the ongoing relationships with Mutual Aid groups in the homelessness serving sector.

5.0 - Area for improvement: Improved Communication and Information Sharing

2023
5.1 - Trial engagement of a Community Safety Liaison to liaise with businesses and neighbours.
2024+ Implementation
5.2 - Develop a coordinated approach to communications so encampment messaging is aligned among all partners.
5.3 - Create a new template for regular reporting against the evaluation framework.

6.0 - Area for improvement: Increase in Dedicated Encampment Resources

2023
6.1 - Analysis of resources needed based on learnings from the 2023 active priority list pilot and prototypes.
6.2 - Establish clear targets for all aspects of the response.
6.3 - Request additional resources at the fall 2023 SOBA.
6.4 - Develop Indigenous-led encampment or housing support.
2024+ Implementation
6.5 - Support all Edmontonians in accessing safety through investment in affordable housing options, including supportive housing.

Prototype Stream

The prototype stream approach has three phases which are either completed or currently underway:

1. Observation (Spring 2022 - Fall 2022)
 Status: **Complete**
 The project team engaged with each of the three main groups involved in the encampment response. Summaries of the neighbour and business engagement and the staff engagement were shared as part of the October 11, 2022 Community and Public Services Committee report CS01278 Homelessness and Encampment Response Strategy - Update. The report, 'Staying Outside is Not a

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Preference: Homelessness in Edmonton,' documents the research conducted by M.A.P.S Alberta Capital Region with encampment occupants.

2. Ideas (Fall 2022 - Winter 2022)

Status: **Complete**

As the project team analyzed all the information collected from the observation phase, a list of over 40 prototype ideas emerged. A team comprised of individuals from the City of Edmonton, Edmonton Police Service, Bissell Centre, and Boyle Street Community Services sorted and scored each of the prototypes. The top-ten prototype ideas were shared with the Encampment Strategy Table for their feedback before a final list of five prototypes was identified for the project team to test in Spring/ Summer 2023.

3. Implementation (Spring - Fall 2023)

Status: **In Planning**

Administration will lead or co-lead the testing of the five prototypes below. Knowing that human-centred design is an iterative process, it is anticipated that the prototypes may adapt and change as new needs emerge.

Prototyping - Next Steps

The first three prototypes listed below will be led by the City of Edmonton, while the remaining two will be led by external organizations. The decision to partner with the external organizations was based on technical expertise, experience working in the sector and that the work is already fully funded either through existing City funding (e.g. Recover's Soloss prototype) or through the Canada Mortgage Housing Corporation.

Each of the first three prototypes is framed as a 'How Might We' statement. Framing the problem in this way enables the initiation of human-centred design by focusing on the core needs of the users (i.e., encampment occupants, neighbours, Outreach staff, clean-up crews, and Park Rangers).

'How Might We':

- "How" suggests that Administration and partners do not yet have the answer. It allows for multiple avenues for innovation and reinforces the need to explore the problem and solution space.
- "Might" emphasizes that there are many different paths to go down when thinking about solutions. This allows for open-minded creativity and brainstorming and thinking about the problem from multiple perspectives.
- "We" commits to working collaboratively to develop a joint understanding of the problem and working together to develop a joint solution.

Prototypes:

1. How might we increase access to healthcare services (e.g. mental health, addictions, primary care, etc.) for individuals in encampments?
2. How might we create the conditions for encampment occupants to keep their encampments clean while waiting for housing?
3. How might we reduce the probability of encampment fires?
4. Testing the Soloss prototype with encampment occupants
5. A Solutions Lab on encampments supported by Canada Mortgage Housing Corporation (CMHC).

Prototype #1 How might we increase access to healthcare services (e.g. mental health, addictions, primary care, etc.) for individuals living in encampments?	
Who is involved	Lead: City of Edmonton Boyle Street Community Services Bissell Centre At the time of the Council Report, discussions were still ongoing with community-based agencies and Alberta Health Services regarding additional partners for the health prototype.
<p>Why is it important to test:</p> <p>Health, healthcare access and homelessness are intrinsically linked, through upstream causes (or social determinants), such as poverty and systemic barriers, and downstream causes, such as chronic diseases and mental health and substance-related disorders. Administration and partners see this linkage in poor health outcomes for people who avoid accessing healthcare services because they have experienced stigma and discrimination. Administration and partners also see a disconnection between health and social interventions when the competing priorities of survival, shelter, and food take precedence over health care. Avoiding or delaying necessary healthcare results in the need for acute services, which are inadequately equipped to integrate social support. Importantly, holistic health and social integration require not just services, but also the recognition of people’s resiliencies, capacities, and strengths, which form protective factors that also promote well-being. Engagement with encampment occupants over the summer months of 2022 revealed that only a small number of participants received treatment, though many were experiencing complex health challenges.</p>	
<p>Anticipated Learnings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What does increased access to healthcare look like? ● How are health and well-being understood and defined? ● What services or care would better support people in their health journey? 	

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Prototype #2 How might we create the conditions for encampment occupants to keep their encampments clean while waiting for housing?	
Who is involved	Lead: City of Edmonton Boyle Street Community Services Bissell Centre Encampment occupants
Why is it important to test: Encampment clean-up was a top concern raised during the encampment response engagement with neighbours and businesses in the spring and summer of 2022 (October 14, 2022 Community and Public Services Committee report CS01278.) Engagement participants discussed at length concerns about the amount of garbage within active encampments and the garbage left behind once a removal occurs. Business owners expressed frustration in having to clean up after encampments. A survey of 17 business owners found that two-thirds had incurred costs due to clean-up and/or repairs due to encampments. Multiple participants voiced deep concern for the biological and environmental hazards created by discarded needles, feces, batteries and propane tanks. Through engagement, it has been noted that many encampment occupants would also like to keep the encampments clean but face multiple barriers in doing so.	
Anticipated Learnings: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are encampment occupants willing and/or able to keep their encampments clean?• What barriers do encampment occupants have in keeping their encampments clean?• What supports would encampment occupants need to keep their encampments clean?	

Prototype #3 How might we reduce the probability of encampment fires?	
Who is involved	Lead: City of Edmonton Bissell Centre Encampment occupants
Why is it important to test: Surviving outside in Edmonton's cold winter climate is an unfortunate reality for encampment occupants. Encampment occupants use propane heaters and open fires to keep warm and cook food when temperatures dip below freezing. In 2022,	

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Edmonton Fire Rescue responded to 105 fires involving tents and encampments, some involving injuries related to fire. Not only is it critical to mitigate fire-related injury within encampments, but there is a need to limit the damages to surrounding infrastructure and wildland areas.

Anticipated Learnings:

- What barriers do encampment occupants have in applying fire safety best practices?
- What supports do encampment occupants need to adhere to fire safety best practices?

Prototype #4

Testing the Soloss prototype with encampment occupants

Who is involved:

Lead: City of Edmonton, REACH Edmonton
Encampment occupants
InWithForward
Losstenders (a network of everyday Edmontonians)

What is Soloss?

Soloss is a community-based and peer-led prototype that supports people experiencing loss and grief in Edmonton. It emerged from research that identified yearnings for connection and belonging from people with lived experiences of unacknowledged grief and losses, including loss of family, culture, and identity. Soloss seeks to turn moments of grief and loss into healing moments of connection by matching Losstenders, a paid peer support role, to people with raw, often unprocessed, experiences of grief and loss, referred to as Sharers. Losstenders bear witness to loss, in all its shapes and sizes, and draw from art, music, storytelling, dance and breathwork practices to co-create healing rituals.

Why is it important to test:

Trauma and loss were identified through research¹ as the most prevalent health challenge that encampment occupants face at 76 per cent of research participants. While a minority, less than 30 per cent of encampment occupants receive treatment for other health challenges, and 10 per cent of research participants have received treatment for trauma.

Anticipated Learnings:

- What impact can Soloss have on people in and around encampments?
- How can Soloss develop its network, and what does governance look like?

¹ <https://mapsab.ca/community-based-research/complex-needs-banning-research-project/>

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- How can the City enhance the way it works with the community by taking a relationship-driven approach versus a survive-driven approach?
- How does Soloss aid encampment occupants in the journey to improved wellbeing?

Prototype #5 A Solutions Lab on encampments supported by Canada Mortgage Housing Corporation (CMHC).		
Who is Involved:	Lead: The Shift BGM Strategy Group City of Edmonton Other organizations/ City branches will be added as the Lab progresses	
<p>What is the Solutions Lab:</p> <p>A Solutions Lab, or social innovation lab, offers an innovative approach to solving complex societal challenges that require systems change. The dual aim of this project is to develop a model for a human-centered approach to addressing encampments in cities across Canada and encouraging the Solutions Lab learning cities selected by the CMHC (Kitchener, ON; Edmonton, AB; and Vancouver, BC) to workshop and test solutions to encampments. The Lab will also consist of an Advisory Committee composed of people with technical expertise, lived expertise and knowledge and experience with navigating inter-jurisdictional barriers. The committee will advise the Solutions Lab team on the design and implementation of the project.</p> <p>Project Goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a model for implementing a human-centered and GBA+ approach to addressing encampments. • Develop an implementation plan. 		
Timelines		
Phase 1: Definition	Timeline: October to December 2022	Status: Complete
This phase focused on setting up the Lab and confirming the project approach, identifying relevant stakeholders, and establishing a baseline of understanding of social and legal issues to define the problem.		
Phase 2: Discovery	Timeline: January to March 2023	Status: In Progress

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<p>During this phase, the Solutions Lab team will seek to understand what creates the conditions (pain points) that may sway local officials away from addressing encampments using a human-centered approach. To accomplish this, the Solutions lab team will build on the work already carried out by the City of Edmonton, the M.A.P.S team, and identified within the Encampment Response Project. The team will also seek to engage with a variety of stakeholders (i.e., policymakers, those with first-hand knowledge of encampments such as advocates, activists, human rights experts and people with lived expertise) that the learning city has identified, and that is not duplicative of any efforts already carried out by the City and stakeholders.</p>		
Phase 3: Lab Development	Timeline: April to September 2023	Status: Not Started
<p>In this phase, a Plan will be developed through robust engagement with a range of stakeholders in Edmonton. Through this engagement, the Solutions Lab team seeks to formulate human-centered solutions, create a mechanism for Edmonton to continue engaging and consulting with encampment occupants, identify best practices and solutions to specific pain points and consider best practices. This phase also seeks to create a space for Edmonton to interact with and learn from other participating cities.</p>		
Phase 4: Prototype and Test/Deliver	Timeline: September 2023 to March 2024	Status: Not Started