

# Homelessness and Housing Services Plan 2024

An action plan to guide how the City of Edmonton will prevent, resolve and improve emergency responses to homelessness in our city.

April 2024

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## Land Acknowledgement

The City of Edmonton acknowledges the traditional land on which we reside is in Treaty Six Territory. We would like to thank the diverse Indigenous Peoples whose ancestors' footsteps have marked this territory for centuries, such as nêhiyaw (Cree), Dené, Anishinaabe (Saulteaux), Nakota Isga (Nakota Sioux), and Niitsitapi (Blackfoot) peoples. We also acknowledge this as the Métis' homeland and the home of one of the largest communities of Inuit south of the 60th parallel. It is a welcoming place for all peoples who come from around the world to share Edmonton as a home. Together we call upon all of our collective, honoured traditions and spirits to work in building a great city for today and future generations.

### A Note on Language

The content of this report is written using terminology on “homelessness” that is consistent with national and provincial reporting standards. The City of Edmonton acknowledges the impact of language on identity, especially for people with lived and living experience. The authors of this report aim to use inclusive, current, and representative language, however, there may be terms that readers question or challenge. In particular, some Indigenous peoples have indicated that “houselessness” is a preferred term. In line with Jesse Thistle’s 12 Dimensions of Indigenous Homelessness<sup>1</sup>, we honour the truth in this experience and will seek to reconcile with the First Peoples of this land through not only our words but also our actions and accountabilities.

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<sup>1</sup> Jesse Thistle’s 12 Dimensions of Indigenous Homelessness have helped to create a “Definition of Indigenous Homelessness in Canada”. Some examples of these 12 Dimensions are: historic displacement homelessness and contemporary geographic separation homelessness, spiritual disconnection homelessness, overcrowding homelessness, and escaping or avoiding harm homelessness, 2017, [homelesshub.ca/IndigenousHomelessness](http://homelesshub.ca/IndigenousHomelessness)

## Executive Summary

The City of Edmonton's *Homelessness and Housing Services Plan* (the Plan) describes the City's role in addressing and ending homelessness. It outlines the purpose and function of the City's involvement, aligned with the *2024 Community Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness* and City of Edmonton's *Affordable Housing Strategy (2023-2026)*. The Plan is built around three goals, eight objectives, and twenty six actions to organize the City's approach to achieving the City Plan Inclusive and Compassionate target of ending chronic and episodic homelessness in Edmonton. It is designed to be actionable over the next four years, with a commitment to integrate the next update into the refresh of the affordable housing strategy.

The City's role in addressing homelessness historically has been adaptive to respond to emerging gaps and coordinate the implementation of solutions through both operational programs and affordable housing development. More recently, in response to growing rates of unsheltered homelessness, the COVID-19 pandemic, and corresponding needs for basic amenities at a local level, the City of Edmonton's role and financial support for addressing housing and homelessness has grown significantly. While the City's response in 2024 is not as involved as it was during the pandemic, the lingering economic and social impacts for vulnerable community members has necessitated increased investment. In 2022, the City of Edmonton spent \$73,593,000 on homelessness related activities<sup>2</sup>, inclusive of Edmonton Public Library and Edmonton Police Service. This number increased by approximately 23 per cent to \$91,363,000 in 2023. These activities are inclusive of homelessness prevention initiatives, efforts to resolve homelessness for individuals for who take refuge in public spaces and homelessness response initiatives which aim to tackle the public space impacts of homelessness and provide basic amenities and emergency services to people who are in crisis and experiencing imminent health risks.

The City's investments are a small but critical piece of the community-wide response to homelessness. The Government of Alberta both delivers services (such as income support) and funds organizations to deliver services to address homelessness. In addition, they hold a critical funding and oversight role of shelter service delivery and allied systems of care such as healthcare, child and family welfare and affordable housing. The Government of Canada primarily provides funding to municipalities and community based organizations through the National Housing Strategy to help get housing built and fund operational responses to homelessness. Most of the federal, provincial and municipal operational

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<sup>2</sup> These totals are not inclusive of capital costs for supportive housing development. For complete breakdown of financial analysis, see CS01759 Attachment 3.

funding for housing programs to address homelessness flows through Homeward Trust Edmonton, who in turn fund 27 community based organizations to do the work.

In Edmonton today, the homeless-serving system of care is challenged. This means the resources available to those who are entering homelessness for the first time are backlogged and the number of individuals with chronic and complex health conditions are unable to find supports that address their needs in a timely manner.

It is in this context that the City of Edmonton, as one actor in the homeless-serving system of care, is working to proactively plan how to contribute to collective efforts to end homelessness. The *Homelessness and Housing Services Plan* articulates how the City will help prevent, resolve and improve emergency responses to homelessness in Edmonton. The Plan is oriented around three goals, aligned with the City Plan.

### City Plan Target

There is no chronic or episodic homelessness.

#### City Plan Direction 1.1.1.1

As long as homelessness persists, establish basic amenities throughout the city for people experiencing homelessness.

### Homelessness and Housing Services Plan

- Goal 1: The City contributes to an overall reduction of inflow into homelessness year over year.
- Goal 2: The City contributes to increased housing outcomes for people experiencing unsheltered homelessness year over year.
- Goal 3: As long as homelessness persists, the City contributes to emergency responses that prioritize the safety and wellbeing of people experiencing homelessness.

The goals were developed through an evaluation of data from the homeless serving-system of care, consideration of emerging plans and investments from other orders of government, research to understand and adapt best practices from other municipalities across Canada and extensive engagement. To achieve each goal, the Plan outlines key objectives that define the City's role and associated actions that should be pursued in order to help more people stay housed, get connected to appropriate housing and related support services and be safe in the absence of a permanent housing option.





Nineteen-year-old Victoria is handed the keys to her new apartment in September 2023 after living on the streets for five years. Through Homeward Trust she was connected to a Bissell Centre Housing Worker and a Follow-up Support Worker. She plans to go back to school and learn a trade.

## Introduction

### The Need for a City Homelessness and Housing Services Plan

The City Plan outlines the direction needed to proactively grow Edmonton to be a healthy, prosperous and climate resilient city of 2 million people. The City Plan has two goals around homelessness and affordable housing: that there is no chronic homelessness and that nobody is in core housing need. While the *Affordable Housing Strategy (2023-2026)* outlines the investment and approaches needed to increase affordable housing supply, including supportive housing, as long as homelessness persists the City of Edmonton must focus its limited resources to effectively support the work of the entire homeless-serving system of care using municipal levers.

According to the By Name List managed by Homeward Trust, over 3,000 people were experiencing homelessness in April 2024. The By Name List is representative of people who are experiencing homelessness and accessing housing services; during their intake, individuals are asked to identify where they sleep most often. 543 of those individuals identify as staying in shelters, 878 identify as unsheltered and 1,841 identify as being provisionally accommodated, meaning they lack permanent tenancy. Of the 1,421 people who are sheltered or unsheltered, 16 per cent are 24 years old or younger, nearly half identify as Indigenous and 42 per cent are women.

As a result of inflation, a growing population and already oversubscribed affordable housing supply, tightening vacancy rates and increasing rents, the inflow into homelessness outpaces the resources available to address the need. At the same time, the chronicity and complexity of health needs in Edmonton's homeless population is growing due to a number of factors, including contaminated street drug supply and rising rates of mental health concerns, which drives the need for more supportive housing options in addition to housing programs with holistic wrap-around health, social and financial supports. In the *2024 Community Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*, Homeward Trust identifies that by 2030: an additional caseload capacity of 300 - 600 spaces is needed to address the backlog of individuals who have asked for housing support and are waiting to be matched with a housing case worker; 150 - 250 more bridge housing units will be needed to help stabilize those being matched with housing; and 1,400 - 1,700 more units of supportive housing will be needed for chronically homeless individuals.

The impacts of this resource gap on City services are clear: more encampments and visible homelessness, increased public perception of a lack of safety in City owned spaces and facilities, and growing pressure from Edmontonians to do more, better, and faster.

Historically, the City of Edmonton has played a supporting role in the coordination of operational services and initiatives that connect unhoused Edmontonians to support services, including pathways to housing. This changing role has never been formally documented through a corporate wide plan, although there have been previous housing plans and strategies that have touched on how the City contributes to the coordination of housing services for people experiencing homelessness. However, since 2018, the City's role in this space has increased substantially at both the direction of Council and, like other municipalities across the country, in response to a number of factors beyond the City's control, including the COVID-19 pandemic, the Shigella outbreak, the drug poisoning crisis, and numerous health and safety risks associated with encampments and unsheltered homelessness. The lingering impact of this increased role in responding to community crises places pressure on City staff and budgets, often driving decision making in a reactive, emergency environment without dedicated funding or consideration of how investment decisions contribute to long term outcomes. Examples of these investments over the past few years include: temporary emergency shelter service funding, funding for day services, and funding for hygiene services.

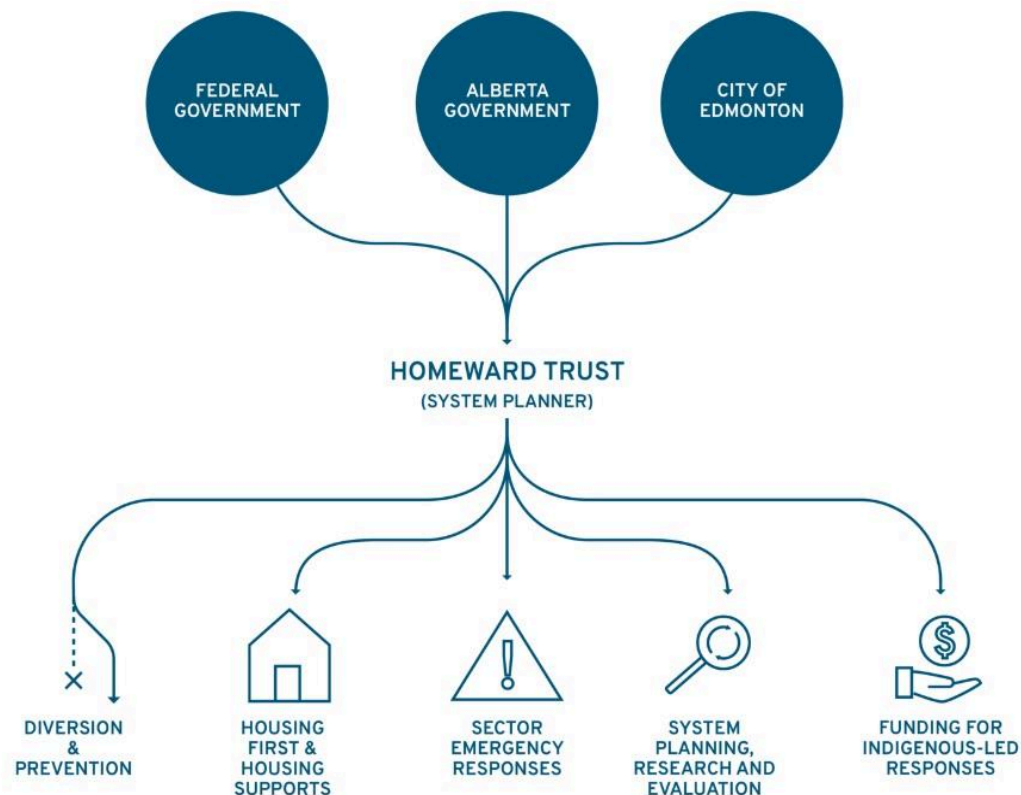
The *Homelessness and Housing Services Plan* is designed to transition from this reactive cycle to a proactive approach by identifying the City's commitments within the *2024 Community Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*, coordinating shared approaches and evaluation

efforts across City initiatives responding to homelessness, and creating a clear line of internal accountability for Plan implementation.

### Edmonton's Homeless Serving System of Care

The homeless-serving system of care is inherently interdisciplinary as individuals and families experiencing homelessness tend to interact with multiple allied systems of care to support them in meeting their needs. These systems include housing, health, child and family services, justice, and policing. While allied systems of care primarily fall under the jurisdiction of the Government of Alberta and, less so, the Government of Canada, the homelessness and housing services response across Canada is unique compared to other social programs in that it is largely created and implemented at a local level. This is done in order to empower communities with expert knowledge of their unique circumstances to implement solutions with local context in mind.

In Edmonton, the primary network of housing programs and supports for people experiencing chronic homelessness is coordinated by Homeward Trust Edmonton, the designated Community Entity and Community Based Organization. Homeward Trust distributes funding from all orders of government to community-based organizations to deliver a variety of programs and services with the mandate of ending homelessness.

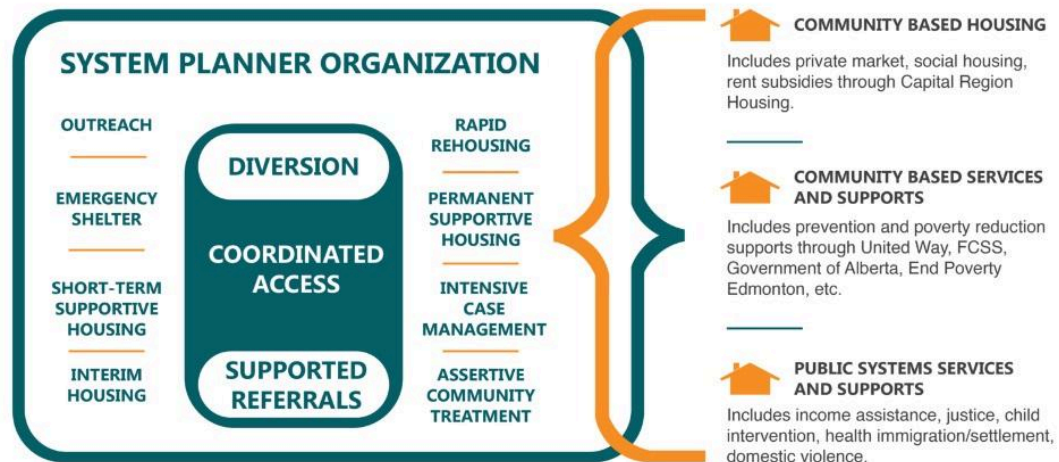


Source: Homeward Trust Edmonton



Services, programs, and initiatives that address homelessness can be understood along a continuum of care, from prevention focused efforts that are designed to support a person or family from becoming homeless, to crisis response efforts that are designed to meet a person's immediate needs, and critical interventions that connect individuals to the appropriate supports and services they need to find housing and stability.

Homeward Trust organizes the delivery of these services through a system called Coordinated Access, which acts as a central database and referral mechanism for all individuals seeking housing support services across housing service providers. Using a standardized housing assessment tool, people who are experiencing homelessness self-identify their needs and are added to a list to be matched with the most appropriate housing services, which can range from intensive housing services with on-site supports to a scattered-site housing model, where individuals are housed in market housing and supported to maintain that housing for a set period of time via subsidies and follow-up assistance from housing workers.



Source: Homeward Trust

Through this systems approach, over 17,400 people have been housed since 2009 through Housing First and related housing programs. In order to regain this level of effectiveness in a post COVID-19 context, allied systems of care must be guided by the *2024 Community Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*, which provides strategic direction for the actions needed to end homelessness not only by Homeward Trust and related housing service providers, but by all actors across the homeless-serving sector including those whose mandate may

not be to end homelessness but whose services and supports are required by individuals and families in order to sustain their housing.

### Intergovernmental Context

The Plan considers the roles and responsibilities of other orders of government as outlined in their strategic documents, to bring clarity to City contributions to this work, prevent overlap, and find operational alignment among different initiatives and programs.

Federally, the Government of Canada distributes funding to address homelessness primarily through *A Place to Call Home: Canada's National Housing Strategy* and relies on local communities to develop and deliver solutions to homelessness under a principled funding framework. The federal Strategy has a number of funding initiatives for the development of affordable housing, such as the Rapid Housing Initiative, and provides funding for operational responses to homelessness through the Reaching Home initiative.<sup>3</sup> Reaching Home funding is delivered through two organizations in Edmonton - Homeward Trust Edmonton and Red Road Healing Society. The funding is tied to directives that are designed to advance Reaching Home's target of cutting chronic homelessness nationally by March 2028, including developing and integrating Coordinated Access and a Homelessness Management Information System, delivery of Housing First-oriented approaches to delivering housing services, and developing an outcomes based framework with measures to mark progress.<sup>4</sup>

Provincially, the Government of Alberta's *Action Plan on Homelessness*<sup>5</sup> was developed in 2022 in response to recommendations made in the *Recovery-Oriented Housing model*<sup>6</sup> report developed by the Coordinated Community Response to Homelessness Task Force. Broadly, the actions in the plan touch on continuous improvements for shelter service response, including adoption of 24/7 operations for all shelters, more housing focused services, bringing balance to funding allocations between Edmonton and Calgary, and improving the reporting models for both shelter and community based organizations to provide better insights on the effectiveness of existing responses to homelessness as a basis for future improvements.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.placetocallhome.ca/funding-programs>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.infrastructure.gc.ca/homelessness-sans-abri/directives-eng.html>

<sup>5</sup>

<https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/5601187b-7dfc-45ab-8238-8f4c0be3c634/resource/0e21de0d-1248-4594-8268-0d96860723a0/download/css-action-plan-on-homelessness.pdf>

<sup>6</sup>

<https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/0c443da7-0451-419f-9e47-135f67801969/resource/1db86f64-17b0-4fce-b015-d5ffb0f885d5/download/css-recovery-oriented-housing-model-report-of-ccrh-task-force.pdf>

## How this Plan was Built

### Project Approach

*The Housing and Homelessness Services Plan* has been developed over the past year and a half, alongside the development of the *2024 Community Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness* which is stewarded by Homeward Trust Edmonton. The project integrated four key inputs: consultation, research, collaboration, and financial analysis. Combined, information from each of these activities have helped to establish where the City should invest its resources in the response to homelessness to be most effective, with consideration of ongoing work in the sector.

### Consultation

A public opinion study was conducted in the spring of 2023<sup>7</sup> to better understand Edmontonians' attitude towards homelessness and their perception of the City of Edmonton's role and responsibility in addressing it. Key findings included:

- 80 percent of respondents agreed that more should be done to address homelessness in Edmonton.
- 73 per cent of respondents agreed that regardless of the responsibility of other orders of government, the City of Edmonton should do more than it currently does to address homelessness.

Other findings from this study demonstrate that Edmontonians perceive homelessness as the cause of safety issues on transit and in parks and public spaces. Additionally, Edmontonians support the City doing more in the homelessness prevention space.

### Collaboration

Multiple engagements with people with lived and living experience, the homeless serving sector, and City staff were undertaken to determine the ideal scope and objectives of the Plan.<sup>8</sup> The approach to this work is inherently collaborative, noting that these stakeholder groups are the most impacted by City partnership, investment, and service delivery.

In July and August of 2023, 67 individuals from 27 City business areas, Edmonton Police Service and Edmonton Public Library participated in small group discussions to confirm what activities they were undertaking to address homelessness, to identify how those activities were being evaluated, and to identify opportunities to improve and/or align these

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<sup>7</sup> CS01732, Attachment 5. Public Opinion Study for the Corporate Homelessness Plan April 2023.

<sup>8</sup> Full accounts of engagement findings can be found in the following documents: CS01759, Attachment 2, What We Heard Report; CS01853, Attachment 3, Lived Experience Engagement Summary Report, and CS01853, Attachment 4, What We Heard: Sector Engagement.

efforts. Findings from this engagement helped to categorize these activities into three categories: homelessness prevention, homelessness resolution, and homelessness response. Engagement highlighted that there is tension in business areas whose mandates can be complicated by the symptoms of homelessness and that the majority of operational activities to address homelessness are reactive. Many business areas whose mandate does not directly include efforts to prevent and resolve homelessness also expressed a desire to be a part of the solution.

When the draft goals, objectives, and actions were developed, a second round of engagement was conducted throughout the month of April 2024 to refine and validate the draft content of the Plan. Invitations were circulated to all of the business areas who would be impacted by the Plan. Approximately 60 City staff participated, including representation from Edmonton Police Service and Edmonton Public Library. Feedback from this engagement helped to refine and consolidate objectives and actions. There was overall support for the intention of the Plan, particularly around the objectives that will lead to the co-creation of shared standards and frameworks for collective decision-making when exceptional circumstances challenge existing support systems.

To integrate engagement needs with community stakeholders, Administration also considered the engagement and partnership work alongside Homeward Trust Edmonton for the *2024 Community Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness* as a vital input into the City's *Homelessness and Housing Services Plan*. In July through September of 2023, researchers met over 150 participants with lived and living experience of homelessness in various community settings in order to include those who were sheltered, unsheltered, provisionally housed, and newly housed through housing programs. The findings from the lived and living experience engagements informed sessions conducted in November 2023 with service providers who are a part of the homeless-serving sector. A total of 177 individuals participated, representing government agencies, funders, partners, and grassroots organizations. There were 80 people that attended in-person sessions and 97 completed online-only surveys. Findings from this work informed the recommendations and actions in the *Community Plan*, which the *Homelessness and Housing Services Plan* is directly aligned with.

Administration, along with REACH Edmonton, co-funded a community-based study on the lived experiences of 32 youth that had experienced unsheltered homelessness in the past year. The study was conducted by MAPS Alberta and steered by the Action Alliance for Youth Inclusion. Over 80 per cent reported feeling safe where they slept due to the presence of their significant other, friends, or security features in shelters like cameras. Two

thirds of participants reported that they do not prefer to sleep outside. Front-line staff at drop-ins, library staff and outreach workers rated highest for the quality of the interaction (average score of “somewhat positive”). Family members and positions of enforcement were rated lowest (average score of “neutral”). There is a significant gap in mental health and addiction support for youth that have experienced unsheltered homelessness, with participants rating their average health 2.7/4 and reporting low rates of treatment for their health concerns.

### Research

A jurisdictional scan of municipal responses to homelessness presented in the Corporate Homelessness Plan - Research and Project Update (CS01732) illustrated the different governance structures that shape local responses to homelessness. In Ontario, provincial legislation empowers municipalities to hold responsibility for the full spectrum of homelessness and housing services, funded by federal, provincial and municipal dollars. This means that municipal budgets are often much larger in Ontarian cities than in the prairies, where most municipalities rely on a community-based organization to perform that function. In cities with a community-based organization leading the work, municipalities often fill stop-gaps related to core-service delivery. From the research, the City of Edmonton was one of the only municipalities included in the scan that was pursuing the development of a corporate homelessness plan, as a response to a City Auditor report or otherwise,<sup>9</sup> despite not being the designated community entity or system planner.

To deepen the understanding of municipal budgets on housing and homelessness, the City of Edmonton hired Nick Flavo Consulting to undertake a review of Canadian municipal spending on affordable housing and homelessness. The review highlighted that municipal spending is related to a variety of factors including but not limited to demographic trends, differing roles and responsibilities of municipal and provincial governments, and political priorities and landscapes, and whether or not the municipality is the designated community entity. In the case of Edmonton, for example, municipal spending falls lower when compared to Toronto (municipal spending \$22 per capita versus \$256 per capita). This can be attributed to a number of factors, with the most notable difference being that where Edmonton is not the designated community entity receiving provincial and federal dollars, the City of Toronto is the assigned community entity which results in increased funding access. The review found that the diversity in how a municipality is structured and the differing roles and responsibilities attributed to it was the main contributor to differences in

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<sup>9</sup> Presented to City Council (OCA01289, City's Response to Homelessness Audit) on June 17, 2022



spending and did not demonstrate the municipality's commitment to addressing homelessness.<sup>10</sup>

In response to Edmontonians' reporting in the public opinion study that they support the City doing more in the homelessness prevention space, the City of Edmonton hired Pivotal Research Inc. to complete a secondary research study on Edmonton's prevention ecosystem as well as a jurisdictional scan and literature review of prevention models. This research resulted in eight recommendations.<sup>11</sup> They cover coordination of services, funding mechanisms, developing an evaluation framework, and increasing awareness about homelessness prevention. These recommendations are captured in the homelessness prevention category but it can also be said that the themes of coordination, funding, evaluation, and increasing awareness are found throughout the whole of the Plan.

Homeward Trust Edmonton completed a "lessons learned" evaluation of the *2017 Community Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*.<sup>12</sup> Key findings from that work included:

- 84 per cent of individuals experiencing homelessness who responded to the 2022 Point-in-Time Count self-identified a substance use challenge, while 66 per cent self-identified a mental health challenge. The rising rates of substance and mental-health challenges may also be contributing to an overall rise in chronic homelessness, from 59 per cent in 2016 to 65 per cent in 2022.<sup>13</sup>
- 55 per cent of Edmonton's population experiencing homelessness is Indigenous. Indigenous people are also disproportionately represented in correctional facilities and among people fleeing domestic violence.
- The increasing complexity of need in Edmonton's homeless population requires increased supportive housing and other supportive living options. Higher rates of recidivism in scattered-site Housing First models, which involves renting units in independent private rental markets, is observed among individuals with complex health needs.

### **Financial Analysis**

In order to capture current levels of City spending on homelessness, Administration undertook a financial analysis of homelessness expenditures across the organization, including Edmonton Police Service and Edmonton Public Library. For the detailed analysis and summary, see Attachment 3.

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<sup>10</sup> Attachment 4 OF CS01759, Comparative municipal spending on housing and homelessness in Canada's major cities

<sup>11</sup> Attachment 5 OF CS01759, Homelessness Prevention Secondary Research Study, pg. 4-5

<sup>12</sup> Presented to City Council (CS01661) on December 4, 2023

<sup>13</sup> ATTACHMENT 1 OF CS01661, October 30, 2023 (rerouted to December 4, 2023)

### Internal Alignment

The Community Safety and Well-Being (CSWB) Strategy is the City's overarching approach to address the root causes of complex social challenges and ensure all who make Edmonton home feel a sense of purpose, safety and stability. The Strategy encompasses a number of interconnected initiatives, frameworks and plans (Figure 1) related to seven pillars of action: Anti-Racism, Reconciliation, Pathways in and out of Poverty, Well-Being, Safe and Inclusive Spaces, Crime Prevention and Crisis Intervention and Equitable Policies.

*The Homelessness and Housing Services Plan* contributes to the Pathways Out of Poverty pillar of the Community Safety and Wellbeing Strategy. Homelessness and its related individual and community impacts are addressed in part by many of the plans that fall under the CSWB Strategy. However, with the exception of the *Affordable Housing Strategy (2023 - 2026)*, the desired outcomes of each of those plans is not necessarily housing focused. Recognizing that there are many outcomes the City is aiming to achieve under CSWB, the Plan brings focus to the support needs of homeless individuals and families and identifies the City's role from this perspective, with consideration of adjacent plans and their targeted outcomes. This alignment is important to consider when reviewing the Plan's objectives and actions, which are built to work alongside concurrent efforts to address community safety and violence, the drug poisoning crisis, mental health and addictions responses. While individuals experiencing homelessness may interact with initiatives resulting from some or all of the adjacent plans, they also may interact with none. By centering the Plan's goals, objectives, and actions around individuals experiencing homelessness, the City will now have clear direction for how it can contribute to addressing root causes of homelessness.

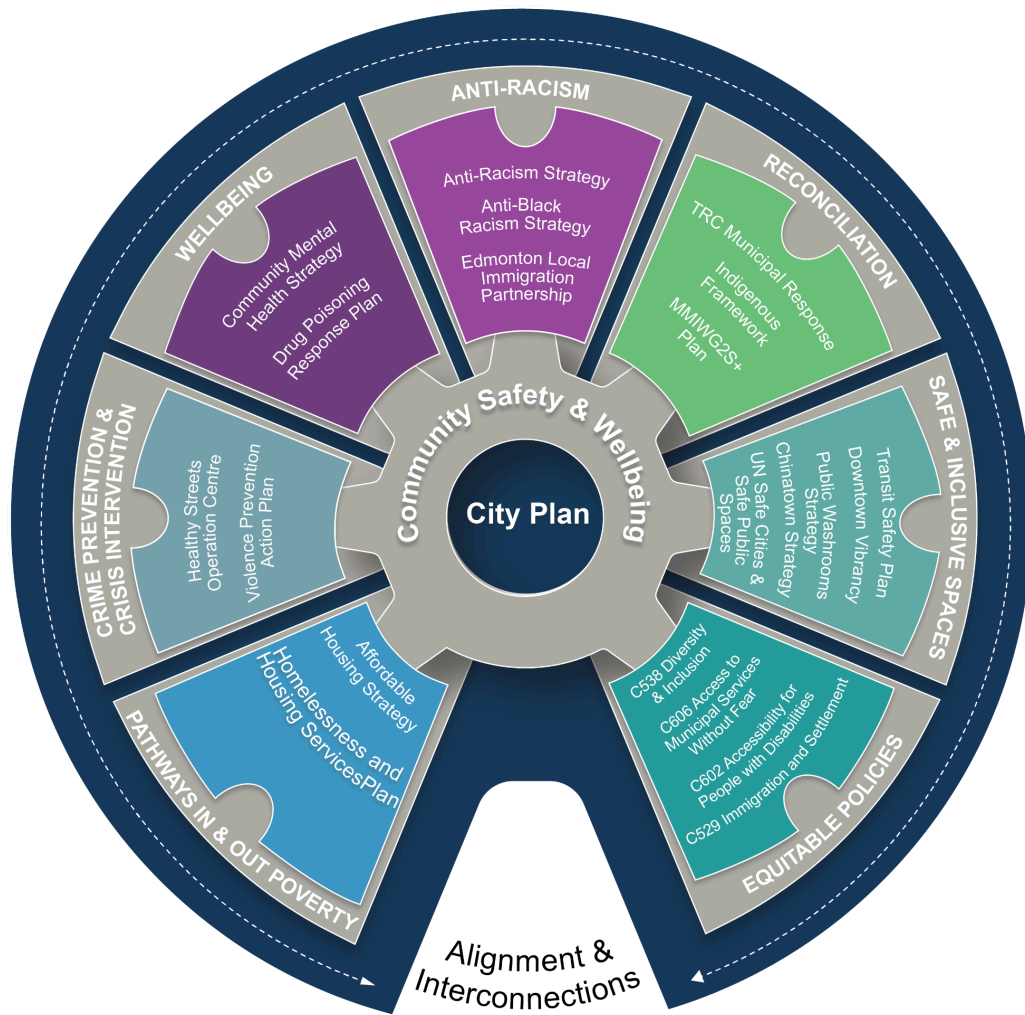


Figure 1: Interconnected Strategies and Plans with the Community and Safety Wellbeing Framework

## The Homelessness and Housing Services Plan

### The City's Role

The City's *Homelessness and Housing Services Plan* positions the City to play four distinct roles in ending chronic homelessness. To be effective in these roles, the City relies on participation in sector-wide discussions about emerging research, best-practices, and lived experience to practice continuous improvement across initiatives that are stewarded by the City to help prevent and end homelessness.

#### The City's Role in Addressing Homelessness

Funder	Convener	Advocate	Coordinator
Provide limited funding to Homeward Trust	Align City funded efforts both internally and with	Communicate housing and homelessness	Coordinate the City and community efforts in

<p>Edmonton to act as Systems Planner and deliver housing services. In addition, provide limited funds to deliver homelessness prevention and referral services to people at risk of or experiencing chronic homelessness.</p>	<p>allied systems of care to improve service delivery for individuals seeking services and address emerging issues.</p>	<p>needs to funders and service partners, based on robust data analysis and research, to advance collaborative solutions.</p>	<p>homelessness prevention and responses to unsheltered homelessness in public spaces. This includes identifying opportunities to provide basic amenities for people experiencing homelessness within existing City services.</p>
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Underpinning these four roles is a recognition of the structural inequality faced by certain population groups who are either disproportionately represented in Edmonton’s homeless population and/or who have distinct support and housing needs. Despite making up only five per cent of Edmonton’s overall population, approximately 55 per cent of Edmonton’s homeless population who are staying in shelters and/or places unfit for human habitation identify as Indigenous. In the 2022 Point In Time Homeless Count, 82 per cent of respondents identified they had a substance use disorder and 64 per cent identified they had a mental health condition. Often, people experiencing chronic homelessness have a combination of physical and mental health needs that require a multidisciplinary network of supports and specialized housing types in order to achieve self-sufficiency.

The City of Edmonton’s 2023 Affordable Housing Needs Assessment provides further insights on the types of housing needed by priority population groups disaggregated by gender, race, disability, and age. Of note, 16% of households<sup>14</sup> that include individuals dealing with an addiction or mental health issue are in core housing need and nearly one quarter of renter households that include individuals with developmental disabilities live in core housing need.

The distinct needs of population groups are considered throughout the Plan’s goals, objectives, and actions, with a commitment to implement solutions that contain equity measures that reflect the needs of Edmonton’s homeless population.

**Homelessness Prevention**

Providing more opportunities for individuals and families to maintain their housing when faced with challenging life circumstances is a critical component of ending homelessness.

<sup>14</sup> City of Edmonton Affordable Housing Needs Assessment, pg 27, figure 13

Approximately one in four renters in Edmonton pay more than they can afford on housing and the housing market cannot address the needs of low-income households. In order to address Edmonton's affordable housing need by 2050, the City will need:

- 3,800 new Rent Geared to Income units, which will address the needs of very low income households.
- 30,200 deep and shallow subsidy units, which will address the needs of low and moderate income households.
- 5,700 near market units, to address the needs of average income households.<sup>15</sup>

Affordable housing is the key structural intervention to prevent homelessness. The City will work with partners to increase affordable housing options in all areas of Edmonton, as identified in the *City of Edmonton's Affordable Housing Strategy (2023-2026)*. On the demand side of the equation, enhanced service adjustments to existing homelessness prevention initiatives, with a focus on eviction prevention and centralizing the coordination of community-based prevention initiatives, will position the City to contribute to an overall reduction of inflow into homelessness year over year. A brief description of the prevention work currently underway is described below.

#### *Tenant Support*

In 2022, Edmonton City Council approved a Community Services funding package for a \$1 million ongoing operating budget dedicated to preventing homelessness. In 2023 and 2024, this funding has been used primarily to bolster existing community-based homelessness prevention initiatives, and to hire a staff person to support and enhance the work of Tenant Support to a service that prioritizes supporting individuals navigating tenancy issues that may render them homeless. During this time, Tenant Support has also partnered with Bissell Centre and C5 to develop and deliver Tenant Empowerment courses, which are designed to build tenants' capacity and equip them with the knowledge and tools they need to both be a great tenant and how to reduce the likelihood of landlord-tenant conflict. Since the launch of the Tenant Empowerment courses in Spring 2023, over 150 people have completed the courses. In 2023, Tenant Support fielded over 9,100 calls (an average of 741 calls per month) from residents seeking to understand their rights and responsibilities under the *Residential Tenancies Act*.

#### *Residential Inspection Safety Compliance (RISC) Team*

The City addresses complex issues associated with problem properties through a collaborative, inter-jurisdictional effort. The RISC Team provides a coordinated, wrap-around approach to solving issues that arise from residential living situations involving vulnerable

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<sup>15</sup> City of Edmonton Affordable Housing Strategy, pg 6



individuals and families. Each partner agency holds a unique role that is enabled and empowered by various municipal, provincial, and federal strategies and legislation. Using this integrated and holistic approach, the team works to achieve compliance with minimum housing standards at high-risk properties and to reduce overall risk in the community. The City of Edmonton has previously provided ad-hoc housing support to displaced families by leveraging relationships with community-based housing agencies.

#### *Safe Housing Program*

The Safe Housing Program is for older multiple occupancy dwellings that do not conform to the current Alberta Building Code but form an important part of Edmonton's rental housing stock. Residents of these dwellings may not otherwise be able to find affordable market housing. The Safe Housing Team includes Edmonton Fire Rescue Services, Alberta Health Services, and Safety Codes. The primary operating guidelines are the Safe Housing Standards and the Alberta Health Service's *Minimum Housing and Health Standards* to ensure minimum levels of safety and health are in place for existing rented residential buildings.

#### *Family and Community Support Services*

Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) is a joint municipal/provincial partnership that funds preventive social service programs. Under the Poverty Reduction and Homelessness Prevention Pillar, funding is provided to community-based organizations to implement policies, practices, and programs that support full and meaningful participation by addressing individual situational factors and structural or systemic factors that may lead to homelessness.

#### *Fare Assistance Programs*

Edmonton Transit Service (ETS) offers several fare assistance programs to help individuals, families, seniors, and agencies access lower-cost or subsidized transit tickets and passes.

These programs include:

- Transit Access Grant (TAG) - provides single trip fare to non-profit agencies within the City of Edmonton. Agencies who are approved for the Transit Access Grant support low income individuals in need of urgent, short term access to transit to get to employment, educational and social services, improving their quality of life. In 2023, the City of Edmonton distributed over 66,000 tickets to agencies receiving TAG.
- PATH Program (Providing Accessible Transit Here) - provides partner agencies with free monthly bus passes to distribute to individuals who are homeless or at high risk of homelessness. This program is relationship based, and all distributing agencies support their PATH recipients with services and support needed in addition to the

monthly bus pass required to access these. In 2023, 19,874 PATH passes were distributed to nearly 8000 unique Edmontonians supporting them with access to transit. Partner agencies also offer support to transition from the PATH program to the Ride Transit Program once housing is secured.

- Ride Transit Program - provides greater access to ETS by reducing financial barriers for individuals and families in Edmonton. Through a partnership with the Government of Alberta, this program provides monthly passes to eligible Edmontonians at a subsidized rate. ETS sold over 250,000 Ride Transit passes in 2023.
- Senior Annual Pass Program - provides all seniors with a discounted rate for an annual transit pass. The cost for this pass is dependent on income, and the cost ranges from free to a \$385 annual cost. Seniors are also eligible for a discounted monthly pass, if they prefer.

Through engagement, it was identified that there were opportunities and benefits for improved coordination across the corporation of the different services available for individuals who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless. Engagement also identified that measures available to support people through their journey were not always known by citizens, and business areas had no way of sharing data and coordinating all resources available to support them. Staff identified that they often were unable to clearly state whether the support they provided had been useful to the individuals they served, often leaving gaps in measuring success of their actions. With a limited number of resources to reach all individuals throughout the city, there was interest in expanding and modifying existing services being delivered in order to increase the impact to Edmontonians. Through both internal and external engagement it was evident that enhancing current measures of support provided by the City would ensure individuals experiencing homelessness would have increased support and be empowered to find solutions that prevent homelessness. Finally, the Secondary Prevention Research Study completed by Pivotal Research Inc. resulted in eight recommendations.<sup>16</sup> One of them suggests that rent banks<sup>17</sup> are a program the City should explore. A feasibility study would need to be completed as there are a variety of models that rent banks may be actioned through; there is also a need to catalog existing financial supports and tools that those at risk of homelessness can access. Other recommendations relate to coordination of services

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<sup>16</sup> Homelessness Prevention Secondary Research Study, Attachment 5, pg. 4-5

<sup>17</sup> "Programs that provide emergency financial assistance to households at-risk of eviction due to rental or mortgage arrears, or a sudden inability to pay rent, exist globally. 'Rent Banks' (as we call them in Canada) are an important homelessness prevention strategy when people face evictions, or are at imminent risk of losing their housing due to structural/systems failures. In different jurisdictions, these programs' eligibility, governance and funding vary widely." Exploring International Rent Bank Models for Eviction Prevention, Homeless Hub, November 8, 2023

and increasing awareness about homelessness prevention. The engagement results and research were used to inform the objectives and actions that the City could take to support the reduction and prevention of people experiencing homelessness in Edmonton.

Goal	The City contributes to an overall reduction of inflow into homelessness year over year
Objectives	Actions
<p>1. Convene and coordinate a homelessness prevention program that connects housing insecure Edmontonians to appropriate supports at various locations throughout the city and in various formats</p>	<p>1.1 Convene service providers delivering homelessness prevention initiatives to coordinate and integrate all resources and services into a single program that can be delivered consistently in a decentralized way at various sites and through various mediums and languages</p> <p>1.2 Build the capacity and breadth of eviction prevention supports and services provided to tenants by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Providing the coordination and convening functions needed to develop deep connections between service providers for integrated referrals and resources</li> <li>● Expanding partnerships to increase the number of Tenant Empowerment courses offered each year</li> <li>● Working with partners to expand available supports and services to tenants to 7 days/week</li> <li>● Creating a modest emergency fund that support workers can access to assist people who are at risk of losing their housing</li> <li>● Developing an inter-agency training program for experts working in homelessness prevention to learn from each other and build agency and sector capacity</li> <li>● Developing homelessness and eviction prevention resource guides for priority populations, in multiple languages where necessary</li> </ul> <p>1.3 Review Safe Housing Program and identify strategies for meeting the housing needs of people living in potentially unsafe housing</p> <p>1.4 Work with Homeward Trust to create a dedicated team to help rehouse people who are at risk of homelessness due to closures of problem properties</p>
<p>2. Identify one-time financial interventions that can help prevent people from losing their housing</p>	<p>2.1 Provide ongoing operational funding to the Bissell Centre's Community Bridge Program</p> <p>2.2 Undertake a feasibility study to better understand the need for financial supports and tools for people at risk of eviction who otherwise do not qualify for existing supports. External funding sources will be explored as a part of this study</p>

### Homelessness Resolution

The City plays a leading role in developing supportive housing which is designed for individuals who are chronically homeless. Since 2019, the City has invested \$100.76 million to help create 880 new units of supportive housing.

In addition to these efforts, the City provides an annual subsidy of \$1.2 million to Homeward Trust to contribute to their work implementing housing programs across Edmonton. Since 2009, over 17,400 people have been housed through Housing First and related programs coordinated through community based organizations funded by Homeward Trust.

In spite of this progress, unsheltered homelessness persists in Edmonton, often visibly. People seek refuge in encampments on public lands, transit shelters, business doorsteps, stairwells and malls, and other public spaces that are not safe, adequate shelter. There is a nearly 20 year history of the City convening operational responses to unsheltered homelessness on public land, as well as leading efforts around affordable housing development, and political endorsement and Council initiatives that have both driven and supported community-wide advocacy efforts.

As the stewards of public parks and land, the City of Edmonton has convened operational responses to unsheltered homelessness since 2005. The “Homeless on Parkland” initiative convened three City of Edmonton departments that worked with Boyle Street Community Services, Edmonton Police Services and Alberta Health Services to resolve the effects of unsheltered homelessness on City parkland. In August 2011, City Council received a presentation for the Violence Reduction Action Plan<sup>18</sup> which resulted in increased funds for outreach services that were awarded to Boyle Street Community Services.

In 2017, in response to rising rates of unsheltered homelessness, especially in transit facilities, Administration undertook research to understand why people are unsheltered in order to address the barriers people may face to accessing existing services and pathways to housing.<sup>19</sup> This work, in part, led to the development of the aspirational City of Edmonton Minimum Emergency Shelter Standard (2021) to elevate a best practice standard for emergency shelter operations and development, and the development of a risk-assessment tool to organize the City’s encampment response. Recognizing the unique challenges faced by chronically homeless individuals living in public spaces, in 2023 City Council also

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<sup>18</sup> Edmonton City Council, Community Services Committee, November 12, 2012, Item 6.2

<sup>19</sup> Report on Homeless Encampments on Public Land, Edmonton City Council, Community and Public Services Committee, May 8, 2019, Item 6.2

approved funding for prototypes to explore potential improvements to the City's approach to encampments.<sup>20</sup>

Understandably, the response to unsheltered homelessness must regularly evolve to adapt to the dynamic and shifting conditions within which people experience homelessness. In January 2024, the Government of Alberta opened the Navigation and Support Centre, where people transitioning from encampments can access needed services, such as photo identification, income support, referrals to health and cultural resources, and referrals to housing services, including transport and access to emergency shelters.

As long as unsheltered homelessness persists, the City must have an encampment response that accounts for the social, economic, environmental, and political conditions of the day. The City is responsible for managing the safety and accessibility of its public spaces. Beyond encampment response approaches, however, this category of work is designed to focus on homelessness resolution. In other words, the goal of this category of work is to connect those experiencing unsheltered homelessness, wherever they may be, to the appropriate housing and related support services needed for them to progress on their respective journeys out of homelessness. To that end, the City's relevant efforts and contracts will become explicitly aligned and integrated with housing-focused objectives, actions, and indicators.

In addition, homelessness resolution cannot be effective without a sufficient supply of the temporary accommodations on the housing spectrum that are needed to help people get stabilized while they are working on securing permanent housing. To this end, the City will introduce a new bridge housing capital funding stream in its Affordable Housing Investment Plan. Further, the City will continue to advocate to the Government of Alberta to enhance and improve access to and delivery of shelter services so that more people will choose to stay in shelter versus being unsheltered.

Goal	The City contributes to increased housing outcomes for unsheltered people year over year
Objectives	Actions
3. The City supports the development of	3.1 Include bridge/transitional housing investment targets and funding requests in all future Affordable Housing Investment Plans

<sup>20</sup> "As part of the 2023-2026 budget, the service package was partially funded, with Council passing an amendment removing all funding with the exception of \$1.17 million ongoing for encampment clean-up starting in 2024, and one-time prototype funding of \$250,000 planned for 2023 funded with the Community Safety and Wellbeing funds." Edmonton City Council, City Council, April 17, 2023, Item 7.3



<p>Community Plan interim housing program targets and continuous improvement of emergency shelter services</p>	<p>in order to provide land and/or funding for capital development</p> <p>3.2 Explore City owned residential units for possible sale or lease to Homeward Trust to expand their scattered site portfolio</p> <p>3.3 In collaboration with the Government of Alberta and relevant service providers, update the City of Edmonton’s Minimum Emergency Shelter Standards every three years as a best practice tool to help emergency shelter providers identify and adopt recommended improvements for the delivery of emergency shelter services</p> <p>3.4 Continue to work with Government of Alberta and community stakeholders to proactively identify solutions for potential system capacity limitations, such as with day/emergency shelter services and bridge housing</p>
<p>4. Align related City funded initiatives and front- line service delivery with housing- focused outcomes</p>	<p>4.1 Starting with all City funded front-line workers that respond to unsheltered homelessness, explore a coordinated deployment model to improve efficiency and ensure the appropriateness of services provided</p> <p>4.2 Develop shared reporting requirements among all City contracted outreach teams in order to demonstrate impact and alignment with Community Plan targets</p> <p>4.3 Update the approach and scope of work for City funded outreach teams to identify and support individuals not connected to the homeless serving system of care, in alignment with the work of allied systems of care</p> <p>4.4 Create opportunities for housing focused training for interdisciplinary staff and teams</p>

**Homelessness Response**

The City has specific actions to prioritize the safety of homeless Edmontonians through targeted work, including Policy C620, which determines how the City supports vulnerable people in extreme weather scenarios, the enhancement of basic amenities through the public washroom strategy and hygiene hubs, and partnerships with Alberta Health Services and community based organizations to reduce barriers to access healthcare and housing.

Outside of these initiatives, there are a number of business areas that have adapted their service delivery models to consider the specific needs of Edmontonians experiencing homelessness. These service delivery adaptations often overlap with the City’s commitment to maintaining safe and inclusive public spaces, in parks, recreation centres, and on public

transit. While these core services are designed to meet the needs of all Edmontonians for various purposes - recreation, connection, learning, and commuting - they also serve as vital spaces for people who are homeless with limited sheltering options.

The City has already adapted to this reality in many ways:

- Edmonton Public Library (EPL) provides programming space and a small social work team to help with referrals so that houseless Edmontonians who are visiting can be connected to services. In that same space, EPL funds overdose prevention teams and extra security who are well suited to address immediate health and safety concerns.
- The Community Outreach Transit Team (COTT) is a partnership program between the City of Edmonton and Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society. Their primary role is relationship building with individuals that accept or seek their help as well as providing referrals to community supports. They might help individuals that seek or accept their help for a variety of issues including financial assistance, mental health supports, and housing.
- More broadly, the City of Edmonton ensures the safety and cleanliness of public spaces and services through regular maintenance that is targeted in response to the impacts of homelessness. This includes initiatives such as the hygiene hub and an expanded Public Washroom Strategy. It also includes encampment cleanups, intensified cleaning in downtown, and needle debris removal. Year to date, over 1,500 vacant encampments have been cleaned removing over 55,000 kgs of waste and over 12,400 needles collected.<sup>21</sup>

Through engagement, multiple business areas identified a desire for better training and support in responding to the needs of vulnerable individuals, a better understanding of the City's role in addressing homelessness, and a proactive process to identify when and how the City activates extra support or services for Edmontonians experiencing homelessness. The objectives and actions within the Homelessness Response goal are designed to bring clarity to how the City responds to the needs of individuals in crisis in public spaces.

Goal	As long as homelessness persists, the City contributes to emergency responses that prioritize the safety and wellbeing of people experiencing homelessness
Objectives	Actions
5. Develop a decision-making	5.1 Identify criteria to assess whether or not the City needs to provide supplemental support during exceptional situations that

<sup>21</sup> May 10, 2024 Weekly Parks and Roads Services Weekly Update to Council

<p>framework to determine when and how the City provides extra emergency funding or services in exceptional circumstances</p>	<p>impact people experiencing homelessness that cannot be addressed through existing community resources. Recent examples of exceptional situations include the shigella outbreak and the COVID-19 pandemic</p> <p>5.2 Develop a decision making process, that includes working with other orders of government, for activating emergency responses to homelessness that articulates how the City will provide supports, how long the interventions will be in place and funding guidelines to determine the level of financial supports the City of Edmonton will provide</p> <p>5.3 Identify a funding source for an associated contingency fund to ensure that future emergency response actions are not dependent on funding limitations</p> <p>5.4 Review and update Policy C620 - Supporting Vulnerable People During Extreme Weather to ensure safety of houseless and precariously housed people</p>
<p>6. Identify and evaluate innovation opportunities to test alternative ways of improving the safety and wellbeing of people experiencing homelessness</p>	<p>6.1 Pursue opportunity areas tied to wellness, connection, and safety as detailed in lived experience research including the Housing Needs Assessment qualitative research</p> <p>6.2 Utilize learnings from previous pilots and prototypes that advance individual wellness of people experiencing homelessness in partnership with community organizations and allied systems of care</p>
<p>7. Establish basic amenities throughout the city for people experiencing homelessness</p>	<p>7.1 Leverage existing social infrastructure to help people experiencing homelessness meet their basic needs</p> <p>7.2 Incorporate learnings from the hygiene hub project into the Public Washroom Strategy and identify a funding source to make hygiene hubs permanent infrastructure. In 2023, the hygiene hubs had over 30,000 visits.</p> <p>7.3 Enhance Gender Based Analysis + to include people experiencing homelessness so that their needs are consistently considered corporate-wide</p>
<p>8. Staff interacting with people experiencing homelessness are safe and supported to do their work</p>	<p>8.1 Host information and training sessions on the homeless serving system of care for City staff to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● increase understanding of the root causes of homelessness and trauma-informed care;</li> <li>● Increase awareness of, and connection to, services, programs, and resources that improve responses to homelessness</li> </ul> <p>8.2 Conduct a training needs assessment with business areas</p>

	<p>across the corporation to determine what types of knowledge and education would benefit and improve their ability to engage with people experiencing homelessness</p> <p>8.3 Ensure business areas impacted by homelessness have access to information and resources about available supports and plans</p>
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## Implementing the Plan

### Accountability

The actions in this Plan rely on the participation of many business areas across the corporation, oriented around the City Plan target of ending chronic homelessness. However, in order to ensure the work is completed over the next four years, a single lead must be identified to ensure role clarity and accountability for the work under way.

Through engagement, most business areas identified that their primary activities were around addressing the symptoms of homelessness and while they wanted to support or lead improvement efforts to better orient those experiencing homelessness towards services, there is an incompatibility between the efforts to prioritize ending homelessness and their respective mandates. Acknowledging this, Affordable Housing and Homelessness from Social Development Branch in Community Services has been identified as the accountable lead for implementation of the *Housing and Homelessness Services Plan*, with a focus on addressing root causes through prevention and resolution and working alongside other business areas to action continuous improvement in homelessness response activities.

In order to advance these actions over the next four years, Affordable Housing and Homelessness will convene an accountability table, pulling together business areas who need to participate in Plan implementation as outlined in the chart below. The accountability table will serve at a minimum the following core functions:

- Sharing updates on actions underway as outlined in the Plan
- Reporting back on challenges to implement actions, identifying solutions, and providing clarity on roles and responsibilities
- Evaluating the impact of implementation through regular monitoring of key performance indicators alongside data from other aligned strategies (both internal and external)
- Identifying costs related to homelessness through a year over year financial analysis using the methodology created for this Plan to track spending

- Acting as a solutions oriented table for business areas facing new or challenging problems related to homelessness

The RACI chart below identifies which business areas and partners will be responsible for helping to achieve the eight objectives as laid out in the Plan. Affordable Housing and Homelessness will ultimately be accountable for making sure that the work is completed and advances progress towards the three goals. Business areas responsible for affordable housing development as it relates to homelessness prevention and resolution activities are not included in this chart as project development initiatives already have strong internal governance structures and processes. This chart will be adapted as the roles and functions of different business areas change in response to emerging needs.

**RACI Chart**

Branch	EPS	ETS	Fire Rescue Services	Social Develop- ment	Community Standards and Neighbour- hoods	Parks and Roads Services	EPL
Objective							
1	C	R	C	A/R	I	I	C
2	I	I	I	A/R	I	I	I
3	C	I	C	A/R	C	I	I
4	C	C	C	A/R	C	C	C
5	C	C	C	A/R	C	C	I
6	I	C	C	A/R	I	C	I
7	C	C	I	A/R	C	R	C
8	C	C	C	A/R	C	C	C

**Legend**

**R** = Responsible: business areas directly involved in doing the work and completing the task.

**A** = Accountable: business areas ensuring the work is completed and meets project objectives.

**C** = Consulted: business areas whose feedback is sought before commencing and during the task.

**I** = Informed: business areas that are informed about progress.



Implementation will begin immediately if the Plan is approved by City Council. Progress will be reported through a public facing dashboard and regular updates to City Council, aligned with the Evaluation and Monitoring Framework identified in the *Affordable Housing Strategy*.

**Evaluation Framework**

The *City's Housing and Homelessness Services Plan* is the municipal commitment to the goals, recommendations, and actions identified in the *2024 Community Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*. Each of the goals and corresponding objectives are designed to support the ultimate measure of ending homelessness, which is defined as a community having resources to adequately address the need so that any experience of homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring. The suggested key performance measures in Table 1 below are based on engagement, and will evolve or change as a result of work to improve performance measurement, in collaboration with business areas and partners. The performance measurement framework will be finalized through the Accountability Table by December 2024.

**Table 1 - Suggested Key Performance Measures**

<b>Goal 1</b>	The City contributes to an overall reduction of inflow into homelessness year over year.	
<b>Objectives</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Convene and coordinate a homelessness prevention program that connects housing insecure Edmontonians to appropriate supports at various locations throughout the city and in various formats</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Identify one-time financial interventions often offered by community organizations or other orders of government that can help prevent people from losing their housing</li> </ol>
<b>Key Performance Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 100 calls per month to Tenant Supports with an imminent eviction are able to access support to help keep them housed, year over year</li> <li>• Increase the total number of referrals made from Tenant Support to community programs and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Bridge program prevents 300 households from being evicted year over year</li> <li>• # of evictions prevented through per \$ of funding to Community Bridge</li> </ul>

	<p>services year over year (by 75 referrals per month)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide Tenant Empowerment courses to 500 people annually</li> <li>• 100% of participants indicate they have increased their knowledge about tenants rights and responsibilities as a result of Tenant Empowerment courses</li> <li>• 100% of people displaced from problem properties are re-housed (up to 17 households a month)</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Goal 2</b></p>	<p>The City contributes to increased housing outcomes for unsheltered people year over year</p>	
<p><b>Objectives</b></p>	<p>3. The City supports the development of Community Plan interim housing program targets and continuous improvement of emergency shelter services</p>	<p>4. Align related City-funded initiatives and front-line service delivery with housing-focused outcomes</p>
<p><b>Key Performance Measures</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City of Edmonton commits funding to 150 - 250 of bridge/transitional housing units by 2030 (target to be refined through Affordable Housing Investment Plan)</li> <li>• Bridge/transitional units that receive City funding maintain an 80% occupancy levels year over year</li> <li>• # of individuals supported from unsheltered homelessness to</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City funded outreach teams responding to unsheltered homelessness make at least 250 referrals to housing services annually</li> <li>• 80% of unique participants (target: 230 individuals) interacting with City of Edmonton funded outreach programs for unsheltered people are referred to housing services or pre-housing stabilization supports year over year</li> <li>• 100% of City funded outreach workers responding to people experiencing homelessness receive housing services training by December 2026</li> <li>• 80% of City funded outreach workers report improved coordination and</li> </ul>

	<p>bridge/transitional (source: Homeward Trust Edmonton)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li># of 24/7 shelter beds available day-to-day (source: Government of Alberta)</li> </ul>	<p>information sharing among frontline teams year over year</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>collective effort of multidisciplinary teams when they work together)</li> </ul>
<b>Goal 3</b>	As long as homelessness persists, the City contributes to emergency responses that prioritize the safety and wellbeing of people experiencing homelessness.	
<b>Objectives</b>	<p>5. Develop a decision-making framework to determine when and how the City provides extra emergency funding or services in exceptional circumstances</p>	<p>6. Identify and evaluate innovation opportunities to test alternative ways of improving the safety and wellbeing of people experiencing homelessness</p>
<b>Key Performance Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>evaluations through adjusted reporting requirements on the supports funded through the decision-making framework</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>qualitative evaluations of innovations and pilots to determine improved personal feelings of safety and wellbeing</li> </ul>
<b>Objectives</b>	<p>7. Establish basic amenities throughout the city for people experiencing homelessness</p>	<p>8. Staff interacting with people experiencing homelessness have the appropriate training and access to resources that help them to feel safe and supported in their work</p>
<b>Key Performance Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li># of seasonal amenity programs/pilots with corresponding end-user evaluations (ie fire hydrant water stations)</li> <li>Evaluations from Alberta Health Services and providers from allied systems on positive health impacts of hygiene services for houseless people</li> <li>2,500 Hygiene Hub</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li># of referrals to allied systems of care across City funded outreach teams (Alberta Supports, health, employment, etc.) versus number of unique individuals engaged</li> <li># of unique individuals engaged by City funded outreach teams and select City staff within public spaces that agree to participate in an activity or service</li> <li>Development of information and training curriculum and resource guide by Q1 2025 and delivery of quarterly learning sessions starting in 2025; corresponding end-user evaluations of learning sessions</li> <li>Completion of a corporate-wide training needs assessment to</li> </ul>

	visits per month, inclusive of washrooms, showers, and laundry services, with corresponding end-user evaluations regarding accessibility, cleanliness	determine unique business area education needs by Q4 2025
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### Budget Impacts

The majority of actions in the Plan rely on improved coordination, evaluation, and accountability mechanisms that can be achieved within existing budgets. There are a small number of actions that may have funding implications, which are identified in the table below.

Homelessness and Housing Services Plan - Potential Budget Implications		
	Budget Impact (Y/N)	Actions that may have budget implications
<b>Objective 1</b>	<b>N</b>	
<b>Objective 2</b>	<b>N</b>	
<b>Objective 3</b>	<b>Y</b>	Administration will include a bridge/transitional housing target and corresponding funding package for the 2024 Affordable Housing Investment Plan.
<b>Objective 4</b>	<b>Y</b>	Administration will investigate existing funding sources for improved coordination across outreach services. Additional resources may be required to improve data collection efforts.
<b>Objective 5</b>	<b>Y</b>	Administration will investigate existing funding sources for emergency responses to homelessness. If no funding source can be identified, new funding may be required.
<b>Objective 6</b>	<b>N</b>	
<b>Objective 7</b>	<b>Y</b>	Administration will prepare a service package for Council to consider for the hygiene hub program.

<b>Objective 8</b>	<b>Y</b>	Administration will complete the training needs assessment with existing resources; however, implementation of a corporate-wide training and education program may require additional funding.
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## Appendix

### Homelessness and Housing Services Plan Snapshot

<b>Homelessness Prevention Goal:</b> <b>The City contributes to an overall reduction of inflow into homelessness year over year.</b>	
<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Actions</b>
<p>1. Convene and coordinate a homelessness prevention program that connects housing insecure Edmontonians to appropriate supports at various locations throughout the city and in various formats</p>	<p>1.1 Convene service providers delivering homelessness prevention initiatives to coordinate and integrate all resources and services into a single program that can be delivered consistently in a decentralized way at various sites and through various mediums and languages</p> <p>1.2 Build the capacity and breadth of eviction prevention supports and services provided to tenants by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing the coordination and convening functions needed to develop deep connections between service providers for integrated referrals and resources</li> <li>• Expanding partnerships to increase the number of Tenant Empowerment courses offered each year</li> <li>• Working with partners to expand available supports and services to tenants to 7 days/week</li> <li>• Creating a modest emergency fund that support workers can access to assist people who are at risk of losing their housing</li> <li>• Developing an inter-agency training program for experts working in homelessness prevention to learn from each other and build agency and sector capacity</li> <li>• Developing homelessness and eviction prevention resource guides for priority populations, in multiple languages where necessary</li> </ul> <p>1.3 Review Safe Housing Program and identify strategies for meeting the housing needs of people living in potentially unsafe housing</p> <p>1.4 Work with Homeward Trust to create a dedicated team to help rehouse people who are at risk of homelessness due to closures of problem properties</p>
<p>2. Identify one-time financial interventions often offered by</p>	<p>2.1 Provide ongoing operational funding to the Bissell Centre's Community Bridge Program<sup>22</sup></p>

<sup>22</sup>Operational funding for the Community Bridge Program is currently provided on a temporary basis. [Community Bridge](#) is a financial empowerment focused case management program that can provide small interest free loans to cover arrears to prevent eviction, utility disconnection, and foreclosure.

<p>community organizations or other orders of government that can help prevent people from losing their housing</p>	<p>2.2 Undertake a feasibility study to better understand the need for financial supports and tools for people at risk of eviction who otherwise do not qualify for existing supports. External funding sources will be explored as a part of this study.</p>
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**Homelessness Resolution Goal:  
The City contributes to increased housing outcomes for unsheltered people year over year.**

Objectives	Actions
<p>3. The City supports the development of Community Plan interim housing program targets and continuous improvement of emergency shelter services</p>	<p>3.1 Include bridge/transitional housing investment targets and funding requests in all future Affordable Housing Investment Plans in order to provide land and/or funding for capital development</p> <p>3.2 Explore City owned residential units for possible sale or lease to Homeward Trust to expand their scattered site portfolio</p> <p>3.3 Update the City of Edmonton’s Minimum Emergency Shelter Standards every three years as a best practice tool to help emergency shelter providers identify and adopt recommended improvements for the delivery of emergency shelter services</p> <p>3.4 Continue to work with Government of Alberta and community stakeholders to proactively identify solutions for potential system capacity limitations, such as with day/ emergency shelter services and bridge housing</p>
<p>4. Align related City funded initiatives and front- line service delivery with housing-focused outcomes</p>	<p>4.1 Starting with all City funded front-line workers that respond to unsheltered homelessness, explore a coordinated deployment model to improve efficiency and ensure the appropriateness of services provided</p> <p>4.2 Develop shared reporting requirements among all City contracted outreach teams in order to demonstrate impact and alignment with Community Plan targets</p> <p>4.3 Update the approach and scope of work for City funded outreach teams to identify and support individuals not connected to the homeless serving system of care, in alignment with the work of allied systems of care</p> <p>4.4 Create opportunities for housing focused training for interdisciplinary staff and teams</p>



**Homelessness Response Goal:**  
**As long as homelessness persists, the City contributes to emergency responses that prioritize the safety and wellbeing of people experiencing homelessness**

Objectives	Actions
<p>5. Develop a decision-making framework to determine when and how the City provides extra emergency funding or services in exceptional circumstances</p>	<p>5.1 Identify criteria to assess whether or not the City needs to provide supplemental support during exceptional situations that impact people experiencing homelessness that cannot be addressed through existing community resources. Recent examples of exceptional situations include the shigella outbreak and the COVID-19 pandemic</p> <p>5.2 Develop a decision making process, that includes working with other orders of government, for activating emergency responses to homelessness that articulates how the City will provide supports, how long the interventions will be in place and funding guidelines to determine the level of financial supports the City of Edmonton will provide</p> <p>5.3 Identify a funding source for an associated contingency fund to ensure that future emergency response actions are not dependent on funding limitations</p> <p>5.4 Review and update Policy C620 - Supporting Vulnerable People During Extreme Weather to ensure safety of houseless and precariously housed people</p>
<p>6. Identify and evaluate innovation opportunities to test alternative ways of improving the safety and wellbeing of people experiencing homelessness</p>	<p>6.1 Pursue opportunity areas tied to wellness, connection, and safety as detailed in lived experience research including the Housing Needs Assessment qualitative research</p> <p>6.2 Utilize learnings from previous pilots and prototypes that advance individual wellness of people experiencing homelessness in partnership with community organizations and allied systems of care</p>
<p>7. Establish basic amenities throughout the city for people experiencing homelessness</p>	<p>7.1 Leverage existing social infrastructure to help people experiencing homelessness meet their basic needs</p> <p>7.2 Incorporate learnings from the hygiene hub project into the Public Washroom Strategy and identify a funding source to make hygiene hubs permanent infrastructure. In 2023, the hygiene hubs had over 30,000 visitors.</p> <p>7.3 Enhance Gender Based Analysis + to include people experiencing homelessness so that their needs are consistently considered corporate-wide</p>
<p>8. Staff interacting with people experiencing</p>	<p>8.1 Host information and training sessions on the homeless serving system of care for City staff to:</p>

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<p>homelessness have the appropriate training and access to resources that help them to feel safe and supported in their work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• increase understanding of the root causes of homelessness and trauma-informed care;</li><li>• Increase awareness of, and connection to, services, programs, and resources that improve responses to homelessness</li></ul> <p>8.2 Conduct a training needs assessment with business areas across the corporation to determine what types of knowledge and education would benefit and improve their ability to engage with people experiencing homelessness</p> <p>8.3 Ensure business areas impacted by homelessness have access to information and resources about available supports and plans</p>
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