

VIOLENCE PREVENTION ACTION PLAN

Recommendation

That the March 3, 2025, Community Services Report CS02082, be received for information.

Requested Action	Information		
ConnectEdmonton's Guiding Principle	ConnectEdmonton Strategic Goals		
CONNECTED This unifies our work to achieve our strategic goals.	Healthy City		
City Plan Values	BELONG. LIVE.		
City Plan Big City Move(s)	Inclusive and compassionate	Relationship to Council's Strategic Priorities	Community safety and well-being
Corporate Business Plan	Serving Edmontonians		
Council Policy, Program or Project Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Safety and Well-being Strategy Indigenous Framework Murdered and Missing Indigenous Relatives (MMIR) Action Plan Truth and Reconciliation Municipal Response Plan Anti-Racism Strategy Anti-Black Racism Action Plan Downtown Core & Transit Safety Plan Chinatown Strategy Living Hope: A Community Plan to Prevent Suicide in Edmonton Strategy for Community Mental Health Corporate Homelessness Plan Updated Affordable Housing Strategy Community Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness Update 2SLGBTQIA+ Safe Spaces Action Plan 		
Related Council Discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> October 2, 2024, Community Services report CS02603, 2025/2026 Community Safety and Well-being Funding July 4, 2023, Community Services report CS01919, Community Safety and Well-Being Strategy Implementation Update February 22, 2023, Community Services report CS01550, Anti-Racism Community Safety Fund Proposal Recommendation May 16, 2022, Office of the City Manager report OCM00991, Community 		

Previous Council/Committee Action

At the September 12/13, 2023, City Council meeting, the following motion was passed:

- That Administration provide a report with the development of a violence prevention action plan, in collaboration with partners, as part of the broader Community Safety and Well-Being strategy, highlighting key priorities, including but not limited to youth and neighbourhood prevention, and related funding requirement; and provide a memo midway as an update on this work.

Executive Summary

- The Blueprint for Violence Prevention (BVP) is the City of Edmonton's plan for reducing and preventing violence, with a focus on youth and community violence. The BVP takes a public health approach that recognizes violence as preventable.
- Edmonton has consistently ranked fourth for violent crime severity index across 10 Canadian municipalities of similar size from 2019 to 2023 (ranked highest to lowest: Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Regina, Edmonton, Montreal, Vancouver, Toronto, Quebec, Calgary and Ottawa).¹
- Violence takes many forms ranging from youth violence, intimate partner violence, hate crimes, community trauma and systemic violence. These forms of violence are interconnected and often share the same root causes. Violence prevention refers to the reduction of violent victimization or perpetration through direct efforts to remove or reduce underlying causes².
- Traditionally viewed as the responsibility of the police and justice system, violence prevention requires a broader, collaborative approach that leverages the unique capacities of other systems partners, community-based organizations and municipalities. The City of Edmonton plays a critical role in preventing violence through bylaws and policies, convening and coordinating responses, developing localized understandings of needs, interfacing with other orders of government, and ensuring targeted and impactful investments.
- Building on the foundation created by the Community Safety and Well-Being Strategy (CSWB), the BVP is the evidence-informed framework that will analyze local needs and implement targeted corporate and community activities under the Crime Prevention and Crisis Intervention pillar of the CSWB strategy.
- The BVP will guide Edmonton's efforts in preventing violence through priority areas of focus; three goals and identified opportunities to be initiated in 2025:
 - Goal 1 - Build Structure for Impact and Sustainability
 - Goal 2 - Prevent Violence in the Near Term
 - Goal 3 - Move Upstream

¹ Police Reported Crime Statistics release from the Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics, Statistics Canada

² Institute for Security Studies, What is Violence Prevention (2021). <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep62706>

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- Moving forward on violence prevention in a meaningful, sustainable and impactful way requires significant, informed and intentional investment from actors throughout the ecosystem. In 2024, City of Edmonton financial resources allocated towards initiatives that contribute to reducing and preventing violence and crime totalled \$8.8 million (\$4.7 million in City funding from Community Safety and Well-Being and Downtown Vibrancy, \$2.6 million in Provincial funding for Family and Community Support Services and \$1.5 million in Federal funding for Building Safer Communities).
- On October 2, 2024, City Council approved \$750,000 in multi-year one-time funding from the Community Safety and Well-Being funds for 2025 and 2026 (Community Services report CS02603) to implement the Violence Prevention Action Plan (BVP). Next steps include establishing a Violence Reduction Network to oversee the development of the implementation plan, which will include a robust second phase needs assessment and engagement plan, identification of corporate actions, investment approach, indicator framework, intergovernmental approach and the development of an evaluation framework.

REPORT

Violence and violent crime are pervasive issues that profoundly impact societies worldwide. Globally, more than 1.6 million people lose their lives to violence each year.³ Beyond the tragic loss of life, violence imposes a significant economic burden with its global impact in 2023 amounting to \$19.1 trillion—equivalent to \$2,380 per person.⁴

The Blueprint for Violence Prevention (Attachment 1) uses a modified version of the World Health Organization's definition of violence.⁵ Violence takes many forms ranging from youth violence, intimate partner violence, hate crimes, community trauma and systemic violence. These forms of violence are interconnected and often share the same root causes.

An important distinction in BVP is between violence and crime which, though sometimes used interchangeably, are distinct concepts. Some types of crime are violent (murder, assault), while other crimes may involve no direct violence (property crime). Conversely, not all types of violence are criminalized (psychological violence such as verbal harassment).

To address the complexity of violence and crime and its origins, many cities around the world have adopted a public health approach that recognizes violence as preventable (Attachment 2). The public health approach emphasizes comprehensive collaboration, accountability and multi-level responses that balance immediate interventions with longer term prevention efforts that tackle the underlying causes of violence.

Edmonton has made significant investments (Attachment 3) to address underlying causes and promote community safety and well-being through the Community Safety and Well-being Strategy (CSWB). Building on the foundation created by CSWB, the Blueprint for Violence Prevention (BVP) is

³ Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, Injury and Trauma Yellow Book (2024).
<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/yellowbook/2024/environmental-hazards-risks/injury-and-trauma>

⁴ Institute for Economics and Peace. Global Peace Index 2024.
<https://www.economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/GPI-2024-web.pdf>

⁵ "The intentional use of physical [emotional, psychological and sexual] force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation." World Report on Violence and Health (2002).

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the evidence-informed framework that will analyze local needs and implement targeted corporate and community activities under the Crime Prevention and Crisis Intervention pillar of the CSWB strategy. Progress in the Crime Prevention and Crisis Intervention pillar positively influences outcomes across other CSWB pillars and furthers commitments within The City Plan and ConnectEdmonton.

Edmonton Context

Best practices in violence prevention efforts emphasize the importance of developing a comprehensive and tailored needs assessment to understand place, people and issues based concerns related to violence. The BVP was informed through a preliminary needs assessment using violence prevention research, a jurisdictional review, expertise of the multi-sectoral System Stewardship Table, focused engagement and multi-source data analysis⁶ to better understand the current state of gaps and opportunities in the City's violence prevention ecosystem.

The preliminary needs assessment draws upon multiple sources to further understand the local landscape of violence through data. In relation to crime,⁵ the BVP is focused on violent crimes. Under the Criminal Code of Canada, violent crimes involve the use of threat of force against a person or property and include: assault; attempted murder or homicide; robbery and sexual assault.⁷ Edmonton Police Service (EPS) data on the total number of city-wide violent criminal incidents increased by 1.8 per cent (+295 incidents) between 2023 and 2024.⁸ Violent criminal incidents involving the presence or use of the most common weapons decreased slightly by one per cent in 2024. Firearm and caustic spray incidents decreased, while knife incidents saw a slight increase. Health data is another important source, particularly emergency department visits related to violence. In 2023, Edmonton reported 4,618 emergency department visits due to violence and purposely inflicted injury, slightly up from 2022 which saw 4,126 emergency visits.⁹ Of the 4,168 emergency visits in 2023, 1,895 were female, a 16 per cent increase from 2022.⁹

Initial findings through the preliminary needs assessment highlighted that while Edmonton has many programs, initiatives and services led by community-based organizations and service providers that address and prevent violence, there is opportunity to enhance coordination and governance to maximize impact and identify gaps and opportunities that may exist in the current ecosystem. There is consensus through research and engagement with local partners that upstream solutions that address root causes of violence are required to promote safe, connected and vibrant communities; however, near-term violence strategies, interventions and investments are also required to address violence impacting communities today. Further engagement and data analysis is required to provide additional clarity on opportunities to enhance upstream support, access and investments.

Multisource data analysis on violence is a complex undertaking requiring relationship building across sectors, initiating data sharing processes and agreements and rigorous analysis to determine contextualization and alignment of data sources, measurements and indicators. The preliminary needs assessment laid a critical foundation for enhancing the local understanding of

⁶ See Attachment 1

⁷ Kidnapping and human trafficking are also included as a violent crime under the Criminal Code of Canada, however they fall outside of the scope of the BVP.

⁸ Edmonton Police Service. Media Release, 2024 Crime Statistics
<https://www.edmontonpolice.ca/News/MediaReleases/epccrimestats2024>

⁹ Government of Alberta. Ministry of Health. Interactive Health Data Application.

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violence, identifying initial areas of opportunity and focus. A robust needs assessment including further analysis of data sources, community input and engagement with communities with lived experience will be developed in the implementation phase, building on the existing data sharing networks and collaborations initiated during the preliminary needs assessment.

The City of Edmonton's Role in Violence Prevention

Based on the findings of the preliminary needs assessment, the City is well positioned to bring together partners in the violence prevention ecosystem to develop deeper connections with systems and communities, coordinate resources, identify needs and opportunities and co-develop local solutions.

Through the *Municipal Government Act* (MGA), municipalities are broadly enabled to support safe and viable communities driven by local needs. The City has multiple tools available to advance the collective effort towards violence prevention (detailed in Attachment 1).

Bylaws and Policy

Under the MGA, municipalities may pass bylaws for municipal purposes concerning the safety, health and welfare of people and the protection of people and property.

Administration directly oversees some public safety services including the Community Peace Officers and Municipal Enforcement Officers. City Council establishes the Edmonton Police Commission by appointing members and establishing a policing budget. The oversight of the Edmonton Police is through the Police Commission. The City also oversees Zoning, which helps shape and improve safety, public health and welfare of residents and the environment, and is responsible for ensuring land is developed according to City bylaw regulations, buildings are constructed to recognized safety standards, and businesses operate with the correct licences.

Convene and Coordinate

The City plays an important role in convening and coordinating multiple different sectors, agencies and orders of government to work towards a common vision, such as violence prevention. The convening and coordinating function of the City is integral when addressing complex social issues, bringing together diverse actors to develop and monitor solutions, and to support better coordination of local supports and services.

Investment

As the City holds limited financial levers, Administration is exploring how to increase City investments with strategic plans across the corporation to optimize resources and attract investments made by other orders of government and funders, where appropriate.

Localized Understanding of Needs

Edmonton knows what Edmonton needs. The City is best positioned to promote understanding of unique local context, needs and opportunities through Edmonton-specific quantitative and qualitative data, community input and lived experience, that can inform localized responses and investments.

Intergovernmental Relations

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While municipalities are leaders and vital partners in ensuring people and communities feel safe, no one sector or order of government can accomplish this alone. Effective intergovernmental collaboration between all orders of government and other key partners is essential to creating safe and secure communities. Violence prevention is a shared responsibility across multiple orders of government and other stakeholders and all orders of government take different actions in these spaces through their various levers.

Additional information on alignments to other City strategies and action plans can be found in Attachment 4.

Blueprint for Violence Prevention (BVP)

The BVP outlined in Attachment 1 is the City of Edmonton's plan for reducing and preventing violence, based upon violence prevention research, an understanding of best practices in other jurisdictions (Attachment 2), expertise of the BVP's System Stewardship Table, focused engagement and multi-source data analysis to ensure a localized approach to violence prevention. It sets out three measurable and tangible goals to address and prevent violence in Edmonton. The goals represent a systems approach aimed to impact measures of what the City wants to reduce, such as the occurrence of violence and its associated risk factors, as well as what the City wants to increase, including vibrancy, cohesion and well-being.



Following in the steps of many jurisdictions (Attachment 2) that have shown promising results, the BVP highlights the value of bringing together law enforcement and public health, given their shared preventive aims and the interconnections between the social determinants of health and the determinants of criminal behavior¹⁰. Policing, community development and public health models often share similar strategies that include defining the problem, identifying risk and protective factors, developing and evaluating interventions and implementing promising interventions. The Problem, Analyse, Nominate, Deploy, Assess (PANDA model) used by the Edmonton Police Service, and the Scan, Analyze, Respond and Assess (SARA) model used by the City of Edmonton Community Safety Team are consistent with public health approaches.

¹⁰ World Health Organization Commission on Social Determinants of Health, the Vera Institute of Justice, the Acheson Report in Britain (1998) and the National Criminal Justice and Public Health Alliance

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A public health approach also means addressing the conditions in which people live and work to reduce the risk of violence. This approach looks at the causes of violence and the underlying systemic factors that perpetuate it, and involves coordinated collaboration between government, enforcement, health, social, education sectors and communities.¹¹ The BVP establishes a sustainable foundation for collaborative partnerships as no individual sector, system or community can prevent violence in isolation. The most critical partnerships involve communities and youth, who are paramount to successful violence prevention. This process requires a sustained commitment to engagement and collaboration and the appropriate structures to build processes for accountability and long-term commitment, to mobilize and coordinate roles and levers, to be data/evidence informed, and to determine where resources and investments can be maximized.

Understanding where to focus resources is critical, given that some communities and groups are more exposed to inequitable systemic conditions that give rise to violence (both perpetration and victimization) and other health inequities, most notably Indigenous, racialized and gender diverse communities.¹²

Next Steps

The opportunities outlined in the BVP will be explored through the creation of a Violence Reduction Network, building on existing networks and established partnerships already in place led by the City of Edmonton's Administration. As part of the implementation plan needs assessment, the network will seek to actively engage community, government, First Nations, Métis and Inuit leaders, health, education, social and economic sectors, academia and enforcement. With cross-sectoral representation, the network will provide advice on objectives and activities related to violence prevention. The creation of the Violence Reduction Network is a key component to the implementation of the BVP as it is the governance mechanism that allows for lasting sustainability of the plan beyond the identified opportunities, political cycles and organizational changes.

The Violence Reduction Network will consist of three core working groups:

1. Advisory Board
2. Strategic Working Group
3. Operational Working Group

On October 2, 2024, City Council approved \$750,000 in Community Safety and Well-being funding from Community Services report CS02603, 2025 / 2026 Community Safety and Well-Being Funding for each of 2025 and 2026 to implement the Violence Prevention Action Plan. To ensure the goals and objectives within BVP are implemented effectively, these funds, along with existing City assets and resources will be leveraged to:

- Develop the BVP implementation plan and support the Violence Reduction Network in implementing identified opportunities.

¹¹ Veto Violence. (n.d.). Violence Prevention Fundamentals, <https://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/apps/main/assets/pdf/prevention/fundamentals/ViolencePreventionFundamentals.pdf>

¹² Violence and Health Equity, Urban Networks to Increase Thriving Youth through Violence Prevention, nd

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- Complete a phase-two needs assessment, expanding data analysis and gaining further insight on the lived experiences of individuals experiencing and/or perpetrating violence.
- Conduct further engagement specifically focusing on priority areas and populations that may be highlighted through further needs assessments. This may include specific neighbourhoods or population groups such as youth, men and boys, newcomers, Indigenous communities, etc.
- Ensure targeted and coordinated investments are secured to further the goal areas.
- Identify corporate actions, assets and services that can be leveraged across Administration to improve violence prevention.
- Continue to monitor the intergovernmental landscape, build relationships, collaboratively pursue shared goals and maximize investment opportunities.
- Develop an indicator framework which will assist the Violence Reduction Network with the collection, interpretation and communication of data.
- Develop a strong evaluation framework to measure progress and effectiveness of the BVP actions and related investments.

Administration will be accountable for stewarding the plan alongside the Violence Reduction Network. Progress will be tracked as part of the Community Safety and Well-being Strategy outcomes.

Further information, including associated timelines and key components within the implementation plan, can be found in the BVP Attachment 1. Administration expects to provide an update of BVP's progress in 2026.

Budget/Financial Implications

In addition to the \$750,000 multi-year funding approved for implementation in 2025 and 2026, the City makes investments into violence prevention through other funding avenues such as Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) and the Community Safety and Well-being grant programs. Through these existing funding programs, Administration will work to further allocate funding to priority areas identified through the needs assessment and implementation plan, as appropriate.

Through the implementation process, Administration and the Violence Reduction Network may identify areas that would benefit from additional investment. If this occurs, Administration will explore other opportunities for investment and/or bring forward funding requests to Council for consideration during future four-year or supplemental budget adjustment processes.

Community Insight

As part of the development of the CSWB Strategy in 2022, many community organizations, leaders and members were consulted and identified the need for a collaborative, multi-sectoral approach to proactively address risk factors of violence. Community feedback served as the basis for the Safe and Inclusive Spaces and Crime Prevention and Crisis Intervention Pillars of the Community Safety and Well-Being Strategy, and continues to influence the development of VPAP.

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To support the development of this initial report and guide future efforts and engagement, community insights were gathered through two primary avenues, including the Systems Stewardship Table and a focused engagement approach.

System Stewardship Table

The Systems Stewardship table was convened early in the planning process (June 2024) and brought together different parts of the system, including health, enforcement, the social sector and the City of Edmonton. The stewardship table was able to advise on ways to optimize and coordinate violence prevention efforts, aligning interests as mutually interdependent systems and identify levers available to each partner that could collectively be used for a whole of society approach to violence prevention.

The System Stewardship Table included representation from:

- The City of Edmonton
- Edmonton Police Service
- REACH Edmonton Council for Safe Communities
- Alberta Health Services (Community Health Services)

Each of these sectors have different roles within the violence prevention ecosystem as outlined in the BVP.

Focused Engagement

Administration conducted a focused engagement approach from May to October 2024 to inform the development of this report and the BVP. Most of the participants engaged were from Edmonton, but some notable experts were from other parts of Canada and the United States. A focused approach with existing collaborative tables and MOU partners was selected to ensure that the insights gathered from previous engagement efforts are honoured; to ensure that this project did not contribute to widespread engagement fatigue; and to make best use of the limited time and resources available. Administration heard that engagement must include accountability, must be ongoing, and must be based on trust and relationship building, which is not possible within project timelines. BVP acknowledges these considerations, which were critical to informing the goals and opportunities.

The focused engagement included the following four phases:

1. Socializing
2. Analysis of Previous Engagements
3. Focused Conversations
4. Open House

The attached What We Heard Report (Attachment 5) provides a summary of the feedback received through the engagement process.

This engagement approach was just a starting point. Further engagement will be integral to the implementation of this plan where more direct engagement will occur with both social and geographic communities experiencing violence in Edmonton.

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GBA+

There is a disproportionate risk for violence conditioned on inequities due to race, socioeconomic status, gender and where people live. Consequently, some communities are more vulnerable to violence and its repercussions than other communities. Some of the same factors that are behind the experiences of discrimination and unfair treatment can also serve as motivations for incidents of criminal victimization. According to Statistics Canada 2019 General Social Survey, three per cent of all criminal incidents were perceived by the victim to be motivated by hatred - representing approximately 223,000 incidents. Violent incidents were more commonly believed to be hate motivated (six per cent)¹³.

Of all incidents perceived to be motivated by hate, over half (54 per cent) of respondents identified the offender's hatred of the victim's race or ethnicity as the motivation.¹⁴ Other commonly perceived motivators included language (32 per cent), sex (24 per cent), disability (23 per cent) and religion (19 per cent).⁹

Violence is highly gendered with women (106 incidents per 1,000 women) being violently victimized at a rate of nearly double that of men (59 incidents per 1,000 men) in 2019.¹⁵ This gender difference is the result of the fact that women were five times more likely than men to be a victim of sexual assault (50 versus 9 per 1,000).⁹ When controlling for individual characteristics, women, lesbian, gay or bisexual people and younger people have a greater likelihood of being victimized.

Indigenous peoples in Canada face a disproportionate risk of homicide, a heightened risk rooted in the ongoing effects of colonization, systemic discrimination and a legacy of trauma. In 2023, just over one in four homicide victims were Indigenous, despite representing five per cent of the overall population.¹⁶ Overrepresentation translates to a homicide rate more than six times higher than the rate for non-Indigenous Canadians.¹⁰ In 2023, 30 per cent of all homicide victims (235) were identified as belonging to a racialized group. Among all homicide victims identified as racialized, the most represented groups were Black (39 per cent) and South Asian (20 per cent) individuals.¹⁰

Environment and Climate Review

This report was reviewed for environment and climate risks. Based on the review completed no significant interactions with the City's environmental and climate goals were identified within the scope of this report.

Attachments

1. Blueprint for Violence Prevention
2. Jurisdictional Scan
3. Municipal Grant Investments in Violence Prevention
4. City's Alignments

¹³ <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89f0115x/89f0115x2019001-eng.htm>

¹⁴ <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2022001/article/00002-eng.htm>

¹⁵ <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2021001/article/00014-eng.htm>

¹⁶ Statistics Canada. Homicide Trends in Canada, 2023. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/241211/dq241211a-eng.htm>

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5. Focused Engagement - What We Heard Report