



Edmonton's Downtown Core and Transit System Safety Plan



Edmonton

EDMONTON'S DOWNTOWN CORE AND TRANSIT SYSTEM SAFETY PLAN

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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), Dene, 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.

Edmonton has faced the same challenges as communities around the world in adapting to changing demographics, economics, and a global pandemic. For example, most urban centres have seen unemployment, houselessness, drug poisonings and mental health issues increase during the past two years. Particularly Downtown and in Chinatown, this brought increases in violent crime and social disorder, a doubling of the number of houseless people, high levels of drug poisoning, increasing numbers of people with mental health challenges, visible open drug use, and more. These are very complex and complicated social problems that require collaboration between all orders of government and community partners.

The pandemic also exposed deep-rooted inequities in our society. Those who lived on the margins were disproportionately impacted as they were least equipped to deal with its impact.

Houselessness increased in every urban center, doubling in Edmonton. Due to the worsening drug poisoning crisis, mental health crisis and individual and intergenerational trauma, disorder in the urban core has increased.

The City of Edmonton has long had programs and services in place to deal with community challenges, both as part of ongoing programs and as part of a response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Violence is unacceptable, and people being violent to others should be held accountable. Open drug use is illegal and compassionate enforcement and service options are available. Shelters are

available, so people do not need to sleep in the cold. Security guards have been stationed in transit centres since the early days of pandemic response.

Recently, the City of Edmonton was asked to demonstrate that it has a plan to ensure that residents are safe in public spaces, particularly in Downtown, in Chinatown and on public transit. The City's approach is comprehensive, given the understanding of safety as both a social and policing matter, and the recognition that social disorder does not occur independently from violence and weapons-related occurrences. The City recognizes public safety as a broad outcome for our community, and recognizes that it is measured with both statistics and perceptions. It is measured by numbers of criminal actions, rates of violence, numbers of police officers ready to respond, or number of houseless encampments. It may also be viewed in light of community perceptions and practices. Whether residents feel safe on their street, whether businesses are comfortable opening their doors after hours, how people react when they see someone sleeping on a bench, and how vulnerable people expect they will be treated are integral parts of public safety. There must be public safety for there to be community well-being, and vice versa.

Edmonton's Downtown Core and Transit System Safety Plan summarizes the many ways the City and the Edmonton Police Service (EPS) have responded to changing conditions and kept Edmontonians safe in the transit system, in Chinatown and Downtown, and in the broader community. The Edmonton Police Service is addressing Downtown and Chinatown issues by increasing enforcement to suppress crime, and focusing on high harm and disorder locations. The Service has also been balancing enforcement and compassion with programs that bring policing and support resources together, enabling the EPS to respond differently to those who are vulnerable and those who are committing crimes. The City has been increasing safety measures on transit, improving public infrastructure and providing more social supports, so that public spaces are safer. Both organizations recognize that there must be community safety for there to be community well-being.

Some of the actions described were well underway before the plan was requested, while others are just getting started. Whether you are a Chinatown small business owner, downtown worker, transit rider, a residential homeowner in the core or a person experiencing houselessness, Edmonton's Downtown Core and Transit System Safety Plan shows how the City is making your community safer.

The following table summarizes that work.

Increasing Public Safety in Edmonton

| Downtown Core and Transit System Safety Plan | Law enforcement and disorder deterrence | Community & individual health | Housing & houselessness supports | Transit safety and passenger comfort | Clean, vibrant public spaces |
|---|---|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Healthy Streets Operations Centre | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Increased police presence | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | |
| Increased peace officer presence | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | |
| Conduct of Transit Passengers Bylaw | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Encampment and problem properties response | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Business security | ✓ | ✓ | | | |
| Community recovery | | ✓ | | | ✓ |
| Public washrooms | | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Safety audits | ✓ | | | | ✓ |
| Increased cleaning | | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Opioid prevention & response | | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Communication about services | ✓ | | | | ✓ |
| Community Enhancement Plan | ✓ | | | | ✓ |
| Plan to redistribute social services | | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Advocacy | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Promotion and co-ordination | | | | | ✓ |

The Safety Plan also describes how these actions have moved forward within the broad frameworks of City policy and strategic priorities for community safety and well-being, transit safety, and downtown vibrancy.

Edmonton's Downtown Core and Transit System Safety Plan is also aligned with specific Downtown and Chinatown plans, which were also built in collaboration with the community and continue to be discussed as part of charting a path for renewed collaboration.

While the Safety Plan confirms that the City has a number of actions underway and strategic approaches to guide future decisions, it also reinforces that all orders of government must work together to respond to these challenges. Municipal governments have neither the jurisdiction nor the resources to address houselessness, mental health crises, addictions issues, and criminal justice procedures. The Plan includes an overview of those areas where leadership, funding and collaboration from other orders of government are required. It also highlights that the dedication and experience of community leaders are critical in identifying needs, assessing priorities, and formulating practical strategies that meet current needs.

The following pages outline twelve recent actions that the City of Edmonton has taken to support public safety from a perspective that includes public spaces, bylaw, cleanliness, communication, and enforcement. It describes four streams of longer-term work that will improve social services, program access, community development and economic development. In addition, it confirms that Edmonton has a strong framework to guide decision-making thanks to its long-term plan.

The City is aware of the many challenges facing Downtown and Chinatown and Edmonton public transit. It has responded to changing conditions in these communities, and continues to make adjustments based on new information and changing community needs. The City is committed to the actions in this plan, and to the honest conversation with community about how much work still needs to be done.

RECENT ACTIONS

Within the past year, the City of Edmonton has responded to changing conditions Downtown, in Chinatown, and across the public transit network. City Council has made public safety a top priority, and has made this clear for Edmontonians and the Edmonton Police Commission. The Edmonton Police Commission and Edmonton Police Service have acknowledged this and are currently taking active steps to divert resources to the priority public safety needs. These service changes have reflected a balance of compassion and safety – getting supports for people who need it, creating welcoming and inclusive spaces, and reinforcing the City’s commitment to safety for all. Examples of recent actions include changing bylaws, providing supports to business and community groups, improving public facilities and spaces, increasing services and supports provided to vulnerable persons, and increasing communication with community partners.

Identified Need for a Healthy Streets Operations Centre

With the assignment of multidisciplinary teams in Downtown and Chinatown, the City of Edmonton and the Edmonton Police Service are creating an operations centre in Chinatown, opening shortly. This would ensure multidisciplinary teams comprised of EPS, Peace Officers and staff from social agencies can respond in a timely and effective manner. The Downtown Branch of EPS, given its proximity to Downtown and Chinatown, continues to offer walk-in services to the community.

Increased Police Presence

To increase responsiveness in Chinatown and Downtown, on May 24, 2022 the Edmonton Police Service launched a project to increase the connections between the EPS and the community it serves. The EPS has increased its focus on the identified high-harm and high-disorder areas of Alberta Avenue, Chinatown, the Downtown core and Downtown LRT stations. These communities have been identified as having historically high levels of victimization and criminality which have been magnified with the COVID-19 pandemic.

The project takes a phased approach which includes outcomes and measures, and integrates evidence-based, community-focused and human-centered policing. During the phase which began in May, the community is seeing a high-visibility and high-engagement police presence within the identified areas to decrease victimization, increase prosocial behavior, and increase community

members' perceptions of safety. The police will increase their involvement with community members to identify more problematic locations, situations and individuals. In the second phase, the visible police presence will continue, and the information gathering and intelligence sharing between police bureaus and stakeholders will increase. In the third phase, partner organizations will be engaged to allow the appropriate authorities to take the lead as situations require. While the project is a three-month targeted intervention, EPS is committed to transitioning the model to a sustainable, long term, increased presence in Chinatown and other high priority areas.

Increased Peace Officer Presence

Starting May 22, 2022, the Transit Peace Officer foot patrol teams are now referred to as Transit Community Action Teams (TCAT), and act as a more consistent presence on the LRT and platforms throughout the transit network. These teams consist of 11 Transit Peace Officers who work split shifts between 7:00 a.m. and 1:00 a.m. The teams use a high-visibility and high-engagement deployment model to reduce and prevent crime and disorder in assigned hot spots.

Starting May 24, 2022, the Downtown Peace Officer team has also been deployed into the Chinatown community. In June, other enforcement and community development resources will be deployed into Chinatown for the duration of the summer.

Amended Conduct of Transit Passengers Bylaw

Bylaw 8353, the Conduct of Transit Passengers Bylaw (see [Attachment 1](#)), regulates the conduct and activities of people using the Edmonton Transit Service in order to promote the safety and welfare of everyone using the service. Any behaviour that is reasonably expected to interfere with the safety or comfort of others using transit is prohibited under this bylaw.

On May 27, 2022, City Council asked Administration to bring forward amendments to this bylaw. The amendments (see [Attachment 2](#)) were approved June 8, 2022 when Council added an additional offence dealing with inappropriate behaviours on transit property that have the effect of interfering with the intended use of transit and negatively affecting perceptions of safety. The amendments strengthen the existing rules by confirming that inappropriate use of transit property, such as remaining in transit stations, vehicles, or platforms for long periods of time for purposes unrelated

to the use of transit services, is not permitted. In addition, the amendment confirms that visible use of illicit substances is not permitted in transit property. While illicit substance use is regulated federally, the visible use in public spaces, such as transit property, interferes with the safe and comfortable enjoyment of these spaces and is not acceptable conduct within transit facilities.

Increased Response to Encampments and Problem Properties

On May 9, 2022, Council also increased investment in the City's Encampment Response Team by \$860,000 to focus on priority hot spots. The team partners with community agencies, and when it is notified of encampment sites it helps people find supports and connect to housing. When a camp is found it is assessed as low or high risk, with the assessment determining the nature of the response. Encampments which are assessed as high risk to individuals or the surrounding community are closed in a timely manner, and people are connected with other shelter options. People in low-risk sites may be connected with bridge housing or other options. City clean-up crews are assigned to clean up encampments once they are closed to reduce public safety risks.

On April 19, 2022, City Council approved \$850,000 on a one-time basis to extend the [Community Property Safety Team](#) pilot for up to 18 months, and \$915,000 on a one-time basis to enhance dedicated resources for problem properties.

The pilot project involves ordering owners to secure vacant properties, and uses an escalating enforcement model that secures vacant properties against break-ins at homeowners' expense. To date, 23 orders have been sent to private property owners in Alberta Avenue, McCauley and other neighbourhoods and one commercial order has been issued in Chinatown. Three properties have been boarded up, and two were demolished, and four have submitted demolition permits. As a result of these efforts, the community fire risk is now significantly lower. The pilot project is scheduled to run until October 2023.

Funded Business Security

On May 24, 2022, City Council approved \$300,000 for the purpose of addressing the immediate needs of Chinatown. In consultation with the community, Administration identified that an effective use of these resources is helping fund new private security resources which coordinate with EPS and

Peace Officers. On June 3, 2022, Administration provided a \$300,000 grant to the Chinatown and Area Business Association to help fund private security resources in and throughout Chinatown.

Funded Community Recovery

On May 25, 2022, the City established a dedicated Chinatown Recovery Fund, a post-COVID vibrancy fund along the same model as the Downtown Recovery Coalition, and allocated \$1 million in funding from the City's Financial Stabilization Reserve. Given the importance of the issues faced by the community, the City is working with the Chinatown and Area Business Association in advance of receipt of these funds.

On June 22, 2021, Council approved up to \$5 million in one time funding towards the Downtown Vibrancy Strategy (see [Attachment 3](#)). The Downtown Vibrancy Strategy outlines 20 actions under four pillars to revitalize Downtown as a home, an economic hub, a destination, and a safe, welcoming place. Released in June 2021, the strategy was built in collaboration with community, and focused on supporting pandemic recovery. Actions included expanding safety, expanding urban wellness thinking and practices, shared streets initiatives, free parking promotions, a temporary patio program, construction grants to spur development, and public space activations like Downtown Spark. Many of these actions and approaches to recovery are being considered for Chinatown.

Installed Temporary Public Washrooms

To help keep Chinatown clean and reduce social disorder, Administration is working with the Chinatown and Area Business Association to co-ordinate the installation timing, location and operational plans for a temporary public washroom facility. This action builds on the 2022 mobile washroom project, which is installing up to 12 mobile washrooms in high-traffic parks, business districts and event areas. These mobile washroom trailers offer increased and equitable access to safe and clean washroom facilities, and are staffed with attendants from Boyle Street Ventures' "Hire Good" program who provide support and maintenance. The BIA Board's feedback on potential locations is expected the week of June 6, 2022.

Completed Safety Audits

The City of Edmonton's Neighbourhood Empowerment Team (NET) has been actively involved in the Chinatown Safety Council regarding the Chinatown Strategy (see [Attachment 4](#)). Between 2006 and spring 2022, the NET, Edmonton Police Service, and a private company have completed more than 20 safety audits. NET's most recent Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) audit (see [Attachment 5](#)) was completed in fall 2021 with recommendations provided to Chinatown. In light of changing conditions in Chinatown and across the Downtown core, Administration will conduct a new audit shortly, will share the results with the Chinatown and Area Business Association and other stakeholders upon completion, and will prepare an implementation plan to address the elements identified.

Increased Cleaning in Parks, Roads and Alleys

Beginning in May 2022, Administration has enhanced its cleanup and servicing activities Downtown and in the Chinatown area. Patrols for loose litter and general waste including hazardous materials (e.g. needles or fecal matter) were increased from weekly to daily throughout all streets in the Chinatown area. This includes power washing of public amenities as needed. In addition, lighting, furniture and public amenities are being assessed and repaired across the Downtown and the Chinatown areas including Alex Decoteau, Mary Burlie, Michael Phair and Beaver Hills Parks so that these public spaces are cleaner and feel safer.

This marks an expansion to ongoing cleanup activities across Downtown and Chinatown, which includes proactive graffiti removal on public property (e.g. light posts, traffic signs and electrical boxes) and private property. Across the city, free litter kits and community clean-up grants are available to support community efforts to reduce litter. Service enhancements in Chinatown will continue as long as required.

Funded Opioid Prevention and Response

On May 31, 2022, the City of Edmonton, Downtown Business Association and Boyle Street Community Services [announced](#) they are piloting a new program called Overdose Prevention and Response Teams (OPRTs) to help prevent and respond to drug poisonings in Edmonton. The pilot will run from May to September 2022 and includes a City-funded Downtown Vibrancy grant of

\$195,000. These teams will consist of trained medical professionals and outreach workers that will provide drug poisoning prevention and response throughout the Downtown pedway system and surrounding streets.

Increased Communications and Co-ordination with Businesses and Social Agencies

Effective May 24, 2022, City employees and bylaw officers are now directly engaging with business owners and informing them of support available to clean up both public areas in front of their businesses and private property.

Administration is engaging with the Chinatown and Area Business Association to discuss its relationship with mutual aid agencies and their efforts in the area. There may be opportunities to collaborate, improve outcomes, or reduce challenges. Together, Administration and the Edmonton Police Service are co-ordinating regular touch points with all Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) through the BIA Council, which includes the Downtown Business Association and the Chinatown and Area Business Association.

UPCOMING ACTIONS

Work is underway on a number of initiatives which the City and Chinatown community representatives have identified as priorities.

Develop a Community Enhancement Plan

On June 15, 2022, Administration will present a progress update on capital investments in Chinatown to the Executive Committee of City Council. The 2018 Chinatown Strategy (see [Attachment 4](#)) identified the area between 97 and 101 Streets and 105 and 107 Avenues for streetscape improvements. Key projects and opportunities that have been leveraged include the following:

- Streetscape improvements of residential roads identified in the Chinatown Strategy are being co-ordinated with the Boyle Street and McCauley Neighbourhood Renewal projects for construction in 2023-2025. These include 98 Street, 99 Street, 100 Street and parts of 105 Avenue.

- Mary Burlie Park improvement designs are being co-ordinated with the Boyle Street and McCauley Neighbourhood Renewal project with some elements being included for construction in 2023-2025.
- The 97 Street Bridge is not owned by the City but is identified in the Chinatown Strategy as an asset that needs to be addressed, with ideas ranging from removal to retention. The approach will be confirmed by the developer of the Station Lands development as it is a privately owned amenity space that will be included in a future phase of development.
- The New Harbin Gate installation will be brought forward in the 2023-2026 budget cycle for consideration of design and delivery with an expected funding source from the Downtown Community Revitalization Levy (CRL).

Separately, Administration will work with the community to develop targeted streetscape improvements for the core in Chinatown to assist with prevention of encampment set ups, to be funded through the Chinatown Recovery Fund.

To ensure that infrastructure improvements meet the community's needs over the longer term, Administration will work with Chinatown on a Community Enhancement Plan for City Council consideration. This work will include reviewing the relevant statutory plans and assessing impacts before proceeding further.

Plan to Decentralize Social Services

Administration will work with community, stakeholders and other orders of government to create a five-year plan to redistribute social services from Chinatown and Downtown to other appropriate areas of the city. A more equitable distribution of social services – both across communities within Edmonton and across the greater metropolitan region – can increase access to services for people who need them, and potentially reduce the impacts of their concentration on neighbourhoods.

Improved decentralization of social services will require an understanding of where the people who access social services live and work, and what their mobility patterns tend to be. Administration will undertake research and analysis to understand the geographical intersection between where existing social service providers and their clients are located.

Subsequent work on how to strategically locate social service providers will require close collaboration with partner agencies and the provincial government to determine the most effective and appropriate tools, incentives, and interventions to apply to ensure that social service agencies can continue to operate and serve their clients, while working within their fiscal constraints as non-profit organizations.

The City may also consider what options exist to help ensure that social services are distributed geographically and developed in ways that minimize potentially negative impacts to the surrounding neighbourhoods.

Advocate to Provincial and Federal Governments

The City is a member of the Co-ordinated Community Response to Homelessness Task Force, and looks forward to both its forthcoming recommendations and the Government of Alberta's actions on them in a timely manner.

At that table and others, the City is continuing to advocate to the province to:

- adopt minimum shelter standards and provide increased support for permanent supportive housing;
- better support vulnerable populations;
- stop discharging health patients into houselessness;
- stop releasing people from provincial remand and correctional facilities into houselessness;
- and
- limit pharmacy concentration in Chinatown.

There are opportunities to improve outcomes. For example, the Edmonton Police Service headquarters building now includes a vacant detainee management unit. Converting that to a transition area for those with an opioid dependency would provide appropriate supports. The ongoing estimated cost of this change would be about \$1.4 million annually.

The City will also advocate to the federal government for a prohibition on releasing people from federal corrections facilities into houselessness.

Increase Information, Promotion and Co-ordination

To support better communications between the City and the community, Administration is developing multilingual information materials to provide members of the Chinatown community with timely and accurate information about the services and supports available to them.

The City of Edmonton plans to build a network with organizations like the Chinatown and Area Business Association, Chinatown Transformation Collaboration Society, Downtown Business Association and Downtown Recovery Coalition. Working together with these groups on promotional/marketing/awareness campaigns will help amplify and target messaging and storytelling opportunities to highlight the many businesses, events and activities taking place in Chinatown.

Administration is meeting on a monthly basis with residents, businesses and stakeholders from neighbourhoods that are impacted by unsheltered houselessness and encampments, primarily neighbourhoods in the core of the city. The focus of the meetings is to listen and gather practical information about what's happening on the ground. From there, Administration takes issues back to an internal multidepartment working group to address the concerns using existing resources.

As well, the Mayor, Mayor's office staff and O-day'min Ward Councillor will continue to meet with and support the Downtown and Chinatown communities through sustained community engagement and event participation.

To support better communications between social agencies and the neighbouring community, Administration will increase co-ordination with social agencies and charities to:

- Convene a constructive and facilitated planning session between social agencies and Chinatown business owners to review and address operating procedures that negatively impact businesses and residents

- Convene a meeting of social agencies with provincial and federal governments to focus on issues in Chinatown, Downtown, Alberta Avenue and other impacted business districts.
- Implement a community-wide public awareness campaign reminding charities and charitable people not to drop resources off randomly in Chinatown. The City will reach out directly to charities and provide on-site education to facilitate the delivery of these resources so that it does not impact business owners or residents.
- Ask agencies to reconsider methods of food distribution to minimize litter in and around Chinatown.
- Inform and advocate to the Government of Alberta to add kitchen facilities at the provincially funded Herb Jamieson shelter to prevent the ongoing distribution of packaged food that is creating significant litter issues within surrounding Chinatown businesses and community.

To facilitate this work, Administration will appoint a social agencies client co-ordinator to support the Chinatown and Area Business Association in bringing forward concerns about social agency procedures. In addition, Administration will review and improve the “Good Neighbour” agreements in place with social agencies.

ADDITIONAL PLANS AND STRATEGIES FOR SAFETY

The Downtown Core and Transit System Safety Plan is consistent with the City’s operational approach, and with larger City plans and strategies that have been approved by Council and are moving forward. Reflecting the view that community safety is about both safety and well-being, the City is increasingly using multidisciplinary teams that provide the enforcement or social supports that might be needed in any given situation. Other plans are focused on Downtown economic vibrancy, and City-wide transit security and community safety and well-being.

Multidisciplinary Approach

Through multidisciplinary joint operations, Administration is working with Edmonton Police Service (EPS) on a three-phased approach to improve community safety in the Downtown and Chinatown areas:

- Increase in proactive police presence to get boots on the ground Downtown, in Chinatown, and along Alberta Avenue. Similar to the City's peace officer deployment, this approach is high-visibility and high-engagement.
- Problem identification and creation of multidisciplinary ad hoc project teams to address issues. The composition of these teams will depend on the project, and will include available city resources as well as the EPS. This will use the work Administration has already done in creating the concept of the Multidisciplinary Community Support Teams.
- Determine how to create sustainable shared work models as a standard service level for high-risk/high-demand areas of the city.

Transit Safety and Security Plan

On February 24, 2022, City Council approved the Transit Safety and Security Plan (see [Attachment 6](#)), outlining several initiatives that increase co-ordination and integration between the City of Edmonton, the Edmonton Police Service and Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society, and increase social support provided by the Community Outreach Transit Team (COTT). The plan includes \$3.9 million in funding to:

- Allocate a project director to oversee joint operations
- Increase resources for the COTT (an additional three peace officers, three outreach workers and one outreach co-ordinator) and
- Add two additional Transit Peace Officer foot patrol sergeant positions.

The Transit Safety and Security Plan builds upon the previous work and foundational investments made in 2018 and will help deliver a safe experience for transit riders and users of the Downtown pedway system. Since the beginning of the year, the number of Peace Officers has increased from 70 to 84. The majority of the additional resources were funded on a temporary basis, pending the outcomes of pilot programs like COTT. As the Transit Safety and Security Plan is operationalized, the foot patrol teams of Transit Peace Officers will be assigned to specific transit centres and LRT stations. Police Officer and Transit Peace Officer resources, working in collaboration with Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society, will be deployed in a unified and consistent manner based on collective data analysis with both the City of Edmonton and the Edmonton Police Service as contributors.

Building on past short-term shared deployments, joint planning will be used to organize effective and efficient crime prevention and align crime responses between the teams. The planning will consider the use of joint deployment, a continuum of enforcement resources and evolving public safety techniques. The joint deployment planning will also account for the historical context of enforcement of marginalized populations and the need to build trustful relationships.

Through the expanded COTT, marginalized people in our community will receive the support they need. The City is working with Alberta Health Services to provide people with access to services beyond the scope of the COTT, such as health care, addictions treatment, psychiatric services and other specialized care.

Downtown Safety and Vibrancy Initiative

On May 16, 2022, Community and Public Services Committee of City Council (CPSC) directed Administration to “work with the Downtown Business Association and Edmonton Police Service, to request the use of up to \$1 million from provincially-provided downtown safety resources to fund social workers and mental health specialists to be partnered with law enforcement in Human-centered Engagement and Liaison Partnership Unit (HELP) teams throughout the downtown core and Chinatown, and to supplement daytime shelter space led by Indigenous Community Organizations.”

CPSC also directed Administration to “work with the Downtown Recovery Coalition to allocate up to \$4 million from 2022-2024 from City-provided Downtown Vibrancy Initiative recovery funds to fund social workers and mental health specialists to be partnered with law enforcement in the Edmonton Police Service and Administration to enhance The Police and Crisis Response Team (PACT), Human-centered Engagement and Liaison Partnership Unit (HELP) and Community Outreach Transit Team (COTT) resources in the Downtown, Chinatown and the Transit system, to expand the YEG Ambassador Program, and to supplement daytime shelter space led by Indigenous Community Organizations.”

Work to operationalize that direction is underway.

Community Safety and Well-Being Strategy

On May 24, 2022, City Council approved the Community Safety and Well-being (CSWB) Strategy (see [Attachment 7](#)), and is providing \$8.7 million in funding reallocated from funding previously in the EPS budget for 11 related projects to address immediate needs for the remainder of 2022.

Consisting of a seven pillar framework (anti-racism; reconciliation; safe and inclusive spaces; equitable policies procedures, standards and guidelines; pathways in and out of poverty; crime prevention and crime intervention; and well-being), the CSWB Strategy covers actions which can be carried out by the City with local partners, and that can achieve outcomes which are incremental (two years or less), moderate (three to four years), and transformational (five years and beyond).

The funding is being targeted to several key priority areas for the remainder of 2022:

- \$1.5 million for microgrants for community members to apply and receive funds to help bridge and support the sustainability of new and existing programs in the community.
- \$1.5 million towards the Integrated Call Evaluation and Dispatch Centre to modernize the current call intake process, so that Edmontonians are able to obtain accurate and timely service without having to call a number of different agencies.
- \$811,000 for Indigenous Framework implementation through hiring of full-time positions to support the implementation of City department action plans, develop evaluation and change management methodologies, assist in community engagement and integrate the city's municipal response to the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women & Girls Calls for Justice and the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action.
- \$1 million in support for an Indigenous-led shelter, which requires a project scope and outcomes, a functional program, and a site location analysis which would inform next steps for design and delivery of the facility, including budget and schedule estimates.
- \$1 million for Extreme Weather Protocol implementation of extreme heat activations this summer, including expansion of hydrant and bottled water programs. This also provides time to prepare for and operate the community's response this winter season.
- \$25,000 in additional program funding to Drug Poisoning Response to fund key activities and responses to the drug poisoning crisis, including making appropriate supplies available in the community (e.g. Narcan, educational materials, etc.)

- \$415,000 to support a Community Safety Peace Officer Training and Professional Standards Centre of Excellence; creating a professional development and standards office; and prioritizing professional standards and public transparency.
- \$1.622 million to convene with key partners to integrate a new strategy on Community Wellness for identifying service gaps, addressing the mental health needs of Edmontonians and preventing suicides in Edmonton.
- \$200,000 to support the Edmonton Public Library's (EPL) Sing, Sign, Laugh and Learn Program for two additional positions, which will allow EPL to increase the number of free early literacy classes for caregivers and children.
- \$290,000 to launch a Bridge Healing Centre prototype to demonstrate solutions to discharging people into homelessness from the health system. This would provide patients experiencing homelessness with housing and wrap-around services.
- \$300,000 in Chinatown funding for the purpose of addressing immediate needs for Chinatown and area.

Day Services

We have heard from stakeholders and community members that the increased number of unsheltered and unhoused individuals who have nowhere to go during the day are negatively impacting local businesses and the overall vibrancy of the Downtown area. While providing day services and day shelter space is the responsibility of the Government of Alberta and not within the City's mandated scope of services, due to inadequate financial resourcing and support from the province, City Council recently approved \$1.8 million to fund day services at the Bissell Centre Community Space (10530 96 Street). This funding partially extended a \$10 million allocation in 2021 which increased day shelter service capacity at Boyle Street, Bissell Centre, and The Mustard Seed over the winter months. Those services include:

- Two meals a day and beverages
- Access to washrooms, use of shower facilities, self serve laundry services and recreational activities
- Intake and referral services
- Drop-in space for respite
- Housing services and referrals

- Indigenous cultural support and trauma-informed services, and
- Mental health support.

PROVINCIAL ROLE IN COMMUNITY SAFETY AND WELL-BEING

Community safety and wellbeing is a shared responsibility. The City of Edmonton is doing its part with limited resources. The City relies on property taxes, user fees, and provincial and federal government grants to cover the costs of providing services to Edmontonians. The availability of resources and the City's limited capacity to raise revenues are key determinants in setting the types of services that are provided for public safety and across all 73 lines of business. Services can remain reasonably constant when funding for them is aligned with population growth and inflation.

As outlined above, the City is taking a comprehensive approach to keeping communities safe by balancing policing, enforcement, support services, and community well-being initiatives. Edmonton resources those programs with tax levy revenues and grants from other orders of government (see [Attachment 8](#)). However, the City does not have the legislative authority, responsibility nor the financial resources to address many of the root causes of social disorder.

The City is a strong advocate to partners and other orders of government. The most frequent funding requests have highlighted the City's needs for bridge housing, permanent supportive housing and emergency shelter spaces (see [Attachment 9](#)). In correspondence, budget submissions, meetings and discussions (see [Attachment 10](#)), the City has also asked for resources to address drug poisonings, mental health services, actions related to reconciliation and the impact of intergenerational trauma and economic recovery.

Below, the City has identified areas on which the provincial government should focus resources to support the shared responsibility of public safety.

Grants that Keep Pace

Provincial government funding for police and safety services has not kept pace with inflation and population growth. Over time, this has required the City to pay an increasing share of the costs of policing. A provincial commitment to police funding that addresses growth and inflation would

reflect its renewed commitment to responding to crime and violence, and would better equip the Edmonton Police Service to continue protecting public safety.

For example, the City's proportionate share of police funding continued to increase, as costs increased and the city grew. Prior to 2021 there were two provincial grants that provided police funding:

- Municipal Policing Assistance Grants of \$16 per capita meant that police funding grew with population *but was not adjusted for inflation*, and
- From 2008 to 2011 the Government of Alberta added 300 police officers to municipalities across the province to promote safe and secure communities and help reduce crime. Edmonton received 105 officers and was provided the Police Officer Grant at \$100,000 per officer. *Funding has not been adjusted for inflation.*

The City of Edmonton is asking the Government of Alberta to increase the per capita allocation in the Municipal Policing Grant to accurately reflect population growth and inflation.

The City of Edmonton is also asking the Government of Alberta to pay the full and current cost of a police officer which it capped in 2008 at \$100,000. In 2022, this figure has nearly doubled.

Funding for Mental Health Services

Over the past two years, over one-third of Canadians have experienced challenges with their mental health. Albertans are particularly impacted, reporting the highest rates of hopelessness, stress, sadness, and loneliness or isolation rates¹. The current state of mental health and suicide in Edmonton presents an opportunity to increase collaboration among stakeholders to have the most collective impact. We have seen successful individual and community results for multidisciplinary projects that pair mental health, addiction support or resource workers with enforcement or safety officers. For example, the City of Edmonton has invested in the Neighbourhood Empowerment Team

¹ Source: Canadian Mental Health Association, Alberta Division
<https://alberta.cmha.ca/covidreport/#:~:text=Key%20Findings,and%20wellbeing%20during%20the%20pandemic>

(NET) which pairs a youth worker, a community safety liaison and an Edmonton Police Service civilian employee to support community level safety initiatives, and in the Community Outreach Transit Team (COTT) which pairs an outreach worker from Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society with a City of Edmonton Transit Peace Officer to provide services and support within the transit system.

The City is asking the Government of Alberta to immediately increase its investment in a collaborative model, such as the Police and Crisis Response Team (PACT). An existing partnership with Alberta Health Services pairs mental health therapists from Alberta Health Services' Access 24/7 program with Edmonton Police Service officers to respond to citizens in need of mental health crisis support, consultation, and transportation to designated facilities. Additional funding of \$605,000 annually would allow for resources to provide phone consultation services on a 24/7 basis for consultation calls, so that deployed police resources can be fully utilized within the community.

Data and Funding for Addictions Response

The City of Edmonton has been working with partners to better support people using substances and investing in the agencies and organizations who are responding to drug poisonings on a daily basis. The Community Safety and Well-Being Strategy (see [Attachment 7](#)) includes increasing staffing to support collaboration with agencies, harm reduction efforts, and activities to prevent poisonings. To do this effectively, the City requires access to reliable data.

The City of Edmonton has deployed a Drug Poisoning Outreach Dashboard, drawing on data from the City and 24/7 Crisis Diversion to identify locations with the most calls for service. This allows for a more targeted, data-driven response to the current crisis. Built with privacy and data ethics in mind, the dashboard does not reflect personally identifiable information and draws in data related to time, location and call type. Access to the dashboard is secure and only provided to partners who agree to the terms of use.

The City is asking the Government of Alberta to support access to Alberta Health Services' Emergency Medical Services' call for service data, limited to the elements mentioned above, for inclusion in the Drug Poisoning Outreach Dashboard. In return, secure access to the application

would be available to Alberta Health Services to help inform the response efforts in Edmonton. Access to this data will inform the aggressive efforts on the front line to curb this crisis.

Edmonton is currently in the midst of a drug poisoning crisis with a record number of recorded drug poisoning deaths in 2020 and 2021. With limited access to supervised sites, equitably distributed where needed across the city, and an increasingly toxic drug supply, individuals are using drugs in LRT stations where there is security monitoring and medical assistance in case of a drug poisoning. This is evident by the increase in the number of medical incidents in LRT stations.

Transit spaces are not appropriate locations for drug use, so there is a critical need for additional spaces and investment to meet the increased need in the city. To support addictions recovery, the City is asking the Government of Alberta to establish several treatment and recovery facilities throughout Edmonton with ongoing support to help sustain long-term recovery.

The City is reviewing the report released by the provincially-appointed Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Council earlier this spring and looks forward to learning more about how the province plans to respond to the recommendations of the Council which include recovery-oriented housing and a continuum of supports for those struggling with addiction.

Supports that Avoid Transfers into Houselessness

The Edmonton Police Service headquarters building includes a vacant detainee management unit. Converting that to a transition area for those with an opioid dependency would provide appropriate Downtown supports to ensure that people who have been detained can receive addiction services before being released.

The City and the Edmonton Police Service are asking the Government of Alberta for \$1.4 million annually to provide this service.

As part of the Community Safety and Well-being Strategy, the City recently provided \$290,000 in one-time funding to support the Bridge Healing Centre, a pilot project with the Royal Alexandra

Hospital that will see 144 patients experiencing houselessness receive immediate housing and wraparound services when they are discharged. If the pilot proves effective in improving health outcomes for both individuals and the community, the City is requesting longer-term funding to sustain these services.

Adoption of Emergency Shelter Standards

Shelter conditions have been identified as a key contributor to the incidence of encampments in Edmonton, and shelter operating hours have been identified as a contributor to social disorder. The City of Edmonton developed Minimum Emergency Shelter Standards (see [Attachment 11](#)) to reduce barriers to accessing shelter by expanding upon and complementing the Government of Alberta's existing shelter expectations. Shelter providers have indicated that they support the implementation of the standards but require additional funding to fully implement them.

The City is asking the Government of Alberta to provide the necessary additional funding to emergency shelter providers so that they can expand the available capacity in the shelter system and implement the City's Minimum Emergency Shelter Standards.

Equitable Funding for Emergency Shelter Support

The Government of Alberta has the responsibility to fund emergency shelters and transitional housing throughout the province. *Currently, there are approximately 634 permanently funded emergency shelter spaces in Edmonton compared to 1758 spaces in Calgary.* Immediate support from the Government of Alberta to provide Edmonton the same level of support provided to Calgary will have an immediate impact in improving safety and well-being in Edmonton.

The City is asking the Government of Alberta to immediately provide permanent funding for additional emergency shelter spaces in Edmonton.

Funding for Wrap-Around Services for Supportive Housing

Supportive housing for people transitioning out of homelessness is a proven way of ending chronic episodic homelessness. In 2022, 436 units from eight supportive housing projects in Edmonton are scheduled to be completed. For these supportive housing projects to be open and ready to accommodate Edmontonians transitioning out of homelessness:

The City of Edmonton is requesting that the Government of Alberta increase Homeward Trust Edmonton's Outreach and Support Services Initiative (OSSI) funding by \$8.9 million ongoing, starting in 2022, and continue to increase it as additional supportive housing comes online (to an estimated total of \$24.1 million by 2026).

These operating funds should be provided to Homeward Trust Edmonton, the owner of these units, who will contract the building's operators and bring the facilities online to immediately break the cycle of homelessness for 436 Edmontonians.

OUTCOMES, MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION

Outcomes

The outcomes of Edmonton's Downtown Core and Transit System Safety Plan are intrinsically linked to those outlined within Edmonton's Community and Safety Well-Being Strategy. In the longer term, through realization of the Strategy, the following outcomes will be realized:

- **Anti-Racism:** Policies and structures are anti-racist, committed to reconciliation, and support equity and inclusion. Individuals and communities who have experienced systemic racism and historical trauma are included, valued and respected.
- **Reconciliation:** Edmontonians, Indigenous Peoples, and the City have authentic, interconnected relationships that honour, understand, and collaboratively integrate Indigenous experiences, histories, and cultures.
- **Safe and Inclusive Spaces:** Communities are supported and empowered to lead the cultivation and sustainment of safe, inclusive, vibrant, sustainable and resilient spaces.

- **Equitable Policies, Procedures, Standards and Guidelines:** People making Edmonton home have enriched experiences through equitable access to programs, services, and spaces.
- **Pathways In and Out of Poverty:** Edmontonians have the economic, social and cultural resources to have a quality of life that sustains and facilitates full and meaningful participation in the community.
- **Crime prevention and crisis intervention:** Crime is reduced through community collaboration and culturally appropriate approaches to safety and security that leave people feeling safe and secure.
- **Well-being:** Edmontonians have the capacity and opportunity to pursue experiences of connection to self, body, land, arts and culture, community, human development and spirit.

The short and medium term outcomes of the seven pillars of the Community Safety and Well-being Strategy are described in [Attachment 7](#).






Measurement and Evaluation

Edmonton is in the process of developing a Community Safety and Well-Being dashboard, which will be released to the public in the fourth quarter of 2022. The dashboard will display the progress towards outcomes and will incorporate additional data sources pertinent to the CSWB Strategy, including the Edmonton Police Service dashboard, SafeCityYeg (a web-based mapping tool that allows Edmontonians to report where they feel unsafe or safe in their communities and why). It will also include other information made available through open data sources and shared-use agreements, such as economic indicators from the municipal census, the Government of Alberta's economic dashboard and Statistics Canada reporting.

The EPS' Corporate Performance Measurement Framework is an evidence-based accountability mechanism which provides the EPS with an integrated, systematic approach for identifying, developing, and using data to assess organizational performance. Many of the measures originate from a nationally developed framework. Trends are continuously identified, shared with leadership, and discussed in detail during strategic planning sessions. Decisions are made by leadership on which of the trends are the most important to address within existing resources and what should be

allocated accordingly. The EPS Performance Framework is structured around four dimensions, in line with the Canadian Police Performance Framework: crime and victimization, police activities and deployment, police resources, and public trust. To further break down one of these dimensions as an example, EPS measures crime and victimization through rates of violent and non-violent crime, rates of property crime, and numbers of violent and property crime victims.

Updates are provided to the Edmonton Police Commission through the Business Plan, which details how resources are allocated to deliver on the priorities and the goals and outcomes identified in the EPS' Strategic Plan. Progress made toward the goals and outcomes is provided in the EPS' Annual Report. These pieces of the Framework are publicly available documents which supplement the 35 reports presented to the Edmonton Police Commission annually. Through this data-driven process, the EPS holds itself accountable to the people of Edmonton. It provides a means for assessing organizational performance and understanding rationale for resource allocation. The table below shows the measures that EPS tracks related to violence and crime.

| MEASURE | OUTCOME | 2018-2019 | 2019-2020 | 2020-2021 | 2021-2022 | TREND |
|---|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|--------------------|---|
| Violent Crime Rate Data Source: STATSCAN Table 35-10-0183-01 Data Available: <i>Annually</i> | EPS reduces victimizations in high crime areas | 1,311.20 | 1,290.19 | 1,235.20 | 1,222 ⁷ |  |
| Violent Crime Victims Data Source: <i>EPS</i> Data Available: <i>Annually</i> | | 10,974 | 11,051 | 11,070 | 11,132 |  |
| Percentage of people victimized more than once Data Source: <i>EPS</i> Data Available: <i>Annually</i> | | 8.7% | 8.4% | 9.0% | 9.2% |  |
| Property Crime Rate Data Source: <i>EPS</i> Data Available: <i>Annually</i> | EPS resources are made available to reduce calls for service | 5,779 | 6,421 | 5,068 | 4,395 |  |
| Property Crime Victimization Data Source: <i>EPS</i> Data Available: <i>Annually</i> | | 57,855 | 62,733 | 53,099 | 46,347 |  |
| Referrals - Youth Data Source: <i>EPS</i> Data Available: <i>Annually</i> | EPS connects offenders, witnesses, and victims to services so that diversion pathways are created | N/A | N/A | N/A | 153 | N/A |

CONCLUSION

Ending houselessness, mental health issues, addictions and trauma along with increased enforcement, taking a broad perspective on safety, connecting with community and responding to changing conditions are the key approaches in Edmonton's Downtown Core and Transit System Safety Plan. Those approaches steered the city well in making operational and resourcing decisions before and during the pandemic, and they continue to guide decisions going forward.

The City is confident in the services it is delivering, and committed to ongoing conversations about safety in high-priority communities. We remain committed to finding the right balance between enforcement and support.

As initiatives are implemented, they will be monitored so that impacts are understood and addressed. It is possible, for example, that increased enforcement in Chinatown pushes social disorder into other communities. City Administration will monitor these impacts and adjust resources accordingly.

It is clear that Edmontonians are passionate about safety and wellbeing in their community. The City cares deeply too, and welcomes the interest of stakeholders and governments committed to building a safer city for everyone.

LIST OF ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: [Bylaw 8353 Conduct of Transit Passengers](#)

Attachment 2: [Amendment to Conduct of Transit Passengers Bylaw](#)

Attachment 3: [Downtown Vibrancy Strategy](#)

Attachment 4: [The Chinatown Strategy: Energizing a Prosperous Future](#)

Attachment 5: [Chinatown Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design \(CPTED\) Recommendations](#)

Attachment 6: [Transit Safety and Security Plan](#)

Attachment 7: [Community Safety and Well Being Strategy](#)

Attachment 8: [Resource Analysis](#)

Attachment 9: [Edmonton's needs for housing](#)

Attachment 10: [Chinatown and Downtown Advocacy Submissions and Meetings with Other Orders of Government](#)

Attachment 11: [Minimum Emergency Shelter Standards](#)