

Memo



Social and Health Development

To: All Members of Municipal Council and Strategic Leadership Team

From: Kevin Dickins
Deputy City Manager, Social and Health Development

Date: June 13, 2024

Regarding: Community Encampment Response Plan: Community Feedback

Background

The Whole of Community System Response has been a community plan endorsed by Council that has aimed to support the most marginalized members of the community through the creation of 24/7 Hubs and Highly Supportive Housing. The Community Encampment Response Plan was developed to guide and articulate the encampment portion of the plan which outlines the intent to support from a basic human needs lens to people while mobilizing care to help individuals on to a pathway from trying to survive outdoors to moving indoors to receive the health and social supports offered in hubs and highly supportive housing.

Prior to finalizing the plan, and the report to accompany the plan, there were two community engagement sessions held on May 21, 2024, and May 23, 2024. The sessions there were opportunities for members of the community to ask questions in a group setting and engage in one-on-one conversations with Plan authors and City Administration. Attendees were also provided the opportunity to give written feedback through handouts at the sessions or submit online. The feedback received from all sources is organized according to themes of: concerns expressed, support received, and questions raised.

Community Feedback

Concerns:

Locations

- That encampments should not be concentrated in one area of city (particularly OEV, or the Core Area), but should be kept near needed services.
- Proximities: request that encampments not be near playgrounds, parks, schools, daycares, senior housing, railway yards or overpasses
- Specific locations flagged as concerns:
 - Queens Avenue from English to Colborne Street, especially in front of 603 Queens Ave Elizabeth St. (North of Dundas)
 - Bishop Cronyn Church
 - Shores of Thames River
 - Do not want encampments in Kiwanis Park

Financial:

- Why are we defunding services instead of supporting organizations that support those unsheltered?

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- Money going to police services vs. support for housing
- Anticipated increase in housing-insecurity and of people in encampments due to funding cuts
- Use of substances in encampments, needles, perceived increase in drug dealing
- Visible increase in fires, garbage, and violence
- Perceived presence of/fear of sex offenders, domestic violence
- Perception of no rules – “low barrier” understood to mean that encampment residents can set their own rules
- Concerns that community anger, apathy, frustration, and nimbyism is a challenge
- Too many services are hard to navigate
- Winter plan for unsheltered people
- Pets’ wellbeing in encampments
- Noise

Support for:

- Existing encampment safety protocols
- Existing no-go locations or encampments
- Keeping encampments out of municipal lots and off of sidewalks/pathways
- Continued waste management at camps through daily garbage clean up
- Meals for unsheltered individuals, water and showers (individual), common basic basin to clean in
- Stability for those unhoused
- Counselling and mental health services and medical attention for those unsheltered
- Preventative care for mental health and access to medical and dental care, education
- Rehabilitation services
- Transitional housing
- Security for and in encampments
- Moving encampments away from the Core
- Live-in programs to support folks to learn skills like grocery shopping, cooking a meal, seek recovery if desired.
- Exploring sanctioned encampment – with “security, protocols and site support workers”
- Continuing to explore opportunities for Hubs
- Continuing to finance the services/transitional housing/Hub beyond July
- Prioritizing building more housing

Questions:

- *Where **can** people camp?*
- *How are protocols enforced?*
- *What does “near” mean in terms of proximity of encampments?*
- *What happens when people are removed from no-go zones?*
- *Is a protocol needed on emergency situations? Like epidemic or sudden illness? Or important emergency?*
- *What happens when bylaws are violated e.g. noise. If we can’t manage current encampments, how are we going to manage additional ones?*
- *How many outreach workers are working daily? What education do they have?*
- *What are the Service Depots?*
- *What are you waiting on for sanctioned encampments? Is there a tipping point where we would consider relocating unhoused folks out of the city Centre?*
- *Is there any consideration being given to normalizing the existence of several encampments?*

- *Why were services that help keep people in their homes before they face homelessness not supported by city councilors in the budget?*
- *How many people living in encampments have we spoken to?*
- *If the public finds an encampment in an "No Go" Area who, and how do they connect to the City People etc. to address this?*
- *Do we have a plan for what organizations are going to be doing what work?*
- *Do we have a budget for encampments?*
- *Are you doing any more depots?*
- *Where can we send people who are not housed now?*
- *Would there at least be 3 encampments with daily services in acceptable locations?*
- *Ensuring appropriate First Aid/Overdose response is promptly available, do Depots address this concern?*
- *What should residents do when they find people asleep on the street (are they alive or dead)? Who do we call?*

Outcomes

Community feedback collected through the channels outlined above helped finalize the Community Encampment Response plan. There are some areas of the plan where feedback was more relevant and helpful in shaping it. Particularly around proximity and service depots.

If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out.

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