



Downtown Safety Leadership Table

2024 March 6

Outcomes and Recommendations

Updated March 13, 2024: Revised numbering of the recommendations

INTRODUCTION

Established in September 2023 by Mayor Jyoti Gondek, the Downtown Safety Leadership Table (The Table) is a representative group of downtown leaders convened to identify barriers, opportunities, solutions, and strategies to address real and perceived safety issues in downtown Calgary. Over seven months, The Table engaged with over 45 community groups and social service partners/providers to understand the issues impacting downtown Calgary, the scope of existing services and initiatives, and how to best support and enhance safety and vibrancy in our city's downtown.

KEY FINDINGS

From our broad engagement, several recurring themes emerged:

- A need for increased support to address the needs of our community's most at-risk populations and those experiencing homelessness.
- A need for enhanced levels of maintenance, service, and outreach in our downtown to ensure residents and visitors feel safe.
- An opportunity for improved communications to help citizens understand the supports, investments, and initiatives underway or upcoming.
- The inadequacy of resources and funding for social service providers dealing with complex and drastically increasing addiction and mental health challenges. These limitations also impact service providers' ability to attract, train, and retain qualified staff.
- Considerable perception challenges impacting the downtown experience for visitors and residents that must be addressed to support an active and vibrant downtown.

These themes informed the four focus areas outlined on page 3.

OUR MANDATE

The Table's mandate is to identify gaps and existing resources, recommend removal of barriers, and advise on proposed actions to address safety concerns in downtown Calgary to ensure that downtown continues to grow, and is comprised of safe and vibrant spaces.



GOAL AND FOCUS AREAS

The Table's goal is to provide a series of strategic recommendations, informed by diverse community voices and data, that will improve safety, inclusivity, and perceptions of safety for an enhanced downtown experience for all.

This goal is supported by four strategic focus areas:

- 1. Government Response** – strengthen investments and remove barriers to improve the delivery and outcomes of services.
- 2. Strategic Communication** – ensure the range of targeted investments and actions are effectively communicated.
- 3. Community Collaboration** – deliver coordinated and measured responses through key service providers and inspire downtown organizations and communities to come together with a vested interest to influence better outcomes.
- 4. Specialized Initiatives** – implement targeted, innovative approaches to address diverse community needs.



LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The Downtown Safety Leadership Table acknowledges that our activities, our consultation process, and the recommendations in our report take place on the ancestral and traditional territory of the Blackfoot Confederacy, made up of the Siksika, Piikani, Amskaapiikani and Kainai First Nations; the Îethka Nakoda Wîcastabi First Nations, comprised of the Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Goodstoney First Nations; and the Tsuut'ina First Nation. The city of Calgary is also homeland to the historic Northwest Métis and to the Otipemisiwak Métis Government, Métis Nation Battle River Territory (Nose Hill Métis District 5 and Elbow Métis District 6). We acknowledge all Indigenous people who have made Calgary their home.

PROCESS & CONSULTATION

Delivering a safe and inclusive downtown experience for all is a community issue that requires a community response. The Table believes this response must be cross-jurisdictional—the community, downtown businesses, and all orders of government must step up and work together. Our consultation process reflected this belief.

To better understand the issues, experiences and concerns related to downtown safety, the Table met with over 45 community partners and individuals:

- Enforcement and public safety—Calgary Police Service, Community Standards (Bylaw), Transit (Public Safety), Calgary Fire Department.
- City of Calgary—Community Research & Evaluation, Calgary Transit, Parks.
- Homelessness and social serving agencies—Calgary Homeless Foundation, United Way, Trellis, The Drop-In Centre, Alpha House, carya, Distress Centre, Salvation Army.
- Tourism and local business—Calgary Hotel Association, Tourism Calgary, Calgary Public Library, Fort Calgary, Business Improvement Areas.
- Post-secondary institutions—University of Calgary, Mount Royal University, Bow Valley College
- Arts and culture groups—Arts Commons, Contemporary Calgary.
- Community and resident groups—Aboriginal Standing Committee on Housing and Homelessness, Downtown Community Associations.
- Representatives from the development and real estate community—Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA), Building Industry and Land Development Association (BILD), Real Estate Sector Advisory Committee (RESAC), NAIOP Commercial Real Estate Development Corporation (Calgary).
- Jurisdictional research from San Diego (through Calgary Municipal Land Corporation) and direct consultation with Helsinki, Finland.
- Members of the public with expertise in Calgary’s downtown and urban geography and in neighbourhood change and inequality.
- Indigenous elders representing the Treaty 7 Nations.
- Calgary Chamber of Commerce.
- Individuals with lived experience.

The Table also considered the findings of a downtown area online survey completed by 354 residents, business owners, students, and front-line staff.

WHAT WE HEARD

The Table's four focus areas and their supporting recommendations have been crafted with careful consideration of several recurring themes that emerged during The Table's consultation process, including:

1. ADDICTION, MENTAL HEALTH, AND HOMELESSNESS INFLUENCE PERCEPTIONS OF SAFETY

Current State and Existing Resources

Downtown Calgary has visible safety concerns; and among Calgarians who live, work, visit and/or spend time downtown, perceptions of safety are generally negative. Downtown businesses have seen an increase in property damage as well as aggressive behaviour and violence toward staff and patrons.

Safety concerns relate primarily to increases in open drug consumption, drug activity, and drug related debris, to the increase and encroachment of makeshift and permanent encampments, and to the unpredictable behaviours exhibited by some who struggle with addiction and other mental health issues. Notably, in most cases, those with addictions and mental health challenges are more likely to be the victims of crime or to perpetrate crimes among themselves—they are not, as a rule, dangerous to bystanders.

Service delivery and our justice systems continue to fail the most at-risk members of our community. Difficulties of access—to addiction and mental health treatment options, to affordable housing, and to supportive facilities for at risk populations—perpetuate the foundational issues. In addition, community members from historically marginalized communities indicate racism and prejudice, which impact the sense of safety for accessing services and gathering in the downtown. Meanwhile, limited around-the-clock resources in the social sector limit the options for law enforcement partners requiring prompt, real-time resolutions in matters of public safety.

Currently, 34 community outreach teams work with at-risk populations and those experiencing homelessness in Calgary, providing services from basic needs to intensive case management. The City of Calgary's Bylaw team assists by providing bylaw intervention for public safety—for example, addressing encampments—and it delivers safe interventions for pets belonging to those experiencing homelessness. Members of Calgary Police Services and Transit Peace Officers endeavour to balance community needs for safety with the needs of those experiencing homelessness. Community services provide additional support.



Gaps

Shortcomings in service coordination and in the sharing of public safety data among responders are clear barriers to timely and effective responses. Lack of coordination leads to duplication of services and hinders effective response planning. Jurisdictional boundaries and barriers to information-sharing perpetuates these issues.

During consultation, downtown residents, visitors, business owners and operators expressed concerns and shared perceptions about downtown safety. The most serious concerns relate to open consumption, drug poisonings, vandalism, encampments, and the high visibility of populations experiencing addictions and mental health issues.

Diverse groups agree that the challenges for downtown's at-risk populations have fundamentally changed; the challenges are cascading, compounding and growing ever more complex. This is outpacing and severely stressing funding and resourcing models, staff resilience and wellbeing, and overall capacity to meet people where they are at.

Further, the desire to help individuals from shelters, encampments, and rough sleeping access appropriate housing and/or social services is hampered by inadequate supply of subsidized, supportive, affordable housing options, limited resources, and lengthy waits to access detox, treatment and mental health supports. Encampment numbers have risen dramatically since the pandemic, with new layers of complexity related to fentanyl and methamphetamine use.

2. TRANSIT SAFETY

Current State and Existing Resources

C-Train stations, platforms and adjacent areas tend to experience a concentration of drug activity, panhandling, harassment and violence. Many people avoid using C-Trains at night, particularly in the downtown area. As C-Train stations become increasingly problematic, businesses and services along the downtown LRT line see increases in property damage and criminal activity.

Congregations at C-Train stations are more prevalent and noticeable during the daytime than in the evening. Calgary Transit Peace Officers regularly patrol trains, stations, and surrounding areas. The Community Outreach Team (Calgary Transit paired with Alpha House HELP Team) assists individuals experiencing homelessness with resources and services. C-Train platforms have HELP buttons and encourage the use of a text line that connects users to immediate support in crisis situations.

Gaps

While user experience and safety are key considerations on Calgary Transit infrastructure and properties, no national standard or comprehensive guide on transit safety exists. Calgary is taking a leadership role in filling this gap and defining a national standard with its recently launched comprehensive Public Transit Safety Strategy; however, the strategy's effectiveness will not be known for some time. C-Train stations and platforms used as places to stay warm during colder months increase the visibility of safety concerns, which in turn influences public perceptions.

3. CONGREGATING AND LOITERING

Current State and Existing Resources

The public realm is where people from all walks of life find social connection and a sense of belonging. Encounters among citizens of varied circumstances and world views make cities and urban life interesting. This is how we, as a community, build understanding and empathy. When the sense of safety and security in a city's public realm is threatened, its capacity to break down social barriers is greatly diminished.

A significant shortage of managed indoor spaces for those experiencing homelessness contributes to street-level encampments and congregations. Public spaces designed for gathering and equipped with seating tend to attract congregations and loitering by individuals seeking warm spaces to rest or sleep was a frequently cited concern.

Some downtown properties have reported that post-pandemic, they deem it necessary to lock entryways to their buildings or otherwise constrain access to a few monitored points of entry. Due to significant increases in vandalism, abusive/violent interactions, and real threats to personal security, facility managers are tightening perimeter security to exclude those thought to present safety concerns.

Emergency homeless shelters offer daytime access; however, not all shelter users are comfortable remaining in shelters throughout the day, and some seek out different locations across the city.

Outreach services facilitate access to community resources and winter coordination provides some relief with daytime warming centres downtown and in neighbouring communities off the C-Train lines.

Gaps

Limited daytime drop-in spaces at locations other than shelters are available in extreme weather for those experiencing homelessness and for at-risk populations seeking connection, basic needs, health care, and access to resources; however, spaces viewed as safe and welcoming for women, LGBTQ2S+, and youth are limited. Many people experiencing homelessness gather in public spaces like the Central Library and food courts.

While outreach services provide supports related to harm reduction, basic needs, shelter, and health care, their collective effectiveness is limited by inadequate service coordination.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN AND STRUCTURAL CONDITIONS

Current State and Existing Resources

As issues that impact the pedestrian experience, downtown stakeholders point to shortfalls in maintenance and cleaning, limited modernized infrastructure including inconsistent quality lighting, increased graffiti and access to safe public washrooms and showers.

The Plus 15 network is rife with safety issues after 6 PM and on weekends. Required to remain open, they are prone to acts of vandalism and violence without ongoing security and policing.

Daily clean-up crews deal with encampments around the Dermot Baldwin Way, and outreach teams regularly perform needle debris services. Newer C-Train platforms have significantly improved lighting that support safer environments in the evening. Programming public plazas and spaces with small, frequent activations improves vibrancy and creates opportunities for safe social connection. Bylaws and enforcement impel property owners and operators to address graffiti in a timely manner.

Gaps

The focus on cleaning up garbage and needle debris from encampments needs to be broadened to avoid unsanitary, and potentially harmful conditions where encampments pop up regularly. Limited access to bathrooms leads to public defecation and urination, posing further health risks. Post-secondary institutions connected to the Plus 15 network are not comfortable leaving access open after 6 PM due to the costs for additional monitoring and security. Businesses and property owners/operators have concerns related to social disorder, damage to public and private property, and theft occurring in the Plus 15 network. The economics that gave rise to the Plus 15 network as a corridor connecting office towers have fundamentally changed; to cultivate an equitable, inclusive, and active downtown, the pedway's tendency to attract street-level issues requires careful scrutiny and definitive action.

Some believe that too many downtown plazas are underutilized for programming and activations, inviting users and behaviours that make the spaces uninviting and unsafe. While inspiring connection, community programming carries the risk of displacing distressing activity from one space to another. Downtown's communal spaces require a thoughtful approach to prevent social disorder from simply migrating to other locations.

5. COORDINATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

Current State and Existing Resources

While many services and resources exist to address safety issues, limited coordination curtails the collective capacity to meaningfully address downtown's needs. Business owners cite limited response from emergency responders and government agencies to heightened concerns about theft, property damage, loitering and encampments—matters that have increased operating costs and made it more difficult to attract and retain staff due to concerns about personal safety. Limited coordination, under-reporting of incidents, and limited communication between businesses and responders impact response times.

Private security companies, police, and enforcement officers as well as outreach teams seek to address the needs of all populations. Some existing formalized partnerships bring enforcement and social services together to address social disorder for those experiencing homelessness, addiction, and mental health issues.

Improved communication about initiatives related to downtown safety is an opportunity for community partners, funding organization, City administration, and all orders of government.

Gaps

Inadequate coordination between enforcement and outreach services impacts response times and diminishes response effectiveness. A long-term strategy, planning oversight, and implementation support are needed to resolve this issue and to effectively address safety concerns. Concentrated enforcement in some areas may simply displace undesirable activities to areas with less security presence.

6. EMERGENCY SHELTERS AND THE CENTRALIZATION OF SERVICES

Current State and Existing Resources

Beyond providing overnight stays, referrals, employment support, and case management, shelters offer a range of specialized programs, basic medical services, and supports for addictions and mental health. Shelters focus on understanding the needs of those experiencing homelessness and on connecting them as quickly as possible to opportunities for permanent housing.

The large scale of some downtown shelters creates a concentration of at-risk populations. This sometimes precipitates undesirable and unlawful behaviour and creates safety concerns for both those staying and working in emergency homeless shelters. It also creates conditions ripe for the victimization of vulnerable persons, and it impacts nearby businesses and residents. Many people who require shelter services are hesitant to access shelters because of concerns for personal safety.

Gaps

Faced with perennial shortfalls in funding and qualified staff, shelters and social service agencies are finding it increasingly difficult to respond to the current reality shaped by a shortage of appropriate housing, affordability issues, and the opioid crisis. The complexity, severity, and variety of challenges faced by front-line agencies have fundamentally changed since the pandemic, as have the services shelters are expected to provide—yet the resourcing models and funding formulas to meet these needs haven't substantially changed. Shelters as an essential service are not consistently or effectively funded.

The Table also heard about an unmet need for specialized services—for example, for young adults who age out of youth shelter/care and turn to adult shelters. Funding restrictions and ongoing funding uncertainty limit the ability of front-line agencies to proactively plan for long-term service requirements, and they impede the retention and training of critical front-line staff.

7. CRIMINAL ACTIVITY AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

Current State and Existing Resources

For many, downtown safety concerns are linked to perceived and witnessed increases in violence and criminal activity. Businesses, visitors, city services and post-secondary institutions note a significant increase in interactions with individuals exhibiting unpredictable, aggressive, and concerning behaviours. The frequency of theft, property damage, personal harm, and dumpster fires has increased in certain downtown business districts.

Calgary Police Service responds to criminal activity. Police who patrol on foot or on bicycles improve access for local businesses and citizens. The Stephen Avenue Safety Hub and East Village Safety Hub include dedicated spaces for report writing, multi-service collaboration and equipment storage by officers of all enforcement agencies.

Criminal prosecution and the judicial process are governed by the Criminal Code of Canada and established sentencing guidelines. Decisions around charges and incarceration depend on the availability of evidence and the likelihood of securing sentences.

Gaps

Many businesses note that anticipated response times make them hesitant to the call to police for assistance or reporting. Without easy access to report in person, instances of social disorder and criminal activity within the downtown core go unreported. (Business owners and others express resistance to travelling to the Ramsey station for reporting.) This under-reporting skews the measures of crime that inform funding and resource allocation decisions.

For some members of our community, environments can feel unsafe or tense when there is a city or private uniformed presence. There is a mistrust of enforcement agencies that has formed from a history of bias, racism, and other community interests prevailing over those of at-risk groups.

IMPACT TO THE COMMUNITY

The Table heard overwhelmingly from businesses, City services, front-line agencies, post-secondary institutions, and arts and culture organizations that the money and staff time now required to respond to social disorder, vandalism, debris, violence, and other crimes is untenable. From the costs for additional security and property repairs to staffing challenges, lost productivity, and impacts on staff morale and workplace culture, downtown businesses are bearing an increasingly heavy burden, often holding operations together through sheer will. Some businesses are compelled to move, close or curtail times of operation. Many cannot attract or retain staff who feel sufficiently safe to work downtown in the evenings.

All orders of government are contributing public funds toward programs and initiatives to support community safety and address matters of mental health and addiction. However, these investments are piecemeal, and they often fail to address root causes.

Social disorder, crime, and other issues that foster negative perceptions of safety are elevating the costs of owning, managing, and maintaining businesses and properties in Calgary's downtown, making many businesses reluctant to operate in the core. Businesses are spending significant amounts to address these issues: the average commercial property owner/operator downtown has invested over \$120,000 per building (in 2022) to address symptoms resulting from gaps identified in this report and is on pace to invest over \$132,000 when last surveyed in 2023—all in addition to rising baseline security costs and struggling to attract and maintain staff. The increasing costs to maintain a business or property and provide a safe environment for employees and customers in the downtown core cannot continue and cannot be normalized.

Throughout our consultations, the Table also heard overwhelmingly about the human cost to safety concerns in downtown. Safety and perceptions of safety deeply affect Calgarians and visitors; and when significant safety concerns and perceptions of safety exist, people become less likely to spend time downtown—the economic and social heart of our city.

The Table also heard strong expressions of empathy and concern for those experiencing homelessness and those who are at-risk. Inadequate housing, affordability issues, and the challenges of mental health and addiction disproportionately affect some populations in our community, and we all witness the consequences. Calgarians want assurance that the people in their neighbourhoods and communities have timely access to appropriate services and housing so that their safety and dignity is preserved.

The human and economic costs of safety-related concerns will continue to escalate if prompt and decisive action is not taken.

OUTCOMES & RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Downtown Safety Leadership Table has identified four focus areas supported by 28 recommendations designed to support safety in Calgary's downtown. The recommendations are not presented in order of priority. The Table recommends that City of Calgary Administration identify a suitable lead and implementation path to prioritize and advance each recommendation.

Timeline

The recommendations for each focus area are grouped under three proposed implementation timelines:

Quick Wins (1 year):

These recommendations are immediately actionable and can be implemented within a year or less.

Further Research (1-3 years):

These recommendations are priorities that will require further research and/or time to implement.

System Impacts (3+ years):

These recommendations are to be actioned under a systems approach with multi-order government support and may take up to three years or more to fully implement.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Strengthen investments and remove barriers to improve the delivery and outcomes of services.

Quick Wins

1 Year

- 1. The City of Calgary to immediately support state of good repair and community safety improvements to enhance the downtown experience, including:**
 - Increasing the frequency, responsiveness, and scope of downtown cleaning and power washing, prioritizing public spaces/amenities and underpasses.
 - Improving and replacing lighting in a timely manner along streets and public spaces to improve sight lines and perceptions of safety.
 - Collaborating with community partners to determine priority areas.
 - Encouraging a community-centered approach and incentive grant program for private entities and community organizations (e.g., businesses, BIAs) to undertake regular cleaning of the public realm (sidewalks, furnishings, fixtures, etc.) immediately adjacent to their owned, managed, or leased properties.
 - Exploring incentives for businesses to lock or relocate garbage disposal bins to mitigate unsafe behaviour.
 - Exploring a dedicated Downtown Maintenance Team that provides elevated maintenance services and responds directly to increased maintenance and cleanliness concerns.
- 2. Direct a plan to resource a series of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) studies of high-risk downtown hotspots with the aim to improve the public realm.**

Review recommendations with impacted partners (e.g., downtown businesses, post-secondary institutions, students) and identify funding for immediate improvements to mitigate current high-risk areas. Consider including the implementation of CPTED study recommendations as part of a more comprehensive plan to address maintenance requirements, property standards, and other improvements to further support the overall downtown experience.
- 3. Improve availability and access to downtown public washrooms** with appropriate levels of maintenance, management, and security. Leverage best practices and lessons learned from existing Calgary public washroom pilot programs.

4. Establish daytime resource centres that provide supports and access to services for individuals experiencing homelessness. Daytime resource centres should:

- Enhance the services of the Coordinated Community Extreme Weather Response to provide year-round access.
- Provide a decentralized model of smaller sites in scattered and accessible locations and leverage existing sites such as the Journey Church and Parachutes for Pets.
- Include access to washrooms, showers, laundry, internet, mailboxes, and storage where possible.
- Accommodate and provide resources for pets.
- Provide coordinated case management, crisis response, and outreach resources to address immediate needs.

5. Add capacity to provide dignified and safe access to all populations in need regardless of barriers, backgrounds and/or social issues. Update City of Calgary policies and protocols related to managing encampments and rough sleeping city-wide, with the following considerations:

- Incorporate strategies that reduce risks for those living in encampments while addressing the needs of local businesses and residents situated near active encampments.
- Calgary Police Service and Calgary Bylaw response to criminal activity within and around encampment sites.
- Effectively resource coordinated support systems to strengthen access to programs and services for those living in encampments.
- Collaborate with community partners to address gaps in services and improve safety within encampments.
- Improve coordination between agencies and the orders of government to address encampments on Provincial land within City boundaries.

6. Enhance police and uniform presence downtown through:

- A centrally located, publicly accessible and visible Calgary Police location with a service counter for all reporting.
- Calgary Police Commission to advance plans for a downtown District Office that meets the needs of the community.
- Continue with the downtown Safety Hub model to allow for continued collaboration and coordination between enforcement services.
- Build upon the Government of Alberta and the Calgary Public Safety and Community Response Task Force's work to create a hybrid health and police hub that provides on-site police services and facilitates access to recovery-oriented services, housing options, cultural supports, and primary health services.
- Ensure uniformed presence creates positive relationships with Indigenous and BIPOC individuals. This needs to begin from an understanding of the long history of racism and bias in enforcement systems that has resulted in mistrust and contributed to trauma.

7. Review the current state of assets, safety, useability, accessibility, aspects of social segregation, changed economics, and operational feasibility of the Plus 15 network.

- Work with building owners and managers to develop solutions to shared challenges including costs associated with ensuring user safety throughout the network.
- Improve organic surveillance and perceptions of safety at street level by identifying sections of the Plus 15 network that may be suitable for closure or dismantling to encourage more street-level foot traffic.

8. Coordinate, resource, and incentivize frequent and sustainable event activations downtown among all partners to enhance safety and nurture vibrant, inclusive spaces:

- Consider incentives that encourage downtown employers and/or property owners to develop and deliver programming activations.
- Foster direct community participation in programming of underutilized spaces in our downtown, with the intent to make it simple and accessible for organizations to connect with the necessary parties and/or acquire the required permitting to program and activate private or public spaces.

Further Research or Time Required **1-3 years**

9. Through The City of Calgary’s Community Safety and Well-Being team:

- Establish a process to coordinate existing and upcoming strategies such as the Transit Public Safety Strategy, Home is Here – The City’s Housing Strategy, Mental Health and Addiction Strategy, and other City of Calgary strategies related to downtown safety. Recommendations need to be aligned, tracked and, as required, deconflicted.

10. Establish a consistent and predictable fund for downtown initiatives that enhance coordinated strategies to support safety, community, and vibrancy projects.

11. Audit the use and availability of existing HELP buttons to identify opportunities to improve or expand use. Explore implementation of community-facing communication channels—e.g., an app or text line—that connect individuals to downtown services and resources.

12. Establish a permanent Downtown Safety Table that:

- Reviews emergent concerns, suggests solutions, and leverages data to optimize community-led responses.
- Upholds the values of collaboration, nimbleness, responsiveness, being solution oriented and founded on dignity for all.
- Monitor progress and perform ongoing evaluation of the impacts of actions taken to improve downtown safety and support at-risk populations and individuals experiencing homelessness.
- Is supported by The City and includes membership from social serving agencies, business community, post-secondary institutions, arts and culture, BIPOC organizations, and Indigenous leaders and/or organizations.

13. Address the escalating constraints of existing funding models and service delivery capacities due to rapidly changing, increasingly complex realities to ensure adequate allocation of resources among shelters, first responders, and outreach agencies.

- Evaluate how resources can be better targeted and/or redistributed to more effective agencies.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of current funding models relative to supporting broad agency and organization mandates and scopes in the context of rapidly changing, increasingly complex community needs.
- Reduce organizational reliance on project and competitive funding sources and emphasize operating funding that enables operationalizing mandates, operational planning, and investing in longer-term strategic initiatives.
- Provide ongoing multi-year base funding for agencies and service providers that provide essential services for complex populations and individuals experiencing homelessness and shift away from single-year funding models, which strain community partners.

14. The City of Calgary and the Government of Alberta to work together to implement and expand resources for Calgarians experiencing complex mental health and addictions.

- Building on the recently announced allocation of City land for up to 250 high-acuity transitional housing units, further accelerate investment for an additional 150 specialized housing units distributed across the city for those living with complex needs and cycling in and out of treatment, homelessness, and the justice system. And continue to identify opportunities to leverage city-owned land and remove policy barriers to accelerate housing development.
- A collaborative and rapid response is required to expedite and expand availability and access of community-based addictions treatment options for acute care (medically supervised detox), inpatient treatment (including for opiate and/or methamphetamine abuse and concurrent disorders) and chronic care services (for relapse prevention and support). Service delivery must include pre- and post-treatment transitional housing options and 24/7 nursing and home care.
- Rapidly establish approved processes and channels for real-time information sharing between system providers and services for better coordinated responses when personal safety is at risk.
- With social serving agencies and enforcement organizations, develop and resource a coordinated, collaborative, and responsive assessment and case management system to address situations of community risk and safety.

15. Advocate to the Province of Alberta to develop a Community Court in Calgary to address bylaw citations, breaches, and warrants related to social disorder and minor property-related crimes resulting from complex addiction and mental health. A Community Court will enhance the enforcement of court-mandated interventions for addiction and mental health stabilization that address the underlying factors and costs associated with the administration of justice.

16. Encourage law enforcement partners to build greater awareness and further utilization of Calgary's provincial specialty courts including Calgary Indigenous Court, Calgary Drug Treatment Court, and Domestic Violence Court, which help ensure offenders access resources to address the underlying issues of their criminalization.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

Ensure the range of targeted investments and actions are effectively communicated.

Quick Wins

1 year

17. Create an easily accessible public-facing communications resource that serves as a 'single source of truth' by consolidating and sharing plain language, multi-agency information on downtown safety initiatives, investments, elevated emergency responses and resources from key partners. This resource should:

- Include the current state of operations and actions taken by shelters, businesses, and other community partners to address ongoing concerns.
- Provide frequent updates to the public to increase awareness of safety initiatives and their progress.
- Help clarify misconceptions and perception challenges related to downtown safety through transparent data sharing and progress updates.
- Consolidate data by streamlining incidence tracking at one source rather than multiple, often duplicated sources.
- Provide a listing of available resources and sources of credible data to connect the public with up-to-date information.

18. Develop a coordinated and secure data compilation and sharing platform between key partners that removes silos, supports coordinated service planning, and allows analysis of trends and emerging issues that can be used to support public communications. It should:

- Provide collaborative analysis of trends, issues, and situations to help shape strategies and outcomes that address current and potential concerns.
- Include a multi-partner data dashboard with all stakeholders to coordinate efforts in identifying needs and responses as required.
- Develop a privacy agreement for participating parties to ensure sensitive and private information is protected.
- Improve The City of Calgary Administration's inter-departmental understanding of downtown priorities, break down silos, and ensure every City department is working with a common goal and vision for downtown.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

Deliver coordinated and measured responses through key service providers and inspire downtown organizations and communities to come together with a vested interest to influence better outcomes.

Quick Wins

1 year

The recommendations in this quick wins section are deeply connected and should be considered and implemented together.

19. Form a dedicated Downtown Maintenance and Safety Team that supports downtown safety and vibrancy through:

- Collaborative and effective communication initiatives.
- Collaboration with outreach teams.
- Supporting downtown maintenance and cleanliness with year-round operations.

20. Increase effective coordination through 24/7 deployment of outreach services by key community partners in Calgary's downtown and surrounding areas. Leverage the varied skill sets of agency-operated outreach services with grassroots outreach teams to activate stronger collaboration and shared resources and to achieve the right balance of supplies and services. Consider:

- Establishing standards of practice for all outreach teams identifying outreach zones, times of service, types of services delivered, and specialization of teams for deployment.
- Developing a common outreach web application that allows community partners to coordinate service delivery and allocate appropriate staff.
- Further expanding mobile medical outreach services to ensure those experiencing homelessness can access medical services where they are.
- Increasing funding for organizations and partnerships working to improve coordination of outreach services.

21. Improve coordination of policing and enforcement services by:

- Advancing technology to reduce duplication of services and deploy the right services to the right situation.
- Enhance communication between corporate and private security partners, Calgary Transit, Bylaw, and police to share safety concerns and relevant data and to coordinate responses as required.
- Develop a clear, comprehensive strategy to intervene with high systems users more effectively.
- Enable community-led initiatives like the Community Information Exchange Service and Situation Tables to allow first responders and social serving agencies to share information and services and improve response and service coordination.

SPECIALIZED INITIATIVES

Implement targeted, innovative approaches to address diverse community needs.

Quick Wins

1 year

22. Support the development of affordable, supportive market housing

tailored to the needs of Calgarians and connected to the work of 'Home is Here, the City of Calgary's Housing Strategy' and 'A Way Forward, Affordable Housing for Urban Indigenous'.

23. Further development of the Indigenous Gathering Place (IGP) and other

Indigenous places to gather—spaces where Indigenous peoples can share, connect, heal, and celebrate Indigenous cultures.

24. Resource grassroots and community-led volunteer groups and organizations

that have high-trust and shared experience with community members that are experiencing homelessness and marginalized conditions.

25. The City of Calgary to advocate with the Government of Alberta for the continuation and expansion of service hub models and funding for shelters to ensure that recovery-oriented addiction and mental health services, primary health care, cultural connections, and housing options are available to those accessing or leaving shelters.

Further Research or Time Required

1-3 years

26. Incorporate Indigenous recovery supports that reflect a culturally informed continuum of care options for Indigenous peoples struggling with mental health and substance abuse. Create culturally informed approaches to assist families and those supporting family members struggling with addictions and mental health challenges.

27. The City of Calgary and Government of Alberta to provide opportunities and resource supports to Indigenous and Indigenous-serving organizations to offer frequent and varied programming and activations downtown that enable Indigenous people to connect with the natural world.

System Impacts

3+ years

28. Many vulnerable and at-risk youth transitioning to adulthood require access to the shelter system but do not feel safe in an adult shelter. Create a transition shelter between youth brackets and the adult system to better meet the expressed needs of this group in transition.



NEXT STEPS

The Downtown Safety Leadership Table recommends that The City of Calgary lead the implementation of the recommendations provided in this report. This should include prioritizing recommendations, taking immediate action where possible, identifying key community partners to lead and collaborate on initiatives, and pursuing multi-order government collaboration and funding opportunities. Where necessary, The City of Calgary must lead advocacy efforts with other orders of government to ensure recommendations are actioned.

DOWNTOWN SAFETY LEADERSHIP TABLE (DSLTT) MEMBERS & ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

MEMBERS

Heather Morley, DSLT Co-Chair, Chief Executive Officer Inn from the Cold.

Mark Garner, DSLT Co-Chair, Executive Director Calgary Downtown Association.

Brett Bergie, Director of Government Affairs, Bow Valley College.

Clare LePan, Vice President, Communications and Strategic Partnerships, CMLC

Jay Islam, Government and Member Relations Manager, BOMA Calgary.

Katelyn Lucas, Executive Director, Elizabeth Fry Society and Chair Aboriginal Standing Committee on Housing and Homelessness.

Scott Boyd, Superintendent, Calgary Police Service.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Downtown Safety Leadership Table extends thanks to the many community and organization representatives for their support and participation that has helped inform the outcomes contained within this report. The Table also extends thanks to the City of Calgary for their support in logistics, scheduling and engagement activities that have been invaluable to the Table's efforts.

