



Standing Committee Report

REPORT NUMBER		047-2026-Growth-Strategy & Engagement
DATE		
PREPARED	January 12, 2026	FILE
STANDING		
COMMITTEE	February 10, 2026	
MEETING DATE		
SUBJECT	Guiding Criteria for Designated Encampment Sites	

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to seek feedback from the Quality of Life Standing Committee on guiding criteria for identifying designated encampment sites, and to request support for proceeding with site identification and the next phase of consultation.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As part of implementing the City's [10-Part Enhanced Encampment Response Plan](#), Administration is advancing work to identify potential designated encampment sites, building on the Distance Guidelines (Attachment A – 2024 Approved Distance Guidelines) approved by Council in 2024.

While the Distance Guidelines remain an important tool, distance compliance does not always reflect operational, safety, environmental, or service-delivery considerations. Pairing distance-based screening with clearly identified designated sites provides greater clarity and predictability for encampment residents, service providers, and the broader community.

This report presents guiding criteria and seeks feedback from the Quality of Life Standing Committee. No specific sites are identified or recommended at this time.

Subject to feedback, the guiding criteria will be applied to identify potential locations, undertake site-specific community and stakeholder engagement, and report back to the Standing Committee with consultation results and up to three recommended designated encampment sites for endorsement to City Council.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Implementation Context

In April 2024, Council considered the feasibility of designated and sanctioned encampments through [Corporate Report 137-2024 – Response to Unsheltered Homelessness: Feasibility of Designated/Supported Encampments](#). Council endorsed a designated encampment approach, as it is more feasible and better aligned with municipal responsibilities and fiscal capacity.

While specific locations for designated encampments were not identified, Council approved a set of Distance Guidelines to operationalize this approach. Since implementation, this approach has demonstrated value by providing a consistent basis for evaluating site compliance, and guiding conversations with encampment residents, community partners, and the broader community. At the same time, operational experience has highlighted the need to supplement distance-based screening with additional criteria to address service delivery, safety, environmental, and overall site suitability considerations.

This report responds to *Item 5 – Identify options for designated encampment locations within Urban Cores* of the City's [10-Part Enhanced Encampment Action Plan](#). Specifically, the Action Plan (the Plan) states:

In collaboration with community partners, people with lived and living experience, and Indigenous leaders and representative organizations, and in accordance with the Distance Guidelines, up to three designated encampment areas with essential services are identified, reducing the strain on community partners and Administration, and leading to improved outcomes for encampment residents (pg. 5).

As per the Plan, and based on projected need, three designated encampment sites will be located as follows:

- A minimum of two sites located within Urban Cores (one in the North Core and one in the South Core).
- A third site that may be located outside the Urban Cores, but not in a rural area, due to service delivery, accessibility, and operational constraints.

Guiding Criteria for Designated Encampment Sites

In addition to the City's existing Distance Guidelines, the following guiding criteria will be used to inform the identification of potential designated encampment sites, recognizing that not all criteria may be applicable or achievable in every location.

- **Minimum site size:** Ideally, at least one usable acre to allow for appropriate spacing, safety requirements, and access for services and emergency response.

- **Established use:** Preference for locations with encampment activity to avoid introducing encampments into new areas.
- **Emergency and operational access:** Adequate access for emergency responders, sanitation and garbage services, outreach vehicles, and snow clearing operations.
- **Land-use compatibility:** Exclusion of spaces with regular permitted, programmed, or revenue-generating uses, including parks with active City-led or contracted programming.
- **Proximity to services:** Reasonable walking distance (approximately 1.5 km or less) to public transportation or essential health and social services.
- **Service feasibility:** Ability to provide and maintain basic services such as portable toilets and regular servicing, garbage collection, potable water access, and outreach support.
- **Year-round operability:** Sites should be capable of operating safely in all seasons, including winter conditions.
- **Accessibility:** A minimum of two sites should reasonably support accessibility considerations such as the presence of gravel or paved surfaces, recognizing that full accessibility may not be achievable in all locations.

The guiding criteria were developed through a community safety and well-being lens, with the intent of balancing the safety and dignity of encampment residents with the safety of service providers, emergency responders, and the broader community.

Emerging Trends

Historically, camping trailers and vehicle-based living have been limited within the community. More recently, however, Administration has observed a noticeable increase in individuals sheltering in vehicles and trailers. While the three designated encampment sites are intended to address tent-based encampments, Administration recognizes that vehicle-based living presents distinct spatial, safety, and servicing considerations.

As such, there may be a future need to explore a designated location specifically suited to vehicle-based sheltering. Administration will continue to monitor trends and operational pressures and will report back to Council should this additional need arise. This report does not seek approval for an additional site. Any future recommendations related to vehicle-based living would be brought forward separately for Council's consideration.

Next Steps

After receiving the Quality of Life Standing Committee's feedback on the guiding criteria for designated encampment sites, Administration will identify potential options and undertake site-specific consultation with additional stakeholders, including but not limited to, the business community and representative organizations, and the broader public.

Consultation results, along with three recommended designated encampment sites, will be presented to the Quality of Life Standing Committee on March 10, 2026, for feedback and endorsement, before being presented to City Council for its consideration.

This timeline is informed by the anticipated conclusion of overflow winter shelter capacity on April 30, 2026. Confirming designated encampment sites in advance of this date will support proactive communication with individuals experiencing homelessness and enable coordinated planning among service providers and partner organizations.

CONSULTATION

The proposed guiding criteria for designated encampment sites are partly informed by previous consultation results on the feasibility of sanctioned and designated encampments as described in [Corporate Report 137-2024](#). Several consistent themes shape the guiding criteria, including:

- The importance of proximity to services and public transportation;
- The need for basic infrastructure such as sanitation, garbage collection, and outreach access;
- Strong disagreement with the use of parks with active programming or other heavily used public spaces; and
- The importance of safety, dignity, and manageable site size.

In alignment with the *Enhanced Encampment Response Plan*'s direction to collaborate with community partners, people with lived and living experience, and Indigenous leaders and representative organizations on designated sites, Administration engaged with the stakeholders below in December 2025:

- Indigenous leaders and representative organizations;
- Service providers working directly with people living in encampments;
- Front-line workers participating in the local Outreach Workers Network; and
- People with lived and living experience of encampments.

Feedback through these consultation efforts has broadly supported the guiding criteria identified in this report, particularly the emphasis on safety, emergency response and service access, and limits on site size and number of individuals.

Comprehensive consultation results, including feedback gathered in December 2025 and additional feedback gathered from site-specific consultations, will be presented to the Quality of Life Standing Committee on March 10, 2026.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATION

Designated encampment sites can be implemented within existing resources; however, achieving voluntary uptake may require additional investments to support site safety and functionality, and responsiveness to resident needs. Should such enhancements be identified, Administration will report back to Council with options and seek direction.

BACKGROUND

October 21, 2024, Corporate Report 384-2024 from C. Olsen, Director Strategy & Engagement was represented and recommended that the Human Rights-Based Community Action Plan be approved, and that a copy of the resolution be sent to the Office of the Federal Housing Advocate, and provincial and federal members of parliament.

October 7, 2024, Corporate Report 384-2024 from C. Olsen, Director Strategy & Engagement was presented as a first report and proposed an enhanced encampment response through a ten-part Human Rights-Based Community Action Plan.

August 12, 2024, Corporate Report 312-2024 from R. Willianen, Policy & Research Analyst and C. Olsen, Director Strategy & Engagement was presented and recommended to Council that the encampment distance guidelines for trails, sidewalks, parking lots and bridges remain at 5 metres, and that they be included in the overall Distance Guidelines that were approved and ratified on July 15, 2024.

July 15, 2024, Memorandum dated July 5, 2024, from C. Olsen, Director Strategy & Engagement was presented and proposed amended distance guidelines to include 20 metres away from private non-residential property and 5 metres away from rivers and railway tracks as they were not originally reflected. The final recommendation as presented in the memorandum was approved and ratified.

June 24, 2024, Corporate Report 252-2024 from R. Willianen, Policy & Research Analyst and C. Olsen, Director Strategy & Engagement was presented to Committee of the Whole and provided recommendations related to adopting distance guidelines, and advocacy items to other orders of government related to encampments and unsheltered homelessness.

May 6, 2024, Council directed that the City conduct an environmental scan of municipal approaches to designated and sanctioned sites, undertake an assessment of recommendations to municipalities by the Office of the Federal Housing Advocate, update the Encampment Response Protocol, further define designated encampments for the City, and continue to coordinate a human-rights based encampment response.

April 22, 2024, Corporate Report 137-2024 from C. Olsen, Director – Strategy & Engagement and R. Willianen, Policy & Research Analyst, was presented to Committee

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of the Whole and provided an update on the feasibility of designated encampment locations, including community consultation results.

REFERENCE MATERIAL ATTACHED

Attachment A – 2024 Approved Distance Guidelines

REPORT PREPARED BY

Rilee Willianen, Supervisor of Encampment Response – Growth

REPORT SIGNED AND VERIFIED BY

Kerri Marshall, Commissioner - Growth

Date (01/30/2026)