

Corporate Report

REPORT NUMBER 252-2024-City Manager's Office-Strategic Initiatives & Engagement	
DATE PREPARED	June 14, 2024
	FILE
MEETING DATE	June 24, 2024
SUBJECT	Report Back – Response to Unsheltered Homelessness- Designated Encampment Framework

RECOMMENDATION

WITH RESPECT to Corporate Report 252-2024 (City Manager's Office, Strategic Initiatives & Engagement) we recommend that the distance guidelines as outlined in this report be adopted within the City of Thunder Bay;

AND THAT the lands municipally known as 306 Victoria Ave. S. (the "**Viscount Lot**") be identified as a site for a built structure pilot project;

AND THAT a letter from the Mayor, on behalf of City Council, be sent to potential funders in support of a built structure pilot project located on the Viscount lot;

AND THAT City Council advocate to the Government of Ontario for the following:

- to fulfill the cost-matching requirement to secure 2024 federal budget funding to address the urgent issue of encampments and unsheltered homelessness;
- to improve the adequacy of social assistance by increasing social assistance rates so that recipients are better able to meet their basic needs, including the cost of living and housing;
- to fund low-barrier crisis stabilization spaces for people with mental health and/or substance use related issues that operate 24 hours per day, seven days per week across the city as part of a full continuum of evidence-based services, treatment and wrap around supports;

AND THAT City Council urge the Government of Canada to establish a National Encampment Response Plan as recommended in the Federal Housing Advocate's February 2024 final report;

AND THAT the City Manager and City Clerk be authorized to execute any necessary documents;

AND THAT a copy of this resolution be sent to the Premier of Ontario, Doug Ford, Honourable Michael Parsa, Minister of Children, Community, and Social Services. Honourable Paul Calandra, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and all Ontario municipalities;

AND THAT Outstanding List Item 2024-006-ADM Response to Unsheltered Homelessness – a Protocol for the City of Thunder Bay, be removed from the Outstanding List;

AND THAT any necessary by-laws be presented to City Council for ratification.

LINK TO STRATEGIC PLAN

Within the Maamawe, Growing Together, City of Thunder Bay Strategic Plan 2023-2027:

Strategic Direction: All Together. We honour the truth and reconcile for the future.

GOAL: Strengthen the City's relationships with Indigenous communities, leaders and organizations to advance Truth & Reconciliation priorities together.

GOAL: Work toward inclusion, diversity, equity, and respect for all.

Strategic Direction: Safety and Well-being. Our community is healthy, safe, and strong.

GOAL: Improve access to supports for priority populations to narrow gaps in equity.

GOAL: Enhance safety and well-being at the community level through climate action and environmental design.

GOAL: Create and maintain strong neighbourhoods and Indigenized spaces where people connect and engage.

Additionally, this work connects with the following City Council approved strategic plans:

Community Safety & Well-Being Plan

Priority 2: Housing and Homelessness; Targeted Outcomes: Reduce Indigenous homelessness by 50 percent by 2027; Increase transitional and supportive housing opportunities in Thunder Bay

Indigenous Relations & Inclusion Strategy

Pillar 1: Respectful relations; 2. Honour & foster relations with Fort William First Nation, Metis, and local Indigenous Partners

Pillar 2: Responsive city; 5. Inclusive research & policy development

Pillar 4: Community prosperity; 9. Provide guidance to make City services responsive to needs of Indigenous Peoples; 10. Improve outreach & communications on City services; 11. Advocate & work with governments & local partners to improve outcomes

Thunder Bay Drug Strategy

Housing Pillar: Advocating for more supportive housing for people with complex needs; Contributing to the understanding of homelessness in Canada.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Municipalities across Canada, including Thunder Bay, are grappling with a rise in unsheltered homelessness and visible encampments. An environmental scan conducted by Administration reveals a variety of approaches that fall broadly into two distinct models: sanctioned encampment sites, and permissible encampment sites. An alternative to designated encampments seen in some municipalities are built structure sites. Each model requires careful consideration because housing and homelessness are under the jurisdiction of the District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB) and thereby administered externally to the City.

This Report provides Council an overview of the two models of designated encampments, and an example of a built structure site. To address unsheltered homelessness within the City's jurisdiction and capacity, the report recommends:

- Council adopt the encampment distance guidelines (see Attachment A) as outlined in this report
- Council hold Viscount lot for a period of up to two years to be made available to support a proposed Built Structure Site pilot project
- Administration continue to work in partnership with TBDSSAB and other community partners to identify long-term solutions
- Council advocate for increased funding, resources, and policy reform from other orders of government to address substandard social determinants of health, including housing and income

DISCUSSION

Service System Managers in Ontario: Housing & Homelessness

Across Canada, municipalities are facing a surge in unsheltered homelessness, leading to the proliferation of visible encampments. Housing and homelessness fall under provincial and local jurisdiction, creating a varied landscape of responses since the federal government, while influential in policy and funding, lacks direct control over these issues. In Ontario, certain social services, such as housing and homelessness, are administered by Service System Managers. The role of Service System Managers is to oversee systems planning, funding, and manage the delivery of housing and homelessness services and programs.

The province of Ontario designated the District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB) to deliver Ontario Works, Childcare services, and Housing & Homelessness programs, and provides a funding model flowed through

TBDSSAB to deliver on their mandate. Meaning, the City does not receive dedicated provincial funding for housing and homelessness. However, because encampments are usually on municipally owned property, the City has a role in addressing unsheltered homelessness via policy, process, strategic support, and coordination.

Human Rights in Canada

Fundamental rights and freedoms, such as the right to equality and the right to life, liberty, and security, are guaranteed to all individuals. In Canada, human rights are protected provincially by the [Ontario Human Rights Code](#), and federally by the [Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#), which forms part of Canada's constitution – the highest law in all of Canada. As a result, all federal, provincial, and territorial laws, municipal by-laws, and government actions must comply with the *Charter*. Laws, including municipal by-laws, and government actions that do not comply with the *Charter* will be struck down by courts.

The Charter is particularly relevant in discussing unsheltered homelessness and municipal responses in addressing this issue. A growing body of precedent-setting legal decisions, particularly in British Columbia and Ontario, continue to build jurisprudence establishing a “right to shelter” within section 7 (right to life, liberty, and security) of the *Charter*. The decisions have found that municipal by-laws and municipal actions intended to evict people living in encampments, particularly when the number of homeless individuals exceeds the number of *available* and *truly accessible* indoor sheltering spaces, violates *Charter* rights. Efforts to address unsheltered homelessness by the City of Thunder Bay must remain consistent with the law, including this growing body of section 7, “right to shelter” jurisprudence.

While some believe their rights to use public spaces are compromised by the presence of encampments, it's essential to distinguish between fundamental human rights and inconveniences. The Charter protects the right to life, liberty, and security, which includes having shelter as a fundamental right. In contrast, the expectation to use public spaces without encountering encampments is not a protected right. Courts have consistently ruled that the need for shelter and safety for vulnerable populations outweighs these inconveniences. However, community concerns remain significant, necessitating a balanced approach that respects the human rights of those living in encampments while addressing broader community issues.

Human Rights-Based Approach

In April 2023, Council adopted a human-rights based approach, spearheading a broader movement among Ontario municipalities to address the needs of encampment residents with dignity and respect. This commitment aligns with recommendations from the Federal Housing Advocate's [final report](#) and positions the City to benefit from significant federal funding. The 2024 federal [Solving the Housing Crisis: Canada's Housing Plan](#) earmarks \$250 million, to be cost-matched provincially, for a total of \$500 million towards encampment responses. Eligibility to receive funds is contingent on adopting

human rights-based strategies. By upholding this approach, the City not only honors its obligations to its most vulnerable citizens but also enhances its ability to secure vital funding.

Response to Unsheltered Homelessness Task Force

Despite lacking formal jurisdiction and dedicated funding for these issues, the City recognizes the urgency of addressing unsheltered homelessness and continues to support efforts like providing limited financial resources to external outreach efforts, facilitating portable toilets and garbage collection, providing staff time through the Response to Unsheltered Homelessness Task Force (Task Force).

The Task Force, chaired by the City's Director of Strategy & Engagement, meets bi-weekly to provide updates and address emerging issues related to encampments. In response to Council's direction to enhance community communication, Corporate Communications has recently joined the Task Force. Additionally, encampments have been added to the "Report a Problem" function on the City's website, with plans to add a dedicated webpage on the Task Force.

The Task Force exemplifies a collaborative approach coordinated by the City and includes representation from:

- City of Thunder Bay (Community Strategies, Indigenous Relations, Municipal Licensing and Enforcement, Thunder Bay Fire Rescue, Corporate Communications, and Parks and Open Spaces)
- CP Police Service (no current representative due to staffing changes)
- District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board
- Elevate NWO
- Lakehead Region Conservation Authority
- People Advocating for Change through Empowerment (PACE)
- Thunder Bay District Health Unit
- Thunder Bay Police Service

Regular updates from Task Force membership include:

- Number of individuals known to be living in encampments.
- Inactive and active sites, including portable toilets and garbage collection needs.
- Health and safety issues or concerns.
- Emergency shelter space occupancy rates.

Notably, the Task Force was recently advised that in the warmer months, capacity in the emergency shelter system decreases due to overflow beds scaling back and Grace Place's Out-of-the-Cold Program closing.

Emergency Shelter System Capacity – Current as of June 2024			
Shelter Name	Regular Beds	Overflow Beds	Total Beds
Urban Abbey (women, low barrier)	20	0	20
Shelter House (all gender, low barrier)	62	0	62
Salvation Army (men, abstinence)	20	20	40
TOTAL	102	20	122

- **Regular Beds:** The number of individuals the shelter can accommodate under normal operating circumstances.
- **Overflow Beds:** Additional capacity available during emergency situations or peak demand periods.
- **Total Beds:** The sum of the regular and overflow capacity, representing the maximum number of individuals emergency shelter system can accommodate.

From May 1, 2024 – June 14, 2024, the TBDSSAB reported an average of 81 out of 102 regular beds occupied nightly (79% average occupancy rate). The TBDSSAB also reported that Salvation Army will make their overflow beds available as necessary. For comparison, Elevate NWO reported 156 people living in encampments, with 135 individuals regularly engaging with their supports and services. These reports demonstrate a lack of sufficient capacity in the current emergency shelter system.

Approaches to Designated Encampments

In responding to the growing crisis of encampments, some municipalities have implemented designated encampments. A high degree of variation in approaches exists between municipalities, ranging from limited to full support. An environmental scan reveals two distinct models for consideration:

1. Sanctioned Encampment Sites
2. Permissible Encampment Sites

1. Sanctioned Encampment Sites (Not Recommended)

Sanctioned encampment sites offer a structured environment where individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness can reside with access to comprehensive supports and services. These sites aim to enhance living conditions for encampment residents and improve service delivery efficiency for service providers. However, the establishment and maintenance of sanctioned sites presents several challenges and raises several considerations regarding their effectiveness and sustainability.

Criteria for Site Selection

If the City were to consider establishing sanctioned sites, specific criteria should guide the selection of suitable locations. Sites would have to meet the distance guidelines outlined in the section that follows; be immediately available and free from construction or disruptions, ready for use within 1-2 months with minimal preparation, have

winterized drinking water and communal hydro connections, reachable by service and emergency vehicles, safe for pedestrian access, and close to public transit. They should also be located near the downtown cores and existing encampments, and should not occupy actively programmed public park space or interfere with major public events. Subject matter experts advise that sites should not surpass 25 tents or 30 individuals, as they will likely become unmanageable after that point. In examining these criteria and the number of people currently experiencing unsheltered homelessness, Administration concludes there is not enough municipally owned land to adequately support an appropriate number of sanctioned sites.

Considerations

One of the City's primary challenges in implementing sanctioned sites relates to jurisdiction. Since the management of social services, including housing and homelessness, is the TBDSSAB's jurisdiction, the City of Thunder Bay does not receive dedicated funding for homelessness-related initiatives. This creates significant human and financial resource limitations, impeding our ability to support and manage sanctioned sites.

The City's current staffing levels are inadequate to meet the additional demands that sanctioned sites would impose. Establishing these sites would require at minimum three new full-time employees: one Supervisor and two Outreach Workers. Furthermore, building trust and effectively engaging with individuals in encampments takes time and dedicated effort, stretching the City's limited resources even further.

Land availability is another significant limitation. In following the criteria for site selection outlined above, the City does not have enough municipally owned land to support the number of sites required to meet current demand (6 sites minimum), which is expected to rise. This lack of available municipally owned land complicates the logistics of establishing and maintaining sanctioned sites.

Community and security concerns further complicate the implementation of sanctioned sites. Feedback from encampment residents indicates discomfort with the presence of security guards or on-site cameras managed by the City. Implementing security measures would also necessitate privacy impact assessments, adding to the overall costs and timelines for establishing these sites.

Other municipalities have also noted that without clear exit strategies prior to their implementation, sanctioned sites run the risk of becoming entrenched and normalized, which leads to unclear pathways into stable housing.

Financial resources associated with maintaining sanctioned sites is another critical concern. These sites, especially during Thunder Bay's harsh winter months, require substantial investments in infrastructure for power, heating, snow removal, and essential services. Without additional financial resources from other orders of

government or partnerships, the City cannot sustainably cover the operational costs associated with these sites. An estimate for one site is included below for reference.

Sanctioned Site – Estimated Annual Operating Costs	
Item	Estimated Cost
Clean Drinking Water	\$9,700
Nutritious Food	\$279,000
Waste Management	\$72,000
Hydro Utility Bill	\$10,000
Water Utility Bill	No estimate received
Internet Utility Bill	\$1,800
Harm Reduction Supplies	\$0
Staffing	\$300,000
Security Personnel	\$745,000
Gas and Insurance	\$3,000
Incidental Site Supplies	\$6,500
TOTAL	\$1,427,000

Sanctioned Site – Estimated One-Time Costs	
Item	Estimated Cost
Power Installation	\$44,000
Water & Sewer Servicing	\$75,000
Toilet, Shower, and Laundry Facilities with Belongings Storage	\$309,000
Fleet Truck – Extended Cab	\$60,000
Lighting Installation	\$11,000
Internet Services	\$5,000
TOTAL	\$504,000

Sanctioned Site – Total Estimated Cost	
Annual + Start-Up TOTAL	\$1,931,000
Unforeseen Costs + Incidentals (10%)	\$193,100
GRAND TOTAL – Year 1	\$2,124,100

Estimates for each site would vary. However, to effectively support the current number of individuals with professional guidance to not exceed 25 structures per site, we anticipate the need for six sites at minimum. Thus, it can be reasonably assumed that this estimate can be multiplied by six (minus \$60,000 for the new fleet truck).

Total Cost for six sites minimum:

- \$12,744,600 overall – Year 1
 - \$8,562,000 annual operating costs
 - \$3,024,000 one-time costs
 - \$1,158,600 unforeseen costs and incidentals

Recommendation

Administration strongly advises against adopting sanctioned sites for several reasons. Firstly, managing these sites falls outside the municipal jurisdiction and capacity of the City of Thunder Bay. Secondly, the financial burden is significant, and the City cannot sustain these costs without significant external funding. Thirdly, there is a lack of sufficient municipally owned land and staff capacity to support the required number of sites and their operational needs. While sanctioned encampment sites offer potential benefits, the City must consider alternative strategies that align with its jurisdictional scope and resource capabilities.

2. Permissible Encampment Sites (Recommended)

Permissible encampment locations involve a set of established distance guidelines (Attachment A) that strike a balance between public interests and encampment resident needs and human rights. In devising these distance guidelines, Administration used their professional judgement to adapt the distance guidelines from the City of Hamilton to be suitable for our community. Administration then engaged with people currently living in encampments (see Consultation section) and updated the distance guidelines based on their feedback. The updated distance guidelines were reviewed and discussed with the Task Force and the City's Executive Management Team before being finalized. Administration is also working with a Mapping Technician in Infrastructure, Development & Operations to create an internal facing map to support the Task Force in assessing compliance.

Distance Guidelines

An encampment, defined as locations where one or more people live in an unsheltered area in temporary structures, are not to be located:

- On or within 100 metres of a school, or licensed children daycare centre.
- On or within 100 metres of a playground, pool, or splash pad.
- On or within 50 metres of any lake, beach, pond, or boat launch.
- On or within 50 metres of any actively programmed park, active sports field, inclusive of but not limited to, skateboard parks, fitness amenities, hockey rinks/arenas, golf courses, ball diamonds, soccer pitches, tennis courts, or any other sports or multi-use courts, as well as stadiums, dugouts, stages, and bleachers.
- On or within 20 metres of a highway.
- On or within 20 metres of any private property line.
- On or within 10 metres of any public transit stop or any formally designated heritage properties.
- On or within 5 metres of any trail, sidewalk, or parking lot or on or under any bridge, including pedestrian access points to such areas and structures.

- On or within 5 meters of any cemetery, including its roads, lanes and paths for travel within the cemetery.
- On or within 5 metres of any off-leash dog area.
- On or within 5 metres of any community garden and including any garden shed or greenhouse.
- On or within 5 metres of any designated fire route, or the entrance to or exit from a designated fire route or located so as not to block any fire hydrant.
- On or within 5 metres of any accessibility entrance or ramp or located in a way that blocks access to such entrances or ramps.
- On or within 5 metres any entrance, exit or a doorway to a building or structure, and including, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, an area adjacent to such entrances or exits required in the event of fire or emergency.
- Within the Environmental Protection Zone or any area identified as susceptible to flooding, erosion, slope instability, or other environmental hazards that presents a risk to health and safety.
- It is recommended that there be no more than five tents/temporary structures per cluster, with 10m of separation between each cluster, and a maximum of up to 25 tents or 30 individuals at any one location, to be assessed on a site-by-site basis.
- It is recommended that encampments or structures are not to be placed against, under, or be attached or tied to any building, structure, or tree. All temporary shelters or tents should strive to be freestanding. Assessments on impacts to City-owned infrastructure will take place on a site-by-site basis.

Considerations

Sites found to be in violation of these guidelines would be subject to Health and Safety Reviews as determined by the Task Force. Where such a review is required, the Task Force would determine who should be involved. The professionals conducting the review would use their professional opinion and a risk assessment tool to examine the severity of risks. Those who do not pose a serious health or safety risk would be subject to the Planned Relocation Protocol. Whereas those who are determined to be at serious risk of injury, illness, or death would be subject to the Emergency Relocation Protocol. The protocols are outlined in Attachment B.

It's important to note that these distance guidelines are not enforceable regulations. They are recommendations designed to balance community safety with the rights and needs of encampment residents. Compliance relies heavily on trust, collaboration, and positive relationships between encampment residents and those who support them. This cooperative approach fosters mutual understanding and respect, which are crucial for the successful management and relocation of sites.

Recommendation

Administration advises that adopting distance guidelines for areas where encampments would be permissible is more appropriately aligned with our municipal jurisdiction and fiscal capabilities. Ongoing engagement with Indigenous leadership, encampment residents, and the entities that support them to assess the effectiveness of the guidelines is recommended to uphold our commitment to a human-rights based approach.

Municipal Support for Built Structure Site Pilot Project

Built structure sites generally involve mini cabin-style structures and supportive communal living that is transitional in nature. For example, [Pallet Shelter Villages](#) are being implemented in municipalities across North America. Pallet is a rapid response alternative to traditional shelters. Each cabin can be built in under an hour, contrasting starkly with traditional housing methods that can take years to implement, and offers a private, secure space equipped with lockable doors, allowing residents to live in a safe and dignified environment.

Beyond providing immediate shelter, Pallet's villages are designed to be cost-effective and supportive transitional environments. Constructed using durable materials like fiberglass reinforced plastic and aluminum framing, these shelters are built to last while maintaining affordability. This cost-efficiency makes it feasible to deploy shelters on a large scale, facilitating quicker and broader responses to homelessness crises.

Moreover, each village must abide by Pallet's "dignity standards" by requiring access to essential services like food and water, showers, and laundry facilities, ensuring residents have access to the necessities that can help stabilize their lives. On-site social services further assist residents in their journey towards permanent housing and long-term stability. By integrating private living spaces with community support and essential services, Pallet's shelter villages offer a humane and practical pathway out of unsheltered homelessness.

Considerations

A community organization is exploring implementing a Pallet Shelter Village pilot project but would require a vacant property. The recommended site is the Viscount Parking Lot, which Council already approved for closure. It is estimated that the site may accommodate up to 23 cabins, two shower/washroom units, and one laundry unit. The site's operator would be responsible for providing residents with supportive services and programs.

Key considerations of this project include:

- **Site and Zoning:** The proposed site's location is desirable due to its proximity to public transportation and social service organizations like the TBDSSAB, PACE, and the Shelter House. The site is already zoned for an emergency shelter.
- **Operational Management:** Community partners have shown support for the concept. It is proposed that an external community partner be the operator for the pilot project to ensure that the village is managed by an entity with expertise in supporting people experiencing unsheltered homelessness.
- **Flexible and Reusable Design:** Pallet's structures can be disassembled and reassembled easily, providing flexibility in their deployment and relocation if necessary.
- **Engagement:** People living in encampments have indicated a strong preference for the Pallet cabins over existing options, such as tents, highlighting the appeal and perceived security of these structures.
- **Professional Oversight:** The project will involve contracting architects for design, engineers for safety signoffs, and contractors for assembly, ensuring that the village meets all necessary safety and design standards.
- **Stability and Dignity:** Mini cabins provide much more stability and dignity than temporary structures. They also provide people a fixed address.
- **Evaluation:** An evaluation to assess the effectiveness of the Pallet model in Thunder Bay would be undertaken.

Recommendation

Administration recommends Council provide a letter of support to potential funders for the project and identifying commitment of the Viscount lot for the purposes of implementation.

CONSULTATION

Engaging with people with lived and living experience (PWLLE) in encampments on matters that impact their lives is a central tenant of a human rights-based approach and aligns with Recommendation 2.c from the Federal Housing Advocate's [final report](#): "People living in encampments must play a leading role in decision-making processes that affect them. All governments must implement ongoing and meaningful engagement with people living in encampments and those who support them" (p. 22). In keeping with the City's commitment to a human-rights based approach, Administration engaged with PWLLE in encampments and the Task Force on designated encampment locations, with a strong focus on the proposed distance guidelines.

People with Lived and Living Experience in Encampments (PWLLE)

Administration conducted four focus groups with PWLLE in encampments. Discussions primarily focused on distance guidelines but also included PWLLE sharing their experiences with living in encampments.

Key insights regarding their experience living in encampments include:

- Reports of harassment and violence from non-encampment residents, including tents being slashed, having gasoline poured on them, tents being urinated on, rocks being thrown at tents, and verbal harassment and disturbances.
- A strong sense of family, community, and security exists amongst people who live at the same encampment site.
- All individuals noted they would rather live in a mini cabin than a tent and they would accept housing if a suitable and affordable option were available.
- Many individuals expressed an interest in being part of an advisory body for people with lived and living experience in encampments.
- Some individuals noted their desire to speak with members of Council about their experiences living in encampments.

Encampment residents were generally supportive of the distance guidelines proposed by Administration. Notable feedback includes:

- Broad support for flexible guidelines, balancing safety and access, while allowing for nuanced views on specific locations to be assessed on a site-by-site basis.
- Reducing the distance between clusters from 20 meters to 10-15 meters due to protection concerns.
- Allowing flexibility with distance guidelines in areas with a tangible buffer zone.
- Increase the distance away from a private property line from 10 meters to 20 meters for privacy, personal safety, and to “keep the peace.”

Response to Unsheltered Homelessness Task Force

Following Administration’s engagement with PWLLE, the distance guidelines were amended as per feedback received where appropriate. The amended distance guidelines were brought to the Unsheltered Homelessness Task Force for their review. Notable feedback includes:

- Concerns were raised about which organizations would be responsible for providing services and whether winter months would require adjustments to cluster parameters to maintain warmth.
- It was suggested to add the term “active/open” to guidelines regarding playgrounds and pools to clarify the restrictions.
- The Task Force recommended adding hockey arenas and outdoor rinks within the 50-meter distance guidelines for sports fields, for clarity.
- Support for flexibility in areas where physical barriers like fences and railway tracks exist.
- Increasing the distance to 20 meters was suggested for greater safety around highways.
- Concerns about encampments being against, under, or attached to trees were discussed, suggesting a flexible approach pending assessment by Parks staff.

To continue upholding our commitment to a human rights-based approach, Administration will establish an advisory body comprised of 6-8 individuals currently living in encampments. This body will play a pivotal role in informing decision-making by meaningfully including the feedback and ideas of those directly affected.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATION

Establishing distance control standards/guidance would not entail any financial implications. However, implementation will require additional financial resources to support specially trained outreach workers and related health and safety response measures. Impacts for the 2024 year will be funded through the current approved budget. The full financial implications of approximately \$450,000 would be brought forward in the 2025 Budget Directions.

Administration does not recommend investing significant City financial resources to attempt to unilaterally resolve the current encampment situation. Community collaboration is essential for effective collective impact solutions.

The Province of Ontario has established the Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP) and provides this funding to Service Managers to develop and deliver programs and supports to address homelessness that best meet local need. There are 47 Service Managers in the Province: 37 Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs) and 10 District Social Services Administration Boards (DSSABs), including the District of Thunder Bay. Those Municipalities designated as CMSMs receive HPP funds directly to target funding where the community need is greatest. The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB) is responsible for Housing and Homelessness in the District of Thunder Bay, receiving \$16.5 million annually from the Province of Ontario to fund homelessness prevention initiatives.

Although the impacts of homelessness are felt at the municipal level, unlike most of our municipal counterparts, the City of Thunder Bay does not directly receive the financial resources to effectively implement homelessness prevention solutions. The City must rely on TBDSSAB to develop and deliver community-focussed programs and supports to help individuals and families along the housing continuum. Administration recommends the City's role should primarily focused on policy, process, and strategic support to work with community partners towards addressing and reducing homelessness.

CONCLUSION

Addressing unsheltered homelessness is a multifaceted challenge shaped by jurisdictional boundaries, limited resources, and the immediate needs of those living in encampments. While housing and social services are administered by the TBDSSAB, the City is directly impacted as many encampments are on municipal properties. Despite lacking direct funding and jurisdiction over social services, the City adopted a human-rights based approach to prioritize responses to unsheltered homelessness that

uphold the dignity and rights of residents, aligning with broader trends in other municipalities and federal housing policies.

Strategic efforts include collaboration through the Response to Unsheltered Homelessness Task Force and innovative solutions like distance guidelines and a potential Pallet Shelter Village. However, large-scale interventions, like sanctioned sites, face substantial financial and logistical constraints, necessitating a focus on actions within the City's capacity, such as supporting outreach and enhancing communication. Administration will report back to Council in 2024-Q4 with an update should the recommendations in this report be accepted. Moving forward, advocating for additional funding, and fostering collaborative relationships will be essential to developing sustainable and humane solutions to this crisis.

BACKGROUND

May 6, 2024, City 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, Committee of the Whole: Corporate Report 137-2024 from C. Olsen, Director – Strategic Initiatives & Engagement and R. Willianen, Policy & Research Analyst, was presented and provided an update on the feasibility of designated encampment locations, including community consultation results.

September 25, 2023, Committee of the Whole: Memorandum from C. Olsen, Acting Director – Strategic Initiatives & Engagement, was presented and provided an update on the response to unsheltered homelessness, including preparations for the upcoming winter months.

May 1, 2023, City Council ratified a resolution that the City is to adopt a human-rights based approach to responding to encampments, include a \$20,000 expansion in the Operating Budget for 2024, conduct community consultation to better understand the feasibility of designated/supported encampments, and to work with the Intergovernmental Affairs Committee to advocate to the provincial government.

February 13, 2023, Committee of the Whole: Susan Lester and Jeanne Adams appeared before Committee and provided a PowerPoint presentation, relative to encampments on the McVicar Creek Recreational Trail, and responded to questions. At this meeting, the subject matter of the deputations was referred to Legal Services to complete a review of the Superior Court decision in the Region of Waterloo and report back to City Council on how the City may respond to encampments and the use of public spaces.

August 8, 2022, Committee of the Whole: Memorandum from C. Olsen, Manager – Community Strategies, was presented and direction was provided to work with Elevate NWO and fund this work from the existing Community Strategies budget, this direction was ratified at City Council on August 22, 2022.

June 27, 2022, Committee of the Whole: Memorandum from C. Olsen, Manager – Community Strategies, was presented at Committee of the Whole on June 27, 2022 and requested an opportunity to provide an update relative to the ongoing collaborative approach responding to unsheltered homelessness in the community. Executive Director Holly Gauvin -Elevate NWO, and Staff Sergeant Jason Anderson – Community Outreach - Thunder Bay Police Service provided an overview relative to the above noted and responded to questions.

REFERENCE MATERIAL ATTACHED

Attachment A – Encampment Distance Guidelines

Attachment B – Encampment Relocation Protocols

REPORT PREPARED BY

Rilee Willianen, Policy & Research Analyst and Acting Drug Strategy Lead

Cynthia Olsen, Director – Strategy & Engagement

REPORT SIGNED AND VERIFIED BY

Norm Gale, City Manager

06/21/2024