

From: **"Singh, Sandra"**

To: **"Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"**

Date: 2024-07-24 2:19:26 PM

Subject: Memo to Mayor and Council - Structures Integrated Response Team - 2024-07-24

Attachments: **CMO - DCM - Memo (Council) - Structures Integrated Response Team (2024-07-24).pdf**

Dear Mayor and Council,

Attached please find a memo with an update on staff efforts related to the new Integrated Response Team (IRT) and process for addressing structures in the public realm.

Key points:

- The new IRT aims to continue to manage the public realm by coordinating responses to structures in public spaces such as City streets, sidewalks, and parks.
- In 2023, there were over 4,500 reported cases of structures in the public realm, highlighting the need for a more coordinated approach.
- The IRT includes staff from ACCS, ENG, Park Board, and VPD with connections to the Provincial HEART program, focusing on both immediate response and long-term solutions for unsheltered residents.
- A new streamlined process for reporting and responding to structures will be implemented, including a centralized triage system and clear assessment guidelines.
- Metrics will be tracked for each step in the process to inform future decision making and support senior government advocacy efforts.
- Ongoing collaboration with partner agencies will help refine processes and ensure effective participation from all involved parties.

Please note as an internal operational structure and process, we will not be issuing proactive communications about this refinement to our operational approach to structures in the public realm.

We will offer a staff briefings for Mayor & Council and Park Board Commissioners on the implementation of the IRT in September.

Thank you,

Sandra

Sandra Singh | Deputy City Manager

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The City of Vancouver acknowledges the unceded homelands of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Sel̓ilwítulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

MEMORANDUM

July 24, 2024

TO: Mayor & Council

CC: Paul Mochrie, City Manager
Armin Amrolia, Deputy City Manager
Karen Levitt, Deputy City Manager
Lon LaClaire, General Manager, Engineering Services
Margaret Wittgens, General Manager, Arts, Culture, and Community Services
Katrina Leckovic, City Clerk
Maria Pontikis, Chief Communications Officer, CEC
Teresa Jong, Administration Services Manager, City Manager's Office
Mellisa Morphy, Acting Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office
Trevor Ford, Director of Operations, Mayor's Office

FROM: Sandra Singh, Deputy City Manager, City Manager's Office

SUBJECT: New Integrated Response Team and Process for Responding to Structures in the Public Realm

PURPOSE

This memo provides Council with an update on the implementation of a new integrated cross-departmental team and processes for addressing structures/tents in the public realm (streets, sidewalks, parks). The improvements are aimed at enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of our response, preventing future encampments, and supporting people experiencing homelessness.

BACKGROUND

In recent years, the homelessness crisis in Vancouver has resulted in a significant number of structures/tents and encampments in the public realm, negatively impacting those experiencing homelessness, compromising the overall well-being of the community, and frustrating local neighbours and businesses. The homelessness crisis is further intensified by the mental health and overdose and toxic drug supply crisis. The City works in partnership with senior government and the non-profit sector to address homelessness through the creation of housing, direct supports and services. The City plays the key role in mitigating the impacts of unsheltered homelessness in the public realm, while balancing the needs of community and individuals.

The City's Current Response to Structures in the Public Realm

The current process and resourcing for addressing structures in the public realm is not adequate to deal with the complexity and scale of this challenge.

Key Highlights and Challenges:

- Over 4,500 reported cases of structures in the public realm in 2023 via 311 or Van311 App. Since 2018, reported cases have had an average annual increase of 8%.
- 2,420 people were identified as experiencing homelessness in the City's 2023 Homeless Count (605 unsheltered / 1,814 sheltered), an increase of 325 people since the 2020 Homeless Count.
- Department-specific response models to address structures in the public realm are currently not consistently aligned or coordinated.
- Requests originate from multiple sources with no triage process or centralized contact to support assessment.
- Limited formalized procedures or documentation in place to support coordinated response.
- Response planning and coordination initiatives are side-of-desk work and are unsustainable.

Despite the best effort of staff involved in this work, these challenges can result in duplication of effort, ineffective or inadequate response, and a lack of prioritization or triaging for more urgent cases.

DISCUSSION

Structures in the public realm are a growing and intensifying challenge that requires a more coordinated and integrated City response. City staff explored new approaches and team structures to address structures in the public realm. The work included a jurisdictional scan of models in other North American Cities, several senior staff workshops, learnings from previous work, and discussions with partner agencies including the Vancouver Police Department, BC Housing, and Vancouver Coastal Health.

The City's New Integrated Response Team

The new Integrated Response Team (IRT) brings together staff from ACCS, ENG, Park Board, and VPD into one integrated team that will enable more efficient and effective responses to structures in the public realm, including providing a connection to the Province's new homelessness response interagency table (HEART) which is anticipated to better align services for people experiencing homelessness. Appendix A summarizes the role of each department and support agency in the IRT.

The City's New Process for Addressing Structures in the Public Realm

City IRT staff will be implementing a new streamlined process for triaging and responding to reported structures in the public realm. The process includes a new 311 intake process, a centralized point of contact to triage reported cases, and new assessment guidelines to help staff determine the most appropriate response. As well, two new roles have been established – by-law compliance officers and community service liaisons – to improve procedural implementation and ensure appropriate connections to supports for people experiencing homelessness during by-law compliance work. Metrics and targeted response times will be established and measured to help staff better understand performance and gaps.

Appendix B provide a step-by-step overview of the new draft process and priority factors including metrics to be tracked.

NEXT STEPS

Initial steps to implement the IRT began in early July, and this will continue to evolve in the coming months. As this new program launches, staff will collaborate closely with partner agencies to formalize their involvement and refine processes. This will include ensuring appropriate connections to Provincially-coordinated services and supports for people experiencing homelessness (HEART).

The effectiveness of the IRT, including its processes and staffing levels, will be continually assessed through tracked metrics. Future staffing levels will be determined based on these evaluations and Council's budget allocations.

Briefings for City Council and Park Board are planned for September.

FINAL REMARKS

Implementing a new integrated response team and streamlined approach for addressing structures in the public realm is an important part of the City's overall response to maintaining healthy and safe communities. The new team and process is designed to balance the respect and dignity of residents experiencing homelessness with the overall well-being of the community.

If Council requires further information, please feel free to contact me directly at



Sandra Singh, Deputy City Manager

Appendix A: Integrated Response Team Composition and Role in IRT

Department / Support Agency	Role in IRT
Arts, Culture, and Community Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support triaging and assessing reported cases. • Homelessness Services Outreach engagement & support with individuals to access income, shelter, housing (as available) and health services. • ACCS Liaison team supports individuals to take down structures and make connections to community services during operations / by-law compliance with attention given to a gender safety lens.
Engineering Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support triaging and assessing reported cases. • Determine appropriate operational teams. • Leads the operational response activities including structure removal and/or site cleanup. • Leads investigations and bylaw compliance (with discretion and judgement based on an individual's need). • Manages the impoundment & retrieval process when applicable. • Primary liaison to VPD.
Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement with residents sheltering in Parks. • Educate on Parks Control Bylaw and seek bylaw compliance. • Refer to IRT for complex structure cases and/or non-compliance.
Vancouver Police Department*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure City staff safety. • Keep the peace as City staff carry out their duties.
Vancouver Coastal Health*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homelessness Services Outreach staff make referrals and connections as-needed basis based on IRT assessment or knowledge of the individual. • Support people experiencing unsheltered homelessness with medical and treatment support. • Providing mental health support.
B.C. Housing*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain list of available shelter spaces and reserve as needed. • Homelessness Services staff make referrals for supportive Housing allocation through Coordinated Access. • Leverage intergovernmental relationships to enable other needed supports and services.

*Formalized involvement pending ongoing discussions with City Leadership currently underway.

Appendix B: New Process for Addressing Structures in the Public Realm

Step	Process
Structure Reported to the City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reported via 311, Van311, Staff, BIAs, Mayor & Council. • Case forwarded to IRT for triaging.
Centralized Triage of Request	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACCS Staff triages cases and determines need for site visit based on details from report. • Determines team composition for initial site visit.
Initial Site Visit & Information Collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HS Outreach staff attend to connect and offer supports to individual(s) prior to IRT seeking compliance with By-laws. • IRT performs initial site visit, offers available supports, and seeks compliance with City and Park Board by-laws. • In Parks: Park Rangers perform initial engagement and refer to IRT for compliance and/or complex situations.
Situation Assessment & Response Plan (As needed for more complex situations) Note: Depending on the situation, the initial visit and situation response steps may be collapsed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IRT staff complete assessment based on site visit to determine response priority, response team composition, and timing for response. • Homelessness Services Outreach staff consult with support agencies for additional support as needed.
Response & Compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IRT implements response – this will be a dynamic team made up of ACCS Liaison staff, ENG Sanitation Staff, ENG by-law compliance staff, VPD Officers (as jointly determined by IRT and VPD), support from VCH / BCH as required.
Ongoing – Metrics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metrics will be tracked for each step in the process to inform future decision making and support senior government advocacy efforts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Time to triage / assess ○ Priority case volumes and time to clear ○ Time to resolve priority cases ○ Escalation frequency (to integrated team) ○ BIA / Council feedback and general public perception ○ Shelter / housing referrals ○ Volume of integrated response team cases

Priority Factors

High Priority Factors:

- Immediate risk to life and / or public safety
- Immediate risk of fire
- Structure obstructs fire connections and exits

- Structure obstructs access / egress to health and social services, businesses, and residential building
- Structure is located on the premises of a school or playground
- Structure is affecting road safety / operations

Medium Priority Factors:

- There is a potential, but not immediate safety risk
- Structure contains a large amount of combustible materials
- Structure partially obstructs sidewalk, construction/demolition activities, access / egress to social services and / or community spaces

Low Priority Factors:

- No immediate safety risk to occupants or staff
- Low risk of fire and little combustible materials
- Staff already working with occupants to provide access to support services to seek compliance

Appendix C: Funding Considerations

Department	New Roles to Address Process Gaps	Funding Source
Engineering Services	1 x Superintendent II 2 x Superintendent I 1 x Clerk III 3 x By-law Compliance Officer	Solid Waste Utility Fees
Arts, Culture, and Community Services	1 x Planning Analyst 3 x ACCS Liaison (ACCS)	Funded from within existing budget allocation and resources