

The logo for the City of Edmonton, featuring the word "Edmonton" in white text on a dark blue square background.

Edmonton

2017 highlights

HOMELESS ON PUBLIC LANDS INITIATIVE

According to the 2016 local homeless count, 1,752 people were still experiencing homelessness in Edmonton, and of those, more than 270 are living rough outdoors.

The Homeless on Public Land Initiative brings together a range of stakeholders to address the needs of vulnerable individuals who are living rough on public land. The focus is to support people experiencing homelessness to find a new way home - a home that offers a sustainable solution for those in need of a safe space day and night.

Homelessness and encampments on public lands is a complex issue which has many societal impacts. From its inception, the [Homeless on Public Lands initiative](#) has grown and responded by adapting its approach and expanding its partners to meet the needs of the chronically homeless in a dignified manner.

The Homeless on Public Lands initiative brings together a number of city departments through intentional collaboration. The Boyle Street Outreach team and the Bissell Centre Housing Outreach team work closely with city staff in Parks and Roads Services, City Operations, Park Rangers, Bylaw and Peace Officers, Transportation, Family and Community Supports, Edmonton Police Service and Fire Rescue Services.

Ongoing coordination, support and communication with all the front line resources is key to responding to citizens who are homeless.

“The challenge comes in striking the right balance between building trust with individuals, so they can connect to services, and maintaining our public spaces. Until more affordable housing is built to effectively house individuals and ensure they have the appropriate supports, we will continue to grapple with this situation.”

-Jenny Kain, Director of Family and Community Supports, City of Edmonton

There were encouraging signs. In 2017, the Street Outreach Team housed a total of 52 people previously living rough outdoors, 40 of whom were housed using the Housing First approach - where getting a home and the supports to keep that home is central to an individual's success.

So far in 2018, a total of 30 people have been housed, 26 of whom were housed using the Housing first approach, and four housed in market housing.

“These numbers tell us that people sleeping rough are seeing improved access to Housing First programs. Jared Tkachuk, Manager of 24/7 Boyle Street Outreach Support Services. “However, we are still seeing difficulties in finding sustainable housing options for people with extreme, interwoven issues.”

- Jared Tkachuk, Manager of 24/7 Boyle Street Outreach Support Services

Looking ahead in 2018

- The Homeless on Public lands (HoPL) initiative continues to work with Homeward Trust to ensure the city's most vulnerable individuals are getting access to the housing and social supports they need.
- Outreach workers, Coordinated Access, and Housing First teams have been working together using a 'hotspot' approach at planned locations, to meet those living and sleeping rough on public land. It is in this manner that individuals can access eligible services without having to call or visit multiple programs.
- This hotspot approach ensures registration on Edmonton's by-names-list; a real-time data tool listing all individuals experiencing homelessness in our community.
- The by-names-list also assists service providers in understanding the needs of those requiring housing and supports and to make adjustments to program services in Edmonton as needed.
- Homelessness is complex but progress is being made. Since 2009, Homeward Trust and its partners have been able to house over 8,000 people.

Increasingly, citizens are getting involved, from reporting encampments to 311 to inquiring about what they can do to help our city's most vulnerable. As citizens, it's not always easy knowing which number to call or what to do. To assist, a [quick reference tool](#) has been developed which shows who to call and how you can get involved to make a difference.

While the City of Edmonton does actively identify encampments, reports to 311 helps us to more effectively deliver supports to those who are homeless and to provide clean up services.

Here is a [quick guide](#) to the Homeless on Public Lands response which outlines the process followed when an encampment is proactively identified.