

# Municipal Update: Helping address homelessness in the Halifax region

Date of issue: June 7, 2024

*The Halifax Regional Municipality's priority has been, and continues to be, treating those experiencing homelessness with dignity – and continuing to work with the Province of Nova Scotia and community partners to find ways to provide support to them within our organization's capacity and scope. The following is an update on ongoing efforts to help address homelessness in our region.*

## **Designated Locations**

As of May 24, 2024, the designated locations were occupied as follows:

- **Barrington Street green space, Halifax** – 11 tents on site; this site is over capacity.
- **Green Road Park, Dartmouth** – 36 tents, three trailers and one structure on site; this site is over capacity.
- **Lower Flinn Park, Halifax** – 14 tents on site, this site is over capacity.
- **University Avenue green space, Halifax** – 23 tents, this site is over capacity.

The municipality will take steps to reduce numbers at designated locations over capacity as other options become available.

## **Regional Council meeting – June 4, 2024**

- During the meeting, Mayor and members of Regional Council discussed and debated the [report](#) and [presentation](#) provided by Housing and Homelessness staff. Further to the motions passed by Regional Council, below is a summary of key decisions:
  - Approved significant funding to augment the municipality's support for those experiencing homelessness:
    - \$750,000 for renovations to a new drop-in centre to be run by Shelter Nova Scotia at a yet-to-be-identified location. This funding will match the contribution from the Province of Nova Scotia; and
    - \$1.8 million from the Financial Reserve to prepare a non-park space for use as a designated location (Marketplace Land and Bancroft Drive, more information below) and, to hire additional staff to enable the municipality to provide increased levels of designated location support, supervision and management to mitigate the harmful impacts of encampments.
  - Confirmed they do not support the "no encampment" approach recommended by staff as there is still insufficient indoor space for those who need to sleep rough.
  - Endorsed a long-term designated locations and increased encampment management approach.
  - Directed the CAO to produce a ranked list of sites that could be used as designated locations. Once this list is approved by Regional Council, it can be used by the CAO to identify future designated locations, as required, without requiring further approval from Regional Council.
  - Directed the Mayor to send a letter to the Premier of Nova Scotia, the Minister of Community Services and all Members of the Legislative Assembly for the Halifax Regional Municipality

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outlining the requests from the municipality as per the [report](#). These requests build upon the ongoing collaboration to address the broader, longer-term issues by asking the province to invest in these initiatives immediately. This list includes:

- Prioritizing opportunities that would support persons with the highest acuity;
- Accelerating the purchase and installation of Pallet shelters as well as confirmation on locations;
- Contributing funding to support a winter sheltering program for recreation vehicles at Shubie Campground for the winter of 2024/ 25;
- The creation of more indoor shelter spaces;
- Identifying provincially-owned land which could be used for designated locations or temporary housing; and
- Funding for a housing and homelessness summit in the fall 2024 to bring together all orders of government, service providers and other interested parties to discuss the state of homelessness in the municipality and a long-term approach to eliminate the need for designated locations and encampments.

## **New designated location – Marketplace Lane and Bancroft Drive**

- As directed by Regional Council at the meeting on June 4, 2024, staff will begin to take immediate steps to prepare a new designated location on vacant municipal land at the corner of Marketplace Lane and Bancroft Drive in Burnside (Dartmouth). This municipal property is not park space or used for events.
- Similar to the other designated locations, this new location will have the same supports including garbage cans and collection, portable toilets, needle boxes and bottled water.
- Once established, municipal staff will regularly visit this new designated location to ensure the services are adequate and to mitigate issues where possible. Municipal staff will also continue coordinating with the Province of Nova Scotia and their service providers to ensure those experiencing homelessness have access to the support they need, including referrals to provincial indoor shelters and temporary housing options.
- More information on when this new designated location will be ready for occupancy will be provided when available.

## **Distribution of tents and code of conduct**

- The municipality is no longer providing tents directly to those experiencing homelessness. Rather, it will continue to provide additional supports to those needing to sleep rough at the designated locations (e.g. garbage collection and portable toilets) and regular visits by municipal staff to the designated locations and encampments to ensure they are aware of available supports through the province and its service providers.

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- As part of efforts to reduce the negative impact of encampments on those who have to shelter in them as well as the surrounding community municipal staff will also develop a new code of conduct for the designated locations. The code of conduct will be developed in the coming weeks and will be informed by the lived experience of those who have been homeless as well as feedback the municipality has received from communities around designated locations and encampments.
- Municipal staff will also review and update a list of parks and event spaces where sheltering will not be permitted and will reiterate to anyone who shelters in these spaces that they will have 24 hours to relocate to a shelter or designated location and the municipality will assist them in this relocation.

**For more information about ongoing efforts by the municipality to help address homelessness in our region visit [halifax.ca/addressinghomelessness](https://halifax.ca/addressinghomelessness).**