

The Case for Day Spaces

CONTEXT

Unhoused Calgarians face barriers accessing spaces during the day and are often asked to move along from food courts, libraries, LRT stations and other public areas. This results in increased pressure on the downtown area, on LRT lines and increased calls to first responders (Downtown Safety Leadership Table, 2024; No Place to Go, 2024).

While emergency shelters downtown offer daytime access, not all shelter users are comfortable remaining there throughout the day, often seeking out other locations across the city. Additionally, “spaces viewed as safe and welcoming for women, LGBTQ2S+ and youth are limited” (Downtown Safety Leadership Table, 2024).

Day spaces have been proposed as a holistic, people-centred, integrated community response that could yield better outcomes for unhoused Calgarians. Day spaces could also provide a decentralized model of smaller sites to help address safety concerns. (Downtown Safety Leadership Table, 2024; No Place to Go, 2024).

This program draws its direction from multiple report recommendations and initiatives, including:

Reports	Initiatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Downtown Safety Leadership Table (City)• No Place to Go (VCC)• Transforming Calgary’s Crisis Response System (CPS, City)• The Future of Stephen Ave (City)• South Sudanese Engagement (CPS)• Extreme Weather Survey at Journey Church (DCC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Extreme Weather Response (CHF, City)• RIMHAC/ReachUp (CPS)• SORCe (DCC, Pathways, AHS, Aboriginal Friendship Centre)• Provincial Navigation Centre (GoA)• Community Hubs (United Way, City)• Multiple services and supports maps (CHF, United Way, City)

The City has partnered with the Calgary Police Service (CPS), Calgary Homeless Foundation (CHF) and the United Way to define a vision and expected outcomes.

VISION

Day spaces build on the seasonal spaces provided by the Extreme Weather Response (EWR). We envision a coordinated network of small existing and new day spaces in the downtown and across the city.

Day spaces provide safe, dignified places for unhoused Calgarians to connect with services and community. They allow people to escape extreme weather and rest in welcoming, people-centred environments year-round.

Day space networks are a set of small day spaces that work together in a coordinated way and with other resources like outreach organizations and first responders.

The day spaces program will work with local communities to encourage involvement, mitigate impacts, and provide continuous updates.

OUTCOMES

There are five key groups involved in this initiative: Participants (unhoused Calgarians), the staff and volunteers that work within each day space, the service providers that provide the staff and services, intersecting sector organizations like health and justice that may work at day spaces, and the local communities in which day spaces are embedded.

What do we need to realize our vision?

- Spaces that work for people first.
- Partnerships with service organizations, grassroots and other natural supports, as well as with intersecting organizations like health and justice.
- Information sharing, including policy reform to enable inter-agency information sharing and coordinated information systems across the network.
- An organizational home for partner organizations and staff to connect, collaborate, and coordinate.
- Mitigation plans to reduce impacts on local communities.
- Evaluation data to improve day spaces over time, to show the effects of mitigation efforts and general impacts of the program on the communities, and to support requests for long-term funding.
- Ongoing engagement and communication with all groups involved groups including Council and Calgarians.
- Long-term sustainable funding.

How will we respond to participant needs? By:

- Being flexible and innovative in our response.
- Providing trauma-informed spaces and responses that are equitable, anti-racist, culturally supportive and climate resilient.
- Listening to participant needs and by responding to changing needs over time.

Direct outputs of the program:

Participants	Staff and volunteers	Service providers	Intersecting orgs	Local communities
<p>Increased:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to predictable formal services and supports. • Access to coordinated services. • Safe daytime choices • Smaller scale, intimate spaces • Operating hours like weekends and longer weekdays <p>Decreased:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to repeat stories. • Involvement with the Criminal Justice System 	<p>Increased:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities to build trust and relationships in an intimate environment. • Flexibility in work locations and hours • Interactions with staff of partner organizations in a shared space 	<p>Increased:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings with participants in safe and reliable formats • Opportunities to connect with those who do not access shelter services. • For grassroots organizations to deliver assistance • Collaboration and coordination with a wide range of partners <p>Decreased:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isolated service delivery 	<p>Increased:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Options for intersecting orgs to assist participants with gaining access. • Opportunities to collaborate with service providers. <p>Decreased:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calls for service to first responders 	<p>Increased:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities to get involved. • Ongoing education / communication • Availability of data to inform civic planning and policy decisions. <p>Decreased:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative interactions with unhoused Calgarians • Criminal behaviour in the community • Calls for service to first responders

Outcomes: Are people and groups better off after the program than before?

Participants	Staff and volunteers	Service providers	Intersecting orgs	Local communities
<p>Increased:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistency in experience across the network • Reduced burden/stress on participants seeking coordinated services. • Follow-through with services (i.e., NSQ to housing) • Improved circumstances, health, and wellbeing. 	<p>Increased:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding of lived experiences. • Ability to respond to the unique needs of participants. 	<p>Increased:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transformational, coordinated participant-focused, service delivery. • Accountability through coordinated evaluation of service provision • Understanding needs and impacts through coordinated data analytics. 	<p>Increased:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transformational, coordinated participant-focused, service delivery. 	<p>Increased:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceptions of safety in public spaces • Understanding of unhoused, mental health and addictions issues • Ability to interact and respond that improves their sense of security in public spaces

REFERENCES

Downtown safety leadership table: Outcomes and recommendations. (2024, March 6).

<https://www.calgary.ca/content/dam/www/major-projects/documents/downtown-safety-leadership-table-report-march-2024.pdf>

No Place to Go (2024, May 30).

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