

DOWNTOWN WHITEHORSE SAFETY RESPONSE ACTION PLAN

The Downtown Whitehorse Safety Response Action Plan (DWSRAP) is a roadmap aimed at enhancing the safety, health and overall wellbeing of downtown Whitehorse. It is a living document, focused on immediate and long-term solutions, such as increasing housing security, expanding support services and improving public safety measures.

The plan involves collaboration with community partners, Yukon First Nations and local businesses to address challenges related to homelessness, substance use and community safety, ensuring a coordinated and sustainable approach to create a vibrant, inclusive and safe downtown for all.

The document is structured into several sections: completed actions, medium-term actions (1 to 12 months), long-term actions (1 year+), and recommendations from the April 2024 coroner's inquest. This organization provides a clear overview of the steps taken, current initiatives, and future goals, ensuring a comprehensive approach to enhancing downtown Whitehorse's safety and wellbeing.

ACTIONS COMPLETED

- ✓ Allocating funding for 2 new Whitehorse-based RCMP officers and a new SCAN investigator, subject to Legislative Assembly approval (fall 2024).
- ✓ Partnering with Yukon organizations such as Safe at Home Society, Council of Yukon First Nations, Kwanlin Dün First Nation and others to **decentralize services** and operationalize additional locations where people can access **food services** (July 2024 – ongoing).
- ✓ Hosting monthly sharing circles with 405 Alexander guests (June 2024 – ongoing).
- ✓ Coordinating **community engagement and education**, engaging downtown residents and businesses, NGOs, Yukon First Nations and people with lived experience (fall 2023, spring 2024).
- ✓ Initiating the new Canada Yukon Housing Benefit **rent subsidy for people fleeing gender-based violence** (spring 2024).
- ✓ Establishing a **Managed Alcohol** residential program to support, stabilizing and reducing harms associated with chronic alcohol use disorder (spring 2024).
- ✓ Partnering with Blood Ties Four Directions Centre to extend and enhance their **Healthy Meals program** (spring 2024).
- ✓ Stationing an **Outreach Worker** at the library (April 2024).
- ✓ Developing a **Community Warming and Drop-in Space pilot project** at the Jim Smith Building (spring 2024). To be reopened in fall 2024.
- ✓ Extending hours at the **Supervised Consumption Site** (February 2024).
- ✓ Announcing a partnership with Safe at Home Society to **develop The Hearth – Permanent Supportive Housing** which will provide 67 self-contained affordable housing (February 2024).
- ✓ Signing a letter of intent with Yukon First Nations and the Government of Canada to **build a Yukon First Nations healing centre** (December 2023).
- ✓ Operationalizing a Council of Yukon First Nations (CYFN) led **Mobile Outreach Initiative** to provide after-hours and weekend supports (December 2023).
- ✓ Hiring private **security services** to support local businesses near Alexander Street (November 2023 – July 2024) and started transitioning to outreach-focused efforts with the CYFN-led Mobile Outreach Initiative.
- ✓ Leading **community engagement and education** in collaboration with IRP (inspire.reconciliation.potential) Consulting, engaging downtown residents and businesses, NGOs, Yukon First Nations and people with lived experience (November 2023).
- ✓ Extending funding to Safe at Home Society as part of the **Winter Housing Strategy** (November 2023).
- ✓ Allocating \$3M for **on-the-land treatment funding** provided through the Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy (November 2023).
- ✓ Removing benches from outside 405 Alexander (September 2023).

MEDIUM TERM ACTIONS (1 TO 12 MONTHS)

- ☐ Improving safety on Alexander Street by applying **Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design** principles.
- ☐ **Continuing dialogue** with downtown residents and businesses, NGOs, Yukon First Nations and people with lived experience (ongoing).
- ☐ Continuing to work with partners to **discuss appropriate levels of accessibility** regarding emergency services.
- ☐ Working with the City of Whitehorse to:
 - develop a **community safety and wellbeing plan** for the City of Whitehorse, focusing on the downtown area;
 - identify **accessible community washroom facilities**; and
 - explore options for the **beautification of Alexander Street**.
- ☐ Hosting a community **Restorative Justice Circle** to promote cross-learning and healing.

- ☐ Securing **additional supportive and emergency housing** options.
- ☐ Operating a supportive housing program at 408 Alexander Street later this fall through **Safe at Home Society**.
- ☐ Launching a new **Crime Prevention Grant Program**.

LONG TERM ACTIONS (1 YEAR +)

- ☐ **Reviewing accessibility policies for emergency housing facilities** and diversifying the options available to meet support needs.
- ☐ **Building more Yukon Housing Corporation community housing units** to alleviate the Yukon Housing Corporation waitlist and By-Name List pressures.
- ☐ Working with the private sector partners to **bring more affordable housing online**.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE APRIL 2024 CORONER'S INQUEST

The Government of Yukon is dedicated to implementing all recommendations from the coroner's inquest by October 2024 to ensure the safety and wellbeing of guests at 405 Alexander. All recommendations are currently underway.

1. Policy review and development

- ☐ Conduct an inclusive review of shelter policies with active participation from Yukon First Nations, 405 Alexander guests, staff, and individuals with lived experience.
- ☐ Develop clear, evidence-based policies for managing intoxicated or medically vulnerable guests, overdose events, and critical incident reviews.

2. Training enhancement

- ☐ Implement a comprehensive training plan focusing on overdose response, recognizing alcohol intoxication, cultural safety, trauma-informed practices and performance management.

3. Staffing priorities

- ✓ Prioritize the hiring of Indigenous employees and people with lived experience to ensure services are safe and culturally appropriate. **(Completed, with ongoing improvements)**

4. Evaluation

- ☐ The Government of Yukon should ensure Connective Support Society fulfills recommendations one, two and three in a timely manner.

5. Independent review

- ☐ Regularly evaluate compliance with the recommendations and ensure independent reviews for any future deaths at 405 Alexander.

6. Grief and loss support

- ☐ Within two months, leadership from the Government of Yukon and Connective Support Society should meet with the community affected by the deaths to hear concerns arising from the inquest.

7. Communication

- ✓ Establish monthly talking circles and structured complaint processes to build trust and improve communication. **(Completed, with ongoing improvements)**

8. Safe spaces

- ☐ Create safe spaces for LGBTQ2S+ and female-identifying guests at 405 Alexander.