



June 5, 2026

Edmonton City Council
c/o Office of the City Clerk
City of Edmonton
1 Sir Winston Churchill Square
Edmonton, Alberta, T5J 2R7

To Mayor Knack and City Council:

Re: Item 7.2 Investment Options for Day Spaces, Community & Public Services Committee, June 8, 2026

On behalf of the Edmonton Downtown Business Association (EDBA), I am writing to express our support for sustainable investment in day spaces as part of Edmonton's broader homelessness and community safety response.

The recent *Evaluation of Investment Options for Day Spaces* clearly demonstrates that these spaces serve a significant and growing need in our city. During the funded period of December 2025 and March 2026, 6,634 unique individuals were served across more than 37,000 visits at the four City supported sites. During that period 1,700 referrals to housing, healthcare, recovery supports, and other essential services were arranged. These numbers reflect both the scale of the crisis and the importance of accessible, low-barrier spaces and support.

Downtown businesses continue to experience firsthand the impacts of homelessness, addiction, mental health challenges, and social disorder every day. Our member businesses are deeply invested in downtown Edmonton and remain committed to its future. Supporting that commitment means creating a downtown where everyone feels safe and welcome, including residents, workers, visitors, business owners, and vulnerable individuals who rely on downtown services and spaces. We believe that investing in coordinated, compassionate, and evidence-based social infrastructure is essential to achieving that goal.

The lack of day spaces is evident through our data and interactions from our Core Patrol program in 2026. Core Patrol is the EDBA's 100% member funded, two vehicle, proactive patrol operating within our BIA boundaries. Between January and May 2026, 1,923 wellness checks were completed during the 7am-3pm daytime shift. Wellness checks can vary drastically, and can include quick check-ins, providing directions to a nearby social agency, administering first aid or escalated responses to emergency services for severe frost bite or overdose response. A commonality, though, is all of these wellness checks happen outside-on the street, in back alleys, at surface transit stations, or along storefronts. Our team also reports a significant influx of new people experiencing homelessness, often from rural or northern areas and including high-risk youth, seeking resources and services.

With very few daytime options available for vulnerable populations, this puts strain on public spaces like parks, libraries and recreation centres across the City, but most visibly downtown, creating tension in third spaces. Day spaces can reduce visible distress in public areas. Without year-round day spaces available, there is a significant lack of positive public spaces for those experiencing homelessness to access resources and supports to start or continue their journey toward being housed.

We recognize that day spaces are not a standalone solution to homelessness, nor should they replace investments in supportive housing, healthcare, recovery, or emergency shelter systems. However, they play an important complementary role within the broader continuum of care by:

- Improving public safety and social stability through dedicated positive public spaces to provide safe, reliable, indoor space year-round for vulnerable populations to access support
- Ensuring young people that are high-risk and experiencing homelessness are considered in prevention and specific early intervention work through this proposed collaborative work
- Reducing pressure on businesses and downtown pedway systems, libraries, transit stations, and other public spaces not designed or equipped to provide social services
- Helping individuals maintain connection and consistency with outreach workers and support systems
- Creating opportunities for referrals into housing, healthcare, and recovery pathways

The findings in the report also reinforce the importance of stable and predictable funding models. While the temporary winter investment produced measurable outcomes, short-term seasonal funding creates staffing instability, service disruptions, and uncertainty for both operators and clients. We encourage Council to continue exploring sustainable year-round models in partnership with the Government of Alberta, the Government of Canada, and community organizations. Community Service Hubs could provide a safe place for people to access housing, healthcare, income support services, employment services, and other pathways out of poverty and homelessness. They also help improve safety, reduce pressure on public spaces, emergency services and hospitals, and support healthier communities and business districts.

We are encouraged by the report's emphasis on system integration, including stronger coordination between day spaces, healthcare providers, housing supports, and recovery-oriented services. Investments that improve continuity of care and connect individuals to long-term stabilization will ultimately benefit both vulnerable Edmontonians and the broader community.

As Council considers future budget priorities, we encourage continued collaboration with the three levels of government, the business community, social sector organizations, Indigenous organizations, healthcare partners, and residents to ensure Edmonton's approach is balanced, compassionate, and effective.

Edmonton's downtown recovery and long-term economic vitality depend on creating a city core where people have appropriate places to access support, and where social challenges are addressed thoughtfully and collaboratively. Day spaces are not separate from downtown economic development—they are part of the infrastructure needed to create a safe, inclusive, and economically resilient downtown.

Sincerely,

Braede Harris

Braede Harris
Director of Operations / Acting Executive Director
braede@edmontondowntown.com

cc James Robinson, Executive Director