



SPECIAL TOPIC

Inclusive public space management

When adequate access to safe shelter or housing is not provided, people who are unhoused have few options other than living in public spaces.




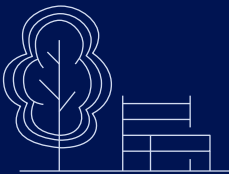
The political pressure by those who want to have public spaces free of unsheltered homeless people can result in over-investment in public space management and/or over-reliance on coercive and punitive approaches of arrest, citations, and move-along orders.

INCLUSIVE PUBLIC SPACE MANAGEMENT

includes regulating uses, managing conflicts between uses, and coordinating interventions in the uses of public spaces to be inclusive of all, including people who are unsheltered and have no other feasible options.

ADDRESSING UNSHELTERED HOMELESSNESS

There are four required components to successfully address unsheltered homelessness.

 Reducing Inflow	 Crisis Response	 Housing Stabilization	 Public Space Management
RESPONSIBILITY: Public Systems	RESPONSIBILITY: Homeless Assistance System		RESPONSIBILITY: City & County Government
<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Justice> Anti-Poverty> Prevention> Health, including behavioral health> Child Welfare System> Affordable Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Continuum of Care> Outreach> Emergency shelter & temporary housing> Housing providers> First responders> Health, including behavioral health providers		<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Mayor/city manager> Code enforcement> Public health> Law enforcement> Parks> Outreach> Libraries> Businesses and business organizations> Faith-based organizations
Use data to identify how people are becoming homeless and target prevention strategies and policies to these areas.	Investment in housing stabilization capacity will make crisis response more effective and efficient.		To reduce expenditures, increase efforts to reduce inflow and expand homeless assistance system.

Quick-fix punitive approaches divert attention and resources away from more long-lasting, cost-efficient, and effective solutions. Beyond that, punitive measures lead to displacement, outstanding legal obligations, and further deprivations that prolong homelessness and increase

attendant miseries. This is not only detrimental to those experiencing homelessness but also does little to resolve public space conflicts and increases public systems costs.

Local governments' efforts to manage public spaces should not be in conflict with the efforts to provide

temporary crisis help and a path out of homelessness to housing.

Inclusive public space management practices consider how to accommodate the needs of all people who use these spaces and use a public health framework.

THREE TYPES OF COMMUNITIES

The relative rate of those who are experiencing unsheltered homelessness defines the community type.

Each community requires specific strategies to address the human needs of people who are unsheltered and living in public spaces while mitigating the impacts and concerns of residents and business owners.

COMMUNITY TYPE 1:

Low rates of unsheltered homelessness

- Partner with local government on a well-organized homeless assistance system to engage unsheltered individuals and offer access to temporary and permanent accommodations.
- Focus law enforcement on problem solving and linking to outreach organizations that work directly with individuals who are unsheltered to provide connections to housing.
- Respond to public concerns through public education and engagement on solutions.
- Places working on this approach: Rockford, Syracuse, Southwest Minnesota, and Wichita.

COMMUNITY TYPE 2:

Tipping

Communities that are “tipping” from low rates to high rates of unsheltered homelessness

- Grow the homelessness assistance system and housing resources rather than scaling up public space management despite the growing public pressure for punitive and coercive responses.
- Align public space management with inclusive practices that are both less harmful to unsheltered people and more effective at addressing public concerns in non-punitive ways.
- Launch extensive public education, similar to communities with high rates of unsheltered homelessness.
- Places working on this approach: Minneapolis/St. Paul, New Orleans, and Philadelphia.

COMMUNITY TYPE 3:

High rates of unsheltered homelessness

- Expand low-barrier shelter and housing as part of a well-organized homeless assistance system.
- Partner local government and community organizations to both engage unsheltered individuals and offer access to temporary and permanent accommodations.
- Align public space management with inclusive practices that are less harmful to unsheltered people, actively protect everyone from health risks, and more effective at addressing public concerns in non-punitive ways.
- Launch public education providing information about:
 1. The causes of growing homelessness
 2. Promoting solutions to homelessness
 3. Building public support for additional investment in solutions
- Develop communication channels to respond to public concerns about people who are living unsheltered. *Don't create a hotline for public reporting about homeless campsites—if you already have one, convert it to a method for deploying services (outreach, public health, and sanitation services).*
- Align providers within the homeless assistance system with inclusive public space management strategies to mitigate harm to homeless individuals.
- Places working on this approach: Portland and Santa Barbara.

Distinct Community Typologies

Levels of unsheltered homelessness will influence a community's response.

Low Rate of Unsheltered

- Sufficient shelter and housing
- Outreach able to make meaningful linkages
- Public support for crisis interventions and long term solutions

RESPONSE:
Organized system

Tipping

- Growing number and rate of unsheltered
- Insufficient access to shelter and housing (may be high barrier or inadequate capacity)
- Public is growing frustrated and more calls for punitive approaches

RESPONSE:
Organized system, scale up responses, and manage public space carefully with clear public education

High Rate of Unsheltered

- Homelessness is very visible
- Very limited access to shelter and housing
- Public is very frustrated and high demand for more punitive measures

RESPONSE:
Organized system, dramatically scale up responses, manage public space carefully, and provide lots of public education

PRACTICAL MEASURES FOR INCLUSIVE PUBLIC SPACE MANAGEMENT

>Increase temporary and permanent housing

Increase access to—and in some cases the supply of—temporary and permanent housing.

>Adopt non-punitive public policies for response

Enact public policies that recognize inclusive uses of public spaces and affirm a non-punitive response to people who are unsheltered. Do not broadly use “move-along” orders. Do not enact or enforce statutes or regulations that result in arrest or citation of people who are unsheltered engaging in meeting their basic needs.

>Coordinate across systems

Align efforts to address homelessness through coordination across government and nongovernmental organizations, such as law enforcement, fire and emergency

medical, code enforcement, public health, public sanitation, human services, and health and behavioral health providers and systems.

>Pro-actively make public spaces healthier

Provide regular trash pick-up, access to drinking water, public restrooms and showers or other hygiene and sanitary options, and safe needle disposal and needle exchange. Provide supplies and education to unsheltered people on how to keep their sites tidy, minimize health and sanitation hazards, and peacefully share public space with other individuals.

>Have trained outreach staff accessible 24/7

Advance coordinated outreach, with multi-disciplinary collaborations between homeless service providers, law enforcement and other first responders, and healthcare organizations. These efforts should emphasize a person-centered, housing focus—working to connect people to stable housing along with access to healthcare and other needed services. Harm reduction is

essential—building connections with individuals to a range of treatment options while also providing critical, immediately needed resources.

>Train first responders and sanitation workers in problem-solving approaches

Ensure that law enforcement and first responders are trained and supervised to focus on problem solving with people who are unsheltered to connect with homeless assistance systems. Threats or actual arrest or citations should be reserved only for situations where the public safety is immediate.

>Track data

Because multiple departments will be involved in public space management, it is important to establish ways to track responses, human impacts and outcomes, and costs related to these activities.

>Only close encampments with great care and protect the rights of unsheltered people

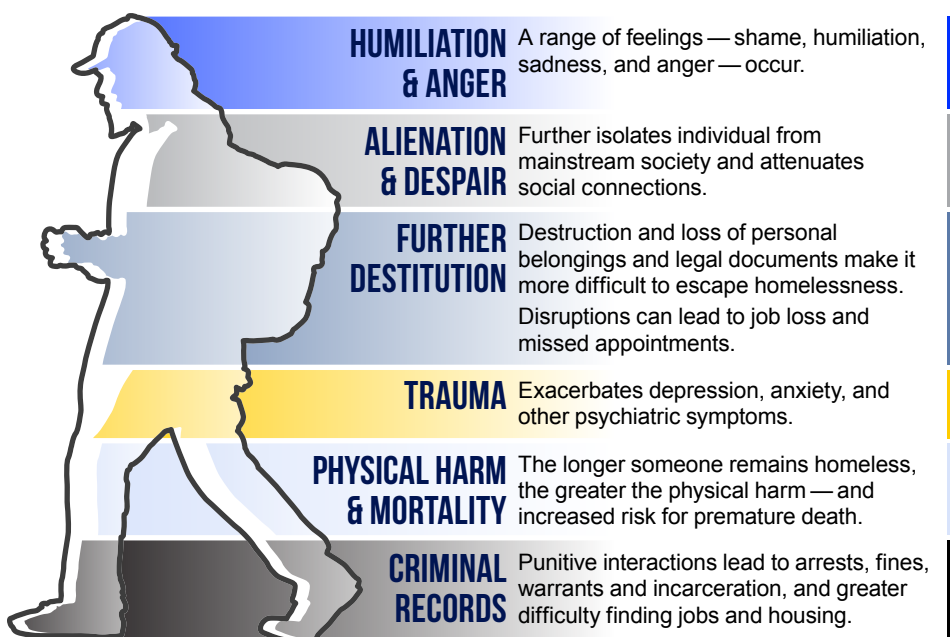
Encampments should only be closed when there is a serious public health risk—clear protocols should be in place to assess when closure is necessary. Practices include consultation with individuals living in the encampment, adequate time to relocate to safe shelter or housing, assistance with relocating, clear notice on actual date and time of the cleanup, and protection of personal belongings and documents including safe storage, and providing options for alternative living arrangements if safe shelter or housing is not available.

>Avoid false expectations

Create realistic expectations that don’t exceed the ability of the government to address and resolve unsheltered homelessness.

Consequences of Punitive Approaches

Displacement through move-along orders or arrest and citations for activities like sleeping, camping and “acts of living” laws are fundamentally unfair when individuals have no other reasonable alternatives, and prolong homelessness and increase the need for services from various public systems.



“The Sheriff’s Office can’t solve homelessness, but we also understand that we must address livability concerns within our community. Through collaboration with the local social service providers, we work to lessen the impacts that being houseless has on our citizens.”

*Captain Travis Gullberg
Multnomah County Sheriff’s Office*



Deputy DeWayne McQueen of the Multnomah County Sheriff’s Office HOPE Team checks out a campsite under a highway bridge and in the woods of the National Forest. The campsite would meet “low impact” requirements as it is tidy but the open fire is hazardous. The latter would likely make it target for clean up by transportation officials.

Continuum of Enforcement Practices

- Success should be measured by reductions in unsheltered homelessness.
- Not all public space management practices are effective.
Non-punitive responses support effective solutions.

EFFECTIVE

Effective, Non-Punitive

- Policy affirming non-punitive response
- No regulations or practices that punish homelessness
- Collaboration with homeless assistance system
- Outreach without enforcement
- Behavioral health teams
- Panhandling alternatives that connect to paying jobs

Ineffective, Non-Punitive

- Anti-panhandling campaign
- Independent programs that are not aligned with homeless assistance system

Ineffective, Less Punitive

- Non-enforcement of regulations that punish homelessness
- Arrests/citations issued only as last resort
- Specialized policing—alternatives to arrest (e.g. LEAD®)
- Encampment resolution with notice, linkages, protection/safe storage
- Alternative courts and/or treatment requirements

INEFFECTIVE

Ineffective and Punitive

- Arrest, citations, fines, fees, and incarceration for acts related to homelessness
- Imposing mandates or face arrest, even in situations of limited options for crisis housing
- Active enforcement to clean up sites without protections
- Arrests for refusing shelter referral

NON-PUNITIVE

MOST PUNITIVE

RESOURCES

➤ **National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty.**

https://nlchp.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Tent_City_USA_2017.pdf

➤ **National Recreation and Parks.**

<https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2019/january/addressing-homelessness-in-public-parks/>

➤ **Public Library Association.**

<http://www.ala.org/pla/resources/tools/homelessness>

➤ **U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness.**

<https://www.usich.gov/tools-for-action/ending-homelessness-for-people-in-encampments/>



Hygiene facilities available through "Showers of Blessing," a mobile shower set up run by the Interfaith Initiative of Santa Barbara

SOLUTIONS BASED ON EVIDENCE

Arnold Ventures (AV) is a philanthropic organization with the mission to invest in evidence-based solutions that maximize opportunities and minimize injustice. AV supported a study to identify practices and policies that promote alternatives to using punitive and enforcement-based measures as the primary responses to unsheltered homelessness. Project investigators conducted a three-day visit in spring–summer 2019 to each of nine sites for an in-person review of community-specific initiatives. The sites represent the major regions of the U.S. and include cities of different sizes as well as rural, suburban, and tribal areas and provide an array of different socioeconomic contexts and present different local housing market configurations.