



# HUMAN SERVICES & VETERANS COMMITTEE

## COMMITTEE MEETING

~ MINUTES ~

Tuesday, November 29, 2022

2:00 PM

Sullivan Chamber  
795 Massachusetts Avenue  
Cambridge, MA 02139

**The Human Services and Veterans Committee will conduct a public meeting to discuss the unhoused population in Cambridge and uptick in substance use in Central Square**

Attendee Name	Present	Absent	Late	Arrived
Marc C. McGovern	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Burhan Azeem	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Alanna Mallon	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Paul F. Toner	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Quinton Zondervan	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

A public meeting of the Cambridge City Council’s Human Services and Veterans Committee was held on Tuesday, November 29, 2022. The meeting was Called to Order at 2:00 p.m. by the Chair, Councillor McGovern. Pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2022 adopted by Massachusetts General Assembly and approved by the Governor, this public meeting was hybrid, allowing participation in person, in the Sullivan Chamber, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, City Hall, 795 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA and by remote participation via zoom.

**Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.**

- Councillor McGovern – Present
- Councillor Azeem – Present/Remote
- Vice Mayor Mallon – Present
- Councillor Toner – Present/Remote
- Councillor Zondervan – Present/Remote

**Present – 5 Absent – 0. Quorum established.**

Councillor McGovern gave opening remarks and noted that the focus of the meeting was to discuss the unhoused population in Cambridge and uptick in substance use in Central Square. He introduced the City Manager, Yi-An Huang who was joined by Assistant City Manager Owen O’Riordan.

The City Manager, along with representatives from various City Departments, presented a power point titled “Committee Meeting: Residents Who Are Unhoused and Increase in Substance Use in Central Square” (ATTACHMENT A). City Manager Huang did an overview of the increase in troubling activity in Central Square and noted that the City and its partners, Central Square Business Improvement District (BID), Bay Cove, Healthcare for the Homeless, are all responding together to help on the ongoing needs of the unhoused community. City Manager Huang recognized that the City is taking a multi-department, local community partnered approach to address increased activity and support its residents who are unhoused and noted that

Minutes Acceptance: Minutes of Nov 29, 2022 2:00 PM (Committee Reports)

there is more work that needs to be done and that he looks forward to coming back together to create a recommended path to meet goals.

Ellen Semonoff, Assistant City Manager for Department of Human Service Programs (DHSP), gave a quick overview regarding coordinating with shelter providers, working to utilize emergency housing vouchers, and expanding Medical Street Outreach services.

Christine Elow, Police Commissioner for the Cambridge Police Department (CPD), reviewed the police departments approach with the unhoused community and substance abuse. They noted that there was an outreach unit dedicated to both Central and Harvard Square and there has been collaborations with other departments and community organizations on ways to improve public safety.

Derrick Neal, Chief Public Health Officer for the City of Cambridge, participated in the meeting remotely and summarized how the Public Health Department is taking action to reduce overdoses and reduce harm by awareness and training.

John Nardone, Deputy Commissioner of Department Public Works (DPW), gave an overview of how DPW is working with the BID and the Harvard Square Business Association to help improve the appearance of the squares.

Neil MacInnes-Barker, Director of Veteran Services, noted he was accompanied by Cynthia Harris, Deputy Director of Veteran Services, and reviewed how Veteran Services is able to help Veterans who are unhoused and what services are available for them through Veteran Services and through other partnerships within the City.

Liz Mengers, Planning and Development Manager for DHSP, summarized how DHSP is expanding permanent supportive housing and adding supportive services.

Theresa Young, Senior Director of Housing and Homeless Services for Bay Cove, gave an overview on the medical street outreach team and how Bay Cove partners with community organizations to address the community's needs and the connections to shelters including information and transportation that is provided.

Christine Elow reviewed noted that CPD's data-driven approach has led to increased patrols in Central Square, noting that there are high impact patrols conducted during both the day and night shifts.

Frederick Cabral, Superintendent from CPD, also reviewed the work being done by high impact patrol officers, outreach officers, and the clinical support unit. They summarized how Officers and staff are seeking to locate and help any unhoused residents who may need services.

John Nardone reviewed what services are being provided by DPW to help keep the Squares clean and how they have been working closely with the BID addressing vandalism, graffiti, and unpleasant odors.

Michael Monestime, member of the Central Square BID, gave an overview of the responsibilities of the BID and ambassadors who are helping keep the Squares clean daily.

Brian Sink, Program Manager of the Needle Exchange, thanked presenters for their creative solutions to address the increase in people experiencing homelessness. They summarized the work being done at the Needle Exchange and what some of their future plans are.

**Councillor McGovern opened Public Comment.**

Ava Swanson, 10 Holyoke Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke on lending her support to the development of daytime drop-in centers for the unhoused.

Luke Calamita, 435 Pforzheimer Mail Center, Cambridge, MA, spoke on Policy Order #1, Unhoused Population.

Patricia Medeiros, 5 Temple Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke on Temple Street.  
 Debra Morris, 237 Franklin Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke on Central Square Safety.  
 Pete Bassney, 240 Franklin Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke on Central Square.  
 Jim Stewart, 11 Garden Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke on Shelter Capacity Human Services Committee.  
 Cassie Hurd, 5 Longfellow Park, Cambridge, MA, spoke on Public Comment.  
 Eileen Vitone, 252 Harvard Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke on Central Square.  
 Patrick Barret, 41 Pleasant Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke on Central Square BID and Central Square.  
 Robert Winters, 366 Broadway, Cambridge, MA, spoke on Central Square.

Councillor McGovern thanked everyone for their comments. He noted that the issue is not always because a person is unhoused in Central Square, but it is the behavior that is happening in the Square, and that it is a very complex issue.

Vice Mayor Mallon thanked members of the community who spoke at today's meetings and the experiences they are having in the Square. She spoke on day drop in shelters and connections that are available in the City, and also make comments on substance abuse and education. She noted she looked forward to future conversations.

Councillor Zondervan thanked presenters and had clarifying questions on the Spaulding Lease to which The City Manager responded. He made comments on day shelters and shelter capacity in the City.

Councillor Simmons noted she is aware of the unhoused community and that the City is trying to do the right thing to serve them, and that it should be a regional conversation of the unhoused community. She thanked CPD and the BID for their hard.

**Vice Mayor Mallon made a motion to extend the meeting by 15 minutes.**

**Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.**

Councillor McGovern – Yes

Councillor Azeem – Yes

Vice Mayor Mallon – Yes

Councillor Toner – Yes

Councillor Zondervan – Yes

**Yes – 5 No – 0. Motion passes.**

Councillor Toner noted that a regional conversation on the unhoused community would be beneficial and that there should be a short-term action plan to help citizens feel safe.

Councillor Carlone made comments that it is important to plan for the space of a day center and to use the resources that the City has.

Councillor McGovern thanked everyone for the work that they do every day. He made comments that it is important for everyone to feel safe. He noted that the unhoused community and substance abuse is a structural problem beyond the City. Councillor McGovern noted that today was not the first time a day center has been on the table and it is important to go forward with it.

**Councillor McGovern made a motion for adjournment.**

**Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.**

Councillor McGovern – Yes

Councillor Azeem – Absent

Vice Mayor Mallon – Yes

Councillor Toner – Yes

Councillor Zondervan – Yes

**Yes – 4 No – 0 Absent -1. Meeting adjourned 4:06p.m.**

Attachment A: Committee Meeting: Residents Who Are Unhoused and Increase in Substance Use in Central Square

**Clerk’s Note:** The City of Cambridge/22 City View records every City Council meeting and every City Council Committee meeting. This is a permanent record.

The video for this meeting can be viewed at:

[Nov 29, 2022 2:00 PM - Human Services & Veterans Committee - Committee Meeting \(granicus.com\)](https://www.granicus.com/ViewVideo.aspx?ID=104444)

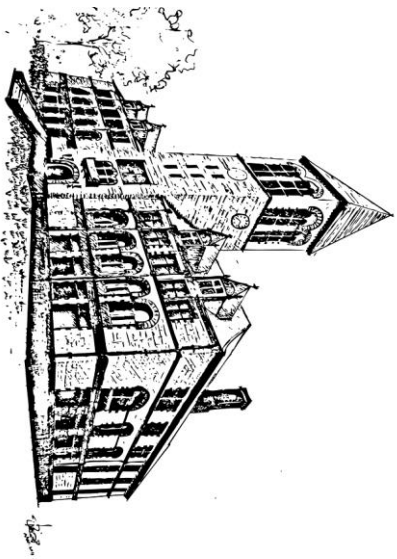
All meetings are “closed captioned”. After each meeting the “closed captioned transcripts” are available online at: <https://app.box.com/s/9qormcahynjt4pzpt1n5opixogl3q7k5>

Please note that there is no editing of these “closed captioned transcripts” and they do not constitute a verbatim transcript prepared by a certified transcriber.

**A communication was received from City Manager Yi-An Huang, transmitting a presentation regarding Residents Who Are Unhoused and Increase in Substance Use in Central Square.**



# CITY OF CAMBRIDGE



## **Committee Meeting: Residents Who Are Unhoused and Increase in Substance Use in Central Square**

November 29, 2022 at 2 p.m.

Sullivan Chamber, Cambridge City Hall, 795 Massachusetts Avenue

- Data show an increase in troubling activity (e.g., overdoses, assaults) in Central Square
- While an increase or change in residents who are unhoused has been brought up as a potential driver, this does not tell the whole story; more analysis of underlying drivers is required
- The City and its partners (e.g., Cambridge BID, Baycove, Healthcare for the Homeless) are responding to the increase in activity and ongoing needs of our unhoused residents in Central Square in a myriad of ways, which will be summarized today
- While the current response is robust, even more work needs to be done, with more internal and external coordination, likely incorporating a regional response given inherent cross-city interdependencies
- Moving forward, we will evaluate recommendations from both the January 2022 Ad Hoc Homelessness sub-committee and FY22 Substance Use Advisory Committee and come back to this forum with a recommended path forward in early 2023

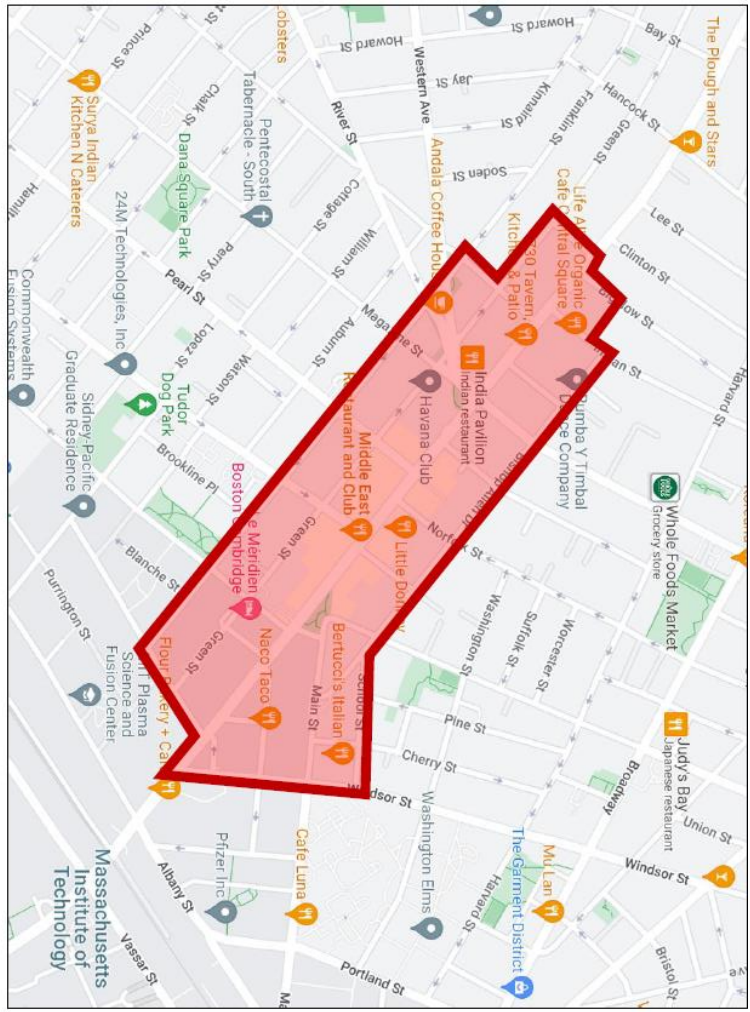




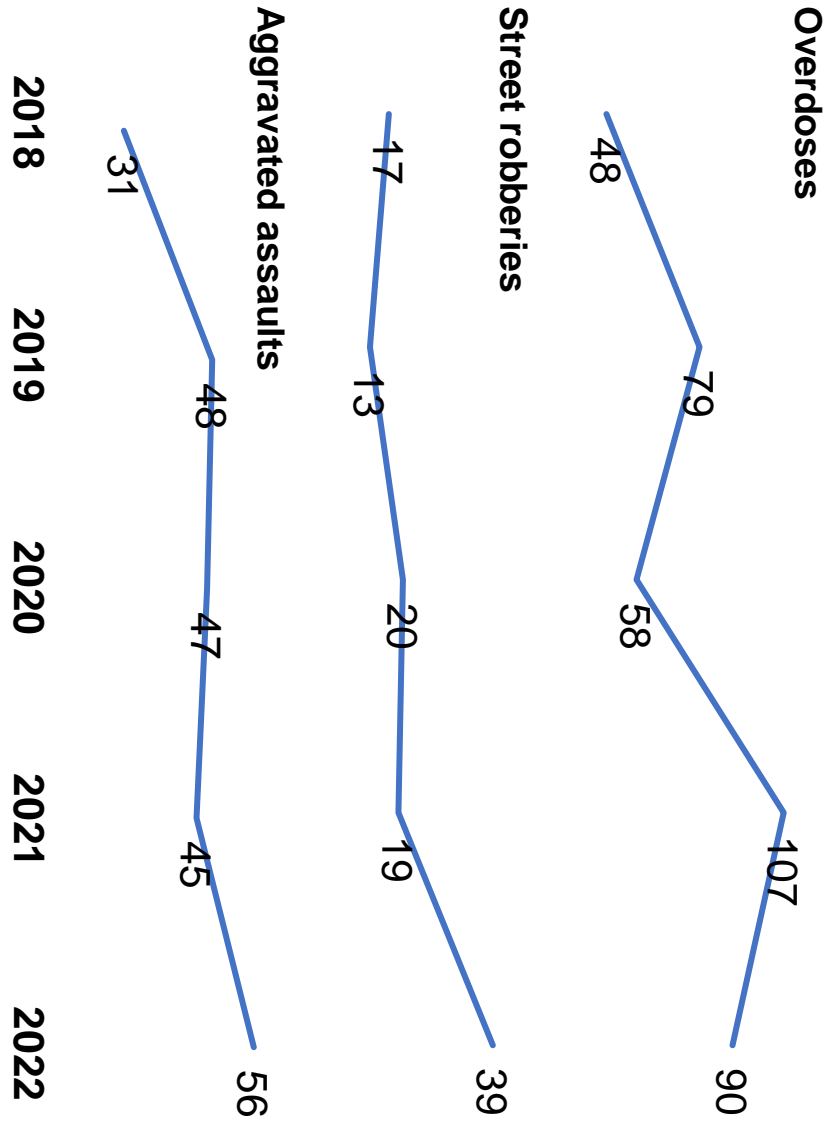
**There has been an increase in documented overdoses and aggravated assaults in Central Square compared to prior years**

Minutes Acceptance: Minutes of Nov 29, 2022 2:00 PM (Committee Reports)

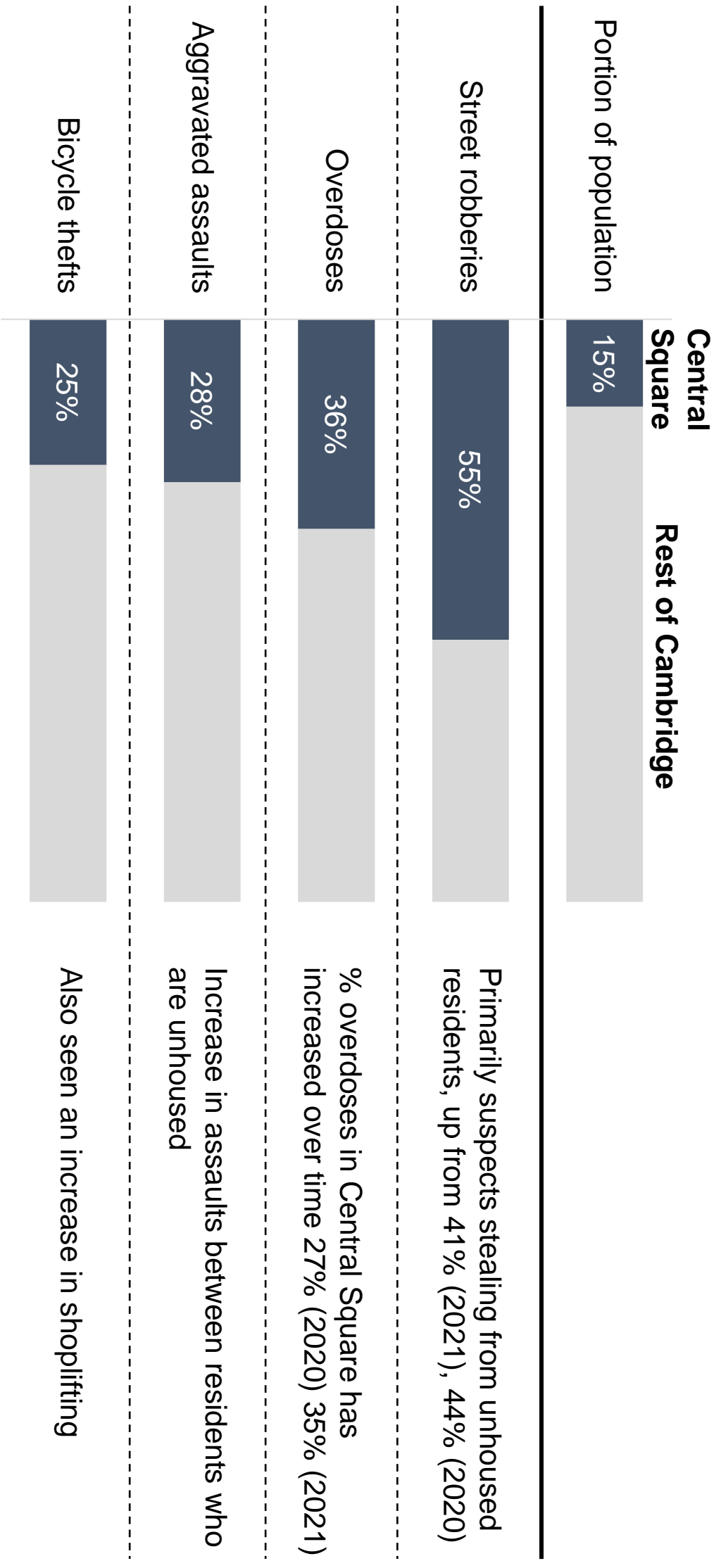
**Using a narrow definition of Central Square (approximates BID) . . .**



**. . . Qualitative assessments of increased incidents are supported by CPD data**



**Central Square continues to have an outsized proportion of the City's incidents and remains a focus for the City and its partners**



Primarily suspects stealing from unhoused residents, up from 41% (2021), 44% (2020)

% overdoses in Central Square has increased over time 27% (2020) 35% (2021)

Increase in assaults between residents who are unhoused

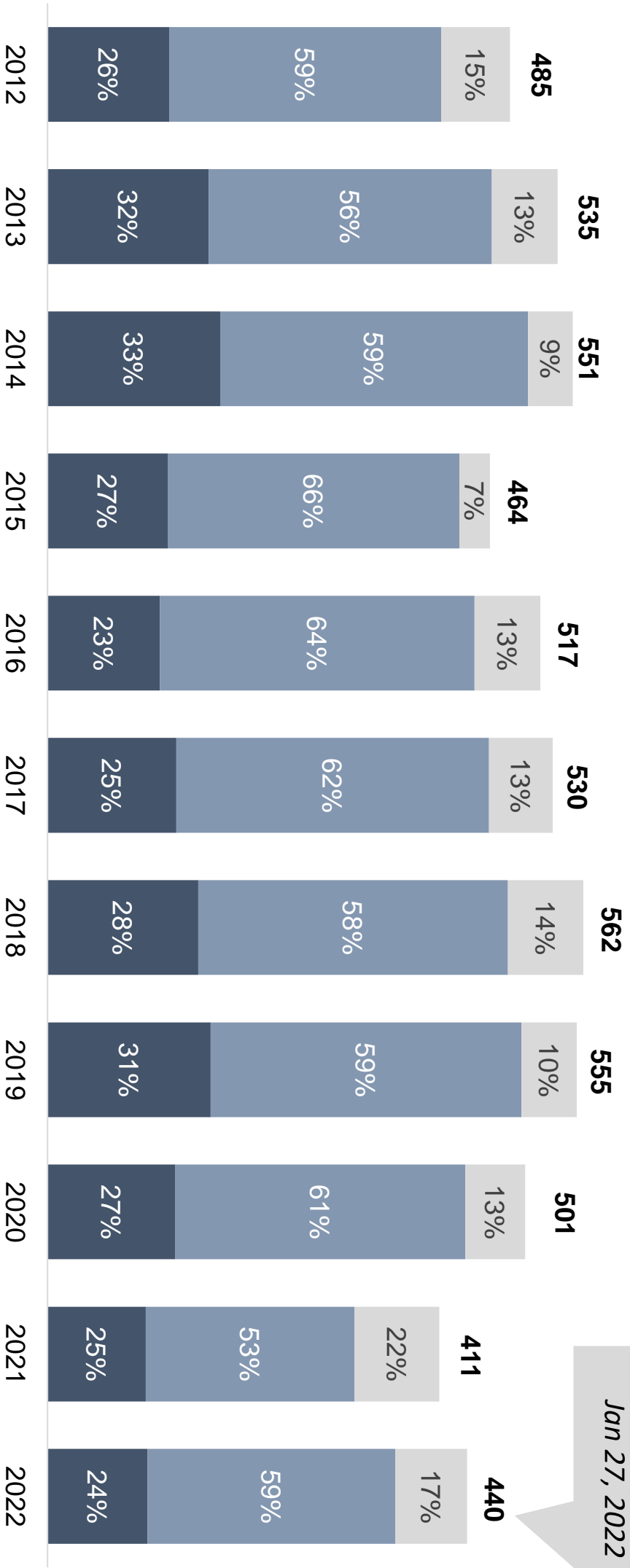
Also seen an increase in shoplifting





Annual point in time assessments of residents who are unsheltered in Cambridge are similar to historical trends, though they have not been updated since late Jan 2022

Point in time assessment of homelessness over time

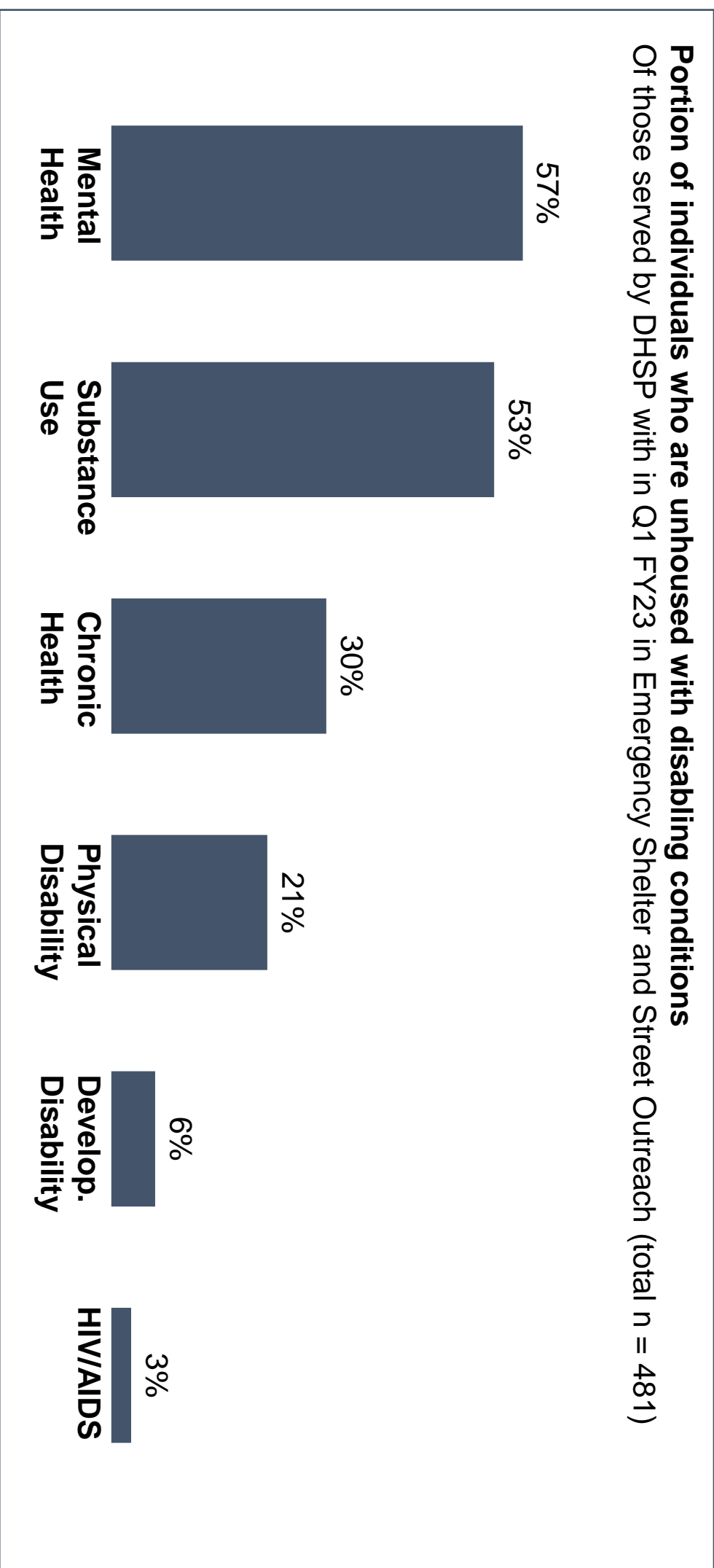


Point-in-time from Jan 27, 2022

# Many in the unhoused community have significant clinical needs, particularly mental health and substance use disorders

Minutes Acceptance: Minutes of Nov 29, 2022 2:00 PM (Committee Reports)

**Portion of individuals who are unhoused with disabling conditions**  
Of those served by DHSP with in Q1 FY23 in Emergency Shelter and Street Outreach (total n = 481)



# While today we are discussing supporting the unhoused within Cambridge, the challenge is a regional and inter-dependent one

Minutes Acceptance: Minutes of Nov 29, 2022 2:00 PM (Committee Reports)

## A month after the tents were cleared in Mass. and Cass, signs of tumult, and hope

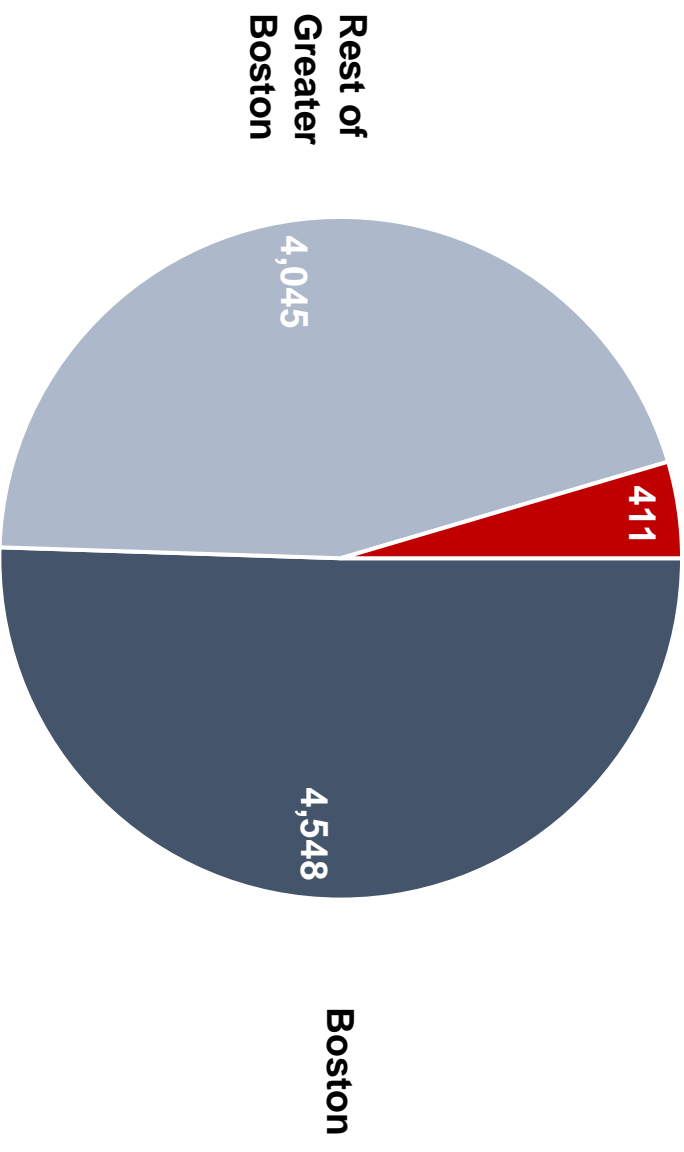
By Milton J. Valencia Globe Staff, Updated February 12, 2022, 3:50 p.m.



A security officer patrols Atkinson Street among the crowds of people in the Mass. and Cass area on Friday, about a month after the tents were removed. JOHN TUMACKI/GLOBE STAFF

## Cambridge's local share of residents who are unhoused

Cambridge



# The City is taking a multi-department, local community partnered approach to address increased activity and support its residents who are unhoused

Minutes Acceptance: Minutes of Nov 29, 2022 2:00 PM (Committee Reports)

1

## Human Service Programs

- Funding 6 FTE housing navigators
- Implementation planning for expanded Medical Street Outreach with a mobile van
- Coordinating with providers to stabilize 2023 shelter capacity
- Expanding permanent supportive housing and supportive services (e.g., 116 Norfolk)
- Working to utilize emergency housing vouchers and secure new ones in partnership with the Cambridge Housing Authority

2

## Cambridge Police

- Data-driven redirection of resources/increased outreach
- Clinical support unit and social workers central to response
- Strategically using Community Court
- Hired additional officers
- Collaborating with other departments and community organizations (e.g., BID, Community Court, Boston Homeless Task Force, CHA, City of Somerville) on other ways to improve public safety

3

## Public Health

- Distributing newly accessed state funded naloxone and fentanyl strips
- Launching PSA harm reduction campaign in December (e.g., locate nearest Narcan sites)
- Evaluating best use of J&J opioid settlement funds

4

## Public Works & Cambridge BID

- High level of services to keep streets clean
- Addressing vandalism, graffiti and odors
- Installed needle drop boxes, needles collected/disposed of regularly by BID staff
- Evaluating extended BID ambassador hours into evening



# DHSP is expanding permanent supportive housing, adding supportive services, and expanding creative solutions like medical street outreach

## Expanding permanent supportive housing

- Emergency housing and mainstream vouchers
- Housing navigation and stabilization
- 116 Norfolk Street

The level of homeless dedicated resources and mainstream affordable housing outmatched by scale of issues and need

Prioritizing most vulnerable/highest service need clients for limited housing opportunities generates challenges including in referral, vacancy time, service provision, etc.

## Adding supportive services

- Funding 6 FTE housing navigators
- Street outreach – medical outreach; BID
- Food assistance

## Exploring other creative solutions

- Medical Street Outreach with Baycove/FirstStep and CHA/Cambridge and Somerville Healthcare for the Homeless
- Low threshold 24 hour drop-in center(s)





3 There are significant potential declines in Cambridge local shelter capacity over the next 6-12 months; DHSP is working with partners on options and will report back in early-2023

Shelter bed counts

Name	Pre-covid	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024 anticipated
Emergency Services Center (240 Albany)	97	60	60	60
Cambridge Warming Center (Senior)	49	30	40	40
Emergency Shelter	43	35	35	0
Harvard Square Homeless Shelter	29	15	15	15
Y2Y Harvard Square (First Parish)	27	18	22	22
Heading Home Emergency Shelter	21	0	0	0
First Church Shelter	14	14	14	14
St. Pat's (Somerville)	32	20	27	27
Transition Wellness Center (Spaulding)	N/A	58	58	0
Green St. Shelter (MEMA/DHCD funded)	N/A	55	52	52
<b>Total bed count</b>	<b>312</b>	<b>305</b>	<b>323</b>	<b>230</b>

<b>Yearly change</b>	<b>-7</b>	<b>+18</b>	<b>-93</b>
----------------------	-----------	------------	------------



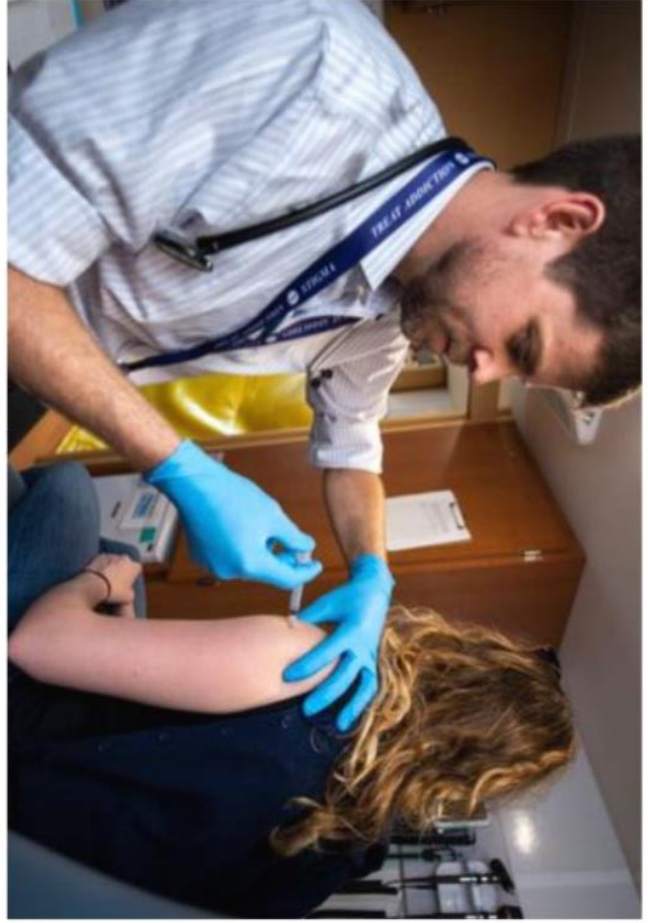
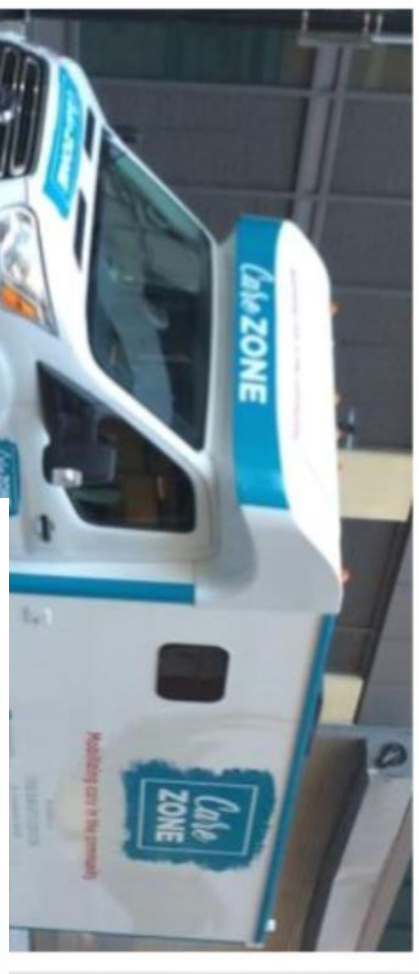
Working Together to End Homelessness



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE



3. **Medical Street Outreach is a great example of partnering with community organizations to address our community's needs**



First Step provides mobile outreach services in Cambridge and Somerville and are available 7 days/week from 2 PM-midnight to provide:

- Care from a physician (CHA physician currently joins street outreach team 3 shifts/week)
- Basic needs supplies (including food, water, clothing, and toiletries)
- Safe injection supplies (clean needles and personal sharps containers)
- Connections to shelters including information and transportation

# CPD's data-driven approach has led to increased patrols in Central Square

- Extensive visibility and data-driven work is being done within our Operations and Criminal Investigations Units
- This approach helped identify need to hire additional officer for late afternoon/evening shift 7 days a week to enhance visibility in each Square's high-activity locations
- High-impact patrols are also conducted during the day and night shifts, 7 days a week, in areas that have seen an increase in quality of life and disorder complaints.
  - Undercover officers are also deployed in the Squares to monitor and act on any criminal activity.
    - Also develop intelligence on specific issues and places and refer individuals in need for follow-up
- These high impact patrols supplement foot patrol officers assigned to the Squares every shift (7 days a week) and officers are assigned to both Central and Harvard Square
- Strategically using Community Court arrest and summons process as a tool for people who are resistant to services and involved in petty crime





**3 Officers connect with 50-100 individuals a week, many unhoused, and offer services to all**

- Officers and staff are:
  - Seeking to locate and help any unhoused residents who may be in need of services
  - Looking to identify and mitigate any active substance use, drug transactions, abandoned property, and trespassing violations
- On average officers are connecting with approximately 50-100 individuals a week, many unhoused, in these areas
  - All are offered services
  - Many accept a Cambridge Continuum of Care “Homeless Services Update” that helps locate and access temporary and longer-term shelter options, as well as showers, public toilets, food options, and more.
  - Food, water, blankets, and other needed items are also distributed, as available/when appropriate
- Clinical support unit and social workers go central to response including getting records of unhoused sealed so people can get housing





### The community has appreciated CPD's increased attention to high activity areas like Central Square and outreach approach

"Your staff goes above and beyond with these outreach initiatives. What a great community service."

"Very challenging situation and I appreciate the resources being directed to help our most vulnerable."

"Thank you for this update, your attention to these issues, and more presence in general. A challenging situation for sure."

"I am very glad to know that the folks who "camp out" under the library overhang are being offered services.... living rough must be so hard."

"Happy for the partnership we have with you, definitely a lot of teamwork in this City."



# Cambridge Public Health Department is taking action to reduce overdoses and reduce harm

**You Can Save a Life With a Spray**

**Stop an Overdose with Naloxone**

Think someone's overdosing?

- Call 911
- Give Naloxone
- Give Rescue Breaths

Learn more at [cambridgepublichealth.org](http://cambridgepublichealth.org)

Do you have unused or expired **prescription medications** in your home?

**Dispose of them the safe way!**

Prescription Drug Take Back Day

- Reducing overdoses
  - Naloxone and fentanyl test strip distribution events
  - NaloxBox accessibility at City buildings
  - Medication takeback events
  - Pilot project with Harvard students to provide Narcan vending machines and CPR face shields.
- Awareness and training
  - PSA campaign (BlueBikes, MBTA buses) including maps of nearest Narcan sites
  - Overdose prevention training sessions
- Consumer voice and inclusion
  - Incorporating a consumer voice in decision-making

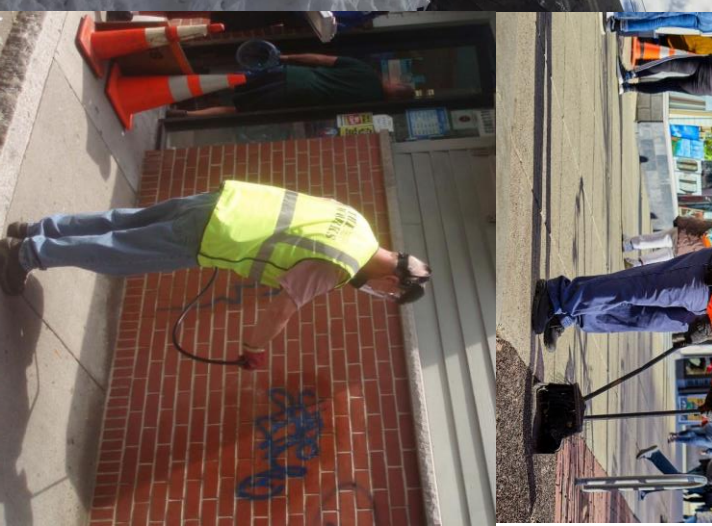




# The DPW works with both the Central Square Business Improvement District (BID) and the Harvard Square Business Association to help improve the appearance of the squares

## Some of the services include:

- Litter pickup & Public area recycling
- Hand crews, cleaning sidewalks 7 days/week
- Street cleaning
- Outdoor seating
- Snow clearance
- Power Washing
- Graffiti removal program





### Additional Detail: Litter pickup, public area trash and recycling and sidewalk/street sweeping/cleaning

- The mixture of public area bins in all of the squares are emptied seven days a week, twice a day (once between 7:00 am -3:00 pm and again between 3:00 pm -11:00 pm).
- Compactors and open barrels are washed on a monthly basis during the months of April through November, and repairs are made as needed.
- The streets in and around The Squares are mechanically swept daily between 4:00 am- 8:00 am, between April and December.
- A vacuum sidewalk sweeper is deployed daily 4:00 am- 7:00am between the months of April and December
- Hand-crews for sidewalk sweeping are stationed in Squares year-round, between 7:00 am- 3:00 pm Monday through Friday.
- On weekends (Saturdays & Sundays) streets are also mechanically swept between 4:00 am - 8:00 am and sidewalks are swept between 6:00 am-10:00 am by hand-crews and/or the vacuum sweeper.
- Working closely with the BID team needle drop boxes were installed at 4 locations within Central Square and needles are collected daily with BID staff.





### Additional Detail: Addressing vandalism, graffiti and unpleasant odors

On a weekly basis Public Works along with our contractors, BID staff and others are:

- Inspecting electrical boxes and traffic poles and scraping off stickers as needed. Bus shelters are cleaned, and abandoned bikes are removed from racks.
- Removing graffiti on both public and private property, as needed.
- Inspectors are surveying areas and graffiti prevention and enforcement efforts include issuing citations for illegal postings, when violators can be found.
- DPW contractors steam clean significant portions of the squares 1-2 times per month (BID staff take care of this cleaning in Central).
- Three times per year, all of Central and Harvard Squares are steam cleaned. This includes all benches, trash and recycling receptacles, cleaning and deodorizing of sidewalks, bus shelters, and removal of graffiti on public property along this route.
- Prevention and enforcement of odor concerns also involves speaking with property owners about improperly stored garbage, and issuing citations as needed.



## **This conversation is a beginning with next steps focused on better coordination and strategic prioritization**

Minutes Acceptance: Minutes of Nov 29, 2022 2:00 PM (Committee Reports)

- Work through the Cambridge Continuum of Care to convene providers and key stakeholders to develop local approach:
  - Clarify near-term goals and priorities (e.g., Central Square environment, social/clinical interventions, shelter capacity)
  - Assess underlying drivers for increased incidents in Central Square
  - Review and prioritize actions from the 2022 Ad Hoc Working Group on Homelessness and FY22 Substance Use Advisory Committee
- Begin outreach and coordination to plan for regional advocacy and action
- Bring back more formal recommendations in early-2023

