

UNDERSTANDING ENCAMPMENTS IN BALTIMORE

What is an Encampment?

- An encampment is an outdoor location on public property where one or more individuals have established temporary living accommodations, typically involving structures like tents. It can also refer to the accumulation of personal belongings that remain in place even when the individuals are not present.

What an Encampment is Not:

- It is not a dwelling set up on private property.
- It is not a daytime gathering without temporary dwellings.
- It does not include locations where an individual is temporarily asleep without setting up living quarters or taking belongings when they leave.
- Encampments don't include movable belongings like shopping carts or strollers.
- It is distinct from places where panhandling occurs without temporary dwellings.
- It is not a case of general trash left in a public space.

THE CITY'S PLAN FOR ENCAMPMENTS

Why Can't People Live in Encampments?

The City holds the health and safety of all residents paramount. Living in outdoor spaces not meant for human habitation leads to a number of health and safety issues, including:

- Weather conditions can increase the risk of frostbite and hypothermia in cold winter and severe sunburn and heat stroke in hot weather.
- Cooking in close quarters or inside tents can cause fires.
- Lack of running water and electricity, which prevents proper handling of food and medicine, can facilitate the spread of food-borne diseases.
- Garbage that attracts rodents and other vermin.

Outreach & Support Services

- The Mayor's Office of Homeless Services (MOHS) and their funded providers, People Encouraging People (PEP) and Downtown Partnership of Baltimore (DPOB), engage in daily outreach to individuals in encampments to build trust and meaningful relationships.
- Outreach teams provide essential support services like meals, transportation, resource connections, and advocacy. They also help connect individuals to shelter, housing, and treatment programs.
- Various City agencies collaborate to address encampment issues. Resources are specialized based on encampment need and agency expertise (i.e. if a fire is set in an encampment, the Baltimore City Fire Department (BCFD) responds to ensure safety).



Reporting an Encampment

- If you would like to report an encampment, please call 311. You can also report an encampment by submitting a ticket at 311.baltimorecity.gov or on the Baltimore City 311 Mobile App.
- If Outreach is already aware of the site, that information will be shared with the reporting constituent. Otherwise, an Outreach Team will visit the location to assess it.
- In cases of immediate safety concerns for an individual, call 911. For support with a mental or emotional health crisis, call 988.

Protocol for Encampment Cleanup

- The Mayor's Office of Homeless Services (MOHS) coordinates with other City agencies to schedule and conduct cleanups when an encampment poses health, security, or safety risks or interferes with public space use.
- An Encampment Workgroup assesses and prioritizes each encampment based on a rubric.
- Notices are posted at least 10 business days in advance of a cleanup by the Baltimore Department of Transportation (DOT) or Department of Recreation & Parks (BCRP).
- Outreach teams engage with encampment residents, offer services, and inform them about the upcoming cleanup.
- Cleanups involve multiple agencies, including MOHS, DOT, BCRP, BCFD, Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD), Baltimore City Department of Public Works (DPW), and Baltimore City Police Department (BCPD).
- In some cases, DPW may perform "trash only" cleanups, allowing tents and personal belongings to stay while removing obvious trash. A 14-day notice is provided for such cleanups.

Why Do Some Individuals Decline Shelter and Support Services?

- Individuals may choose not to accept shelter for reasons such as attachment to their encampment's neighborhood, past negative shelter experiences, or behavioral health or substance use conditions.
- Shelter and services are optional, and individuals have the right to accept or reject them.
- Outreach teams work to build trust and motivate individuals to participate in the housing process.

Important Note

Encampments will not be closed unless housing, shelter, and other essential resources are offered. Moving encampments without providing alternatives can cause further instability and trauma. The focus is on providing a range of shelter, housing options, and resources tailored to individual or family needs.

