

DOWNTOWN ACTIONS

Strengthened downtown policing and visibility, with City Council approving and supporting the Barrie Police Service's expanded downtown team, including dedicated foot and bike patrols focused on public safety, social disorder, and visible drug use.

Expanded daily downtown cleanup efforts through the County of Simcoe's One Community Solutions program, including the regular removal of needles, debris, and hazardous materials from streets, sidewalks, and alleyways.

Actively addressing illegal drug dispensaries, including working with the Barrie Police Service and exploring all available legal and enforcement tools to shut down unlicensed operations that pose public safety concerns downtown.

Ended the long-standing practice of individuals being released from the Central North Correctional Centre into downtown Barrie. Since the launch of the city supported pilot, 800 individuals have been safely transported to their home communities rather than dropped off in the downtown core.

Accelerated encampment response through the Mayor's Emergency Order, declared on September 9, 2025, enabling faster action on health and safety risks. To date, 100 encampment sites across the city, including in the downtown, have been addressed, restoring parks and public spaces for community use.

Invested in downtown revitalization, including funding for enhanced safety measures, public space activation (such as Troubadour Festival), and direct funding to the Downtown BIA. Supported post-secondary expansion in the downtown core, with Georgian College and Lakehead University campuses bringing more than 1,000 students into the downtown on a daily basis which support economic activity and long-term revitalization.

Supporting the County of Simcoe in shifting the focus of social service operations in downtown, including the upcoming opening of the County's 40 bed bridge housing program at 113 Tiffin Street, which will provide supportive housing for individuals experiencing homelessness.

Working with the County of Simcoe and Barrie Cares to advance a purpose-built Campus of Care, located outside of the downtown core, that will consolidate shelter, health, addiction, and support services in one location reducing impacts on the downtown while ensuring people receive coordinated, ongoing care.

While challenges remain, meaningful action is underway. The Mayor and Council remain committed to improving safety, cleanliness, and economic vitality in Barrie's downtown.

Although the City of Barrie does not manage social services (these are the responsibility of the County of Simcoe, as designated by the province), the city recognizes these concerns and stepped in under the recent Emergency Order declared by the mayor on Sept 9/25 due to the growing number of visible encampments and the health crisis that we are experiencing, not only in Barrie, but nationally.

While under the Emergency Order, the city took on additional initiatives in areas like encampment response, environmental cleanup of parks and community spaces, and social service coordination to ensure individuals are provided indoor spaces and resources to successfully transition from encampments and street homelessness to a pathway to recovery and housing.

The Emergency Order allowed the city to act quickly particularly where safety risks, fire hazards, overdoses, and encampment related concerns created pressure on both municipal services and the community. The city has been working daily with the County and Barrie Police Service on outreach, enforcement, connecting people to shelters/resources, and reducing unsafe encampments across the city. This work included securing additional winter warming centre spaces and supporting a health care approach to homelessness, recognizing that addiction and untreated mental health conditions are driving much of the visible crisis you're seeing downtown.

The city has also launched several initiatives and made significant financial investments to support solutions and improve community safety. These include:

Accelerated encampment response with coordinated outreach and enforcement reducing encampments on city-owned property. Since Sept 9/25, the city has successfully cleared 160 encampments, transitioned 74 individuals to indoor accommodations and supports.

By law updates that give Enforcement more tools to prevent re-establishment of encampments once individuals have been offered shelter or services.

Secured 40 additional warming centre spaces to ensure individuals have indoor accommodations, alleviating pressures on community spaces and downtown.

Additional financial investment into a Family Reunification program, which so far has assisted nearly 150 unhoused individuals with travel expenses to reconnect with family and supports through John Howard Society and Elizabeth Fry Society, alleviating pressures on our local community and social services.

Continued investment in the Central North Correctional Centre (CNCC) shuttle service pilot program, which has successfully diverted over 800 individuals from being dropped off in downtown Barrie, ensuring they are safely returned to their home communities. This initiative provides alternative transportation for those released from CNCC, reducing street homelessness and enhanced community safety measures in Barrie.

A focus on creating more affordable housing through the DC Waiver Holiday program, which is already enabling 654 newly approved affordable units to be built in Barrie by waiving development charges for qualifying developments.

Launched a Downtown Community Safety initiative in the downtown core to discourage loitering, illegal activity and provide rapid response to safety concerns at the transit hubs, Meridian Square, Heritage Park, Sam Cancilla Park, and the Dunlop St W and Toronto St corridor.

Barrie Police has initiated their Downtown Engagement Team and Guardian Program in the downtown core which provides enhanced visual presence of officers and special constables proactively patrolling the downtown core in car, on foot, and with the use of an UTV vehicle on waterfront trails etc.

City Council recently endorsed a mayoral motion on April 29, 2026, supporting a “zero tolerance” approach to drug-related offences in Barrie. This includes working with police on enforcement and calling on other levels of government to expand mandatory treatment options, improve access to rehabilitation, and strengthen penalties for drug-related crimes. The direction also includes steps to address illegal retail uses and improve local enforcement. Action has already been taken and lead to the closure of illegal drug dispensaries in Barrie.

The city also works closely with organizations such as RVH to advocate for expanded treatment programming,

I also want to share an update on the organization known as Barrie Cares (<https://barriecares.ca/>) They are a coalition of community partners, consisting of downtown business and property owners, who are working alongside the County of Simcoe and City of Barrie on a new Campus of Care. This facility will bring mental health care, addiction treatment, emergency shelter, and other wraparound supports together in one place, something Barrie has urgently needed. Most importantly, as it relates to your concerns, the facility is thoughtfully being planned in an area that is not in the downtown core, and where individuals can easily access health-care services needed for a successful transition from homelessness to stability.

Additionally, the County of Simcoe has opened its doors at 113 Tiffin St, a 40-bed bridge housing program, which is in the process of transitioning individuals from street homelessness into secure accommodations, with supports and connections to resources such as HART HoSC (Homelessness and Addiction Recovery Treatment - HART Hub Simcoe County - Simcoe County). HART HoSC is a collaborative network managed by the County of Simcoe and funded by the province of Ontario designed to provide wraparound care for individuals facing homelessness, addiction, and mental health challenges with a focus on treatment and recovery for long-term stability.

Thank you again for expressing your concerns and for your patience as we navigate these complex issues. The city is committed to continuing this work in collaboration the County of Simcoe to ensure community safety and well-being for all.