

August 1, 2025

Hi everyone,

Thank you for your time and feedback yesterday, and for what you do for our city everyday. We are truly grateful for the important feedback and conversation on the serious impacts on safety, quality of life, and business sustainability stemming from outdoor substance use for residents, employees, and business owners. It was especially helpful to hear specific feedback on the targeted areas in the neighborhood where businesses are struggling with daily impacts, and the areas where businesses have seen improvements.

Open substance use in any part of Boston is illegal and unacceptable. As we have built up a coordinated citywide response to end encampments, tackle overdoses and create a continuum of care, our focus is on ending congregate substance use in Boston and the criminal activity that supports it.

The Boston Police Department (BPD), Coordinated Response Team (CRT), and Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC) have been taking ongoing steps guided by targeted community feedback:

- Commissioner Cox has assigned additional officers to the D4 police district, allowing for dedicated staffing with a “same cop, same neighborhood” focus.
- After a walkthrough with neighborhood leaders and small business owners in June, BPD has deployed additional BPD bicycle patrols. The officers take routes that cover hot spots on streets and alleyways, are able to respond quickly to calls from residents and small businesses, and can cover more ground more quickly than walking beats alone. The bicycle unit piloted this strategy in Downtown with successful results, and more new officers are being trained to be able to carry out bicycle unit work.
- Two portable cameras have been temporarily located in Worcester Square and on Harrison and East Springfield, allowing for real-time monitoring from the Department’s Bureau of Field Services.
- CRT continues to host a daily morning huddle with high-level management, EMS, Public Works, Department of Public Health, specialized units within BPD, and district officers from across the city. During this huddle, we review activity from the previous 24 hours and identify high-call areas, high-risk locations, situations, and individuals of concern. This allows us to coordinate the most appropriate response and triage support in real time. CRT uses this data to stay ahead of emerging patterns and conduct focused deterrence efforts where needed.
- The newly-established partnership between CRT and the Gavin Foundation is focused on streamlining access to substance use treatment, transportation, and navigation support. With this

grant, CRT will deploy Gavin Foundation professionals to connect individuals directly to treatment and provide transportation—whether to services or back to their place of origin when appropriate.

- Streamlined access will directly strengthen CRT’s co-response with law enforcement and bolster our diversion efforts. This initiative will focus on high-impact areas like the South End and is a key part of our strategy to end outdoor substance use and improve public safety through coordinated, compassionate action.
- City departments are convening a weekly Hub table, including leadership from service providers and healthcare providers, to work through a by-name list to connect individuals with needed substance use treatment and recovery programs. The City believes that connecting individuals to decentralized treatment sites, through diversion, sectioning, and voluntary navigation, is a critical complement to enforcement. The Hub table is organized with a goal of removing individuals from conditions of active substance use, providing them with needed stability, and ending congregate use in city neighborhoods, allowing for rapid sharing of information between city departments and providers.
- BPHC is continuing to work closely with the Newmarket BID and other partners to implement new strategies to safely and quickly pick up and reduce the number of needles discarded in the area. This includes ending outdoor syringe exchange from BPHC, as well as shifting the hours of the syringe collection teams from 7am-7pm previously to 5am-midnight instead.
- In addition to the standing task force (including city and state officials, neighborhood leaders, and the Newmarket BID) focused on community policing to address daily public safety needs, necessary judicial reform related to treatment, and long-term solutions, including plans for a regional recovery campus; BPD has started a monthly meeting for focused feedback that will include representation from the most impacted neighborhood associations as well as SEBA.

Our police, public health, public works, and coordinated response teams will be on the ground seven days a week, working to address the impacts on our neighborhoods. Dealing with the nationwide opioid epidemic at the local level is ever-changing, and we are grateful for city and state partners, task force members, and all community members in addressing immediate needs and building long-term plans. Your specific feedback on hotspots, targeted areas that need intensive focus, and other larger issues are critical to guiding our resource deployment and getting results. Thank you for engaging with the City in this ongoing work.

Sincerely,

Michelle Wu  
Mayor of Boston