

8 THINGS

CITIES CAN DO NOW TO PREVENT HOMELESS VIOLENCE

Unsheltered homeless people living in public spaces commit a disproportionate number of property and violent crimes. Some cities mistakenly think they are helpless to do anything about this, hamstrung by court decisions. In fact, there are many completely legal actions cities can take to immediately reclaim public spaces from homeless criminals and protect residents, workers, and local businesses.

1

Run warrant checks at all encampments

2

Tow and impound all illegally parked RVs and camper vans

3

Enforce laws against public drug use

Cities should expand capacity of detox beds, drug courts, and addiction treatment services, and offer people breaking laws against public drug use a choice between jail and supervised treatment.

4

Enforce laws against public indecency and defecation

5

Enforce laws against open fires

6

Clear parks, sidewalks, and business districts of rough sleepers at 6am every day

7

Do not allow tents, mattresses, boxes, or carts in public spaces

Enforce laws against obstructing sidewalks and limit homeless people to a sleeping bag and one piece of luggage (e.g., a backpack, duffel bag or small suitcase).

8

Designate specific streets for rough sleeping and do not allow rough sleeping elsewhere

Assign police officers and outreach workers to each designated area. Run warrant checks and screen all arrivals for weapons. Enforce laws against public drug use and indecency in the area. Limit all arrivals to a sleeping bag and one piece of luggage.

Implementing these policies would immediately improve the safety of residents, workers, and visitors in cities with significant unsheltered homeless populations. Longer-term investments in shelter capacity, mental health resources, and addiction treatment are critical but potentially costly, whereas the above recommendations can be accomplished with existing law enforcement and outreach resources.

UNSAFE STREETS