

**Report to / Rapport au:**

**OTTAWA POLICE SERVICES BOARD  
LA COMMISSION DE SERVICES POLICIERS D'OTTAWA**

**18 December 2023 / 18 décembre 2023**

**Submitted by / Soumis par:**

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**SUBJECT: NEIGHBOURHOOD OPERATIONS CENTRE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

**OBJET: PLAN DE MISE EN ŒUVRE DU CENTRE DES OPÉRATIONS DE  
QUARTIER**

**REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

**That the Ottawa Police Services Board receive this report for information.**

**RECOMMANDATIONS DU RAPPORT**

**Que la Commission de services policiers d'Ottawa prenne connaissance du  
présent rapport à titre d'information.**

**BACKGROUND**

Over the past year, the Ottawa Police Service (OPS) has engaged extensively with our downtown communities. This has involved building stronger relationships with city partners, social service agencies, businesses, and local community associations. Through open and collaborative dialogue, OPS has gained a deeper understanding of the diverse needs and concerns of all community members, especially those who are most vulnerable and at risk. The growing problems of crime and social disorder are profoundly affecting community safety and well-being in the downtown core.

Residents, businesses, and street-involved populations report increased fear and insecurity stemming from crime and a decline in shared community values. The situation is worsened by visible social disorder and public health issues, including open drug use, overdoses, and deteriorating street sanitation. These issues are especially

concerning as they frequently occur in sensitive areas around daycares, schools, and playgrounds.

In addition, downtown Ottawa's role as the economic heart of the nation's capital is at risk. Home to the Parliamentary Precinct, diverse businesses, cultural sites, hotels, and tourist attractions, the area plays a critical role in the city's economic and social vitality. The urgent need to restore safety and economic health to the area is underscored by the fear and frustration felt by staff and business owners, and the reluctance of tourists and locals to visit the downtown core.

Recent crime statistics support community concerns, with the Crime Severity Index (CSI) three times higher in downtown Ottawa compared to the city average. Looking at total crime counts for the last seven years, the average amount of person-on-person crime (assaults, etc.) is 328% higher than the City average, while property crime is 279% higher; with both counts continuing to rise.

OPS recognizes the urgent need for an enhanced police response to crime and social disorder. We are committed to responding effectively while recognizing that these issues are complicated by social, economic, and health-related factors, along with the current state of housing, treatment, and social support services in our city. While the OPS has an essential role, relying solely on law enforcement to resolve the crisis is neither sufficient nor effective. More comprehensive, multi-agency partnerships and community-led solutions are required. We are grateful to work alongside the key service providers in the downtown core.

## **DISCUSSION**

In collaboration with community partners, the OPS is initiating the Community Outreach Response and Engagement (CORE) Strategy—an evidence-based approach to community policing in downtown Ottawa. The strategy will deliver immediate solutions to enhance safety, reduce crime, and restore a sense of security and well-being.

The CORE Strategy aligns with key elements of the OPS strategic plan and the Community Safety and Wellbeing (CSWB) framework by creating a customized policing model that is responsive to unique local needs, builds trust through strong community partnerships, and delivers alternative responses to address the complex causes of crime.

The Ontario Mobilization and Engagement Model of Community Policing (OMEM) recognizes that achieving sustainable crime prevention must involve community leadership. The model operates along a continuum that begins with a high need for police intervention, using strategies like targeted enforcement and crime suppression. It

progresses toward creating ever safer communities through partnerships centered on collaborative problem-solving and community-driven crime prevention.

In alignment with OMEM, early stages of the CORE strategy will prioritize a police-led approach with an emphasis on visible presence, enforcement, and social development as key drivers of crime prevention. As the strategy progresses and community safety is restored, OPS will facilitate a transition to a more supportive role, empowering our partners to build community-led safety and problem-solving initiatives. This confirms the shift from a reactive law enforcement model to a proactive and community-integrated approach.

### **The CORE Objectives**

Starting in Spring 2023, the OPS began work on several pilot projects, which now form the five interconnected elements of the CORE strategy:

1. Proactive engagement in high-need 'Areas of focus'
2. Police enforcement targeting serious offenders
3. The Neighbourhood Operations Centre (NOC)
4. The Community Advisory Council
5. The Integrated Community Support Table (ICST)

Each of these five elements of the CORE Strategy are discussed below. Included in each section are some of the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) which will be used to develop quarterly reports for the OPS Executive and Board, as well as for community partners and stakeholders.

#### **1. Areas of Focus**

Research shows that crime and disorder are not evenly distributed across the community but are concentrated in specific areas of focus. Similarly, a small number of repeat offenders are responsible for a large percentage of all crime (Weisburd, 2015). Using advanced data analytics, the OPS identifies areas where focused police attention is needed and deploys intermittent and highly visible patrols accordingly. This approach ensures an efficient and effective deployment of police resources and functions as a force multiplier, providing greater crime reduction benefits with limited resources.

A sustained and visible police presence in areas of focus is proven to prevent and disrupt crime. Evidence suggests that rather than displacing crime to surrounding areas, this approach has a diffusion effect, improving safety and security throughout the wider community. As our community partners also focus resources within these areas to

support the needs of at-risk and vulnerable groups, our combined efforts will produce noticeable results. Additionally, OPS will conduct Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) audits to identify and modify environmental conditions that may facilitate crime and disorder.

**KPIs:** Crime rates, Calls for Service, and crime severity in identified hot spots; OPS and community-responses to social disorder (including opioid consumption, public disturbances, and trespassing); CPTED audits; public perceptions of safety and police presence.

## **2. Targeted Enforcement**

Using data analysis, OPS identifies repeat high harm offenders, especially those involved in serious and violent crime such as random assaults, robberies, drug trafficking, and gang activity. Data show that these offenders are responsible for unacceptable levels of violence in our community, including stabbings and daytime shootings in our busy downtown areas. These high harm individuals will be the focus of direct and swift enforcement actions by specialized police units such as our Neighborhood Resource Teams (NRTs).

Using a data-informed approach, recent NRT projects like the Street Sweep and Alliance achieved significant success on Rideau Street and in the Byward Market. These projects yielded 53 provincial offence tickets, 62 criminal charges, and the arrest of 21 individuals, including several wanted on outstanding warrants.

**KPIs:** Rates of criminal offending and crime severity among identified high harm offenders; number of OPS outputs for high harm offenders such as tickets, charges, and arrests; rates of criminal offences and crime severity in downtown core

## **3. Neighborhood Operations Centre (NOC)**

The Neighbourhood Operations Centre (NOC) is an essential element of our CORE strategy, acting as the foundational support for community partnerships and other objectives. In direct response to community demands, the NOC will significantly improve police presence and visibility in the downtown core. The facility will function as a central hub for OPS and our partner community agencies, offering a centralized space for the 18 members of the Integrated Community Support Table and key stakeholders of the Community Advisory Council to collaboratively address challenges in the Byward Market area.

The NOC is also designed to function as a base of operations to coordinate and launch proactive patrols and targeted enforcement efforts. Strategically situated on the ground floor of the Rideau Centre, the NOC will face onto Rideau Street, with an external entry

point adjacent to a mall entrance just west of William Street. This centralized location in a busy area of Rideau Street provides police with an accessible base of operations, improves perceptions of safety with an established police presence, and improves resource efficiency by reducing displacement to and from Elgin Street Headquarters. The NOC will also allow OPS to directly support local community partners like the Byward Market District Authority (BMDA), Rideau BIA, and Ottawa Community Engagement Teams (CET).

The OPS is scheduled to take possession of the space in March 2024, with required renovations starting immediately. Our aim is to have the site fully operational by Spring 2024.

In Phase One of development, the OPS Central Neighborhood Directorate will be in command of the NOC. In practical terms, day-to-day functions will see NRT and Community Police (CPO) officers come and go as they coordinate operations, hold briefings, process reports, access the OPS computer system, and host community meetings. The OPS is actively working with the community to guide further phases and shape the design, purpose, and function of the NOC. This process will evolve over the next six to 12 months. Decisions will be made by the OPS executive command, with inputs from the community and from officers and teams who are using the site.

The NOC will not be a new police station; it will not maintain a 24/7 police presence and will not be used for the storage of police equipment, firearms, etc. Aligning with the security and access controls at all OPS facilities, access will be restricted to OPS personnel and accompanied visitors. Any installed cameras will focus on the interior and front entrance and will not be used to monitor public activity on the street. Due to OPS staffing limitations, the facility will not be accessible to the public during the first phase of operations.

Consistent with the Ontario Mobilization and Engagement Model of Community Policing, the initial role of the NOC is to support police-led operations. As community safety and well-being is restored, community and City partners will have more significant roles in the NOC, leading the development of the property into a multi-agency location for enhanced community collaboration. This will transform the NOC into a community-led hub for a variety of services, highlighting the importance of community leadership in safety and problem-solving initiatives. When phasing the NOC into the Community Hub model, public access will also be considered, centralizing both police and community services within one accessible facility.

**KPIs:** Call response times; stakeholder meetings; public perceptions of police visibility and accessibility.

#### **4. Community Advisory Council**

The formation of the downtown Community Advisory Board is in its initial phase, having started with stakeholder identification and engagement in October 2023. Scheduled to meet quarterly, the Council is composed of key community stakeholders including a representative from City Council, the BMDA, the Rideau BIA, local community associations, and service providers.

The Council's primary objective is to involve community leaders in monitoring outputs and outcomes of the CORE Strategy, identifying areas of success and collaborating on solutions for improvement. The Council will also serve as a platform for exchanging information, offering feedback to OPS, and applying community guidance to continually enhance the effectiveness of the strategy.

A Terms of Reference (TOR) document is in development which will outline the scope, clearly define roles and responsibilities, and establish the framework for collaborative governance within the Council.

**KPIs:** Community engagement (meetings, partnerships, etc.); stakeholder perceptions of community safety and well-being and targeted outcomes.

#### **5. Integrated Community Support Table (ICST)**

The ICST was created in response to a need for better system coordination and evidence-based approaches to meet the needs of individuals who frequently interact with the criminal justice system. Their interactions are often the result of unresolved risk factors, including housing insecurity, mental health, and addictions.

The ICST brings together the expertise and resources of 18 influential community partners who provide street outreach, legal support, medical treatment, mental health and addictions support, housing, and shelter services. The Table representatives and knowledge keepers from diverse communities including First Nations, Inuit, and Metis, and agencies include the John Howard and Elizabeth Fry Societies, Sandy Hill Community Health Centre, and Ottawa Inner City Health (see Document 1 for a list of current partners). Our shared goal is to disrupt ongoing cycles of criminalization.

As a Multidisciplinary Risk-Driven Intervention Table (Situation Table), the ICST meets biweekly to assess and manage cases involving individuals identified as being at acutely elevated risk of harm due to mental health issues, problematic substance use, housing insecurity or criminal involvement. The Table centers around risk assessment, data sharing, and coordinated case management, aiming to prevent harm, provide early intervention, and allocate support resources based on the identified risk level. This 'Focused Deterrence' model is based on substantial evidence-based research and uses

data analysis to objectively identify high risk / high harm individuals. Participation is voluntary and each person engaged benefits by receiving the help and support they need, while the community benefits from a reduction in crime and victimization.

As a Situation Table, the ICST strictly adheres to guidelines and best practices around privacy and data sharing, using the risk-driven tracking database provided by the Ministry of Solicitor General and the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario. It also forms a key part of Ottawa Public Health's newly released Ottawa Opioid Response Strategy.

A comprehensive Terms of Reference is being developed in collaboration with the City of Ottawa Community and Social Services Department, which will be completed and agreed to by all Table partners shortly. We are grateful to all the community partners who have stepped forward to join this initiative and work alongside the OPS.

**KPIs:** Number of individuals identified and successfully integrated into the ICST; rates of criminal offending and social disorder for identified individuals; stakeholder perceptions of ICST model.

### **Data and Reporting**

As a community-oriented and evidence-based policing strategy, stakeholder engagement and the consistent collection, analysis, and reporting of data are key to success. As such, the Community Advisory Council will convene quarterly to share performance metrics and solicit community feedback on project outputs and outcomes.

The OPS is currently working with a variety of community and city partners to develop data sharing agreements and to collect baseline metrics that will enable progress tracking. We are also engaging with academics to pursue opportunities for academic research partnerships, which will maintain accountability and transparency for the project, as well as to ensure we are following best practices and benefiting from lessons learned in other jurisdictions.

Feedback from the Advisory Council and analysis of KPIs will be used to generate quarterly progress reports to ensure that the OPS Executive and Board are well informed of strategic progress and outcomes.

### **Next Steps**

The establishment of the NOC is a crucial component in advancing to the next phase of CORE strategy, providing a community-level location for regular and ad-hoc meetings.

The ICST has been in a pilot phase since June 2023, with the participation of 18 partner agencies thus far. The next steps involve expanding capacity, formalizing data reporting procedures, and continuing to engage additional community partners.

## **The District Revitalization Project (DRP)**

- The CORE strategy aligns with the four key objectives of the DRP;
  - 1) Develop a deployment model tailored to community needs;
  - 2) Enhance community engagement and collaboration;
  - 3) Stabilize the Service; and
  - 4) More efficient use of police resources.
- Evaluation of CORE Strategy outcomes will function as ‘proof of concept’ for evidence-based policing initiatives. Lessons learned and processes developed through the CORE Strategy will be adapted to guide the development of District Model Policing across the City.

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

Document 1 – Current Integrated Community Support Table Partners

## **CONCLUSION**

The OPS CORE Strategy represents a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach to addressing the challenges of crime and social disorder in downtown Ottawa. Through its alignment with the OMEM and the integration of community-led initiatives, the strategy emphasizes a collaborative and evidence-based approach to public safety. The implementation of targeted initiatives like proactive policing in areas of focus, the NOC, and the ICST demonstrates a commitment to adaptive and responsive community policing. The strategy's focus on stakeholder engagement, data-driven decision-making, and the continuous evaluation of key performance indicators ensures that the approach remains effective and accountable.

The CORE Strategy has the potential to not only restore safety and well-being to downtown Ottawa but to also serve as a model for broader application across the city, thereby enhancing community engagement and optimizing police resources. OPS remains dedicated to serving Ottawa with excellence and further enhancing public safety for everyone.



## **DOCUMENT 1**

### **Current ICST Partners**

- The City of Ottawa Community and Social Services Department
- Ottawa Public Health
- The John Howard Society
- The Elizabeth Fry Society
- Sandy Hill Community Health Center – OASIS CTS
- Montfort Renaissance
- Ottawa Inner City Health
- StreetSmarts Outreach – Jewish Family Services
- The Salvation Army Booth Center
- The Shepherds of Good Hope
- The Ottawa Mission
- Belong Ottawa
- Tungasuvvingat Inuit
- The Metis Nation of Ontario
- Odawa Center
- Ontario Works
- OC Transpo
- The Ottawa Police Service