



Public Safety Questionnaire Engagement Report

December 13, 2024

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1.0 Overview

Earlier this year, Council refocused its priorities to two key areas: Safe and Resilient and Livable and Accessible. The Public Safety Questionnaire launched at the Council-hosted Budget Open House on October 29, 2024, to help City Council and staff understand the level of safety residents feel in their neighbourhoods, the types of crime residents experience, their preferences for community safety investments, and to gauge their awareness for emergency preparedness.

Feedback will be used to help guide priority tactics and initiatives to increase public safety. The following document summarizes the activities completed and the findings from the process.

2.0 Community Participation

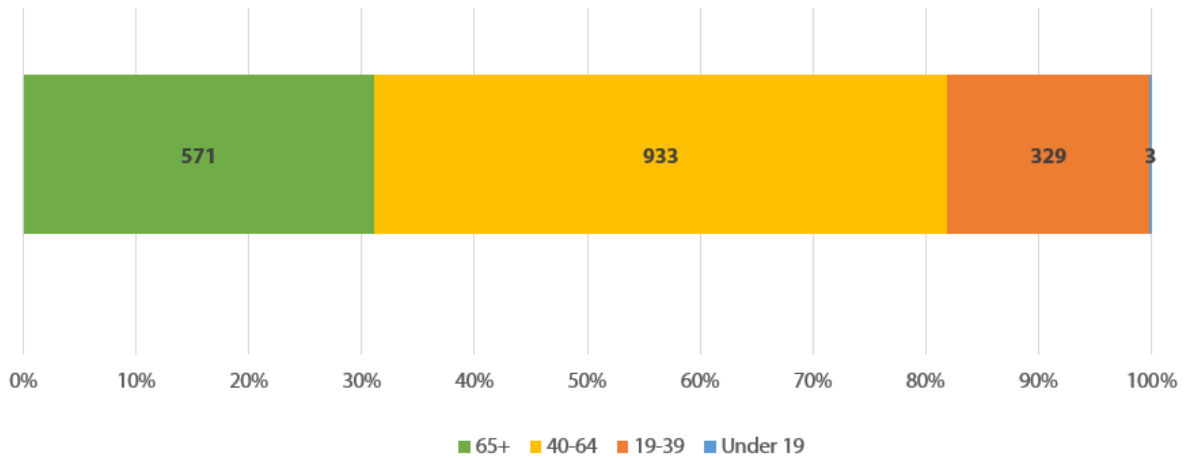
The engagement program was conducted between October 29 and November 29. The following diagram summarizes participation. A detailed timeline of engagement activities is provided in Appendix A.



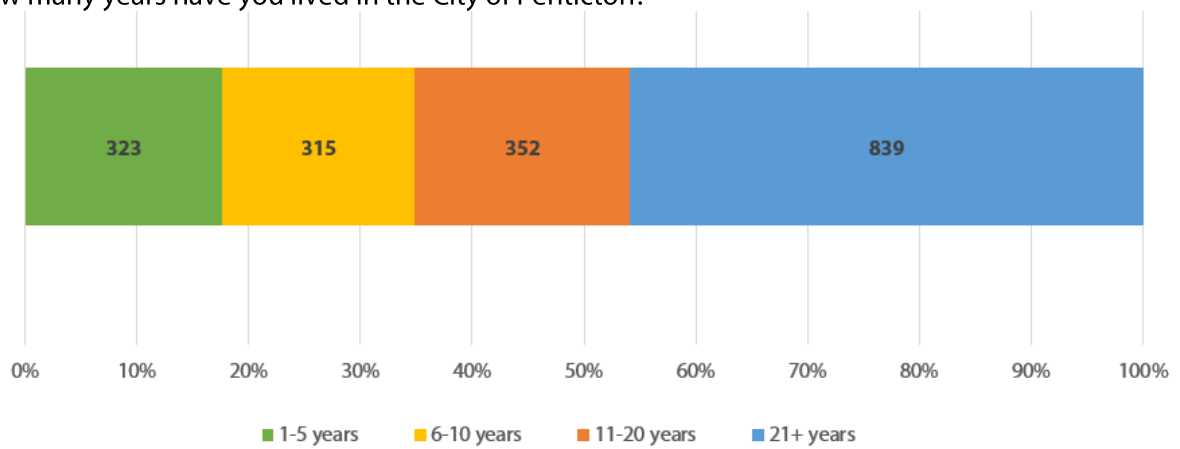
3.0 Feedback Form Results

One of the primary ways the City gathers formal feedback is through the use of feedback forms. The focus of the feedback form was to understand the level of safety residents feel in their neighbourhoods, the types of crime residents experience, their preferences for community safety investments, and to gauge their awareness for emergency preparedness. The deadline for feedback was Friday, Nov. 29. In total, **1842 feedback forms** were received. Please note that the key findings from those submissions are presented in this report and that complete results, including full comments, are available at shapeyourcitypenticton.ca

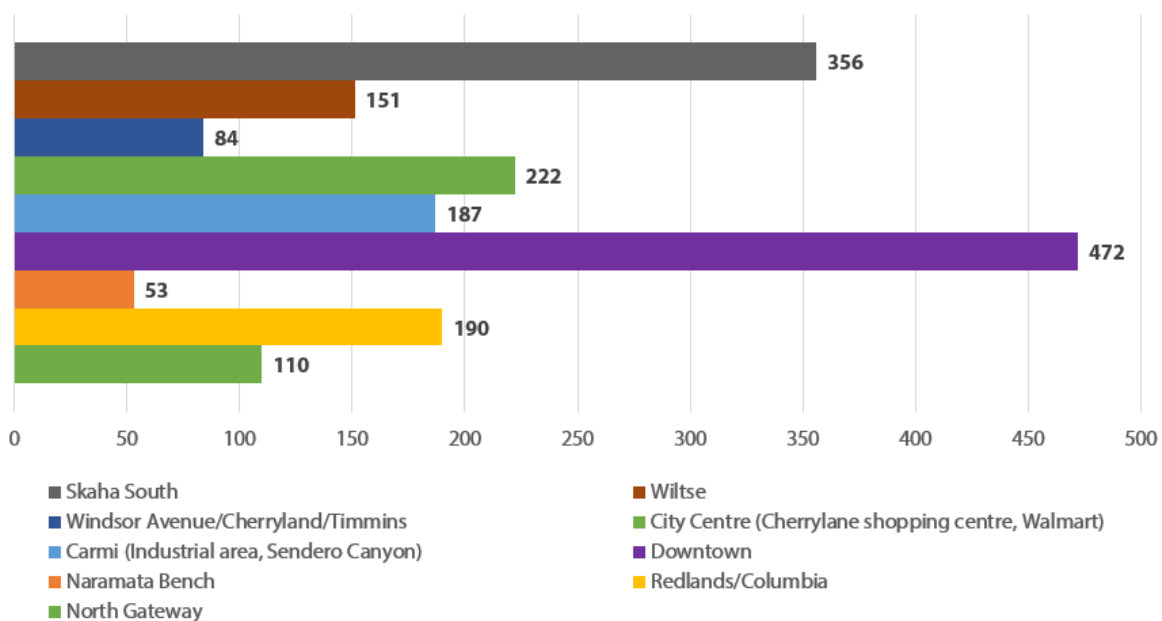
1. Please select your age category



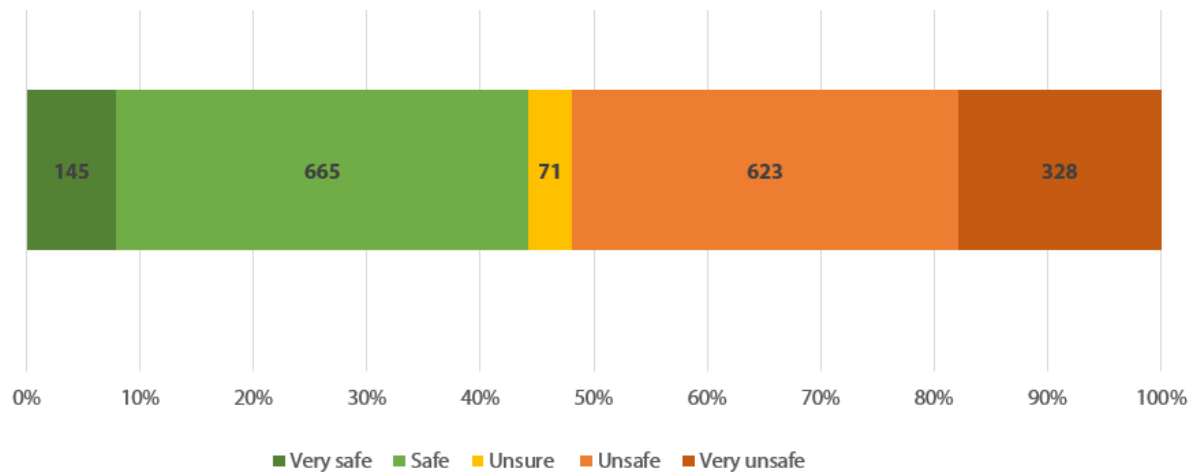
2. How many years have you lived in the City of Penticton?



3. Which neighbourhood do you live in?



4. How safe do you feel in your neighbourhood?



Respondents that selected 'Unsure' were invited to provide further comment. The following is a summary of the themes. Full comments are available at shapeyourcitypenticton.ca

- Increase of homelessness and drugs on the streets, uncomfortable walking in the evenings
- Increasing property and vehicle thefts
- Lack of visible police presence

Respondents that selected 'Unsafe' were invited to provide further comment. The following is a summary of the themes. Full comments are available at shapeyourcitypenticton.ca

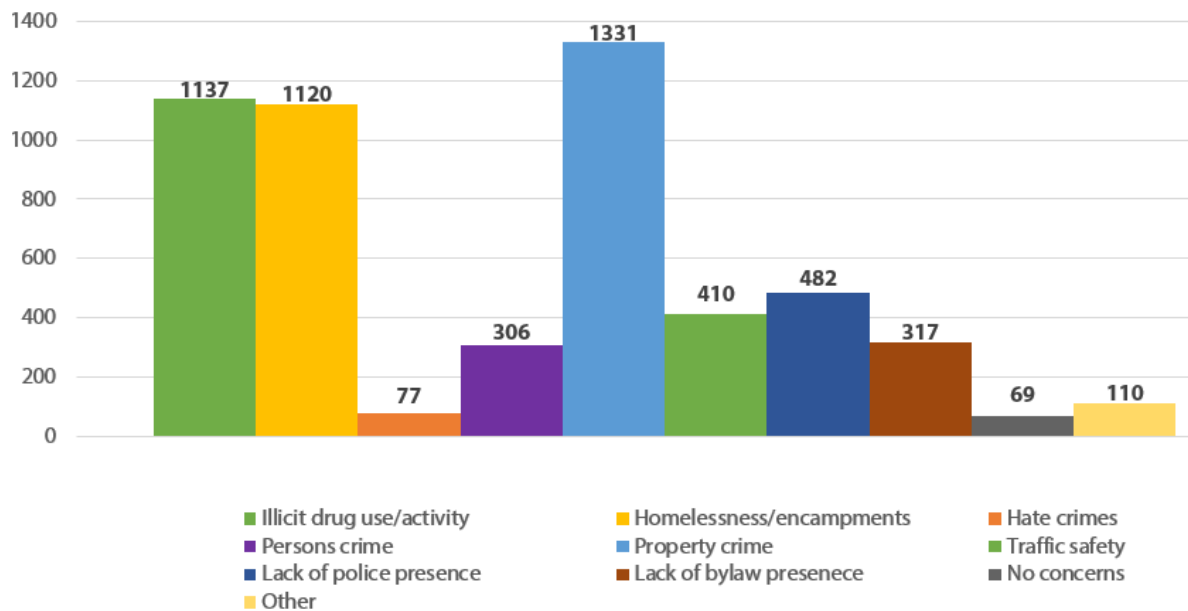
- People experiencing homelessness on drugs carrying weapons
- Too many encampments
- Open drug use and drug dealing
- Witnessing repeat thefts without consequences
- Physical assaults
- Property crime
- Traffic safety (speeding, no sidewalks in neighbourhood)
- Lack of police presence
- Thefts
- Drug paraphernalia in public spaces
- Increase in violent crimes (stabbings, homicides, more Emergency Response Team (ERT) incidents)

Respondents that selected 'Very Unsafe' were invited to provide further comment. The following is a summary of the themes. Full comments are available at shapeyourcitypenticton.ca

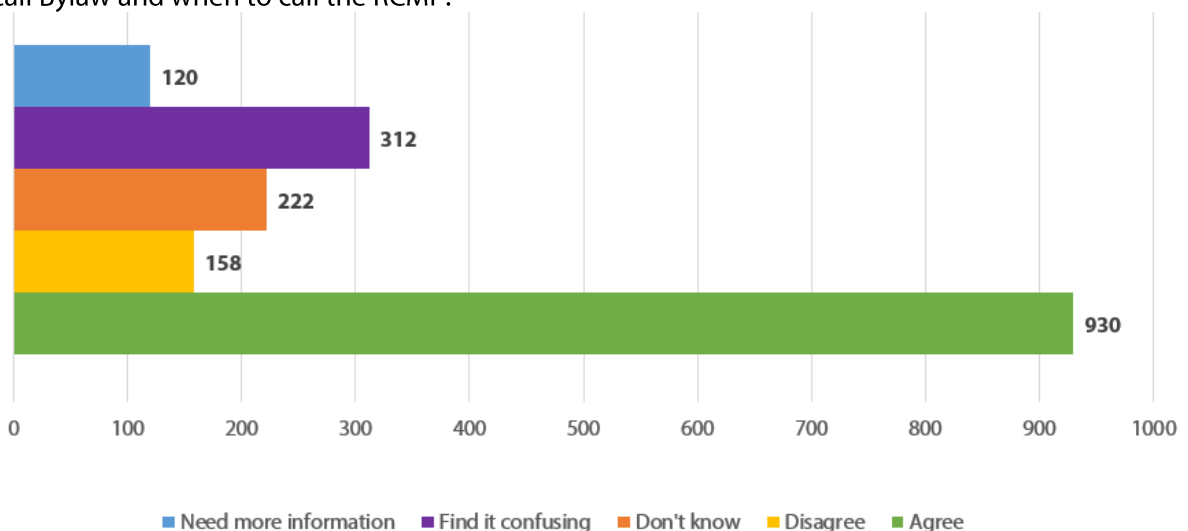
- Escalating open drug use, crime
- Increasing property and vehicle thefts
- Aggressive break-ins
- Physical assaults from those on drugs
- Vandalism

- Mental health issues resulting in aggressive behaviours from those experiencing homelessness
- Concern for the number of weapons carried by those experiencing homelessness
- Open drug use
- Increasing encampments and loitering on sidewalks
- Trespassing
- Increase in RCMP and ERT response in neighbourhoods
- Experiencing hate crimes

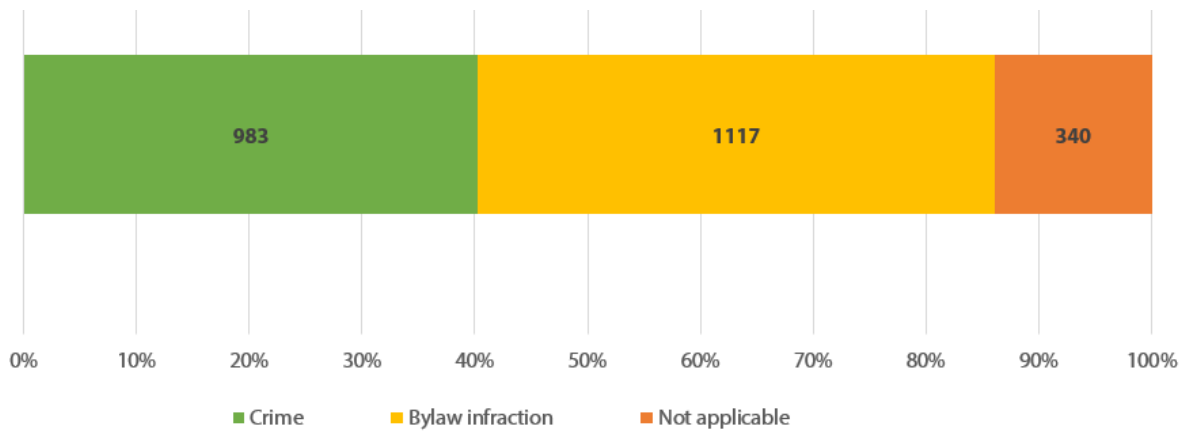
5. Which of the following issues are a top concern in your neighbourhood? Please select the top 3. Note: This graph represents responses from all neighbourhoods. Individual results are presented in the Conclusion section.



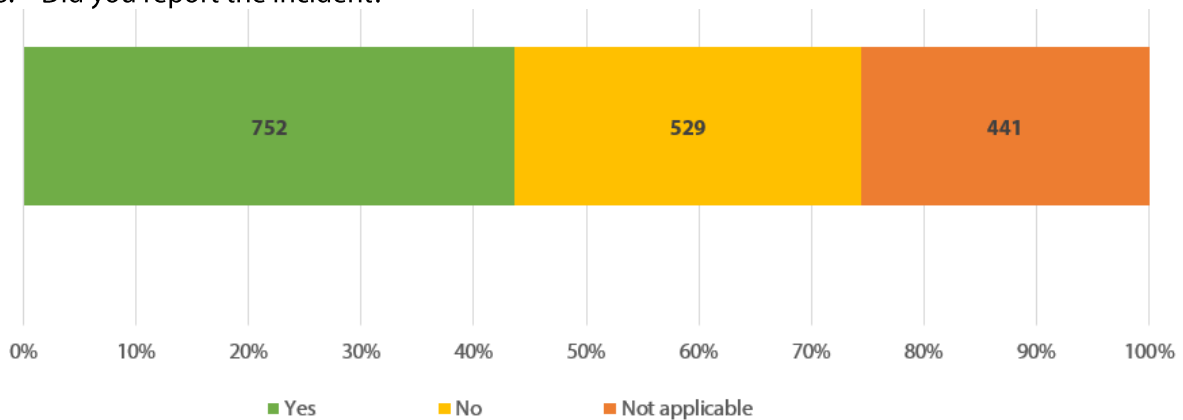
6. Please rate the following statement: I feel confident in knowing the difference between when to call Bylaw and when to call the RCMP.



7. Have you witnessed a crime or bylaw infraction in the last year?



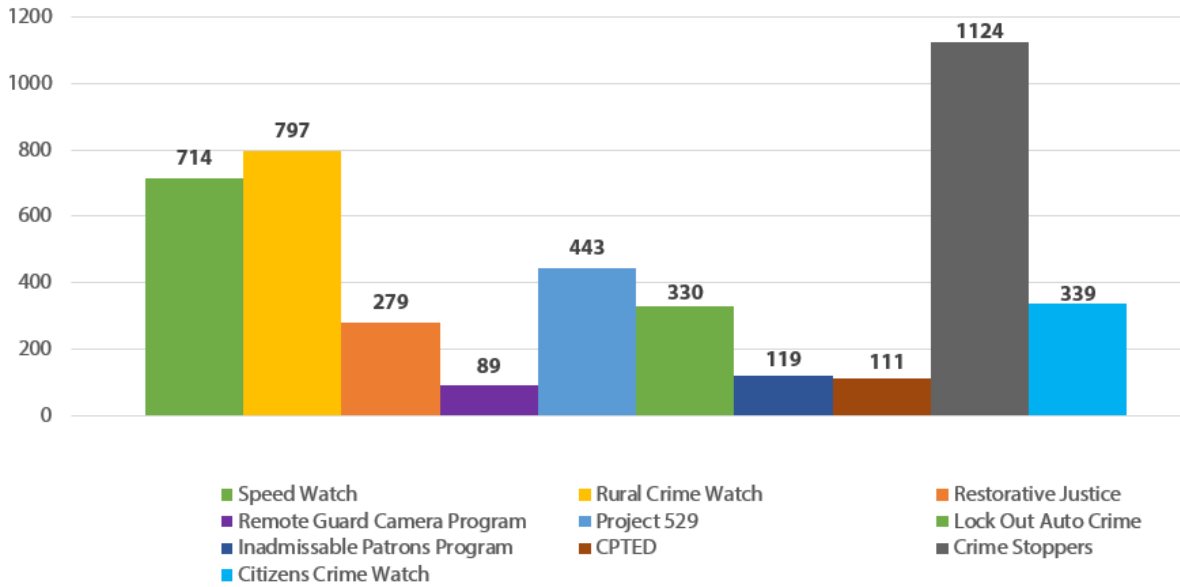
8. Did you report the incident?



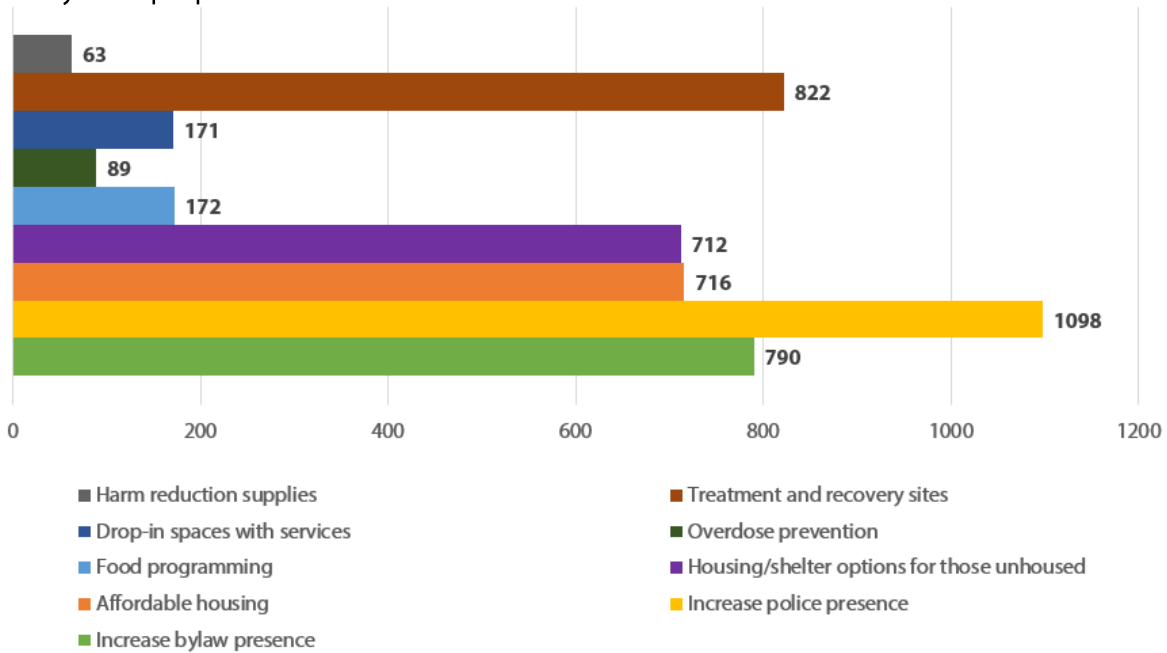
Respondents that selected 'No' were invited to explain why they did not report the incident they witnessed. The following are themes from the comments provided. Full comments are available at shapeyourcitypenicton.ca

- Concern that even if reported, nothing will change
- RCMP and Bylaw officers are already overwhelmed
- Have previously reported similar incidents without resolution
- Received no response from RCMP or Bylaw
- Unsure who to call
- When crime is happening daily, reporting it daily is not feasible
- Handled matter personally
- Incident was reported by someone else
- Concern that offenders aren't held accountable for their offences
- Concerned about repercussions of reporting

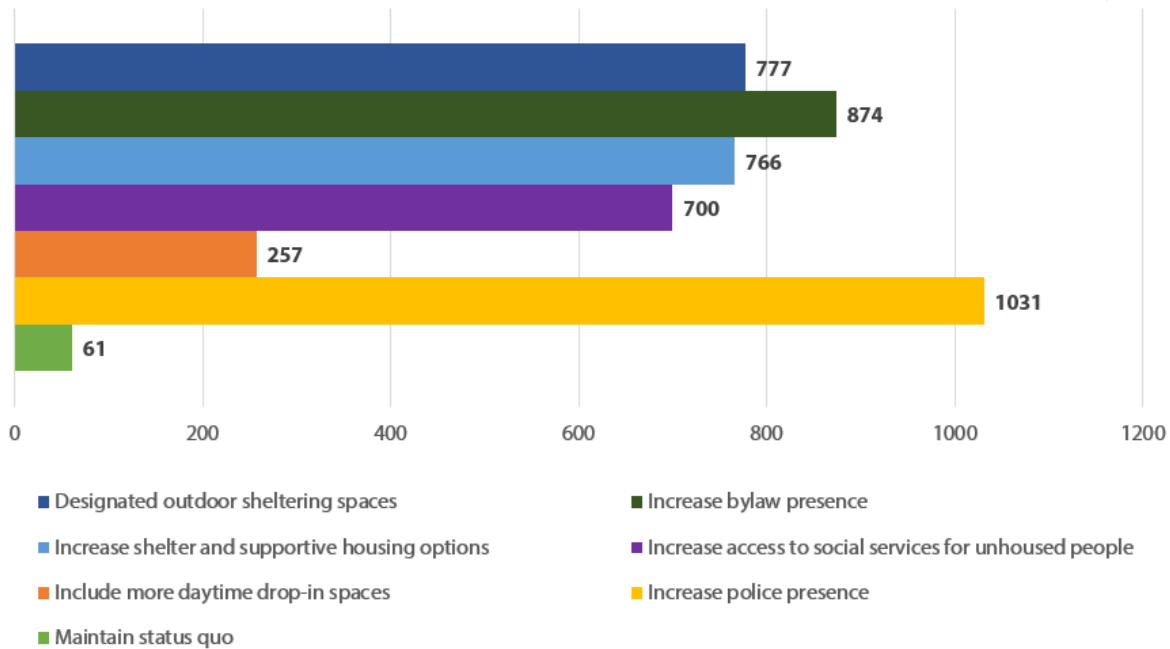
9. There are a number of initiatives and programs that can help address crime in neighbourhood areas. Are you familiar with the programs listed below? Select all that apply.



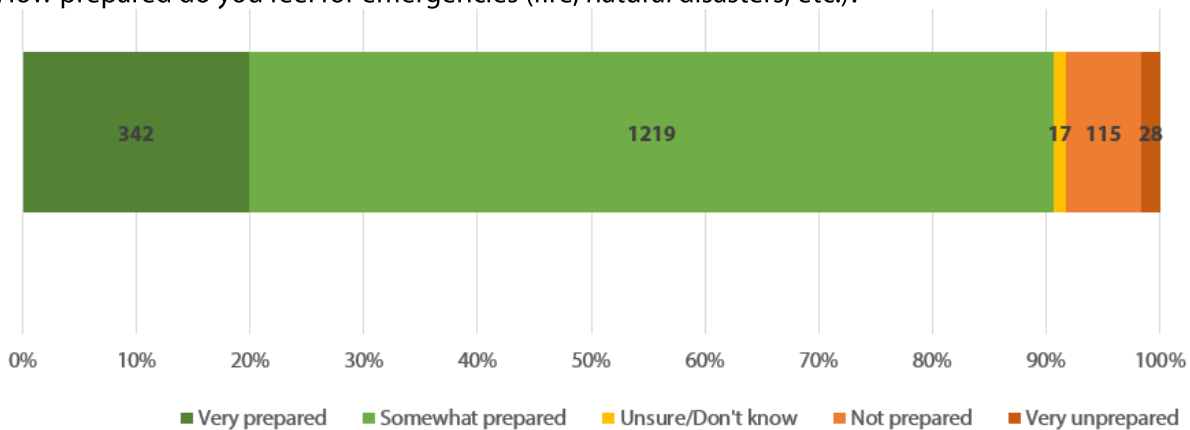
10. Where would you like to see future investments to support a Safe and Resilient community? Please select your top 3 priorities.



11. Encampments are on the rise in many communities in BC. For Penticton, please select the top 3 strategies you would like prioritized for managing encampments.



12. How prepared do you feel for emergencies (fire, natural disasters, etc.)?



Those that selected 'Unprepared' were invited to elaborate on their response. The following are themes from the comments provided. Full comments are available at shapeyourcitypenitcton.ca

- Do not have an emergency kit or go-bag
- Do not know where to start, what to do
- Lack of information about local hazards
- Inability to afford and store go-bag
- Too difficult to prepare for all events
- Difficult to prepare a plan, especially with pets

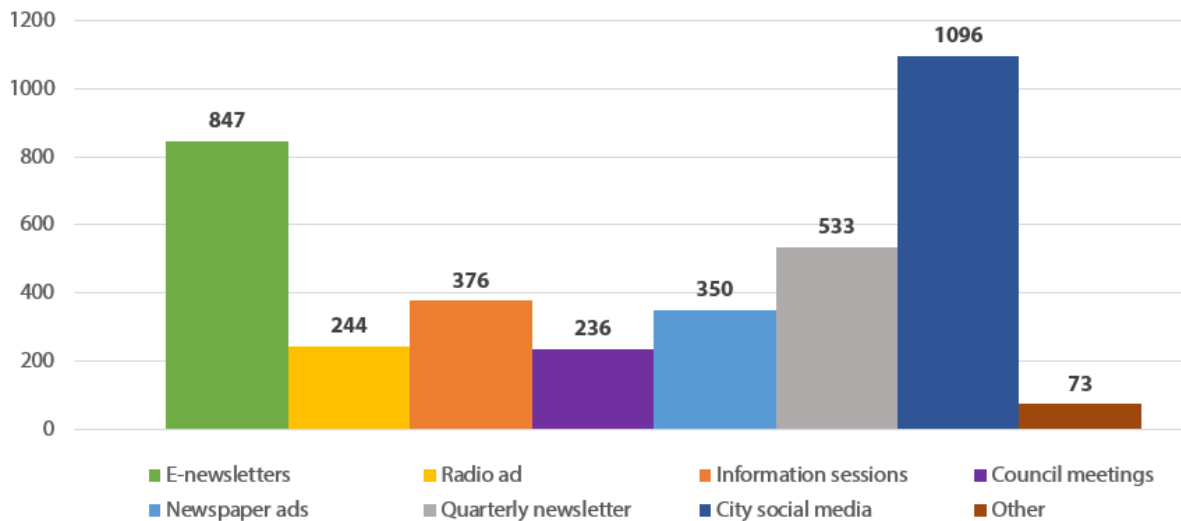
Those that selected 'Very unprepared' were invited to elaborate on their response. The following are themes from the comments provided. Full comments are available at shapeyourcitypenitcton.ca

- City hasn't provided enough information to residents about emergency planning
- Unaware of what City's [emergency response] plan is
- Lack of resources

Those that selected 'Unsure' were invited to elaborate on their response. The following are themes from the comments provided. Full comments are available at shapeyourcitypenticton.ca

- Lack of information for how to prepare
- No previous need to consider preparing
- Only just learning about what hazards to prepare for

13. How would you prefer to receive information about public safety programs or initiatives? Select all that apply.



'Other (please specify)' included online news sites, television news, flyers, with utility bills, on the SOEC billboard, direct to email inbox, and pop-up booths in the community.

14. Is there anything else you would like to share regarding public safety in our community?

The following are summaries of general themes provided by respondents. Full comments are available at shapeyourcitypenticton.ca

Crime and Safety

- Concerns for personal safety when downtown, or in parks
- Concerns with open drug use, drug dealing
- Concerns of threats or threatening behaviours from those experiencing homelessness, including with weapons
- Desire to see "catch and release" program reformed
- Desire for [stronger] consequences for law and bylaw breakers
- Desire for more police
- Concerns regarding aggressive deer
- Desire for more traffic calming measures, concerns with excessive speeding

Homelessness and Addiction

- Desire for higher levels of government to take back their responsibilities (provide mental health services/facilities, affordable housing, rehabilitation programs)

- Concerns that services in Penticton are attracting those experiencing homelessness from outside the city
- Concerns with encampments in public spaces limiting general use (parks, trails)
- Concerns for “lack of rules” for those in social/supportive housing (tolerance for drug use, theft, violence)
- Concern that the amount of BC Housing facilities are disproportionate to the population of the city

RCMP and Bylaw

- Concerns with the lack of response from police and bylaw officers when crimes are reported
- Desire for extended bylaw hours
- Desire for stricter enforcement of laws and bylaws, especially related to vandalism, theft and public drug use
- Desire to have bylaw officers focus less on parking concerns and more on community safety issues
- Desire to organize neighbourhood/citizen safety initiatives
- Desire for more bylaw officer staff in order to prevent encampments before they start

Mental Health Services

- Concerns for the lack of long-term treatment facilities
- Desire to collaborate with provincial and federal governments to create more centres of support (rehabilitation centres, mental health units)
- Desire for programs for families and individuals to support them before they become homeless

Community and Economic Impact

- Concerns that tourists avoid downtown areas because of safety concerns and encampments
- Concerns for safety throughout Nanaimo Square, businesses losing business
- Concerns with walking alone through neighbourhoods and parks (solo adults, older children/teens)
- Desire to see use of CPTED throughout community
- Concerns that guests and visitors won’t return due to amounts of visible homelessness and public drug use

4.0 Conclusions

The main goal of this process was to gather feedback from the community to understand the level of safety residents feel in their neighbourhoods, the types of crime residents experience and to gauge community awareness for emergency preparedness.

North Gateway

The majority of respondents living in this neighbourhood feel unsafe or very unsafe (56%) and 43% feel safe or very safe. 2% of respondents are unsure whether they feel safe. The

top 3 concerns for this neighbourhood are property crime (71%), followed by a tie of illicit drug use/activity and homelessness/encampments (70%).

Redlands/Columbia

The majority of respondents living in this neighbourhood feel safe or very safe at 69% and 26% unsafe or very unsafe. 5% of respondents are unsure whether they feel safe. The top 3 concerns for this neighbourhood are property crime (75%), followed by a tie of illicit drug use/activity and homelessness/encampments (40%).

Naramata Bench

The majority of respondents living in this neighbourhood feel safe or very safe at 74% and 26% unsafe or very unsafe. There were no unsure responses. The top 3 concerns for this neighbourhood are property crime (85%), followed by homelessness/encampments (48%) and illegal drug use/activity (42%).

Downtown

The majority of respondents living in this neighbourhood feel unsafe or very unsafe at 64% and 33% safe or very safe. 4% responded unsure. The top 3 concerns for this neighbourhood are illicit drug use/activity (79%), property crime (75%) and homelessness/encampments (69%).

Carmi (Industrial area, Sendero Canyon)

The majority of respondents living in this neighbourhood feel unsafe or very unsafe (50%), with 47% responding feeling safe or very safe. 3% responded as unsure. The top 3 concerns in this neighbourhood are property crime (77%), illicit drug use/activity (62%) and homelessness/encampments (58%).

City Centre (Cherrylane shopping centre, Walmart)

The majority of respondents living in this neighbourhood feel unsafe or very unsafe (71%), with 27% responding feeling safe or very safe. 2% responded as unsure. The top 3 concerns in this neighbourhood are homelessness/encampments (84%), illicit drug use/activity (80%), and property crime (72%).

Windsor Avenue/Cherryland/Timmins

The majority of respondents living in this neighbourhood feel unsafe or very unsafe (66%), with 31% responding feeling safe or very safe. 2% responded as unsure. The top 3 concerns in this neighbourhood are homelessness/encampments (83%), illicit drug use/activity (70%), and property crime (63%).

Wiltse

The majority of respondents living in this neighbourhood feel safe or very safe at 79% and 23% unsafe or very unsafe. 5% of respondents are unsure whether they feel safe. The top 3 concerns for this neighbourhood are property crime (79%), followed by homelessness/encampments (50%), and illicit drug use/activity (42%).

Skaha South

The majority of respondents living in this neighbourhood feel unsafe or very unsafe (52%), with 43% responding feeling safe or very safe. 6% responded as unsure. The top 3 concerns in this neighbourhood are property crime (79%), homelessness/encampments (70%) and illicit drug use/activity (66%).

Future investments to support a Safe and Resilient community

Respondents indicated their top three priorities for future investments to support a Safe and Resilient community are increasing police presence (65%), treatment and recovery sites (48%), and increasing bylaw presence (46%).

Strategies for managing encampments

Respondents indicated their top three priorities for managing encampments are increasing police presence (61%), increasing bylaw presence (52%), and designating outdoor sheltering spaces (46%), which eked ahead by 1% of increasing shelter and supportive housing options (45%).

Emergency preparedness

While the majority of respondents indicated they feel somewhat or very prepared for an emergency (91%), only 52% are registered for the City's emergency text notification system.

Next Steps

The feedback gathered through the engagement program is to be provided to the Safety and Public Partnerships team. It will also be shared with Council and the community-at-large.

Appendix A - Engagement Timeline

The following list summarizes the main methods that were used to raise awareness about the application and the opportunities for residents to provide feedback through the community engagement period that took place between October 29 and November 29, 2024.

| Date | Activity |
|-------------|---|
| Oct. 29 | Council-hosted Budget Open House |
| Oct. 29 | Project information and feedback form on www.shapeyourcitypenticton.ca |
| Nov. 4 | Eblast |
| Nov. 8 | Service announcement |
| Nov. 13 | Eblast |
| Nov. 18 | Social media post |
| Nov. 27 | Social media post |
| Nov. 29 | Deadline for feedback forms |