

# Homeless Encampments, Hotels, and Equitable Access to Public Space: Advancing Change Towards Socially Sustainable Post-Pandemic Public Spaces in Victoria, British Columbia

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## Chapter Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing social inequities (de la Barre et al., 2020; Fenley, 2020; Perri et al., 2020). The closure of drop-in services and community centres, reduced access to public spaces, and a reduction in resources has had a negative impact on marginalized populations (Perri et al., 2020). Moreover, these tumultuous circumstances have led to increased numbers of persons setting up encampments and clustering in public space across British Columbia, Canada (British Columbia Ministry of Health, 2020b).

In response to pandemic-related health concerns involving high-density encampments, the Province of British Columbia, in association with various government and not-for-profit stakeholders, activated Emergency Response Centres (ERCs) to house persons experiencing homelessness during COVID-19. At first glance, this innovative, intersectoral response showed promise as a short-term solution to housing our most vulnerable during public health crises. However, forcing people out of public park space has intensified social inequities and reinforced existing power relationships (Fenley, 2020).

This case study will critically examine lessons learned during COVID-19 to inform how we advance change towards socially sustainable public spaces. Through the lens of equity, access to public space for vulnerable populations during COVID-19 in Victoria, British Columbia, is explored. A stakeholder analysis is presented to illuminate the nature of stakeholder engagement within the City of Victoria, followed by a review of the intersectoral response that led to the activation of ERCs and the mobilization of hotel rooms to accommodate people experiencing homelessness during the pandemic. Furthermore, this case study will discuss how participatory processes, such as equity-centred design, placemaking, and equity mapping, can facilitate community and citizen engagement.

This case highlights the emergence of leisure-related innovations as catalysts for social change—an increasingly important area of leisure research. In addition, this case study outlines the urgent need for research related to the

intersection of COVID-19, equity, public space, and leisure. For broader audiences, such as local governments, not-for-profit organizations, and leisure service providers, the value of this case study is underscored by the relevance of co-creation in the context of inclusive land-use planning, policy, and design.

## Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, learners will be able to:

1. Identify the ways in which power and privilege impact equitable access to public space and leisure resources;
2. Recognize the role of leisure in supporting human development;
3. Understand the challenges associated with implementing participatory local planning processes;
4. Outline the ways in which transitioning people experiencing homelessness, from encampments to pathways of permanent housing, provides opportunities for the pursuit of leisure.

## The Issue, Opportunity, or Trend

### Leisure in the Context of COVID-19

At the start of COVID-19, emergency measures caused governments to limit outdoor movement (Payne, 2020). Since then, public spaces have been at the heart of discussions and initiatives to redesign and support physical distancing protocols (de la Barre et al., 2020). Across Canada, the pandemic has provided an opportunity to return leisure to public space, while highlighting the importance of community connections as social dimensions of health and wellbeing (de la Barre et al., 2020). For example, city-planning departments have closed roads in urban areas to allow for an increase of foot-passenger traffic; cities have changed bylaws so restaurants can accommodate people to sit outside; and municipalities have opened up more parks and green spaces to accommodate outdoor recreation and leisure activities (de la Barre et al., 2020; Honey-Roses et al., 2020).

While these initiatives have allowed those privileged enough to “shelter in place” a means of respite, social connection, and awareness of public space in their lives (de la Barre et al., 2020), constraints to leisure participation in urban public spaces for vulnerable populations, as highlighted by Harmon (2019), have in fact been heightened by COVID-19. Moreover, the closure of drop-in services and community centres reduced access to public spaces, such as libraries and parks, and a reduction in resources, such as counselling and recreation services, has had a negative impact on people experiencing homelessness throughout the duration of the pandemic (Perri et al., 2020).

### Everyday citizenship and equitable access to public space

Formally understood as a complex social construction that affects our spatial and social practices (Johnson & Glover, 2013), public space has not been given the attention it deserves, despite its importance in promoting sustainable

urban development (UN Habitat, 2015). By constructing a sense of community, culture, and civic identity, public spaces can encourage development of social capital, economic development, and community revitalization (Johnson & Glover, 2013; UN Habitat, 2015). However, public space “within its dominant conception, is space that is available for certain acceptable uses, including the leisure and activities of those deemed to be part of the community” (Buhler, 2009, p. 216).

These spaces often create conditions for the reproduction of social inequities, legitimizing the exclusion of individuals regarded as undesirable, while reinforcing existing societal power relationships that compromise “everyday citizenship” (Buhler, 2009; Johnson & Glover, 2013). Citizenship relates to an individual’s sense of identity and belonging in a community, and associated behaviours and activities (Bonnet, 2020; Fenley, 2020). In contrast, “everyday citizenship”, refers to the experience of people as they maneuver through public spaces day-to-day, as well as their capacity to inhabit public spaces in a way that does not undermine their self-identity (Fenley, 2020). When a person’s access to public space is limited—either symbolically or materially—everyday citizenship is compromised, and dominant societal perspectives are reinforced (Fenley, 2020).

### Leisure and Homelessness—Considerations

People experiencing homelessness have been routinely moved and consistently pushed out of public space by authorities (Harmon, 2019; Hodgetts & Stolte, 2016). Surveillance and policing of ‘public space’ has resulted in the “criminalization of poverty” (Harmon, 2019) and the promotion of prejudice against people experiencing homelessness (Fenley, 2020). Ultimately, public space has become a site for the politics of inclusion and exclusion (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2016). As Harmon (2019) suggested, leisure itself implies a certain level of permission and privilege to participate freely, and, in many cases, community members do not welcome homelessness into spaces of recreation and leisure.

These transgressions are the result of once communal public locations being transformed into spaces for consumption with “preference given to those with purchasing power” (Harmon, 2019, p. 2). Moreover, the reproduction of the work-leisure dichotomy in the realm of public space has worked to reinforce the commodification of leisure through unequal access to leisure resources and other exclusionary practices that promote ‘otherness’ (Glover, 2015; Hodgett & Stolte, 2016). As such, we take for granted the challenges faced by those experiencing homelessness regarding their rights to the city, leisure, and human flourishing (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2016).

In an effort to better understand the leisure of this population, Hodgetts & Stolte (2016) documented the lived experience of everyday leisure for 99 people experiencing homelessness throughout different urban areas across New Zealand and England. Findings demonstrated the complexities of leisure for these individuals and highlighted ways in which leisure spaces were used by participants to exercise social practices (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2016). The authors found that participants took part in a wide range of leisure pursuits—including daydreaming, reading, walking, and

gardening—that assisted them with identity exploration, personal reflection, and reconnection with themselves and others (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2016). Moreover, they suggested that leisure synthesizes when individuals experiencing homelessness engage not only in practices that are of value to them personally, but which also offer them opportunities for coping with and respite from the harsh realities of street life in the city (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2016).

## Participatory Local Planning Processes—Considerations

Although inclusive public space is commonly understood as “public space for all,” urban public spaces are not always designed and managed with inclusivity in mind (Zhou, 2020). However, there is potential for inclusive local planning processes, ones that allow for the creation of places that align with the values, feelings, and beliefs of residents (Glover et al., 2008; Johnson et al., 2014). Community-based, participatory, and public-space planning processes can facilitate the growth of social capital, economic development, and community revitalization initiatives by supporting shared community narratives of change (Glover et al., 2008; Johnson & Glover, 2013; UN Habitat, 2015). However, historically, marginalized populations have not been provided with the same opportunities to voice their thoughts, concerns, and opinions (Brown & Wyatt, 2010; Christiano & Neimand, 2018).

## The Innovation

### Case Context

#### A brief description of Victoria, British Columbia

Located on Vancouver Island in the Pacific Northwestern region of Canada, Greater Victoria encompasses 13 municipalities, approximately 20 First Nations, and is home to nearly 380,000 people (Fiorentino et al., 2020). Renowned for its heritage architecture, colonial-style gardens, and temperate weather, Victoria, the capital city of British Columbia, boasts over 207 hectares of municipal parks and open spaces that allow for various forms of outdoor recreation and leisure experiences (Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce, 2020). Over the years, the increasing regulation of public space has become a critical issue for citizens of Victoria (Buhler, 2009). The development and implementation of restrictive architectural design, urban planning, and legislation has prohibited and evicted vulnerable populations from the vast collection of “public” spaces in the region (Koenig, 2007).

#### Social determinants of homelessness

Generally speaking, the escalating number of persons experiencing homelessness is the consequence of social policy shifts that have reduced housing supply and income availability (Pauly et al., 2011). In particular, housing is unaffordable in Victoria because real estate prices have surged, rental costs have exponentially increased, and incomes have largely remained static (Capital Regional District, 2018). According to the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness (2019), persistent systemic and personal factors faced by vulnerable populations have been

intensified by the rising cost of living and lack of available housing in the region. Many people spend much of their time meeting survival needs, in addition to facing a myriad of financial and social constraints that make it extremely challenging to access essential health and social services (Jackson et al., 2012). Subsequently, in Victoria, these circumstances have amounted to an increase of homeless encampments dispersed throughout the community, as well as conflicts over the “acceptable” use of public park space (Buhler, 2009).

### Activation of Emergency Response Centres (ERCs)

COVID-19 response measures have caused more people to cluster together and set up encampments in public spaces (BC Ministry of Health, 2020b). In response to pandemic-related public health concerns associated with homeless encampments, a collaborative and coordinated housing-first approach, spearheaded by the Government of British Columbia, facilitated the activation of Emergency Response Centres (ERCs). In turn, this process led to the mobilization of hotel rooms in communities across the province to accommodate persons experiencing or at risk of homelessness (BC MOH, 2020a).

At first glance, this innovative, intersectoral response of multiple stakeholders from the public and not-for profit sectors showed promise as a short-term solution to housing our most vulnerable during this public health crisis. However, forcing people out of public park space has intensified social inequities and reinforced existing power relationships (Fenley, 2020). Furthermore, this response has inadvertently further dispersed precariously housed individuals by disrupting social networks within the city of Victoria, disconnecting them from essential services (BC MOH, 2020a; Larkin, 2017).

## Stakeholders Involved

### The City of Victoria—considerations

In 2012, the City of Victoria released a document outlining a proposed strategy to improve civic engagement. The main goal was to offer citizens the opportunity to meaningfully contribute their ideas and knowledge to policy development (City of Victoria, 2012). However, one of the city’s biggest challenges in fostering such engagement was a lack of clarity surrounding roles and responsibilities of stakeholders (City of Victoria, 2012). As such, the following roles and responsibilities were outlined.

City council was described as being responsible for municipal decision-making and representing the interests of the community at large, while city staff were positioned as separate from the role of council as leaders in organizing and reporting back from engagement efforts (City of Victoria, 2012). The role of public advisory committees and neighbourhood associations was to provide early and regular public input to council on issues, acting as a mechanism to support community and stakeholder groups in civic engagement efforts (City of Victoria, 2012).

Lastly, the general public was reported as being positioned to contribute to informed decision-making and the quality of life in their neighbourhoods through voicing their concerns on issues related to the communities in which they live (City of Victoria, 2012). It should be noted that the City of Victoria defined stakeholders as “organizations, community groups, and more formal associations that are representative of the wider community and have related interests,” while citizens were referred to as “the wider community and the general public, including those who are not officially voters” (City of Victoria, 2012, p. 7).

### Rapid Response to Homelessness Framework (RRH)

In 2017, BC Housing—a crown corporation owned by the Province of British Columbia— announced the Rapid Response to Homelessness Framework (RRH) to counteract the escalating issue of homelessness in the province (BC Housing Corporation, 2017). The RRH supported the creation of new and immediate housing units and support services for individuals at risk of or experiencing homelessness in BC (BCHC, 2017). The Housing Continuum Model depicts this innovative housing solution by including emergency shelters and housing for those experiencing homelessness, through to affordable rental housing and homeownership (BCHC, 2017).

**Figure 1**

*Housing Continuum Model*



Source: BCHC, 2017.

### Emergency Response Centres (ERCs)

The development of the RRH provided the social and organizational infrastructure necessary for the housing-led response by the provincial government that produced the “mobilization of hotels to create temporary and permanent housing with wraparound support” (Pauly & Ranger, 2020, para. 3). To support the depletion of highly-populated emergency shelters, ERCs followed guidance from the Provincial Health Officer (PHO) and the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) in the evacuation of public encampments (BCHC, 2020).

The activation of ERCs in Victoria represented an intersectoral response with representatives from the public and not-for-profit sectors. Encampment prevention and response was presented through a collaborative and coordinated top-

down approach led by the Government of BC (BC MOH, 2020a). The Government of BC, Island Health, BC Housing, the City of Victoria, Our Place Society, and Victoria Cool Aid Society all had key roles in responding to homelessness and encampments. Several of the provincial government's ministries were responsible for the development and application of policy, procedure, and administration that enabled cohesive partnerships and collaborations between local governments, not-for profits, and Indigenous and community organizations (BC MOH, 2020a).

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing helped to coordinate cross-ministry responses, while the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction provided community-based outreach and social supports. Additionally, the Ministry of Health, through regional health authorities, provided clinical outreach to ERCs, including public health, primary care, home support, and mental health and substance use (MHSU) (BC MOH, 2020a). As such, Island Health—the regional health authority for Vancouver Island—referred individuals to ERCs in coordination with non-profit service providers. They also supported overdose prevention and harm reduction at the sites in cooperation with clinicians, peer outreach groups, and not-for profit, contracted social-service partners (BC MOH, 2020a).

BC Housing secured ERC sites, funded non-profit providers to supply on-site support services, and provided operational homelessness and encampment responses, housing, shelter, provisions, and site management. They also issued janitorial and housekeeping maintenance, supplied internet connections to facilitate virtual health and social supports, and coordinated with not-for profit operators to supply bedding and sleeping materials, laundry services, and onsite security (BC MOH, 2020a). The City of Victoria partnered with BC Housing in the identification, review, and selection of sites, and provided necessary permissions to facilitate the occupation and use of housing locations. They also cooperated with BC Housing and site operators regarding the installation and ongoing management of the units and facilitated bylaw administration that transitioned persons experiencing homelessness into hotels (BCHC, 2017).

Lastly, Our Place Society, and Victoria Cool Aid Society— inner-city not-for profit organizations based in downtown Victoria that serve the city's most vulnerable and work to develop community-based solutions to homelessness—functioned as operators of ERCs (Our Place Society, 2020; Victoria Cool Aid Society, 2020). The not-for profit operators were responsible for resident and property management and the delivery of support services (BCHC, 2017). A variety of tailored programs were offered at ERCs to help enhance access to other community-based supports and services that promote resilience against homelessness (BCHC, 2017).

## Approach Used and the Impact

### Hotels mobilized as ERCs

As of June 2020, five hotels operated as ERCs in Greater Victoria that supported different clientele: (1) Paul's Motor Inn (35 rooms), for self-sufficient persons experiencing homelessness with low needs; (2) Capital City Centre (80 rooms), for the general population experiencing homelessness; (3) The Howard Johnson Hotel (80 rooms), for homeless youth in need of substance use support; (4) The Travel Lodge (90 rooms), for youth experiencing

homelessness; and, (5) The Comfort Inn (90 rooms), for the general population experiencing homelessness (GVCEH, 2020). The level of support services needed for each site was determined by BC Housing on a case-by-case basis in consultation with partners and supports (BC MOH, 2020a).

Inside the repurposed hotels, each resident was supplied with their own room, which contained a double-bed, television, private bathroom, mini-fridge, and storage for personal belongings (CBC News, 2020; DeRosa, 2020; Kines, 2020). To support the health and wellbeing of residents, the following centralized services were provided: (1) twice-daily room checks accompanied by meal deliveries; (2) access to on-site clinicians and other health care services; and (3) overdose and harm reduction services to discourage solitary drug use (DeRosa, 2020; GVCEH, 2020; Kines, 2020).

### Park sheltering move-in strategy

In addition to the activation of ERCs and the mobilization of hotel rooms at the start of the pandemic, the City of Victoria declared a temporary bylaw amendment in support of provincial health guidelines that allowed persons experiencing homelessness to erect 24/7 encampments in designated parks across the city (GVCEH, 2021b). As a short-term intervention, public parks have provided refuge for people experiencing homelessness, providing them with clean washroom facilities, running water, and a sense of community (Andersson, 2021).

However, city council recently announced that it will be lifting the temporary amendment, indicating that encampments will need to come down between the hours of 7am—7pm (GVCEH, 2021c). 24/7 encampments will no longer be permitted because the BC government has announced that indoor sheltering options will be made available to all persons experiencing homelessness in Victoria (GVCEH, 2021b). These efforts are significant as they will provide more effective access to necessary assistance and services for persons experiencing homelessness, in line with the province's pathway to permanent housing (GVCEH, 2021b).

Similar to the activation of ERCs, the park sheltering move-in strategy is a collective effort between several different public and not-for-profit organizations. Together, BC Housing and its contractors, funded outreach organizations, the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness, and the City of Victoria have secured 24/7 indoor sheltering options and will work to transition individuals into various locations (GVCEH, 2021b).

### Caledonia Tiny Homes Village

The Caledonia Tiny Homes Village is one of the many transitional housing sites secured by BC Housing and its partners in the city of Victoria (GVCEH, 2021a). This innovative village—composed of 30 housing units built from repurposed shipping containers—was funded by citizens and local businesses of Victoria and BC Housing (GVCEH, 2021a). Over \$500,000 was raised to support this initiative (Weston, 2021), which will exist and operate for a period of 18 months as a temporary place for people to call home on their journey to secure permanent housing (GVCEH, 2021a).

Housed on land provided by the City of Victoria, the village will be managed by Our Place Society and supported by the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness (GVCEH, 2021a). Staffing and site security will be made available around the clock, residents will have access to support workers, and a cleaning team will be assigned to keep the location looking pristine (GVCEH, 2021a). Additional supports will be made available to support residents, including but not limited to: (1) twice daily meals provided by Our Place Society; (2) access to life-skills training, employment assistance and counselling; (3) physical and mental health resources; and, (4) referral to addiction recovery services through Island Health (GVCEH, 2021a). Moreover, each living space will be outfitted with a bed, chair, wardrobe, and mini-fridge, and residents will have access to communal washroom and storage facilities, as well as a community garden plot for planting vegetables (Skrypnek, 2021).

Above all, this project represents a culmination of resources and support that has stemmed from the initial activation of ERCs across the province. Moreover, the Tiny Homes Village may work to provide persons experiencing homelessness a chance for reflection, respite, connection, and leisure. It is unlikely that leisure will rectify homelessness, but, according to Hodgetts & Stoltes (2016), leisure participation may provide stability for such individuals and allow them the opportunity to better understand where they fit in the material and social world.

## Implications & Lessons Learned

Moving forward, we must not lose “sight of the potential of leisure for re-humanizing people in need” (Hodgetts & Stoltes, 2016, p. 912). As the COVID-19 crisis continues to ravage our communities, many jurisdictions have struggled to grasp the fact that parks are homes for many precariously housed people (Parks People, 2020b). We must learn to recognize the ways in which societal structures and the contestation of power in leisure spaces work to fortify exclusion of those deemed as ‘disruptive bodies’ (Hodgetts & Stoltes, 2016).

Shifting the influence of power and privilege as it relates to urban public space in Victoria will require intentional and purposeful community-engagement initiatives; lasting impact will only come to fruition if underlying structures are modified and inclusive, operational mechanisms are supported (Abercrombie et al., 2015; Kania et al., 2018). The following examples illustrate the ways in which participatory processes can empower local community members as co-creators of public space, thus enhancing the possibility of meaningful community involvement, inclusive park governance, and equitable access to public space in post-pandemic cities.

## Adaptive Public Space and COVID-19

Throughout the pandemic, innovative measures involving equitable access to park space have emerged as contributors to sustainable urban development in locations across North America. For example, Gehl, an urban-planning, design, and strategy firm, conducted an impact assessment of seven public spaces between September

2020 and February 2021 in cities located across the United States, including: Akron, Ohio; Detroit, Michigan; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and San Jose, California (Gehl, 2021).

Findings demonstrated the ways in which local leaders facilitated impact through their quick reaction to community needs and illustrated the power of public space as a platform for community development (Gehl, 2021). According to Gehl (2021), this power made public spaces a critical component for pandemic recovery. Findings revealed further that projects that supported “quality design, resident-centred programming, historic character, and the arts invited regular activity” (p. 5). Moreover, Gehl (2021) found that participatory engagement methods, including co-creation related to park maintenance, helped to build resident belonging, attachment, and trust with project organizers.

### Incorporating Equity into the Civic Design Process

From the perspective of equity, examining recreation and leisure in public space exposes the privileges ingrained in accessing and using parks and open space (VanPlay, 2020). To advance change towards socially sustainable public spaces, civic designers must act as open-minded accomplices to consider innovative approaches of working with communities, government, and non-government agencies (Disalvo & Le Dantec, 2017; VanPlay, 2020). The promotion of equity involves providing spaces for civic participation while enhancing socioeconomic equality (UN Habitat, 2015).

Equity-centred community design is a unique problem-solving approach based on “equity, humility-building, integrating history and healing practices, addressing power dynamics, and co-creating the community” (Creative Reaction Lab, 2018, p. 3). The focal point of this design process is the culture and needs of a community, such that they can gain the necessary tools to deconstruct systemic oppression and fashion a future with equity in mind (Creative Reaction Lab, 2018).

### Equity Mapping

As outlined in its citywide master plan, The Vancouver Park Board has implemented equity mapping, a tool that acts as a compass to identify priorities in terms of the efforts and investments necessary to reduce and eliminate barriers and constraints to park access and leisure participation (VanPlay, 2019). Utilizing geographic analysis as reconnaissance, equity mapping works to locate “initiative zones”— areas in which planners look to develop new programming and services (Howard & Culbertson, 2020; VanPlay, 2019). Howard & Culbertson (2020) suggest that this method can be used to prioritize post-pandemic public funding in the city of Vancouver as means of addressing health inequities related to the uneven distribution of parks and recreation services.

### Leisure and Placemaking

Placemaking has been recognized for its ability to enable collaboration as well as its potential to influence citizens to become actors, co-creators, and agents of change (Cities for People, 2016). Considered an entry point to systems

change, placemaking begins with citizens working together to improve their local environment through the development of place attachment (Cities for People, 2016; Johnson et al., 2014).

Parks and recreation resources and opportunities may be one way to influence change towards socially sustainable public spaces (Johnson et al., 2014). Leisure and placemaking can facilitate creative, inclusive patterns of use that can build local capacity and enhance positive community narratives of change (Henderson & Frelke, 2000; Johnson et al., 2014). Intertwined values, place, and stories can provide insights into the growth of community revitalization strategies, emphasizing the urban environment as a place to build local, everyday connections (Johnson et al., 2014).

## Emerging Scholar/Practitioner Reflections

For the author, this case study has revealed the reality that equitable access to public space is required to enable socially-sustainable, post-pandemic cities (UN Habitat, 2015). Public spaces support environments for social processes, enabling the population to remain engaged and stake a claim to the city; they provide opportunities for individuals to be perceived as “everyday citizens” (Fenley, 2020; UN Habitat, 2015). If we are to advance change towards more socially sustainable post-pandemic public spaces, we must continue to ask ourselves, “Who’s community is being highlighted?” and “What group is being represented?” (Johnson et al., 2014, p. 39). The first step, to create enabling post-pandemic environments that promote inclusivity, accessibility, and empathy, starts with recognizing the multiplicity of power and privilege at play in the urban social networks we inhabit.

Embedding purposeful interventions that focus on empathy, equity, and humility in the civic design process may help us to nurture a sense of mutual commitment and belonging among community stakeholders involved in civic design processes (Brown & Wyatt, 2010). As we pursue human equity, we must be able to identify inequity and recognize that we, as designers, have the capacity to dismantle it (Creative Reaction Lab, 2018). After all, “Inequities exist by design, and only intentional acts can dismantle them” (Creative Reaction Lab, 2018, p. 4).

Public spaces should not be dependent upon one’s purchasing power. Everyone should be able to access and enjoy parks and open spaces so that they may experience the transformative power of leisure and reap the rewards of its many health-related benefits.

## Discussion Questions

1. In what ways do parks and open spaces reinforce social inequities?
2. How do public perceptions impact the social determinants of homelessness?
3. What is the role of leisure in supporting the de-stigmatization of marginalized populations?

4. How might future planning processes, that seek to relocate persons experiencing homelessness, provide opportunities for those impacted to voice their concerns and contribute to informed decision-making?

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