



Social Sustainability
321 Maple Street
PO Box 580
Fort Collins, CO 80522
970.221.6758

MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 8, 2015

TO: Mayor Troxell and City Councilmembers

THRU: Darin Atteberry, City Manager
Jeff Mihelich, Deputy City Manager
Jacqueline Kozak-Thiel, Chief Sustainability Officer

FROM: Beth Sowder, Social Sustainability Director

RE: Burlington, VT Street Outreach Program Report

Purpose of Memo

At the August 25 Work Session on the Homeless Action Plan Update, Council requested a report from staff about the recent trip to learn about Street Outreach Program best practices in Burlington, VT.

Background

Several months ago, the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) convened a diverse meeting of stakeholders to discuss downtown behaviors and how they can be addressed. The conversation began to focus on reaching out to people in need to ensure access to services. This brought up the idea of a Street Outreach Program. After several months of research about different Street Outreach Programs across the country, a team of people traveled to Burlington, VT in early August to learn more about their Street Outreach Program. Burlington, VT's program has been recognized as a best practice model and the team was interested in exploring if it could be adapted to address some of the shared issues in Fort Collins.

Public and Private Sector Team Members

The multi-agency team that traveled to Burlington, VT included:

- Derek Getto, Downtown Development Authority
- Vanessa Fenley, Homeward 2020
- Stephanie Madsen-Pixler, SummitStone Health Partners
- David Rout, Homeless Gear
- Beth Sowder, Social Sustainability Department
- Jeremy Yonce, Fort Collins Police Services

People and Places Visited

While the team was in Burlington, they met with several partners and agencies including:

- Burlington Street Outreach Team (5 people plus 1 vacant position) – 2 are “interventionists” who work closely with Police
- United Way Director
- Church Street Marketplace (Business Improvement District) Director
- Acting Chief of Police and Deputy Chief
- Retired Police Chief (was Police Chief when Street Outreach started; recently retired)
- Committee on Temporary Shelter (COTS) Director – day and night shelters
- Burlington Housing Authority
- Several “clients”, businesses, and downtown patrons

The team also visited various places including:

- Outreach Team office (although they are not there very often)
- Police Department
- Housing Authority
- COTS day and night shelters
- Church Street Marketplace – walking and observing while they work – also interacting with people
- United Way Office

Key Items Learned

- Collaborative, multi-agency approach is key to success
- All partners reported that the Street Outreach Program has been effective
- It was evident that relationships were strong - everybody knew them
- Some clients are long-term (working with them for years) and others are short term or traveling through
- It is not a “silver bullet” – expectations should be managed. It is part of a multi-pronged, long-term approach.
- Similar downtown issues – panhandling, park users, disruptive behaviors
- Focus on making downtown livable for all
- The Marketplace uses a panhandling campaign “Have a Heart, Give Smart” with proceeds going to COTS
- Courtesy signs on benches asking people to limit their time so others may enjoy
- Smoke-free pedestrian downtown
- Burlington instituted a no-trespass ordinance to help deter illegal behavior on Church Street Marketplace – this policy is seen as effective and has the support of all key stakeholders

Burlington Street Outreach Program Background, Approach and Funding:

- Started in 2000 in response to increasing distress in downtown
- Operates as a public-private partnership under the Howard Center (mental health provider)
- Creates and maintains relationships with clients, police, and service providers
- Engages, assesses, refers, follow-ups, and coordinates services to affect positive change and reduce negative impact

- Proactively reach out to people in need in the downtown area
- Respond to calls about concerns from merchants, citizens, clients, etc.
- “Interventionists” work very closely with Police – attend roll call, go out on calls with Police, proactively call “high-frequency utilizers”
- Funding partnership includes United Way, Marketplace, Mental Health Provider, Police/City, Business Association, and Vermont Department of Mental Health
- Budget for program is approximately \$240,000 – started much smaller with only one outreach worker, added workers and “interventionists” – now have 6 employees

Burlington Street Outreach Program Goals:

- Improve lives of those suffering severe and persistent functional impairments as a result of mental health, substance abuse, housing or behavioral challenges
- Respond to concerns from consumers, Police, merchants, service providers, families, and other community members
- Leverage systems of care for those in need of services
- Assist in reducing conflict in public and private space
- Reduce the reliance on Police to respond to and/or address social service issues
- Proactively engage with individuals to help them sustain their highest level of functioning
- Address behaviors that negatively impact/disrupt the immediate surrounding area and which have the potential for police involvement, court referrals, evictions, and denial of services

Burlington Street Outreach Program Metrics and Outcomes:

- 9,346 contacts with 871 different individuals in 2014
- 92% of these contacts were proactive
- 8% were documented at “concern”, “potential threat”, or “actual threat” levels
- Police requested 385 contacts
- Merchants requested 196 contacts
- Providers requested 400 contacts
- Responses vary from addressing behavior to arranging services, with problem-solving and de-escalation as core services
- Other responses include: service coordination, addressing basic needs, providing transportation, referral and consultation around accessing systems of care
- Street Outreach is an important bridge between mostly isolated, at-risk citizens and law enforcement, social services, and healthcare systems providing a step by step support system to resolve interpersonal problems and legal issues and identify options to reach obtainable goals. The disposition of the 9,346 contacts in 2014 include:
 - Accepted feedback 3,227
 - Stable 3,566
 - Made plan and discussed at follow-up 2,689
 - Changed behavior 826
 - No change 587

Next Steps

1. Council directed staff to move forward with implementing a Street Outreach Program here in Fort Collins
2. Cross-agency team currently working on scoping the program, determining governance model, actively finding funding partners
3. Mid-cycle budget offer for \$80K for the City's portion of funding
4. Expected timeline includes program start in early 2016

Attachments:

1. Howard Center Street Outreach Program Report 2014
2. Street Outreach Team Evaluation Report May 2015

Church Street Marketplace



Interventionist and Client



Municipal Park Adjacent to Church Street Marketplace



People Laying on Benches on Church Street Marketplace



Two Outreach Workers on Church Street Marketplace



Client Giving Jeremy Yonce Hand-made Flower



Officers, Outreach Workers, and Client on Church Street Marketplace



Team Talking with Private Donors of Street Outreach Program



Church Street Marketplace Campaign for Alternative Giving



Alternative Giving Receptacles – Proceeds Go To COTS



Bench on Church Street Marketplace with Courtesy Sign

