

City of Riverside

Community Livability Task Force

Action Plan

March 2014

Introduction

Over the last several years Riverside residents, staff and elected officials have perceived an increase in criminal and nuisance activities that impact the City's quality of life. This includes aggressive panhandling, vagrancy, unpermitted camping, vandalism, illegal vendors, abandoned property and the like. In order to address this situation, the City Manager's Office has pulled together an internal task force including the City Attorney's Office and every city department with responsibility for the enforcement of livability laws and the maintenance of city facilities. This Community Livability Task Force was charged with reviewing existing city ordinances and establishing a roster of enhanced staffing to bring about visible and sustained change. A complimentary component is additional outreach and education to bring about a culture change. This action plan is the culmination of this process and outlines the necessary steps for implementation, measurement and reporting in order to effectuate lasting change. It should be noted that this plan focuses on people who violate laws or ordinances and aims to deter criminal and nuisance activities by enforcing the City's laws and ordinances.

Background

The issues that the City of Riverside is experiencing are not unique to Riverside. In fact, many communities throughout the state of California and elsewhere in the country are experiencing similar impacts, as reported by local governments and media coverage. For example, local media reports indicate that Temecula, Jurupa Valley, Hemet, Upland, Highland and Redlands have all experienced impacts and are looking at ways to address these issues.

Riverside is the largest city in the inland region, serves as the County seat for Riverside County, is home to a County detention facility and has developed a large justice center with county, state and federal courts. As such, Riverside is visited by many people from throughout the region seeking county services including those provided by the courts, mental health, public health, and social services. City staff has observed that other county seats also experience elevated impacts from nuisance activities and it appears that the presence of county services may be a contributing factor. It should also be noted that these types of criminal and nuisance activities are generally more common the larger a city becomes, likely because a larger population adds a level of anonymity and larger concentrations of people provide more potential targets for petty criminals.

We have seen an aggravation of these issues since the implementation of Assembly Bill 109 (AB 109), also known as prison realignment, which took effect in October 2011. The primary result of realignment has been to intensify the County Jail overcrowding problem. As a result of overcrowding of the County Jail system, on a routine basis, the Sheriff's Department is forced to release convicted prisoners before their sentences are served and to release pre-sentence defendants without requiring the posting of bail. Consequently, persons who would previously be held for several days pending their court cases on minor nuisance crimes such as panhandling, or on defecating in public, are released within hours of their arrests. Similarly, before the County's severe jail overcrowding situation, a person who was cited for a minor crime and who failed to appear in court, could expect to be the subject of a judicial warrant and would be arrested if found in the community. In the past such warrant subjects would be held in jail until they were transported to the court issuing the warrant. Today, again due to jail overcrowding, subjects cited for quality of life infractions routinely fail to appear in court, they are found to have warrants and are arrested and taken to county jail where they are released within hours without appearing in court.

Prison re-alignment has also contributed to the degradation of our communities in that there are currently more than 500 ex-offenders in the city of Riverside under Post-Release Community Supervision (PRCS), the program established by AB 109 for supervision of a certain class of felons who are not subject to traditional State Parole supervision after their release from state prison. This class of ex-offender is much more difficult to return to custody for any significant amount of time when they are found to be in violation of the terms of their conditional release. Currently, there are 264 PRCS subjects registered to a domicile in the city of Riverside. Another 254 such subjects have listed themselves as being homeless, but living in the city. The city of Riverside has the largest numbers of PRCS

subjects of any city in our county. This population contains many individuals who have difficulty finding employment for due to their criminal histories. Many of them also suffer from substance abuse and mental illness.

Panhandling is one of the most visible nuisance activities and results in a high number of resident and business complaints. According to the Center for Problem-Oriented Policing (Scott, 2002), studies have shown that panhandlers spend much of their money on alcohol, drugs and tobacco, with some going to food, transportation and toiletries. In addition, the Center reports that many studies have shown that only a small percentage of panhandlers are homeless and only a small percentage of homeless people panhandle. In recognition of these facts, the City has strengthened its anti-panhandling ordinance and has developed an anti-panhandling education program to discourage donations to panhandlers and to instead direct those who want to give to the **Give to Positive Change** campaign.

The City of Riverside also has a demonstrated commitment to helping those in need and in 2003 the City Council adopted the Riverside Community Broad-Based Homeless Action Plan. Pursuant to this Plan, the City created the Homeless Services Campus on Hulen Place and provides a wide range of services including strategic outreach, crisis intervention, interim housing, rapid re-housing and coordinated case management. Shelter services include the Emergency Shelter, Cold Weather Shelter, Rainy Day Shelter, and Supportive Housing. The City invests \$965,646 annually to provide these services.

In 2012 the City led a collaborative effort to review its current operations and developed the Homeless Reduction & Prevention Strategy Five-Year Plan to solidify a unique community system of dignified supportive housing, prevention programs and supportive services. The Five Year Plan identified three priorities:

Priority #1

- Basic Needs and Services
- Community Education

Priority #2

- Preventive Services
- Outreach

Priority #3

- Employment Services
- Permanent Housing

The City has been actively engaged in implementation of Priority #1 through the **Give to Positive Change** campaign and expanding the basic services provided at the Homeless Services campus. Give to Positive Change is an educational campaign to encourage the public to donate to the Riverside Ending Homelessness Fund, a community-based donor advised fund that supports homeless programs and services that assist homeless individuals to exit life on the street, instead of giving money to panhandlers. This campaign has been marketed in a variety of ways including posters, business cards, street banners, and video and has resulted in \$33,616.79 in donations to date.

Another effort to raise awareness of homeless programs and services and to raise funds to add a shower and laundry facility to the Homeless Services campus is the **Walk to End Homelessness**. This event will take place on April 12, 2014 and will include a 2.5 mile walk and a tour of the homeless services campus. More information about the walk and all of the City's homeless services can be found at **EndHomeless.info**.

Regulatory Framework

The City of Riverside has a comprehensive set of Community Livability Laws in place addressing issues such as aggressive solicitation, loitering, conduct on public property, trespassing, possession of open alcoholic beverages, littering, graffiti, and damaging public property, among others. In reviewing these laws and examining regulations that have been implemented elsewhere, as well as the applicable legal framework, staff has identified the following enhancements for consideration:

1. **Alcohol Sales Restrictions.** Planning staff are drafting amendments to the City's alcohol sales laws to implement standards for existing businesses that sell alcohol for off-premises consumption and to establish a process for revocation of permits when these standards are violated. The standards will address conditions such as litter, graffiti, loitering, visibility into the premises, etc. It is anticipated that this item will be presented for consideration by the Planning Commission on May 8, 2014.
2. **Laura's Law.** The Assisted Outpatient Treatment Demonstration Project Act of 2002, also known as Laura's Law, allows a court to order a person to obtain assisted outpatient mental health treatment if the court finds by clear and convincing clinical evidence that a mentally ill adult has a history of recent lack of compliance with treatment and is unlikely to survive in the community without supervision. The law is very detailed in its requirements and would require that the County take the lead in implementing and providing services.

City staff has reviewed the existing Community Livability Laws and do not recommend any changes. The recent enhancements regulate group feeding and prohibit panhandling in certain public places including gas stations and fuel pumps, medians and freeway rights of way including on- and off-ramps and shoulders, driveways and dining establishments. The Riverside Police Department has been actively enforcing these provisions since the law went into effect on February 7, 2014.

Enhanced Operations

The Community Livability Task Force has carefully reviewed the issue and determined that enhanced staffing will bring about an immediate and lasting change. These enhanced operations will be a coordinated effort involving additional enforcement staff from the Riverside Police Department and Community Development – Code Enforcement Division complimented with a City Attorney Municipal Prosecution (CAMP) Division and an additional Homeless Outreach Team; additional public works personnel to clean up abandoned property and repair damage in the rights-of-way; and additional programming in the Parks.

Riverside Police Department. The Police Department’s Field Operations Division Commander will establish a task force of twelve officers and two sergeants, comprised of experienced uniformed personnel who volunteer to perform the special detail on an overtime basis as their primary duty. These officers would devote their full attention to addressing quality of life issues. Task force members will work with the City Attorney, Code Enforcement, Public Works, Parks and Community Services and the Homeless Outreach Team in a unified and strategic way to abate and eliminate problem behaviors and conditions. Assignments will include securing parks facilities at closing hours, thus relieving park personnel from this responsibility and ensuring that a high level of security is visible in the evening hours. In order to implement this task force, the police department will need \$1,685,215 in additional funding.

Code Enforcement. The Community Development Department will add a Community Livability Team staffed with two full-time Code Enforcement Officers who will focus on transient issues, illegal encampments, abandoned property, illegal vendors and unpermitted park feedings. This team will be dedicated exclusively to handling issues in the parks, open space and right-of-way areas of the City and not regular zoning, building or public nuisance code enforcement activities on private property. The Code Enforcement Team will work closely with the CAMP Division, RPD’s task force and Parks staff to identify and respond to violations. Staffing costs are anticipated to be \$195,153 and start-up costs for an additional vehicle, workstations, Toughbook’s and printers, equipment and uniforms is projected to be \$85,211.

Homeless Outreach. Presently the Homeless Outreach Team includes two teams of two people typically working weekdays from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm. In order to provide services on an expanded basis and to be available to participate alongside the RPD task force, the Community Development Department will add an additional team of two outreach workers and flex the schedules of the three teams to provide coverage in the evenings and on the weekends. An additional \$118,600 will be needed to provide staffing for a two-person outreach team.

City Attorney Municipal Prosecution (CAMP) Division. The City Attorney’s Office is proposing to form a Municipal Prosecution Division to proactively improve public safety and the quality of life within the City by (1) engaging the community to identify and solve nuisance-related problems; (2) working with City staff to educate the public on Community

Livability laws; (3) filing misdemeanor criminal complaints and pursuing prosecutions against offenders; and (4) strategically collaborating with other city departments and local agencies to more effectively deploy city resources. The CAMP Division will work proactively with the other city departments to address neighborhood problems before they become criminal problems and prosecuting criminal violations. The CAMP Division will be overseen by the City Attorney and would add three new positions to the department: a Deputy City Attorney/Municipal Prosecutor; a paralegal; and a legal support specialist. The cost associated with these positions will range from \$225,000-\$275,000 depending on the level of experience of the new Deputy City Attorney/Municipal Prosecutor.

Public Works Department. The Public Works Department will function in a support role to the enforcement staff and will remove trash and debris left on public property. Public Works anticipates costs of \$31,800 for labor, equipment and dump fees.

Parks, Recreation & Community Services. The Parks, Recreation & Community Services Department will work in conjunction with the other departments to report and monitor nuisance activities with the parks and is proposing to expand programming in the parks in order to increase positive activity and involvement. In order to initiate this new programming, Parks, Recreation & Community Services will need \$70,000 for start-up costs to purchase vehicles and equipment and \$200,000 in ongoing funding for staffing and operations. The new programming will consist of the following components:

- Mobile Recreation Unit. Purchase a van/trailer and hire staff to visit parks that do not have community centers and parks that have livability issues to engage youth in fun, healthy, wholesome group activities and encourage positive use of the parks. This program would operate on weekends and after school hours and would visit a minimum of two sites a day for at least two hours each.
- Special Programs Unit. Employ a Special Program Coordinator and part-time staff to develop and implement programs that promote safer parks, community stewardship, positive use of parks and discourage negative behavior. This staff would organize and coordinate activities such as Arts in the Park at North Park, White Park, Arlington Park and La Sierra Park on a rotating basis; coordinate and organize a volunteer Parks Ambassador Program; and develop a Rewards Program with a passport kit to encourage residents to visit and explore all 58 city parks.

County Resources

The County of Riverside has responsibility for certain programs that have a direct impact on the City's ability to monitor nuisance activities and provide resources to those in need. Two key county partners in this effort are the Mental Health and Environmental Health departments. An effective livability effort needs mental health workers to participate in outreach and partner with the police department to provide services to those in need.

Riverside County Department of Mental Health (RCDMH) has funded a Clinical Therapist to work with Riverside Police Department to respond to mental health related issues as well as to assist with homeless individuals. While this position is currently vacant, RCDMH remains committed to hiring a qualified clinician for this assignment. Furthermore, RCDMH has also applied for additional grant funding to add mobile support mental health staff to respond to law enforcement requests for assistance in the field to provide crisis support and linkage in the region.

City staff have also discussed with RCDMH the need have a dedicated mental health homeless outreach worker (Behavioral Health Specialist II) to partner full time with the City Homeless Outreach Team to identify homeless who are seriously mentally ill and engage them in accepting services and support. RCDMH would need funding in the amount of \$60,017 for salary and benefits to hire and assign a dedicated Behavioral Health Specialist to the City of Riverside. City staff will look for funding opportunities for this position.

As discussed previously in this report, implementation of Laura's Law (Assisted Outpatient Treatment Demonstration Project Act of 2002) requires that the Board of Supervisors, by resolution or through the county budget process, authorize its application and make the applicable findings. The City recommends that the Riverside County Board of Supervisors adopt a resolution authorizing application of the law.

The City is also concerned about feeding programs that operate in the City and needs the assistance of the Environmental Health Department to license and inspect food providers to ensure that all food is safe for consumption.

In summary, the City recommends that the County Board of Supervisors take the following actions:

- Prioritize recruitment of the funded Clinical Therapist to work with RPD
- Seek funding to assign a full-time Behavioral Health Specialist to partner with the City's Homeless Outreach Team
- Adopt a resolution authorizing Laura's Law within Riverside County and provide appropriate resources to RCDMH for implementation
- Instruct the Environmental Health Department to study the issue of public feedings and determine the appropriate methods to ensure that all food is safe for consumption

Funding

City staff has developed a thorough plan to address livability issues in the City. In order to fully fund the initiatives outlined in this report, the following funding will be needed for the first year of operation:

| <u>Department</u> | <u>FY 13/14</u> | <u>FY 14/15</u> |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Riverside Police Department | \$ 421,304 | \$ 1,685,215 |
| Community Development Department | \$ 85,211 | \$ 313,753 |
| Parks Recreation & Community Services | \$ 70,000 | \$ 200,000 |
| City Attorney's Office | \$ 50,000 | \$ 275,000 |
| Public Works Department | \$ 7,950 | \$ 31,800 |
| Marketing | \$ 2,000 | \$ 0 |
| TOTAL | \$ 636,465 | \$2,505,768 |

It is recommended that a non-departmental budget be established for the Community Livability Program with line item funding for each department. This will allow for tracking of the costs of the overall initiative and will also keep the funds separate from regular departmental operations.

It is expected that this program will be launched immediately after City Council approval of the program and supplemental appropriations. To the extent that staffing will be provided by existing staff, as is proposed by the Police Department, operations will be able to begin immediately. Most of the other departments will need to recruit and hire staff; therefore full implementation is expected to begin on July 1. For the current fiscal year, the funding requirement is estimated to be \$636,465 including start-up costs. For next fiscal year, the funding requirement is \$2,505,768. Since this is a new initiative, funding will need to be appropriated from General Fund Reserves.

Education and Awareness

An essential component of the Community Livability Task Force is publicizing this effort and educating residents and businesses about the City's work to reduce criminal and nuisance activities that impact the quality of life. City staff has developed a Marketing and Communications Plan to educate local businesses, City departments, community members/residents and neighboring cities about the task force. The components of this marketing strategy include press releases, collateral materials, information posted to the City's web sites, social media, Explore Riverside newsletter articles, and informational video for GTV. Additionally, City staff will continue to promote the **Give to Positive Change** campaign and the **Walk to End Homelessness**. A budget of \$2,000 is requested to cover the cost of print collateral materials.

Measuring and Reporting

The goal of this program is to reduce the incidence of criminal and nuisance activities that impact the community's quality of life. It is expected that initially there will be an increase in complaints, citations and arrests as a result of increased awareness of the new program and enhanced enforcement. Over time, we would expect to see a decrease in complaints and a decrease in citations and arrests as the violators realize that this behavior is no longer tolerated in Riverside. At the same time, it is expected that there will be increased utilization of the City's homeless services as a result of the additional outreach team and as needy people become more willing to accept services to change their circumstances. Following are baseline statistics that can be used to measure the impact and success of this program:

Public Safety/Enforcement:

- Incident responses by Riverside Fire Department (excluding fires): 187 from 1/31/14 to 3/26/14 = average of 3.4 per day
- Fire responses by RFD: Four fires between 1/31/14 to 3/26/14 = average of 2/month
- RPD Title 9 (Peace, Safety, Morals) and CVC 22520.5 citations: Six month average 8/13 to 2/14 = 75 per month; 166 citations issued in the first month after the new ordinance became effective (2/7/14 to 3/6/14)

Homeless Services

- Outreach Team: 542 individuals served FY 12/13 = average of 2.19 per day (unduplicated)
- Pet kennel: Average 45 pets/year
- Access Center: 87 unduplicated clients, January 2014 = 60/day average (duplicated)
- Emergency Shelter: 393 unduplicated individuals assisted FY 12/13
- Cold Weather Shelter: 560 unduplicated individuals assisted FY 12/13

Housing for Homeless Individuals

- Supportive Housing: 15 units
- Homeless Prevention and Rapid Rehousing: 37 assisted FY 12/13
- Shelter Plus Care: 5 units FY 12/13
- VALOR Initiative: 153 vets assisted in 100 days

In addition to tracking these statistics, Staff will document attendance at the new Parks programs, cases handled by the new Code Enforcement team, trash and debris removed from public property, and other actions that result from this program. It is recommended that progress reports be provided to the Public Safety Committee every six months with annual reports to the City Council.