Follow-up Review of Homelessness

in the

City of St. Petersburg

Presentation of Findings and Action Plan Recommendations
to the

City of St. Petersburg

by

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Project Scope of Work

The Project was divided into two phases and outlined in the services contract as follows:

1. Phase 1- Research and Review: Consultant shall conduct an assessment of the current homeless situation in St. Petersburg. This assessment will require Consultant to conduct street-level observations of areas in the City where the homeless congregate, attend meetings with key people working on homeless issues in the City, conduct interviews with selected agencies serving the homeless population, engage in discussions with the City’s Homeless Street Outreach Team and law enforcement officers working in areas with a high concentration of homeless individuals, and collaborate with others who have significant knowledge of the current homeless situation in the City. The City’s Manager of Veterans, Social and Homeless Services will help arrange the meetings and interviews and will work closely with Consultant during the Research and Review Phase. This phase shall commence on March 1, 2014 and shall be completed by April 30, 2014. NOTE: at the request of the City of St. Petersburg, the due date was extended to June 2014 in order accommodate a June 5, 2014 presentation to the City Council by the Consultant.

2. Phase 2- Action Plan and Written Report: Consultant shall develop recommended action steps (“Action Plan”), based on his findings during the Research and Review Phase, for addressing homelessness in the City.
Big Picture Observations

* The overall success rate is not as high as it was, but relative to other cities the rate of reduction is still good. The bad news is the trend-line rate is getting significantly worse. The good news is, at least at the time of the drafting of this report, the increase is limited to a defined area and during a defined period of time which makes the situation easier to address.

* The night-time street level homelessness reduction rate from June 2010 to March 2014 is 92.6% when the prior sleeping area set up at City Hall is included. When the sleeping area at City Hall is not included the reduction is 84.0%. These are very good reduction rates relative to other cities. These counts are taken by St. Petersburg Police Department on a weekly basis, normally on Wednesday evenings.

* The day-time street level homelessness has gone up and is concentrated in four locations: Williams Park, Mirror Lake, Unity Park and around St. Vincent de Paul. Additionally, there is some traversing across First Ave. North-Central Ave.-First Ave. South.

* Almost all of the “additional” individuals during the day-time (e.g., the difference between the day-time and night-time counts) are individuals spending the night at St. Vincent de Paul. The number ranges from 45-65 individuals per day. These individuals leave the night-time sleeping area at St. Vincent de Paul early in the morning because the program closes at 6am.

* During the time of this study, this researcher conducted 15 different field observations totaling 54 hours in the field, eight of these hours were with Cliff Smith (Social Services Manager for the City of St. Petersburg). Additionally, Cliff Smith conducted an additional 10 hours of field observations at the highly concentrated locations. All total, there was more than 64 hours of combined field observation on different days at different times.

  During all these field observations, only one time were any St. Petersburg Police Officers observed engaging homeless individuals. This engagement was with four officers and lasted less than 20 minutes. During this one time engagement, Cliff Smith and this researcher noticed numerous infractions, yet the police officers took no actions.

* The highly successful Pinellas County Sheriff’s Homeless Diversion Program was discontinued because of budgetary reasons. Many St. Petersburg Police Officers cite this as the number one reason for the increase in homelessness. It is important to note that promises of financial support by St. Petersburg to the Pinellas County Sheriff have not been kept.

* The HOTeam time which was originally developed to engage adult homeless individuals has morphed almost exclusively into a HOTeam for homeless families. During two separate visits with the HOTeam, their cell phone rang or was texied more than 20 times per hour, and the HOTeam’s voice mail is normally full by 10am. Currently, “211” and several other agencies direct most of their family homeless calls in the St. Petersburg area to the HOTeam. The family homelessness crisis in St. Petersburg is simply overwhelming the HOTeam.
Summary of Recommendations

1- Fulfill the prior financial pledges of support to Pinellas Safe Harbor and secure sustainable funding for future operations.

2- Ask the Pinellas County Sheriff to reinstate the *Homeless Diversion Program*.

3- Reverse St. Petersburg Police Department complacency in terms of proactive homeless engagement.

4- Re-commit the St. Petersburg’s HOTeam to engaging single adults.

5- The Society of St. Vincent de Paul night-time program for single adults needs to become a 24/7 self-contained holistic program that proactively addresses the root causes of homelessness.

6- The City of St. Petersburg should partner with the Juvenile Welfare Board’s *Family Services Initiative*, and the Homeless Leadership Board should be encouraged to take a leadership role in addressing homeless families with children homelessness.
Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation 1  -  Fulfill Prior Financial Pledges of Support to Pinellas Safe Harbor

* The City of St. Petersburg should honor its prior funding pledge of $150,000 per year to Pinellas Safe Harbor and this amount should be indexed for inflation.

* In addition to the $150,000 pledge, when the City of St. Petersburg asked the Sheriff to open Pinellas Safe Harbor, St. Petersburg pledged to enlist ongoing funding support from other cities within Pinellas County (the original pledge was 25% of all funding to Pinellas Safe Harbor would come from the cities within Pinellas County).

* The services offered at Pinellas Safe Harbor by the Pinellas County Sheriff are a critical component of the homeless services continuum of care within Pinellas County. Since this program serves all of Pinellas County, the elected and appointed officials from the cities within Pinellas County and the Pinellas County Government must work together to proactively secure adequate and sustainable funding for the continued operation of Pinellas Safe Harbor. The Pinellas County Sheriff should not be expected to solely maintain the bulk of the operational funding of Pinellas Safe Harbor alone.

Recommendation 2  -  Reinstate the Pinellas County Sheriff’s *Homeless Diversion Program*

* The Pinellas County Sheriff should be asked to reinstate the highly successful *Homeless Diversion Program* in order to give police officers a more effective and affective tool to engage homeless individuals on the street.

* Participating cities would be expected to provide significant financial support to this program.

Recommendation 3  -  Reverse SPPD Complacency in Terms of Homeless Engagement

* It needs to become a Department-wide priority of the St. Petersburg Police Department (SPPD) to engage and encourage homeless individuals to enter 24/7 treatment programs.

* All SPPD officers should receive homeless engagement training on an ongoing basis and all officers regardless of deployment location need to proactively engage homeless individuals.

* St. Petersburg’s Police Department needs to re-engage the Downtown Deployment Team (DDT) to proactively engage and encourage homeless individuals to enter 24/7 holistic treatment programs.
* St. Petersburg’s Police Department needs to develop a culture throughout the Department (e.g., beyond DDT and the HOTeam) to proactively engage and encourage homeless individuals to enter 24/7 holistic treatment programs.

* The Social Services Manager for the City of St. Petersburg should have input into the St. Petersburg Police Department deployment patterns, at least in the highly concentrated areas. A review of homeless counts and deployment patterns should be a regular agenda item during the monthly meetings held between the Social Services Manager and the Police Department.

* Based on field census counts threshold triggers to deploy enhanced engagement should be established (e.g., when a certain level of homelessness occurs, there is an automatic step-up of proactive engagement with the hope that homeless individuals engage in 24/7 programming).

**Recommendation 4 - Re-commit the SPPD HOTeam to Engaging Single Adults**

* The current HOTeam needs to focus solely on adults and needs to formally disengage from serving families with children.

* This disengagement needs to formally occur with “211” and all other referral agencies.

* It is strongly encouraged that the HOTeam starts anew with a new cell phone number.

**Recommendation 5 - St. Vincent de Paul Programming Needs to Become 24/7**

* If the over-night sleeping program continues to be a part-time program that kicks-out individuals in the early morning, the observed increase of day-time street homelessness will persist as long as this program remains a part-time program.

* St. Vincent de Paul closes their night shelter at 6am. On April 1, 2014 they started a small Day Services Program which opens at 11am on weekdays and stays open all day until the night shelter re-opens at 9pm. There is thus a gap in services from 6am to 11am and the program is not open on weekends. This program also needs to become more robust.

* It is critical that the current over-night sleeping program for adults at the Society of St. Vincent de Paul become a self-contained 24/7 holistic program that addresses the root causes of homelessness.

* Because of the high average daily census at Pinellas Safe Harbor, it is best to create a self-contained holistic program at the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. For the purpose of this recommendation “self-contained” means that the number of holistic day-time program “slots” exactly equals the number of night-time mat/bed “slots” on an individual-to-individual basis,
and with no interruption of services during any 24-hour cycle (e.g., the night-time cohort and
day-time cohort are exactly the same individuals).

* All services offered by the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, including meals for the chronic
homeless population, should be tied to active participation in case management services.

**Recommendation 6 - Partner with the Juvenile Welfare Board’s Family Services Initiative**

* There is a CRISIS level of homeless families with children in Pinellas County. This issue
was identified by this researcher in his first report *Strategic Action Plan to Reduce
Homelessness for Pinellas County* dated November 21, 2011.

* The City of St. Petersburg needs to partner with the Juvenile Welfare Board’s (JWB)
successful Family Services Initiative.

* There needs to be a dedicated focus to helping families with children on a county-wide basis.
The JWB, the Homeless Leadership Board (HLB) and the Pinellas County Government are
best suited to take responsibility for addressing homeless families with children.

* The capacity of HLB will need to be increased in order to effectively and affectively address
homeless families with children.
Transformational Communities

The Seven Guiding Principles of Transformation, combined with the Core Tenets of a Transformative System, influence all aspects of how we develop plans to establish transformational communities:

- Overall service system design, structure and operations (e.g., systems approach)
- How the homeless community is engaged
- Selection and training of staff
- How volunteers are activated
- Engagement of the general public
- How buildings are designed
- How existing facilities are re-purposed
- Inter agency interfaces (government, faith-based and non-profit organizations).

The Seven Guiding Principles of Transformation  
Moving from Enablement to Engagement

1. **Move to a Culture of Transformation (versus the Old Culture of Warehousing):**

   Homeless individuals must be engaged and no longer enabled. Everybody within the services delivery system (e.g., general public, media, elected politicians, appointed officials, boards, staffs/volunteers of service agencies and most importantly the homeless themselves) must embrace a culture of transformation. A transformative culture positively fosters individual transformation and reintegration into society. For moral and fiscal reasons, homelessness must become an unacceptable condition that is not tolerated in the USA.

2. **Co-location and Virtual E-integration of as Many Services as Possible:**

   In order to increase success, all services within a service area must be e-integrated. Virtual e-integration improves coordination of services, enhances performance, reduces gaming of the system, engages individuals on the margin of society, and increases cost efficiencies within and between agencies. Furthermore, whenever financially possible, services should be co-located. Co-location goes beyond virtual e-integration by increasing the number of “service hits” into a shorter period of time through the reduction of wasted time in transit and minimization of mishandled referrals. Co-location also increases the supportive “human touch.”

3. **Must Have a Master Case Management System That is Customized:**

   Because there are so many different service agencies helping homeless individuals (e.g., government at multi-levels, non-profits and faith-based), it is critical that ONE person coordinates the services an individual receives and to do so in a customized fashion. The types of service provided are critical, but more important is the sequencing and frequency of customized services.
4. **Reward Positive Behavior:**

Positive behavior should be rewarded with increased responsibilities and more privileges. Privileges such as higher quality sleeping arrangements, more privacy and elective learning opportunities should be used as rewards. It is important that these rewards be used as tools to approximate the real world in order to increase sustainable reintegration into society.

5. **Consequences for Negative Behavior:**

Too often there are no consequences for negative behavior. Unfortunately, this sends a message that bad behavior is acceptable. Within the transformational process, it is critical to have swift and proportionate consequences.

6. **External Activities Must Be Redirected or Stopped:**

External activities such as “street feeding” must be redirected to support the transformation process. In most cases, these activities are well-intended efforts by good folks, however these activities are very enabling and often do little to engage homeless individuals. Street feeding programs without comprehensive services actually increase and promote homelessness. Street feeding groups should be encouraged to co-locate with existing comprehensive service programs.

7. **Panhandling Enables the Homeless and Must Be Stopped:**

Unearned tax-free cash is very enabling and does not engage homeless individuals in job and skills training which are needed to end homelessness. Additionally, most often cash is not used for food and housing but rather for drugs and alcohol which further perpetuates the homeless cycle. Homeless individuals who are panhandling should be engaged in the transformational process. Furthermore, many panhandlers are not truly homeless individuals but are predators of generous citizens.
Short Resume of Robert G. Marbut Jr.

First as a volunteer, then later as a San Antonio City Councilperson/Mayor-Pro-Tem and a homeless service agency President/CEO, Dr. Robert Marbut has worked on homeless issues for more than three decades.

In 2007, frustrated by the lack of real improvement, and as part of the concept development phase for the Haven for Hope Campus, Dr. Marbut conducted a nationwide best practices study of homeless services. After personally visiting 237 homeless service facilities in 12 states and the District of Columbia, he developed *The Seven Guiding Principles of Homeless Transformation*. Since then, Dr. Marbut has visited a total of 652 operations in 21 states, plus Washington, DC and Mexico, DF. These *Seven Guiding Principles of Transformation* are used in all aspects of his work to create holistically transformative environments in order to reduce homelessness.

Dr. Marbut was a White House Fellow to President George H.W. Bush and a former chief of staff to San Antonio Mayor Henry Cisneros.

He earned a Ph.D. from The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas in International Relations (with an emphasis in international terrorism and Wahhabism), Political Behavior and American Political Institutions/Processes from the Department of Government.

He also has two Master of Arts degrees, one in Government from The University of Texas at Austin and one in Criminal Justice from the Claremont Graduate School. His Bachelor of Arts is a Full Triple Major in Economics, Political Science and Psychology (Honors Graduate) from Claremont McKenna (Men's) College.

Dr. Marbut also has completed three post-graduate fellowships, one as a White House Fellow (USA's most prestigious program for leadership and public service), one as a CORO Fellow of Public and Urban Affairs and one as a TEACH Fellow in the Kingdom of Bahrain and the State of Qatar (1 of 13 USA educators selected).

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