



Best Practices

Costa Mesa Homeless Task Force

- The Homeless Task Force was formed by the City Council in January 2011 in response to a series of incidents in the Lions Park vicinity

- Response to problems @ Lions Park
 - Vagrancy (sleeping in the park)
 - Storage of items in public areas, abandoned property citywide
 - Complaints from library & community center patrons
 - Business owners
 - Homeless sleeping on their property at night
 - Loitering

- Many of the people encountered were mentally ill and/or suffering from substance abuse

Costa Mesa Homeless Task Force Mission Statement

“Establish Realistic Strategies and Make Recommendations that Address the Needs of the Costa Mesa Community, Residents, Businesses and the Homeless”

Focus of HTF Meetings

- Civility law (ordinance) review
- Law enforcement, municipal code prosecution & mental health outreach
- Homeless mental health & medical issues
- Financing strategies/funds available for supportive housing
- Definition of a “Costa Mesa Homeless Resident”
- Vanguard University Homeless Needs Assessment

Goal/Action Item Recommendations

■ Nine Goals/Action Items:

1. Define who is a Costa Mesa Homeless Individual
2. Protect the health & safety of CM residents via enforcement of “civility” laws & provide of alternate storage facilities
3. Institute proactive resolution for high crime/vice motels that cater to transients & enforce local codes & ordinances at problem halfway/sober-living homes
4. Centralize homeless service coordination
5. Coordinated law enforcement, mental health & legal strategy to approach homelessness
6. Explore financing strategies for permanent supportive housing & possible access center
7. Interim housing options
8. Develop metrics system to monitor reduction in homelessness
9. Promotion of Lions Park as a local venue for special events

Main Findings of HTF

- Mental illness and substance abuse play major role in homelessness as does difficulty navigation services
- No “team work” between governmental entities, mental health organizations and faith and non profit communities
 - Chronic offenders receive multiple citations yet continually return to the City
 - No coordination with other governmental agencies or non profits
 - Several motels harbor repeat offenders
 - Faith organizations assist chronic offenders without establishing clear expectations for service recipients
- There is opportunity to improve relationship with faith community in order to partner with them on creating solutions

Goal 1

Define Who is a Costa Mesa Homeless Individual

- A Costa Mesa resident is defined as:
 - A person has lived in Costa Mesa for the preceding 36 months at the time they are assessed for residency by city staff or affiliated volunteer organizations, or has been a member of Costa Mesa's workforce for the same duration. Any exceptions to this definition that surface as result of extraordinary circumstances shall be considered on a case by case basis by the Chair of the Network for Homeless Solutions in consultation with Network members.
- There are two (2) ways to provide proof of Costa Mesa Residency:
 1. Examples of acceptable documentation to confirm recent residency includes:
 - Copy of a previous lease
 - Confirmation of previous utility service
 - Confirmation of residency from a previous landlord, or proof of residency in transitional living facility
 - School records

Goal 1

Define Who is a Costa Mesa Homeless Individual

2. Proof of strong ties to the community:

- ❑ Proof that the individual and/or their dependent(s) attended K-12 school in Costa Mesa within the past 10 years and have been re-established in the community for at least one year.
- ❑ Knowledge—either first hand or recorded—by the Costa Mesa Police, Fire Department, City Community Outreach Workers and Trellis Volunteers and/or the Costa Mesa Code Enforcement Department that the individual has been living on Costa Mesa's streets for the prior 36 months.

Goal 1

Define Who is a Costa Mesa Homeless Individual

■ EXCEPTIONS

- Vulnerable homeless individuals, including those identified by the VI-SPDAT whose well-being will be severely compromised by living on the street. Efforts to assist these individuals will be limited to stabilization and placement in housing or return to their community of origin.
- Homeless individuals identified by City Staff (i.e. CMPD, Fire and Community Outreach Workers) as high users of City resources and services are not Costa Mesa Homeless Residents unless they meet the aforementioned thresholds and conditions. The NHS will determine on a case by case basis the extent of service efforts afforded these individuals, with the final determination by the Chair of the Network for Homeless Solutions in consultation with Network members. In most cases, NHS efforts will be limited to reconnecting these individuals to their communities of origin.

GOAL 2

Protect the Health & Safety of CM Residents Through Enforcement of “Civility” Laws & Provision of Alternate Storage Facilities

- Reduce homelessness in CM via coordinated actions to create processes & policies that will lead to a reduction in homelessness & an increase in the City’s quality of life
- Establish ordinances that create the means by which the City can enforce desired outcomes

Ordinances

- Parking
- Camping
- Storage Ordinance & Alternative Storage Site
- Food Sharing
- Prohibition on Smoking
- Ban on Sex Offender in Park
- Bike Rack

Goal 2

Parking Ordinances (New)

- Parking issues result as vehicles park for long periods of time in City parks which results in vehicle owner/occupant using the space for lodging purposes & possibly preventing residents from parking in order to recreate in City parks
- **HTF RECOMMENDATION:**
 - No overnight parking in parks except by permit

Goal 2

Camping Ordinance (Existing)

- Anti-camping/lodging ordinances are not necessarily unlawful, but Best Practices suggest to avoid allegations of civil rights violations an alternate location should be provided so that an individual's ability to sleep is unabridged

■ **HTF RECOMMENDATION:**

- Enforce anti-camping ordinances as part of a legal strategy connected to actions that link homeless to housing
- Ensure park is closed at night

- Update – Enforced with discretion. Code Enforcement now enforcing camping on private property

Goal 2

Storage Ordinance & Alternative Storage Site

- Enforcement of personal property storage ordinances are best defended from litigation when alternate storage sites are provided
- HCD staff & Church Consortium met regarding the utilization of church property for this purpose

■ **HTF RECOMMENDATION:**

- Update & enforce existing personal property storage ordinances & if possible, partner with faith-based/nonprofit organizations to provide accessible & secure locations for homeless to store & retrieve personal property
 - Updated – Adopted 2013

Goal 2

Food Sharing Ordinances (New)

- Restricting individuals from feeding the homeless is an action that has been subject to
- Effective enforcement of food sharing ordinances may depend on other “positive” actions by City
- **HTF RECOMMENDATION:**
 - Research ordinances limiting food sharing programs in City parks & other public locations
 - Update – Legal Counsel states most limitation on food sharing challenged in court
 - Focus on centralizing food distribution in City and encouraging faith based organizations to do the same

Goal 2

Prohibition on Smoking Ordinances

- CM Parks & Recreation Commission recommended expanding proposed smoking ban to include:
 - All City-owned buildings, facilities & motor vehicles
 - Areas within fenced areas (including parking lots if not within the fenced areas) of City owned sports fields
 - City owned community gardens
 - Within 50 ft. of any City park (parking lots included in park boundaries)

- **HTF RECOMMENDATION:**
 - HTF recommended supporting ordinance
 - Update: Ordinance approved by City Council in Fall 2011

Goal 2

Ban Sex Offenders in Park Ordinance

- The City Attorney is researching the feasibility of an ordinance to exclude registered sex offenders from city parks & youth sports fields owned/operated by the City
- Potentially constitutional rights issues
- The City Attorney is preparing a legal analysis for Council to evaluate whether to adopt such a restriction

- **HTF RECOMMENDATION:**
 - That the City Council adopt an ordinance banning registered sex offenders from City owned parks & recreation facilities
 - Update – Adopted, overturned in State and Federal Court

Goal 2

Bike Rack Ordinance (New)

- New ordinance not previously discussed by Task Force
- Purpose of the Ordinance was ensure that bike racks were used for their intended purpose and to curb the number of abandoned bikes in the City
- To be discussed with Council to obtain additional direction

- **HTF RECOMMENDATION:**
 - None at this time, although there is general support
 - Update – Bike Rack Ordinance adopted

Goal 3

Institute Proactive Problem Resolution with regard to High Crime/Vice Motels Catering to Transient Population & Enforcement of Local Codes & Ordinances at Problem Halfway/Sober-Living Homes

- One cause for influx of homeless to CM is a proliferation of motels & sober living homes
- Law enforcement agencies from other jurisdictions (Probation & Parole) utilize these motels & sober living homes for clients
- **HTF RECOMMENDATION:**
 - That staff explore changes to current building codes that could reduce or mitigate impact of half way/sober living homes on residential & business neighborhoods
 - Update: This action incorporated into 2 interdepartmental efforts consisting of problem motels & sober living enforcement and network for homeless solutions

Goal 3

Partner with Parole & Probation

- A combined State Parole, County Probation & City Code Enforcement team could inspect motels & recovery homes to ensure they operate in accordance with CUPs & that individuals residing in units are not violating terms of parole or probation
- **HTF RECOMMENDATION:**
 - That staff pursue a partnership with Probation & Parole personnel to proactively inspect recovery/halfway homes to ensure code compliance
 - Update: This action has been incorporated into motel, sober living and network for homeless solutions task forces

Goal 4

Centralized Homeless Services Coordination

- Homeless issues impact outside jurisdictions & entities
- Best practices suggests one department be responsible for coordination of homeless services & complaints
- This department should be responsible for:
 - Coordinating in-house & outside efforts
 - Addressing homeless complaints by coordinating responses with CMPD, City Attorney, other City departments & outside agencies
 - Evaluating new techniques for addressing homeless issues
 - Homeless Task Force strategies/recommendations

- **HTF RECOMMENDATION:**
 - Continue centralized homeless services coordination

Network for Homeless Solutions



Network for Homeless Solutions
Rick Francis

City Attorney
Kathya Firlik

Community Outreach
Muriel Ullman

Development Services

Chief of Code Enforcement
Fidel Gamboa

Code Enforcement Officer
Mike Brumbaugh

City Outreach Team

Outreach Worker
S. Bowler

Intern (2)

Outreach Worker D.
Penfil

PT Analyst

Police Department

Lt. Bakkila

Lt. La Pointe

Park Ranger Pallo

Public Services

Maintenance Services Manager
Bruce Hartley

Fire Department

Code Enforcement
Jon Neal

Non-Profits

- Mercy House
- Collette's Children's Home
- SOS

- Working Wardrobes
- Broken Hearts Ministries

- Fresh Beginnings
- Off the Streets
- Families Forward

Faith-Based Partners

- Trellis
- Light House
- Church of Christ

- The Crossing Church
- Rock Harbor
- St. Joaquim

- St. John the Baptist
- Queen of Angels
- St. John's Episcopal

Government Agencies

OC Health Care Agency

VA

OC Community Services

Private Partners

Private Landlords

Private Rehab

Goal 5

Integrate Law Enforcement, Mental Health & Legal Strategy as a Collaborative Approach to Homelessness

- Best practices suggests that the enforcement of codes & policies may require a new approach that includes a “homeless-specific” policy/legal strategy
- The City should consider adopting a collaborative approach to law enforcement that includes arresting chronic offenders & criminals while working with the City Attorney, CMPD & mental health outreach workers to help move the homeless off the streets

Goal 5

Create Homeless Enforcement Team

- Cities that have success with homeless issues usually have officers trained in homeless specific solutions
- As the 1st responders to homeless calls for service a homeless officer can free up officers to return to patrol duty
- Homeless outreach officers build rapport with homeless which helps assess long-term needs of the chronic homeless

HTF RECOMMENDATION:

That the City explore the deployment of a “Homeless Outreach Officer”

- Update: On hold due to resource constraints. Program to be implemented in 2016

Goal 5

Coordinate Mental Health/Street Outreach

- Presently service providers visit CM libraries & parks weekly
 - E.g., OC Mental Health, Veterans 1st, VA
- CMPD calls these agencies for assistance as needed
- Service providers often need multiple encounters to build trust & assess needs of homeless to remove from streets
- The City may be able to expedite trust-building process and access to services by funding a PT street outreach team/worker
- **HTF RECOMMENDATION:**
 - Recommend that staff explore contract opportunities with qualified providers to coordinate mental health & street outreach services for Costa Mesa homeless residents
 - Update: Community Outreach Team established with County Collaboration

Goal 5

Formalize Legal Assistance to Prosecute Chronic Violators

- Develop a multi-faceted legal strategy that involves a stronger presence in court when transients appear before a judge
- City Attorney's Office will prosecute municipal code violations for repeat offenders & will communicate with DA's office regarding specific cases of interest
- This approach could result in the ability to remove people from the community who commit repeated offenses & who refuse assistance
- **HTF RECOMMENDATION:**
 - Formalize support for this current legal strategy
 - Update – In process

Goal 5

Provide Emergency Motel Vouchers for CMPD

- CMPD occasionally encounter situations that require rapid, temporary placement of vulnerable individuals/families into safe/decent housing
- CMPD should have a supply of vouchers for emergency situations especially for families with children found sleeping in the street
- **HTF RECOMMENDATION:**
 - That staff identify resources to provide CMPD with motel vouchers for emergency situations & help develop criteria for the use of vouchers
 - Update – Implemented and includes transportation vouchers

Goal 6

Research Permanent Supportive Housing & Possible Access Center for CM Homeless Residents

- Best practices suggest the availability of supportive housing & a daytime facility where homeless may congregate helps reduce impact of the homeless on neighborhoods & local businesses
- Facility location must ensure impacts to surrounding neighborhoods are mitigated
- **These facilities would only be accessed by CM homeless based on the definition conceived by the HTF**
- **HTF RECOMMENDATION:**
 - Have staff explore the possibility of financing strategies for the development of supportive housing/access
 - Update: Project on hold based on neighborhood opposition to proposed site

Goal 8

Develop a Metrics System to Monitor Reduction in Homelessness

- Best practices suggests a homeless strategy should measure impact of actions on the homeless
- CM should develop appropriate metrics system to measure success or failures of its homeless strategy including a reduction in homelessness
- **RECOMMENDATION:**
 - Develop analytical tool to measure homeless reduction resulting from implementation of the City's homeless strategy
 - Update – City has implemented information management system which tracks all clients assisted including services received, case management hours and notes

Goal 5 - Community Outreach Workers

- The City employs 2 part-time community outreach workers Monday-Saturday.
- Primary responsibilities:
 - Forming relationships with homeless individuals on the vulnerability list
 - Helping them find them services.
- Concentration on individuals on the list or those individuals who are defined as “Costa Mesa Homeless Residents” by City staff and CMPD.
- To avoid becoming an attractant for individuals outside of Costa Mesa, the outreach workers work primarily with individuals who meet this definition.

Community Outreach Workers

- **Outreach workers** collaborate with **social service providers** to attempt to get homeless individuals:
 - services or housing
 - obtaining I.D., birth certificates, etc.
 - reunite them with family members
 - transportation to take them to homeless court & medical appts
 - continually follow up on their progress.
- If a client requires hospitalization, the mental health worker coordinates their care with hospital social workers so that client is not released directly to the streets

How Can Outreach Workers Help Public Safety/Policy Makers?

- Collaborate on cases involving homeless people who have no means to move off the street or chronic offenders resistant to change
- Outreach workers can locate substance abuse program, housing, family members for reunification and other social service programs
- De-escalation of aggression
- Quickly approach new arrivals to the city and convince them to return to their location of origin

BEFORE HOMELESS TASK FORCE OUTREACH/COORD

COSTS	<p>Citizen complaints</p> <p>140 homeless on streets</p> <p>No coordination amongst faith based groups & homeless providers</p> <p>\$40,000 in homeless grants given out haphazardly</p> <p>Estimate \$20,000 in police transient calls not including time spent in hospitals doing medical clearance</p>
BENEFITS	None

AFTER HOMELESS TASK FORCE OUTREACH/COORD

COSTS	<p>\$245,000 in City Resources</p> <p>Citizen complaint process</p> <p>Ongoing political support</p> <p>Education and re-education of residents, businesses and political officials</p>
BENEFITS	<p>105 housed over past 3 years</p> <p>637 linked to services</p> <p>\$60,000 in grants to targeted CM homeless residents</p> <p>52 Chronic homeless residents assessed for Coordinated Entry Program</p>

What Can we Learn from Costa Mesa?

- 1. Must balance needs of residents, businesses, homeless
- 2. Services targeted to Costa Mesa Homeless Residents included those offered by city funded non profits
- 3 Centralized homeless coordination and partnership of street outreach, public safety, faith and non profit organizations critical to a city's success
 - Data driven metrics must be included
 - Transportation to services and targeted street outreach is key to successful outcomes

What Can we Learn from Costa Mesa?

- 4. In house working groups create better coordination of City and multi-jurisdiction resources for reducing impact of factors contributing to chronic homeless, reduction in criminal activity and quality of life
- 5. You can start small and be effective – Costa Mesa has placed 105 people in housing and linked hundreds of other to services since 2012 with small part time staff
- 6. Housing is key to ending homelessness – However it can be tailored to local residents and include both public and private resources

QUESTIONS?