Manager's Report

January 11, 2022

THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE



Presentation Overview

- ARPA Process Update
- Community Reparations Commission Process
- Homelessness Initiatives

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ARPA Process Update

- Applicants invited by City Council to provide two minute presentations at council work sessions.
  - Tuesday, February 1, 2022 - 10:00 am - 12:00 pm
  - Wednesday, February 2, 2022 - 11:00 am - 1:00 pm

- Work sessions will be streamed live

- Next Steps:
  - Council review and decision making

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CITY OF ASHEVILLE
COMMUNITY REPARATIONS COMMISSION

Project Update

January 11, 2022





Community Reparations Commission Key Updates

- **Public Comment Period**: October 18 – November 1
- **Revised Composition** of Commission:
  - Impacted Neighborhood appointments increased from thirteen (13) to fifteen (15)
  - Council and Commissioner appointments changed from twelve (12) to ten (10)
- **Current Distribution** of Commission Appointments:
  - **Impacted Neighborhoods** (15 seats):
    - Six (6) neighborhoods historically impacted by urban renewal: Burton Street (2), East End/Valley St. (2), Shiloh (2), Southside (2), Stumptown (2), Heart of Chestnut (2)
    - Public housing communities (3)
  - **Impact Focus Areas** (10 seats): Criminal justice, economic development, education, health and wellness, and housing
    - Five (5) City Council appointments
    - Five (5) County Commissioner appointments

REPARATIONS PROJECT



Community Reparations Commission Key Updates (cont'd)

- Commission member **estimated time commitment**: 5-10 hours per month
- Commission member **stipends**: $75 to $150 per month (paid from project management services budget)
- **Applications** released on November 19th
- Twelve (12) **information sessions** conducted since November 19th (over 200 registered participants in total)
- In addition to appointment applications, soliciting **support interest forms**
- **Next steps:**
  - Deadline for applications: January 15, 2022
  - Neighborhood organizations complete their selection process
  - City Council and County Commissioners review applications, conduct interviews, and make final appointment selections
  - Appointment announcements at the end of February 2022

REPARATIONS PROJECT

Homeless Initiatives

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Key Takeaways

- Homelessness is a community-wide issue that requires a **community-wide response.**
- The City is **responding daily** while also working with partners on **longer term** solutions to address homelessness. Community opinions differ on best approaches.
- City continues to address criminal behavior as well as **increased monitoring and clean-up** of parks and other public property.
- City has procedures it implements when homeless camps occur on publicly or privately owned property with **safety of the campers, the general public and staff** always being the **highest priority**.
- Encampments are unsafe and not solutions to homelessness.
- City's goal is to move beyond managing homelessness to **ending homelessness.**

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Presentation Overview

- Homeless Population
- City Homeless Goals and Initiatives
- Homelessness Focus: Safety and Solutions
- City’s Procedures on Homeless Camps
- Moving Forward

Homeless Population: Definitions and Data

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Federal Definitions of Homelessness

- Literal Homelessness
  - Lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence (emergency shelter, transitional housing, or places not meant for human habitation)
- Subsets of literal homeless population
  - Chronic Homelessness: 12 months of literal homelessness, either consecutively or during at least 4 episodes in the past 3 years and having a disability (chronic physical illness or disability, developmental disability, serious mental illness, diagnosable substance use disorder)
  - Unsheltered: people camping or sleeping outside, in cars, or in places not meant for human habitation

Homeless Population

- 2021 Point-in-Time count identified 527 people experiencing homelessness

- Population characteristics
  - 411 sheltered or in transitional housing; 116 unsheltered
  - 154 chronically homeless
  - 188 Veterans
  - 469 single adults

Homeless Population: Demographics

Gender	
Female	134
Male	391
Transgender	1
Gender Non-Conforming	1

Ethnicity	
Hispanic/Latino	15
Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino	512

Race	
White	369
Black or African-American	125
Asian	1
American Indian or Alaska Native	8
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	2
Multiple Races	22

City Goal:
Ending Homelessness

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Ending Homelessness in Asheville

- Goals
  - Move beyond managing homelessness to **ending homelessness**
  - Develop and support a homeless service system that can quickly respond to resolve housing crises
  - Make homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring

- Values
  - Homeless people are not the problem. Homelessness is the problem.
  - Homelessness is a public health issue, an equity issue, and a housing issue.
  - Strategies and decisions should be data driven.
  - Homelessness is a solvable problem.

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City's Role in Ending Homelessness

- Developing and supporting the community's homeless service system
  - Not a direct service provider
  - HUD Continuum of Care lead
  - Collaborative Applicant for CoC and Regional Applicant for ESG funding: $1.9M
  - Data (HMIS, Point-in-Time count)
  - Strategy and solutions: moving beyond crisis response to ending homelessness
- City Investment
  - Critical services: coordinated entry, outreach
  - CDBG and HOME funding for homeless programs
  - Permanent housing developments targeting homelessness

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Homeless Initiatives:
Safety and Solutions

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Homeless Initiatives: Safety and Solutions

- Focus has always been on community safety and solutions
- Created and funded non-congregate shelter in response to COVID:
  - Red Roof Inn: 158 people who were unsheltered and had underlying conditions
    - 48 people moved into permanent housing
  - Ramada and other hotels: 116 people from 3 encampments
    - 100% of people camping accepted shelter
    - Much safer than encampments
    - $3.5M ARPA funding
    - 38 people employed; 42 people connected to substance use services; 23 people slated for housing programs

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Homeless Initiatives: Safety and Solutions

- Coordinating with Buncombe County on COVID testing and vaccinations for people who are homeless
- Funding outreach positions at Homeward Bound to engage with people who may not otherwise be connected with any services
- Code Purple
  - Last winter: coordinated and funded shelter with Western Carolina Rescue Ministries
  - This winter: coordinating with partners based on data from last winter; $100,000 funding for ABCCM
  - Posting notification on the Harrah's Cherokee Center marquee each night Code Purple is operating and on posting on City of Asheville's website

Homeless Initiatives: Safety and Solutions

- Pursuing high-access shelter development to fill a gap
- Facilitated $2.3M of federal COVID response funding for rental assistance
- Funded 185 units of Permanent Supportive Housing
  - Homeward Bound - Days Inn: $2M (85 units)
  - Step Up - Ramada: $1.5M (100 units)
- Working with partners to support and develop the Continuum of Care
  - Successfully ending homelessness requires a whole-community response and a systems-wide approach

Homelessness Response: Safety and Solutions

- Parks:
  - Every City park visited daily to ensure cleanliness and address safety issues, such as needle litter
  - Park Warden presence established in downtown parks
  - More frequent trash pickup in Pritchard Park
  - Adding signage to address acceptable behavior in parks
- Law Enforcement:
  - Proactive enforcement of laws against illegal behavior(s)
- Ordinance Changes:
  - Looking at necessary changes to current ordinances related to certain activities, such as leaving food in parks
- Coordinating with Partners:
  - Working with Homeward Bound to improve neighborhood safety (adding lighting and benches, proactive outreach on N. Ann St., recruiting volunteers for trash pickup)

City Procedures on Homeless Camps

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Laws and Ordinances Regarding Camping

- No camping on City Property CO:12-51
- Public Urination CO: 11-15
- Parks Closing Time (10pm to 6am) CO: 12-41
- Trespassing NCGS: 14-159.13
- No Tents or Shelters on City Property CO: 12-52
- Obstruction of Sidewalks CO: 16-2

APD is responsible for enforcement of these ordinances.

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City Procedure for Illegal Camping

- Approach
  - Proactive outreach (APD Community Engagement, Homeward Bound)
  - Connection to community resources
  - Dignity and respect
- Camp removal on City-owned land
  - **Advance notice (7 days) unless immediate risk**
  - *This worked when people were camping in small groups.*
- Camp removal on private property
  - Discretion of the property owner
  - APD responsible for enforcing trespassing laws at the request of the property owner

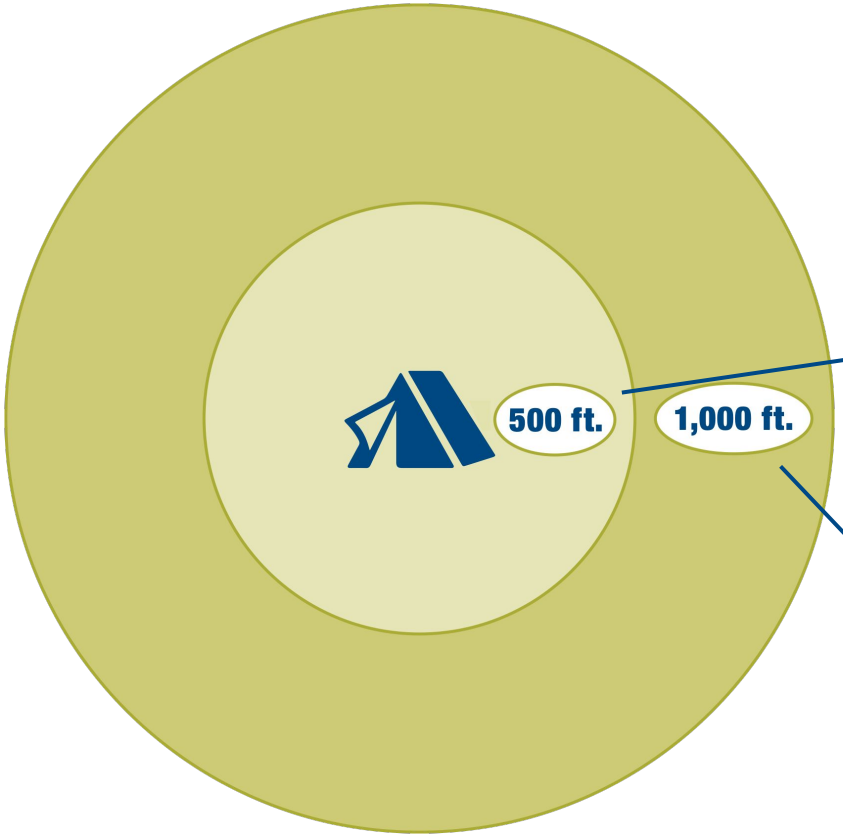
Evolution of Campsites

When safety is our highest priority, we must continuously adapt and evolve to a changing environment.

- COVID shelter-in-place presented unintended consequences.
- Increase in illegal camping/trespassing throughout the City.
- Large encampments formed at various locations in the city.
- These encampments create health and safety issues for people in the camps as well as the surrounding areas/neighborhoods.

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Large Encampment Crime Issues



- **Crimes occurring in and around encampments:**
  - Homicides (2)
  - Suspicious Death (1) (Foul-Play Suspected)
  - Overdoses (105)
  - Robberies (54)
  - Agg Assaults (151)
  - Rapes (25)
  - MV Thefts (105)

- **10%** of the crime that has occurred in the City of Asheville over the **past 2 years.** (2,321 of 22,611)
  - 14% of all violent crime (167 of 1,216)
  - 8.5% of all property crime (873 of 10,221)

- **22%** of the crime that has occurred in the City of Asheville over the **past 2 years**. (4,887 of 22,611)
  - 25% of all violent crime (301 of 1,216)
  - 20% of all property crime (2,032 of 10,221)

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Adjusted procedure for addressing illegal camping

- City of Asheville receives a complaint or discovers illegal camping
- Determine if the camp is on private property or COA property.
- Determine if a safety issue is present.
  (Examples: violent crime, blocking access, fire, etc.)
- Contact City-funded Street Outreach Team Members (Homeward Bound) to provide outreach related to service opportunities
- Once a site visit has been completed by Street Outreach Team, City staff (to include APD) communicates to person that they will need to leave within 24-48 hours (unless there is immediate risk)
- Once person(s) have left the property, COA or property owner cleans the site

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Engagement with Campers/Activists

- City staff/police work to offer a variety of resources to people within the camps
- Officers routinely provide supply/food boxes to unsheltered people
- During Code Purple, officers routinely give unsheltered people rides to Code Purple sites
- Most people staff and APD encounter at camps are unsheltered people who are cooperative and cooperate with staff to move within the requested time frame
- In most cases citations are **not** issued to **campers** but occasionally to activists who refuse to leave or obstruct camp clean-up or tent removal

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Moving Forward

Immediate

- Continue to prioritize safety for people experiencing homelessness
- With partners, continue to mitigate the effects of homelessness on our community

Long term

- Partner with all stakeholders to develop and implement solutions
- Invest in opportunities for people to exit homelessness into permanent housing

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