

DOWNTOWN BURLINGTON, VERMONT'S COMMUNITY POLICING PROGRAM

I. 2012 TRENDS AND PRELIMINARY FINDINGS IN DOWNTOWN

- Poverty, lack of affordable housing, rigors of substance abuse, cyclical nature of mental illness
- Overarching all of our challenges is a sense that we are “out of balance” in Burlington and VT in general
 - Culture of permissiveness to bad behavior & the “bar” increasingly set at a high level
 - Erosion of social service nets including mental health, substance abuse, and criminal justice
 - Concentration of social services
 - Pressure on Department of Corrections to release offenders into often structureless settings has helped create a fragile environment in neighborhoods and the downtown.
 - Inadequate sentencing by our justice system creates an environment where there are no consequences.
 - Wide-spread sense of cultural entitlement
- Erosion of the social standard for behavior (*not how someone looks* but how they behave)
 - Fighting and tumultuous behavior
 - Personal drama in public spaces
 - Public drunkenness
 - Aggressive & Inappropriate Panhandling
- Both transients and individuals indigenous to the community are represented in the group challenging existing community capacity.
- Public Intoxication is on the increase and common with a particular small population. Shelters, rightly, don't accept intoxicated clients except on exceedingly cold evenings. Their behaviors, while intoxicated, are frequently unpredictable and result in increased calls to BPD and a decrease in safety and perceptions of safety.
 - Package stores are selling alcohol to this population; if they begin drinking early in the day, problems in the downtown escalate soon thereafter.
- Panhandling is on the increase. Increases are due to a variety of reasons:
 - Combination of unemployed, housed but unable to afford rent, seeking to fulfill their basic needs. Some are panhandling as a lifestyle.
 - Most are resistant to receiving available social services and assistance; not interested in working
 - Some do it because they need money for substances, nicotine, food, motel rooms.

- Life style' panhandlers do it for money and for social reasons -- to meet their friends, and have social interactions.
- Problems arise when panhandlers' daily frustrations are played out in public or when they are joined by others who have less respect for the community.
- **The 2011 Street Outreach Team Annual Survey found that:**
 - Merchants experience at least one behavioral problem each week due to substance abuse.
 - Merchants believed these incidents had a significant impact on the business atmosphere and continued to credit the Team with keeping the rate of incidents down.
 - Over the past two years, merchants have reported feeling less safe and secure in the downtown area; however, they report that without the Team's presence they would feel significantly less safe and secure.
 - Primary issues of concern are panhandling, loitering, perceptions about downtown Burlington's level of safety, youth behavior and substance abuse (versus mental illness). Merchants felt the factor most responsible for unwelcome incidents downtown was the economic downturn and resulting poverty.
 - 2011 incidents were more visible to the public and the majority of the disorder was related to substance abuse, Serious Functional Impairment (SFI), and poverty. Behavior of youth and a culturally entitled and indifferent population also ranked high in the number of disturbing incidents and presents a downward trend that will require closer scrutiny.

II. COMMUNITY POLICING:

Since 2000, when BPD introduced community policing, a range of collaborative partnerships have



been initiated between the Burlington Police Department and downtown stakeholders to maximize the City's public safety resources. Every day, downtown stakeholders engage in efforts to identify problems and develop effective responses.

Policing illustrates how our downtown's public, private and non-profit sectors can align their management, organizational structures and personnel to support community partnerships and proactive community problem solving. The shared ownership and sustained commitment by downtown stakeholders has resulted in many successful programs and strategies, including:

III. COMMUNITY POLICING PROGRAMS & STRATEGIES

1. **SARA** is a problem solving strategy commonly used by downtown stakeholders. SARA is defined as: Scanning: Identifying and prioritizing problems; Analysis (researching what is known about the problem); Response (developing solutions to bring about lasting reductions in the number and extent of problems; Assessment (evaluating the success of the responses).
2. **STREET OUTREACH TEAM.** The Street Outreach Team provides a range of services for persons in and around the downtown Burlington business district. Guided by Matt Young of the HowardCenter, the Street Outreach Team delivers street-based support to individuals with psychiatric disabilities, substance abuse problems, homelessness issues and unmet social service needs. The majority of individuals served do not receive services from any other primary service provider. The team utilizes the Personal Responsibility Model in addressing behaviors. They are available to any business in the Downtown District for consultation. They act as a liaison with other social service providers, and the Burlington Police Department. Results of annual surveys of downtown merchants, service providers, police officers, and the persons served continue to indicate that the Street Outreach Team has a significant and positive impact on the Church Street Marketplace and downtown. Team members are well known by merchants, police officers, and service providers. The services provided by the Team are understood, used, and highly valued by clients as well as merchants, service providers, and police officers. The number of disturbing incidents involving persons with mental illness has dropped noticeably over these years.

The program is funded by the State of Vermont, Department of Mental Health; Fletcher Allen Community Health Foundation; HowardCenter; United Way of Chittenden County; City of Burlington (Mayor's Office); Burlington Police Department; Church Street Marketplace, Burlington Business Association, Chittenden County Transportation Agency (CCTA), and local

Burlington Street Outreach Team



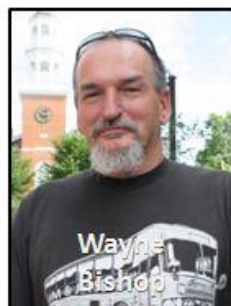
DAYS: Monday - Sunday



Matt Young,
Supervisor



Tammy
Boudah



Wayne
Bishop



NIGHTS:

w/ Burlington Police



Justin
Verette

businesses. Overall, merchants, providers, police, and clients continue to be very satisfied with the Team's services, and report that the Team effectively addressed the needs of all constituencies. **The program operates 7 days a week, 8 AM - 6 PM. WEEKDAYS: Matt Young, Tammy Boudah, 802-324-8356; WEEKENDS: Wayne Bishop, (802) 324-8357. EVENINGS: Justin Verrette, (802) 324-8358**

3. **INTERVENTIONIST:** By 2009, Burlington began experiencing a significant increase in the use of the police department as a clearing house for all types of social, economic and mental health problems. Every day, emergency responders were called away from their primary task of maintaining public safety to handle a variety of complaints concerning a small cross-section of the community. In response to this change, the Burlington Police Department leveraged American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds and expanded the services available through the Street Outreach Team by creating an Interventionist position to work with specific individuals who required considerable services and resources. The Interventionist position has demonstrated that timely and mobile social service interventions translate into increased opportunities to address underlying issues by matching individuals with appropriate services. It has resulted in cost savings and more appropriate use of community resources that allowed for resource reallocation. It has demonstrated how BPD and Street Outreach can work together.

More proactive support has translated into less disruptive behavior in neighborhoods and the downtown. Less disruptive behavior means fewer calls for emergency services (Burlington Police Department, Burlington Fire Department and Ambulance Service, Emergency Room at Fletcher Allen Health Care). Fewer calls for services lead to fewer citations, arrests, court referrals and incarcerations (Decreased the use of Court system, State's Attorney's Office and Department of Corrections).

4. **STREET OUTREACH ADVISORY COMMITTEE** meets the first Wednesday of each month at Turning Point Center, 191 Battery Street (second floor) to provide support for the Street Outreach Program by identifying trends and needs that may require specific action, additional resources, etc. Members of the committee represent the funders and supporters of the Street Outreach Program.
5. **UNIVERSAL TRESPASS PROGRAM:** Burlington Police Department collaborates with downtown businesses through a Universal Trespass program, pursuant to state law. Participating businesses agree that when a person is given a notice of trespass by one business, that notice is effective for all participating businesses ("If another business issues a trespass notice to someone you wish to enter your business, you may let them enter."). Notice is valid for one year; any business can rescind a particular notice for a particular person. If the issuing business rescinds the original notice, the notice is rescinded for all participating businesses. BPD delivers the Notice of Trespass to the appropriate problem person. If the person remains or returns to the business, he/she is cited to appear in Vermont District Court for trespassing.

6. **CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design)** is a strategy that encourages changes in the physical design of our buildings, streets, sidewalks and parks to minimize opportunities for crime to be committed. Individual strategies can include increased security lighting, locking gates, landscape design that discourages intrusion, scheduling activities in certain areas to attract more people. CPTED practices have been in use for over 20 years in cities throughout the United States and around the world. CPTED strategies can result in a dramatic reduction in crime, improved business climate and increased pedestrian activity and awareness. Design streets to increase pedestrian and bicycle traffic.

7. **BURLINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT**



Burlington Police Department

BPD's Downtown Team

Police Chief
Michael Schirling



Deputy Chief
Andi Higbee



Lieutenant
Bruce Bovat



Corporal Ethan
Thibault



Brooke Hadwen,
Community
Support Program
Coordinator



- **Dedicated patrols - Foot Patrols**, Visibility and presence are always a deterrent to crime and disorder. Officers regularly park their cruisers and walk the Marketplace, Waterfront and downtown parks. There is an extra effort in place for our High Season. We realize an officer's presence can't always be maintained 24/7, but every effort is made to make BPD's presence known on Church Street.
 - **Flexible patrols** - using Detectives and Administrative staff rotating through posts to act as a "force multiplier"
 - **Rapid/flexible deployment** of impact teams from designated shifts
 - **Use of Split Shifts (1330-2330)**
 - **Rapid Arraignment & Conditions of Release** requests for offenses in the Inner City District
 - **Beach & Parks Patrol** College students studying criminal justice and supervised by BPD, patrol the Marketplace, Downtown and Burlington's Waterfront, bike paths and parks, during summer months. They provide information and enforcement of City ordinances that affect "quality of life" (aggressive panhandling, parking, bicycle and skateboarding).
8. **THE GRAFFITI REMOVAL TEAM OR GRT** (operated by Community & Economic Development Office) gives residents and business owners the tools they need to take control and restore

neighborhood pride. Although acts of vandalism are often considered low-level crime, the community is greatly affected when the damage is not addressed. Neighborhoods with lots of litter, graffiti, and broken windows start to look run down and feel unsafe. GRT gives residents and business owners the tools they need to take control and restore neighborhood pride.

IV. **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2012**

1. **Early preparation will be key for 2012** (as has been done over the past three years)
2. **Still tighter coordination is needed between the public, private and non-profit stakeholders in our downtown.** More time and effort is needed in framing problems, educating stakeholders then unifying around solutions. A diverse coalition of downtown stakeholders is already in place. It is clear that individual stakeholders are in agreement about what the problems are and what the solutions need to be. What's missing is an effort to bring this coalition together in a more formal way. Demonstration of broad support for downtown safety and security programs can be realized through the use of petitions and letters signed by all stakeholders
3. **Key message for this downtown coalition of support**
 - Downtown is for EVERYBODY. Everybody has the right to feel safe.
 - Downtown stakeholders' efforts to increase safety and security are NOT about displacing people who don't dress or look a certain way
 - The efforts ARE about displacing people who demonstrate negative behavior and frighten or threaten others who have come to enjoy what our downtown offer

4. **Street outreach**

- Shift focus to behaviors that have become intractable in the downtown area while still being ready to respond quickly to issues related to mental health symptoms and behavior. Emphasis will be added to the quality of interactions with all groups represented in the downtown, with particular attention paid to youth, SFI and substance abuse.
- Evolve and create strategies to relieve pressures on the downtown, from incentives to social/legal consequences

5. **Advocate for adoption of city ordinances**

Proposed revisions to City's "Aggressive Solicitation & Panhandling" Ordinance

- Protection from manipulation by individuals claiming to be a veteran, homeless, from out of town, stranded or disabled.
- Coming within 3 feet of a person
- Prohibited activities: soliciting from 6 PM and 9 AM
- freeway exits/entrances, intersections with traffic signals

- any one city block for more than one hour
- sitting or lying down upon the public right of way or upon a blanket, chair, stool. Exemptions: medical emergency or disability
- unresolved civil tickets

Proposed unlawful trespass ordinance for the Church Street Marketplace District

- **Disorderly Conduct**
 - fighting or violent, tumultuous or threatening behavior
 - unreasonable noise
 - abusive or obscene language
 - disturbs any lawful assembly or meeting or persons
 - obstructs vehicular or pedestrian traffic.
- **Unlawful mischief**
 - intentional damage to
 - property, private or public.
- **Possession of open or opened intoxicating LIQUOR, regulated DRUG**
 - **Consequences for proposed unlawful trespass ordinance for the Church Street Marketplace District**
 - **1st OFFENSE:** \$200-\$500 fine. Trespass for balance of day
 - **2nd OFFENSE:** \$300-\$500 fine, Trespass for 90 days
 - **3rd OFFENSE:** \$400-\$500 fine. Trespass up to 1 year, waived in whole or in part upon completion of Community Justice Center program

6. Advocate for more public seating on Church Street

- Execute a fundraising campaign to purchase 10 more benches for Church Street. Place time limits on benches so that more citizens can enjoy what available benches there can be on Church Street, given space limitations.
- Create and institute moveable seating.

7. Change the culture of giving to panhandlers

- Launch first charity box on Church Street to change the culture of giving and educate the public that giving directly to local charities is more constructive and helpful than giving to individuals.

8. Address public intoxication

- Seek Assistance from Downtown Package Stores about limiting Alcohol Sales Before 11 AM

9. Hire private security to complement BPD

- Hire GMCS to patrol the Church Street Marketplace and environs from 3 AM to 7 AM during high season. Goal is to reduce public defecation, urination, camping/sleeping in doorways, behind buildings.

10. Heighten BPD and PARKS PATROL presence in the downtown for summer, 2012

11. Email & Fax Alerts: www.nixle.com

12. Training & Education

- Train merchants how to be an extension of the enforcement presence
 - Use role playing, training & education to encourage a consistent and persistent message: “knock it off, you’re out of line.”
 - Consistency is key. The more people reinforcing rules and ordinances, the more powerful our efforts will be.
- Train BPD Officers and Parks Patrol on Aggressive Panhandling and Solicitation Ordinance. Request assistance from BPD’s training officer on how to execute.
- Train Parks Patrol on Marketplace Rules & Regulations. Request at least one half day from BPD for training with follow ups for those serving on Church Street.