

MIAMI BEACH

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COMMISSION MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Mayor Dan Gelber and Members of the City Commission

FROM: Alina T. Hudak City Manager 

DATE: February 1, 2023

SUBJECT: **DISCUSS/TAKE ACTION ON THE HOMELESS SITUATION IN COLLINS PARK.**

BACKGROUND/HISTORY

On December 14, 2022, the Mayor and City Commission discussed the homeless situation in Collins Park.

The Mayor and City Commission directed Administration to take action on the following:

1. Assignment of Park Rangers in Collins Park:

The Parks and Recreation Department continues to work diligently and closely with enforcement partners in the Police Department, as well as the Office of Housing and Community Services, to tackle the important homeless encampment issues our city is facing.

In response to previous discussions pertaining to homeless activity in Collins Park, the Parks and Recreation Department increased the number of regulatory signs throughout Collins Park. The additional signs have been placed along paved park access points and clearly identify park hours (sunrise to sunset). Signs also include "no trespassing" language to further facilitate police enforcement.

The Parks and Recreation Department has also increased the level of Park Ranger presence at Collins Park. Roving Park Rangers are now conducting thorough patrols of the entirety of Collins Park a minimum of once per hour. Their duties during their visit includes patrolling all park areas and addressing any violations, with particular emphasis on encampments and related violations. To further address the ongoing homeless encampment violations, the Parks and Recreation Department has instituted a Park Ranger homeless outreach overtime detail. This detail is dedicated solely to homeless outreach and enforcement in identified areas of concern throughout the parks system, including Collins Park. The detail takes place outside of regular Park Ranger service hours. The Department has seen very positive results from this additional overtime detail since its implementation earlier this month.

In addition to the previously mentioned actions, the Parks and Recreation Department is requesting a FY 2024 enhancement for dedicated Park Ranger roving coverage throughout the City Center, which includes Collins Park, Soundscape Park, Collins Canal Park and Pride Park. The request provides four full-time Park Ranger positions, estimated at an annual cost of \$350,000. If approved, positions would become available October 2023. However, if the direction is to implement coverage immediately, the Department would require a mid-year budget amendment to start filling positions prior to October 2023.

2. Review Signage in City Parks/Public Spaces:

A recent survey of Collins Park was conducted by the Police Department, who determined there is adequate signage for enforcement purposes. The Administration is also taking an in-depth look at signage citywide and exploring the most efficient means for updating. Our Parks and Recreation Department continues to regularly survey each city park and identify any missing signage or signage needing to be replaced.

3. Collins Park Action Plan to address the homeless:

On December 19, 2022, the Police Department, through the Homeless Resource Unit, enacted a 30-day action plan to increase enforcement and shelter placement on a 24/7 basis through a combination of RDA/City Center personnel and patrol shift staffing. This effort included not only Collins Park but Citywide hotspots such as the Beachwalk, Washington Ave, Soundscape Park, and Lincoln Road. The Police Department has since extended the action plan for an additional 30-day period. To date the results of the initiative Citywide are as follows:

- **13 Afterhours Shelter Placement**
- **1 Treatment Placement**
- **7 Field Interview Contacts**
- **5 Baker Acts**
- **5 Marchman Acts**
- **95 Trespass Warnings / Referrals**
- **39 Misdemeanor Arrests**
- **20 Felony Arrests**

Included in the above statistics are the following in the Collins Park Area:

- **1 Afterhours Shelter Placement**
- **5 Field Interview Contacts**
- **6 Trespass Warnings / Referrals**
- **4 Misdemeanor Arrests**
- **5 Felony Arrests**

Additionally, the Office of Housing and Community Services Homeless Outreach Services Team conducts daily street outreach throughout the city to proactively engage the homeless and offer services. In an effort to contribute to the reduction of homelessness in Collins Park, the Homeless Outreach Services Team has increased the frequency of outreach conducted at the park, engaging the homeless and providing information on available services.

The Homeless Outreach Services Team continues to collaboratively conduct weekly Unified Outreach Missions with Homeless Resource Police Officers and the Sanitation Division to proactively address encampments and homeless-related complaints and concerns. Weekly joint outreach efforts at Collins Park allow for outreach and engagement to the homeless population with the support of the Homeless Resource Police Officers, along with the opportunity for the Sanitation Division to facilitate the cleanliness of the park.

The Office of Housing and Community Services has also executed a contract with New Hope C.O.R.P.S. ("New Hope") to provide specialized outreach on the streets of Miami Beach seven (7) nights a week from 7pm-3am, with the ability to place homeless individuals directly into shelter upon request. New Hope routinely conducts outreach to Collins Park to offer shelter placement and/or substance abuse treatment services. Since contract execution in October 2022, New Hope has documented approximately seventy-four (74) contacts and engagements in the Collins Park area; two (2) of which resulted in shelter placement. The specialized outreach team will continue its efforts to promote and offer services and resources to the homeless population of our City.

4. Research on Homelessness Initiatives in other Communities

The Office of Housing and Community Services gathered research on the following communities: Palm Beach County, FL; Central Florida; Atlanta, GA; and San Francisco, CA.

Homeless and Housing Alliance of Palm Beach County

The Homeless and Housing Alliance (HHA) of Palm Beach County (formerly the Continuum of Care) is intended to deliver a comprehensive and coordinated continuum of services for homeless individuals and families. The system's fundamental components include:

- Homeless prevention;
- Outreach and assessment;
- Emergency shelter;
- Transitional housing;
- Supportive services;
- Permanent housing; and
- Permanent supportive housing.

The HHA includes community-based membership with representatives from government, business, formerly homeless individuals, law enforcement, banking, housing service providers, faith groups, education, veterans, health care, and concerned individuals. Palm Beach County Division of Human Services (the Division) continues its role as the lead entity for the HHA which began in January 2006.

- **Palm Beach Sheriff's Office (PBSO) Homeless Intervention Team Efforts:**
 - Community response to homeless-related calls made to Sheriff's Office
 - Temporary shelter/ living arrangements
 - Mentorship
 - Linkage to local shelter and homeless prevention services

Central Florida (Orange, Seminole, and Osceola County)-H.O.P.E. (Homeless Outreach Partnership Effort)

Since 2001, Health Care Center for the Homeless (HCCH) has been providing homeless outreach in Orange, Seminole, and Osceola County through the Homeless Outreach Partnership Effort (H.O.P.E.) Team. Staffed by a diverse team of outreach specialists, veterans, licensed mental health & medical providers, and volunteers, the Team works where people experiencing homelessness live and survive- on the streets, in encampments and shelters, and in the woods. Trained in Motivational Interviewing, Trauma-Informed Care, Harm Reduction, and Diversion, their main goal is to engage and build trust with people experiencing homelessness, assess their needs and eligibility, and connect them to services. Among the many services the H.O.P.E. Team provides are:

- Linkage and transportation to medical and mental health/substance use treatment appointments;
- Referrals to shelter/food/clothing;
- Eligibility assessments for housing assistance;
- Obtaining identification cards & birth certificates;
- Family reunification; and
- Linkage to Veterans Affairs (VA) services and assistance in accessing mainstream benefits.

Atlanta, GA

- **Office of Human Services-** The City of Atlanta, in conjunction with the Atlanta Continuum of Care, has authorized Partners for HOME to coordinate homeless response services for the local homeless ecosystem. Homeless service access points allow individuals to be assessed and prioritized based on vulnerability and severity of needs, prioritizing

permanent supportive housing for chronically homeless clients assessed through Coordinated Entry.

- **Central Outreach & Advocacy Center-** Supportive Services Provider with access to:
 - Identification, birth certificates, and Social Security cards;
 - Homeless verification letters;
 - Food stamp applications and renewals;
 - SSI/SSDI applications;
 - Referrals for dental, medical, vision, mental health, & substance abuse services; and
 - Main Frame Job Readiness Program, including resume building, computer literacy, job searching, financial literacy, and more.
- **Atlanta Downtown Improvement District (ADID)**
 - Launched the ADID Mobile Homeless Outreach Initiative intending to build capacity in the homeless service ecosystem by acting as a service conduit to those experiencing homelessness on the streets of Downtown Atlanta. Metrics include:
 - Community calls for service;
 - Connections to shelter;
 - Contact engagements;
 - Collaborative placements into Transitional Permanent Housing; and
 - COVID-19 testing and vaccination linkages.
- **Atlanta Police Department Efforts:**
 - The Homeless Outreach Prevention and Engagement (H.O.P.E) Team works with the homeless and mentally ill. The primary duties of the unit are to identify and eliminate all homeless encampments in the City of Atlanta by trying to place homeless individuals in short or long-term housing. The unit can offer these services by partnering with a host of agencies. A second key function of the unit is to work with the mentally ill. The unit is available upon a call to de-escalate situations involving a mentally ill person in Crisis with the use of CIT (Crisis Intervention Training) techniques. The unit works hand in hand with NAMI (National Alliance of Mental Illness) Georgia through training and partnerships.

Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing - San Francisco, CA

The San Francisco Homeless Outreach Team (SFHOT) works to engage and stabilize the most vulnerable individuals by voluntarily placing them into shelter and housing or connecting with other available resources. To make these placements, SFHOT works seven days a week to provide outreach and case management to people experiencing homelessness living on the streets of San Francisco. SFHOT works collaboratively with the Department of Public Health's Street Medicine team to address medical and behavioral health needs, using an individualized approach that includes wrap-around services and promotes harm reduction and stability-based recovery.

- **Outreach Services:**
 - Skilled teams working in neighborhoods provide practical support, information and referral, in-depth assessment, and referrals to SFHOT case management for those who qualify
 - Mobile Access Point for Coordinated Entry providing on-the-spot assessment or reassessment
- **Case Management Services:**
 - Stabilizes individuals by addressing the numerous day-to-day and long-term problems related to homelessness
 - Provides shelter beds and stabilization rooms within the limited resources available
 - Works to connect each person with shelter and housing
 - Develops a stabilization plan for each of the individuals SFHOT works with to reduce the harms of homelessness

- **Street Medicine Services:**
 - Medical staff joins outreach services to help transition people living on the streets into shelter and housing. The street medicine team provides healthcare using an adapted patient-centered medical home model. The street medicine team assess patients and establish care for chronic conditions such as medical, mental health, substance use, and cognitive disorders. Additionally, the team provides health care services in shelter and Navigation Centers.
- **Inclement Weather Services:**
 - Homeless Outreach Team activates inclement weather protocols during hot weather, cold weather, wet weather, and air quality incidents. The team increases wellness checks, distributes appropriate supplies, and provides information on additional resources
- **San Francisco Police Department (SFPD) Efforts:**
 - Working together, SFPD, Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing, Department of Public Health, Public Works and other city agencies, are addressing homelessness and behavioral health issues on our streets. The Healthy Streets Operation Center (HSOC) provides a coordinated city response to persons experiencing homelessness, individuals struggling with behavioral health issues, cleanliness, and related public safety issues.

5. Legislative options, including designating a children’s park and enforcement

In reviewing the deed restriction pertaining to Collins Park, the deed requires that the land be used for the purpose of a “public park and recreation ground”, with possible development of a library for use by the public (although the City is not required to construct, operate or maintain it). A children’s park constitutes a park and recreational activity; therefore, the proposed development of Collins Park, or a portion thereof, as a children’s park would not be prohibited based upon the deed restriction.

However, in an abundance of caution, and in order to fully examine whether there exists any restriction preventing the development of a children’s park, the City Attorney’s Office has ordered a title search for the property and is further researching with the City Clerk’s Office to confirm that there are no prior resolutions, including any possible restrictions related to funding sources / grants in connection with the development of Collins Park. Notwithstanding the foregoing, it is highly unlikely that there is a covenant or restriction prohibiting a children’s park, when the deed itself authorizes such use.

ANALYSIS

Strategic Connection:

Mobility – Address homelessness.

CONCLUSION

The Administration continues to collaborate internally and externally to identify and implement strategic solutions to approach the homeless situation in Collins Park. The Administration has taken measures to amplify outreach and enforcement and will continue to address homeless-related issues in all areas of the City, including in Collins Park.