



770 Bailey Hill Road
Eugene, OR 97402
ph (541) 343-2822
fx (541) 343-5019
info@foodforlanecounty.org
foodforlanecounty.org

Jon Ruiz
City Manager
City of Eugene
125 E. 8th Avenue, 2nd Floor
Eugene, OR 97401

July 1, 2013

Dear Jon,

Thank you for inviting me to Chair the Committee to Develop a Path to End the DPSZ. I enjoyed the opportunity and feel the right people were selected to tackle this issue. We have successfully reached the conclusion of our project and are pleased to share our recommendations.

The committee met six times, including a joint meeting with the Human Rights and Police Commissions. As you know, the committee was comprised of a diverse and knowledgeable representation of professions, perspectives and interests. Everyone worked hard to develop a list of recommendations that we believe would serve to meet the five objectives of this committee, which were to reduce illegal behavior and improve public safety in the downtown core, improve police and community relationships, be constitutionally valid and fiscally feasible, and aligned with Council goals.

Finding new solutions to difficult problems, stemming from complex issues (such as homelessness, mental illness and substance abuse), was a difficult task. After a few meetings, the Committee acknowledged that there wasn't any magic bullet we were going to present. City staff was already well versed in the issues, challenges and had researched many ideas over the past five years. However, we did have some fresh ideas, coupled with previously suggested ideas that may offer a more holistic approach to problem solving.

The Committee unanimously recommends the following strategies be considered to address the negative impacts resulting from the sunset of the downtown public safety zone. Below is a brief summary of ideas ranked to reflect our priorities:

FOOD for Lane County
is an equal opportunity
provider and a member of



United Way of Lane County



and the Oregon Food Bank Network



1. **HIGH priority - Expand current or develop new alternative sentencing options.** Simply incarcerating chronic offenders, particularly those with mental illness, substance abuse, or no housing does not rehabilitate them or reduce recidivism. Examples: Graffiti clean-up team, Clean team with DEI, mentor City workers to water flowers or clean restrooms.
2. **HIGH priority- Expand mental health court.** The Committee heard a compelling presentation from Judge Mary Mori about the benefits of the current program, and the current constraints due to funding. This option begins to address the root cause of some of the chronic offenders, and despite increased cost, is imperative to enhance, as the DPSZ sunsets.
3. **HIGH priority- Expand use of drug court.** Circuit Court operates a drug court funded in part with a grant. Because of a decrease in the filing or prosecution of circuit court drug charges, there is extra capacity in the Circuit Court Drug Court. The City of Eugene should determine how to access this excess capacity, either for municipal or felony drug offenses. This option begins to address the root cause of some of the chronic offenders, and despite increased cost, is imperative explore as the DPSZ sunsets.
4. **HIGH priority- Increase activity downtown,** creating a strong and vibrant downtown and supporting economic development strategies. This includes both encouragement of private development as well as increased focus on recreation and activities in the downtown core. Also **strengthen relationships** with downtown businesses and nonprofits who believe in a strong and robust downtown. Increase collaborations and engage with them to participate in creating a stronger and safer downtown.
5. **HIGH priority- Develop a plan for public restrooms** in the downtown area. The committee explored both temporary and permanent public restrooms, with all the costs and complications explained. There should be increased access to public restrooms in the downtown core, and if there isn't currently capacity to accomplish that, the City should develop a plan to achieve this important goal. It is understood that this idea has been thoroughly researched by city staff. Our suggestion is to implement the idea rather than explain why it can't be implemented. Yes, it may be difficult but it still needs to be done. However, funding for bathrooms should not be detoured from any funding from #2 and #3.
6. **HIGH priority- Develop a list of high-utilizers and analyze the true cost of inaction.** The City of Seattle, in conjunction with the University of Washington, United Way and social service providers developed a list of high utilizers to the jail, emergency rooms, and sobering centers. Their conclusion was that although the cost of service delivery is high for this population, the cost of inaction is higher. The City of Eugene should be aware of the costs of inaction with its high utilizers, many of whom would be considered chronic offenders.

The following recommendations focus largely on traditional enforcement or punishment. One committee member commented that the problems faced by these chronic offenders have not and will not be mitigated by simply excluding or incarcerating them. On the other side, other committee

members noted that the concentration of undesirable behavior downtown paired with the desire to enhance downtown warrant some consideration to efforts to disburse the congregated bad behavior.

7. **Moderate priority - Establish a drug impact area.** This would be a more restricted and focused enforcement of drug distribution offenses, along with an option to exclude convicted drug dealers from a certain geographic area. Because of fiscal constraints at Lane County, this option should be considered in conjunction with the option below.
8. **Moderate priority- Adopt certain felony offenses to move jurisdiction and authority to the City.** While Lane County declines to prosecute some low-level felony drug offenses, the effectiveness of existing enforcement or enhanced drug impact enforcement is compromised. To assure needed consequences and penalties are levied after an arrest, it would be recommended that the City assumed increased control over the criminal justice processing and decision making for felony cases which are currently being dropped due to lack of resources.

The Committee understands that additional work will need to be done to develop these ideas. If you are interested in convening any future taskforces to develop these ideas, please know that many of us would be willing to volunteer and join other experts and professionals in these areas to create specific work plans. Measuring the effectiveness/impact of any changes or activities should be included in the work plans

Warmly,



Beverlee Hughes

Chair, Committee to Develop Path to End the DPSZ

Enclosures

- Prioritized recommendations with more details
- Original charter
- Committee roster