

MEMORANDUM

TO: Salem City Council

THROUGH: Kristin Retherford, Interim City Manager

FROM: Lieutenant Debbie Aguilar, Salem Police; and
Gretchen Bennett, City of Salem Homeless
Liaison

DATE: June 8, 2022

SUBJECT: Public Safety Analysis for 1280 Center Street Micro-village site



The micro-shelter program as administered by the Church at the Park, working in coordination with the Salem Police Department, has a number of components in order to protect the public safety and minimize impacts on the surrounding neighborhood. Salem Police Department's experience with the other micro-shelter villages in town has been that there has not been a significant increase in criminal behavior in the areas around the villages when compared to the general crime rate for the City.

For example, within a ½ mile radius of the 2640 Portland Rd NE site, there was an increase in assaults from 13 reported cases in 2019 to 15 in 2021, when looking at a similar time frame before the micro-village was in place and after the village opened (in this case, April 15, 2019 to October 15, 2019 and April 15, 2021 to October 2021). In looking at property crimes in that same area, there was a decrease in shoplift complaints from 15 reported cases in 2019 to 5 cases in 2021 during that same time frame. For trespassing complaints, Salem Police received 2 complaints of trespassing in 2019 as compared to 8 complaints in 2021. As a comparison, in 2021, Salem overall experienced a 15.4% increase in reports of violent crime and a 3.7% decrease in reports of property crime.

Considering the previous information related to crime statistics, it is important to note that crime statistics can fluctuate and may reflect large increases or decreases in reported crimes, based on the length of time that is analyzed. In addition, due to factors such as no identifiable suspect, it is difficult to attribute an increase or decrease in crime to a specific location such as a micro-village site.

At the outset, it should be noted that the neighborhood around the proposed 1280 Center Street location has historically experienced the presence of unsheltered individuals. The Safeway market located across the street, the McDonalds at the intersection of Capitol and Center Street,

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and areas along Mill Creek near Center Street are a few locations where the unsheltered have frequented.

Micro-Village Program

From the beginning of the program, Church at the Park has administered the micro-shelter villages to ensure the safety of the clients living at the village and in the surrounding neighborhoods. Church at the Park has used at other sites and will continue to use at the Center Street location, a site management plan that has proven successful thus far.

The village has 24-hour security, staffed by DPSST certified personnel. Video surveillance of the village is maintained 24 hours. Additionally, to address concerns regarding impacts on the surrounding neighborhood, Church at the Park, has agreed to inspect the area one block in each direction to ensure that no “satellite” camps are established around 1280 Center Street. Should such camps be discovered, Church at the Park personnel will report the camps to appropriate authorities and City of Salem staff will work with the affected property owner to clear the site. The village also has a curfew by which clients must be back at the village, subject to exceptions for employment which must be approved. Guests to the village are limited and must comply with accountability requirements. Controlled substance(s), weapons and alcohol use are prohibited at the village. Behavior that is not consistent with the community agreements and which threaten peace at the site (such as fighting and bullying) is also prohibited. Clients must have a progress plan, that reflects accountability, in place and weekly reviews by village staff ensure that clients are making progress on their plan. The village functions as a transitional venue to more traditional housing and therefore progress, by engagement in services, is a key component of the program. Additionally, by having a flow of clients through the village, it prevents some of the negative consequences that occur when social hierocracies form among the residents, i.e. drug trafficking, and assaultive or menacing behavior.

Navigators currently visit all known unsheltered sites and encampments regularly. They have committed to being present to meet people and refer them to appropriate services.

Violations of the rules of conduct are subject to an escalating series of sanctions. Drug use, anti-social behavior or a failure to progress on the accountability plan can result in exclusion from the village, although this is used as a last resort. Clients will also be held responsible for conduct that impacts the adjoining neighborhood(s). Clients are reminded of their obligation to not engage in criminal behavior in general, and in the surrounding neighborhood in particular. Church at the Park cooperates with Salem Police Department should a circumstance arise where a client is implicated in criminal behavior inside or outside the village. Clients are encouraged to use particular routes when coming and going to the village in order to minimize impact on traffic safety.

Coordination with Salem Police Department

There is considerable misinformation within the community about Salem Police Department's response to crimes associated with the homeless population. The Salem Police Department prioritizes their response to criminal complaints and will respond to calls for service involving crimes against persons or property, including trespass. However, the Salem PD does prioritize those calls based on severity. A person-felony gets priority over a trespass or a low-level misdemeanor theft. Additionally, because of the policies instituted during the pandemic, Marion County Jail is not accepting persons accused of low-level crimes from the City. This may result in accused persons being cited for crimes but not necessarily removed from the scene. Moreover, the Salem Police Department continues to be hampered by a shortage of sworn and unsworn personnel. The police department currently has 13 vacancies for sworn police officers. However, the number of vacant officer positions is only one factor when looking at the department's ability to respond to calls for service and proactive patrols through residential and business areas. There are currently 98 officers assigned to the patrol division as patrol officers. Twelve of those officers are Sergeants who have field supervisor responsibilities and generally do not take calls for service. In addition, there are 11 officers on light duty, with several of those officers on long term light duty due to the severity of their injury. When field supervisors, light duty officers, and any recruit officers who are in training are considered, the number of officers available to take calls for service in the city from the patrol division is 75 officers.

However, notwithstanding these impediments, the Salem Police Department has committed to enhanced patrols of the area through its Homeless Outreach Service Team (H.O.S.T) and will make additional patrols in the area as time and work-load permit. The H.O.S.T team is comprised of two senior officers working full time on issues related to unsheltered persons. The officers began their assignment the week of June 6, 2022. Additionally, the Salem Police Department will, upon request, advise property owners on steps they can take to make their property more crime resistant.

In summary, the program as delineated by Church at the Park and the enhanced efforts by Salem Police and other community members means that the micro-shelter village can be integrated into the neighboring community without an undue or unreasonable risk to the public safety.