



Date: August 17, 2015

To: Durham City Council

From: Ellen Reckhow

Subject: Poverty Reduction Initiative: Public Safety Task Force

Executive Summary

In response to the Mayor's Poverty Reduction Initiative (PRI) that focuses on Census Tract 10.01, a number of Task forces were created to look at different aspects of reducing poverty, providing support services and building wealth in this target area. This Agenda Item is an interim report from the Public Safety Task Force co-chair Ellen Reckhow.

Background

The Public Safety Task Force has been meeting for over a year. We were guided by the PRI's survey of residents last fall and the community listening sessions. The Task Force decided to focus on four areas: (1) Relationship Building; (2) Adequate Staffing; (3) Neighborhood Safety; and (4) Youth Engagement.

Discussion

1. **Relationship Building.** During the past year, relationships between the police and communities around the country have been tense. The lack of trust within the PRI target area was reflected in the survey results. The Task Force believes a focus on improving relations is critical to our success. We suggest the following action steps.
 - Poverty Simulation for officers – Completed first phase
 - Establish an Officer in the Neighborhood Program to encourage officers to live in the area by providing financial assistance to buy and rent housing. There are excellent models in other communities like Atlanta and Columbia, SC. In Columbia, officers can purchase a home with no down payment at a low interest rate. Officers receive an end of year bonus for each year that they stay in the house. **Note: To assess feasibility, we are waiting for a survey to determine interest.** We will also reach out to the Sheriff as to their involvement.
 - Build on the new Public Safety curriculum at Holton Career and Resource Center by establishing a career track with Durham Tech to grow a public safety career pipeline

for Durham students. This would reduce the number of officers we need to recruit from out of town.

- Add a curriculum component at Camp High Hopes, a camp that serves many PRI youth, to introduce public safety careers and to incorporate skills for constructively interacting with officers.
- Create a Community Liaison Officer position to work with residents on problem solving and community policing. This person could share the PAC office at Holton.

2. Adequate Staffing. According to the neighborhood surveys and listening sessions, residents would like to see officers walking a beat and not just responding to 911 calls. This will probably require a higher level of staffing for District 1.

- Update and follow up on assessment of police staffing completed last year. Utilize national best practices and comparisons with similar NC cities. Ensure that consideration is given to enhancing community policing and providing more “face time”.
- Adjust the number of District 1 officers according to analysis of results.
- Ensure that the allocation of patrol officers to the target area allows adequate time on the ground (out of cars) for community engagement functions. Ensure community engagement criteria are in the officer job description, training, and review process.

3. Neighborhood Safety. The neighborhood surveys indicated that 56% of residents were interested in getting involved with a Neighborhood Watch. They also wanted police officers to be more visible and felt more outdoor lighting was needed.

- Two meetings have been held to organize Neighborhood Watch groups. Unfortunately, they have been lightly attended and no new Watch groups have formed. We may need to seek a sponsor and provide meals to get better attendance along with joint planning events with other groups.
- A Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) analysis has been performed by Officer Knight for the 3 parks and all the bus stops in the target area. The recommendations have been forwarded to Neighborhood Improvement Services to help coordinate the implementation of the recommendations which include shrub and tree pruning, improved lighting and various other recommendations.
- CPTED review will also be provided to homes and businesses in the area. We may work with Habitat for Humanity homeowners to get the process started.

- Training sessions on crime prevention and ways to better work with police will be provided in the target area during the upcoming year.

4. Youth Engagement. In order to help keep young people safe and reduce juvenile crime, residents mentioned having more things for children and teens to do during the listening sessions. The Task Force would like to see Holton Career and Resource Center become an even stronger hub of activity for young people.

- The Task Force worked with the County to inventory and assess existing youth services in the area in the past few months. This information will inform our work.
- A neighborhood youth committee will be formed this fall to plan for additional events and services using this assessment.
- In addition to working with existing agencies and churches, additional funding or redirection of resources may be pursued as needed. In particular, the task force will work to expand recreation and enrichment programming at Holton.

Alternatives: Not Applicable

Financial Impact: Not Applicable

SDBE Summary: Not Applicable