Homelessness in Denver

Presented to the Board of Public Health & Environment

April 8, 2021
Introduction

Meeting purpose and plan

City efforts to address homelessness
Not meant to be inclusive of all City efforts;
presentations will be given by:

- The Department of Housing Stability (HOST)
  - Denver Parks & Recreation
- The Department of Transportation & Infrastructure (DOTI)
  - Denver Public Health & Environment (DDPHE)

Please hold questions until the end of the presentation
HOST’s Approach to Our Work

Investing, partnering, and creating policy across the continuum

- Data Driven
- Trauma Informed
- Person Centered

Unsheltered | Shelter | Supportive Housing | Affordable Rental Housing | Affordable Home Ownership | Market Rate Rental Housing | Market Rate Home Ownership
Homelessness is a Symptom

- Housing is out of reach: high cost, mismatched stock
- Incomes largely stagnant: gap in affordability
- Health Problems
- Escaping Violence
- Impact of Racial Disparities

Housing that is affordable, safe, and healthy provides a stable platform to address what contributed to experiencing an episode of homelessness.
Homelessness in Denver: Point in Time Survey 2020

- About 51 out of 10,000 Denver residents experience homelessness on a given night.
Denver County Residents by Race and Ethnicity

Figure 5. Percentage of Denver County Residents by Race and Ethnicity

Source: Data for all Denver residents is from the U.S. Census Bureau 2014-2018 American Community Survey 5-year estimates; Data for residents experiencing homelessness is from the 2020 Point-in-Time Count.

Note: Data are for Denver County.
Shelter Access Points
(found at denvergov.org/emergencyshelter)

For Families

- Lawrence Street Community Center (transportation to men’s shelter)
  2222 Lawrence St.
  Buses are departing nightly, at approximately 6 p.m., to transport men to different shelter sites.

- Denver Coliseum (single men)
  4600 Humboldt St.
  For access to reserved and overflow beds, individuals should go to the Lawrence Street Community Center, 2222 Lawrence St., for possible assignment. Lottery for reserved beds is held at 1 p.m., and overflow beds are assigned from 5-6 p.m.

- Samaritan House, Holy Rosary Emergency Shelter (single women)
  2301 Lawrence St.
  Limited beds are available for walk-ins. Women in need of shelter can begin lining up at the designated area outside of Samaritan House on Broadway at 4:30 p.m. Beds are assigned each night through a lottery at 5 p.m. Shelter operates from 5 p.m. to 7:30 a.m.

- Elti Shelter (single women; transgender individuals 18+)
  1370 Elati St.
  Access will be provided from this site to additional overflow shelter, as needed.

- Delores Project (single women; transgender individuals 18+)
  Call for address.
  303-534-5411

- Urban Peak Overnight Shelter (youth ages 15-20)
  303-974-2908

- Salvation Army Crossroads (Single men)
  1901 29th St.
  720-305-4640
  Entry between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m.

For Individuals

- Samaritan House
  2301 Lawrence St.
  303-294-0241
  Seven days a week
  5 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

- The Gathering Place
  1535 N. High St.
  303-321-4198
  Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday
  1 – 4 p.m.

- The Volunteers of America Mission
  2877 Lawrence St.
  303-295-2165
  Monday through Thursday
  1 – 4 p.m.
Outreach Efforts

Denver Street Outreach Collaborative (DSOC) and Strategic Outreach to Large Encampments (SOLE)

SOLE workers are embedded with DSOC team

Large encampment outreach focused on:
* Primary and behavioral health support
* Peer navigation

Other outreach teams beyond HOST
Temporary Managed Campsites

*SOS is a temporary solution*

"What is a Safe Outdoor Space"?

"SOS Impact"
(Videos courtesy of Colorado Village Collaborative)

Tiny Home Villages

Two villages:
- Beloved Community Village
- Women’s Village at Clara Brown Commons

$1 million+, three-year contract with Colorado Village Collaborative

Meant to be a temporary stop on the housing continuum

Tents at a Temporary Managed Campsite in Denver
Supportive Housing Projects

Legacy Lofts

Charity’s House

Warren Residences

Charity’s House rendering

Valor on the Fax rendering

Rendering of the renovated Sanctuary at Warren Residences
What Can You Do?

• Join a charitable organization's board
• Volunteer:
  - Spark the Change: [https://www.sparkthechangecolorado.org/calendar](https://www.sparkthechangecolorado.org/calendar)
  - MHUW: [https://unitedwaydenver.org/volunteer/](https://unitedwaydenver.org/volunteer/)
• Employ people in a housing crisis / facing housing instability in meaningful work
• Partner in policy review and changes; data-driven solutions
• Help shape and support the Five-Year Housing Stability Strategic Plan
• Help change the conversation
### DDPHE Public Health Investigations:
#### Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-2009</td>
<td>Food safety inspections &amp; complaints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Suspended inspections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td><em>S. aureus</em> outbreak &amp; resume shelter inspections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Licensing of nonprofits/develop inventory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Interagency shelter inspection process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Response to complaints about encampments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>First DDPHE area restriction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Syringe access regulation transitioned to PHI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Tiny home village project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Infection prevention engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>Hepatitis outbreak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>Charitable food service guidance &amp; regulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>COVID response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>Safe outdoor spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>Systems-level support, resources &amp; development</td>
</tr>
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DDPHE Public Health Investigations: Service Provider Support

Regulations:
- *Denver Rules and Regulations Governing Food Establishments*
- *Denver Rules and Regulations Governing Residential Health*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food Safety Program</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full Inspections conducted</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited Inspections conducted</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>FTA Visits to Shelters</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Food Safety/FBI Complaints received</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residential Housing Program</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inspections conducted</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complaints received</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Statewide & Denver outbreak affecting people experiencing homelessness: 

October 2018 – February 2021

- 418 cases (71% hospitalized); 2 deaths
- 108 Denver cases
- 2,760 hepatitis A vaccines; 632 meningococcal vaccines
- DOC activation October 2019
- 1300+ DDPHE staff hours
**DDPHE Public Health Investigations: COVID-19 Response**

- Added DDPHE position to support systems-level improvement and ongoing advocacy with partners through Denver Joint Task Force, Homeless Leadership Council, and HOST

- Supported opening of de-densified 24/7 shelters and provided daily onsite staffing

- Worked with HOST, CCH to establish activated respite processes for jail & shelters; supported protective action sites for at-risk people experiencing homelessness
Established Resource Library on shared drive for Homeless Leadership Council Members:

DDPHE Public Health Investigations: COVID-19 Response
Distribution of supplies: masks, hand sanitizer, and signage
- 36,500 masks
- 494 personal-size hand sanitizers
- 120 containers of 16 oz hand sanitizer

Surveys conducted with Peer Navigator Collaborative to develop person-centered information for vaccination strategies and education.
**DDPHE Public Health Investigations:** COVID-19 Response

Total # of testing **events** = 272+
Total # **tests** = 16,500+

- **DDPHE** 10,000
- **DPH** 5500
- **CCH** 1000+

**Vaccinations for People Experiencing Homelessness:**

- **1,411 vaccinations** provided by DPH/DDPHE/CCH mobile teams were administered to guests at shelters and in protective action motel sites coordinated through EOC/Denver Joint Task Force.
**DDPHE Public Health Investigations: COVID-19 Response**

### COVID-19 Infection Among People Experiencing Homelessness in Denver

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Total Cases</th>
<th>Total Hospitalizations</th>
<th>Total Deaths (with COVID-19)</th>
<th>Total Deaths (Due to COVID-19)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1,046</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.7% of all cases in Denver)</td>
<td>(27.1% of cases in people experiencing homelessness have resulted in hospitalization, compared to 8.0% among people not experiencing homelessness)</td>
<td>(1.4% of cases in people experiencing homelessness have resulted in death, compared to 1.4% in people not experiencing homelessness)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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Deaths with COVID-19 = all deaths among persons with COVID-19; Deaths due to COVID-19 = COVID-19 documented as primary or secondary cause of death.

### Week of March 28, 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cases</th>
<th>Hospitalizations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 5</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
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### COVID-19 Cases Among People Experiencing Homelessness by Week

[Graph showing COVID-19 cases among people experiencing homelessness by week]
DDPHE Community & Behavioral Health: Wellness Winnie

• Mobile unit offering support, assistance, and resources to those in need by serving them where they are.
• Winnie travels through Denver to provide equitable access to behavioral health resources and support services.
• Winnie is staffed with mental health counselors and peer navigators.
• Winnie serves housed and unhoused individuals
DDPHE Community & Behavioral Health: Wellness Winnie

Services include (but aren’t limited to):

• Providing the essential supplies needed for daily living; offering information about available resources; listening
• Behavioral health screening and assessment
• Active referrals to services (medical, legal, social services, etc.)
• Distribution of socks, gloves, and toiletries
DDPHE Community & Behavioral Health: Wellness Winnie

From August 2020 through February 2021:

• Engaged with **over 2,000 people**, with 20% returning 2 to 5 times for a service
• **99** one-on-one peer support and navigation sessions
• **41** one-one-one clinical case management sessions
• **69%** of those in one-on-one sessions reported unstable housing
• Provided **20 people** with naloxone and the training to administer it
DDPHE Community & Behavioral Health: Substance Use Navigators (SUN)

- Clinical Navigator
- Peer Navigators
- Co-respond multiple times per week with a variety of City agencies, including DPD’s Homeless Outreach Team and Denver Human Services
DDPHE Community & Behavioral Health: Substance Use Navigators

Monthly Snapshot: March 2021
- 264 total contacts
- 118 total engagements
- 112 total referrals
- 26 follow-up/subsequent contacts
- 7 hotel vouchers
- 58 encampments visited

2021 year to date (thru 3/31)
- 215 engagements; 200 referrals

2020 totals
- 130 engagements; 90 referrals
DDPHE Community & Behavioral Health: Harm Reduction Services

Syringe Services Programs (SSP):
- Reduce the harms of drug use
- Community-based prevention programs
- Funding for three syringe services programs
- Serve housed/unhoused populations via static sites and mobile outreach efforts

Services include:
- Linkage to substance use disorder treatment
- Access to/disposal of sterile syringes, injection equipment
- Access to naloxone
People experiencing homelessness are disproportionately impacted by fatal and non-fatal overdoses.

Denver’s Chief Medical Examiner issued a standing order making it possible for trained DDPHE staff and Park Rangers to carry, administer, and disseminate naloxone.

In 2020, overdose made up 42% of deaths of those experiencing homelessness in Denver.

Overdose fatalities reversed by participants of SSP’s increased by 57% from 2019 to 2020.

Expanding access to free naloxone via peer-to-peer distribution, online portals, and communal kits for agencies and businesses.

*Total deaths reported for 2020 includes cases still pending investigation and are subject to change.
Denver Parks and Recreation
Denver Park Rangers

- 18 Urban Park Rangers employed citywide
- Maximize public safety, protect Denver resources, provide education to patrons
- Provide outreach materials, connections to local services
- Provide emergency support for individuals in crisis
- Act as liaisons for HOST, Substance Use Navigators, Shelter Outreach, Denver Police
- Reversed seven opioid overdoses in Civic Center Park since being provided with and trained to administer naloxone in 2020
Chartered responsibility to keep Denver clean, safe, and free of hazards that cause harm

In describing the work and responsibilities performed by various City agencies, the term “sweeps” is not only inaccurate in describing the work, but it also perpetuates an image of a person that is not in alignment with our values.

Demeaning and dehumanizing and does not reflect the incredibly challenging work by our employees and partners to connect people experiencing homelessness with housing, with care, with supportive services, and with stability.
Our shared goal as a city is to ensure the health of all of Denver’s residents, including people experiencing homelessness, through the least restrictive means possible, such as a large-scale encumbrance cleanup conducted by DOTI.

Working towards the least restrictive means to protect all people is top of mind when DDPHE evaluates encampments; Enacting a temporary area restriction is a last resort.
The Department of Transportation & Infrastructure (DOTI)

- DOTI was formed in 2020 to expand efforts around transportation and mobility.
- We serve our community through planning, design, construction, and maintenance of the City’s infrastructure.
- Solid Waste Management is a Division of the Utilities Administration.
The Department of Transportation & Infrastructure (DOTI)

Office of the Executive Director of the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure

- Office of the Chief Financial Officer
- Office of the Chief of Staff
- Performance Office
- Public Information Office
- Safety & Industrial Hygiene Office
- Office of Community and Business Engagement

MOBILITY FUNCTIONS

- Plan Transportation and Mobility Planning
- Design Transportation Design
- Build (Transportation) Transportation Project Management
- Build (Infrastructure) Infrastructure Project Management
- Deliver Major Projects & Program Implementation
- Operate Transportation Operations
- Maintain Maintenance Operations
- Regulate Right of Way Services
- Enforce Right of Way Enforcement

UTILITIES FUNCTIONS

- Utilities Administration (Margaret Medellin)
  - Plan/Maintain/Regulate
  - Wastewater Management
  - Solid Waste Management
The Department of Transportation & Infrastructure (DOTI)

Involvement with encampment cleanups:
• DOTI is charged by the City Charter to remove encumbrances.
• Through our Division of Solid Waste Management, we support Citywide efforts by removing trash, cleaning sidewalks, streets and other rights-of-ways, including sanitization, when necessary and facilitating no-cost storage of personal belongings, including unattended personal belongings that do not pose a public health or safety risk.
The Department of Transportation & Infrastructure (DOTI):

*Public Restroom Project*

Mobile Trailer-Based Pilot Program

Fixed Unit – 16th and Champa
A DDPHE Area Restriction (AR) may be used when environmental and/or public health factors present imminent hazards.

The program began in 2018 as alleyway sanitation inspections.

October 2018 DDPHE implemented its first Area Restriction for severe health and safety conditions around Samaritan House (severe rodent infestation, feces accumulation, trash, debris, sharps, propane tanks, and other fire hazards).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of ARs Implemented</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>0</td>
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</table>
2020: addition of Investigator III position focused on environmental/public health complaint response, including encampment complaints.

- Complaints regarding encampment conditions are one of the most common complaints received by 311.
- PHI works collaboratively with other agencies to connect people with available services and support interventions.
- Most encampment clean ups are done under DOTI authority and do not rise to the level of a DDPHE Area Restriction.
DDPHE Public Health Investigations: Encampments

Complaints regarding encampment conditions received by DDPHE
DDPHE Public Health Investigations:
Encampments – Public & Environmental Risks
CDC guidance contemplates factors impacting people experiencing homelessness absent any other public health or environmental considerations and provides broad guidance.

- The City invests extensive resources towards shelter, interim, and long-term housing solutions.
- Unauthorized camping presents safety and health concerns for people camping, the surrounding community, and environment.
Questions from the Board