



## SHARED PUBLIC SPACES WORKGROUP

July 9, 2018

Dear Community Leader,

We know you are passionate about Philly. We are too. That's why we have dedicated ourselves to leading the Shared Public Spaces Workgroup over the past 18 months to explore the evolving nature of homelessness, prescribe solutions and act on street homelessness, food access and the code of conduct that guides public behavior.

We are writing today to share some of the results of that work. We are optimistic about the progress and what's underway to ensure safety, respect and dignity for all in the public areas we share: sidewalks, parks, transit stations, plazas and streets. We also understand that the limited financial resources available to aggressively pursue lasting solutions means that we must continue to develop creative and cooperative means to affect real change.

**Code of Conduct.** Our Workgroup heard a consistent message from stakeholders like you about the need for clarity around the City's policy on behavior in public spaces. This spring we published a clear summary of "rules of the road" – pointing to behaviors, existing penalties, and service alternatives in *Philadelphia's Guide to Sharing Public Spaces*.

**Decoding Panhandling.** Our Workgroup also has a committee focused on aggressive panhandling. We can all agree that panhandling is a problem, but police enforcement is limited by the Constitution and not all panhandlers are homeless. We deployed a team of surveyors who learned that panhandlers earn about \$20 a day, use the money for necessities and drugs, and most interestingly, treat it like a job by showing up to the same place at the same time every day. We are encouraged that

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the Chamber of Commerce, the City's Commerce Department and private philanthropy is engaged and helping to identify the model that best addresses the economic reality of panhandling, while limiting public apprehensions and disruption on the sidewalks.

**Daytime Engagement for people who are street homeless.** The community has been clear: people sitting and lying on sidewalks and in public spaces creates many issues – and not just for those who have nowhere to live. The solution? More daytime engagement centers. First, we expanded the New Life Center in West Philadelphia to Monday – Friday, 9 - 5. Then we opened the 11,000-square-foot Hub of Hope in the Concourse. A first-of-its kind site, the Hub is a partnership between SEPTA, the City and Project HOME that provides showers (over 1,700 by over 750 unique individuals), laundry (over 850 loads by over 250 unique individuals), snacks, a place to rest and access to services. Engagement centers like the Hub have proven to be a successful bridge from chronic homelessness to treatment and even permanent housing.

**Housing Chronically Homeless People – from the street.** Starting with the 100 Day Street Homelessness Challenge, we have housed over 600 people from the street who have serious mental illness and/or substance use disorder in less than 2 years. This success is thanks in part to the Mayor's leadership and City Council's support of new funds for permanent supportive housing - an evidence-based practice with an average 90% success rate in preventing a return to homelessness.

We see progress and hope that Philadelphia can be a city for all because Philly Cares. We hope you will join our effort by signing up to receive on-going communication so that we can be in touch as we move forward. We want to begin a dialogue about our ideas and provide you a forum to share your creative solutions. To sign up please complete [this form](#).

Sincerely,

Liz Hersh  
Director, Office of Homeless Services