

HOUSING, NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES & REDEVELOPMENT POLICY COMMITTEE

April 7, 2022

Members Present: *Council Member, Chair Crystal Murillo*
Council Member, Vice-Chair Ruben Medina
Council Member, Juan Marcano

Others Present: Mattye Sisk, Barbara Abbotts, Christina Amparan, Alicia Montoya, Andrea Amonick, Angela Garcia, Adrian Botham, Brandt Van Sickle, Charise Canales, Courtney Tassin, Cristal Dukes, Daniel Krzyzanowski, Emma King, Jacquelyn Bayard, Jeff Hancock, Jessica Prosser, Karen Hancock, Lana Dalton, Mindy Parnes, Omar Lyle, Roberto Venegas, Sandra Youngman, Scott Campbell, Sharon Duwaik, Roxanne White, Yvonne Miranda, Sabrina White

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Council Member Medina welcomes everyone to the meeting.

MINUTES

March 3, 2022 minutes were approved.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

No announcements are made.

NEW ITEMS

Youth Violence Prevention Strategic Plan Resolution

Summary of Issue and Discussion

Christina Amparan, the Youth Violence Prevention Program Manager, presents this item. The Youth Violence Prevention Program (YVPP) conducted a community needs assessment inclusive of individual interviews and focus groups in collaboration with Rocky Mountain Partnership and worked with Tri-County to collect and evaluate over 600 surveys from community residents. Over 70% of the survey responses came from Aurora youth. National models and local efforts were assessed to identify strategies and programming to be implemented in Aurora to address local community needs and impacts of youth violence. The YVPP created a network of workgroups made up of a multi-disciplinary representation that continues to inform the program's strategic plan, information sharing and collaborative responses. Overall, feedback from stakeholders is positive. The YVPP strategic plan, is based on the public health approach to identify trends and possible programming to be strategically implemented and eventually duplicated on a larger scale. Programming is ensured to be culturally sensitive, trauma-informed, evidence-based, and strength-based. YVPP is partnering with Denver to ensure a regional approach is in place to address the impacts of delinquent and criminal behavior that is crossing municipality boundaries.

A SWOT Analysis was done to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. To name a few points, the analysis revealed that YVPP has the extensive support of stakeholders and has a good beginning foundation relating to funding. Areas of opportunity include moving responses from a siloed response and having a balanced approach that is inclusive of both intervention and prevention efforts.

YVPP identified four key areas of focus for programming. The first is a collective response of the YVPP network to identify collaborative opportunities and have continuous discussions on programming. Next is the release of the notice of funding opportunity (NOFO) amounting to \$500,000 for intervention and prevention programming. 51 organizations attended the Q&A sessions and 21 have applied with most applications falling under the intervention category. Overall, over \$3 million was requested for funding. As an example, YVPP aims to fund the use of violence interrupters, specialized mental health services and supports to caregivers. The third category of the program includes developing a Critical Incident Responses through violence interrupters and outreach workers and direct case management to at-risk and high-risk youth and creation of the Multi-Disciplinary Team. Other efforts include the development of the Safe Haven Approach and use of safe passage efforts. For prevention, YVPP will continue to facilitate community and youth-led efforts through the Youth Advisory Council and through the Community Mobilization Team. The Youth Advisory Council hosts service projects such as the last event that included a community clean-up, distributing hygiene bags, resource fair and BBQ. The youth report having been able to develop life skills, leadership skills, and a support system among them.

The YVPP approach aims to develop the program's response into a multi-year, multi-level, and multi-sector approach that will lead to the reduction of impacts of delinquent and violent behavior within the city and consist of five strategic areas. Under program development, YVPP aims to develop policies, procedures, and training and ensure that they have a full team that has been given the tools and direction it needs to provide the appropriate response. Under organizational change, one of the goals is to increase capacity of local organizations to address youth violence within the city through training opportunities. A multidisciplinary team will be developed to determine a proper referral process and proper information collaboration with other professionals. Under the secondary prevention area, the program emphasizes the importance of identifying and providing supports to at-risk youth that as an example may be a runaway, and as a result are witnessing and or being victimized, and for some recruited into gangs or other delinquent and criminal behaviors. High-risk youth will be referred to the YVPP for Outreach Specialists to receive case management, system navigation supports, and connection to outside services. They will be identified through a set of criteria developed by the YVPP Intervention Team.

Questions/Comments

CM Marcano asks if the youth groups are successful in drawing other youth into the program. Christina Amparan confirms that the 16 members of the Youth Advisory Council are working to spread the word about the programs and help other youth feel welcome. CM Marcano asks where the advisors are currently focused in the city. Christina answers that their service projects are focused on Northwest Aurora to address the hotspots. She adds that the service projects are scheduled once a quarter. CM Marcano asks how they could expand the reach. He mentions that parents of students in Overland and Prairie are expressing concerns about their youth. Christina mentions that the Youth Advisory Council is full-Aurora based with representations from different communities and are of different age ranges. She adds that they were also present in the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) Central Recreation Center Programming for spring and winter break and are consistently doing over 100 hours of volunteer work monthly. CM Marcano asks how successful the spring break program was given that they have waived fees for youth. Christina says that they were successful in having a great number of youths at any given point. The staff from the department are willing to partner and engage with YVPP. She adds that the Youth Advisory Council had an opportunity to go into the recreation center and make new connections. CM Marcano mentions that this would be good to make permanent if it is giving new youth into the program that considered lack of awareness or cost as a barrier. He mentions that he would like to see the statistics on this to bring it forward as a permanent policy shift for the city.

Jessica Prosser, the Director of Housing and Community Services, mentions that the YVPP team will be giving a presentation with PROS at the April meeting of the PFQL Committee on the possibility of expanding. CM Murillo asks if it would include a recommendation to continue for all public-school breaks instead of just spring break. Jessica confirms this. CM Medina asks if the Youth Advisory Council determined specific centers or activities that they are looking at or any obstacles hindering the youth from participating in programming. Christina states that the Youth Advisory Council partnered with PROS to administer a survey on winter break. The survey revealed that the cost of the fees and transportation were the major barriers. In addition to this, they also identified awareness and availability of nearby programming as barriers. CM Medina mentions that he was looking at the potential to build a youth center specific for teens that can be expanded to other age groups. He adds that these centers will be designed by the youth to determine preferred wraparound services and programs. CM Murillo mentions that she is looking forward to seeing the evolution of the YVPP program and is excited to see participation from the youth in the Advisory Committee.

CM Marcano asks when the next PFQL Committee Meeting will be. Jessica states that it will be on April 28th at 8:30 a.m.

Outcome – The Youth Violence Prevention Strategic Plan Resolution will move forward to Study Session.

Rental Assistance and Foreclosure Filing Updates

Summary of Issue and Discussion

Bobbie Abbotts, the Home Ownership Assistance Program Supervisor, presents this item. The city is currently doing less rent assistance due to COVID. They are still helping with evictions and can stop evictions. Residents must continue paying rent after the eviction is stopped. Additional funds are received from the ERA 2, but the city is not using it fast enough. The goal is to use 50% of the funding by April 30th and the Housing and Community Services Department is working with the Treasurer to give a further extension. Over \$15 million of funding have been used thus far.

As of March 4th, lenders have filed 54 Notices for Election and Demand (NED) between Adams and Arapahoe County. Letters are being sent out every Tuesday to people for them to reach out to the Department and make sure they are not being scammed. State applications for assistance are currently on the rise and they have involved more agencies in application processing. A big issue is that homeowners on forbearances were in default prior to COVID, making them ineligible for the automatic COVID modifications. These are the ones with the NEDS being recorded. For other homeowners with forbearances, they are automatically given a modification offer to sign without being asked for a package. However, there were issues with scammers who are sending packages out but are requesting money to come back with the package.

The state is allowing \$35,000 in COVID hardship assistance including HOA dues, property taxes, and homeowner insurance. Homeowners that have not been able to pay their property taxes and outright own their homes or are on reverse mortgages can go through the state to get the taxes paid. The Treasurer states that homeowners can apply for the partial claim to be paid off. They have currently assisted 22 households as of March 24th. The Colorado Homeownership Coalition is also offering \$6,000 to help homeowners fully resolve the hardship. However, should the homeowners owe more than that, they must prove that they have additional funds to get the \$6,000 to make sure that they will not be foreclosed on even after receiving the grant. They have seen mostly HOA requests.

Questions/Comments

CM Marcano expresses his appreciation for being able to help Aurora residents. CM Murillo asks how the prior HORNS Committee used the information on the updates and asks if there were specific outcomes. Jessica explains that the update became a part of the agenda at the end of 2021 when they asked about foreclosures and rental assistance. She adds that they just want to provide an update to the Committee.

Outcome – This item was for information only and no action was taken.

Aurora@Home Strategic Planning Update

Summary of Issue and Discussion

Jessica Prosser and Roxanne White present the item. Yvonne Miranda and Sabrina White, project coordinator and project manager are introduced. The Aurora@Home collective identified gaps in their service delivery to the unhoused population in the city. They have created an IGA with agencies to provide funding to bring on a consultant in the fall of 2021 to start the process of creating an updated Strategic Plan. Aurora@Home is formed by leading governmental and non-governmental organizations from the Aurora Housing Authority. Currently, Aurora@Home is not incorporated as a nonprofit and is in the process of putting together bylaws including mission, vision, etc. They are looking to provide culturally responsive and trauma-informed services with the ultimate goal that homelessness is rare, brief, and one time. Aurora@Home plans to partner and coordinate with services and supports needed by people who have ties to Aurora. This includes those living in Aurora and returning residents. Each organization would then determine if the person met the funding requirements of the program offered. They focus on providing trauma-informed care that is equitable and collaborative given that trauma is oftentimes a barrier to seeking help and moving forward.

Aurora@Home prioritizes learning from those who have experienced housing insecurity/instability. Recommendations to systems and services will be based on the consumer, data, evidence, and best practices. Aurora@Home aims to create a governing board of 10 to 20 members consisting of individuals from government entities, service provider organizations, and those with lived experience. Aurora@Home will develop strategies and key performance outcomes and measurements to continue to expand and enhance prevention efforts and enhance outreach to include base management and direct access to services. They also aim to conduct system mapping to help those experiencing homelessness gain clarity on accessing services and the availability of funding. In addition to this, they will strive to have consistent and high-quality data tracking and make sure that systems are aligned. Their goal is that all members of the team, direct service workers, and the board ensure that they are working on prevention, outreach, and communication.

The Aurora Housing Authority is the current plan administrator. They plan to coordinate and get support from the city and city leadership. Service providers believe that in the long-term, city leadership should become the plan administrator and assume coordinating functions. The city would then coordinate efforts with staff and organizations, appoint the board, and approve the strategies, goals, and budgets. The board would manage service provision strategies, provide direction for meeting the people's needs, fundraising, consultation, etc.

Questions/Comments

CM Marcano asks why the statement on ending homelessness was removed from Aurora@Home's mission. He mentions that this might set a narrow horizon. Roxanne states that President Bush had a 10-year plan to end homelessness that was championed, and they are hoping to get back there with time. However, ending homelessness is currently seen as unrealistic and communities have moved away from that language and did not see it as aspirational. She highlights that they saw it as a lack of connection to the reality experienced by the unhoused population in the country. CM Marcano

asks if this is part of the Built for Zero. Roxanne mentions that Built for Zero is an important program that ensures that no veterans are experiencing homelessness. Aurora is currently doing better in this program than any other place in Colorado. CM Marcano asks what happens if the person identified did not have a prior connection or residence in Aurora. Roxanne clarifies that that is when they start to work regionally. She highlights that people require a sense of community and that they will work with people in their home communities to give them a better chance of finding opportunities and connections within the community. Jessica adds that federal funding requires them to serve people in Aurora. She mentions that there are different programs and funding sources available. Organizations would then determine if the person met funding requirements for the programs. CM Murillo stressed that the collaboration with other entities is the right approach given that Aurora borders other cities and people in crisis may lack awareness or interest in city boundaries and eligibility for funding. She asks if there have been issues with maintaining a more formalized board structure. Roxanne mentions that they have great CEOs, executive leaders, and decision-makers in the governmental entities of the Aurora@Home Board. She adds that they have a strong group of direct service staff and supervisors that are coordinating efforts on the ground. She stresses that there is a strong commitment. However, they see the need for a smaller group of people to help with strategy, leadership, and vision. CM Murillo mentions that it might not be a risk now given that it is part of paid work as opposed to a volunteer board. She expresses concern about what would happen if there would be no emphasis on prioritizing housing and homeless efforts. She adds that they should be thinking about long-term sustainability and formalizing the board. Roxanne says they are also making certain that everybody at the table is involved.

CM Murillo asks for clarification regarding the city appointing board members. Jessica mentions that they currently pay a portion of administrative costs to the housing authority for different positions to oversee Aurora@Home. She adds that the capacity of staff might not be able to take on the administrative logistics but there may be funding that could be reallocated. She explains that they have not yet decided on this structure, but it would be similar to the boards and commissions wherein there would be a recommendation from the Council on whom to appoint. She adds that there may also be a Council Member that sits on the board. CM Murillo mentions that there are pros and cons to involving the city council in that process. She asks if Aurora@Home could have the ability to have additional accountability regarding the camping ban enforced on people experiencing homelessness. She mentions that there have been horror stories about how people are being treated in Denver and she wants to ensure that people are still treated like people. Emma King states that they will have trauma-informed care training from Aurora Mental Health for all service providers to get everyone on the same page and using the same language. CM Murillo mentions that it's good to know that there will be specific training. She asks if there would be conversations by the board on the execution of the camping ban given that it impacts their work. Jessica says that it was also discussed during their strategic planning session and will be part of data tracking and outcomes. She highlights that they will also be tracking the camping ban's impacts and implementation.

CM Marcano states that is a good opportunity in terms of efficiency in serving the unhoused population if Aurora@Home better integrates with the city. However, he expresses concern about work being politicized and adds that there are some Councilmembers that don't think that the city should do anything for the homeless population, and it should be a function of the counties. He stressed that it might not be wise for Council to appoint members, but it would be beneficial to have a Council representative on the board. Roxanne states that they have studied models such as the Colorado Network of Homeless and Runaway Youth, Colorado Children's Campaign, and the Metro Denver Initiative to view options. Some options are to have Aurora@Home incorporated as a nonprofit, take on an advocacy role, or continue as a more informal collaborative. They also looked at a model of a homeless leadership team in Denver where they invite the city to have meetings. She

mentions that there are models that have statewide coordinating committees allowing for the city to take a more active role. At this moment, the board recommends working more closely with the city. If this does not work over time, they could shift to another model. The board has also requested to have conversations with the city on the impact of the camping ban. Jessica mentions that they are still in the feedback situation rather than bringing a formal proposal forward because they want to have a touchpoint with Council and the Committee first. She adds that they are also looking at the pros and cons and transitions happening with staffing. CM Marcano states that he is just concerned and understands that they are only looking to get a sense of the Council. He asks if they would maintain the status quo or pursue a different model should they integrate with the city. Jessica explains that they would either maintain the status quo or move towards creating a separate nonprofit like Visit Aurora wherein the city is involved, but the collective has its own identity.

CM Murillo expressed appreciation for the team for thinking about their concerns and is looking for input. She expressed that they will not be able to make the perfect decision, but she is glad that they have the flexibility to change the model in the future. CM Medina stressed that the city may not always be the best partner. He asks where the collective will fall under if the city becomes the plan administrator. Jessica explains that it would be integrated into the homeless division. CM Medina says that mixing boards with Council would lead to people handpicking those that they want on the boards. He emphasized that those on the board must also have training given the amount of information that they have to consider. He suggested having board buddies whom they can bounce ideas off and be able to learn from, especially those with more experience being on boards. Roxanne explains that many of them have consumers on their board and them being at least 25% of the board. They also make sure that people are supported in all ways such as financial expenses to be able to attend the meetings. She adds that they also make certain that people come and feel like they have a real seat at the table, and they can actively participate.

Outcome – This item was for information only and no action was taken.

MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

Updates from Community Members

No updates from community members.

Next meeting: Thursday, May 5, 2022 at 10 a.m.

Meeting Adjourned: 11:26 a.m.

APPROVED: *Crystal Murillo*
Crystal Murillo (Jul 25, 2022 18:04 MDT)

Committee Chair, Crystal Murillo