

Norwood GROVE

Zone d'amélioration commerciale
Business Improvement Zone

NORWOOD SAFE COMMUNITY INITIATIVE

Developed in 2018

INTRODUCTION

The Norwood Grove BIZ (NGB) has seen the issues surrounding homelessness, panhandling and street-involvement become a growing concern to the Norwood community in recent years prompting a call to action by local business and property owners in 2017.

The Norwood Grove BIZ believes that by taking the initiative to facilitate, collaborate and build partnerships that tackle visible, street-based concerns, we are investing in the economic competitiveness of our neighbourhood and commercial district.

This *Safe Community Initiative* identifies steps that the Norwood Grove BIZ community can take to build a safer, more inclusive community for all.

OUR STRATEGIES:

1. Collaborate

- Build relationships with members and partners who are invested in problem-solving for complex social challenges such as police, social agencies and bylaw enforcement, while working together to address issues of safety on a case-by-case basis.

2. Communicate

- Establish a network with in the stakeholders that supports easy information sharing such as, but not limited to incidents, trends, resources and tactics that support the reduction of crime in the neighbourhood.

3. Support

- Develop, source and provide support directly to BIZ members and stakeholders to aid in the reduction of crime and/or promotion of safety at their location. Support can include but not limited to printed resources, local connections, equipment funding and staffed support services such as patrols.

4. Educate

- Provide educational opportunities to the community both visitors, residential and business promoting informed and effective decisions.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS:

Homelessness - Homelessness encompasses a continuum of living situations including:

1) Unsheltered (absolute homelessness), 2) Emergency Sheltered, 3) Provisionally Accommodated and 4) At Risk of Homelessness.

Pandhandling – Is defined as “the act of begging” for money or objects.

Street Involvement or Street Involved – The term '**street-involved**' is quite broad, accounting for both varying degrees of homelessness and a wide range of at-risk behaviours.

Substance Use – Refers to all types of drug and alcohol use.

Hidden Homelessness - living temporarily with others without legal protection, guarantee of continued residency, or prospects of permanent housing. This includes any of the respondents who said they are staying with friends, family, or strangers/ acquaintances temporarily. Sometimes this is referred to as “couch surfing.”

BACKGROUND

The Norwood Grove BIZ and community has always tackled challenges associated with homelessness, panhandling and street-involvement, however in recent years we have noticed a visible increase in these challenges. Such examples are increased harassment in parking lots of local businesses, public intoxication, panhandling in traffic and at intersections, temporary shelters and warming fires, and an increase in vandalism of property.

In 2017, due to the increase in experiences by local businesses, the Norwood Grove BIZ hosted a community meeting to share the concerns and experiences. The result of that meeting was an initiative to address the challenges and a commitment to the community.

WHY A BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT ZONE NEEDS TO FOCUS ON COMMUNITY SAFETY.

Safety is a key component of any thriving neighbourhood, community or city and is directly linked to successful commercial districts, shopping destinations and residential communities. This is why safety in our community is a priority of the Norwood Grove BIZ.

As important as safety itself, so is the *perception* of safety. When a community is perceived as safe we see a notable increase in development, new businesses and increased foot traffic which all support the sustainability and growth of the community.

Issues surrounding homelessness, panhandling and street-involvement create concern for the Norwood Grove BIZ. Not only are perceptions profoundly impacted by these visible street-based challenges so is local crime, directly impacting local businesses.

For this reason, NGB prioritizes safety as vital to economic development and believe that through our *Safe Community Initiative* we can make a positive impact that will continue to support all stakeholders within the Norwood Grove Community.

UNDERSTANDING THE ISSUES

Homelessness, street involvement, substance use and panhandling are complex challenges. Different causes require different interventions. For example not all panhandlers are homeless and not all homeless use substances. In order to effectively address the concerns we must first understand what we are addressing.

HOMELESSNESS

In 2015 a collective of organizations completed the *Winnipeg Street Census*. The following data was collected on the night of October 25, 2015 and is noted as relevant to the Norwood Safe Community Initiative:

- On the night of October 25, 2015 there were at least 1400 people experiencing homelessness in Winnipeg.
- An additional 439 people were staying in long-term (average lengths of stay of 1 year or longer) provisional accommodation
- 71.1% of those experiencing homelessness in Winnipeg identified as Indigenous.
- Low income was the most commonly reported barrier to finding housing (50.9%)
- Over Half, 52.2% of all survey respondents were receiving income from Provincial Employment and Income Assistance (EIA), from either the general or disability streams.
- Almost ¼ of respondents has no formal, ongoing income. That is, they had no income or only received their money from family or friends, or self/informal employment like busking, panhandling, flagging, or other riskier income sources like theft or drug dealing.
- A majority of individuals experiencing homelessness have been in Winnipeg for one year or longer, however 21.8% moved to Winnipeg in the past year, a much higher mobility rate compared to the general population (3.9%).
- Just over 1/3 of people surveyed said they need services for an addiction. The second and third most common service needs related to mental health and a chronic or acute medical condition.

“The purpose of the Winnipeg Street Census was to estimate the number of people who are homeless in Winnipeg, obtain a demographic profile of the population, and (over time) identify trends.” Focusing primarily on those experiencing homelessness only provides a portion of the picture required to understand all demographics involved in the challenges associated with homelessness, panhandling and street-involvement within the Norwood Grove BIZ.

PANHANDLING

There are no social service agencies or government entity that tracks panhandling. This is why data and statistics in understanding the group can be difficult. However Winnipeg BIZ groups and local media have reported a recent increase in panhandling and associated challenges the activity brings. In addition to homelessness, media interviews identified the following that is relevant to the Norwood Safe Community initiative;

- “You can’t survive on what social services gives you” - Brian Minchin interviewed on CBC
- You can earn \$40 - \$50 on the afternoon drive home - Brian Minchin interviewed on CBC
- With a high school diploma and carpenters’ ticket, Christopher Wings can’t find work to pay him as much as he makes panhandling (also lives on social assistance and subsidized housing)– Christopher Wings interviewed on CBC

It would appear that a large percentage of panhandlers receive living assistance and panhandle to supplement their income. Interaction with local panhandlers in Norwood Grove confirms this and adds the following observations:

- Panhandlers have traveled to the Norwood area to panhandle and claim territory
- Panhandlers work in groups and share income
- Earnings from panhandling can often result in purchases at the local MLCC and Beer Store for immediate consumption
- Panhandling is prevalent at the intersection of the Norwood Bridge, in parking lots and outside banks and retailers

The updated panhandling by-law in 2000 is thought to have made it easier to panhandle due to the advocacy of a local anti-poverty group. The old by-law prevented panhandlers from approaching anyone within 10 meters of a bus stop, ATM or bank entrance. They also could not approach then in an elevator or after dark. Now the by-law only restricts obstruction of pedestrians, threats and approaching in groups of three or more. It remains illegal to solicit business on a roadway under the highway traffic act.

STREET-INVOLVED

Street-involved is a broad term and can usually be associated with youth. Due to this there are few statistics that would address the entire demographic as most focus on street-involved youth. Those within this demographic who pertain to the Norwood Safe Community initiative have been noted as exhibiting the following:

- Homelessness for a variety of reasons
- History of abuse
- Substance abuse
- In transit, or traveling through

This demographic has been observed participating in a number of identified concern areas within the Norwood Safe Streets Initiative such as panhandling, camping out in parks and vacant structures, substance abuse in public areas, theft within local businesses and breaking into vehicles, sheds or small structures.

WHAT'S NEXT

STATISTICS AND HOW THEY HELP

Winnipeg Police Support is allocated based on *Calls for Service* from the public, we recognize that under-reporting leads to fewer police resources in our community. The Norwood Grove is supported by East District 4 of the Winnipeg Police Service (WPS). Reporting of crimes on any level help increase the potential for support in our community from WPS. It has been repeatedly noted that harassment from WPS, Security Teams, Foot Patrols or similar services has a direct effect in reducing panhandling, temporary homeless structure setups, break-ins and theft.

HOW TO REPORT A CRIME

There are a number of options available to the public for reporting a crime. More information can be found at www.winnipeg.ca/police.

- In the event of an Emergency call **911**
- Non-emergency 204-986-6222
- In person at any local service station
- Online at www.winnipeg.ca/police/report/

COLLABORATION WHERE WE ALL WORK TOGETHER Trespassing

Building and maintaining relationships is a key part of the *Norwood Safe Community Initiative*. Existing relationships with the Winnipeg Police Service, local government and agencies such as the Regional Health Authority and Sara Riel Inc. help provide resources and assistance to the entire community while new relationships offer growing ideas and opportunity.

Local businesses are encouraged to take part in community meetings and share resources and knowledge through the Safe Community Network. The network is a form of document communication that allows local businesses the opportunity to share information and resources related to safety and crime prevention in our neighbourhood. For example:

- A property or business owner has the legal right to ask an individual to leave their property. You may ask this due to loitering, panhandling or past indiscretions that disrupt your business. You can permanently enforce this by issuing a letter to the individual, however you must obtain their name and address. If the individual returns after letter is issued you can take legal action by calling the police to have them arrested. If you don't have their information or they refuse to give it to you, use the network! Businesses serving alcohol can legally ask for ID and if they know you need their information, they can share it through the network!
- Supporting one another. If you have experienced a incident or issues with an individual, share their description or photo with your business neighbors. They can choose to refuse service, or at least gather information that could lead to their

arrest. In some cases tracking the individuals movements and actions can lead to support for the individual through 3rd party services.

Working together with multiple avenues of support and education is the best way to combat diverse and complex problems.

THE BIZ COMMITMENT

The Norwood Grove BIZ commits to be a key stakeholder within the Safe Community Initiative and is driven to maintain the momentum of the initiative by committing to, but not limited to:

- Building awareness of street-based issues and appropriate responses for both business members and neighbourhood stakeholders.
- Providing details of social programs and supports in the neighbourhood.
- Actively building partnerships between business, by-law enforcement, police and social agencies.

IN CLOSING

The *Norwood Safe Communities Initiative* is a guiding resource developed by the Norwood Grove BIZ and members as a tool to aid in sustaining a safe community. This document is an ongoing development project expected to expand to include studies, resources and updated data.

Endorsements:

Name & Title: _____ Signature: _____

Name & Title: _____ Signature: _____

Name & Title: _____ Signature: _____

Name & Title: _____ Signature: _____

Name & Title: _____ Signature: _____