



**INFORMATION ITEM
MEMORANDUM**

To: Mayor and Members of Council

From: Nuria Rivera-Vandermyde, City Manager
Sarah Huntley, Communication & Engagement Director
Ryan Hanschen, Community Engagement Manager
Ana Silvia Avendano-Curiel, Equity Policy Advisor

Date: January 19, 2023

Subject: **Community Connectors-in-Residence Update- Safe Management of Public Spaces Ride-along**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Community Connectors-in-Residence update is designed to elevate the observations and reflections of historically underrepresented communities, specifically with the City of Boulder’s Safe Management of Public Spaces program in this update.

FISCAL IMPACT

Budgetary impacts to the city organization in continuing Community Connector-in-Residence programming are minimal. Implementation will be incorporated into existing staff work plans.

COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENTS AND IMPACTS

N/A

BACKGROUND

Since the launch of the city’s Engagement Strategic Framework in November of 2017, staff have supported a shift in engagement culture, ensuring the city decision-making is more inclusive and meaningful. This has included a focus on identifying and removing barriers to engagement opportunities as well as co-designing sessions with underrepresented community members so there are fewer barriers in the first place. The city’s Community Connectors model, first piloted in the spring of 2018, represents a giant leap forward in this approach to community engagement.

The Community Connector-in-Residence program, specifically co-designed with community members to support the voices and build power of underrepresented communities by reducing barriers to community engagement, advancing racial equity, and surfacing the ideas, concerns, and dreams of community members, was launched in December 2020.

This program aligns with strategies included in the city’s Racial Equity Plan: 4.1 – improve access to decision-makers; 4.3 – focus on high-quality community engagement; and 4.5 – address language, cultural, and engagement access barriers.

At the October 6, 2022, City Council meeting, feedback from Community Connectors on the city’s 2023 budget cycle or the Safe Management of Public Spaces program budget was requested. Recognizing limitations in time and capacity for meaningful engagement, staff committed to elevating the observations and reflections of Community Connectors-in-Residence on the Safe Management of Public Spaces program by the end of 2022. Due to the date of the second ride-along, this update is being shared with council shortly after the end of 2022.

ANALYSIS

N/A

NEXT STEPS

Moving forward, staff will share operational-focused observations and reflections with the Safe Management of Public Spaces team. Staff will share policy-focused observations and reflections with city council and the cross-departmental Safe Management of Public Spaces leadership team. Additionally, Community Connectors-in-Residence are committed to engaging historically underrepresented communities as part of the 2024 city budget cycle.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A – Community Connectors-in-Residence Update – Safe Management of Public Spaces Ride-along

January 2022

Update Purpose

This Community Connectors-in-Residence update is designed to elevate the observations and reflections of historically underrepresented communities, specifically with the City of Boulder’s Safe Management of Public Spaces program.

At the October 6, 2022, City Council meeting, feedback from Community Connectors on the city’s 2023 budget cycle or the Safe Management of Public Spaces program budget was requested. Recognizing limitations in time and capacity for meaningful engagement, staff committed to elevating the observations and reflections of Community Connectors-in-Residence on the Safe Management of Public Spaces program by the end of 2022. Due to the date of the second ride-along, this update is being shared with council shortly after the end of 2022.



Community Connectors-in-Residence

Community Connectors-in-Residence (CC-in-Rs) support the voices and build power of underrepresented communities by reducing barriers to community engagement, advancing racial equity, and surfacing the ideas, concerns, and dreams of community members. Each bicultural CC-in-R serves as a trusted voice and works closely with a community they are already a natural leader within. Identities of CC-in-Rs participating in this ride-along, and sharing observations and reflections, include Latinx, Black or African American, residents of manufactured home communities, multi-generational households, immigrants, and low-income community members.

Safe Management of Public Spaces Ride-along

On November 4, 2022, two Community Connectors-in-Residence (CC-in-Rs) participated in a ride-along with the Safe Management of Public Spaces team. Between 7:30am and 10:40am on a “notification day,” CC-in-Rs observed interactions at several locations near East Mapleton Ball Fields, Goose Creek, Mapleton manufactured home community, and Valmont City Park.



On December 14, 2022, four CC-in-Rs (two of whom also participated in the Nov 4 ride-along) participated in a ride-along with the Safe Management of Public Spaces team. Between 8:30am and 10:00am on a “clean-up day,” CC-in-Rs observed interactions along Boulder Creek, immediately west of the Main Library on the south side of the creek.

Notification Day Observations and Reflections

Overall Experience

- This ride-along was a good experience, way much better thought out than I thought I’d see. I was really impressed with the whole set up and the humanity, very mindful, treating people with respect, and having nonprofit there who also has relationship with individuals.
- My first impression is that the camps are not how I thought they’d be, maybe because they’re covered in snow. People having trash collected in camps surprised me. Community members seem to be policing one another and will report behavior – this site seems different than downtown, where more new folks are.
- I’m glad that I came today. I always seen these tents and wonder how many and how long they’ve been there – there are more than I anticipated.

Safe Management of Public Spaces Team

- The team is doing a great job, Alejandro’s [Public Space Reclamation Supervisor] background and experience and approach is really good.
- The team is friendly and not intimidating They use a respectful tone of voice, didn’t just open any tent, and took time.
- With Spanish-speaking team members, I felt more welcome and able to ask questions in Spanish.
- It’s very important to know resources out here. [Focus Reentry staff sharing resources and conducting case management; told that People Clinic staff also join at times.]

Boulder Police Department Homeless Outreach Team

- I was expecting something totally different – I didn’t know police officers were dedicated to this work, not as focused on law enforcement.
- The police officers had good energy and were respectful to homeless community, even asking us not to go into a camping site all at once.

Needle Reduction

- I was really happy to hear about needle containment work – reducing number of needles on the ground is a good sign.
- It seems like containers they’re having out have made a big difference.

Clean-up Day Observations and Reflections

Overall Experience

- It's hard to have too much of an idea of the program with only two visits and a few hours.
- In terms of the program, what it was before versus now, it seems drastically better than before, with people being treated in a more humane way. This is always important versus the model before where a company would get contracted and they would just take all of the camper's things.
- I felt like I wasn't supposed to be there and that we were circling so that they could get back to their lives. It felt very hopeless because there's nowhere for folks to go. I felt horrible of the cleaning up and impeding on someone's existence.

Safe Management of Public Spaces Team

- The work city employees do is REALLY hard. I hope employees are being compensated and rewarded for such a difficult work.
- Appreciation for the wages and benefits this team receives.
- The team itself is really doing what they can to help someone in this situation.
- Concern for employees – we may be putting them in danger or harm's way.
- The equipment the team were using was very protective – for example, gloves as they are picking up trash where needles and other hazard items may be found. They need to have all the supplies and support.
- It's very important to continue the mental health training for employees to know how to approach someone. This is crucial for building capacity to employees.

Resources

- The text we saw on the paper notices, including resources, was very little and hard to read.
- Don't know how accessible those services or resources are, I wouldn't know.
- While resources are important, how do we make sure that every city provides that as well so that the burden is not just on Boulder.

Reflections

- There are so many different layers to this problem and to understand the issue is so complex.
- It feels like it continues to be this never-ending cycle of notice, clean up, and come back again.
- It is appalling that we have not been able to come up with a better situation or solution for those experiencing homelessness.
- How do we think of a model, which can be replicated nationwide, in a way that is supportive and sees the humanity in people AND takes care of maintaining a healthy clean environment?
- People experiencing homelessness should be part of the solution and the conversation because they too are part of this community.
- Hiring someone who has been unhoused or can better understand the effort it takes to move out of homelessness is crucial for thinking of solutions around this issue/need/situation.

- Possible solution where the city may be able to dedicate an area for people experiencing homelessness could be. If it is a centralized area, the city can offer better resources, cleanings, etc.
- Peer support to address isolation once people move into housing there is a greater chance for success and stabilization
- How do we also make sure that mental health is a crucial part of resource in order to prevent from further people going into homeless situation?
- It would be good if the city doesn't use the word cleaning. It sounds like social cleaning that has historical context with genocides.
- It's sad that some [Boulder Creek] areas are no longer used for kids' play and instead is for folks to camp. I remember some spots where years ago kids used to play – as a mountain kid, that's your first beach. Families need an area to play in that's not contaminated.

Moving Forward

Moving forward, staff will share operational-focused observations and reflections with the Safe Management of Public Spaces team. Staff will share policy-focused observations and reflections with city council and the cross-departmental Safe Management of Public Spaces leadership team. Additionally, Community Connectors-in-Residence are committed to engaging historically underrepresented communities as part of the 2024 city budget cycle.