



## INFORMATION ITEM MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor and Members of Council

From: Nuria Rivera-Vandermyde, City Manager  
Kurt Firnhaber, Housing and Human Services Director  
Vicki Ebner, HHS Operating and Homelessness Strategy Senior Manager  
Megan Newton, Homelessness Policy Manager  
Lynette Badasarian, Homelessness Program Manager

Date: August 17, 2023

**Subject: Information Item: Safe Outdoor Spaces, Evaluation Processes, and Staff Capacity/Timeline**

---

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the August 3, 2023, council meeting, council requested that staff provide additional information about staff's workplan and staff's ability to provide council with adequate research, analysis of financial impacts and recommendation for a potential Safe Outdoor Spaces program. In addition, council directed staff to work with Homeless Solutions for Boulder County (HSBC) to incorporate Boulder-specific evaluation of potential micro-community projects.

Safe Outdoor Spaces are considered to be sanctioned campsites with attached supportive services. Micro-communities are non-traditional housing or shelter such as pallet sheltering sites, safe parking locations, or tiny home villages.

### BACKGROUND

During the Feb. 2023 City Council Mid-Term Check In, staff mentioned that Homeless Solutions for Boulder County (HSBC) had agreed to engage a consultant to conduct an evaluation of HSBC programs, structure and services. As a key partner in HSBC, the city is a participant in the Request for Proposals (RFP) design process and is providing funding for its share of the cost of evaluation. The current timeline for the evaluation is:

- Sept. – RFP will be released
- Mid-Oct. – RFP responses received

- Nov. – Review RFP responses
- Dec. – Award RFP

In addition to the evaluation, council directed staff to research the viability of implementing a Safe Outdoor Space program. At the time, staff informed council that staff would be focused on opening the Day Service Center, an identified Council Priority, and would not be able to fully research the viability of such a sanctioned campsite program prior to a Day Center being launched.

## ANALYSIS

### *Safe Outdoor Spaces*

While council has identified a need for evaluation of other micro-community approaches, some on council have indicated that Safe Outdoor Spaces could be considered separately from a third-party evaluation. Staff have been conducting updated reviews of other similar programs across the nation and have had ongoing conversations with Colorado Village Collaborative – the primary organization providing Safe Outdoor Spaces (SOS) in Denver. Previous staff analysis can be found as part of [the July 14, 2020, study session \(beginning page 10\)](#) and the [Apr. 27, 2021, council meeting agenda](#). Staff are working towards including these findings as part of the Annual Homelessness Update on Sept. 28. Work to implement an SOS program was intended in the staff work plan to begin after the opening of the day service center.

Council asked staff for additional information regarding the potential resource needs and tradeoffs that could be required were staff to be asked to fully implement an SOS program. Implementation of an SOS program will require a variety of aspects including site identification, likely entitlement of site design, implementation of site infrastructure, program design, request for proposals and contracting. With all of the new programs that provide social service support, the hiring of staff has typically taken several months and often includes a training component. These activities would also include a significant level of staff communication and coordination with the provider and other city departments. It is unlikely that implementation of a sanctioned campsite could be accomplished within the next six to nine months unless the day center is put on hold and the priority is shifted to a SOS program. At the Sept. 28<sup>th</sup> council meeting, further information will be provided that will estimate the financial resources to open such a facility. As the cost will likely be between \$1-1.5 million a year, we will need to look at what programs in the city could be eliminated or reduced to cover a new ongoing program. Additional work would be required from the city's legal team to amend the current camping ordinance to accommodate such an SOS program, but we believe this additional ordinance amendment work would be minimal.

## NEXT STEPS

Staff has informed other members of HSBC leadership of council's desire to include an evaluation of non-traditional/micro-community viability in Boulder as part of the overall evaluation contract. Findings associated with the potential implementation of Safe Outdoor Space will be included in the Annual Homelessness Update on Sept. 28.

We await Council direction on whether and what to move forward on regarding a future SOS program.