



**TO: Mayor Glickstein, City Commission and City Manager**  
**FROM: Laura Simon, Exec. Director, DDA**  
**RE: Downtown Safety Ambassador Program June 20<sup>th</sup> Presentation Information**  
**DATE: Friday, June 9, 2017**

## Introduction

*The Downtown Development Authority is requesting the City Commission review the opportunity for the City to partner with the DDA in providing the entire Downtown (DDA District) with a year round Safety Ambassador Program.*

After a very successful pilot program, the Delray Beach Downtown Development Authority recommends implementing a fulltime Downtown Safety Ambassador Program that will enhance the current Clean and Safe program and improve the quality of life for the growing downtown residents, visitors, businesses and employees. This was the goal of the DDA, Community Improvement team and Clean and Safe Police unit was to work together to find a solution to growing issues that the Downtown was facing. This memo will provide you with a brief overview, information about how the program came about as a potential solution, the role of the Ambassadors, community feedback and results.

## Overview

It has been a vision of the Delray Beach community and leadership to create a vibrant Downtown Delray Beach. Over 30 years ago this process began and the proper steps were taken, organizations worked together to outline the vision for what the Downtown should be and is a model to other cities today. This vibrant business and entertainment district continues to grow and evolve both day and night. It has been the epicenter of activity and economic vitality for decades and is the heart of the city. The Downtown sees millions of people, both visitors and residents every year and employs thousands. Therefore, the quality of life and perception of safety is very important and is a focus for the DDA.

As many sociable urban centers around the country with a vibrant night and daytime, face the growing issues of quality of life issues, Downtown Delray Beach is no exception. Over the past several years of panhandling, vagrants, petty crime and an increase in our transient population causing the perception that Downtown is not safe. As we learned that with growth comes issues and Delray Beach has a history of being proactive and working together to ensure that continue to have a welcoming safe environment for visitors and residents.

According to the Clean and Safe police reports, the key areas that were experiencing a high frequency of vagrants and nuisance issues were the Old School Square Park, Veterans Park, and Libby Wesley Plaza and along Atlantic Avenue. In February 2016, the Clean and Safe team in partnership with the DDA addressed a very serious issue of loitering and criminal activity at 504 E. Atlantic Ave. This was a large expense to the Police Department and is an example of an area that can be addressed through an Ambassador program. It was also apparent during this situation that there is a need for more feet on the street to handle the "smaller" issues which allows the police to handle the serious crime.



The Delray Beach DDA has been working closely with the West Palm Beach DDA over the past several years to learn from their Safety Ambassador program. The DDA and Delray Downtown Manager, initiated a meeting with Professional Security Consultants, who works for West Palm Beach and City Place to discuss the opportunity of adding Ambassadors as a solution. We met and reviewed this program in detail with our Police team to receive their buy-in and understand their needs and receive direction for the Pilot Program.

### **Downtown Facts:**

- The Clean and Safe District runs along Atlantic Ave from I-95 to A1A and along NW/SW 5<sup>th</sup> Ave and NE 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave and is monitored by special Clean and Safe police unit and maintenance team both have evolved in staff and responsibility as the Downtown has changed
- Social occupancy has increased over the past two years with the growth in the downtown businesses and residential development
- The police are dealing with increase in crime, traffic and nightlife issues within Downtown
- The homeless population continues to grow; crimes along the edges of the clean and safe area continue to grow; Businesses and business owners feeling unsafe conducting business in town
- The City parks, alleyways, storefronts, and open spaces within the Downtown district are becoming constant nuisance areas and issues that the Police have to find resources to handle

### **PILOT PROGRAM GOALS:**

Program goals were established going into the program by the partners (PD, City, DDA) and it was determined to conduct a Safety Perception Survey to capture community feedback about the program as well as review quality of life changes within the Downtown during the program.

#### **Goals:**

- Increase the perception of safety within the Downtown among the community
- Decrease quality of life issues within the Downtown Area
- Increase support for the Downtown Clean and Safe unit

By conducting a test program, the DDA and city partners took a proactive approach to finding a solution that will enhance the quality of life for all that are patronizing our Downtown every day.

### **PILOT PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION: February 6 – June 6, 2017**

The Delray Beach Clean and Safe unit and Community Improvement team directed the areas of coverage and times for the Ambassadors to be on patrol. Below were created based on current conditions and to better manage the test program. Professional Security Consultants was contracted to provide the Downtown Safety Ambassador program to Downtown Delray Beach.

### **The Ambassadors of Downtown Delray Beach:**

- Coverage times 6am - 11pm Sunday - Wednesday and 6am - 1am Thursday – Saturday
- Area: Atlantic Ave from NW/SW 5<sup>th</sup> Ave to the Bridge and to NE/SE 1<sup>st</sup> Street. This area was adjusted as needed
- Two Ambassadors per shift on foot and bike patrol
- Communication: Radio Communication between the Ambassadors; Main Cellphone contact to call when needed (561-573-8915)
- PSC roving supervisor and a Delray Supervisor to oversee the program

- A constant presence on the street and in the needed locations creating a positive and welcoming environment
- Work with the Downtown Police to monitor areas within the Downtown with an aim of deterring criminal activity or disruptive street behavior
- Work closely with the Downtown business owners and employees to share information and assist with panhandling situations or any other related needs
- Report any safety hazards, code issues, vandalism, graffiti, trip hazards, etc.
- Reporting and accountability programs tracking results (Weekly reports and shift reports)
- Provide Safe Walk services for employees or customers

**PILOT PROGRAM COVERAGE AREA IN RED:**



**PILOT PROGRAM COSTS: \$66,000 for current 16 week format 2 officers (Funded by the DDA)**  
**\*\*Full Program Cost Estimates: \$290,000 (4 officers per shift for the entire Downtown)**

**Ambassador Shift Detail: (2 Officers per shift)**

**MORNING SHIFT:** Separate patrol: One officer eastside on NE 2nd Ave and the other on the Westside of NE2nd Ave

- Veterans Park and public restrooms
- Under the Bridge
- Deck 84
- Atlantic Plaza
- Colonial Benches on East Atlantic Ave.
- Old School Square Park and Old School Square property (including public restrooms)
- Historical Building
- Garages
- Parking lots
- Wesley Park
- SW 6th Ave
- Parking Plaza
- Back Alleys
- SE 1ST Street
- NE 1st Street
- Block by block patrol
- Behind Café Blue/Local Cafe for any delivery trucks; ensure the trucks are not blocking the building entrance and driveway to condos



**AFTERNOON SHIFT** Patrol the same but focus more on the garages, back alleys, Atlantic Avenue and between Swinton & Federal HWY. Also focus on the restaurant The Office restaurant and Johnny Browns.

- All parks are checked by the Ambassadors an estimated 18 times per shift over 60 per day

**PILOT PROGRAM RESULTS:**

- Reduction of vagrant activity in the Old School Square Park, Libby Wesley Plaza, and Veterans Park (reduced from 20 on average to 1 or 2 during the coverage times)
- Assisted with monitoring of the Old School Square Public Restrooms deterring criminal activity; provided supporting need to have the restrooms closed during the evening
- Increase in resident and visitor activity in these parks
- Increase in compliance of the vagrant offenders
- 6am to 7am Ambassadors wake up campers outside the businesses/storefronts and other public areas
- Reduction of the delivery trucks blocking the entrance to the Royal Atlantic Condominium building due to the assistance of the Ambassador patrol
- Assist with the monitoring of high volume areas such as the corner of NE 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave and Atlantic Ave after 10pm Thursday – Saturday
- Identified over 50 safety hazards that were reported to the city
- Over 2000 Tenant Interactions and over 600 Tourist interactions; (walk to car)
- 2200 Park Patrols (OSS, Veteran's and Libby Wesley Plaza)
- 40 incident reports which requires the Ambassador to resolve a situation either on own or with assistance and Over 70 Police Assisted incidents

**Survey Feedback:**

As a test program, it is essential for the DDA to receive feedback from the community, stakeholders and visitors. The DDA took this opportunity to capture input on the perception of safety in the Downtown as well. The DDA launched the survey in April deployed by hand and online throughout the entire Downtown. Over 200 responses were received and continue to come in as the survey as still active.

**Survey Highlights:**

- 61% Downtown Businesses and 34% residents
- 50% of respondents feel Somewhat Safe in Downtown 2% not safe at all
- Alleyways, Parking Garages, Parking lots, Veteran's Park and Side streets most unsafe feeling
- 82% of Respondents say the Ambassadors add to the feeling of safety Downtown
- 76% feel the Ambassadors provide a proactive approach to crime prevention
- 72% Deter the nuisance issues such as panhandling, sleeping in public, trash/littering, graffiti
- 81% feel the Ambassadors provide them with an enhanced feeling of safety
- 87% of responses want the program boundaries extended
- 89% of responses feel the program is great or excellent and should continue
- Largest complaint is that the coverage is limited to one specific area; that there needs to be more communication about the program to the public and how to use it; Customize the uniforms for Downtown Delray Beach!

(Full survey detail provided) *Survey Results and Emails, PowerPoint]*