



TO: Mayor Glickstein, City Commission and City Manager
FROM: Laura Simon, Exec. Director, DDA
RE: Downtown Safety Ambassador Program
DATE: Friday, May 19, 2017

Summary

The Delray Beach Downtown Development Authority is considering implementing a fulltime Downtown Security 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 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. Currently Downtown Miami, Ft. Lauderdale and West Palm Beach all have Downtown Ambassador programs which are huge assets to their organizations and the community. The Delray Beach DDA is also a member of the International Downtown Association and the Responsible Hospitality Institute, both providing strong resources for information and solutions that have worked in other cities like Delray Beach.

We are requesting the City Commission review the opportunity to partner with the DDA in providing the entire Downtown (DDA District) with a year round Safety Ambassador Program.

Program Overview

Downtown Delray Beach is and has been a vibrant business and entertainment district that continues to grow and evolve. This historic downtown 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. Therefore, the quality of life and perception of safety is very important and is a focus for the DDA.

There has been an increase over the past two years in panhandling, homelessness, petty crime and an increase in our transient population causing the perception that Downtown is not safe. 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. 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 Security 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.

The goal for the Delray Beach DDA and the Clean and Safe team is to be proactive and find a solid and proven solution that will enhance the vibrancy of our growing Downtown.



Where we are today:

- The Clean and Safe District runs along Atlantic Ave from I-95 to A1A and along NE 2nd Ave
- The police are dealing with increase in crime and other quality of life issues within Downtown
- The homeless population continues to grow; Critical crimes along the edges of the Downtown 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 nuisance areas and issues that the Police have to find resources to handle
- We have learned from other cities not to let the nuisance issues become police issues or take over your town – be proactive not reactive
- The DDA approved and is funding the Pilot Program with a short term contract with Professional Security Consultants that will allow the Delray Team to customize and evaluate the program. (16 Week program)

PILOT 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 are taking a proactive approach to finding a solution that will enhance the quality of life for all that are patronizing our Downtown every day. This pilot program will allow the team to fully identify and understand what the need is for our community.

PILOT PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION: February 6 – June 5, 2017

After meeting with the Delray Beach Clean and Safe unit and Community Improvement team, areas of coverage and times were outlined. These were created based on current conditions and to better manage the test program. Professional Security Consultants was hired to provide the Downtown Security 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 5th Ave to the Bridge and to NE/SE 1st 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
- They are 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
- Provide Safe Walk services for employees or customers

**Pilot Program Results:**

- Reduction of vagrant activity in the Old School Square Park, Libby Wesley Plaza, and Veterans Park
- 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 work hard to 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 2nd 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
- 2200 Park Patrols
- 40 incident reports which requires the Ambassador to resolve a situation either on own or with assistance
- 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 began enlisting the feedback of the community in April by creating a survey that was deployed by hand and online both in the Pilot Program coverage area and throughout the entire Downtown. Over 200 responses were received and continue to come in as the survey as still active.

Survey Highlights:

- 62% Downtown Businesses and 33% residents
- 51% of respondents feel Somewhat Safe in Downtown
- 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
- 82% feel the Ambassadors provide them with an enhanced feeling of safety
- 90% of responses want the program boundaries extended
- 90% 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)

Downtown Ambassador Weekly Reports:

- Detailed weekly shift reports are provided to the DDA and sent to the city partners; (all have been provided in packet)

[Packet items: PSC Company information; Shift Reports, Survey Results and Emails, PowerPoint]