

Operational Recommendations for Rio Grande District

Implementation		Fiscal Impact		Legal or Civil Rights Considerations		Legislative Requirements	
1	Immediate	1	None Anticipated	1	None Anticipated	1	None Required
2	Within 30 Days	2	\$100-\$3,000	2	Needs Review	2	Modification to exiting statute
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4	Beyond 90 Days	4	More than \$10,000	4	Probable risk		

1. Require the Road Home and any new shelters to implement a “needs based model.”

While there is significant debate regarding the philosophy of needs based vs. low, or even no barrier housing, the current situation in the Rio Grande district and Salt Lake County in general demands a more managed homeless service delivery approach be undertaken. The rapid and sustained increase in population at Salt Lake Valley shelters, specifically the Road Home has allowed individuals who promote criminality and civil disruption to monopolize the very scarce available resource.

A no barrier policy within the Road Home appears to have had the unintended effect of allowing dominate and often aggressive personalities to enter and remain, while forcing many individuals who desperately need and deserve the services to avoid the shelter. The maintenance of “no barrier” has in essences created and sustained a climate of antisocial and unlawful activity.

To ensure individuals who are attempting to reintegrate have the greatest opportunity possible, It is suggested the Road Home reprioritize shelter beds for those individuals which have any one of the following disqualifying factors:

- Currently intoxicated
- Unwilling to be subject to reasonable Search of persons or property
- In possession of drugs or alcohol
- Combative or belligerent
- Currently on Sex Offender registry
- Active Felony Warrant
- Active Warrant for Assault, Domestic Violence

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2. Require the Road Home Shelter reduce its daily population to 200 by June 1, 2017.

The Road Home facility has for many years operated beyond its maximum operational capacities. The approach has resulted in significant health and safety concerns both on the interior and the exterior of the facility. It is critical that the facility limit entry until such time as the facility can demonstrate that populations above 200 can be maintained without the collateral community impacts. Similarly these population restrictions should be maintained until the host of other collateral impacts which are currently aggravated by the deficiencies at the Road Home have been substantially and sustainably reduced or eliminated.

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3. Place a full time Police presence in the Road Home Shelter and other shelters 24 hours a day 7 days a week.

The compliance and deterrent benefits of a full time uniformed Police Officer assigned to a shelter cannot be overstated. The officer assigned should have clear and detailed guidance with respect to the nature and responsibilities of this assignment to ensure the private service provider and the municipalities' needs are balanced.

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4. Clarify and distribute the functional definitions of a “camping” violation.

Currently there is significant confusion both among law enforcement officers and the general population with respect to what constitutes a violation of the “camping” ordinance. This ordinance must be more clearly defined or the ordinance abandoned in favor of more specific language clearly eliminating the ability of individuals to erect or maintain any structure for sleeping or temporary habitation of any kind.

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5. Develop an “Urban Camping” site, located in the vacant lot of 100 South 600 West, or other suitable location.

It is critical to develop a formally designated site where individuals who may be displaced from the Road Home through the recommended population reductions can go and erect a temporary structure for short term habitation. This site should if possible be publicly owned or leased.

Individuals who have been identified by law enforcement as needing temporary shelter can be directed to the site.

The location should have clearly posted rules and regulations to include but not limited to the following:

- Description of the general size and materials allowed at each individual camping site
- Specific times the “camping sites” can be occupied
- Description of allowable associated property
- Number of consecutive days an individual may occupy the sites
- No pets
- No drugs or alcohol

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6. Strict and sustained enforcement of the respective “camping ordinance”

The lack of clarity regarding the current camping ordinances, is aggravated by the intermittent efforts at debris removal. Historically items defined as habitations or other debris have been removed on a weekly or other basis. While these efforts have had a positive impact the reality is individuals will often return to the area immediately following the clean-up effort and construct a new shelter. It is imperative that once eradicated officers remain or return to the location frequently immediately following such operations to ensure such “re-occupation” does not occur.

Officers must be empowered and supported by their respective administrations with respect to these re-occupation elimination efforts. The impact of sustained and prolonged efforts directed against “camping” can engender individual and community hostility as it can viewed as unfairly targeting or “criminalizing” an individual’s attempts to “camp”.

The pattern of partial enforcement followed by either short or extended periods of non-enforcement has and will continue to promote confusion and hostility. Either “camping” will not be tolerated except in designated locations, or further attempts at “enforcing” this issue should be greatly limited as they are of limited value with respect to time and resources.

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7. Utilize inmate labor from the Salt Lake County Jail to assist with Rio Grande clean-up efforts

Because of limited availability of resources inmate labor should be widely utilized to assist in efforts to clean and maintain the Rio Grande area. Individuals who have been arrested within the area should be given the opportunity to return to the area and assist in clean-up efforts.

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8. Utilization of mechanized cleaning and decontamination equipment on a frequent and sustained basis.

Due to prolonged and intense illegal camping and loitering the Rio Grande and surrounding area has been subjected to significant levels of contamination. Officers who work the area have complained about human feces being routinely flung from the tires of their bicycles onto their water bottles causing illness. Citizens also routinely report encounters with human waste, narcotics packaging and hypodermics needles as well as used prophylactics.

These impacts must be mitigated by regular and intense mechanical decontamination. Specifically high pressure washers, street sweepers and the collection and removal of other bio hazard.

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9. Implement a temporary and targeted pedestrian exclusion during school bus pick up and drop off.

Presently children from the Road Home are transported by School bus to a variety of local area schools. These “pick-ups” occur directly in front of the Family Shelter on Rio Grande at pre-determined times. During these periods of time, children, who have been brought to the shelter, often specifically to avoid hazardous environments, are subjected to a host of antisocial and criminal behaviors. It would seem logical, humane and legal that individuals who have amassed on the public areas directly in front of the family shelter be temporarily excluded during these pick up and drop off times.

Few communities would allow the types of behavior which commonly occur on Rio Grande to occur in front of any school in their communities as children were arriving or leaving for school. Why is it allowed to occur at a “family shelter?”

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10. Intermittent deployment of (LPR) License plate readers at various locations and various times in the Rio Grande Area.

The Rio Grande area is a known open air drug market in which individuals from around the region travel for the express purpose of obtaining narcotics. Many of the individuals who frequent the area have been arrested or detained previously for these same offenses. The vehicle information from these previous arrests should be entered into a database attached to a series of mobile license plate readers (LPR). These readers would identify vehicles that have a *demonstrated and documented pattern of criminal activity*. Once identified officers *would have a reasonable suspicion* that these individuals were engaging in similar or other criminal activity and could be stopped to determine their purpose.

Publicizing these actions prior to the deployment will assist in deterrence and would conform to similar requirements for DUI enforcement stops, or other “targeted” law enforcement operation.

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11. Document analyze and publicize those jurisdictions or agencies within Utah and out of the state from which individuals have been either directed or provided financial or transportation resources to travel to the Rio Grande area for services.

It is imperative to obtain *by all legal means possible* the home or last known jurisdiction from which the majority of those who have recently arrived in the Rio Grande are emanating. A common belief amongst both law enforcement and the general public is that certain jurisdictions which may either be less appealing or less supportive of a homeless or indigent population are encouraging their residents to travel to Salt Lake. This belief includes the presently unsubstantiated claim that some jurisdictions are providing transportation to Salt Lake as a means of reducing their own chronic homelessness issues.

Understanding these “migration” patterns will allow Salt Lake and the State of Utah to communicate and coordinate with other jurisdictions.

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12. Further restrict parking during specific hours in the area of 100 South to 400 South from 500 West to 600 west.

Enhanced strategies should be engaged to manage off hour parking and reduce other vehicle related violations within the Rio Grande area. Specific efforts should be directed to discourage parking in all side streets and alley ways from North Temple to 400 South and from 400 West to 600 West. *Improperly parked, uninsured, abandoned and improperly registered vehicles should be impounded and removed.* Similar strategies should be engaged with private property owners to ensure that unauthorized or suspicious vehicle traffic is reduced.

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13. Engage and support local property owners and managers in efforts to deter trespassing and the deterrence of material collection.

Develop and maintain an initiative to deploy law enforcement and or other personnel with specific training and guidance in strategies to secure private property. These strategies should include but not be limited to:

- Exterior lighting
- Fencing or other access denial mechanism
- Trash and construction material storage containment and removal
- Camera Systems
- Private Property vehicle Impound information
- suspicious activity reporting and documentation

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14. Engage in an aggressive public awareness campaign to inform citizens that money given to panhandlers are commonly redirected to feed the drug trade.

Many in our community view the individuals who commonly populate our street corners, freeway off ramps and other high traffic areas as individuals who are in need of support to survive. Unfortunately in all too many cases these individuals are receiving sustenance from a variety of other public and private resources, and are instead using these gracious donations to support drug and alcohol addictions.

An effort to educate and redirect our citizens relative to the potential negative impacts of supporting panhandlers *must be combined with an alternative giving model*. One that allows the continued charity of our community, but ensures the donations are used for the intended purpose which is to elevate people out of poverty not drive them further into addiction. There are at least two distinct public awareness campaigns that are poised and ready to deploy, and it is critical that these efforts begin as soon as possible.

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15. Generate an “alternative giving” model for those who are currently panhandling and have “legitimate needs.”

As previously identified the need to educate the public to redirect donations from individual panhandlers, to an alternative giving model is imperative. Simply telling citizens not to give, has been *proven unsuccessful in nearly every community it has been attempted*. Instead there must be legitimate and coordinated alternative developed and deployed which allows people to donate, and assures these donors the funds they give are received for the purpose intended.

Developing a model where panhandlers can voluntarily obtain a personalized “Identifier”, specifically a text or email identity from a legitimate governmental entity or selected private provider. In order to obtain such an identifier, the individual panhandler would have to voluntarily submit information or documentation describing their need and outlining the specific types of resources they require. Once an individual’s needs are independently validated they would be issued the unique identifier which they could display on their sign on a street corner or other location.

Individuals who might choose to give to this individual could be assured that the request being made was legitimate and the funds they might give would go towards specific benefits. Being assured of this, a potential donor would electronically transfer funds via the personal identifier. The panhandler could *then go to a central location and obtain either direct transfer of certain items or be issued vouchers to local merchants for specific goods or services* based on the funds transferred to their respective account or personal identifier. This model would in all likely hood increase giving, ensure that services were being more efficiently delivered and potentially support participating downtown business

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16. Engage in efforts to prevent unauthorized use of power outlets at both public and private facilities.

It is common for many individuals in the Rio Grande district who appear indigent to have a cellular phone and in many cases other electronic devices. While the device may support some in their efforts to improve their situation it is also common that these devices are used to facilitate the purchase, transportation and distribution of controlled substances. To ensure such activities are limited all efforts should be made to secure or remove any power outlets in the area.

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17. Enforce bicycle license violations with seizure

Presently in the Rio Grande it is common for individuals to use bicycles for transportation. The use of bicycles is not an inherently negative or problematic situation. What is of concern is that not infrequently individuals use bicycles to transport, or distribute controlled substances. It is recommended that in situations *where an officer can articulate the correlation between the use of a bicycle and the distribution or facilitation of illicit activity, and where the bicycle is not licensed*, the officer impound the bicycle.

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18. Create and engage a Task Force comprised of Salt Lake Valley Law Enforcement agencies on a full time basis to participate in enforcement efforts in the Rio Grande.

The Salt Lake City Police Department has and continues to perform incredible work in one of the most challenging environments in the state of Utah. Officers face the challenges with dignity, compassion and honor. These Officers however have been asked to perform these functions without the assistance or support of the communities from which many of the individuals they are dealing with originated. The issues in the Rio Grande are not just a Salt Lake City problem, nor can they be resolved only with Salt Lake City resources. It is recommended the Rio Grande District utilize the resources of a Multi-Agency task force comprised of officers and support staff assigned from all Salt Lake Valley law Enforcement Agencies, as well as any willing Federal Partners.

The Rio Grande Strike Force would be comprised of specially selected, trained and deployed officers with responsibilities to specifically address the narcotics, trespassing, sexual solicitation, traffic, assault and other status offenses occurring in and around the Rio Grande. The advantage of a Task Force model includes enhanced communication and coordination with other Salt Lake Valley Agencies, as well as the ability to assist in the recovery, identification and transportation of individuals who have traveled to the area from surrounding jurisdictions to engage in illicit activities. Perhaps more importantly the deployment of a multi-agency task force will lessen the financial and operational burdens which have to date been borne solely by the citizens of Salt Lake City.

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19. Relocate the 400 South 200 West liquor store.

The current placement of the Utah State Liquor store serves to aggravate an already difficult situation. It is clear individuals who suffer from alcohol dependency will take great lengths to obtain alcohol, and as such will travel to other locations regardless of where the outlet may be relocated. The recommendation to move the outlet should not be perceived as an effort to prevent individuals from obtaining alcohol, but rather a tangible and visible recognition that many of the unhealthy patterns in the Rio Grande should be permanently altered and replaced with healthy alternatives.

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20. Provide Transportation Vouchers on a needs based criteria to individuals wishing to reconnect with friends, families or job opportunities outside Utah.

There are individuals who have found themselves in the Rio Grande area who would travel to locations with family connections if they could not only obtain funds, but maintain them despite the significant and chronic desire to expend those funds on illicit substances. It is recommended that monies be allocated to provide transportation vouchers to allow those with legitimate and substantiated opportunities out of the area to take advantage of those opportunities.

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21. Improve and expand cooperative efforts with all federal resources, to address the complex and chronic drug trafficking issues in the Rio Grande including, DEA, FBI, U.S. Marshalls and Immigration Customs Enforcement.

Many continue to characterize the issues affecting the Rio Grande as a “homeless Problem” while homelessness is a major contributing factor the real issues in the Rio Grande are significantly more insidious. Due in large part to decades of failed social policies, and tolerance of increasing levels of social non conformity the area has become attractive to multinational drug trafficking organizations (DTO’s) and other criminal elements.

Presently and for the last several years, DTO’s have increasingly infiltrated the Rio Grande Area. As part of that infiltration DT’s have recruited individuals from Central and South America to work in and coordinate the transportation and distribution of large quantities of illicit drugs. The DTO’s have recognized the value associated with the social disruption generated by individuals who have been drawn to the area as a result of the myriad of services. The DTO’s often provide quantities of narcotics to individuals to serve as look outs, couriers, and even in many instances to distract the police and allow their arrest to protect members of the DTO’s.

The volume, quantity and quality of the criminal activity especially that orchestrated by multinational drug trafficking organizations cannot be effectively addressed by local resources alone. It is imperative that every resource, including all federal agencies must have a sustained and visible role in addressing these complex and chronic issues if there is to be any significant and long standing impact.

Creation of Rio Grande Park?

In addition to the other recommendations contained in this report it may be beneficial to explore another long term option for this area, which would be the designation of specific portions in and around the Rio Grande Depot as a “City Park”

The area, much of which has already been converted into a “park type strip” along the road way on 500 West between 300 and 400 South, as well as the Historic Rio Grande Depot, Rio Grande Street from 300 South to the dead end at approximately University Blvd. would seem a logical and realistic candidate for such designation.

The creation of a City Park may seem like an unrealistic option however it would allow significant opportunities to restore and even beautify this now blighted area. A Park designation would ensure the district could be effectively managed to preserve and protect the valuable and historic structures, while providing an enhanced urban experience for the residents, businesses and visitors who frequent this portion of our city.

