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Date: January 22, 2018
To: Darin Atteberry, City Manager
Thru: Terry Jones, Interim Chief of Police
From: Kevin Cronin, Assistant Chief
RE: Review of 2017 data concerning criminal activity committed by a segment of the homeless/ transient population.

February 1, 2018
 TO: Mayor & City Councilmembers
 FROM: Darin Atteberry
 FYI /sek

A look back at the past year reveals some troubling trends with regard to our homeless/transient population. There was some very concerning violent crime and property crime committed by homeless/transient people arriving in this area. Some of these people have serious criminal history from other states, and they continue their crimes here.

The increase in the homeless/ transient population has had a significant effect on Fort Collins citizens and the City organization - specifically Police Services, Natural Areas and Parks. Five tragic homicides are the most glaring examples. Another example is a recent string of burglaries in which a transient male stole a truck and crashed it into several businesses to steal money from their cash registers. The damage for this one-night spree is estimated at \$260,000. There are dozens of other examples of members of our community being victimized by a segment of the transient people arriving in the area. Sheriff Smith continues to express concern over 20-25% of the 500-600 inmates in the jail with serious criminal charges that are identified as transient/ homeless. These data points confirm a very troubling situation.

Number of Homeless/Transient Victims and Suspects in Homicide Cases					
Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Number of Victims	0	0	0	1	5
Number of Suspects	0	0	0	2	5

The following table illustrates the number of cases in which people identified as homeless or transient have been arrested or issued a citation in different areas of town. While some decrease has been experienced in Old Town, the increase in the other areas shows that the activity has likely been displaced to other areas as officer's focus on downtown. This data is considered accurate because it comes from the Records Management System (RMS) and is taken from the address field on citations and arrest documentation.

Homeless/Transient Arrests and Citations						
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Total
Old Town Area	327	525	495	720	622	2689
North College Area	44	53	72	85	120	374
Library Area	13	21	18	25	35	112

While there have been positive comments about decreasing disruptive transient behavior in the downtown area this year, other areas of town have experienced increasing problems. Midtown, the Mason corridor, the Harmony corridor and Campus West have all experienced increased transient/homeless activity. In 2017 the Library area became a focal point for disruptive behaviors. Progress has been made there in the last few months by Police Services in partnership with the Library management that has been willing to pay off duty officers to increase police presence.

Another data source available to research police activity is the Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system. Data captured in CAD is less reliable in identifying police activity involving transient/homeless people who are involved in many different types of police incidents. We search for key words in the file that identify calls as homeless/transient-related. This does not give a complete accounting of the related calls, but it is valuable for mapping and comparisons. For example, a recent CAD search for homeless/transient activity at Oak and College in 2017 identified 74 incidents; a deeper look using RMS data revealed 129 related incidents. According to these files, Police Services responded to the following average transient-related calls per day in 2017. This demonstrates the daily impact this activity has on police resources and our ability to serve other parts of the community.

Average Transient/ Homeless calls per day	
June	17
July	18
August	16
September	15
October	13
November	14
December	6

Police Services compiles a bi-weekly report that highlights some of the more visible homeless/transient related cases. Please refer to these reports for dozens of examples of serious crimes committed by some members of the homeless/transient population.

Another troubling trend is the increase in drug activity, especially methamphetamines and heroin, among members of this population. A growing concern over hypodermic needles being found in parks,

natural areas, planters, the downtown library, business restrooms, and other areas demonstrates increasingly bold drug use and a disregard for the safety of our community. A special contractor has been engaged by Natural Areas and Parks to clean up public spaces around Old Town to protect employees from these risks.

The Natural Areas Rangers have also seen an increase in violations in open spaces near downtown and the Poudre River corridor. There is growing concern for the Ranger's safety in light of unlawful behaviors, increasing drug and alcohol abuse, and disregard for law enforcement.

Data from the Natural Area Rangers illustrate the increased contacts the Rangers are making:

- 2015 – 83 ticket/warnings issued. 49 of those camping related (59%)
- 2016 – 105 ticket/warnings issued. 82 of those camping related (78%)
- 2017 – 156 ticket/warnings issued. 105 of those are camping related (67%)

Because of the increasing risks, Rangers have begun to conduct patrols in pairs, team up on patrol with Police Services, and maintain a higher level of defensive tactics training. At this time, Natural Area Rangers are prohibited from making solo contacts with transients. Coordinated patrols twice a month with police officers have been scheduled to help address the level of enforcement.

There have been successes in recent years that can be attributed to City Council's concern about this issue. A team of one sergeant and four police officers was added to the downtown area in the 2015-16 budget. These officers have made a positive impact in the quality of life downtown. Funding to pay for jail bed space for repeat municipal violators is also making a difference. Current plans to utilize work release for municipal violators and to create a municipal probation officer to manage these offenders are positive steps to reduce disruptive behaviors. The support for these initiatives is appreciated.

Rangers and Police Services are exploring potential improvements in the ability of the City to provide community-policing services to natural areas and parks. Several options are under consideration and it is likely there will be 2019-20 budget offers that represent some combination of these options. Options under consideration include:

1. Additional Police Services staff to enhance patrol capacity in these areas and investigate serious crimes committed by the transient population;
2. Additional Ranger staff to enhance patrol capacity in these areas
3. Additional training or equipment for Rangers.

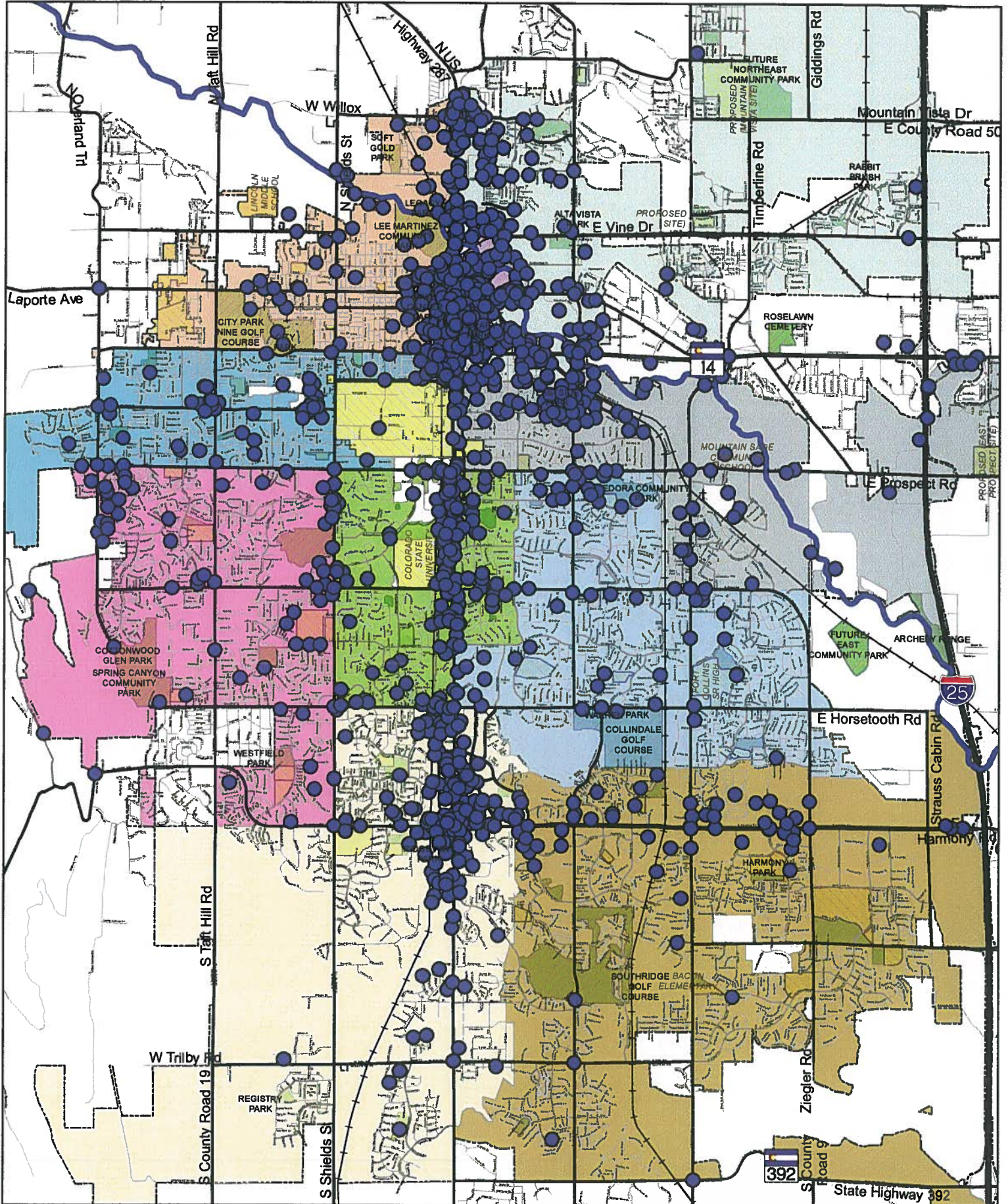
Increasing staffing to address criminal activity by members of the transient/ homeless population is a short-term solution to this community problem. Experience has shown that positive impacts made by increasing staffing in some areas are likely to displace problems in other parts of the city. The long term solution is to assess the reasons homeless/ transient criminals are choosing our community and take decisive steps to make it less attractive to this criminal element where possible. The resources required to respond to and investigate incidents involving members of the homeless/ transient population are

significant, and this ultimately reduces the level of service provided to the community (such as response times to emergent calls). Even more importantly, members of our community are being victimized by a segment of the homeless/ transient population that is committing crimes here.

This community is attractive to people who come here for many reasons. It is no different for the transient/ homeless population who also enjoy the generosity of the people and organizations in this city. In addition to the usual disruptive behaviors that affect people and businesses in this city, a growing number of these visitors have serious criminal history from other places—and they continue their criminal lifestyle here. Homeless/transient populations who are not from the area refer to the City of Fort Collins as a destination place, which provide free resources. This statement is evident from interviews with homeless/transient populations, other jurisdictions, and social media geared toward homeless/transient populations. We need a continued commitment to impact the growing problem of transient/ homeless criminals coming to this city in areas that can be addressed through public policy and community education. This is a big challenge, and it will take time to make progress in this area.

Last year this community was tarnished by some very serious crimes committed by transient/ homeless people. Increasingly, the resources of Police, Natural Areas and Parks are consumed by these issues, reducing the level of service provided to other citizens of this community. Police response times are slower, other crimes are not properly investigated and order and maintenance in our City's natural areas and parks gets neglected because of the lack of staffing to address all of these issues. Dedicated efforts to identify and eliminate the reasons these criminal transient/ homeless people are coming to Fort Collins are essential as we move forward. Adding staffing to these affected departments is an important part of the solution to these problems until the transient/ homeless culture can be impacted through public policy and community education.

Homeless/Transient Contacts
2016



Homeless/Transient Contacts
2017

