

East Eighth Street

REPORT OVERVIEW



City of Sioux Falls
**PLANNING AND
DEVELOPMENT
SERVICES**

SPRING 2020

East 8th Street Corridor Plan—Status Report

SUMMARY

In July 2019, at Councilor Theresa Stehly's request, Councilors Janet Brekke, Pat Starr, Greg Neitzert, City staff, and several 8th Street businesses gathered regarding concerns the businesses had about the homeless and vulnerable in the area. Several businesses reported that their patrons had experienced panhandling, and that aggressive behavior had increased by some of the homeless in the area.

At a follow-up meeting with the service agencies and local businesses in September, Sioux Falls Police addressed concerns and issues that they had experienced. Calls in the area had increased, much due to public intoxication.

Following the September meeting, City Housing and Planning staff met one-on-one with almost 20 businesses, service agencies, and Police to understand and mediate some of the issues that have been brought up. The general themes that were discussed are categorized into these issues:

- Loitering, vagrancy, and panhandling.
- Safety, traffic, pedestrians, intoxication, and aggressiveness.
- Appearance, littering, and restroom usage.
- Enabling, accountability, and rules.
- Concentration and increased numbers of homeless individuals.

Based on consultation with business owners, service providers, Police, and City staff, objectives have been drafted to begin a discussion that can help improve and revitalize the area and study the East 8th Street Corridor and Redevelopment Plan.

This status report provides the strategies developed as a part of the first stage of this corridor study and redevelopment plan process. The report also includes the next steps in the process to fully complete the corridor study and redevelopment plan including plans for a survey, public involvement, and education.

BACKGROUND

Much of what has been discussed during the public meetings and one-on-one meetings has been how to work with the service agencies in the 8th Street corridor area and how to improve homelessness in the corridor area. Below is some background information to provide a basis for developing strategies.

HOMELESSNESS AND SIOUX FALLS

Chronic homelessness has become a major problem in America. According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development as of 2018, there were approximately 553,000 homeless people living on the streets, trapped in a cycle of poverty rendering them unable to find a steady livelihood. The problem of homelessness is at its root a problem of affordable housing. According to statistics compiled by the National Alliance to End Homelessness, 11 million low-income households spend half or more of their annual income on housing. As housing prices continue to rise faster than incomes, more people are likely to become homeless.

Homelessness affects many segments of the population, including families, children, domestic violence victims, ex-convicts, veterans, the mentally ill, and the aged. Twenty to twenty-five percent of the homeless have mental illness such as depression and bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and anxiety disorders. Most researchers agree that the connection between homelessness and mental illness is a complicated two-way relationship. An individual's mental illness may lead to cognitive and behavioral problems that make it difficult to earn a stable income or to carry out daily activities in ways that encourage stable housing. (Brain & Behavior Research Foundation).

Eleven hundred and fifty-nine individuals in South Dakota were identified as homeless in a 2018 survey. Sioux Falls had 410 homeless individuals during the 2018 count. Compared to other communities, people experiencing homelessness in Sioux Falls are more likely to be sheltered than unsheltered. This finding is consistent with reported information about the capacity of Sioux Falls to house people experiencing homelessness. Relative to other communities, Sioux Falls has a higher proportion of emergency or temporary shelter beds available than permanent housing options. (Augustana Research Institute [ARI] Community Collaboration to Confront Homelessness, August 2019).

SERVICE AGENCIES

Like many cities in America, areas in and around downtown Sioux Falls attract the homeless due to nearby service agencies and basic amenities such as shelter, food, personal items, showers, and bathrooms—resources that often cannot be found elsewhere for this population.

Most of the service agencies are located within walking distance of downtown Sioux Falls. The Good Shepherd Center and The Banquet were once located in the center of downtown, but for expansion purposes relocated east to East 8th Street and North Indiana Avenue. The Good Shepherd Center became the Bishop Dudley Hospitality House in 2014 and is within blocks of the Union Gospel Mission, The Banquet (moved in 2007), and across Cliff Avenue is St. Francis House.

Several homeless shelters in Sioux Falls provide emergency housing for the vulnerable population. **Bishop Dudley Hospitality House (BDHH)** provides overnight services for 80 men, 20 women, and seven families. Day services provide essential services besides shelter. These include lunch Monday through Friday, laundry services, shower/restroom opportunities, hygiene items, and access to collaborative social

service providers, resource advocates, and technology access. Support services are also provided by:

- Birthright—Provides information about pregnancy, adoption, and community programs.
- Southeast Behavioral Health—Assist individuals with mental illness.
- Carroll Institute—Treatment facility for substance abuse prevention.
- Veterans Outreach—Provide drop-in services for veterans and their families who experience homelessness.
- Falls Community Health—Complete primary health and dental care.
- SDSU and Augustana nursing students—Light medical triage.

Guests of Bishop Dudley Hospitality House are required to follow policies including:

- No outside food, drugs, or alcohol, or use of, are allowed on the property.
- No fighting, threats, or aggressive behavior is tolerated on the property.
- Any patron who violates these rules will be asked to vacate the property.
- All individuals staying at Bishop Dudley Hospitality House must be able to self-care. Medical professionals are not on staff.
- See BDHH website for additional programs, income source, and length of stay policy.

The **Union Gospel Mission** provides lodging for men, women, and families that need a place to rest and get out of the elements. These guests might be transients passing through the area, some are people struggling as they work to get back on their feet, and a few others are individuals that choose to join their ministry program. The Mission's men's facility allows for 70 men and the separate women's and children facility accommodates 48 individuals. Three meals a day are provided, along with a Thrift Store that provides free clothing and household items for those in need and are open to the public. The Mission plans to consolidate services into one building and increase their capacity in the near future.

Located a few blocks just outside the 8th Street corridor area is **St. Francis House**, an ecumenical transitional housing program that offers fellowship and support to those in need. Their program provides shelter, food, case management, and support as well as special services for reaching long-term goals including employment, independent housing, addiction recovery, and money management. Guests of St. Francis House are required to follow guidelines:

- Guests are required to hold a full-time job and uphold household chores.

- Zero tolerance policy on drugs, gambling, and alcohol.
- Guests must attend two self-improvement classes each week.
- Hold a full-time job.
- Attend all evening meals.
- Uphold household chores.
- Place 100 percent of their earnings into a savings account.
- Pay on any outstanding debt, including fines, restitution, child support, and past due utilities.

The Banquet has a 34-year history of providing meals that are paid for, prepared by and served by volunteer groups who come from Sioux Falls and the surrounding area. Meals are offered for not only the homeless, but also area residents. Breakfast and dinner meals are offered Monday through Friday and lunch meals on Saturdays only. Guests of The Banquet are required to follow guidelines including:

- Intoxicated individuals will not be served at The Banquet.

The City of Sioux Falls and Minnehaha County in cooperation with Sanford Health and Avera McKennan Hospital will be developing a **Community Triage Center** at East 8th Street and Dakota Avenue. It will be a collaborative, communitywide project proposed to meet the needs of individuals presenting a behavioral health or substance use need, which would not require inpatient or emergency department services. Sioux Falls has a subgroup of individuals being served in local emergency departments and in jail who could be better served at a different level and with more coordination of care. The aim is not to replace emergency departments or inpatient behavioral health, but to act as a net to catch those in need who do not reach the criteria for these types of services. (Minnehaha County Community Triage Center Project)

8TH STREET BUSINESS MEETINGS

Throughout July, City Councilors and staff met with several of the 8th Street businesses regarding their concerns about the homeless and changes in the neighborhood that were cited earlier. Later that month, the *Argus Leader* reported that Police had responded to 971 calls during 2019 for service to the area, spanning between Franklin and Cliff Avenues and East 8th Street to East 10 Street. Of those, 272 were reports of disorderly subjects, 123 “man down” calls, 84 intoxicated subjects, and 36 liquor law violations.

Because many of the businesses’ nuisance concerns stem from alcohol use, there was discussion of banning the single-serve 40-ounce alcohol cans in city limits. In 2015, City Councilor Dean Karsky proposed the ban of such alcohol, but after talking with business owners, law officials, and substance abuse professionals, he decided against the ban

proposal based on information that the single-serve ban would not stop anyone from getting his or her hands on alcohol. “If the urgency is bad enough, they’ll seek it out.”

SIoux FALLS POLICE

The City convened a follow-up meeting with human service agencies and business owners in September to help create a dialogue and bridge communication. Sioux Falls Police addressed issues regarding some of the complaints and what, if any, action they could take. Based on state law, they can act on the following:

- **35-1-5.3 Consumption of Distilled Spirits in Public Place as Misdemeanor—Exceptions:**

It is a Class 2 misdemeanor for any person to consume distilled spirits in any public place, other than upon the premises of an on-sale dealer that is licensed to sell distilled spirits or upon the location set forth in a permit granted by § 35-1-5.5. For purposes of this section, the term, public place, means any place, whether in or out of a building, commonly and customarily open to or used by the public, and any street or highway.

- **22-18-35 Disorderly Conduct—Misdemeanor:**

Any person who intentionally causes serious public inconvenience, annoyance, or alarm to any other person, or creates a risk thereof by:

- (1) Engaging in fighting or in violent or threatening behavior;
- (2) Making unreasonable noise;
- (3) Disturbing any lawful assembly or meeting of persons without lawful authority; or
- (4) Obstructing vehicular or pedestrian traffic;

is guilty of disorderly conduct. Disorderly conduct is a Class 2 misdemeanor. However, if the defendant has been convicted of or entered a plea of guilty to, three or more violations of this section, within the preceding ten years, the defendant is guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor for any fourth or subsequent offense.

- **22-35-6 Entering or Refusing to Leave Property After Notice—Misdemeanor:**

Entering or refusing to leave private property after notice is a misdemeanor. Any person who, knowing that he or she is not privileged to do so, enters or remains in any private premise where notice against trespass is given by:

- (1) Actual communication to the person who subsequently commits the trespass;
- (2) Posting in a manner reasonably likely to come to the attention of trespassers; or

- (3) Fencing or other enclosures which a reasonable person would recognize as being designed to exclude trespassers on private property;

is guilty of a Class 2 misdemeanor. However, if such trespasser defies an order to leave, personally communicated to him or her by the owner of the premises or by any other authorized person, the trespasser is guilty of criminal trespass, which is a Class 1 misdemeanor.

Each service agency presented an overview of their organization and policies for residents using their facilities. Agencies attending were:

- Bishop Dudley Hospitality House (BDHH)—Madeline Shields, Executive Director
- Union Gospel Mission—Ron and Linda Gonzales, Executive Directors
- St. Francis House—Julie Becker, Executive Director
- Minnehaha County Human Services—Kari Benz, Director

The agencies discussed a common question that business owners had: *Why do the homeless drink and hang out in the neighborhood rather than stay at their shelter during the day?* Each agency has their own policy, but in most cases, homeless residents are able to make the choice to leave and go out into the community on their own, or stay, except when the facility is being cleaned or turned over for the day. Many choose to hang out with friends and acquaintances, often drinking nearby. During winter months it appears that there are fewer homeless on the streets in Sioux Falls—some possibly choosing to stay inside for warmth and others possibly choose to move on to warmer climates.

Over 40 businesses are located on and around East 8th Street between Weber and Cliff Avenues. Many of the businesses have occupied this area for many years. Handyman is a family business located in Sioux Falls since 1946 and at its current location on East 10th Street since 1994. Midstates Branding & Imprinting Services has been providing quality garments since its founding in 1960 where it is located on East 8th Street. Nearly six decades since its founding, Midstates remains family-owned. In 1923, Electric Supply Company started in Sioux Falls and continues to this day to be family-owned. They are one of the larger electrical contractors in the region. These businesses and several others in the area have been individually dealing with the issues that some of the homeless have brought to the area.

IDENTIFIED ISSUES

Following the September meeting, City Housing and Planning staff met one-on-one with almost 20 businesses, agencies, and Police to understand and mediate some of the issues that had been brought up. The general themes discussed are identified into the following categories:

- Loitering, vagrancy, and panhandling of patrons.
- Safety, traffic, pedestrians, intoxication, and aggressive behavior.

- Appearance, littering, and use of public restrooms.
- Enabling, accountability, and rules.
- Concentration and increased numbers of homeless.

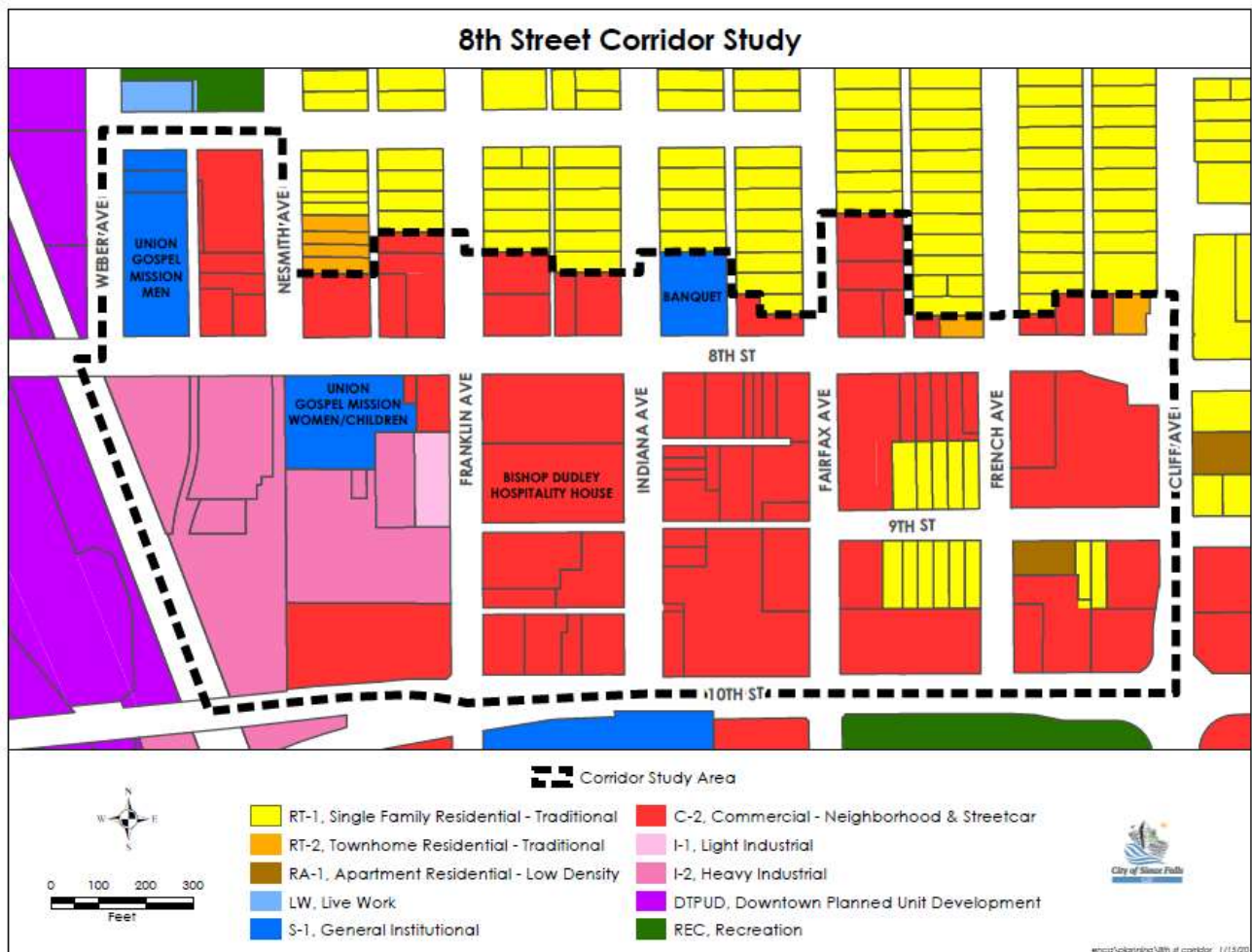
While homelessness in Sioux Falls, like many cities that experience it, may not be able to solve the issue, this report is intended to be used for education and revitalization of the area. Based on the identified issues, the following objectives have been proposed for the 8th Street Corridor and Redevelopment Study area:

OBJECTIVES

Based on consultation with business owners, service providers, Police, and City staff, the following objectives have been drafted to begin a discussion that can help improve and revitalize the business area.

1. Develop a business association for the 8th Street area stakeholders to create a venue for communication, improve safety, and long-term vitality.
 - a. The identity of the area is based on the people who live, work, or have an interest in the area. As an association, information is channeled that is viable and necessary to help deter criminal activity, clean up areas that are blighted, and empower citizens by speaking as one voice when addressing concerns to the City. City staff has a Neighborhood Planner that works directly with Neighborhood Associations, City Police, and other departments to address issues that the association wants to work on. There are also grant funds available from the City for projects such as improved lighting, traffic, and safety.
 - b. The agency policy enforcement and the public safety items can be presented openly during community meetings.
 - c. Advocate for service agencies serving the clients safely.
 - d. Improve communication between businesses and agencies so that it becomes proactive, instead of reactive.
 - e. Hold regular meetings to engage, build relationships, and create transparency and trust.
2. Work with the Police Department to develop safety management and safety design plans.
 - a. The 8th Street corridor should have strategic time presence of people to keep an eye on the neighborhood.
 - b. Work together to find solutions and resources to provide for the safety of the neighborhood.

3. Identify redevelopment area and opportunities to provide a conduit for development and assistance incentives for future development.
 - a. Educate business owners to the City’s development and redevelopment process and possible incentives.
 - b. Create a unique identity for focused redevelopment efforts.
 - c. Encourage a mix of land uses including commercial, residential, and office uses.
 - d. Discuss an opportunity for a public open space for gathering with rules.
4. Improve the appearance and safety of the area as an important gateway to downtown.
 - a. Visually improve the streetscape.
 - b. Address the public right-of-way (ROW) for the safety of pedestrians.
 - c. Facilitate the addition of safety, security features.



Next Steps

Develop a corridor study webpage to:

- Reconvene businesses and stakeholders to present report.
- Continue dialogue with Police Department.
- Provide stakeholders an understanding of how the corridor affects property and the process involved to develop and redevelop land.
- Develop a survey based on the goals of this status report and include on the 8th Street corridor web page.
- Market the website and survey to the 8th Street corridor stakeholders (including all people within the identified corridor area).
- Hold an 8th Street Corridor Study Open House (February/March) to gain feedback on the status report, goals, and survey.
- Develop a second draft of the 8th Street Corridor and Redevelopment Plan.
- Hold a second open house to gain comments on the full 8th Street Corridor and Redevelopment Plan (May).
- City Council Informational Meeting (July).