

# COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT PLAN

## GOAL 1.3 LISTENING SESSIONS



### Summary: November 14, 2020 South Park Community Building Initiative

On November 14, 2020 Santa Rosa Mayor Tom Schwedhelm, Council Member Ernesto Olivares, Chief of Police Rainer Navarro, Community Engagement Director Magali Telles, Community Engagement Coordinator Danielle Garduño, Community Outreach Specialist Gustavo Mendoza met with nine (9) members of the South Park Community Building Initiative (CBI) for a listening session and dialogue. Community Advisory Board Member, Vince Harper, also observed and listened.

### Listening Sessions and Discussion Questions

#### Law Enforcement Specific Questions

#### 1. What does it mean to feel safe in your community and how does that look?

- Not being afraid to let our kids play outside
- Knowing your neighbors
- Having timely police response
- Having a collaborative approach with the Police Department
  - Making more of an effort with the police to a build relationship
  - Allows for trust building and also helps to make first interactions with police officers more positive
  - *“My first interaction with a police officer, they told us we couldn’t use the baseball field. I just wanted to play baseball.”*
  - One participant described observing a positive interaction between a police officer and a group of you who were playing basketball and stated it would be great to have more of those types of interactions happening.
  - *“We want positive first interactions. We want our kids to group up to become law enforcement for our community. We want it to be seen as positive (the job/role as an officer), not negative.”*
- Having more frequent interactions with the police
  - More than once a year at South Park Day/Night Festival
- Having more of a presence from the police
- Having more street lighting – if the neighborhood is better lit, it deters crime
  - There are certain parts of the bike path that are dark
  - Certain streets have no lights and are always dark
  - Trimming of trees could help with some of the lighting issues
- Having more small group interactions such as this listening session
- Addressing sidschows and stopping them from happening

## **Q&A and Discussion**

Chief Navarro and Community Engagement staff mentioned a few projects the Police Department and City are working to improve relationship building efforts with the community. Chief Navarro stated that trying to do their traditional community engagement efforts such as the Community Policing Experience and Coffee with a Cop, are challenging during the pandemic and that the Police Department is trying to find ways to do programming virtually.

One resident mentioned participating in the Community Policing Experience in high school and that she thought it was a great experience which provided her a different perspective on officers and the Police Department. She suggested that this is something that is taught to youth in high school as part of the relationship building piece with law enforcement. Another resident mentioned that it would be great if more people knew about their “beat cops” or officers. Their names and emails are listed online.

Staff also mentioned the Lowrider Patrol Car Project being done in collaboration with the Sonoma County Lowrider Council. Members of the Lowrider Council will receive a retired patrol car from the Police Department and transform it into a lowrider. They will then give it back to the Police Department to use in community events such as the Peggy Sue Car Show and Cruise and the Rose Parade. Staff mentioned that one of the goals of this project is to bring community together with the Police Department for more positive interactions.

Finally, a resident asked a question pertaining to parks. She wondered why, only three blocks away, there was another neighborhood park that is much nicer and well-maintained than their own neighborhood park (Martin Luther King, Jr. Park). Both parks are operated by the City and yet are very different in amenities and appearances.

## **2. What has your overall experience been like with the Santa Rosa Police Department (SRPD)?**

- Fabulous: non-confrontational, respectful and responsive
- 4<sup>th</sup> of July incident: involved an officer that was confrontational about a barricade that was set up in the street. Officer did acknowledge that he was stressed due to the high volume of calls he was responding to.
  - Concerned about how the officer approached the situation. *“It’s important to have positive interactions. One negative interaction, it takes seven, eight, nine positive interactions to fix that.”*
- There needs to be other people who can be called other than the police for mental health issues.

## **Q&A and Discussion**

Several questions came up for Chief Navarro about training and response to mental health:

- Is there training for officers on mental health and responding to calls involving mental health?
  - Yes, it is part of the required annual training officers receive from the department.
  - The City is also looking at implementing our own version of the CAHOOTS Program, which is from Eugene, OR. We are currently working with Eugene on putting together a plan that will work for Santa Rosa and consulting with them on how to implement the program, who will receive training, and developing a Request for Proposals for a local organization to implement the program.
  
- How often do officers get de-escalation training?
  - All officers are required to undergo annual training that includes de-escalation. In addition, we are now requiring all officers to go through implicit bias training and resiliency training, which will teach officers how to manage stress.

**3. What ideas do you have in strengthening relationships with the police?**

- More programming for youth
- SRPD officers as mentors in the community (like Beat Officers in the neighborhood)
- *“We are more likely to call police if we know them.”*
- *“I’ve lived here for 14 years and I’ve never seen a patrol officer just patrolling the neighborhood. It’s always a response to something.”*
- *“I might think twice about calling police on a person of color because of what happens.”*

**Q&A and Discussion**

How many officers speak Spanish?

There are 66 sworn staff at the Santa Rosa Police Department who are bilingual.

**4. What ideas do you have in strengthening relationships with the City of Santa Rosa?**

- Let people know of all services available at the City
- Email and radio spots
- Connect with residents and grow that leadership
- When complaints are made, there is no follow-up
- South Park CBI did a survey of neighbors asking about most important issues for the neighborhood:

- Speeding and traffic
- Crime
- Illegal dumping
- Homelessness
- Graffiti
- Services from City

### **Q&A and Discussion**

For issues with homelessness, residents mentioned that both the City and County don't have the site or space for managed encampments. Neighbors have mentioned that they don't like the trash left from homeless camping in the neighborhood and that loitering is an issue.

Another resident mentioned that the park basketball court is being taken up by an organized youth group from 3-7pm Monday through Friday and our kids can't use it after school.

The group agreed that it would also be helpful to know how to find information either put out by the City or the County and that it can be confusing to navigate.

### **Next Steps**

Community Engagement staff will work with South Park CBI contact to set up additional listening session(s).