



RESTORE RUNDBERG REVITALIZATION TEAM PRIORITIES

June 24, 2016

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Dear Council Members:

On behalf of the Restore Rundberg Revitalization Team, we are writing to request that the Austin City Council appropriate FY2017 funds from the general operating budget to cover the costs of a place-based community engagement coordinator position under the City's recently established Office of Innovation.

City services impact over 900,000 residents and an estimated 19 million visitors annually. While the majority of Austin communities are thriving, several neighborhoods are considered persistently distressed and account for a high percentage of emergency and non-emergency service hours. City priorities are notably shifting from a focus on traditional municipal services to the creation of new, innovative resources: an Office of Performance Management, Office of Innovation, and Equity Office. While these changes speak to the progressive nature of the City and mirror national themes of inclusion, equality and transparency, the City currently lacks an official community-driven mechanism to increase efficacy, achieve cultural shifts and creatively and effectively address objectives identified during the neighborhood planning processes.

The Restore Rundberg Revitalization Team was created in 2012 to serve as the revitalization arm of a U.S. Department of Justice funded place-based criminal justice pilot project. The original Team included five members with the mission of ensuring that Rundberg crime solutions would include community engagement and the connections necessary to lead the area towards successful long-term revitalization. The Restore Rundberg Revitalization

Priority 1
Revitalization of Key Properties

Priority 2
Healthcare

Priority 3
After School / Youth Services

Priority 4
Code Compliance

Priority 5
Homelessness Intervention

Priority 6
Housing Affordability

Priority 7
Economic and Workforce Development

Priority 8
Prostitution Prevention and Intervention





Team, now 15 members strong, acts in an advisory capacity for City staff, with Team meetings providing regular forums for community discussion. The widespread success of the Team is attributed to:

- the volunteerism of project participants
- the efforts of a community engagement coordinator, and
- the strength of a cross-sector partnership between the City, community, and researchers.

Team members have made long-term commitments to the program and we anticipate that University of Texas students will continue to work within the community, studying crime and quality of life issues and testing solutions.

The community engagement coordinator position was created by the City following DOJ approval of the program implementation plan. The engagement coordinator's primary focus has been a 5.74 square mile grant-defined area within Rundberg, as well as programmatically connected neighborhoods. The position supports the cross-sector partnership and promotes the three program goals: to improve public safety; to address social impacts including physical disorder, social economic status and resources, and collective efficacy; and, to ensure the long-term planning and implementation of neighborhood-based revitalization strategies. Generally speaking, the coordinator conducts and coordinates a variety of leadership, public safety and social services outreach and development activities by engaging residents in activities and efforts. The coordinator assists with the Rundberg Educational Advancement District "READ" (<http://www.austintexas.gov/blog/rundberg-educational-advancement-district>), the Council on At-Risk Youth (CARY), and other youth programs in cooperation with project partners to help facilitate community involvement; facilitates public dialogues and consensus building to identify and resolve issues; and, assists in organizing and leveraging community support and resources for our public safety initiatives.

The position has been occupied by two people since the initial posting: Nelson Andrade and Cecile Fandos. Nelson Andrade's work was key in bringing new partners to the project early on. He co-located with the district representative officers and with their support, connected many community members with City services and introduced the Restore Rundberg Program to countless local businesses and non-profit organizations. Cecile Fandos has been with the project for about nine months. In partnership with district representative officers, she has accomplished many essential tasks, including City website development, READ webpage development, and draft hot-spot sustainability plans. She works closely with project partners to leverage much needed resources, publicize and ensure the success of local events, and translate and interpret information in multiple languages.





To date, measuring the impact of engagement (front line and behind-the-scenes work) has been challenging. The University of Texas School of Social Work published a research update in October 2015 that considers data sets, neighborhood surveys and anecdotal information collected over time. Key report takeaways include:

- Feelings of safety are improving for those living and working in the hotspots
- 15% reduction in violent crime across all three hotspots, and a 4.5% reduction in violent crime for the overall grant area
- Nearly 11% reduction in property crime across all three hotspots, and an over 14% reduction in property crime for the overall grant area (decreases are despite annual population increases of about 2.5% in Austin).

http://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/UT_reduction_in_crime_presentation_at_October_2015_RR_Community_Meeting.pdf.

We believe that with minimal funding from the City, the Restore Rundberg Revitalization Team model may be sustained and replicated by other place-based initiatives throughout the City, beginning with Dove Springs (the neighborhood used as a research / data comparison site due to the similar demographics and crime problems) and then extending to other yet-to-be identified areas. With this letter, the Restore Rundberg Revitalization Team (RRRT) proposes that the City hire a full-time community engagement coordinator (classified as "Neighborhood Liaison") to work with the RRRT and within other place-based areas of disinvestment throughout the City to:

- Facilitate monthly meetings at key sites, working with community leaders to set agendas, record minutes and keep neighborhoods updated
- Track and manage asset and resource lists
- Plan, develop and implement youth programs in cooperation with project partners to help facilitate community involvement
- Facilitate public dialogues and consensus building to identify and resolve issues
- Assist in organizing and leveraging community support and resources
- Develop social maps of informal leaders and their linkages as a means to improve community efficacy/social capital, and
- Act as a liaison to City departments, scheduling updates at publicly-held forums.

The areas noted above (Rundberg and Dove Springs) are highly populated by immigrants, refugees, and non-English speaking individuals. Residents are in desperate need of sustained engagement. Many come from countries where strained government and private sector relationships are the norm. Those residing in and visiting the neighborhoods are reluctant to cooperate with government employees, have a general mistrust, and are likely not reporting the





extent of crime and quality of life issues plaguing their families. Residents tend to fend for themselves even when resources that may assist in their ability to raise their standard of living are actually available.

Members of the Restore Rundberg Revitalization Team will be reaching out to Council, City staff and neighborhood leaders in the coming weeks and months to discuss place-based engagement and the benefits of creating this full-time City funded position. We greatly appreciate your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,


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