



# **STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT REPORT**

**For the Downtown Austin  
Community Court Geographic Service Area and  
Adjudicated Cases Analysis**

**SEPTEMBER 2022**



# PROJECT SUMMARY

DACC is conducting an analysis of its current and potential geographic service area (GSA) and adjudicated citations.

**Geographic service area:** The neighborhoods for which DACC adjudicates citations. Currently: downtown, UT's west campus, and east Austin

**Adjudicated cases:** The charge codes, or offenses, that are heard at DACC. Currently Class C misdemeanors (includes Prop B and state camping ban violations)

The purpose of this analysis is to understand the efficacy of DACC's current GSA and adjudicated citations, and to determine whether expansion or alterations might better serve the community and DACC stakeholders.

**Current stage:** Completion of stakeholder engagement period



# RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How effective is DACC's current set-up of geographic service area and adjudicated cases?
- Are there changes that should be considered, or potential reimagined operations structures that DACC management should explore?



# **ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS SUMMARY**

# STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT GOALS

- 1) Introduce the project to the stakeholder community
- 2) Educate the stakeholder community about DACC and the GSA analysis project
- 3) Provide stakeholders the opportunity to inform the project
- 4) Gather input from stakeholders to be used in future GSA/adjudicated cases  
discussions



# HOW WE REACHED STAKEHOLDERS

Primary engagement period: June-August 2022

Stakeholder engagement partners: Austin Public Health, Public Information Office, Violet Keepsafe storage facility, Austin Public Library

Promotion: Virtual and analog

- Online: Social media, City website, email distribution
- In the community: Flyers and promotion at DACC, libraries, cooling centers, Violet Keepsafe storage



# HOW WE ENGAGED WITH STAKEHOLDERS

- 1) Internal stakeholder workshops (4 total)
- 2) External community stakeholder meetings (3 total)
- 3) Open-house style 1:1 engagement opportunities (15 hours of in-person presence)
- 4) SpeakUp! Austin online community engagement hub



# WHO DID WE REACH?

- Internal stakeholders
  - City staff who work with DACC or are affected by the GSA
- External stakeholders
  - Members of the downtown community (business and residential)
  - Members of the social services community
- People with lived experience of homelessness
  - AHAC members
  - People using Violet Keepsafe storage facility

Results: 747 synthesizable data points

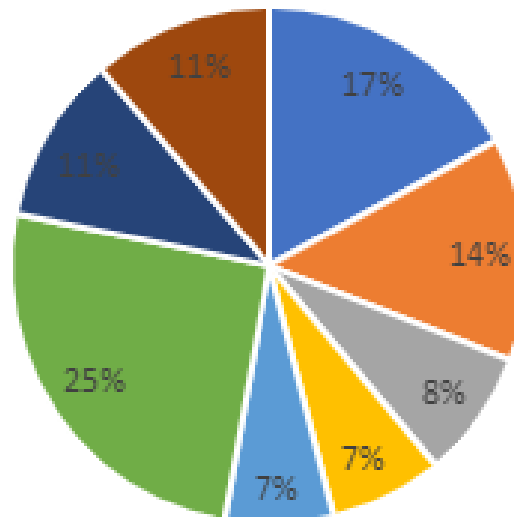




# ENGAGEMENT RESULTS

# WHAT THE DATA SHOWS

Reference Breakdown by Theme



■ Access to Resources - 152 References

■ Equity, Fairness, and Inclusivity - 72 References

■ Resource Availability - 61 References

■ System and Processes - 94 References

■ DACC's Role in the Community - 125 References

■ Information, Education, and Understanding - 63 References

■ Response to Potential DACC Changes - 228 References

■ General/Other Comments - 101 References

# SUMMARY OF THEMES

## **Theme: Access to Resources (152 References)**

**Summary:** Respondents discussed general access to court and homelessness resources in Austin, and how DACC's GSA can act as a facilitator for access, as well as a barrier.

**Quotes from Participants:** "[I could] engage in a misdemeanor in a particular block of the City and have a different outcome on a block across the street."

"Austin has a lot of resources but they are difficult to find for those that need it the most, especially if they cannot get online."

## **Theme: Equity, Fairness, and Inclusivity (72 References)**

**Summary:** Respondents discussed the need for equitable opportunities for people in Austin to access DACC's benefits, especially in underserved areas or places with student populations.

### **Quotes from Participants:**

"This should be offered to everyone in the city limits. Why would one physical location deserve help and another does not?????"

"Addressing the equity piece would be a citywide effort and require a lot of resources. Not sure if the city is prepared, but it seems like the most equitable approach."



# SUMMARY OF THEMES

## **Theme: DACC's Role in the Community (125 References)**

**Summary:** Respondents discussed the ways DACC fits into the Austin community as both a court and a homelessness services provider.

**Quotes from Participants:** “[A] diversionary system – folks committing misdemeanors, before things get real we’re the last stop that’s still a formal legal system, but before things go off the deep end we can help with rehab and supports for individuals before things get more serious or drastic.”

## **Theme: Information, Education, and Understanding (63 References)**

**Summary:** Respondents discussed varying levels of knowledge/ understanding of DACC, community courts, and the Austin homelessness response system.

### **Quotes from Participants:**

““I’m not even certain what a “class c misdemeanor is.”

“...People don't know how to talk to someone or have a hard time knowing exactly what help they need. Informational resources are the most needed.”

“Repeat offenders may not know what resources are available.”



# SUMMARY OF THEMES

## **Theme: Resource Availability (61 References)**

**Summary:** Respondents discussed the resource and funding needs required for potential growth or changes to DACC's current operations.

**Quotes from Participants:** “[If DACC takes on more cases], I think the focus on case management will get lost and people who need these services may start to be underserved.”

“Without a guaranteed vast increase in space, staff, and resources, I wouldn't want it to expand. But with those, then yes, it makes sense.”

## **Theme: Response to Potential DACC Changes (228 References)**

**Summary:** This theme reflects participants' responses to direct questions about changes to DACC's GSA and/or adjudicated cases.

### **Quotes from Participants:**

“...if we were to limit to homeless individuals only, what positive impact would we be giving up for other populations?”

“[DACC shouldn't focus on] people who are self-reliant and don't need help. Low-income people.”



# SUMMARY OF THEMES

## **Theme: System and Processes (94 References)**

**Summary:** Respondents discussed the systems and processes that affect DACC and the people served by DACC.

**Quotes from Participants:** “[I am] solicited quite often and call 9-1-1 once a week due to threats to personal safety...still finding it unsafe and don’t feel what’s working in relation to the Class C misdemeanors given the safety factors.”

“You could reduce the docket and homelessness by de-punitizing the whole process at the citation level. The arresting officer could offer DACC service.”

## **Theme: General, Other Comments (101 References)**

**Summary:** This theme reflects relevant insights that did not fit within any of the other themes.

### **Quotes from Participants:**

“Unfortunately some of the homeless do violate other city ordinances and laws. They should still be brought to places to connect them to services.”

“The court should help people complete their paperwork online too.”

“The court has a good reputation.”



# KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Expanding DACC's GSA to other parts of Austin is supported by 93 percent of participants that chose to express their preference. *(Themes: Responses to Potential DACC Changes, DACC's Role in the Community, Access to Resources; Equity, Fairness, and Inclusivity)*
- DACC maintaining case types for housed people (instead of exclusively serving people experiencing homelessness) is supported by 69 percent of participants that chose to express their preference. *(Themes: Responses to Potential DACC Changes, System and Processes)*



# KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Stakeholders were supportive of DACC's expansion in GSA and social service provision, with several stakeholders expressing that caveat that they would support expansion only if it was supported with adequate available resources. More than 40 individual stakeholder references to geographic or service expansion directly emphasized the resources needed to maintain quality service levels. *(Themes: Responses to Potential DACC Changes, Resource Availability)*
- Stakeholders frequently discussed ways to strengthen opportunities for individuals experiencing homelessness to connect to social service, with more than two dozen stakeholder references specifically indicating a desire for court and citation processes to include enhanced resource connectivity. Many other references related to a general need for resource connectivity for people involved in the court system or people experiencing homelessness. *(Themes: Access to Resources, DACC's Role in the Community, System and Processes)*





# KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Stakeholders expressed desire for elements such as access and equity to be prioritized in upcoming decision-making or recommendations regarding DACC's GSA and adjudicated cases, with particular attention to the current exclusion of DACC's benefits for people outside of the current GSA boundaries. Access to resources was referenced 152 times by stakeholders, and equity was referenced 72 times. *(Themes: Access to Resources; Equity, Fairness, and Inclusivity)*
- In discussions/questions about citations, responses did not strongly align with any particular viewpoints. Some respondents said they want to see more stringent citation for Class C misdemeanors; others prefer a more lenient approach. Multiple stakeholder comments indicated a need for more information/understanding before forming an opinion. *(Themes: Responses to Potential DACC Changes, System and Processes, Access to Resources)*



# KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Stakeholders from all groups (internal and external) expressed need for more education about DACC in order to participate in productive conversations. There was also desire for more information sharing about DACC generally, particularly about available services and successful outcomes experienced by DACC defendants and clients. A total of 63 stakeholder insights indicated a desire for more information sharing about this project and about DACC in general.  
*(Themes: DACC's Role in the Community; Information, Education and Understanding)*
- Stakeholders provided specific input on information that should be considered before any recommendations for change are made. This input ranged from cost analysis for staff expansion to data about DACC defendant/client diversity. This information is included in detail in Appendix B. *(Themes: DACC's Role in the Community; Information, Education and Understanding)*



**NEXT STEPS**

# IMMEDIATE NEXT STEPS

- Are there questions that can be answered about the stakeholder engagement results?
- Is there more information needed from the stakeholder engagement efforts?
- Are there additional stakeholders DACC staff should reach before moving to the data/information gathering phase?
- Work group formulation: Is there interest from Advisory Board members to inform staff direction for a future Council recommendation?



# GSA PROJECT NEXT STEPS

**October and November 2022:** Staff and work group to engage in information gathering and data analysis per Theme: Information, Education, and Understanding (report Appendix B)

**November 18, 2022:** Staff to present additional information and data analysis results at Advisory Board meeting. Advisory Board to advise on additional information needed for recommendation discussion.

**January 20, 2023:** Advisory Board to hear further information, recommendation options, potential vote

