

Safe Takoma

Work Plan Progress Report

November 10, 2008

Background

Per the Memorandum of Understanding agreed by Safe Takoma, Incorporated and the City of Takoma Park in May 2008,

In order to receive a disbursement of the remaining City Funds, Safe Takoma shall present a report of its progress under the Work Plan to the City Council. Such Progress Report shall be scheduled for a mutually-agreeable date that is not sooner than four (4) months and not later than six (6) months from execution of this MOU. If the City Council is satisfied with Safe Takoma's Progress Report, then the Council shall, by recorded vote, authorize disbursement of the remaining City funds to Safe Takoma. The remaining City funds then shall be disbursed to Safe Takoma within 15 working days after the City Council votes to approve such disbursement.

This report conveys Safe Takoma's progress under the Work Plan accepted by the City Council as part of the City-Safe Takoma MOU. In conjunction with Safe Takoma's periodic reports, it documents that Safe Takoma has operated in accordance with the Work Plan and has made significant progress toward agreed goals. It explains how Safe Takoma has met MOU criteria for Council authorization of disbursement of remaining allocated City funds to Safe Takoma.

Safe Takoma Work Plan

Safe Takoma had created its Work Plan with input from Takoma Park Police Chief Ron Ricucci and presented the Work Plan to the City Council at a May 5, 2008 work session. The council enacted a resolution approving the MOU on May 12, 2008 (<http://www.takomaparkmd.gov/clerk/agenda/items/2008/051208-5c.pdf>).

Safe Takoma's Work Plan has an introduction followed by four sections: Management, Programming, Fund Raising, and Operations. We will cover all four in this report.

Progress Under the Work Plan

A Operations

The Work Plan describes a three-phase Operational Plan. We have been operating in accordance with those Work Plan phases.

At the time of Work Plan submission, Safe Takoma was in the second of the phases, *Implementation: Initial Programming and Ramp-Up*. We wrote that the third, *Operations*, phase "will commence when staff – a part-time, Operations Manager – is engaged." Operations Manager Ronnie Miller started half-time in July. As part of our FY09 budget, we increased Ronnie's hours to three-quarters time.

We are pursuing the points we described for our Operations phase:

- 1 Conflict Resolution programming.
- 2 Inception of Youth Development programming (school, recreation, and community programs, roving leaders)
- 3 Intensification of Community Engagement programming.
- 4 Plan for initial design and consideration, then launch, of Youth Offenders programming.

We will cover these points in more detail under *Programming* below. We also plan to regularize how we measure outcomes.

B Fund Raising

The Work Plan says about fund raising, “We anticipate applying for grants from foundations and governmental sources starting in early FY09.” Safe Takoma’s FY09 started October 1, 2008.

In accordance with the Work Plan, we have started to identify funding sources, and we will be applying for our first grant in the coming weeks, in connection to the (Maryland) Governor's Community Crime Prevention Summit on Saturday, November 8, which Operations Manager Ronnie Miller attended. The summit included a session on applying for a grant (up to \$3,000, with \$150, 000 total being offered) from that office, for one of the following purposes: Community Crime Prevention Activities, Youth Crime Prevention Activities, Community Support Programs for addiction and re-entry, Physical Improvement Programs, and Public Safety Training.

C Management

Safe Takoma management has been handled according to the Work Plan.

- We engaged an Operations Manager, in accordance with the steps given in the Work Plan, after a search that netted over twenty applications. Police and community representatives participated in the interview process. We introduced Ronnie Miller to the Council at a September 22 worksession.
- Ronnie sends weekly reports covering progress and plans to Safe Takoma’s board. At Chief Ricucci’s request, she has been copying him on the reports.
- Our board has met monthly and we have requested monthly grant-monitor meetings although in practice these meetings have not occurred every month.
- We have maintained records and have issued monthly status reports, including financial balances (receipts and expenditures) and, quoting from the MOU requirement, “a summary and performance evaluation of all programs and activities during the report period and information about the number of community members who participated in Safe Takoma events, training programs, community patrols, and the like during the report period.”

- We held an Advisory Committee/Programming meeting on October 7, 2008 with eight of our advisors (or their representatives), in addition to Safe Takoma officers, in attendance.
- We secured and furnished office space and undertook various management steps including: Obtained unemployment-insurance and tax-withholding accounts, arranged for payroll processing, arranged worker's compensation coverage, obtained Maryland sales-tax exemption for purchases and applied for DC exemption, rented a Post Office box.
- We created a FY09 budget for the fiscal year October 1, 2008 to September 30, 2009 and have requested grant monitor approval.

D Programming

Safe Takoma's Work Plan outlines four programming areas. Three of those areas fall under the rubric Youth Programming and the fourth under Community Engagement. We described these as follows in the Work Plan:

Youth Programming

Almost all of the street crime and property crimes that occur in the focus area for STI are committed by youth (broadly defined as age 15-25). Therefore, it makes logical sense that STI would focus its efforts on youth issues. We seek to develop three types of Youth Programming.

1) Conflict Resolution – Preventing conflicts before they start by training youth and adults that work with youth in proven conflict resolution techniques.

2) Youth Development – Engaging youth in skills building and educational activities that provide youth with greater opportunities and outlets. This will lessen the likelihood that they will be drawn into the criminal lifestyle or will be forced to commit crime out of necessity.

3) Youth Offenders – For those youth who have already committed a crime, there is a proven need to break the cycle of criminal activity. These youth need help forging a new path or they will likely become lifelong criminals.

Community Engagement

The crimes that most deeply affect our communities and create the feeling of unsafety are street and property crimes. Engaging the community by creating community networks and increasing outreach and awareness will empower the community to take control of its own safety and feelings about safety.

Conflict Resolution

We organized and conducted Conflict Resolution programming within summer camps at the Takoma DC and Takoma Park Maryland Community Centers. The sessions were designed and led by Monika Megyesi and Jacob Stone, working on contract, in cooperation with staff and with some consultation of the Conflict Resolution Center of Montgomery County.

Per the "Trainers' Report on Conflict Resolution Workshops,"

The purpose of the workshops was to engage youth, build community, and provide conflict resolution skills. To that purpose, the curriculum was originally designed to gradually build conflict management skills and to increase skill complexity over time.

Goals that were accomplished:

- *engaged over 150 youth in constructive programming*
- *built community among youth*
- *taught youth conflict management skills and alternatives to violence*
- *built relationships with youth for further work and programming*
- *provided valuable service to the Takoma Park community*

Goals that were not accomplished:

- *providing basic HIPP certification to youth*

We have posted the Trainer's Report to our Web site and can provide detailed statistics to anyone who would like them.

We are building Conflict Resolution into planned youth-development initiatives and are planning to offer another, introductory Help Increase the Peace Program (HIPP) session soon, followed by an advanced, train-the-trainers session in early 2009. This is accordance with the Work Plan. The only Work Plan element we have not yet implemented is organizing a conflict-resolution/peer-mediation network from volunteers. We wrote, "We anticipate supporting yearly peer-mediation training for Coolidge High School and on-going involvement with peer-mediation efforts there and at Takoma Park MD schools." We have made initial contacts at Coolidge High School and at Takoma Park Middle School, including (in Maryland) as part of the Takoma Park Community Action Group's youth forum, but at this point haven't gotten further.

Youth Development

The youth programming plans outlined in our Work Plan were based on partnership with the Takoma Park Community Action Group (TPCAG), the Takoma Park Recreation Department, and the Takoma Community Center (DC). Our summer conflict-resolution programming was a start on building the relationships with the DC & MD community centers that serve as the basis for current youth-development program plans, created in partnership with the TPCAG.

We have designed a Rites of Passage Program that will have two target age ranges:

- Initial sessions for youth aged 13-17, offered for boys and for girls in Takoma Park Maryland and for girls in Takoma DC, planned to start November 19 and 20, respectively.
- A set of sessions for youth aged 18-25, offered for young men and for young women in Takoma Park Maryland and Takoma DC, which targeted for start in the winter-spring of 2009.

The program will empower the youth in the STI focus area with the knowledge, skills and abilities to transition successfully from adolescence into adulthood. The course for 18-25 years would additionally serve as gateway to youth participation in a Safe

Takoma organized pre-apprenticeship program, which would teach skills and attitudes that would prepare participants for gainful trades employment.

In addition, Safe Takoma –

- Actively participates in weekly meetings for the Truancy Task Force Youth Outreach program held at Coolidge Senior High School.
- Participated in an initial youth forum organized by the Takoma Park Community Action Group.

Youth Offenders

Safe Takoma's work plan explained, "Youth Offenders is a *potential* fourth Safe Takoma program, one the organization would launch in late 2008. Implementation is complex because it involves work with District of Columbia and Montgomery County MD youth-offender authorities and case workers, with families, and with schools and other community institutions." We hope to begin program development soon.

Community Engagement

Per our Work Plan, "the Community Engagement program seeks to raise awareness of vulnerabilities, possible remedies, and preventative steps related to public safety." We wrote, "Communications, awareness, and involvement are at the core of Safe Takoma's mission."

We've made progress on all three fronts, via public events and information dissemination, by our whistle program and the sign-ups connected to it, and by on-going outreach to individuals and partnerships with organizations.

- Organized a Takoma National Night Out event, held August 5, 2008 at the Takoma Metro station with the participation of police representatives from Takoma Park, Washington DC, and WMATA.
- Conducted an initial safety-whistle distribution at the NNO event. We distributed over 200 whistles along with instructions and lanyards or key tabs and obtained registration information in exchange.
 - 29 individuals are interested in joining a citizens patrol. (Three already patrol.) We alerted patrol coordinators/neighborhood association heads.
 - 29 would like to arrange a police home safety inspection. We forwarded their information to the MPD-4D or the Takoma Park PD.
 - 97 would like to join the AlertTakoma e-mail list. We added them. Two were already on the list.
 - 30 would consider volunteering with Safe Takoma.
 - 59 are interested in conflict-resolution programming.
- Asked folks who took whistles and gave an e-mail address to take a survey. There were twenty responses:
 - 55% carry the whistle every day; only one never carries it.

- 70% say the whistle makes them feel “a little safer” and one “much safer.”
 - 55% say the area around the Takoma Metro Station is “safe only during the day,” 15% say “safe only during rush hours,” and 20% say “not safe.”
- Respondents identified the most significant safety/crime issues in/around the station as including theft, robbery, loitering, lighting, lack of police visibility.
- Conducted a second safety-whistle distribution November 6, 2008 with the same request for information. The police were there to distribute literature. We do not have sign-up stats available yet.
- Developed a Neighborhood Safety Perspectives, which we presented to the Council on September 22 and subsequently implemented. The program has two parts: Periodic Assessment of Physical Conditions and Periodic Opinion Survey. We conducted daytime assessment walk-arounds in Washington DC on October 21 and in Takoma Park, MD on October 22 and a later, evening TP-MD lighting review.
 - We have compiled review findings and have followed up to request action on a few of the most significant issues: Pedestrian signals out at 5th & Dahlia; police call box not functioning at Maple & Tulip; street lights out (5) in Takoma Park, MD.
- Our survey of Old Takoma Safety Perceptions, fall 2008 has garnered 99 responses since November 3. (We plan to reconduct this survey periodically.)
 - 23.5% feel insecure “on the Takoma street where you live or work.” 20.7% feel insecure or very insecure in the Takoma business district and 30.7% in the Takoma Metro station. 34.7% feel less secure than they did a year ago. Even allowing for selection bias, these aren’t good numbers.
 - Police visibility and lighting were frequent responses to the “what would make you feel more secure…” questions.
 - 34 respondents gave their names and 32 provided an e-mail address.
 - We will analyze response by geography and share information with the police.
- We will include a PD produced flier for distribution with the next PEN newsletter and are looking into distribution in other Takoma neighborhoods. We expect this to be an on-going activity.
- One short-coming, vis-à-vis the Work Plan, was in organizing community meetings.
 - A May 22 PEN meeting with Chief Ricucci was poorly attended and a September meeting for representatives of Old Takoma neighborhood associations was attended by only 2 of 4 invited.
 - By contrast, a November 15, 2007 OTRA crime forum with the chief attracted over 40 residents, and Lieut. Rick Bowers spoke at the August 21 OTRA-WACO restaurants meeting with over 50 attending.
 - It has become clear that people will turn out in a crisis situation or on a special occasion, so we will consider the draw before organizing a safety-specific meeting.