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100 Block of S. Queen Street Property Owners, Businesses, and Stakeholders Meeting

**Monday, December 12, 2016 at 10am
The Salvation Army, 131 S. Queen St.**

Meeting Notes and Recommended Next Steps

The goal of the meeting was to collectively discuss issues negatively impacting quality of life in the 100 block of S. Queen Street with representatives from the Lancaster City Alliance (LCA)/Downtown Investment District (DID) and Lancaster City Police, and to determine the most effective means by which to address these issues. Frequent issues of concern include aggressive panhandling, loitering, prostitution, and drug sales/use. Uses on the 100 block of S. Queen Street include a day care center, high-density multi-family residential, commercial, and social services. A total of five (5) neighborhood stakeholders were in attendance at the meeting, including representatives from social service organizations, property owners, and business owners on the block.

Representing LCA/DID were Shelby Nauman, Vice President (snauman@teamlanc.org); David Aichele, Director of Clean & Safe Services (daichele@teamlanc.org); and Jeremy Young, Community & Economic Development Manager (jyoung@teamlanc.org).

Representing Lancaster City Police was Sergeant Damon Greathouse (greathod@lancasterpolice.com), who leads the Selective Enforcement Unit (SEU). The SEU is separate from the patrol division and aggressively targets illegal activity in specific areas over an extended period of time rather than responding to calls received by County Dispatch. The Unit often works in partnership with property owners to perform plain-clothes details and surveillance. In order for this to work successfully, specific times of day that illegal activity tends to occur and other detailed information (including descriptions of suspects and property addresses) is necessary so that the SEU can plan to respond accordingly.

Summary of Issues Communicated by Neighborhood Stakeholders

Each of the neighborhood representatives present at the meeting indicated that they believe that the 100 block of S. Queen Street has great potential to be a vibrant place due to its central location within the City and its short distance from Penn Square and various downtown attractions. However, the stakeholders also agreed that the following recurring issues are a definite barrier to positive change:

PANHANDLING

Panhandling is a recurring issue affecting quality of life on the block. Instances of panhandling have increased over the last year, including instances where individuals have approached residents, visitors, and business owners and employees aggressively. Several neighborhood stakeholders have noticed an uptick in panhandling on the block during major events downtown, especially those held at the Convention Center one block north. Customers of the day care center tend to feel especially vulnerable or threatened when panhandlers approach them in the presence of their small children.

Panhandling is not illegal and is not enforceable by police unless a person is soliciting funds in the street or becomes aggressive. Aggressive panhandling recently became illegal under the City's new Aggressive Panhandling ordinance, enacted in November 2016. Aggressive panhandling is when a panhandler becomes threatening with those that they are soliciting. Panhandling may also be considered trespassing if funds are being soliciting on or in front of a property against the wishes of the property owner.

Please see page 3 for tips to discourage panhandling and related loitering/trespassing.

DRUG SALES AND USE, LOITERING

Several stakeholders indicated that drug sale activity on the block generally seems to occur in ebbs and flows over months, and that as of December 2016, drug sales seem to be on the rise as evident by the appearance of used drug paraphernalia littering the street and sidewalks. Furthermore, it has been discovered that such paraphernalia including small plastic zip baggies (used for drug packaging) are available upon request at the Los Muchachos corner store (156 S. Queen St.). This product may be facilitating the sale and use of drugs in the neighborhood.

Drug sales activity is also suspected on the block due to an increase in the number of people that have been witnessed coming and going into various multi-family residential buildings and in the number of people and vehicles loitering in front of particular properties. This includes 105 S. Queen Street, where it is suspected a drug dealer may reside and operate. According to one property owner, the Drug Task Force may already be currently investigating this property and resident in question.

Drug users frequently loiter at the rear of 130 S. Queen Street (a City Limits Realty property), often appearing highly intoxicated and suspected to be under the influence of heroin and sometimes sitting or sleeping on the retaining wall on the property's south side. The presence of these individuals make neighborhood residents and business employees very uncomfortable, especially those who must walk past this location to access their vehicles in the adjacent parking lot at night. On at least one occasion recently, a drug user apparently overdosed and was transported to a hospital by ambulance.

Please see page 4 for tips to discourage drug sales/use and related loitering.

POOR LIGHTING CONDITIONS

Neighborhood stakeholders indicated that poor lighting conditions make the 100 block of S. Queen Street feel less safe at night. While the block's many mature trees are generally seen as an amenity, their dense canopy obscures light from the overhead cobra head street lights, leaving sidewalks dark. Additionally, at least one of these fixtures, located in front of 115 S. Queen Street, is frequently not operational. Despite multiple calls by property owners, PPL has yet to take appropriate action to permanently repair the light. There are currently no pedestrian lights installed on the block, but stakeholders would like to see the City of Lancaster install these in the near future. Very few property owners/tenants turn on porch/stoop lights regularly in the evenings, contributing to dark conditions.

In addition to poor lighting conditions at night along the right-of-way in the 100 block of S. Queen Street, lighting is also inadequate or lacking in the alley/parking lot entrance between 130 and 134 S. Queen as well as in the parking lot to the rear of 134-142 S. Queen. Employees of the daycare center and other parking lot users are fearful for their safety at night when returning to their vehicles.

Please see page 4 for tips to address poor lighting conditions.

Recommended Next Steps

Recommended Actions to Address Panhandling

- If a panhandler is soliciting funds in front of your property or place of business, this may be considered trespassing. Please see "Recommended Tactics to Address Loitering" below.
- Victims of aggressive panhandling are encouraged to call 911 or 664-1180 (non-emergency line) to immediately report the activity. Police will respond and may take action against *aggressive* panhandlers in two ways:
 - (1.) cite the individual with harassment or
 - (2.) cite the individual with violating the City's new Aggressive Panhandling ordinance if applicable. In order for charges to be filed, you will be required to serve as a witness and be present in court. A hearing is typically scheduled at the local District Justice office within several months following the incident.

Recommended Actions to Address Loitering

- Property/ business owners and tenants have the right to tell people not to trespass in front of their business/residence. If the person does not comply, call 911 or 664-1180 (non-emergency line) and police will respond to your property as soon as possible. In order for charges to be filed for trespassing, "No Trespassing" signage must be present and visible on the property. Additionally, for charges to be filed, you will be required to serve as a witness and be present in court. A hearing is typically scheduled at the local District Justice office within several months following the incident.

- Please enforce “no trespassing” in front of your property and use the contact list LCA is assembling to let neighboring property owners know when people are loitering in front of their properties. LCA will research property owners not represented at the meeting and strive to engage them with this effort via mail and email and obtain their contact information so those with regular presence on the block can communicate with off-site owners.

Recommended Actions to Address Drug Sales, Drug Use

- If drug sales have been witnessed or suspected, document and report to the police immediately by dialing 911 or 664-1180 (non-emergency line).
- Recurring calls to police about drug sales/use in the same location over a period of time may trigger the activities of the Lancaster City Police’s Selective Enforcement Unit—so you are encouraged to call each and every time you witness this illegal activity.

Recommended Actions to Address Poor Lighting Conditions

- LCA will advocate on the block’s behalf to have the overhead cobra head street light repaired permanently by PPL, in order to improve lighting at night.
- Property owners/tenants are encouraged to turn on porch/stoop lights in front of their homes/places of business (and install where lacking) to improve lighting on sidewalks and supplement lighting provided by the sparse overhead street lights. Property owners may wish to consider installing automatic dusk-to-dawn light fixtures to prevent forgetting to turn lights on at night.

Additional Notes on Reporting Crimes and Police Response

- Please keep in mind that the police officer responding to an incident may use their discretion to determine the most appropriate course of action, which may include issuing a citation, placing a subject under arrest, or simply verbally advising a subject.
- Anyone that would like to report nuisance crimes may contact Sgt. Greathouse of the Lancaster City Police Selective Enforcement Unit directly via email (greathod@lancasterpolice.com), but Sgt. Greathouse prefers to be contacted directly ***only if the person reporting the crime is led to believe that a patrol officer may not respond in time to witness or observe the illegal activity.*** The public is encouraged to call 911 or 664-1180 (the non-emergency line) to report criminal activity otherwise.

Neighborhood Stakeholder Contact Information

The following stakeholders from the 100 block of S. Queen Street were present at the meeting on December 12, 2016 and have agreed to share their contact information for the purpose of facilitating neighborhood communication.

Andres Zorrilla

ASSETS Lancaster
100 S. Queen Street, Suite
(717) 393-6089
info@ASSETSpa.org

Captain Timothy Sheehan

The Salvation Army
131 S. Queen Street
(717) 397-7565
Tim.sheehan@ase.salvationarmy.org

Nina Moragne

Lancaster Day Care Center
150 S. Queen Street
(717) 392-7413
nina@LDCC.org

Nancy Keeler

119 S. Queen Street
(434) 770-3408
Nancyk23@hotmail.com

Linus Hughes

113 ½ S. Queen Street
(401) 829-3612
Linus.hughes@gmail.com