

OUTREACH ASSESSMENT

Macon, GA – Downtown Macon BID



Outreach Support Visit Summary

Conducted by: Chico Lockhart, *Project Manager of Outreach Services*

Purpose:

This report summarizes observations and activities from an Outreach Support Assessment led by Block by Block's Project Manager, Chico Lockhart. The visit focused on evaluating the street population within the BID boundaries and understanding their needs, behaviors, and interactions with the community.

I. Objectives

A. Street Level Observations

- i. Assess the population size, behaviors, and interactions to understand better the reason for the increased presence downtown and service accessibility.
- ii. Collaborated with RVP Clayton Ratledge, RVP Jason Stewart, and Operations Manager Richard Bingaman to develop a standard walking path for consistent data collection in various areas in the BID.

B. Engaged with Stakeholders

- i. Local business and residents: gathered feedback on perceptions of safety, economic business impact, concerns about the unhoused population and general community sentiment.
- ii. Bibb County Sheriff's Office: clarified enforcement policies regarding drug use, panhandling, city and state ordinances, and sleeping in public/private spaces.
- iii. EMS Department: Obtained insight into overdose trends and locations within the district.

C. Street Population Counts

Conducted twice-daily counts (7:00 am and 6:30 pm primarily) except for Friday, when I did a late morning count at 11:30 am. These were performed consistently to observe how the population moved throughout the BID.

Individuals were categorized as:

- i. Unhoused: Individuals with multiple bags/carts or observed sleeping in public
- ii. Transients: Individuals carrying minimal belongings, possibly unhoused, but not residing overnight in the area
- iii. Panhandlers: Individuals visibly soliciting money or goods through signage or verbal requests

D. Direct Engagement with Street Population

- i. questioned individuals why they stayed Downtown instead of going into the shelters
- ii. Inquired whether they were familiar with or had interacted with other outreach programs
- iii. Explored perceptions of safety, access to services, and shelter system limitations

E. Key Observations

- i. **Shelter Preferences:** Many unhoused individuals prefer the outdoors because the police do not directly harass them and feel safer among peers, particularly with the Ambassadors checking in on them and nearby social services. They also don't want to follow the rules of the shelters and give up drinking alcohol, as many suffer from alcohol abuse.
- ii. **Shelter Limitations:** Feedback indicated dissatisfaction with shelter rules—especially curfews and early check-ins. Several people feel it's a waste of time to get housing, as they have no way to find out where they are on the list for housing. No entity is following up with them on their status on the street level, where many have lost hope.
- iii. **Daily Shelter Routine:** Most have to access the shelter by 7 p.m. and are discharged at 7 a.m., but I was also told it varies by situation and facility.
- iv. **Encampments:** A few camps were observed on Riverside Drive behind the bushes near the railroad tracks. Four tents were accessible safely, as there may be more hidden from the public eye further down in the trees. One tent was also visible on Riverside Street just before First Street. No tents were seen obstructing pedestrian pathways throughout the district or in its exterior areas.
- v. **Cleanliness:** Most of the BID, including the curb lines, was very clean throughout. Richard Bingaman (Operations Manager) and the Ambassadors do a great job providing services and maintaining a rapport with the community. This was one of the cleanest Districts I have visited in some time. However, some areas are frequented by unhoused individuals, which accumulates debris throughout the day on Cherry and Poplar Street. This is a focus of the team when they

come to get those areas cleaned before the foot traffic comes in and businesses get busy. The district's borders could use more attention where the unhoused congregate day and night, specifically under the bridge on Walnut Street and Martin Luther King Blvd. Under that bridge, it could use a good power washing once per week, which may discourage some from wanting to be there due to moving their belongings weekly. Also, in some alleys, bulk items needed to be picked up and thrown away before they became furniture for the unhoused.

- vi. **Safety & Drug Activity:** Overall, the unhoused population was respectful and cooperative. Even when I declined requests from the few panhandlers I encountered, they were not aggressive and moved on. I was able to engage most people in conversation to get perspectives on how things were, except the severely mentally ill people, who were very guarded when approached. People in need, for the most part, kept to themselves, smoking marijuana, listening to music, and drinking their beers while hanging out with their peers. There were pockets of this behavior seen by the unhoused population, residents, and visitors who came downtown to socialize. I did not see any hard drug use or find any immediate drug paraphernalia in the district, including the alleys.
- vii. **Service Accessibility & Gap Identification:** Contacted and met with key social service providers, including mental health, substance abuse, and housing agencies, to assess current resources and connections available to the unhoused population, evaluated shelter accessibility, including capacity, hours, and restrictions for those experiencing homelessness. Many unhoused individuals are not being engaged daily, which is a missed opportunity for building trust and rapport with the population. The ambassadors' team is the only entity currently doing this, which most of them respect and cooperate with when asked to do something. Also, some of the services people seek are outside of the district, which people stated they had no way to access, and refuse to walk.

F. Identification of “Hot Spots/Core Areas” & Perception of Safety

A comprehensive district walkthrough was conducted to observe population movement patterns. Most activity centered around the Daybreak Center, Cherry Street, and Poplar Street, as I noticed the

same people congregating and moving to different locations to post up throughout the district. The core of the Downtown BID, I determined, is from New Street to Martin Luther King Street and from Plum Street to Riverside Drive. There was not much activity outside of those areas. I even explored the hospital/medical areas, which had no activity present while I was in town. The Marathon gas station on Walnut Street and the Exxon on Spring Street are places where service providers can always find people needing services. Panhandling can be a disruptive behavior, which appeared minimally; there were a few times in the evening when I was verbally approached, but not many hand-held signs. Police were present in the district; however, I didn't see them proactively engaging unhoused people in the doorways or anywhere I observed people sleeping. Police engage primarily when a complaint is made or someone is being disruptive. In general, the district was a peaceful co-existence between the unhoused, residents, and visitors. A few individuals experiencing mental health issues may make some feel uncomfortable in their appearance, but they keep to themselves. While not aggressive, their presence occasionally caused discomfort among passersby, who didn't make eye contact to avoid interactions. For the most part, most people appeared to be used to seeing people in need as they carried on with their day.

- i. Identified core areas of concern that require more attention and resources from the Ambassador Team
- ii. Evaluated the general perception of safety throughout the district via walkthroughs, and also drove the district, noting areas of higher risk or concern
- iii. Assisted in determining what tools and support the Ambassador Team would need to effectively connect with individuals to minimize negative behaviors that affect the perception of safety
- iv. Emphasized the Ambassadors' dual role: engaging individuals in need and being a resource for businesses and stakeholders. The team is trained to respond when called upon for engagement and to proactively address quality-of-life concerns during their shifts, in addition to their primary duty of cleaning.

II. Overview During the Route:

Process Overview: To better understand the impact of the street population, we performed targeted, time-specific counts and conducted area-specific engagement to help quantify the assessment:

- a. Multiple Daily Population Counts: Counts were conducted twice daily—at 7 am, 6:30 pm, and one count mid-day at 11:30 on Friday to see if the lunch crowd would increase numbers, which it didn't. A consistent route covering most of the district each time, including alleys, was explored during the counts. Each session lasted over two hours, offering insight into how the population shifted during the day and into the evening.
- b. Evening Observations: Later evening walkthroughs didn't display a big difference in activity. However, when the bars and clubs were more active, many more people were hanging out on the sidewalks next to the bars. Most drank outside establishments, supplying themselves with their drinks instead of paying the prices in the bars.

Observations:

- a. Drug Use & Paraphernalia: No heavy drug activity was visible throughout the district; the only place where people appeared to be on hard drugs was at the Exxon Gas Station on Spring Street, based on their behavior. I did not observe any paraphernalia on the streets, which I am sure is due to the detailed cleaning of the ambassadors. The most observed activity in the BID was people drinking beer and smoking marijuana.
- b. Sleeping Patterns: The unhoused population primarily slept isolated in business doorways, secluded areas, or places that offer a sense of safety and routine. There were also people sleeping in the medians on city blocks, such as Cherry and Poplar Street. Three ladies were consistently residing in the exact locations each day. The people who slept in doorways would move around throughout downtown in different spots. Those few people would also try to move out of doorways before the businesses open

and look for places unoccupied or with low foot traffic. Then there were maybe three people who slept anywhere and didn't care who was around, which was probably the ones who wandered the streets all night and were exhausted. I have learned that many sleep during the day because they feel safer then and stay awake throughout the night.

- c. Key High-Density sleeping areas included: Walnut and Martin Luther King under Spring Street Bridge (10-20 people there daily), Exxon Gas Station on Spring Street (6-20 people), Apartment 77 Lounge (1-3 people, or close by), Campsites with four tents near railroad tracks, near Piedmont Occupational Medicine, Poplar & Third Street, Cherry Street – between First and Third Streets, Alleyways on First & Mulberry Street.

Synopsis of Observations: most of these areas are not far from service providers, where people feel safe and part of a community. Many informed me that they visit the Mulberry Church for meals, so they stay close by. This emphasizes the importance of consistent, caring engagement by all outreach teams to build trust and offer meaningful alternatives without disrupting a sense of belonging. There are two locations where many unhoused people were sleeping and expressed a desire to try other options: Marathon near Day Break, and the Exxon Gas station on Spring Street.

III. Conditions of the District

- a. Cleanliness and Maintenance:

Generally, the district was observed to be well-maintained, particularly due to the efforts of the ambassador team. Streets were clean, graffiti and stickers removed, and curb lines looked well-managed. Ambassadors were particularly diligent in hotspot areas where trash accumulates rapidly. There is a critical need for a clear system to distinguish between trash and belongings to avoid unintentional dispossession while maintaining public cleanliness.

- b. Public Restrooms Needed:

There is an evident shortage of public restrooms. Even as a professional doing a walkthrough, accessing restrooms required entering private businesses and pretending to be a guest. For the unhoused, access is even more restricted due to stigma and appearance-based discrimination. Without accessible facilities, individuals will continue to relieve themselves in public, worsening health and

sanitation in the alleys. There was one business that did allow all to use the bathroom, like Fatty's Pizza on Cherry, which I saw people frequenting there for the \$5 pizza deal and unlimited water they could fill their bottles with.

c. Lighting:

There is a row of street lights that are out and make things very dark at First Street and Walnut. Alleyway café lighting in between the corridors reduced the accumulation of trash and biological waste and increased the safety levels.

IV. Conversations, Key Areas & Behaviors of the Unhoused

- a. Engagements with the Unhoused: Conversations with unhoused individuals revealed a range of personalities and responses. Most were respectful and open to dialogue, while some declined to engage, often due to mental health issues they were experiencing.
- b. Feedback on Shelters: Several people mentioned that they would appreciate being able to enter a shelter without having to arrive so early in the evening. Some individuals avoid shelters altogether due to strict rules and the perception that they're being treated unfairly or differently from others. Some take pride in their independence and would rather stay on the streets, living life on their own terms without judgment. Even if they choose to drink or use drugs, they still feel in control of their decisions. Many expressed that shelters take in the people who don't have a voice and are the easiest to work with. They need someone who will consistently check in with them on progress or inform them of the following steps required for housing.
- c. Mental Health concerns: The same three individuals were observed repeatedly residing in doorways in the area; most would stare as I walked by. There were two who appeared to be responding to internal stimuli, possibly experiencing auditory hallucinations. Despite these visible signs of mental health crises, those affected remained respectful of others and did not intrude on anyone's personal space.
- d. Panhandlers: Fewer panhandlers were in the district than I had anticipated, but I also saw less foot traffic from people who work and live downtown. There was only one individual engaged in holding a sign while panhandling, while a smaller number of them made verbal requests, primarily asking for food and money. Over the course of the observations, I counted fewer than five people panhandling in certain areas. One person asked me for specifically \$19 to get a bus pass for Metro to get back and forth to work. An aggressive panhandler was seen going up to car windows at the Marathon at

Martin Luther King. The most active locations appeared to be at the bars and restaurants on Cherry Street, particularly in the evenings when foot traffic increased, especially as the weekend approached on Thursday night. Panhandlers would get close to you and whisper a request as they try to be as discreet as possible. One person even offered to walk me to an ATM since I said I didn't carry cash, southern hospitality at its best. Additionally, panhandling also occurred in late evening hours near the JBM and at Serenity Entertainment on Complex, located on Poplar Street.

- e. Locals and Visitors
 - i. Feeling of Safety: Although I am accustomed to visiting areas that some may perceive as unsafe or "sketchy," I did not feel that way during my time in town. Even walking through downtown at midnight, I never felt personally at risk. The perspectives of the residents and businesses painted the same picture. When I spoke to locals and staff members who work at the businesses downtown, they were very empathetic and wished they could do more for the people struggling.
 - ii. Visiting Patrons: I spoke to a lady from Philadelphia visiting for the week, who stated she felt safe but is always more alert in the evening hours, anywhere she is. She was also surprised she didn't see more people panhandling and following her in the evenings, like she sees back home, which was very refreshing to her.
 - iii. Sleeping Locations: I also asked a few ladies why they chose to sleep outdoors, and they all said they also felt safe sleeping downtown in the open, where people could see them. They could also call for help if needed, if there are people and businesses around. They purposely picked spots with higher foot traffic, and they appreciated the ambassadors making their rounds, checking up on them
- f. Perception of the Unhoused: There are mixed feelings from the locals regarding the unhoused population in downtown as far as safety goes. Some would prefer for the population to clean up behind themselves and keep their belongings with them, instead of leaving them in doorways. Others stated they don't bother them when they are going about their day and feel they have the right to be downtown as well. A few businesses are empathetic and believe there should be more support for them, rather than simply moving the problem around. Then some would like them to get out of town so they don't have to see them and deal with certain behaviors that affect their business.

V. Data Insights Overview:

- a. Counted close to 50 unhoused individuals at one given time
- b. Approximately 96% of individuals were unhoused, ~2.1% panhandlers, ~1.4%transients
- c. Evening counts showed 76.4% more activity than mornings
- d. Minimal observed panhandling – less than 5 individuals total during my count times
- e. Other Data Notes:
 - i. Gender: Most of the ladies observed were single and were not coupled up with men, as typically seen in many communities for safety purposes. I saw most of them sitting on benches, and they had lots of belongings in grocery carts. I would say 80 percent of the population was black males.
 - ii. Sleeping Count: For the unhoused who were actually sleeping, or carrying multiple bags/carts with all their belongings. I have learned from 18+ years of doing outreach that most of the unhoused typically don't travel very far from places they are sleeping in, especially if they have lots of items to carry or push with them.
 - iii. Demographic Types: Between the two counts, the numbers varied tremendously between morning and evening, with 96.43% unhoused, 2.12% were panhandlers, and 1.48% were transients. The activity was definitely more active in the evening between the four days of counts, as I captured 76.47% more metrics in the PM vs. AM hours.

VI. Recommendations & Solutions

- a. Outreach Solutions
 - i. During my time in the district, I did not observe daily outreach efforts from any providers besides the Ambassadors who are based in the area. 1.2 Outreach workers do outreach for the whole county through Brookdale Resource Center, but they only focus on encampments, excluding the single individuals seen daily in the downtown district. The fact that they don't come down daily and only work with people in camps is a missed opportunity to build rapport and provide a solution for those who are chronically homeless.
 - ii. Although some agencies conduct outreach within the broader community, they do not dedicate a full-time presence, such as 40 hours per week, specifically to Downtown. That said, there is no

evidence of inter-agency collaboration, which is critical in working toward sustainable, long-term solutions for those experiencing homelessness

- iii. Additionally, local businesses and stakeholders would appreciate having a dedicated point of contact in the district. This person could also respond to concerns within approximately 15 minutes, and their primary responsibilities would be deployed in downtown. This responsiveness helps address immediate problems and supports shared accountability within the neighborhood. The outreach worker can also determine if a situation can't be de-escalated and needs to be elevated to a police matter.
 - iv. While we all agree arresting individuals is not a solution to homelessness, law enforcement plays a necessary role in maintaining public safety. Holding individuals accountable for unlawful behavior, may, in some cases, prompt reflection and catalyze help and support.
- b. Engagement: An outreach worker can engage with panhandlers to find out their needs and connect them to work, or see if we can meet their needs. Outreach can also determine which services people need, and also try to find housing options for those who may have current vouchers
 - c. Discourage: Outreach workers can try to discourage panhandlers so people aren't bothered, while building a rapport with those who choose to panhandle. Ambassadors can also deter some from staying in certain areas, as some don't like daily engagements. With consistent engagements, there can be a level of respect between the outreach worker and the people on the streets as to what behaviors are acceptable, as it is everyone's community to live in, with the understanding of not disrupting others from enjoying the BID's amenities.
 - d. Note: There did not appear to be many people panhandling; at most, there were five during the counts. Some panhandlers were out during the latter part of the evenings, but again, maybe a handful asked for food or money. The evenings proved to be more of a verbal request for food than people holding signs, and they were approaching, rather than being passive in one spot.

VII. **General Observations:** In many communities I have visited, it is the same people in that community who are either sleeping/or asking for money. I continued to see

familiar faces in some of the same areas daily because they felt safe there. They were not concerned about who I was; even while I was taking pictures, they just continued to do what they were doing. I asked about 20 people why they chose to sleep in Downtown instead of going into the shelters.

- i. Responses: A little more than half of them said they didn't want to follow the shelter's rules. Others said they looked after each other on the streets and could do as they pleased without being bothered. They also felt safer, and they thought they were not bothered by the police, and it was accepted. The ones who were in the group also took turns sleeping and watching over others, as they have their community too, and people they consider to be their families in the struggle.
- ii. Relocation: I spoke to a lady who has been out here for 10 years, as she said she is also teaching others how to survive in the streets. She was distraught, saying she had a nice setup at her camp before she was forced to leave by the police. She stated the city is just moving them around at their convenience instead of helping them. She reported this was the third time she had to move in the last 6 months, leaving many of her supplies behind.
- iii. Homeward Bound: I also met two gentlemen who came into town from Kansas City, sleeping at the plaza, who stated they came with other ladies to find work and a place to stay. Once here, things didn't work out, which landed them both on the street for the next two years. They are now trying to figure out their next move and if they want to remain in Macon. I then asked them if they had the means to return home to Kansas City to friends or family, and they said yes!
- iv. Displacement from Services: Lastly, I spoke to a gentleman playing the slots in the Marathon, while he was talking to the employee about the unhoused population next to his gas station. He blurted out that he was homeless and wanted to tell his story. I was informed that he was from Atlanta and was staying in a respite care due to being discharged from the hospital for a gunshot wound. While he stated that a staff member was pushing him around, he fell out of the chair and hurt his hip and back. Instead of helping him, they gave him a one-way bus ticket to come to Macon. He is now trying to get his entitlements sent to Macon and see about a mental health case manager, as he disclosed, he needed medication for his PTSD and Bipolar disorder.
- v. Note: I must also say that not all of the unhoused are panhandlers, and not all of the panhandlers are unhoused. I only saw fewer than 3 people I marked

as transients coming into the Newtown district, but most were sleeping in the district when I captured them. In the next section, you will see a chart that captures the population I observed and the percentage of activity during a specific time period.

Data Charts

Street Population Types Observed in Downtown Macon				
Date	Time	Unhoused	Transient	Panhandlers
Tuesday 8/12/25	AM	n/a	n/a	n/a
	PM	14	0	1
Wednesday 8/13/25	AM	16	1	1
	PM	26	0	1
Thursday 8/14/25	AM	13	1	0
	PM	48	0	0
Friday 8/15/25	AM	19	0	0
	PM	n/a	n/a	n/a
Category Total		136	2	3
% of Total		96.453	1.484	2.127

Street Population Types

Unhoused: Seen sleeping/lying in public with 2+ bags

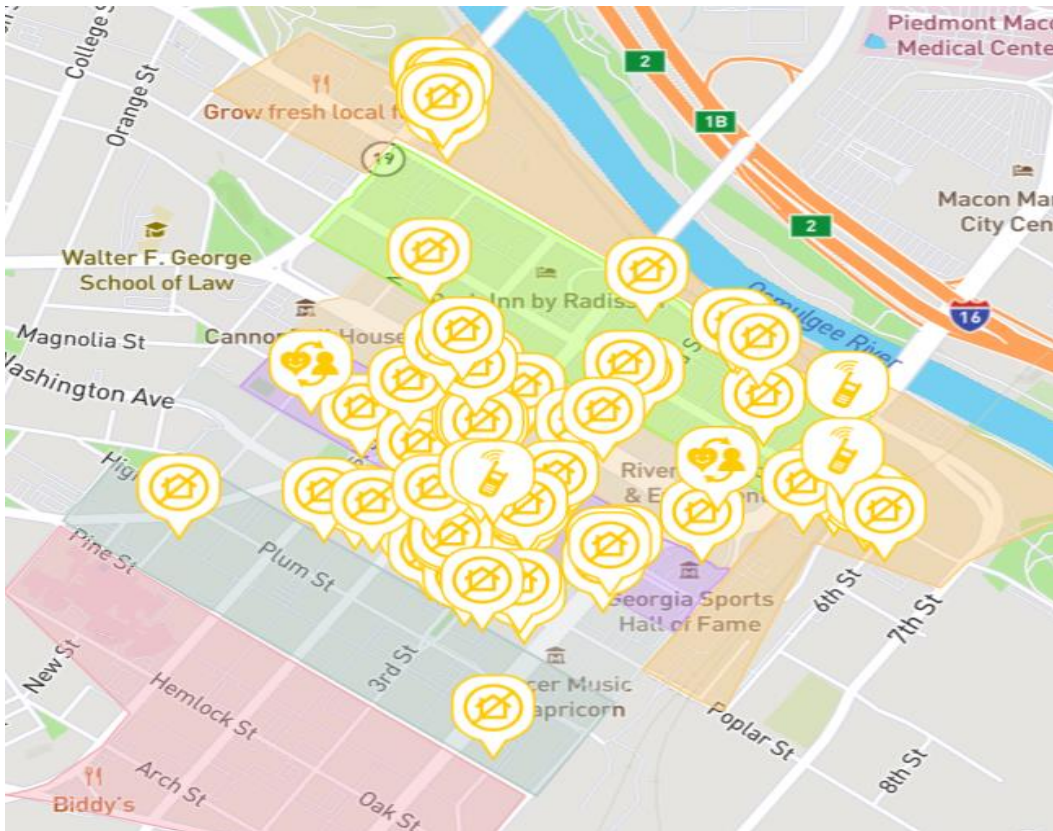
Transient: Seen out with <1 bag, passing through

Panhandlers: Actively observed panhandling

**Morning vs. Evening Count of Street
Population Types Observed in
Downtown Macon**

Date	Type	AM	PM
Tues., 8/12/25	Unhoused	n/a	14
	Transient	n/a	0
	Panhandlers	n/a	1
Wed., 8/13/25	Unhoused	16	26
	Transient	1	0
	Panhandlers	1	1
Thurs., 8/14/25	Unhoused	13	48
	Transient	1	0
	Panhandlers	0	0
Fri., 8/15/25	Unhoused	19	0
	Transient	0	0
	Panhandlers	0	0
Total Each Time of Day Combined	All Categories	51	90

SMART System Screen Pin Grab of Individuals Encountered During Counts



In the map above, you can see what populations were observed and encountered during the counts.

- VIII. Access to Social Services: The connections and access to services in the downtown area were explored, and several agencies were found to serve the community's needs. While there were several services, notable barriers, such as limited bed space, lack of transportation, and lack of advocacy for connections, prevented these services from being fully effective.

Based on my meetings with a few key providers within your continuum of care, it is worth noting that more efforts to increase collaboration between providers are needed to gain traction. Below is a high-level snapshot of key organizations and the roles they currently serve:

- i. Brookdale Resource Center has 1.2 outreach workers through United Way that focus encampments.
 - Report the offer of low – barrier shelter beds for men, women, and families in need.
 - 170 shelter beds and 50 additional night beds
 - Check in between 6pm to 7pm, and they require individuals to leave by 7am.
 - Informed me they have shelter beds available for singles and family
 - Shelter stays are case by case, from 30-60 days, but it varies
 - Also has transitional housing for those who qualify
 - Able to connect people to River Edge or Rescue Mission for substance abuse and mental health services
 - Additional Note: Salvation Army has 108 beds and 30 beds for Veterans
- ii. Daybreak: Closed from 11:30a-12:30p for lunch and to clean the building
 - Offers case management services, clothing, and dental
 - Have medical respite up to 90 days for people discharged from the hospital
 - 12 Respite occupied for seniors and referral only from Piedmont
 - Mental health interns visit 1x/week for clients in need
 - Job placement for people motivated to find work
 - Department of Health also comes to assist people with entitlements
 - Plan to do outreach with BID every Tuesday morning.
- iii. Loaves and Fishes: have to call on Tuesday to schedule a time to obtain birth certificate and IDs
 - Assist with birth certificates and IDs
 - Call in for food assistance for pick up on Tuesdays and Wednesdays at 10am
 - Shower Monday – Thursdays from 10am to 1pm.
 - Laundry service for pick up on Thursdays
 - Prescription pickup for up to \$250 for eligible clients on Tuesday
 - Breakfast on Tuesday 9am – 9:30a, Lunch 12p to 1pm, offer meals Monday – Thursday from 3:30p.
- iv. Mulberry Methodist Church:
 - They offer food for people in need on Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays from 11 am to 12 pm

- People need to enter from the 1st street side to get the meals
- Also, give food bags for people to schedule food pick up for Wednesday

Overall, services are available for people if they are really motivated to obtain their goals. There is not much collaboration between members of the Continuum of Care. From talking and meeting with providers, it seems they are working in silos. Many people feel that there is little hope for their situations to improve. Boots on the ground from an outreach worker may change that mindset if they are ready and motivated to connect with the service providers. Therefore, people must have easy access to beds, and transportation must be available. There has to be some thought about where people can store belongings, as some people won't try to pursue anything to improve their lives because they don't want their belongings stolen or discarded. When there is a window of opportunity to help someone, we must act fast. Removing some of the barriers and challenges such as these, may incentivize those in despair to pursue their options. No entity in your community is downtown 40 hours per week, connecting with people in need. Engaging with people and building rapport with individuals daily provides hope that might motivate them to try something different and feel that there is something better for them to strive for.

- IX. **Law Enforcement Observations in the BID:** Bibb County Sheriff's Office (BSO) showed limited enforcement within the downtown district during my visit. BSO were seen while I was in town, but they seemed to be empathetic about the unhoused population. They know their situation and do not bother people who camped in doorways or slept in public or private right-of-way. There were also many belongings that appeared to be abandoned in doorways that were not bothered. Perhaps that is not something they handle or address. Still, a system must be in place to remove abandoned items that continue accumulating in one area for an extended period. In speaking with a BSO Deputy that works downtown, I asked about panhandling enforcement, trespassing, and if there were a sit and squat law, and I was informed:
- Enforcement of aggressive panhandling or public sleeping typically only occurs after a complaint is made
 - The standard protocol involves a verbal warning, then a citation, and finally, jail if non-compliance persists, or if the person is being disrespectful
 - In the absence of complaints or disruptions, individuals are left alone, even on private property—as long as they aren't "bothering anyone"

- They try to move people along when they have lots of items with them, so they don't get comfortable in one area. However, I saw several people in doorways with items throughout the week
- Holding signs and asking for goods is something they try to deter when seen, and is not permitted in the BID

This practice leads to an environment where unhoused individuals can remain undisturbed, making specific areas in downtown into semi-permanent encampments due to routine and minimal disruption.

- Panhandling: I asked if they engaged people who observed verbally panhandling, and I was told that if it's passive and respectful, they will allow it. If they stopped people from moving about or being overly aggressive, they would engage and ask the person to move along. Based on the interaction, they would cite or address the issue if someone became disruptive.
- Unhoused not concerned with citations: Unhoused individuals stated they are not usually woken and told to relocate. Some also said that when they are told to move, they do so and go to a different doorway to comply, but they may also return several hours later. One Code Enforcement officer I spoke to said that he doesn't bother them if they are not bothering people and not blocking the flow of pedestrian traffic. He also remained empathetic about their situations and understood that obtaining housing can be difficult. That may be why I saw people sleeping in some doorways and on sidewalks. He also talked about the jail being at capacity, which they try to save room for more serious crimes or violations. He felt it depended on each officer, who, at times, is frustrated when people are released before they complete the paperwork from the initial arrest.
- Emergency Medial Services (EMS): I was not able to engage EMS when I was in town, as there was no opportunity to engage them to ask about the overdose rates. I also wanted to inquire what most calls for services consisted of. From walking the district, it appeared that some people smoked marijuana, but a majority of the population drank beer. So I am assuming that there are not many overdoses that occur in the district.

X. Benefits of Outreach Specialist:

- An outreach worker for Downtown would be beneficial for serving those needing resources in the area. Stakeholders can contact an outreach worker

when they have someone in crisis who may require more attention than our current ambassadors can provide.

- b. Resource to Stakeholders: An Outreach worker in place will also be on call while on duty to respond to stakeholder concerns. In many instances, the Outreach person could de-escalate a situation or determine if it needs to be escalated to the police. In some cases, the Outreach workers may be able to handle a situation without police involvement if they have an established relationship.
 - i. Report gaps within Continuum of Care (COC): Outreach will also be able to identify gaps within the local COC and report on these issues. It can also work on identifying the client's needs in the community and actively advocate for that person when attempting to access services. Previously, there have been times when I have been able to connect someone back to family who didn't have the funds to do so while working with them in Downtown Cincinnati
 - ii. Collaboration: The Outreach worker can play a critical role within the COC, as they may be able to reconnect some to the assisting agencies. Agencies can also contact the outreach worker when they are looking for someone up for housing or a prescription refill, or if the case managers are working with them and can't locate them. When I worked on Outreach, I collaborated closely with mental health agencies. If someone needed to get a refill of meds or had a housing appointment, our team assisted in locating that person downtown for the case manager. I wanted to assist in getting that person's meds so they could remain stable in downtown and not cause issues for the stakeholders. This would also lead to fewer police calls if people are not acting out and can control their emotions better due to the medications. There are already some main entities, I mentioned earlier, that we are looking to partner with to have a more coordinated approach in helping those in need in the best way.

Ambassador Team Support:

Job Training: Chico Lockhart, Project Manager for Outreach Services, can deliver job-specific training to the current ambassador team. This training can include:

c. Train Ambassador staff to interact with people in need of services by safely:

- Explaining the importance of entering data into the SMART System.
- Get snapshots as to what populations they are seeing and where they are located
- How to enter quick stats into the SMART System for reporting purposes. This can provide a snapshot of what they see daily.
- Teach the appropriate steps to safely and compassionately engage someone to see if Outreach services are needed
- Teach how to log in and enter Persons of Interest interactions while out in the field
- Inform them how to work with the outreach worker to make that connection effectively
- A training session for the Outreach worker, specifically addressing:
 - The appropriate steps to safely and compassionately engage someone while maintaining a safe distance
 - Knowing how to log in and enter interactions while out in the field, if using our SMART System. We will then be able to see which areas have been covered in the district and ensure that we capture each engagement.
 - Scheduling monthly calls to monitor the district's outreach account and discuss strategies for assisting those in need of services.
 - Scheduling monthly trainings for the Outreach worker to give him or her the tools needed to work towards positive outcomes
 - Walking the district with the Outreach worker to ensure he/she know every aspect of the job, from data entry to business contacts and concerns, and how to be a collaborative partner within the local continuum of care

Key Takeaways, Opportunities, and Recommendations

	Opportunity	Recommendation
1.	<p>Access to Services: I feel that there are resources in your community, but not enough to serve the people in need</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can some shelter beds be reserved for the BID outreach worker to access • Can there be more services that people can enter on the spot and access immediately? • Can the BID outreach worker get bus passes or a way to transport people to services? <p>Can there be an email sent to all outreach providers daily informing them of beds unused for access</p>	<p>Continuum of Care/City:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have to be able to provide a service when someone is ready, as that window of opportunity can be missed • Can all social service providers meet regularly to ensure they are communicating about the next unhoused person slated for housing? • Some unoccupied buildings can be converted to housing singles with/without income • Some may want to shelter to get out of the elements, but shelters run out of space in the evening
2.	<p>HMIS: The BID outreach worker needs to get access to HMIS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They can be another entity to enter people into the database • Can get those on the radar for housing who are not known • Collaborate with existing COC members • Can work with case managers to assist in reconnecting people to the service providers • Can the COC collaborate with Atlanta to discuss granting access for local providers to be able to do HMIS entries themselves 	<p>Continuum of Care:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many people are not being engaged and don't go to shelters that are not on the housing list. • Being able to know if someone has a voucher and is working with a provider that is looking for them. • Having an IPAD and with HMIS, there can be another entity completing VISPIDAT/housing assessment with the population they encounter in the evenings. <p>Local COC members and entities doing outreach should be able to complete the housing applications, which people are ready for</p>
3.	<p>Transporting:</p>	<p>City/County Officials:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many people will never access the service because they can't get to the help • Is there a way to set up an account with Uber or Lyft? <p>Are there bus passes that can also be provided to eliminate a barrier to services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unhoused people may go somewhere where they are getting help getting to facilities outside of the BID with openings • A van would be good so that people can take a reasonable number of items with them <p>Are there any decommissioned police vehicles or city vehicles that can be used for transport to the shelter outside the BID</p>
4.	<p>Outreach Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can engage people who need services every day. • Can be a distraction in people's routines that may lead to positive changes in their lives. • Is on call if someone needs assistance: • With someone acting out. • Engaging aggressive panhandlers. • Be a part of the HMIS reporting <p>Attending meetings with COC members</p>	<p>A BBB Outreach Specialist:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can work on building a rapport with the Street Population • Discover the services people want/need. • Make referrals for services. • Will be dedicated for 40 hours per week to work with people in Downtown Newtown <p>Can work with all local providers to try to obtain live phones, so they will be able to call providers and shelters for people while they are out in the field in real time</p>

In Summary

- Resources are available, but not enough. The Downtown Macon community offers valuable resources for individuals working with providers and seeking help. However, there aren't enough resources to meet the current demand. The system needs to be more accessible and streamlined, reducing red tape so people can access services without feeling discouraged or overwhelmed. There doesn't seem to be collaboration within COC partners to ensure service connections are made, and it appears that resources are working in individual silos. The people who are being overlooked are the most difficult ones, who have severe mental health and substance abuse issues that continue to be chronically homeless in your community. We must prioritize them and not just continue to work only with the people who are easy to work with. There should be monthly meetings among COC members, which include outreach to discuss specific people who need housing and wrap-around services for continued success.

- Shelters are available, and most beds are occupied, but the issue lies in access. These shelters are outside the BID boundaries, which presents a significant barrier as people often won't walk long distances, especially while carrying all their belongings. Transportation is a key needed to help people these shelters.
 - a. Some people feel that they would rather be on the streets with people they like than surrounded by many strangers.
 - b. Few reported that shelter staff don't treat them respectfully and would rather stay outdoors than be talked down to. They also don't want to follow all the rules and jump through hoops just to be able to go somewhere for a little while and then be put back out in the elements.
- The need for a dedicated Outreach worker: Some people require intensive substance abuse or mental health services that may require case management or an outreach person to help them navigate through the continuum of care. Many unhoused individuals need extra assistance to get to those services. Many of these resources in the BID are at capacity, which leads to more people hanging out at those social services places. However, when there are crowds of unhoused/substance abusers at these locations, it makes people feel unsafe and leads to people not coming to those areas, which affects the businesses nearby.

A Dedicated Outreach Worker will:

- Daily, engage with the street population which is needed to build relationships. The Outreach worker will build relationships through consistent, daily engagement with the street population, creating an environment of trust and safety. This trust can lead to positive behavioral changes and connection to needed services. The Outreach worker will also make business contacts to build relationships with downtown stakeholders. When concerns arise, stakeholders can call the outreach worker to assist or direct individuals to social services.
- Advocacy and Accountability for the Street Population for unwanted behaviors will result in more success for the BID. The Outreach worker will actively coordinate with services to identify vacant shelter beds and connect people who need housing to the appropriate resources, improving access to shelter for those in downtown.
- Assist in locating and connecting to services. A key focus will be on individuals in single-occupancy units who are still on the streets or engaged in panhandling. The outreach worker will work to ensure these individuals are reconnected with their housing and service providers. Outreach can also go to the areas where large populations are gathered to build connections with those who continue to be moved around for more long-term, sustainable solutions.

- Demonstrate Care & Compassion to members of the street population can be transformative. By engaging with the street population, the outreach worker will demonstrate that they care about the individuals' well-being and want to see them succeed. From my past outreach experiences, such as in Cincinnati, building rapport and showing compassion often led to people making positive changes, knowing that someone is fighting alongside them. This can create a sense of accountability and community among the unhoused population, giving them hope and motivation to improve their circumstances.

XI. **The Street Population is not motivated to change their habits.** The unhoused population is going to locations where they are not being asked to leave or engaged daily. Many cities are not favorable of a wet shelter, but I will say I got many of our most chronically unhoused/substance abusers into the Jimmy Heath house in Cincinnati. Many of them continue to thrive and have fewer medical calls for service by meeting the person where they were. This can also save the city money as the funds used for the same offenders who occupy the police or EMS often use multiple systems. Some people are not using services outside of the BID because they can't access them. We can change that by assisting with transportation!

- The Unhoused:
 - a. Are comfortable at locations where they have made their homes. If the places are abandoned or empty businesses, then most likely nobody is going to complain about them. Some know they can sleep in areas and not be bothered. Seems like most people are sleeping and loitering in places where the public can see them. Police are constantly monitoring individuals who wish to remain out of the public eye for redevelopment requests. Some were by the river, in the bushes by the tracks, or hanging out where they can get a meal or get out of the elements. That's why under bridges and at gas stations that are covered and not occupied are so sought out. Some people who were displaced from camps outside the BID are not making their way into the BID to find safe places.
 - b. At times, they do not want services: Sometimes, they don't want services: Twelve individuals I spoke to didn't want the services for various reasons.
 - People feel shelters only work with the people that are easy to work with, instead of the people that are chronic and really need support for substance and mental health issues

- Some don't want to be bothered, sleep where they please, and don't want help and want to stay in their current situation.
- Some said there were too many processes to have to go through to get help, and chose to give up.
- Others want to continue their lifestyles and don't want to be told what they can and can't do, and choose to continue drinking or using other substances.
- Engagements lead to changes in thought. More engagements and building relationships show people you care and can lead to a change in their mindset. I heard a phrase that always sticks in my head, that I always.

c. Engagement leads to changes in thought. Engagements and building relationships show people you care and can lead to a change in their mindset. I heard a phrase that always sticks in my head that I always tell our 34 different accounts nationwide, "change comes in the speed of trust." They must trust you first! Then, you work with them at their pace, meet them where they are, and finally collaborate on a plan where they feel more empowered to change their situation.

XII. **Thoughts on Downtown Macon:** Downtown was a safe place to visit, and I felt safe as I moved about during the day and in the late evening. However, from all the years of doing outreach, I have learned that people stay in places they are familiar with and will remain unless their routines are disturbed, which is where the police can be a factor in that with their presence. However, that is not effective if there is no safe alternative for people and leads them to a better form of life.

XIII. **Block by Block Ambassador Team:** Finally, you have prideful Ambassadors that keep your city clean and engage the public. The Block-by-Block Ambassador Teams make people feel safer with extra eyes on the streets, and are more welcoming due to the smiling faces in uniforms, ready to help in every way they can. They are also a deterrent for negative behaviors and will continue to address stakeholders' needs as they occur.