

PORTLAND DOWNTOWN

# City of Portland & Portland Downtown Downtown Police Cadet Program

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Program Evaluation, 2017

**Amy Geren, MCPD**

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The City of Portland, Maine and Portland Downtown, the city's downtown business improvement district (BID), collaborate on the co-management of the Downtown Portland Police Cadet program. The cadet program exemplifies a community policing model that increases the community's perception of public safety while providing valuable training to the next generation of police officers. With an interest in improving and expanding the BID's safety provision, program elements included Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) that addressed all findings and recommendations from year 1 of program evaluation.

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## INTRODUCTION

Portland Downtown was established in 1992 through an act of the Maine State Legislature under the “Maine Municipal Development Districts” statute. It was incorporated as a 501(c)(4) non-profit, and is funded by a development district assessment on downtown district property. Portland Downtown qualifies for Internal Revenue Code (IRC) section 501(c)(4) as a social welfare organization, and its mission-driven services regarding safety, cleanliness, and management of the downtown that provide for social welfare, while funded by property owner constituents, must be available to the community as a whole to qualify for the IRC designation. Since its establishment, Portland Downtown has consistently supported community development with other partners to create value for its property owner constituents.

Portland Downtown’s Board of Directors are members of the community who represent the municipality, property owners, residents, retail merchants, entertainment and night life venues, professional services, accommodations, cultural/nonprofit/educational organizations, and restaurants. In addition, Portland Downtown hosts committee meetings that address a wide range of community issues, and forms ad hoc committees in support of policy advocacy as necessary. Through its advocacy work in particular, Portland Downtown seeks to partner with stakeholders in the implementation of its strategic planning initiatives, which includes expanding police and cadet presence in the downtown. Successful advocacy initiatives in recent years include recommending the reinstatement of the City of Portland’s Sound Oversight Committee to respond to public concerns around excessive noise in downtown; partnering with the City of Portland on a parking supply and demand study of the downtown and eastern waterfront, in response to business concerns about the price and supply of parking downtown; and initiating an outreach partnership to assist those exhibiting need downtown in response to high social service need and businesses’ concern for safety downtown.

For many years, the City of Portland, Maine and the city’s downtown business improvement district (BID), Portland Downtown, have co-managed a Downtown Portland Police Cadet program in an effort to improve perceptions of safety in the city’s downtown district. To provide safety services for its property and business owner constituents, Portland Downtown maintains the cadet program collaboration with the City of Portland’s Police Department during the busy summer months. Cadets are training for careers in law enforcement or the military, and the program gives them valuable hands-on experience in the field of community policing to complement their career training. They are sworn in as constables with the City of Portland, and watch for and report on safety issues, educate the public on local ordinances, and have the authority to issue citations for ordinance violations. The program encompasses many aspects of community policing, as well as ordinance enforcement, community education, and tourism. As part of their duties, cadets make contact with business owners, identify persons in need of social service assistance, and enforce local municipal ordinances. In 2016, the program received an *Award of Excellence* in the Leadership and Management category from the International Downtown Association.

Like most thriving major cities, Portland struggles with common urban issues. Panhandling, vagrancy, loitering, and public substance use have been identified as top concerns among downtown businesses, fearing these behaviors will negatively affect Portland’s business and tourism environments. The cadet program is a partnership that provides for public safety in the district by adding security to Portland’s downtown, an area that sees an influx in traffic in the pleasant summer months due to an increase in tourism and transient populations.

The cadet program epitomizes the community policing model, and is a long-standing program that has adapted with the changing face of law enforcement. In addition to patrolling the downtown area, cadet duties include talking to business owners, engaging with the public at events, and connecting with local homeless outreach teams to resolve issues of loitering, panhandling, and public substance use.

Program benefits for the cadets include:

- Paid internship and/or college credit;
- Hands-on experience in the community policing field;
- Police department training in self-defense and report writing; and
- Mentoring from senior officers.

Their positions certainly focus on ordinance enforcement, but also address quality of life issues that a tourist or business owner sees, focusing as well on making perceptions of Portland a clean and safe destination in which to live, work, and visit.

Early in the year, Portland Downtown's program manager, Amy Geren, collaborated on an International Downtown Association (IDA) *Top Issues Council* with several professionals representing safety and security positions at urban district management organizations nationwide. IDA *Top Issues Councils* are strategic research initiatives that bring together industry leaders to serve and contribute their expertise to the relevant body of knowledge on place management. Consequently, Ms. Geren was able to highlight the cadet program as a specialized safety program in the 2017 *Top Issues Council* report on *Planning for Safety and Security*, bringing national awareness to the program as a best practice in urban district management.

## **PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION**

Portland is generally a safe city and sees crime rate reductions annually, but Portland Downtown must remain vigilant, as perception translates to reality for many. This requires continuous work to create a comfortable experience for visitors, business owners, employees, and residents. Additionally, the influx of tourist and transient groups downtown equates to many newcomers who are unfamiliar with the city's ordinances, resulting in conflicts that are easily resolved through outreach and education rather than police intervention. Portland Downtown manages safety concerns through a close working relationship with the police and fire departments, and social service agencies, and financially supports the staffing of four full-time police cadets from May through September.

With both real and perceived safety being the key concern for business owners downtown, the cadet program bridges the gap between enforcing ordinances and providing public relations for business owners and tourists. Cadets are part of the Police Department's community policing division, and begin each day at police headquarters downtown. They meet with their supervisor at the start of each shift, are informed of assignments for the day, and check e-mail for communication from the department, Portland Downtown, and area businesses and organizations. For safety reasons, cadets, like foot beat officers, work in teams of at least two. With staff of four, cadets are able to patrol in groups of two, which allows them to cover a larger area during a shift. On a typical day, cadets walk nearly ten miles in the downtown, pausing often to engage with business owners, tourists, or other members of the community. The cadets report ordinance violation stats to the Police Department, and share data with

Portland Downtown's program manager, which is then analyzed and shared with downtown constituents.

The 2017 cadet program year began May 27<sup>th</sup> (Memorial Day weekend) and ended October 2<sup>nd</sup>. Cadets typically worked five days per week, patrolling in groups of two, with an overlap in their schedules to provide for a longer day's coverage. After one cadet began full-time training at the state law enforcement academy, the open position was filled by a new recruit to the department who was waiting to join the next state academy cohort. Another cadet was scheduled to go to school locally, and started the academic season early for basketball team practice, creating another staffing shortage late in the season. By the end of the season, two local college interns and another new recruit waiting to join the state academy cohort filled in for staffing shortages, allowing the program to operate at full capacity once again.

## **CADET ACTIVITY: 2017**

### **Community Engagement**

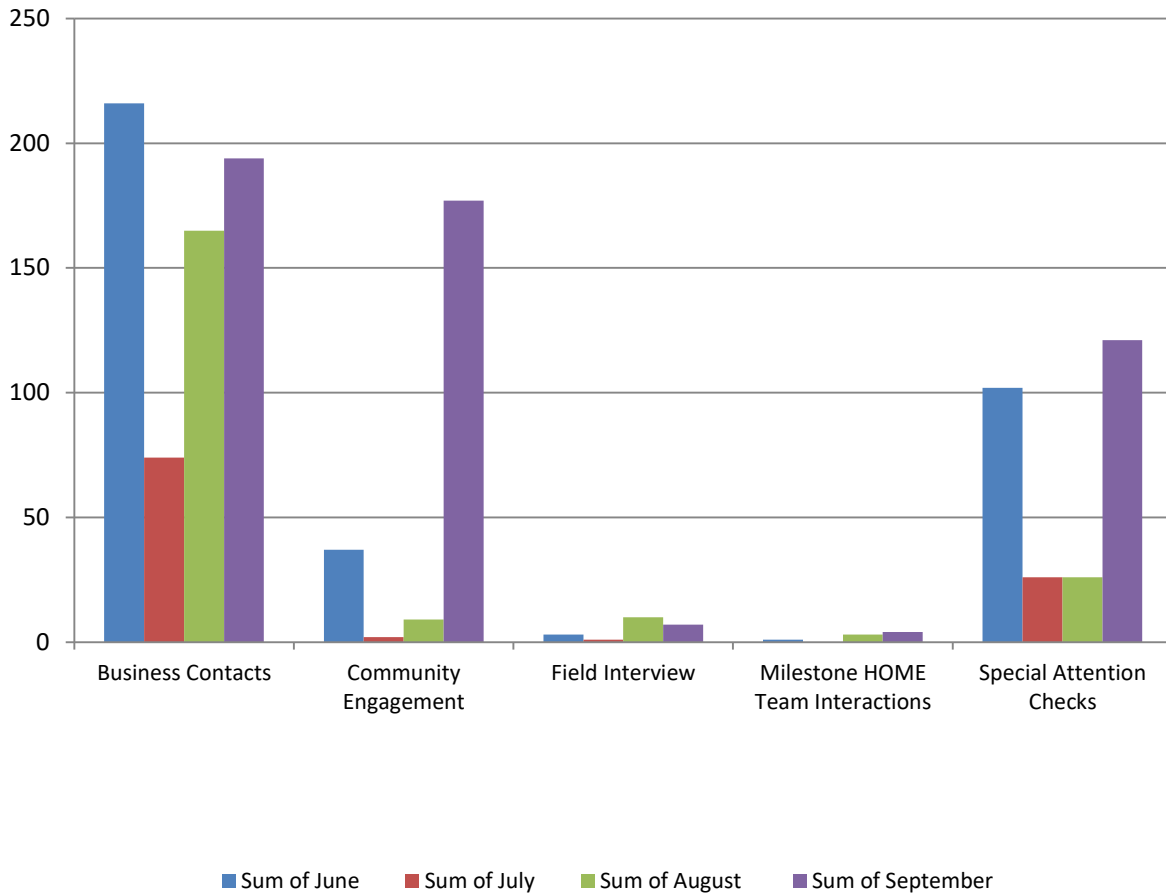
The cadets engaged with the public throughout the season, as an opportunity to improve community relations for the Police Department, and to meet with individuals face to face. One regular engagement included playing basketball with youth at a nearby public housing authority during their lunch break. This engagement was an effort to show the positive side of policing to young residents of the area. Other activities that the cadets were asked to provide special attention to were Portland Downtown's *Old Port Festival*, the City of Portland's *Fireworks Spectacular*, *National Night Out*, an *Eid* celebration, weekly farmers markets, and smaller events held in public parks. They also handed out backpacks to local youth during a *Fill A Backpack* event as the school season approached. The cadets were particularly popular with cruise ship passengers, who reached out to them as a source of information, and they frequently accommodated requests for directions to popular tourism destinations. This aspect of the job is largely expected; in fact, part of the cadets' training included attending a hospitality industry training early in the season, so that they could learn about new and classic things for visitors to do.

### **Daily Activity**

The cadets track and report data on their daily activity, including business visits, special attention checks, and ordinance violation warnings and citations. New for the 2017 season, cadets were asked to record community engagements, and interactions with Milestone Recovery's *Homeless Outreach Mobile Engagement (HOME) Team*, a provider of outreach services for individuals with substance use and behavioral health disorders. The cadets suggested adding field interviews as a data point, because they represent extensive engagements. Field interviews add an additional level of reporting when an individual has been warned of an ordinance violation, which support additional warnings by evidence of earlier encounters with the violator. In an effort to inform on potential improvements to park signage that could help support enforcement of smoking in public parks violations, the cadets were also asked to query violators of their awareness of the City's ordinance specific to smoking in public areas, and of park signs that typically list park rules. Business visits, community engagement activities, field interviews, *HOME Team* interactions, and special attention checks represented a large portion of the cadets' daily activity. Figure 1 details the sum activities, by month, for these categories.

Figure 1

### Downtown Police Cadet Activity: June – September 2017

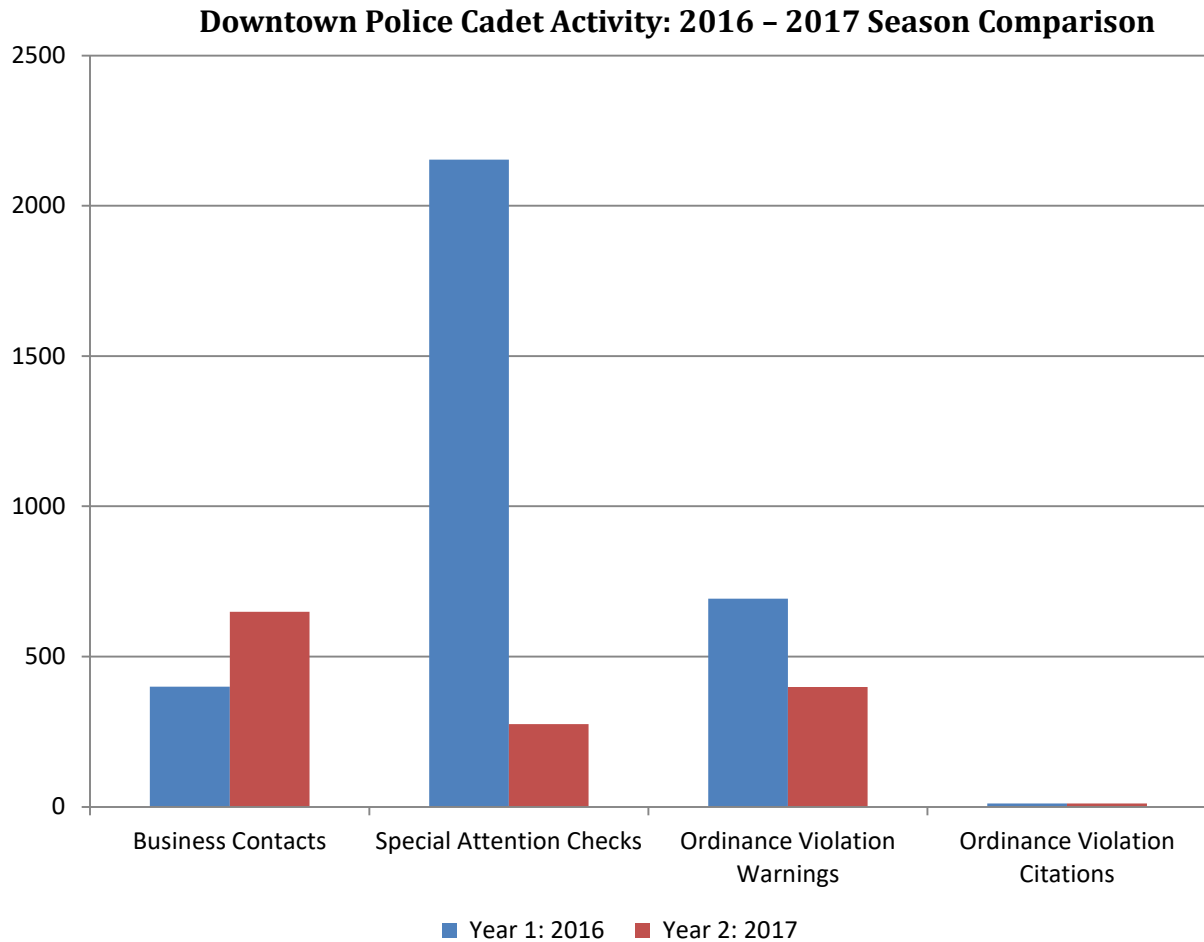


As compared to the previous season’s outreach efforts (Figure 2), business contacts increased, while special attention checks decreased substantially. The decrease in special attention checks data is somewhat misleading. During the months of July and August, the Chief of Police instructed community policing personnel to focus their efforts on areas responsible for high calls for service, in response to business frustration with disruptive behavior downtown. Consequently, the cadets spent significant parts of their days during this time focusing on select hot spots, versus more widely covering the district, in an effort to make their presence felt among frustrated business owners. This focused effort on making the cadet presence visible downtown accounts for the increase in business visits as well, since the Chief of Police requested that the cadets make an extra effort to introduce themselves to businesses, and to offer their assistance where applicable.

### Ordinance Violation Warnings

Ordinance violation warnings (Figure 3) represent a significant point of contact that the cadets have with the public. In an effort to maintain a positive tourism and business experience, the cadets are encouraged to warn versus cite for ordinance violations.

Figure 2

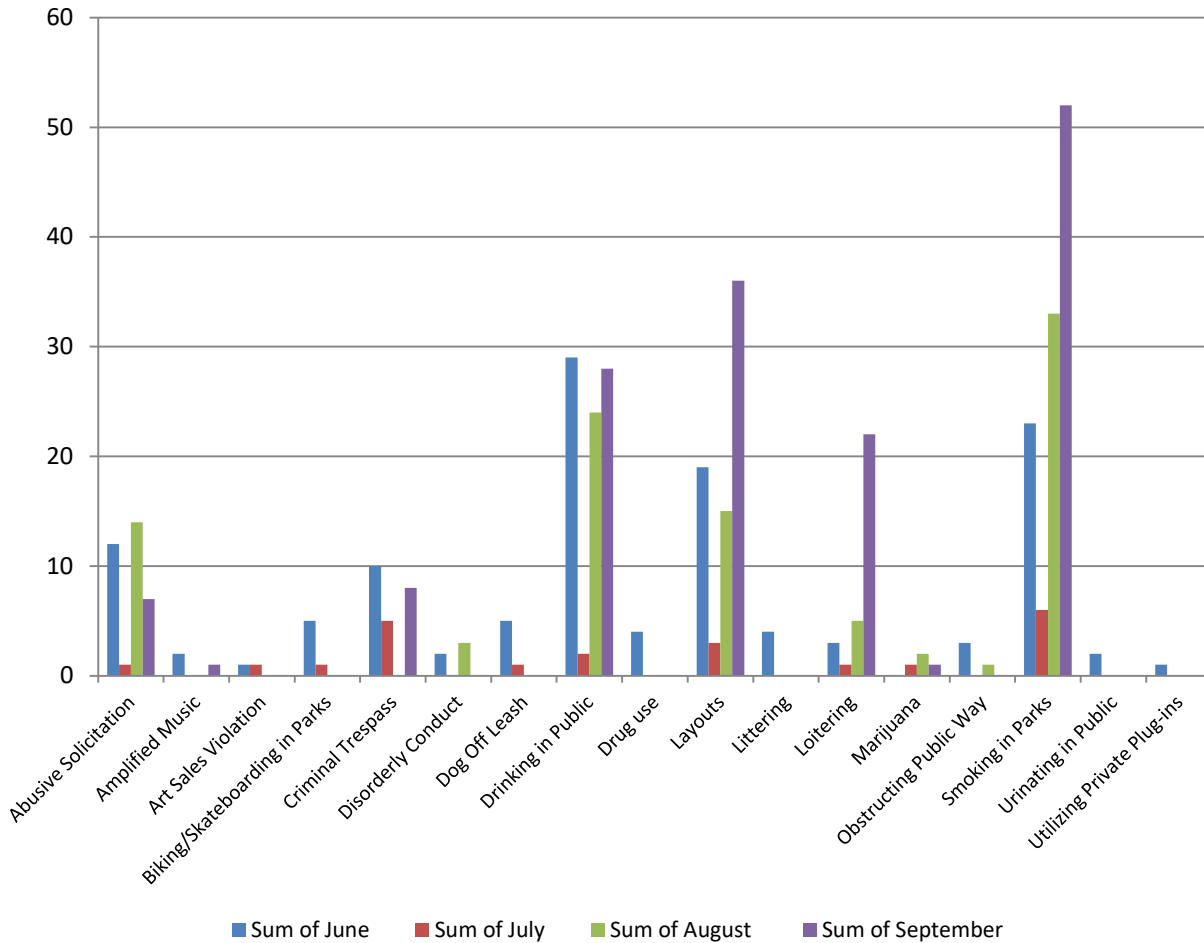


Smoking in public parks was again the highest ordinance violation warning for the 2017 season, which represented over a quarter (28.6%) of all warnings. This violation was outnumbered only by drinking in public, exclusive to the month of June, which represented 20.8% of the ordinance violation warnings for the season as a whole. Layouts were the third highest ordinance violation warned for, accounting for 18.3% of the season’s warnings. Criminal trespass, abusive solicitation, and loitering violations were warned for somewhat frequently, with all three ordinance violations seeing double digit warnings at least one month during the season. Together, smoking, drinking in public, layouts, criminal trespass, abusive solicitation, and loitering represented the vast majority (89.7%) of all ordinance violation warnings for the season.

Layouts stem from a variety of different situations, including an individual sleeping in a public park or building entrance, being under the influence of alcohol, or experiencing the start of an overdose. Layouts, as reported by the cadets, represent individuals who are either sleeping, or intoxicated. Typically, a layout results in waking a sleeping person, calling for assistance from the *HOME Team* if alcohol or drugs are contributing factors, or calling for emergency response if the cadets determine the situation requires urgent medical care.

Figure 3

### Ordinance Violation Warnings: June – September 2017



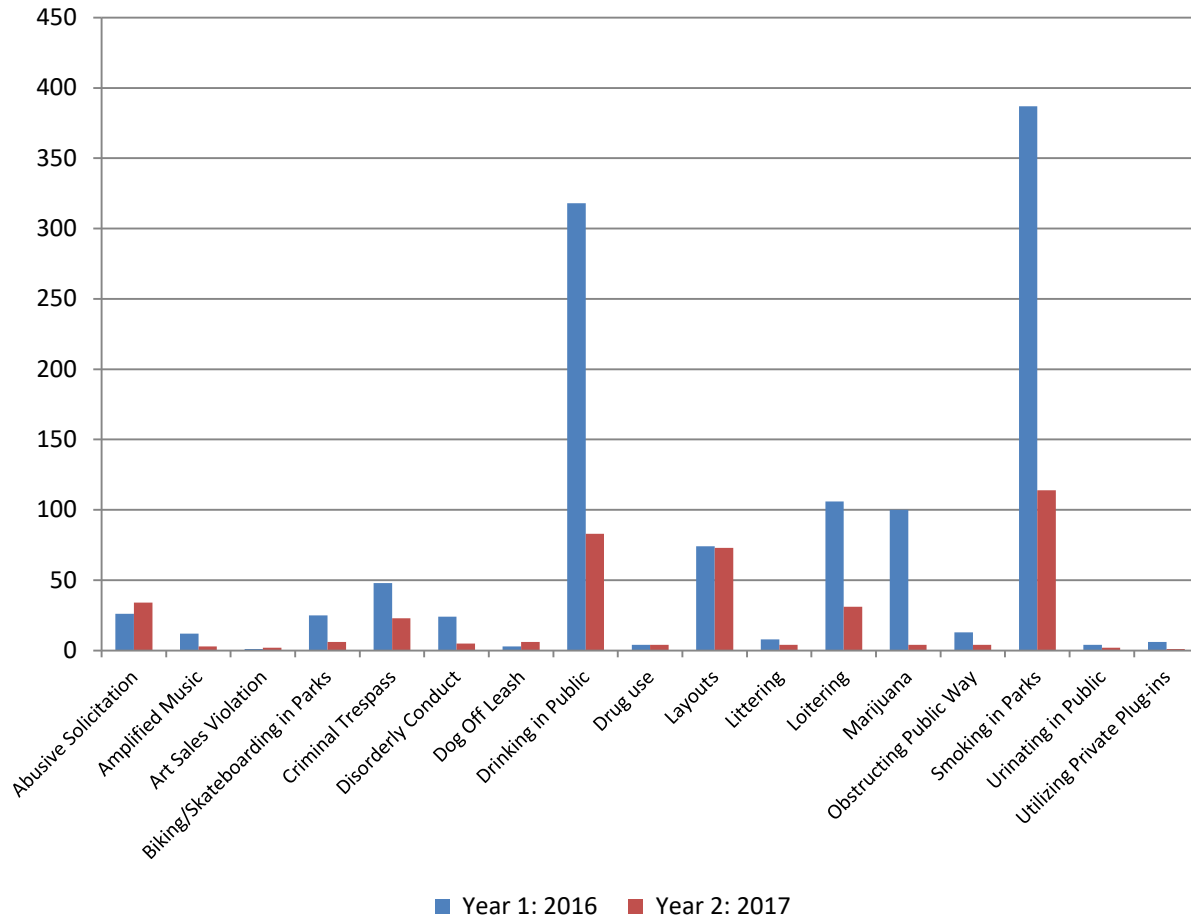
The City of Portland’s Code of Ordinances<sup>1</sup> prohibits abusive solicitation, with the intent of protecting public safety while respecting the constitutional right of free speech. Warning or citing for abusive solicitation is most frequently used by the cadets to address aggressive panhandling. A violation of the abusive solicitation prohibition includes blocking or impeding a person’s passage, following a person solicited after they decline making a donation, touching a solicited person without their consent, and/or threatening a person solicited, physically or with words. This ordinance violation is the only warning that increased in number of warnings with any significance in 2017 over the previous season. Overall, however, there were much fewer ordinance violation warnings in 2017 as compared to the 2016 season (Figure 4), which can be attributed, in part, to the focused effort on special attention to areas specific to public disruption, but also attributable to staffing shortages midseason. Changes between seasons, considered as a proportion of each season’s total warnings (Figure 5), allow for a comparison regarding change in violations between years.

<sup>1</sup> City of Portland Code of Ordinances, § 17-2



Figure 4

### Ordinance Violation Warnings: 2016 - 2017 Season Comparison



Layout warnings for the 2017 season represented the largest change in proportion of the total warnings given, which accounted for an increase of 11.9% in this violation over the 2016 season, even though the number of warnings for the violation actually decreased by one warning. Abusive solicitation warnings increased, with just a few additional warnings accounting for a 6.3% increase. Alternately, both drinking in public and smoking in public parks decreased as a proportion of total warnings, although only slightly, accounting for 6.6% and 4.8% reductions, respectively, in these warnings between the 2016 and 2017 seasons. These two violations still accounted for a large portion of total warnings for the season, representing 20.8% and 28.6%, or nearly half, of all warnings.

There was a large decrease, both in number of warnings (94) and in the proportion of overall warnings (7.8%), in marijuana use during the 2017 season. This decrease can be attributable, in large part, to the legalization of the drug in January of 2017. The law currently allows an individual to possess as much as 2.5 ounces of marijuana, but the law prohibits using the drug in public. Therefore, there seemed to be an increase in marijuana use downtown, as observed by downtown constituents, but enforcement tended more toward smoking violation warnings than public drug use.

Figure 5

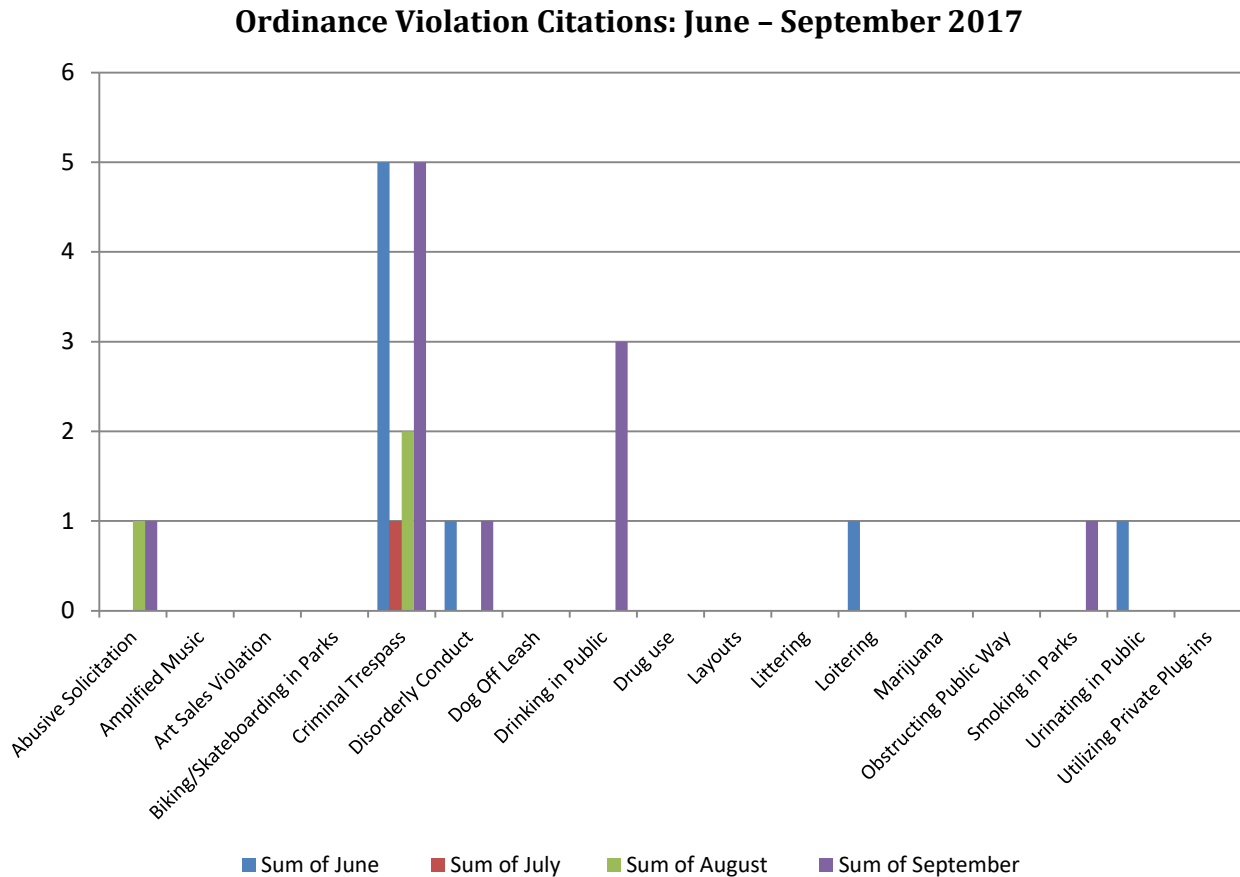
<b>Ordinance Violation</b>	<b>Year 1: 2016</b>	<b>Proportion of Total</b>	<b>Year 2: 2017</b>	<b>Proportion of Total</b>	<b>Change: 2016 - 2017</b>
Abusive Solicitation	26	2.2%	34	8.5%	6.3%
Amplified Music	12	1.0%	3	0.8%	-0.3%
Art Sales Violation	1	0.1%	2	0.5%	0.4%
Biking/Skateboarding in Parks	25	2.2%	6	1.5%	-0.7%
Criminal Trespass	48	4.1%	23	5.8%	1.6%
Disorderly Conduct	24	2.1%	5	1.3%	-0.8%
Dog Off Leash	3	0.3%	6	1.5%	1.2%
Drinking in Public	318	27.4%	83	20.8%	-6.6%
Drug use	4	0.3%	4	1.0%	0.7%
Layouts	74	6.4%	73	18.3%	11.9%
Littering	8	0.7%	4	1.0%	0.3%
Loitering	106	9.1%	31	7.8%	-1.4%
Marijuana	100	8.6%	4	1.0%	-7.6%
Obstructing Public Way	13	1.1%	4	1.0%	-0.1%
Smoking in Parks	387	33.4%	114	28.6%	-4.8%
Urinating in Public	4	0.3%	2	0.5%	0.2%
Utilizing Private Plug-ins	6	0.5%	1	0.3%	-0.3%
<b>Total Ordinance Violation Warnings</b>	<b>1159</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>399</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	

### **Ordinance Violation Citations**

The cadets did occasionally issue ordinance violation citations (Figure 6). There were high incidents of criminal trespassing throughout the season (13 citations), which outnumbered all other citations in total during the season (10 citations). Criminal trespass warnings let individuals know that they are trespassing on private property, and law enforcement can use the warnings to reduce illegal activity or disorderly conduct in crime hot spots. Once an individual has been issued a criminal trespass citation, additional violations authorize the Police Department to arrest the violator. The cadets used the method of criminally trespassing individuals to reduce the conduct of illegal activity downtown. Business and property owners also have the option of completing a criminal trespass form, which authorizes the Police Department to criminally trespass anyone they identify as engaging in illegal activity on private property should they notice extensive criminal behavior occurring on their property.

All of the other ordinance violation citations, including abusive solicitation, disorderly conduct, drinking in public, loitering, smoking in parks, and urinating in public, accounted for only single violations in any given month. Of these violations, only drinking in public exceeded more than a single monthly incidence, and that occurrence occurred in the month of September.

Figure 6



## QUALITATIVE OUTCOMES

At the end of the 2017 program season, Portland Downtown’s program manager held a focus group with two of the cadets, their supervising sergeant and lieutenant, two new recruits serving as cadets while waiting to join the next state academy cohort, and two college interns beginning their season for the school year. Cadets were asked about their training experience and their overall experience with the program, how the program affected their perceptions and attitudes about policing, and what they liked and disliked about the program. The open-ended nature of the questions allowed for ample discussion. In addition to the cadets’ experience discussion, the sergeant and lieutenant talked about the hiring process, and challenges and opportunities regarding program expansion.

### Program Hiring Process

The recruitment process did not change significantly in the 2017 season as compared to the 2016 season. The opportunity was posted with all City of Portland’s employment opportunities in the spring. With an interest in attracting the best pool of candidates, i.e., those studying criminal justice locally for career and program season alignment, the cadets’ supervising sergeant communicated with local institutions of higher education about the program. One of the cadets, a rehire from the previous season, was hired by the Police Department to begin training as a law enforcement officer, which took

her away from the cadet position. A second rehire from the previous season worked through the entire 2017 season, taking a lead role because of his familiarity with the program and the patrol area. The interim staffing shortage required the cadets to alternate their schedules, or work in groups of three, reducing the coverage area for a portion of the season. Midway through the season, a new hire with the Police Department was assigned to patrol with the cadets while waiting to join the next state law enforcement academy cohort, filling program staffing for the remainder of the season. Other than accommodations to account for officer training and the school season beginning at the end of the program season, there were no drop-outs from the program.

Informally, the cadets' supervisor estimated that the race, ethnic, and gender makeup of the cadet program proportionately reflected that of the department as a whole. Portland is the most ethnically, racially, and culturally diverse community in the state. Portland Public Schools' ethnic make-up, largely due to the influx of immigrants from countries facing conflict, is significantly more diverse than the city as a whole, with approximately 32% of students speaking a language other than English in the home. While the parents and grandparents of these young people may have had negative experiences with policing in other cultures, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generation Portlanders have not necessarily had these experiences. Consequently, engagement with the schools provides an opportunity to continue to develop cultural diversity within the Police Department through modeling positive community policing as a career opportunity. In an effort to continually engage youth in leadership opportunities for their futures, and to provide opportunities for friendly engagement with police officers, the Police Department's School Resource Officers (SROs) engage high school youth in *SealsFit*, a program designed to teach youth valuable leadership skills, and to learn about law enforcement as a career.

## **Cadet Training and Management**

Cadets received three days of programed training through the Police Department, that included training on City of Portland Code of Ordinances and state criminal code, how to write tickets, reports, and tag evidence, safety and defense tactics, and practicing with senior officers through roll-playing scenarios. Verbal and physical safety and defense training included how to use words as a primary weapon, but also how to break free from potential physical harm. The scenarios included, among others, staged smoking violations, and a lost child enactment. They trained with several police officers, as well as a City of Portland code enforcement officer.

## **Daily Experience**

Overall, the cadets felt they could not have received a better, more hands-on experience in community policing than through the cadet program. The experience provided an opportunity to deal with a wide spectrum of the population, including individuals with substance use disorders, and those experiencing mental illness, and learn quickly that alcohol use would often equate to abusive behavior. They particularly liked riding along with officers, where they learned valuable communication skills and how to de-escalate potentially dangerous situations. One cadet indicated he tended towards quiet introversion, and the experiences with mental illness and learning to talk with people were "beyond-words" valuable. He saw, from his experience, that kindness was the best way to respond to people in need.

During a typical day's foot patrol, the cadets would focus on areas where drug use tended to occur most frequently, estimating that eventually people began hiding from them later in the season, as transient, substance use disordered, and mentally ill groups and individuals became aware of the cadet presence.

They felt the program taught them how to deal with people verbally to get information, how to approach people, and how to gain compliance by having more casual and friendly conversations.

The cadets reported that mid-season was very busy, while the end of the season was slower, comparatively. They reported that drinking in public and smoking violations were very high throughout the season, as supported by the contact data. The slower period at the end of the season allowed the cadets to make more business checks and to engage with the community a bit more. The cadets appreciated business owners thanking them for their presence, which helped them feel that their role in the community was impactful. Their daily visits to businesses did not always reach a property or business owner, but they left word with staff that they had checked the area.

### **Perceptions and Attitudes about Community Policing**

The cadets expressed that the work was challenging, and could, at times, feel like their efforts were ineffective, as with repeatedly criminal trespassing the same individuals. However, the cadets felt the business owners seemed happy with their presence, which, in turn, made their efforts seem more worthwhile. In fact, one business owner expressed feeling relieved after the cadets assisted in moving a homeless encampment from their business doorway. Experiences such as this, throughout the season, had the effect of making the cadets want to do more to help with homelessness and social service need in the city. As compared to the previous season, one cadet who worked during both seasons noticed that there were fewer traveling homeless groups this season. Through learning about different groups of people, the cadets expressed becoming more sympathetic to those seeking assistance publicly, and that they would like to join the Police Department to assist in solving some of these challenging societal issues.

For the new recruits joining the cadets while waiting to enroll in the state law enforcement academy, the program provided an experience to learn the area, and they felt they would overcome a learning curve once through the Police Department training process. They felt, in fact, that the program made them better candidates, more efficient at their jobs, and that the experience of listening to feedback from officers during debriefings was valuable training.

### **Positive Experiences**

The cadets generally liked the daily flow of the program, especially when assigned specific tasks, which always helped to make the day go by faster than when just patrolling on foot. In general, the cadets loved walking around the city and being at events where they provided special attention. During rainy days, the cadets had the opportunity to talk with people at the community policing centers, which provided another level of mentoring and training.

The cadets enjoyed riding along with officers to gain experience in the field. They felt they could learn techniques and tools of the trade directly from senior officers, which often represented other ways of doing things than how they had been formally taught, or what they had experienced during their brief engagement on the job downtown. They felt the perspectives of other officers increased their decision making abilities while in the field, offering them solutions they might not have considered otherwise.

## **Negative Experiences**

As community policing professional, cadets do not carry weapons. When challenging members of the community observed that they did not carry weapons, or even pepper spray, they were sometimes harassed and taunted for their seemingly innocuous role within law enforcement. A typical day often included getting cursed at, called racial slurs, and generally receiving little respect from challenging members of the community who seemed to want to be problematic. The cadets were quick to point out that the nature of community policing will come with these negative aspects, and that the cadet program in particular, which they felt contained nothing to dislike, was not to blame for some unpleasant experiences. They did learn through experience, however, that they had the ability to turn a situation around through talking. When initially confronted by people who did not seem to respect them, they understood that words were their weapons, and they felt they substantially developed these skills throughout the season.

The shortness of staffing early in the season was a bit problematic for the cadets, as they felt the landscape was considerably more manageable by being able to split up into two groups. By being restricted to working in one larger group, they felt they could not cover as much of the downtown as they would have liked, and they thought they were consequently not as effective in providing for safety.

## **Opportunities for Improvement**

Having had the opportunity to gain first-hand experience throughout the season was consistently cited as invaluable training. The cadets felt that more training with scenarios during their training period, as well as refresher trainings throughout the season, could improve the program. They also felt it might be helpful to cross-train with the Peaks Island program to make the two patrol areas more flexible for staffing.

## **CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT**

Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) is a program management approach that focuses on process improvement. Obtaining the objective contact data that the cadets collect, as well as collecting qualitative data through daily interactions and a focus group, allowed for an opportunity to analyze and improve the cadet program processes in alignment with CQI. Findings from the year 1 evaluation completed in 2016 were addressed prior to and during the 2017 program season. Action was taken on all four recommended areas of quality improvement, as well as with the administrative process of data reporting as referenced as a limitation in the year 1 evaluation.

## **Strategic Outreach/Hiring**

An indication from the Police Department that it would like to be more strategic about its outreach for program staffing, led the supervising sergeant to connect with local community colleges in an effort to interest the best pool of applicants. Since the program extends beyond a typical college summer break, the best candidates for the positions include applicants going to school or working locally, so that they can continue, albeit with reduced hours, through the month of September and into October. For the 2017 season, the supervising sergeant made contact with the local institutions of higher education to assure these potential applicants knew about the opportunity to experience community policing first-hand. As well, repeat hires from the previous season represent ideal candidates to fill the positions, as their familiarity with the area and department colleagues is invaluable, and their experience reduces the

need for extensive training. The sergeant received applications from two prior year cadets, and filled positions with both applicants.

The Police Department requested that Portland Downtown accommodate an increase in the hourly wage offered to cadets for the 2017 season, previously \$11.00 per hour, and Portland Downtown willingly obliged. The minimum wage in Portland increased to \$10.68 in 2017, and the department wanted to increase the offered wage for cadets in an effort to remain competitive with other community policing opportunities for young people. In 2017, the department advertised the positions would pay \$12.00 per hour, just slightly more than the minimum wage ensured for workers in the City of Portland.

Program expansion was also discussed during the year 1 evaluation focus group, but the department indicated it was currently at capacity regarding training and management in the community policing division. Consequently, program expansion was not considered by the partners for the 2017 season despite the desire for more police presence downtown expressed by downtown businesses. However, the department engaged two local college students studying criminal justice to intern through the 2017-2018 school year, thus expanding the scope of the program considerably. The interns were able to begin their season under the guidance of senior cadets, and continued working during the first semester with a Police Department new hire who was waiting to begin training at the state law enforcement academy. The interns followed the data collection process on ordinance violation warnings and citations, and other points of contacts, as used by the summer cadets, which will allow for an evaluation of internship contacts at end of the season.

### **Focused Business Contact**

Personal business contacts decreased 65% in 2016 from the previous season; therefore, the year 1 evaluation recommended more strategic outreach to businesses, making personal business contacts a priority according to demand, in an effort to further improve attitudes and perceptions of a safe and economically prosperous downtown. Incidentally, the Chief of Police implemented a more focused effort on making police presence known in the community, due to overwhelming business concerns regarding public vagrancy, substance use, and other disruptive behavior downtown. Consequently, business contacts in 2017 increased 62% over the 2016 season, in alignment with the 2015 season's business visit data.

### **Smoking Violations**

Smoking in public places where the activity is prohibited was consistently the highest ordinance violation warning by incident throughout the 2016 season. Year 1 evaluation recommendations included exploring public smoking attitudes with public health officials for solutions in slowing these violations. Early in 2017, Portland Downtown reached out to the City of Portland's Public Health Department, and was introduced to the Tobacco Prevention Program (TPP) manager for assistance with affecting change. At the TPP manager's suggestion, Portland Downtown added another level of data collection to the cadets' reporting on smoking violations, including knowledge of the ordinance, and awareness of no smoking signage in areas where smoking is prohibited. The partners were hopeful that this added level of data collection would inform on opportunities for improvements, including updated park signage and language included on the signage. The cadets reported that ordinance violators, when queried, overwhelmingly indicated they did not know about the ordinance, and that even more said they could

not see the sign. Of the smoking ordinance violators who the cadets had further discussion with<sup>2</sup>, 40.6% reported knowledge of the ordinance, and only 18.8% indicated they had seen park signage. The cadets noted the signs in many areas were placed high and were often obscured by trees. As well, they noted that violators often pointed to contained ashtrays attached to public property as evidence that smoking appeared to be allowed in the area. They suggested that large, simple signs might be more effective, but also indicated that people, in their experience, do not always notice signage since many people they observed tended to use their mobile phones and devices while smoking in the parks.

The TPP manager also suggested the cadets carry and offer *Maine Tobacco Helpline* information to offenders who seemed receptive to cessation materials, as the broad goal of the TPP is to reduce smoking rates overall. The cadets did carry the information, in the form of tear-off pads, and offered it on occasion, but estimated they were not the best vehicle for encouraging cessation.

The new relationship between Portland Downtown and the TPP resulted in a partnership initiative which added a smoke- and tobacco-free element to an existing, on-going event, and they continue to collaborate on declaring similar public events smoke- and tobacco-free. In an effort to amplify the success of the initiative, the partners presented on the effort at the *Maine Public Health Association's* annual conference in October of 2017, including educating attendees on utilizing ordinance violation data, as with that provided by Portland's cadets, to inform on the need for smoke- and tobacco-free areas.

## **Social Service Need**

A large majority of encounters the cadets dealt with daily were indicative of social service need more so than law enforcement need, and researching the possibility of a downtown-focused community outreach program to better serve the nature of these issues was a final evaluation recommendation in 2016. These issues were not new findings in the community. Portland Downtown's executive director had previously worked with downtown merchants in an effort to understand concerns among businesses downtown, and a top concern among the group was panhandling. As a first step to addressing business concerns around panhandling, Portland Downtown's Clean & Safe Committee referred the discussion to an ad hoc committee. Public announcement of the ad hoc committee attracted substantial media attention, and the first scheduled meeting additionally attracted public protest at Portland Downtown's offices, as it was initially perceived as an attempt at prohibiting the constitutional right to free speech. Portland Downtown's panhandling ad hoc committee chair and Portland Downtown's executive director received numerous emails and phone calls from members of the community in response to the committee. Nearly all of this feedback was in agreement that there is a problem with panhandling in Portland, and that more needed to be done to meet this perceived need. While feedback on this issue was voiced from a place of concern, there were differing opinions on how to affect change, including fear that giving money to people perceived to have substance use disorders might further contribute to the disorder.

Portland Downtown's ad hoc committee on panhandling was established in December 2016 and formed in January 2017, by a group of downtown district constituents. The goal of the committee was to prepare recommendations for a plan of action to address the issues, and it was agreed that the recommendations would be impactful toward the issue at hand; have clear, concise, and measurable

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<sup>2</sup>Awareness assessment data tracks ordinance violation warnings and violator awareness of the ordinance/signage during the same time period. It is important to note that not all violators engaged in a discussion regarding their awareness of the ordinance or sign, and that these data reflect a much smaller set of ordinance violation warnings than the total number of violators throughout the season.



goals; have a reasonable probability of being enacted; would garner the support of the larger community; and would not exclusively rely on Portland Downtown's staff and resources. The committee met weekly, and was comprised of a diverse group of residents, non-profit organizations, homeless advocates, business owners, and property owners. While the ad hoc committee's initial focus was on panhandling, research and feedback from stakeholder groups revealed that substance use disorders, behavioral and mental health issues, as well as a gap in rehabilitation and treatment services, also have a profound impact on safety issues. The committee's recommendations advocate for greater measures to ensure increased awareness of safety concerns and policy measures to help counteract both perceived and real issues involving personal safety in downtown. Committee recommendations include continuing to acquire data and feedback from the City of Portland to assess the effectiveness of an employment opportunity pilot program targeted at people panhandling in high profile areas, and to assist with program expansion efforts. The recommendations include, as well, that Portland Downtown continue to partner with the Police Department on the downtown cadet program, and with partners in social service delivery through annual contributions from its organizational budget and annual *Shop For a Cause* merchant fundraising events.

Key findings from the panhandling ad hoc committee's research include:

- One of the primary reasons that residents, workers, and visitors feel unsafe in the downtown area is due to panhandling;
- While Portland has a relatively low crime rate, these data do not measure *perceptions* of safety;
- Not all panhandlers are homeless, and many solicit to acquire discretionary funds to fill the gap from social services and to purchase items they want or need;
- Every panhandler has a different story, with some acting on a perceived opportunity versus a real need;
- During the summer months, there is an increase in a population not seeking permanent housing through local programs, and they tend to camp out and loiter in groups, a presence that is intimidating as they aggressively ask for money; and
- Individuals who choose to give are usually acting on an immediate sense of wanting to help those who are in need.

Recommendations based on these findings include, among other suggestions, that Portland Downtown lead an effort to develop information on local resources (i.e., food, shelter, work, and substance use), to be delivered by social service organizations, and possibly by the downtown police cadets, to both those in need and to businesses, in an effort to close the gap in understanding where need can be met. An additional recommendation includes providing opportunities to engage with the City of Portland Police Department and other staff and stakeholders, to have open conversations about downtown safety and concerns, and to work together to find solutions.

A common model for collaborative action that focuses on people who are homeless and difficult to employ, includes combining resources and building partnerships between entities to solve these challenging social issues. Outreach capacity has been one model that has successfully assisted in this vulnerable population's transition out of homelessness. Therefore, Portland Downtown collaborated with a local social service provider to create an outreach program, designed to address the identified need downtown. The City of Portland is an entitlement community that receives an annual federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) award, and Portland Downtown applied for CDBG funds to implement the newly developed program as a multi-year initiative beginning in 2018. If successful, the program will provide outreach workers to coach adults with severe and persistent mental illness and

substance use issues, and will create an opportunity for regular engagement between members of the community as a component of the solution to these problems. In alignment with the panhandling ad hoc committee's recommendations, program outcomes and impact on the community include, in addition to successful outcomes for clients of the outreach program, increased awareness of the challenges and resources needed to address the challenges, and an understanding of the scope and urgency of the problem, by all members of the community. The partners are anticipating that program activities will connect those in need to available services, and will result in better stakeholder coordination and understanding of the broader scope of the issue. If funded, outreach workers will coordinate with community policing to be most strategic and effective with their outreach efforts.

The cadets confirmed this year that, in their experience, there remains a high social service demand from people who are homeless, substance use disordered, and mentally ill. Their reported interactions with Milestone Recovery's *HOME Team* represent a small, but significant data point in the statistics they report on. The cadets had several interactions with the *HOME Team* during the 2017 season, and had numerous positive things to say about the program, including that they are "huge fans" of the program, it is "awesome," and that the Team is very responsive. They appreciated, as well, when case managers were available in the community, frequenting common hangouts downtown, which made encounters with these populations more successful.

## **Data Reporting**

Although not an improvement recommendation, a limitation of the year 1 evaluation included that the data collection process for the season was not optimal. Data collection and reporting during the 2016 season included the cadets drafting a document of ordinance violations, citations, and arrests per category, and other specific activities, with one or two of the cadets taking the lead on the process, and emailing the document to Portland Downtown's program manager. With ease in reporting and clarity with data points in mind, Portland Downtown's program manager developed a data collection tool for the 2017 season, to share with the cadets and their supervisor. This tool allowed for the cadets to enter data into the shared tool directly, thereby avoiding additional document drafting and reporting, as well as reducing potential errors in data entry. The cadets indicated the reporting tool was more streamlined, and took much less time than the previous year's process. One cadet indicated that data reporting had the effect of making them accountable for their time. As well, they felt that their notes used to inform the data reporting provided them with the details they needed to follow up with businesses and special attention checks.

## **FINDINGS**

### **Smoking Violations**

Smoking violations continued to represent the highest ordinance violation downtown for the 2017 program season. Encouragingly, smoking violation warnings as a proportion of the season's total warnings decreased, although only slightly. The partnership with the City of Portland's Tobacco Prevention Program has encouraged some thoughtful follow-up regarding engagement with smoking violators, and can help to inform on future efforts to slow the incidents of ordinance violations. As well, emphasizing public areas as smoke- and tobacco-free as part of media outreach and programming for downtown events, serves as frequent education to remind participants of the ordinance. The ordinance and signage awareness data collected by cadets indicates ordinance violators are largely unaware of the prohibition.

As observed by members of Portland Downtown staff and the community, the newly legalized status of marijuana early in 2017 contributed to regular use of the drug downtown, which created an additional challenge regarding smoking violations. This issue is admittedly in a state of change for the City's Police Department since the new law took effect just this year. The large decrease in warnings for marijuana violations can, in large part, be attributed to the shift in warnings for possession of the drug to violating the smoking in public parks ordinance.

### **Social Service Need**

As evidenced by the most frequently warned and cited for ordinance violations, i.e., abusive solicitation, criminal trespass, drinking in public, layouts, loitering, and smoking in parks, as well as through feedback from the cadets, challenging behaviors indicate that individuals are struggling with substance use and mental health disorders, and have a need for social services. The increase in abusive solicitation warnings, both in number of violations, and as a proportion of the season's total, represents a public environment that businesses express frustration with the most. The larger increase in the proportion of warnings attributable to layouts, demonstrates, as well, that members of the community are either sleeping, or under the influence of intoxicating substances, in public.

### **Business Visitation**

The increase in business visits in 2017 was an expected and encouraged improvement over last season, which saw a sharp decrease in business visits. With a priority on providing for perceptions of safety, the Police Department reacted to business concerns around disruptive behaviors downtown that included making the cadet presence known. Cadets attended several Portland Downtown committee meetings to meet business owners, and could respond to questions regarding challenges with public nuisances downtown. While the cadets made this and other efforts to outreach in the community, business and property owners were not always available when they stopped by their stores.

### **Staffing Capacity**

Program staffing capacity was compromised for portions of the season as a result of several factors, including hiring cadet staff as police officers, and reductions in availability when the school season began in August.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the low incidence of ordinance and signage awareness, there appears to be ample evidence to advocate for more effective park signage. The data regarding awareness of park signage, supported by successfully eliminating smoke and tobacco use at a large-scale event downtown through the use of media outreach and signage, indicates **public outreach and improved signage may be the most effective solution to the prevalence of smoking violations**. Connecting, again, with public health advocates for best practices regarding cessation support and public restrictions, should be the next step in the development of new signage and outreach materials. The City of Portland's Parks & Recreation Department has recently developed new sign standards for public parks, and Portland Downtown could advocate for the specific rules detailed on each sign, per the challenges specific to each downtown park.

State regulations regarding the public use of marijuana will continue to evolve as unintended consequences and sales opportunities emerge. **Portland Downtown should stay informed on updates to laws regarding marijuana regulations, and should connect with public health educators regarding assistance with enforcement if public use becomes more problematic.**

With Portland Downtown's CDBG application under consideration with the City of Portland's allocation committee, it is anticipated that the peer outreach worker program will add a much needed specialization to the concentration of social service need downtown. Regardless of funding success, Portland Downtown should continue to **support its partners in social service delivery through its annual budget, and bi-annual *Shop For a Cause* merchant fundraising events, and collaborate with those in the community working to solve homelessness and provide mental health and addiction support services.**

With safety perception being the key concern among business and property owners downtown, **cadet visibility is perhaps the most important aspect of the program.** Since business owners are not always present when cadets visit businesses, **providing correspondence materials to leave with store staff to make their presence known would increase awareness,** not only of their visit, but of the program overall. As shared by an International Downtown Association member, one tool that other urban district management organizations use is cleanliness and safety check cards. These cards allow clean and safe staff to provide special attention, leave a card with staff if the business owner is not available, or leave a note at the door if they have reached out beyond business hours. Developing a similar tool specific to cadet safety checks would allow for information about the program to be shared more transparently, and for cadets to assure businesses are aware of their presence in the community.

In addition to the desire to hire criminal justice students attending school locally for flexibility at the end of the season, the potential for staffing shortages during midseason can fluctuate with such a small team of cadets. **Hiring slightly beyond capacity to account for department transfers and late season school schedules could allow for more flexibility with schedules, as well as allow for repeat hires to transition to another level of employment within the department.** The cadets' wage, which was just slightly over minimum wage for the City of Portland in 2017, depends on future Portland Downtown budget allocations. As well, the success of the program depends on the ability of the Police Department to supervise staff with a senior officer. Therefore, **any increases in program capacity will require additional funding through grants available for 501(c)4 nonprofit organizations, or through potential sponsorships to match Portland Downtown's funding of the program.**

It is significant that cadet staff represented racial, ethnic, and gender diversity during the 2017 season, although the department does not track these demographics in hiring. There is strong support for matching law enforcement's racial and ethnic background to that of the community it serves, because when dissimilarities in these demographics can be neutralized, contact with law enforcement tends to remain neutral as well. With the goal of maintaining minority representation within the cadet program, as within the Police Department, **outreach specific to youth of color and women interested in law enforcement is highly recommended.**

## CONCLUSION

Best practices in urban district management have traditionally provided for cleanliness and safety, but have risen, in recent years, to include showing compassion to, and serving, the most vulnerable

members of the community. As Portland continues to attract businesses, residents, and visitors to its thriving downtown, it will need to balance meeting the needs of a diverse population, and assist in addressing publicly displayed disparities in health. The Downtown Police Cadet Program provides for an elevated level of safety in an economically vital area of Portland, while it serves as a resource of regular data and feedback to both quantify and qualify safety issues in Portland's downtown. The program has been consistently well-received by members of the community, and it serves to match those interested in law enforcement with an unparalleled, first-hand experience in the field, grooming future generations for careers in public safety.

## **LIMITATIONS**

The 2017 season was the first year utilizing a new data collection tool, and the cadets shared the responsibility of data entry without implementing a process for addressing data entry errors. As well, clarity regarding specific ordinance violations, like smoking violations and marijuana use, were not firmly determined prior to assigning data points.

Staffing limitations likely contributed to less coverage in the downtown, where only two or three cadets accommodated schedules meant for staffing of at least four. New recruits mid-season were trained to work with the team, and were able to provide coverage when the full-time cadets reduced their hours to accommodate their school schedules.