

Please give us any additional thoughts you may have on Chief Acevedo's recent comments about moving the social services out of downtown.

I know that Austin is one of the last places that still allow panhandling legally. We need to work with other cities to stop sending their homeless here. I think this would help the population overflow and allow us to better manage the homeless population for Austin only. There is a large debate as to where it should go. I don't think it should EAST. It needs to be easy for them to access public transit, and get to the necessary places that offer support and help. My vote would be sending it West somewhere.

In some ways, I would love to move them, but I just don't think there are any other options that are as close to services and transportation for them, and that's more important than my occasional discomfort.

When I have had visitors from out of town, it is embarrassing to go downtown. People don't understand why there are so many homeless and drug addict looking people around.

I was recently in Paris, Boston and NYC. They don't have nearly the homeless problem that we have here in huge cities. It's a shame really. With all of the tourism and drive to have residential downtown, the lack of initiative to deal with the homeless and vagrant problems are working against it.

I live near downtown on Congress but venture downtown less and less due to the vagrants. When I have tried to take the bus the short distance down town to avoid parking I've had very uncomfortable encounters with homeless people with mental problems so now I don't even consider taking the bus here. Blech.

I feel your survey should have another question - do you avoid downtown due to the homeless issues?

I have limited encounters now since I avoid putting myself in the "line of fire".

I don't think it's necessary

Austin needs to learn from other cities and move the homeless centers from the core of downtown - ARCH is across the street from a liquor store! Austin needs a hard no panhandling no loitering ordinance in ALL metro areas, not just the urban core.

I have said for years that the homeless shelters and services need to be moved away. Austin has changed and grown so much over the years. Families are now living here and need to feel safe. I do feel sorry for the homeless people's misfortune, but our city is becoming overwhelmed with their population and keeping them downtown I don't feel is helping them out of their situation. I want to be proud of where I live and quite frankly I've been embarrassed when I've had visitors from out of town. They have all commented on the amount of transients.

There must be a better, safer environment for the homeless to stay....away from tempting downtown. Better for all concerned, business, residents, homeless themselves.
Downtown is precisely that! Individuals who are homeless have been there much longer than any of us urban dwellers who now call DT Austin home. I strongly disagree with re-distribution of these individuals to an area outside of downtown. I do not think that this would accomplish what Chief Acevedo hopes that it would. It would only re-distribute panhandling to a different area. Unfortunate circumstances do happen and can happen anywhere.
Just look at Cabrini Green in downtown Chicago as an example of what "re-distribution" of individuals did for that city...and for the individuals involved in that social experiment.
I vehemently oppose this idea.
This is the best move for the city of Austin
Brazos between 5th and 6th needs to be more actively monitored by the police. Because fo the park benches, it has become a favorite area for the homeless.
That is a smart move that would improve safety and quality of life in the city, as well as increase tourism revenue, improve property values downtown, and allow social services to be provided as cost-effectively as possible.
Austin is a great city with a vibrant downtown but the homeless issues are getting out of control to the point that many people are getting concerned for their safety. You can't walk down Congress in particular and not be harassed for money each and every day, some being more aggressive than others. It's scary!! Downtown is also getting a reputation for frequent violence which is a bad thing for the whole city. The panhandlers seem to really prey on the tourists as well which is again scary and very uncomfortable. They are very persistent with their requests for cash!! Please help!!
Moving the social services to less accessible locations doesn't seem like it will serve the population that is really making use of the services.
It seems like having such a large concentration of bars is contributing to the problems -- the excessive drunken patrons roaming the streets isn't always a "safe" environment.
What are the recommendations from the local and national groups that address this issue? There must be a way to separate out some of the transients that are aggressively panhandling and assaulting others to reduce the problem to a more manageable level.
If the services are moved from downtown then the transient population will move with it. Downtown is a visitor destination and should be kept free of panhandlers. I recently visited downtown Denver and their transient population is huge and I was accosted on every street corner.
I hear female visitors in the coffee shop complaining about pan handling. Some even restrict their activities to the hotel and the convention center.
I am undecided about moving them out of downtown. Ideally, we would address the root cause of their homelessness rather than moving them to another part of town. Also, the services are already established in downtown. Who will pay for moving them? What community will then agree to take those businesses/non-profits? There needs to be a clear argument and plan if we, as a community, are to move social services anywhere.
If the homeless population is downtown then social services need to be where the homeless are located. If locating the services out of downtown will cause the homeless to move out of downtown to be near where the services are located then Chief Acevedo's idea is probably a good one, especially if safety issues become more widespread downtown. However, if the relocation of social services to another area draws the homeless population to that area, and safety concerns increase in that area, then obviously these concerns will have to be dealt with. Bottom line, safety will probably be a concern no matter where the social services are located.
Downtown is a neighborhood just as important as any in Austin. It has grown in residential population by the thousands.

Many years ago when downtown was mostly commercial uses the placement of social services may have been appropriate but now it is not. Downtown Austin is the Downtown of Texas and with the huge amount of tourists visiting and a significant population living, working and playing downtown, social services are not appropriate for this area. The social services should be coordinated and organized together on a campus outside of downtown similar to other cities.

Most of our visitors to Austin see downtown and panhandlers give a bad image. Move 'em out.

Particularly transients cognate in the shelters when they are downtown. The shelters should move to the east, where there is lots of space, close to bus lines and other facilities. As downtown grows, the shelters have no business downtown.

The police chief continues to do a wonderful job and he has my full support. Doesn't he hail from Los Angeles where I'm sure the crime rate is much higher? Shameful that Austin is catching up. I no longer want to be downtown at night. It is clearly too dangerous even with the amount of young ppl drinking excessively (ie raney st/w 6th st). It's like Spring Break every weekend. Sirens, cops, EMS, firetrucks everywhere in the evenings. Very sad.

I think it's a good idea. I was driving through DT last week and saw a homeless guy bothering two young ladies, and this was on W. 5th street, a good ways from Congress. I felt bad for not pulling over and making him leave them alone. I think there are a lot of homeless people that are dangerous and demented and I think moving them out of DT will be best for both them and the rest of the DT population.

Moving social services out of downtown, just kick the can over to another neighborhood.

I think if there was a designated zone where mobile social services for the homeless could operate, it may improve homeless management issues.

I understand the delemma of where but we MUST move them somewhere to avoid loosing the most valuable thing we have going for downtown in the new condo population and new businesses and tourism is all at risk if some thing is not done to move them out. The are already starting to come to the Republic park in front of the NEW COURTHOUSE. NOT ACCEPTABLE FOR A NEW AND GRAND PROJECT SUCH AS THIS.

Please move them SE or NE of downtown and build them the little town that they need to live in with groceries, cigarets and liquor, housisng and Trees to SIT under.

LL

When you move the transient population, where will you move them too? What are the solutions?

I don't know what Chief Acevedo's reasons are, but I do firmly believe that downtown residents and workers should NOT have a NIMBY attitude towards the homeless and homeless services.

As a general rule, city services should be concentrated downtown. I don't see any reason homeless services should be an exception.

Although I am sympathetic to the needs of the homeless and have contributed time, money and clothing/blankets I feel the transients have become aggressive towards residents due to the lack of consequences for their negative actions. The downtown area east of Congress is not safe and I am harassed every time I visit the area. I now avoid the area.

I completely agree with Chief Acevedo's comments and hope that they are carried out. Moving the social services out of the downtown area east of Congress will better serve the residents and businesses of the area and they are the ones paying the taxes.

Chief Acevedo has the best interest of Austin in mind by supporting the move of social services from downtown. From his perspective he can see the numerous problems being created by the downtown location of social services. The homeless and transients are but one component of the population of Austin. The location of their services should not be detrimental to the vast majority of the population of the city and the downtown dwellers and workers in particular. The recent rise in violent crime involving the homeless needs to be addressed by moving their focal point from downtown.

Totally agree. If you built it they will come. Example - new benches at 6th and Brazo. We lived on Littlefield Qtrs. for 6 1/2 yrs, it was bad enough with sitting/trash in the planters on the 6th St. side. But to actually put benches on Brazos! We still come to 6th St. every Friday evening and often between the 2 of us may be DT 2-4 times a week. You can't be DT and not be disturbed once or probably more an evening.

Just moved from downtown to NW Hills. There are panhandlers and transients all over the Anderson Lane, Burnet to Mo-PAC area. It would help, I think, if there was a concerted effort to get people from giving money at intersections. They think they are compassionate but they are enabling alcoholism and drug addiction.

I want the homeless to be helped and it seems another location might be appropriate. One reason being it might discourage homeless from other communities coming to downtown where there can hangout and be entertained.

I particularly find the homeless population in the library a concern. I pay the taxes and don't feel comfortable using the library except to run in and check out books. I hope this problem can be addressed when the new library opens.

I've been to other cities and have seen the same problem.

Move the services or when APD picks up people assist them by taking them to the outskirts of the county. Once this is done a few times, some may feel they are not wanted downtown and move on.

I think that social services should be centrally located in the near downtown so that the greatest number of homeless can access those services.

But I don't think that those services need to be in the heart of downtown, as our downtown is one of our only tourist attractions.

Previously worked at 6th & Brazos. One of the reasons I left the position was due to the panhandling issue.

I understand homelessness is a major social issue. Unfortunately, in protecting their rights, my rights are infringed upon. I am solicited several times a day by panhandlers. I have had them come in to a restaurant while I am eating to panhandle. If you sit or eat outside you are accosted. Now the city is removing benches that were part of a beautification process because that was easier than dealing with the homeless hanging out and sleeping on them.

Services and shelters should be moved if we want Austin to be a world class city. There is no reason to have shelters and services on a block from major business and tourism areas.

Additionally, those panhandlers do not want money for food or shelter. There is an overabundance of food available DT. The money is wanted for booze and drugs.

It's not just that the homeless shelters are downtown, it is also that the county jail system releases prisoners to the homeless shelters. Our county and city criminal justice systems funnel all of the problems to downtown.

I fully support him on his view that the homeless need to be moved out of downtown. I hope we can copy other cities on what has worked for them. I want the homeless to have access to services and I am willing to pay some tax to help out if necessary but as a single woman walking many times alone downtown I feel insecure with so many mentally ill and unstable people walking around me.

As downtown is growing the homeless population seems to be growing as well and they are getting more aggressive. I am afraid to walk with my dog at night every day because I always run into a homeless guy that is either drunk or high, and I am afraid about my personal security.

If we want to make downtown thrive and be a welcoming town, it really would be great if the non profits that help homeless move away from the heart of the city. Maybe the lack of traffic in another area will indirectly help "marketing" homeless activities

Moving services out of downtown will not prevent the homeless from panhandling downtown, and simply make it more difficult for them to get assistance.

I think that moving the homeless from downtown will make it even more difficult for them to get services.

The other thing that I think is not good is that it will hide the homeless from the people in the state that can do the most for them.

Finally... It seems most likely that if the higher ups in Austin want to move the services to the homeless they will most likely put them in East Austin. The visual of homeless people in the gated communities of the west is jarring. East Austin is trying hard to work out the multicultural, multi economic level issues. It is not time for this part of Austin to have another issue to deal with.

Not sure if I agree or not since I do not know what the options are and the impacts to both the downtown areas and the homeless that are utilizing the services. I am all for looking at alternatives, but need more detail before i could firmly commit to an answer. Thanks for asking

It is illogical to have services for the homeless in operation so near the main entertainment area used by Austin residents and visitors to Austin.

I think Austin has become a haven for homeless people because of its generally year-round climate and liberal attitudes. I suggested to one homeless man that he go to the Salvation Army for help; the response: "Naw they make you do things you don't want to do, like work, go to classes". That's the ticket, send them off to the non profits for rehabilitation followed by a "three strikes your out" policy. What is a "three strikes your out" policy? I suspect that every homeless person has been through or offered rehabilitation by various nonprofits dozens of times. If, after 3 attempts, they don't accomplish the objectives of the program or don't accept the program they should be banned from loitering/panhandling in the downtown area for good. Enough is enough!

I think the re-development of 6th street is going to be difficult with the homeless center so close. I see more of an indigent problem on 6th street than any other area - day or night - alcohol seems to attract. Lots of panhandling here.

I do hope 6th street can be developed to its historic value for tourist as well as locals as Waller Creek comes to be.

I certainly feel for many of the homeless population, but downtown Austin's quality of life is affected by the concentration of all of the services located downtown.

Not sure on where to relocate the services.

It would be the right thing to do. It is crazy to invite all the out of town people downtown and put a homeless services, right in the middle of it. In the real world the City Council does not have a backbone to move it. The City Council will say that is the

best place for it, because if they move it, It would have to go where land is cheap and it is no way they are going to move it to East Austin. So it will stay on a 30 million block of land so the City Council will keep their jobs. The APD Chief Art Acevedo is just saying " Hey everyone why is the elephant in the room?" T he City Council will tell him to "Shut up."

Within the past 24 hours, I've encountered two homeless persons passed out on the street corners on E. 5th Street, one at Red River and the other at Neches on opposite sides of the Hilton. One was last night, while the other was at 12:30 this afternoon. I've seen them urinating and defecating in Brush Square, across from the Convention Center in broad daylight. It's getting disgusting downtown and if I were a visitor to the Hilton, I'd never come back. Unfortunately, I live here.

Don't really have an opinion...I mean, where would they go to? I can see how it would help make the downtown visitors feel safer, and would add to beautify the appearance by not having some ragged looking people around -- but I also don't see that they really harm anyone.

Whether it is so in fact or not, Austin seems to have a higher percentage of homeless people downtown compared to many other cities I have visited, except San Francisco.

Admittedly, most of these folks are not aggressive,

but when, for example, one is enjoying a downtown coffee shop and a number of homeless come in one after another to use the restroom or simply "hang out" it becomes somewhat unpleasant.

I would likely never walk around Red River-Neches-Trinity from about 7th Street to 15 th Street alone at night.

Downtown is closer to services and opportunities and more convenient for the homeless population. Moving them will effectively erase them from the public eye and perhaps make things less annoying for downtown residents, however it will do little or nothing to benefit the homeless. Austin should work to provide better services for their homeless population, not simply move them away.

I think it can benefit many more than us that live downtown. More people might actually come downtown and businesses might bring back their conventions and hold meetings in and near downtown. I believe we need to have more strict laws about being asked for money...in fact I think they should not be allowed to come up and ask you for money...if someone decides they want to offer their help, they can but I shouldn't have to be asked for money while at a stop light and then when I deny their request (politely) they get all smart mouth and start calling you names. I'm sorry, but I didn't ask you to invade my personal space just to have attitude or whatever. I have lived here over a year now (downtown) and it has gotten worse and I truly believe that I should not have to worry or rethink which way I go around town to have to simply avoid corners that often times have homeless people and wanting money etc...

Good luck finding somewhere else willing to take them.

Montopolis?

will be hard to find a new location. At least no more added services and stop feeding them downtown.

I believe that homeless will always go where the crowds are, I doubt they would stay in a location that is not downtown.

My preference would be that they dont hassle me and curse me when I ignore them.

This is usually from the young homeless that I really have no sympathy for.

<p>I feel that the homeless services should be moved farther away from the entertainment district. I am not opposed to the services being downtown. But the current location is right in the middle of the entertainment district which is not ideal. Perhaps, if the services were moved to a more affordable part of town, they may be able to support more of the homeless. I am in support of services that help the homeless get off the street rather than just enabling them to stay on the street.</p>
<p>I have residential homes in towers in downtown Austin and downtown Dallas. I consider Austin home. The Austin situation is far worse than Dallas. The police in Dallas prevent the homeless from sleeping in parks and on sidewalks. They also restrict panhandling. Austin seems to welcome it or celebrate it. I feel safer on Elm Street in Dallas than I do on Congress Avenue in Austin. I am in favor of restricting panhandling in Austin and moving the homeless out of downtown. Good job Chief Acevedo.</p>
<p>As a resident Downtown for the past 5 years, I agree with Chief Acevedo's growing concerns about the social services existing in Downtown. The fear of the aggression of some. I & tourist feel UNSAFE! The negative verbal comments if I choose to ignore them or not quote "give em money". If I choose to park outside my BLDG, my car ends up bent out of shape (broken left mirror, dents on top of vehicle, etc) no indication that a vehicle did it other than the last person(s) I saw & chose not to tip-as they swung their towel around for me to park-were those last seen by my vehicle. I've called these in on 311. Urine-Stink on my car door as I have personally seen them urinate on vehicles, on many walls, condo gated walkways, etc. They eat or sleep & many leave their filth behind. Ultimately & unfortunately, it is a shame that the few good individuals who attend these services for the assistance they need to rebuild their lives, have to suffer the consequences.</p>
<p>provide same or better support for homeless, just not downtown. Make Austin a bit safer or appearance of being safer and higher class.</p>
<p>First, I agree there is a difference in behaviors between the homeless and transient population.</p>
<p>It is not that I think that the location of services shouldn't be downtown. It is that the services are located next door to liquor stores, bars, etc that are horrible negative influences for this population. 10-20 years ago before the resurgence of downtown, maybe this wasn't so much of an issue. Now we are compounding their road to recovery by placing their services near liquor and tourist who fund their alcohol and drug habits.</p>
<p>This is not a safe mix for any of the constituent parties. Also the transient population has definitely changed over the last 3-4 years and many are much more intimidating than they were just a few years ago. It has only been in the last 1-2 years that I have crossed paths with some really scary folks.</p>
<p>I think we need services downtown like most cities but it's clear to me that we have a problem, like not enough. People are always waiting outside. I heard the ARCH is serving 2x the number it was built for. Seems like we need more housing so the downtown shelters can be for the emergencies, or new folks... not the same folks week after week and month after month.</p>
<p>A hobo killed my friend Matt Casey a couple of weeks ago. Its time to fight back. End all downtown hobo services.</p>
<p>There were four women ages. 45 - 60 that were walking to one of the downtown restaurants. We were approached three times during this short walk. Two of the ladies were from out of town. I was very ashamed of city. I have lived downtown for over ten years and the shelter has changed the way I view my safety downtown. I worry about all the young people that go out and hope they are safe as well.</p>
<p>In addition to problems for local residents and business people, the homeless downtown give a bad impression of Austin to tourists, who regularly go to downtown venues and events.</p>
<p>I think that moving transient populations out of downtown only moves any issues to surrounding neighborhoods. We need more supportive services.</p>
<p>I believe in order to make downtown Austin more desirable we need to relocate social services out of downtown will be a positive step in growing downtown Austin.</p>
<p>The Social services are not the issue. A lack of housing is the single most important factor when considering WHY the homeless population is loitering outside these agencies with more work/people than they could possibly handle.</p>

<p>I absolutely agree! The concept of having such facility at it's current location is beyond reason. As a result the few that actually do need help are left without assistance as they are far outnumbered by those that take advantage of free hand-outs. I have seen first hand the exponential increase in homeless in downtown since ARCH has opened. My vehicle has been vandalized by a panhandler. I have to step over homeless sleeping at the doors of my business just to get to work early in the morning. My customers have to walk trough puddles of urine to come to their appointments. I have seen over and over convention attendees being constantly bothered by panhandlers - I can only speculates how much the CoA has lost in sales tax revenues by organizations choosing other cities for their conventions as a result. Has anyone who has approved the current location of these facilities even thought about their actual effectiveness in such close proximity numerous bars and "prime" panhandling spots?</p>
<p>His comments are clearly biased and uninformed.</p>
<p>The oppresive comments portraying the homeless as less than the other residents of downtown is narrow minded. Using fear for political and social gain as a means to oppress those less fortunate such as the homeless unemployed mentally disabled and veterans is disgraceful. Perhaps it is he that should move out of town.</p>
<p>Residents, consumers, tourist, city leaders, business owners if we move the homeless out who will be next group to victimize and fear. Where does it stop. "Love thy neighbor" except by the grace of God there goes I.</p>
<p>We cannot and should not treat the homeless as cattle to be moved to another pasture to graze. Shame on our lack of leadership who as a public servant has a obligation to protect and serve all residents of Austin. NOT just the ones that look like us.</p>
<p>How utterly pathetic that we treat our pets with more respect than other humans.</p>
<p>The Chief is correct. Moving social services out of downtown would be the best thing to happen to Austin since its founding. The aggressive panhandlers hurt residents, businesses and Austin's brand. Ask anyone who lives downtown and owns a dog. We see it all, ever day when we walk our dogs three or four times per day. Social services so close to the entertainment and business districts just enables crime (drugs, theft, assaults). Most of these folks are criminals, not the mentally ill. For every person I see with possible mental issues, I'll show you 100 criminal transients abusing the system. It's got to stop. Our property values and safety depend on moving the ARCH and social services far from downtown.</p>
<p>Now that downtown is trying to be more pedestrian and residential-friendly, the homeless population does not help that mission.</p>
<p>I support him 100% you can't argue with logic and the facts aggressive panhandling has to stop..</p>
<p>Having so many homeless people wandering the streets, hanging out on benches, sleeping and panhandling, living under bridges or in the Shoal Creek area, hanging around the library, etc. harms businesses since areas where the homeless gather are viewed as less safe (and probably are less safe) and I, for one, do not want to walk through a crowd of homeless/smelly/mentally ill (yelling, cursing) people to get to the front door of the store or business. This is also bad for tourism. Every day on Congress Ave you see panhandlers asking for "change for the bus", I've seen potential drug deals at bus stops, yelling/cursing people loitering on benches. The only other city I've been to where it is worse is San Francisco...and we don't want to become like that with homeless people taking over every park, bench and sidewalk!</p>
<p>Austin has a reputation as a place that homeless can come and get free food, and ask for money by day. I used to live in Dallas and the mayor banned that. It was so nice not to be hassled for money or have people knock on my windows at stoplights. I love Austin, but I hate THAT about Austin.</p>
<p>I AGREE WITH THE CHIEF'S COMMENTS ABOUT MOVING SOCIAL SERVICES OUT OF DOWNTOWN</p>
<p>Tougher enforcement of panhandling laws. Better pad follow up of reported aggressive panhandling. Target aggressive</p>

panhandlers. The aggressive ones are younger.

The homeless population in Austin has become more noticeable, aggressive, and disheveled in the past five years since I began living downtown. The park between my home and office building is frequently crowded now with homeless people. The benches have become sleeping beds for shoeless vagrants. Some sit empty eyed with tattered clothes, all day, even in the heat. Yesterday, a man passed me that left a strong lingering smell. His clothes were torn. You could see his underwear. Recently, a charity has been delivering food from a truck at the park. Many line up for the services. Every street corner near downtown has a panhandler. Most are harmless, but commuters drop coins or hand dollars and hold up traffic. Payment at traffic stops should be prohibited. I've seen homeless fighting, I've been accosted for cigarettes, cursed at, threatened with infection (I'll give you MERSA, he said), and lunged at once. I support the Chief.

Insufficient data at this point to decisively justify the costs of the move and the tangential issues that a move might cause.

Homeless population will still exist--will they follow the services out of downtown or will they stay close to the source of panhandling income?

What alternative site will have comparable public transit access?

There are still a lot of research to do.

Excellent idea. I am a tour guide for Austin, and the most frequent question I get is "Why does Austin have so many homeless people". The Visitor Center is on 6th St., and so many homeless gather there. A lot of the visitors are afraid of the homeless, and it leaves a negative image of Austin.

I think it is a great idea. I would assume that it would more cost affective to move the services from downtown. The downtown building is in need of many repairs and it could be sold and that money could be used to get a better larger place out of ddowntown. My heart goes out to the homeless and I just feel they would be better served with a larger updated place out of downtown. Some will always be homeless, but most just need help getting back on their feet. We need services for job related help and drug and achohl rehabilitation. Mental help services as well. As it is now we just have a growing mess that is not helping the homeless or the downtown business.

I've owned a real estate office in DT Austin since 2002. My office is on W 8th Street, a direct path from the homeless shelter to the library. About six months ago, we decided to keep our front door locked at all times. On numerous occasions, we have had homeless people come into our office, inquiring about places to lease or to use the restroom. Once they're in your place of business, it's difficult to get them out the door. Because so many of the homeless are suffering from mental illness, they are incredibly unpredictable. I have been cursed and berated because I'm unable to provide them with an affordable living option. We also frequently have panhandlers who wait for us to park and come into the office. One of our employees had a man who was obviously disturbed, follow her from her car into the office. Buyers looking at DT condos notice and comment on the number of homeless people we have in the area. Many buyers comment on the huge bar scene in the DT area.

Downtown is a place that many young people come for many of their social activities. As a father of five daughters that frequent this area it concerns me a great deal to have social services so close to where my young daughters and so many other young girls come to have fun.

The homeless greatly decrease the quality of life downtown and it seems like they can and do get away with anything without any ramifications because no one wants to upset the homeless advocates. How was a homeless shelter chosen to be built within a well known area for alcohol and drugs anyways. Move them far away from downtown and our quality of lives and our investments will increase immediately.

Also, I live near Republic Square Park and food trucks drop off food for them. The amount of trash in the park increases dramatically at those times. I am in the park four times a day and see it firsthand. Maybe if there were located outside a drug and alcohol center they would take advantage of helpful services which will help them find jobs. I do feel sad for the mentally ill who clearly need assistance.

Homeless people make any neighborhood uncomfortable and unsafe. They have issues that need professional help.

Downtown just happens to be where they are located now. They need help so they can have a chance to return to society

and help other homeless people.

Austin is just getting housing options downtown to attach residence of all ages and incomes. It is imperative that we keep it clean and safe just like any other neighborhood.

The best cities in the world have great downtown densities and living conditions. They take care of homeless so people can live comfortably and without fear.

I live in the heart of downtown and feel that with the current location of services to the Homeless population is poorly placed.

I was in a sense, verbally assaulted as early as yesterday by a deaf homeless man while I sat outside eating lunch. This went on for 3 minutes.

The congregating or loitering at every bus stop in downtown makes waiting at a stop light uncomfortable. Being pursued as you walk to your destination would be scary for out of towners or someone who does not come into downtown frequently.

I am all in favor of moving these amazing organizations somewhere outside of the downtown area. This is affecting all of us both financially and in safety.

I agree with the Chief 100% and am glad he took a strong stance even though some in the community have asked for his head on a plate because of his comments.

There is no reason why the homeless should be housed in Downtown. Austin would be a much better place if they were relocated away for the condensed population.

Austin must remain sympathetic to the homeless--with a few unfortunate circumstances in your life like loss of job, medical catastrophe, or estrangement from family support because of drug or alcohol use - we might find ourselves in the same situation. However, when first moving to the city I was impressed with the very high homeless population in Austin and the aggression some exhibited. (At a bank on Congress by a woman begging for some of the cash I had withdrawn; at the Randalls on 38th a man followed me to my car to beg money; at the Post office on S Congress a man followed me to my car for money. When I offered a bag I had created with food he became aggressive "I don't need food, I need money!")

We have to ask ourselves how are we truly helping this population? Food and shelter alone, while necessary and compassionate, only attracts an increasingly higher population. The city needs a real plan. Our tourist industry is too important.

Havent heard his statement yet so cant answer that question.

It's my impression that most of the homeless population is located in the downtown area. If the social services for the homeless are moved from downtown how would the homeless access those services? Do they take a cab, bus, train or walk to the relocated area? What neighborhood or area of the city will be the new target area for the homeless population?

Undecided about moving services. A better network of services and more intervention.

Downtown is getting much more crowded and congested than it was 10 years ago. The needs of the homeless would be much better served at a location outside the central business district. Also, the increase in vehicle traffic downtown is a public safety concern as the homeless are not always vigilant in crossing at intersections and watching for traffic. Surely there are better and safer environments to serve their needs.

<p>Could not agree more. The social services don't necessarily need to be moved completely out of downtown, but having nearly all of the resources for the homeless be within 200 feet of the primary nightlife/tourist district is fairly moronic.</p>
<p>The services need to exist, and they need to exist in a manner and location that makes them useful...but they ought not be at 7th and Neches.</p>
<p>I've lived downtown for about 10 years; While I don't like the fact that prime real estate is used for ARCH and that potentially hurts my property value, I also don't like the idea of downtown Austin being a white washed cleaned up Disneyland for upper middle class professionals. I don't think we should move social services out of downtown specifically because someone who owns a \$500k condo feels uncomfortable interacting with a poor person who might also not be caucasian. I'm not sure of the solution, but a diverse (ethnically and financially) population downtown is imperative to Austin's success.</p>
<p>although i recognise that downtown is a natural place for the homeless to gather, because of the parks and the serices from both the city and the county, i find it ludicrous, we put our major resources with feet of a bunch of bars and liquor stores which prey upon theri weaknesses</p>
<p>The homeless should have a safe place to sleep, receive meals, receive counseling and related services.</p> <p>However, in order to continue to attract new renters, new condo owners, visitors, and more conventions the downtown area needs to be clean and safe.</p> <p>The homeless population does not frequent the restaurants, shop in the stores, or contribute to the tax base. Maybe by moving the shelters and agencies who serve them to another area of the city/county they might receive more focused help.</p>
<p>Booze, drugs, tourists, conventioneers = very bad combination for social services.</p>
<p>I don't think moving the shelter is going to resolve any of the issues. The homeless are still going to congregate downtown. With out the shelter they would be on the streets instead of in the shelter. I have also found that typically the homeless people I have felt threatened by are ones with mental disabilities. I think we should spend more money on services that will give these people the help they need. I had a personal experience one time with an older gentleman who was homeless, incoherent and wondering down the middle of the street. I called 911 and the police showed up, there answer to the problem was to throw him in jail. Honestly jail is not the place for a non-violent person with obvious mental issues. Finally, I think APD should reach out to pedicab drivers to create some sort of downtown watch. The pedicab drivers see more than anyone and I'm sure they would want to do their part to keep downtown safe.</p>
<p>I applaud the homeless services and firmly support the role they play but do not believe having the center located downtown is anyone's best interest.</p> <p>There is a high density of pedestrian traffic downtown which makes coexistence fraught with difficulty and places an even heavier burden on the police to help try and keep both the homeless and downtown "regular public" safe.</p> <p>I have been approached by panhandlers close to IH 35/Waller Creek many times and it made me feel very uncomfortable/threatened/quickenened my pace. I do worry about my kids downtown at night. Many times, I have been approached by homeless people who wanted to make sure "my car was secure" for a fee. I did not hesitate to "tip" them because I felt they might scratch or otherwise hurt my car if I did not so in that way I did feel very compromised.</p> <p>Not sure how to answer the question whether to move social services from downtown. Where would it be moved to? And would this end just by moving a building to a different location.</p> <p>My husband and I are part-time residents. We own a unit downtown and come to Austion maybe once a month for 2-3 days at the most. We have not seen the problems with the homeless like the locals. So far the people of Austin have been wonderful. We always enjoy what the city offers... even the homeless and weirdness of Austion.</p>

The more receptive Austin is to the homeless downtown the more they will be attracted and the greater the nuisance and safety issues will become. The main problem as I see it is that the city is providing shelter without programs to truly help with getting people back on their feet and into productive jobs.

My suggestion would be:

1. Ban panhandling and harrasment throughout the city.
2. In exchange for living in a shelter downtown, homeless should have to participate in a work program (CCC type) and receive social services to address any social/health issues.
3. Facilities for those who are unwilling or unable to comply with the above should be located in an area where they do not pose a risk to surrounding residents.
4. If we continue to have fatalities and incidents downtown Austin will develop a reputation as being unsafe which will place a damper on future development.

I am a proponent of providing resources to help the homeless get back on their feet, but the current system in Austin appears to be enabling and promoting homelessness. The ARCH facilities are located in the immediate vicinity of the Convention Center, many hotels, and the Sixth Street District providing ready-made access to a large pool of visitors and tourists to panhandle. This is an ideal set-up for a homeless person who has no desire to change their lot in life, and may explain why the homeless population in Austin is growing. I suggest relocating and de-centralizing the homeless facilities. I understand, there is no easy answer, but the current system doesn't seem to be reducing the homeless population; rather, it seems to be promoting it.

I am so disappointed in our downtown. Recently visted San Antoinio and was struck by the contrast compared to Austin. It was clean, did not smell like urine and I was not approached by homeless. It saddened me that my home city had fallen away from its past beauty and had become so dirty and unsafe.

It is simply a bad idea to have bars, entertainment, and homeless services clustered geographically.

APD has enough challenge controlling the bar patrons and keeping the downtown area safe for its ever expanding resident population. Adding homeless services and transients to the mix is not ideal.

It's a no-brainer. We can't have a vibrant downtown as planned with the homeless sheler and other homeless services in the middle of it. Waller Creek will be a very expensive lesson.

There are many homeless people outside of our building at brazos lofts. There are times where i am traveling and my fiance has to take out our dog by herself. I feel like there is a safety issue here and we both have concerns with this. I feel very uncomfortable with her walking the dog, especially at night, or going anywhere to grab a bite to eat because of the issues that are out there. You see people talking to themselves, screaming, etc and it is very uncomfortable and you never really know when one of them is going to do something that you are not ready for. Many hang out right outside our door and makes us a little nervous. It would be nice to see less of this.

We should not encourage the transient population to gather in the center of our entertainment, visitor centric, professional business district. We own the barber shop at 5th and Brazos and were asking a visitor today how he liked Austin. His response was "great" but there was a transient sprawled out on the sidewalk with police around him. Also, I often see our visitors being harrassed for money and that is not an acceptable image for our city. Lastly but not by far the least. When we moved downtown 6 years ago I always felt safe, now I carry mace because the transient population is so aggressive.

I absolutely 100% agree that the homeless shelter and other social services should be moved out of downtown. I have lived downtown for 8 years and routinely see the same vagrants day in and day out. Clearly, the current program is not working and not helping those that truly need and want help. PLEASE close the shelter or at least move it far away from the current location and CLEAN up downtown Austin. We need stronger loitering laws and enforcement of the current panhandling

laws.
Austin is aggressively buildingupscale condos/apartments, but not addressing the constant transient issue. I have contributed to ARCH, but feel it should be moved from city center.
Will pride more efficient and economic opportunities for individuals whom are homeless. Better access to health care and social services. Safer environment for visitors, workers and residents downtown.
THERE ARE THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE WHO EITHER WORK OR LIVE DOWNTOWN AND HAVE TO SUFFER THE VARIOUS ENCOUNTERS WITH BUMS WHO ENHABIT THE DOWNTOWN AREA. LET ME DISTINGUISH BETWEEN THE BUMS AND PEOPLE WHO REALLY NEED HELP. BUMS KNOW DOWNTOWN AUSTIN IS TOLERANT OF THEIR ABBERANT BEHAVIOR. I BET IF THOSE WHO ARE TOLERANT HAD THESE FOLKS, THE BUMS, CAMPED IN THEIR FRONT PORCH THEY WOULD HAVE A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT ATTITUDE. THESE MARGINAL PEOPLE ARE DESTROYING THE IMAGE OF AUSTIN. TAKE A LOOK AT ALL THE TRASH ON THE STREETS. LOOK AT THE TRASH UNDER THE IH35 BRIDGE AT 6TH STREET. LOOK AT THE HALF DRESSED PEOPLE LYING ON PUBLIC BENCHES, DRINKING/SMOKING DOPE AND CAMPING OUT. WALK DOWN WALLER CREEK, IF YOU DARE, AND LOOK AT THE DEBRIS, ABANDONED CLOTHING, BOTTLES, USED SYRINGES AND VARIOUS OTHER WASTE. FEEL COMFORTABLE AS SOME DERANGED DUDE YELLS, SCREAMS AND THREATHENS YOU AS YOU WALK DOWN THE STREET? THINK HOW THIS IS VIEWED BY VISTORS TO OUR CITY & THOSE WHO HAVE TO TOLERATE IT DAILY.
The homeless shelter should be moved out of downtown and should have never ended up here. There are bars everywhere and all they do in go thru the trash looking for bottles with acohol and asking for money. When I take my trash out they are right there by my gate in the alley downtown passed out, digging thru the garbage or harassing me for money. We are all sick of it.. This is the worst city for Homeless that I have ever seen, over SFO, chicago, NYC, and seattle..
I would volunteer!
Who were the idiot city councilmen that put the shelter there in the first place!!!!
would moving services out of downtown really mitigate any issues? Might it make the situation worse since downtown would remain a magnet?
Pan-handling (PH) detracts from our downtown experience. Many PH have mental problems. If PH gets more out of control, visitors may stop coming to Austin, like San Francisco. I will never return to SF. PH should be discouraged by police. PH services should be moved away from downtown.
There is NO question that the Social Services in Austin are needed, but not in the immediate Downtown area. The negative impacts are quite apparent and the fact that have been an increase in homicides, directly associated with the homeless population, the City of Austin must work on short term and long term solutions, NOW.
I would add that downtown (particularly the 6th street area) is not a positive environment conducive to helping those struggling with homelessness change their situation. The bars and crowds serve as enticements to many of those struggling with homelessness because it is an area rife with alcohol,drugs, crowds, and a party atmosphere. Such an environment does not encourage personal responsibility and can be too much of a temptation.
Social services work best in city centers. Multiple locations would be most beneficial but certainly downtown should remain among the locations available.
The panhandling in this city is out of control, it is the worst I have seen in this country and I spend a lot of time in much larger cities such as L.A. where I would expect things to be worse than Austin, not better. Austin has created a reputation for being very attractive and accommodating to panhandlers and has continued to attract additional homeless and make the existing homeless bold in their panhandling and solicitations.i am always approached after dark when alone in my car along all highways including I-35 and watch cops ignore them. I feel threatened when approached by strange men late at night when no one else is around. This city has created a huge problem, having the ARCH downtown was Will Wynn's biggest mistake and now I pay for it with my own safety, there are stabbings downtown by the homeless onto people trying to attend the local bar and music scene. Certainly there are many harmless people around but they are not the ones panhandling literally at every major interse
You can not move the homeless by moving services - you can just deprive them of the services. He is completely out of touch with the true facts.

I have been traveling a lot recently and not informed about the chief's comments. I can say that if you want a vibrant downtown where people feel safe it's imperative that the city find a way to limit panhandling. Do not let Austin become an attractive place for those who do not want to contribute to society.

It won't clear the homeless from downtown, but it will definitely help. They are becoming very aggressive and is hindering downtown from becoming the amazing community it is evolving into.

we are residents living in the city

we support the restaurants-book store-retail shops

banks spas cleaners

the homeless contribute to trash-occupying the parks

and are on the benches

when we have out of town guest,itvis so uncomfortable

to have every street corner with the homeless with their signs

last week walking over to Swedish Hill bakery

at 9 a.m. Had to literally step over a drunk passed out

on the entrance way to Nest Furniture Store

where are our rights,when we spend our dollars supporting

the city?

With the increasing number of residents moving downtown I believe some changes will be needed to avoid future issues that may arise due to the number of homeless/transient individuals downtown. While I do not have concern walking my dog downtown at night, I have met plenty of women who do fear for their safety walking their dogs at night when particular homeless/transient individuals hang around their residences which I have noticed does occur on occasion.

I am a long time resident of downtown, and one who travels frequently to other cities across the US as well as internationally. In my opinion, Austin should be graded with an F in our dealing with transients / panhandlers. We have allowed them to proliferate when in my opinion, we should have dealt with them in a much less tolerant manner. We have allowed a few of the "Terrytown / Westlake" philosophical "do-gooders" to hold our liveable downtown hostage to street folks, many with severe mental illness, who cannot be rehabilitated, won't be able to realistically exist in low income housing and who chose to live the "on the street" lifestyle that they do.

Austin needs to aggressively move the transient population away from the downtown area. Start by relocating the homeless center at 7th and Neches out of downtown. Locating it in the middle of the entertainment district is ludicrous!!!

New York now has a zero tolerance policy / approach in dealing with the homeless - Austin too

The whole downtown area around Neches/Red River and 4th-8th street feels unsafe and I believe it is a direct result of DANA's location. The area west of Congress seems to be unaffected by it though.

I think the real issue is not being addressed by the chief's comment to move the Social Services outside of downtown. The resources needed by the homeless need increased focus and action. Simply moving the downtown social resources is not helping at all. Controlling panhandling could be as easy as making zones where any panhandling is an arrestable offense. Biz could offer incentives to the homeless to sweep and clean our parks and streets for income. A major problem driving the homelessness, and the soon to be homeless, is drugs. They are cheap and everywhere. The Drug Prohibition model covertly promotes the unregulated drug trade by increasing profits to those willing to take the risk. People seeking illicit drugs are not required to show I.D. nor are they hindered if already intoxicated or are having addiction issues. These community choices and laws are only part of the answer required to fix the homeless issue. We cannot fix the problems by thinking the same way that got us here.

There are far too many visitors and residents living downtown and the physical threat of the homeless population is concerning. I don't feel as though having the social services in the center of our town where out of towners come to see our city are harassed by homeless people. I work hard and take pride in where I live, and I do not want to be concerned about my physical safety for unavailable problems.

Move them out, there is no reason to have it DT. Our DT could be a beautiful place if you remove the items that make it not look good....aka homeless. There is not a single reason that the shelters need to be DT. Yes our tax dollars and donations will take care of them but it doesn't have to be DT.

I now like him a lot. I didn't before those comments

100% behind The Chief's words. Living on the corner of 5th/Sabine we've seen it all from the homeless relieving themselves openly. throwing their trash in the creek, bathing in the creek, sleeping on benches, sidewalks, escape stairway of building on 6th/Sabine, sexual acts, aggravated assaults on tourists/locals, attempts to break into cars and mostly encouraging an active drug trade resulting in aggressive panhandling to feed their addictions.

It makes no sense to have homeless shelters next to the entertainment business. Heard tourists state often that they won't go out at night or that downtown is a "dump" because of the number of homeless hanging around and relentlessly acosting them for money.

If we want a vibrant downtown, people have to feel safe and until this happens we'll never attract businesses which want to invest in making it so. Kudos to the Chief for telling the truth even though it's unpopular to do so! Thank you Chief Acevedo!!!!

I think many homeless are taking advantage of our area under the umbrella of "they have no place else to go." The city is trying to put in benches, etc. only to be taken over by people who need services. I don't think that downtown is the place to house homeless services as it is a tourist attraction and will deter visitors which will affect Austin's economy. As more and more cities "bus" their homeless to Austin, I fear for our safety downtown. I live downtown and have experienced homeless individuals who scare me and my friends because I am not what condition they are in (emotionally, alcohol-related, etc.)

Please relocate the homeless and put their shelter in another area. Downtown Austin is not the place to house them.

I own a property downtown East of congress which i lease out. I have had this property a number of years, but in the last 5 years, it has become more difficult to keep tenants due to the increase in homeless population during this timeframe and the consequent issues widely publicized. This is in spite of the fact that the rental condo is a very nice property and complex - its location makes keeping renters difficult.

Agree with all points

It would improve the downtown experience both day and night.

Having the Social services outside downtown will better control the deterioration of downtown caused by the homeless.

I struggle to take Chief Acevedo's comments seriously since his comments on other efforts are a joke. For example, the noise ordinance for West 6th Street is not enforced and is a laughing joke of the violators such as The Ranch and Molatovs.

I agree. I used to work at Jaimes Spanish Village (now Pelons) and the restaurant went downhill after the opening of the Salvation Army and other shelters nearby.

I can see some on both sides. There's always going to be homeless downtown and having services nearby is better than them completely fending for themselves in whatever way they will. But by having the services downtown, it will attract transients and homeless downtown that might otherwise have just gone wherever the services were. There are always a bunch of people sitting or standing on the sidewalks around the shelter and even if not actually threatening pedestrians, it doesn't look or feel like a good situation. It would be nice to know if the homeless that are always around and digging in garbage cans and what not actually use the services or if it's primarily the temporarily homeless or transients that do.

I think it is long over due to relocate the homeless out of the downtown area. Austin has such a good reputation nationwide and has so much potential to further develop the downtown area; that it is a shame that we continue to showcase our homeless by keeping social services at it's current location. We live 3-4 blocks due south of the homeless shelter and there's not a day that goes by that multiple emergency calls are made to the shelter, most of which are false alarms, with fire engines blaring and emergency vehicles in tow, totally disrupting traffic and the beauty of downtown. It gets worse at night because the sirens seem to never stop. I have watched from my balcony, on many occasions, where the fire trucks race to the shelter like there's a five alarm fire and then turn the sirens off, spend 5 minutes assessing the situation and then drive off with their lights on back to the fire station. This happens all the time. There is no telling what these false alarms are costing

I have many visitors at my 555 condo from out of town and state and they get comments all the time on how bad downtown Austin panhandling is and how they feel threatened... and I agree.

I just learned of this today, and I have had the same thoughts for years. I travel frequently to other large cities, and feel that the panhandling in Austin is somewhat out of control. As a man, I rarely feel threatened as I see these people very often, but I feel sorry for the females and the visitors to Austin as they probably have to deal with a lot of implied pressure from these pan handlers. It seems that the panhandlers know there are plenty of easy marks out there, many of whom probably aren't prepared to fend off these advances for money. Homelessness is a problem and a shame, but this looks like something else, opportunism. I would gladly volunteer my time or money for programs / charities that have a cohesive plan to help these people, but the present situation probably serves the wrong people in that community and jades the public against the plight of the true impoverished.

I work at convention center & last week on 3 occasions reported homeless who had somehow found badges to wear and were asking for handouts. When confronted they quickly left the building.

On the street I often see them engaging convention visitors and tourists in hopes of a handout. This is very bad for our image

Downtown, especially in the 6th Street Entertainment District is a bad idea. The District attracts visitors and tourists and the homeless give a bad impression of the city.

However, it may be difficult, if not impossible, to get the churches and the Salvation Army to go along with moving the homeless services elsewhere.

Certainly I feel safer west of Congress Ave. and south of 5th Street due to the lack of homeless people.

totally agree!

This is not the place ! Doesnt make any sense at all

There is a lot of students !

Is not safe !

I will never forget the restaurant above Maggie Mays that threatened to close if the homeless shelters were allowed to be built downtown twenty years ago.

He closed as promised and said it would screw up downtown forever. Now the Police Chief agrees with him. Who would have figured someone in city hall had a brain.

I hope the restaurant owner is still alive to see someone really cares about Downtown Austin.

While most of the downtown panhandlers are harmless, I have been verbally accosted when I have refused to "donate." It seems obvious that moving them away from downtown is an excellent solution. Housing them away from their most lucrative market seems to be obvious.

I have lived downtown at 5th and Red River since July 2005. Since that time I have found that the homeless population has grown, and the panhandlers have become much more aggressive.

When I first arrived I found downtown welcoming and the areas around our home like a neighborhood.

Now I feel uncomfortable walking around even in the daylight and feel that the homeless population has been the largest contributor to this discomfort.

I strongly support moving the homeless services to a new location that is not in the center of downtown residential activity.

Thanks you!

Brett Bachman

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I think he is absolutely correct. I am currently leasing a condo in downtown and continue go back and forth on my level of commitment to downtown and it is solely attributed the homeless situation. At some point in time it will have an affect on property values and I am not willing to take that risk nor will I continue to lease. This means that with no action to protect my investment on the part of city council, I would not buy in downtown.