

City of Dayton's Response to Downtown Community Leaders' Recommendations

This report outlines the key issues, recommendations, and responses developed through the Justice and Policing Working Group, the Social Services Working Group, the Intragovernmental Working Group, and the Business Community Working Group, regarding safety, disorder, and quality-of-life concerns in Downtown Dayton.

While public perception reflects increased criminal activity, homelessness, and behavioral health challenges, particularly in concentrated areas such as the RTA Hub, data and operational assessments show meaningful progress in crime reduction alongside ongoing challenges that require coordinated enforcement, social services, and judicial accountability. The following sections present a balanced review of concerns raised, actions already taken, and strategic recommendations to further enhance safety, accountability, and access to services in Downtown.

JUSTICE AND POLICING WORKING GROUP

FIRST ISSUE: There has been a perceived increase in Downtown criminal activity, including property damage, and an apparent increase in the homeless population, including individuals with mental health issues. The Downtown RTA hub has also seen an increase in all of these types of activities.

Response: Downtown crime continues to move in the right direction. Due to targeted strategies throughout the past five years, overall crime levels have declined by 35% and are back down to levels that are comparable to 2019, with serious violent crime down 18% and property crime down 26%. We also recognize that localized quality-of-life issues influence how residents, workers, and visitors experience downtown. Through the Mobile Crisis Response Team, the department partners with social service providers, transit officials, and the business community to enhance visibility, enforcement, and service connections. Ongoing monitoring and targeted deployment in the downtown core and at the transit hub support a balanced strategy that keeps downtown safe, accessible, and welcoming.

Recommendation #1: An increased police presence downtown, and an increase in enforcement by those officers Downtown. A visible presence is a deterrent.

Response: We concur with this recommendation. The following has been implemented as it relates to this recommendation:

- In 2025, officers were reassigned from other patrol areas to patrol downtown on bikes and on foot.
- Beginning in November 2025, the department started covering the Central Business District (CBD) from 3 a.m. to 7 a.m. using overtime.
- Effective January 12, 2026, the Dayton Police Department increased Central Business District officer staffing from 24 to 30 officers and restored 24/7 coverage. This includes eight officers who will routinely patrol downtown on bikes. Officers will also continue to be assigned to walking patrol.
- The department is working in partnership with RTA to have a police substation located at the RTA Hub. Construction is underway, a lease agreement was approved by the City Commission, and CBD officers will operate from the new location by March 1, 2026.

- Additionally, property was purchased for \$1.4 million at the corner of E. Fourth Street and S. St. Clair Street to construct a permanent police facility at that site.

Recommendation #2: Real-time monitoring of the camera system Downtown and direct communication with those monitoring and the officer in the field.

Response: We concur with this recommendation. The Dayton Police Department began using the Real-Time Crime Center (RTCC) in the first quarter of 2025 and staffs the center during critical timeframes, Monday to Friday, and for special events. The center monitors 54 cameras and 27 license plate readers within the Downtown footprint. RTCC is staffed with approximately nine officers and one sergeant, and that staffing level is expected to continue.

A recommendation is for RTA, Montgomery County, and businesses to share their cameras that view public spaces through the Flock OS program, which would provide real-time access to help prevent crime and assist in apprehending individuals who commit crimes in the area.

Recommendation #3: The city and county revisit the memorandum of understanding that currently has the Dayton Police provide service for county property Downtown. This should be changed, and the sheriff's office should provide a presence and service for those county properties to help protect their capital investments and those of other community stakeholders. This will allow Dayton Police to allocate their resources elsewhere in downtown.

Response: Since 2008, the City of Dayton and Montgomery County have maintained a productive partnership in shared downtown policing responsibilities. Under the current Memorandum of Understanding, the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) provides patrol coverage and dedicated resources to a downtown cluster of county facilities: the Montgomery County Courts, Dayton Municipal Courts, Montgomery County Administration Building, Crime Lab and Coroner's Office, Jail, Juvenile Justice Center, and the Reibold Building, which houses the Records Center and Archives.

Under the current MOU the City of Dayton provides public safety services to Courthouse Square. If MCSO agreed to deploy its resources for Courthouse Square, the Dayton Police Department is freed to reallocate its resources and proactive enforcement efforts toward the downtown areas of greatest need. By enabling each agency to deploy its resources where they are most effective the city and county can maximize public safety impact across the entire downtown corridor. However, to do so, the county will have to agree to renegotiate the current terms of the MOU. Additionally, since most of the at-grade space is owned by Montgomery County, if the county made environmental investments such as installing cameras around the square, that could be viewable in the RTCC, it would further reduce loitering and other disorderly behaviors through a joint effort of patrolling.

Recommendation #4: Implement a communication system that will allow private security providers at each Downtown building to communicate with each other and the Dayton Police Department.

Response: We concur with this recommendation. This goal, along with recommendation #6 below, will be addressed as follows:

- As of February 11, 2026, the “Downtown Safety Forces” email group has been created to include all downtown private security providers, the Dayton Police Department, Montgomery County Sheriff’s Office, Sinclair Police, University of Dayton Police, Five Rivers Metro Park Rangers, Dayton Public School Security, and RTA Security to address non-emergency issues.
- There will be biweekly meetings at DPD's new downtown substation with the same partners to discuss downtown issues in more detail. Invitations for the initial downtown public safety meeting are already being prepared.
- Regarding emergency situations, the East Patrol Operations Division Major will work to identify options for an emergency notification system for the Downtown Safety Forces group during active incidents. The research will be completed by March 31, 2026.

Recommendation #5: The Dayton RTA must create its own police force to be headquartered at the RTA Hub Downtown.

Response: We concur with this recommendation if it proves to be economically feasible. Several private and public entities maintain their own police forces, providing dedicated personnel to address their specific needs. Law Enforcement agencies that already operate in Dayton as independent agencies include Five Rivers Metro Park Rangers, the Sinclair Police Department, the University of Dayton Police Department, the Kettering Health Police Department, and the Premier Health Police Department.

Recommendation #6: The Dayton Police Department, the County Sheriff’s Office, the University of Dayton Police, Sinclair Police, RTA Police, and private security should be fully coordinated in Downtown.

Response: We concur with this recommendation. The Five Rivers Metro Park Rangers should also be included, since they patrol Riverscape, bike trails, and the river.

SECOND ISSUE: Officers report an unwillingness to arrest individuals because of their belief that either individuals will not be prosecuted or that inadequate enforcement in the judicial process will take place. Insufficient support in the judicial process creates an environment of lawlessness.

Response: The potential lack of consequences should not influence whether an arrest is made. However, there was a focus by community stakeholders and through police reform to look at alternatives to arrest and not to treat homelessness, panhandling, and mental health as a crime. The Dayton Police Department has a full-time Mobile Crisis Response Team (MCRT) officer assigned downtown who strictly focuses on the homeless, mental health, and behavioral health issues. The goal is to connect individuals encountered with services to prevent recurring issues. Additionally, within the Support Services Division, the department has two officers focused on similar issues who work closely with the Montgomery County Getting Recovery Options Working

(GROW) program, along with a Dayton Fire Department EMT who supplements the downtown MCRT Officer.

Many individuals in this population come to Dayton and downtown for treatment and/or services, but these organizations have no plans to return them to their county/city of origin if they drop out or complete the program. The department will, within reason, transport willing individuals back to their home county.

In response to the panhandling issue, the City of Dayton updated its panhandling (distribution) laws in 2018 to avoid any legal challenges. The updated legislation does limit how and when enforcement action can be taken. Dayton Police Officers will receive training on the current legislation in the first quarter of 2026, and there will be an effort to increase enforcement of any violations.

Recommendation #1: A review of the Dayton Municipal Court structure.

Response: It is recommended that further analysis be completed regarding this recommendation.

Although many crimes encountered are misdemeanors, which the Dayton Municipal Court handles, felony crimes are handled by the Montgomery County Common Pleas Court, after charges are accepted by the Montgomery County Prosecutor's Office. There has been an increase in youth crime, and those cases are adjudicated through Montgomery County Juvenile Court.

Recommendation #2: Create a Downtown docket that will hear cases only from downtown and enforce the penalties that apply to each case

Response: It is recommended that further analysis be completed regarding this recommendation.

This is an interesting idea that has proven successful in addressing community mental health issues. The police department is currently developing a "Downtown Crime and Sentencing Tracker" initiative to document specific crime and disorder-related incidents downtown and the court outcomes for each offender. It would be helpful to have an automated process for tracking these outcomes.

Some individuals who are encountered downtown are involved in crimes of disorder and have previously documented mental health, behavioral health, or addiction issues. The Dayton Municipal Court has a Mental Health Docket that could be used to address some of the individuals encountered.

Recommendation #3: Judges are assigned to this docket, not magistrates.

Response: It is recommended that further analysis be completed regarding this recommendation to determine whether this would affect any outcomes.

Recommendation #4: Stringent prosecution of those who commit crimes Downtown.

Response: It is recommended that further analysis be completed regarding this recommendation to confirm whether this is an issue.

Montgomery County is part of the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction Targeted Community Alternatives to Prison (TCAP) program. Under TCAP, Montgomery County receives funds to divert lower-level felony convictions (5th- and 4th-degree felonies) to local community-based alternatives, meaning that individuals are often placed on community control (probation) rather than sentenced to prison.

SOCIAL SERVICES WORKING GROUP

FIRST ISSUE: There is an apparent increase in homelessness and mental health issues downtown. It is reported that these individuals are being brought to Dayton by other communities.

Response: Through our approach over the past five years, overall calls for service in downtown related to mental health have declined by 15% since 2019. At the same time, we understand why day-to-day visibility can create a different perception.

To address these concerns, the department assigns a full-time Mobile Crisis Response Team officer dedicated to individuals experiencing homelessness and those in crisis. This officer works to build relationships, coordinate with providers, and connect people to appropriate services and support.

We also recognize that some individuals travel to Dayton seeking assistance, and continuity of care beyond the initial contact remains a broader system challenge. The department works to prevent the formation of encampments and, when appropriate, provides voluntary transportation for individuals who wish to return to their home communities.

Recommendation #1: Conduct a downtown census of homeless individuals to determine how they got to Dayton and plan for their return home.

Response: Point-in-time counts are conducted on the fourth Tuesday in January each year. The Dayton Police Department has assisted with these efforts in the past and will continue to do so. This count provides the Dayton-Kettering-Montgomery County Continuum of Care (CoC) with data showing the number of individuals staying in emergency shelter and/or places not meant for human habitation on one specific day and night of the year. In addition, all individuals experiencing homelessness at our emergency shelters or on the street and are engaged with street outreach are asked their last known permanent address.

The City of Dayton will pass a \$445,526.00 two-year contract with Miami Valley Housing Opportunities (MVHO) for the Downtown Outreach Program, with Montgomery County contributing \$96,881.50 via an inter-governmental MOU, with an option to extend for a second year. MVHO's Street Outreach team works with individuals living in spaces not meant for human habitation, to build relationships and trust, and ultimately move them to permanent housing. This program will provide targeted outreach to effectively reach, engage, and support individuals in the Downtown corridor, as well as targeted neighborhoods with high incidences of homeless encampments.

The Downtown Outreach Program includes improved data tracking to monitor outcomes, increase community awareness and communication, and connect comprehensive support services (mental health, substance use, employment, transportation) to help individuals achieve long-term stability. In addition, anecdotal data points to the idea that public and private entities outside of Dayton, as well as within Dayton and Montgomery County, are advising and/or providing transportation assistance to individuals into Dayton to access our homeless services. As part of data tracking, those questions will be asked, combined with data from engagements with the Mediation Response Unit (MRU) and DPD's MCRT officer. After commencement of the street outreach expansion project, quarterly reporting will be available for review in combination with the MRU/MCRT data gathered.

Recommendation #2: Create a comprehensive inventory of existing services and programs.

Response: A comprehensive inventory of existing services and programs exists and is titled the "Community Resource Guide." It is available electronically [here](#), available to print as a full-page document, or a street card size. This has been produced for many years, is updated annually, and distributed by services providers regularly.

Recommendation #3: Combine duplicated services and eliminate those no longer needed.

Response: The CoC has addressed any duplication or redundancy in services through its application process to ensure funds are implemented in a strategic manner that reaches vulnerable populations, coordinates a plan and path for supportive housing, and maximizes outcomes against available funding.

Recommendation #4: After an individual receives services how do we help them return to where they came from?

Response: Homeless providers work to divert individuals experiencing homelessness back to connections, resources, etc., that they may already have to prevent shelter stays or street homelessness.

Funding for prevention and diversion has long been limited by HUD, and conversations should continue on how to increase it and identify alternative sources to bolster our system in preventing and diverting homelessness before it occurs.

Recommendation #5: Moratorium and limit on the number of group homes through code enforcement.

Response: We concur with this recommendation. In August 2024, the City of Dayton imposed an 180-day moratorium on group homes, which was renewed in early 2025. In August 2025, the Zoning Code was updated to limit the number of additional group homes by quadrant. In February 2026, the moratorium was extended through August 30, 2026.

Members of the Dayton Police Department worked with the Ohio Legislators to introduce Ohio House Bill 583, which would add additional regulations on group homes. Components such as enhanced training requirements for staff at group homes, mandatory reporting of any interaction with emergency medical services, and the ability to immediately suspend or revoke a group home operator's license in urgent situations were placed into Ohio House Bills 96 and 315, which were signed into law. The legislation authorizes the Ohio Department of Children and Youth to suspend or revoke a group home license if specific conditions are not met and to impose additional training and background-check requirements.

Recommendation #6: Enforce existing codes and city ordinances on retail establishments where criminal behavior tends to congregate

Response: We concur with this recommendation. The police department works with the Dayton Law Department to address nuisance locations. The city nuisance law was recently applied to address a problem bar in the Central Business District.

The Law Department is researching other municipalities to identify opportunities to strengthen nuisance-related ordinances.

SECOND ISSUE: The downtown RTA Hub and the immediate surrounding area have seen an increase in unlawful behavior and activity.

Response: There has been a perception of an increase in crime around the RTA Hub. Upon reviewing crime data, crime has been flat or decreased in the block surrounding RTA in comparison to 2019. The data shows an increase of two incidents in serious violent crime and a 43% decrease in serious property crime.

As previously stated, the Dayton Police Department is utilizing the RTCC to monitor this area to make proactive interventions before situations escalate. Additionally, officers are now deployed on bikes to routinely patrol this area.

During the school year, Dayton Public School Resource Officers play a critical role when they are present at the hub, by helping to reduce issues involving their students.

Recommendation #1: Create a list of after-school services and programs for students who are forced to ride RTA buses to and from school.

Response: This falls under the domain of Dayton Public Schools district. The city can provide after-school services and programs of which we are made aware by Dayton Public

Schools, if need be. The City can provide DPS with a list of activities and programs that the Department of Recreation offers.

Recommendation #2: Create an RTA police force.

Response: Please refer to the previous response to Recommendation #5 from the Justice and Police Working Group.

Recommendation #3: Encourage Dayton Public Schools to continue to find an alternative to RTA busing.

Response: We concur with this recommendation. The city continues to support the use of a non-traditional RTA pass that limits its use to reduce loitering downtown. Additionally, the city supports the removal of the mandate that requires Dayton Public Schools to be responsible for the transportation services of private and charter schools, which would relieve Dayton Public Schools of additional transportation logistics.

INTRAGOVERNMENTAL WORKING GROUP

FIRST ISSUE: There is a lack of communication and collaboration across all levels of government. The city, county, and state governments are operating independently of each other, creating gaps and overlapping policies in policy, services, and funding.

Recommendation: Representatives from all levels of government should meet regularly to discuss community issues, projects currently pending, and issues that need action. All levels of government must prioritize consistency and efficiency in the execution of existing and future policy and work together to implement all the recommendations from the working groups. Work to cap the number of charter schools.

Response: We concur with this recommendation. It is advised that there be a biannual meeting in spring and fall with city, county, state, and federal representatives to discuss high-level projects, collaboration, and issues. We would request that the meeting be organized by Congressman Michael Turner.

SECOND ISSUE: Our goal is to increase new businesses downtown and to retain established businesses downtown.

Recommendation: The city, county, and state governments convened to identify existing policies and opportunities for new policies that would incentivize businesses to bring their workers and or remain downtown.

Response: The city would participate in the recommended group.

BUSINESS COMMUNITY WORKING GROUP

FIRST ISSUE: The issues listed by the other subgroups must be addressed in order to improve the perception of downtown for maintaining economic development and capital investment.

Recommendation: Create a downtown-specific economic development fund to encourage continued capital investment downtown.

Response: In summer 2025, the city assembled the Greater Dayton Fund Development Committee to explore alternative revenue-generating strategies to support downtown development and align around priorities coming around the Greater Downtown Plan Update. Additional legal experts and consultants have presented to the committee regarding how current incentives can be expanded or combined to leverage a larger fund.

Business and stakeholder partner representatives included: Co-Chair David Melin (PNC), Co-Chair City Commissioner Chris Shaw, Robert Murphy (Dayton Dragons), Katie Meyer and Kristina Scott (Downtown Dayton Partnership), Chris Kershner and Stephanie Keinath (Dayton Chamber of Commerce), Steve Skerl (CareSource) Shane Wilken and John Gower (City Wide Development), Chris Dimmick and David Kittredge (The Idea Collective), Carli Dixon (Brightside), Gabriel Vanaalst (Dayton Live), Andy Horner (University of Dayton), Joe Geraghty (Dayton Port Authority), and Scott Koorndyk (Entrepreneur Center).

The representatives with the Greater Dayton Fund Development Committee are modeling a variety of public funding mechanisms and evaluating which incentive structure will best leverage private investment for the greater downtown area. The committee intends to finalize and release its recommendations by the end of June 2026.

SECOND ISSUE: There are multiple groups and organizations that business owners support intended to provide services and a forum to businesses to address these types of issues, such as the Downtown Dayton Partnership, Destination Dayton, the Dayton area Chamber of Commerce, and the Dayton Development Coalition.

Recommendation: The Special Improvement District and the organizations listed above must be reviewed and reformed to determine which services should be provided, improve effectiveness, and eliminate duplicative services.

Response: N/A