

REPORT OF THE AD HOC SUB-COMMITTEE  
ON GRACE MARKETPLACE EXTERNAL SECURITY CONCERNS

(PRESENTED TO THE IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE NOVEMBER 1, 2007)

There is unanimous recognition that the introduction of an imperfectly understood and often caricatured population into a relatively static and homogenous region of the city will produce stress and anxiety within that region and its population. This gives rise to fears, some of which are well-founded in isolated cases, and many of which are rooted in half-truth and urban legend. Whatever the source, the anxiety remains, and thus the need to construct a conceptual plan that will obliterate the perceived risk from the minds of those subject to its tyranny.

It would appear that a number of assumptions are at work in the present challenge:

- That once the homeless persons who populate the One-Stop have left its premises, they will begin to penetrate surrounding neighborhoods, industrial and/or residential, in significant numbers for the express purpose of theft, trespass, burglary, and/or assault.
- That homeless persons will seek overnight shelter in the same surrounding environs.
- That the singular issue to be addressed is how to keep homeless persons away from, and out of, particular areas, without particular concern as to where they might actually go.
- That homeless people, by mere virtue of their homeless status, relinquish their right to basic human dignity at the close of the business day, at which time they can justifiably be ignored, while the rest of us pass the evening hours in climate control and safety.

There is some kernel of truth at the core of the existing apprehension. It would be naïve or unduly biased to state otherwise. Furthermore, visceral reactions are essentially self-validating, whether based exclusively in objective truth or not. Hence, all such expressed anxieties are to be taken seriously, and honored in their substance. Since some of the implicit assumptions about the homeless population between dusk and dawn are factually based, and since some are not, we suggest the following measures be taken by the City of Gainesville vis-à-vis clients of the One-Stop and those whose homes or businesses exist in proximity to that site:

1. ALL persons will be required to leave GRACE Marketplace at closing time each afternoon. There will be no exceptions. Any persons found to be on that property beyond 30 minutes after closing, or prior to an hour before opening will be deemed trespassers, and prosecuted as such.
2. The Gainesville Police Department and the Alachua County Sherriff's Department will be requested to increase patrol coverage in the areas surrounding the Marketplace for four hours after closing on each day of operation. Furthermore, we recommend that GPD vigorously enforce existing laws regarding trespassing, panhandling, and personal property.

3. The City of Gainesville and Alachua County will provide transportation, via RTS, for clients of the Marketplace to a location designated by the City and/or County, where these persons may spend the evening and night hours in a safe facility that provides a roof, cots, and toilets. It is not sufficient to move people away from a service center. There must be a destination to which they are taken which offers the minimum necessities to survive the night hours.

We believe that the overwhelming majority of persons that will employ the services of GRACE Marketplace are not inclined to do harm to the person or property of others. They do, however, need a place to survive. We concur with the residents and business owners in the area surrounding GRACE Marketplace that locations immediately adjacent to the One-Stop would not be the optimum alternative for this to occur. Yet, the reality of survival must be authentically addressed in *some location*.

We can only endorse a plan for safety and security that places value on those aspirations for ALL parties impacted by GRACE Marketplace -- nearby residents, surrounding business owners, and homeless clients.