Survey of Northampton’s Panhandling and Busking Community
The Mayor’s Work Group on Panhandling
Fall 2017

Purpose of the Survey
In the spring of 2017 in Northampton, Massachusetts, Mayor David Narkewicz convened a panel of eleven experts representing city departments, the Northampton City Council, local service organizations, health department, local churches, the business community, law enforcement, and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to discuss the experience of citizens while visiting downtown Northampton. The Mayor’s Work Group on Panhandling, as the group came to be known, was tasked with better understanding the population of people who solicit money or services on Main Street, more commonly known as ‘panhandlers.’ The stated goal of the Work Group was to reduce the need for this strategy for survival among those that employ it, while also making sure that everyone has a great experience downtown.

In an effort to ensure everyone’s voice is part of the conversation, the Mayor’s Work Group wrote and administered a survey to the panhandler population. The goal of the survey is to solicit opinions and attitudes directly from those involved in panhandling to better understand their feelings about the town, the practice, and the challenges they face. The findings of these surveys are outlined in this report.

The Mayor’s Work Group is very grateful to the people who took the time to answer our questions, as well as to those who walked up and down Main Street asking people to participate.

Methodology
By the Work Group experts’ best estimates, at any given time there are about twenty people actively soliciting money downtown. Our survey team, consisting of volunteers from local human service organizations, the health department, and officers from the Northampton Police Department, successfully collected thirteen complete interviews, representing sixty-five percent of this finite population.

It is important to note that this is largely a qualitative measurement of Northampton’s panhandling population, which is to say that the survey measures most effectively the opinions, beliefs, attitudes and perceptions of the downtown panhandling population rather than being a quantifiable measurement of any larger population of panhandlers outside of Northampton. Because the Northampton population is finite, and the Work Group succeeded...
in reaching a large percentage of that population (65%), the margin of error (MOE) for quantitative questions is relatively small at 2.6% at a 95% level of confidence, thanks to a statistical adjustment called the "Correction Factor for Finite Populations (FPCF)." That said, the survey is mainly comprised of open-ended questions that were designed to understand how Northampton's panhandlers feel about the issues surveyed, in an attempt to advise the Work Group's investigations into this topic.

Respondents were approached with an offer of a $10 Downtown Northampton Gift card donated by the Downtown Northampton Association in exchange for participation in the survey, which averaged about 20 minutes in length. A volunteer verbally asked the questions and recorded respondent’s answers on paper. Data collectors reported that respondents were largely eager to participate in the survey.

The survey was intentionally designed to be narrow in scope in relation to panhandling activity downtown, rather than being an in-depth look at the underlying causes, effects, or levels of service adoption by panhandlers. That said, some questions were personal, particularly those about drug use and other aspects of life on the street, so not every respondent answered these questions. It is also possible that despite our best efforts to make the survey a welcoming and safe experience, some panhandlers might have been wary of perceived ulterior motives of the survey, and could have factored that feeling into their responses.

Executive Summary
[TO BE WRITTEN LATER ONCE FINALIZED]

Contours of the Panhandling population

Demographics
The survey reached thirteen people on Main Street who are known to the services organizations and the Northampton Police department as people engaged in panhandling activity. Of these, 77 percent report that they live in the City of Northampton, with one person each saying they live in Holyoke, Springfield, and Palmer.
Demographic Snapshot of Northampton's Panhandling Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Education</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Less than High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>High School (GED)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Post High School</td>
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<tr>
<th>Military Service</th>
<th>Type of Housing Currently Live</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Homeless (street or shelter)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>Hotel, Motel</td>
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Fifty-four percent of panhandlers reached are male, with 38 percent female and one person (8%) identifying as 'other.' The average age of respondents is 33 years old, with the oldest being 59 years old and the youngest 22 years old. Forty-two percent of panhandlers have less than a High School or equivalent education, with 25 percent with a high school degree and a third (33%) with at least some post-high school education. Two individuals report that they are military veterans (15%).

Housing Status
Everyone in our survey reports that they are homeless. Eighty-five percent share that they are living on the street or living in shelters, with seven people saying that they currently live in a tent. The remaining respondents said that they are living in nearby motels or hotels. All walk (46 percent), bike (15 percent), or take the bus (38 percent) to get to downtown Northampton each day they come.
Employment
All panhandlers report that they are not currently employed. Two respondents report (15 percent) that they 'work occasionally,' with a third (33 percent) saying they have performed some kind of work in the past year, and the remaining two-thirds having not worked in at least a year.
When asked what type of work they used to do, panhandlers list a variety of occupations and employers, including:

- Drywall finisher
- Liquors 44
- Registered Nurse
- Stay-at-home mom
- Manual Labor
- Waitress
- Carpentry
- Construction
- Janitorial
- Personal Care Attendant
- General Electric
- Restaurant
- Customer service
- Never held a job

Other than one person who cites some income from additional work in the past year, and another who lists ‘support from an ex-partner,’ all of the panhandlers we reached in downtown Northampton say they have no additional sources of income besides what they collect on the street.

**Government Benefits**

When asked if they receive any government benefits, the largest number (43 percent) say they take advantage of the supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP), followed by public health programs like Medicaid or the Affordable Care Act and Social Security (SSI) (21 percent apiece).
Tobacco, Marijuana, and Addiction
Most panhandlers are current tobacco users and say that they smoke on Main Street (85 percent), while just under half (46 percent) admit to smoking marijuana while they are downtown.

Twelve out of thirteen responded when asked, “Would you say that you are struggling with drug or alcohol abuse currently?” Of those, a quarter (25 percent) said ‘yes.’ When probed if they had ever had a drug or alcohol problem, 58 percent shared that they had at one time struggled with some form of addiction.

Downtown Activity
Respondents spend a good deal of time in downtown Northampton. The vast majority of the people we spoke to either come downtown every day (69 percent) or ‘most days’ (15 percent), with just one person saying ‘once a week, and another sharing that this was their first time downtown.

Panhandlers and buskers listed various reasons for why they enjoy spending time in downtown Northampton:

![Pie chart showing reasons for hanging out in downtown Northampton]

Open-ended responses in the ‘Other’ category above, and also in response to a question asking “What do you like to do when you’re downtown,” demonstrate that panhandlers view Northampton as a safe or respectful place to ask for money or food and that many appreciate being able to “hang out” and socialize. People mentioned that Northampton is:

Fall, 2017
Quiet. People ain't rude.

Reduce cost of food - free meals equal money spent on other things - Haymarket 35% off food cost or free meal

[It's] safe, police, and [people are] courteous to homeless people

Panhandle, look for clothes through assistance

Read

Talk, live life, get money

Guitar, talk, smoke cigarettes, try to make money.

Hang out, shop, eat, sell jewelry

Hang out, network, take care of others

Hang out, shoot the breeze

Talk to people, keep to myself, panhandle

Contemplate and write down thoughts - compile and write down 1000 words a day

Panhandle, get coffee at starbucks

Shop and hang out at coffee shops [It's] safe here.

When asked directly if they panhandle (with the included definition, "that is, do you ask people on the street for money or food"), 85 percent indicate that they panhandle, and with some overlap, 40 percent say that they play music for money - or 'busk.'
More than half of those surveyed have been panhandling, busking or both on Mainstreet for more than a year (56 percent). Twenty-two percent say they've been downtown for less than a month, with the same number (22 percent) indicating they've been working downtown for more than a month but for less than three months.

The Logistics of Panhandling
Panhandlers appear to be creatures of habit with their chosen spot, times, and sense of ethics around their approach to panhandling. The way each person engages in the practice is different, and is sometimes inconsistent with the approach of their fellow panhandlers.

When asked if they experience barriers to or difficulties in panhandling, many cite factors relating to competition with other panhandlers, or interactions with their peers as among the issues they face downtown.

Resident of Northampton have bonds with other panhandlers so treat her disrespectfully. Like I'm taking their friend's spot.

Dealing with other homeless people. Everyone is rude or obnoxious. Alcohol, drugs, violence...

Sometimes other homeless people can be difficult but [I] just walk away.

By friends - other panhandlers - they get jealous when I'm in their spot.

People also mention the dehumanizing nature of panhandling, citing rude or disrespectful treatment from non-panhandlers walking down Main Street.

People not understanding that I exist. I'm being judged.

Some people find me intimidating.

Judgmental. "Get a job."

People marginalize me.

People accuse you of being an alcoholic [or an] addict.

People call [me] names.
Everyone thinks I'm a crackhead or a terrible person

People being mean, saying 'get a job' and 'where's your family?'

Interestingly, the Northampton Police Department does not come up in this discussion. In fact, the presence of Police appears to be more of an asset than a detraction for most panhandlers, driving feelings of safety and factored into site selection for their chosen spot on a given day. The amount of people around, what food or other amenities they are interested in, and a sense that a spot is "Good" also influence the spot panhandlers pick. Sometimes it's just where there is no one else doing it:

I just sit wherever there's an open spot and no other panhandlers around.

Police presence, I like to be seen. Amount of people.

Where it's comfortable. If you're hungry - set up near where you're craving.

Go to where there is a lot of people.

Location depends on people around and my needs at the time.

Asked and heard Starbucks was the best spot. Sat on crate.

I don't pick a spot, I just follow the yellow brick road

Pick a spot where I don't have to be incredibly close to people.

Busy! Food

Nobody has been at this bench.

Like the food at Bueno y Sano, as well as the bathroom and getting water.

Where no other panhandlers are around.

Next to GoBerry

Eighty-three percent of panhandlers say there is a lot of competition for 'good spots' in Northampton. Most panhandle alone (67 percent), that is not as part of a group, though a third (33 percent) say it changes or depends. There is likely a distinction here between times when panhandlers are actively engaged in soliciting money or services and times when they are socializing, due to the observable times when groups of panhandlers are congregating.

Feelings about panhandling as a practice
In an effort to understand what motivates people to panhandle, we asked what they liked most and least about panhandling. Interestingly, when asked "What do you like most about panhandling, besides the money" over half (57%) indicated that there is nothing (else) that they like about panhandling. Summarized by one respondent, "I don't like panhandling. It's a need, not a want." The rest of those interviewed responded that the social aspect of being...
downtown is a second benefit to panhandling. “I don’t enjoy panhandling besides the surprise of kind people and friendly interaction” and “Sucks, but I like talking to people.”

Despite feeling that Northampton is safe and has an overall friendly vibe, most panhandlers report feeling marginalized or judged. One panhandler summarized feelings shared by many interviewed by saying, “People not understanding that I exist. I’m being judged.” When asked what they like the least about panhandling, respondents expressed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feelings</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You’re asking working people for money</td>
<td>Rude and assaultive people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most people give out of fear.</td>
<td>Makes me feel like I’m the bottom of a shoe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling degraded</td>
<td>Making people on Main Street uncomfortable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dirty looks</td>
<td>Rude people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weather and people look down on you</td>
<td>It’s tiring. I’d rather work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking (person has health concerns)</td>
<td>Having to beg.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Panhandlers understand that people passing by may choose to not give money and all feel just as grateful if someone offers food, beverage, or cigarettes instead. When asked how they would like people to respond if someone can’t or doesn’t want to give in the moment, overall the sentiment called for mutual respect.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simply say they don’t have it instead of walking by acting like you’re an alien from out of space. I’m still human.</td>
<td>Just say have a nice day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorry, I can’t.</td>
<td>Say good luck or God bless, but can’t.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No is an acceptable answer. Don’t put your hand in my face. Don’t ignore me.</td>
<td>No, I can’t - I’m sorry. Or a smile.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maybe another time. I can’t.</td>
<td>I always say, “Have a good day” or “God bless” and I like when people say it back and treat me like a human being.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I’m sorry I’m unable to help you, but have a</td>
</tr>
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Fall, 2017
I'm sorry I can't. Just say something. nice day.

Smile. Be honest. Offensive if they ignore you.

In addition to their experiences with those passing by, panhandlers also report challenging interactions with or difficulties negotiating the behaviors of other panhandlers and homeless people on the streets.

Feelings about the impact on panhandling on downtown Northampton
In an effort to explore panhandler's impressions of the impact that panhandling has on business and entertainment downtown, we asked both how people personally viewed the potential impact of panhandling or busking and also asked how they feels other people may view the impact of the activity. In each case, we asked them to further explain their response in an open-ended format.

None feel that panhandling or busking has a 'very positive effect' on business or entertainment downtown. Thirty-eight percent personally feel that it does have a "somewhat positive effect," further sharing:

It depends because if panhandlers use money they're given to purchase items in town then they are spending in Northampton.

This isn't what I exactly want to be doing, but I haven't found that yet. But I make people smile and entertain kids.

I'm stuck. I sell jewelry. People enjoy my stuff. It's art. Really positive. I prefer to give back to the community.

I make creative signs that draw people to me and they ask where they should shop or eat, so I tell them.

No one surveyed feels personally that panhandling or busking has a 'very negative impact, but 38 percent feel that it has a 'somewhat negative impact." Some of the reasons they cite include:

Fall, 2017
Asking people for money who are just coming out of a business - and people are just trying to shop.

People generally see it in a negative light. Don't see how they're treated by others.

Negative energy feeds negative energy. Homelessness and vagrancy is negative for business.

The people with all their bags makes it hard for people to walk by. I could see why people would be scared of aggressive people.

It may scare people away.

Twenty-three percent were not personally sure what impact panhandling or busking has on downtown Northampton business and entertainment.

When asked to imagine the feelings of other people, panhandlers suspect that their feelings are more negative than their own. Not surprisingly, given no one personally feels that panhandling has a ‘very positive effect’ on downtown Northampton’s business and entertainment, none feel others would feel that way. Nearly half as many (17%) feel others
would agree that panhandling or busking has a ‘somewhat positive effect,’ instead a quarter (25 percent) guess that it has a ‘somewhat negative impact,’ and a third (33 percent) suspect others would think it has a ‘very negative impact.’ Seventeen percent say they are unsure what others would say. Responses explaining the impact others would say the activity has include:

**Negative**

*Outbursts from panhandling causes negative [feelings].*

*Because they all think we are drug addicts.*

*People think you’re a drug addict or a bad person.*

**Neutral or Conditional**

*Depends on age. Older people view it more negatively, younger people don’t seem to care.*

*A lot of residents help panhandlers. Some do and don’t like it so overall it equals out.*

*It’s different. People don’t usually see pirates these days. [Note: this fellow regularly dresses in a pirate outfit while spending time downtown.]*

*So busking or selling jewelry is positive vibes. Panhandling is viewed as negative.*

**Positive**

*Panhandlers bring people to business. They appreciate that they have money and they can buy.*

**Number of solicitors on Main Street**

Thanks to the positives they list about Northampton’s welcoming environment, most panhandlers and buskers (67 percent) agree that Northampton probably has more people soliciting on Main Street than other towns.
As noted earlier, one of the principle drivers is a feeling of safety people experience while soliciting downtown. They also clearly mention the cultural attractiveness and vibrance of the city as attracting lots of people who are potential givers.

A lot of homeless here.
Income level of community. Culture. It's a vibrant city.
It's safe.
More happening.
Rich town.

More travelers.
Overall a nicer environment.
It's welcoming and you're treated well.
Rich town/safe
It's safe here.

Panhandler's Code of Ethics
There seems to be little consistency between panhandlers in regards to how they choose their location to panhandle. In fact, most panhandlers report that there is a lot of competition for the "good spots". This leads to potential conflict about territory and may indicate further exploring with panhandlers whether a code of ethics would be useful or safely enforceable among one another.
Panhandlers report choosing a location most often based on three criteria: an open spot with others not present, a spot where others are present, or a business-specific spot. Some panhandlers choose a spot based on open availability—meaning they want to avoid congregating too closely to others asking for money. While others choose higher visibility locations or places where others are also sitting to increase feelings of safety ("Police presence-I like to be seen") and increase social interactions. Lastly, people choose spots business specific spots based on criteria such as the type of food or drink they are interested in ("If you're hungry - set up near where you're craving.") or how friendly the business is to panhandlers/homeless (for example, use of bathroom).

When prompted to consider what should be included in a Code of Ethics, people mentioned the following key themes:

**Respect the people from whom you are soliciting** - This includes speaking politely and being honest about what you are using the money for or your situation.

*Say thank you and have a blessed day*

*Say thank you. Be polite. Be respectful. Pay attention. Don't bother people on the phone or in conversation.*

*Make a sign, be honest about your situation, be friendly, converse with those that are interested, if someone says 'no' smile and wish them a nice day*

*Let the sign do the talking. People will look out for you if you have a good attitude.*

*Don't yell at people, don't smoke cigarettes, don't blast a radio, if someone offers food, take it instead of arguing for cash*

**Respect toward other panhandlers** - this includes sharing what you have received with others, moving around to share good spots, not being too drunk or high,

**Respect for panhandling locations** - Ensure that the location where you were sitting/standing is kept clean and no litter is left behind; Stay in designated areas and don’t overflow the benches and sidewalks with bags or personal belongings. Don’t smoke cigarettes or weed in your spot (or don’t blow smoke onto sidewalk). Don’t bring pets. Keep the area clean.

*You can sit, but don’t put bags on a bench and take up space.*

**Identify appropriate panhandling locations** - One person suggested creating a list of locations where people could panhandle. Another mentioned Be at least two benches away
from other panhandler. While another mentioned moving locations throughout the day. One person had an idea to create locker space for people to store belongings so it’s not kept on street.

Interest in a jobs program
One concept the Mayor’s Work Group on Panhandling is exploring is the possibility of creating a day labor program for interested homeless or jobless people in an effort to reduce the need to panhandle. While significant details would need to be worked out unrelated to demand for such an idea, the effort might be modeled on programs initiated elsewhere in the United States, particularly in Albuquerque, New Mexico, where they have had success with a program called, “A Better Way.” Again, there are likely logistical issues scaling a large city effort to Northampton’s size, but the Work Group desired to understand a baseline receptiveness to such an idea among the panhandling and busking community. We were careful not to reference any structural details about possible day work in our questions, as it is currently unclear how such a program would be best structured.

Prior to introducing the idea of temporary work, the survey asked respondents what they would need to happen if they were interested in stopping panhandling. Eighty-three percent say that they’d need work, a job, income or money in order to stop heading to Main Street to panhandle, followed distantly by the undoubtedly related need for stable housing (25 percent). Three-quarters of panhandlers and buskers would be interested interested in a program that offered work for some number of hours a day, followed by 17 percent who are unsure. Just one person we reached said they would not be interested. While some had conditions for such employment, most say the most interesting are the prospects for income and the dignity of working.

_Because I have kids. Kids ain't cheap._

_Yes, I don't like being unemployed._

_Depends on type of work due to anxiety._

_Varies depending on work type._

_Yes - financial stability._

_Yes, opportunity for income._

_Enough income._

_Yes, I'd rather do something to earn my money._

_Has to meet my standards of work. I can't work at a job like behind a CVS counter. Need housing first._

_I'd rather work, but it would have to pay enough._

_If I have income, I don't need to beg for money._
Getting paid, employee would make feel good.

Respondents’ expectations for pay were modest - most said minimum wage or close to it. Some wanted to know more about the kind of work it would be, but it was clear that given a fair wage, such work would be considered, with comments like, “Enough to live,” and “Anything’s better than nothing.”

Most indicate flexibility about when they could work, offering multiple times of availability, with a preference for the early morning. It’s safe to say that the survey does not strongly suggest that any given time would be good or bad, and that the times could be driven by other considerations of the program.

The kinds of jobs people reported they’d be willing to perform tend to be things relating to manual labor, and things they imagine the area might need. Maintenance, cleaning, trash pickup and snow removal topped the list of potential jobs.
Other jobs they mention in the open-ended response included babysitting and construction, followed by concerns about manual labor based on physical limitations some possess.

Impressions of Northampton and services used
While many wouldn’t change a thing about Northampton, saying they like it the way it is, some do have suggestions about how to make the town better.

- *I like it the way it is.*
- *More trust between Police and homeless*
- *Let sleeping dogs lie.*
- *More public bathrooms.*
- *Police harassment*
- *More benches on sidewalks, more trash cans*
- *Nothing, likes Northampton*

I wouldn’t change anything. Fun town and great place to spend your free time.
More and better public restrooms - community center
People’s rudeness and attitude, drug use
Make sure people have a place to sit
People getting high and drunk and fighting a lot. It’s a little scary.

Here is the first time in the survey with multiple opportunities to speak openly that some hope for a better relationship with the Police, which is at least comforting in the sense that City’s

Fall, 2017
Officers do not represent a top-of-mind concern for panhandlers and buskers. The most urgent issues panhandlers and buskers list are housing, income, medical care, a need for stability and pending legal action.

Consistent with the impressions of the representatives of service organizations on the Mayor's Work Group, most of this population for whatever reason are not using many services available. To the extent that they use local services, Panhandlers and buskers mostly take advantage of those relating to food, housing and health care.

None reported using services among choices listed as: Community Substance Abuse Centers, Grace House Center for Human Development, Center for Addiction Recovery, Allies in Recovery, other Addiction or Substance Abuse Assistance group, Windhorse Integrative Mental Health, or Massachusetts Unemployment Insurance.

Conclusions
There are several findings in this survey that represent real opportunity to support the Work Group's efforts. Aside from providing an important window into the population we strive to understand, several themes are apparent that we can use to guide the language we choose and the initiatives we propose. The data suggest that there are things that can be done that are consistent with the goals of the Mayor's Work Group on Panhandling.

It is clear from speaking with people who busk and panhandle in downtown Northampton, that most would rather be doing something else. There is an unmistakable, and hopefully an
incredibly humanizing honesty in their responses about the experience of being homeless and jobless. Even imagining some degree of self-reporting bias, the conversation solicited by the Work Group represented by this survey goes a long way toward dispelling the notion of the 'professional panhandler,' at least in Northampton. Even as one can extrapolate or imagine factors that may be contributing to this activity and even perhaps the inertia that keeps people engaged, our data does not support an image of people who willfully choose to join the ranks of people asking for money and services on Main Street.

The pain of the experience is evident, even in what were safe and congenial conversations. The feeling of being dehumanized and marginalized by the community, the struggles of not being able to find work and permanent housing, and the overlaying feelings of insecurity and not feeling safe are important threads the Work Group should keep in mind as it considers potential approaches to this community. This is consistent with Work Group research on other locations, and has already driven potential communications. This research, now corroborated by the survey, recommends a message of respect and inclusion for everyone who visits downtown and rejects the separation of people into negative stereotypes of the kind frequently ascribed to panhandlers, the Police, the City, or business owners in these conversations.

Urging mutual respect and a basic recognition of humanity is key. Conversations about regulations, rights, reasons, and approach are inherently confrontational and judgmental. Most importantly, they are unlikely to improve the experience of anyone downtown or to address and reduce the need for the practice. The Work Group has already rejected language from elsewhere that, in an attempt to encourage giving to service organizations rather than directly to panhandlers, discusses a 'right' and a 'wrong' way to give. Our findings here suggest that respect for everyone should be a guiding principle to ensure that we are the good community that many of our panhandling neighbors believe we are.

The survey findings also strongly support the idea of providing City residents and visitors with advice on how to respond to a street solicitation (whether they choose to give or not), and advice on alternatives to direct giving, in the form of food or downtown Northampton Gift Cards. Other needs mentioned by respondents include pre-paid Visa/Mastercards, camping supplies, health & hygiene products, and bus tickets. At the very least, successfully avoiding judgment in every phase of interactions and transactions between city goers and panhandlers could remove one factor complicating this issue, and allow everyone to focus more completely on the underlying causes of homelessness and joblessness in this population.

The feelings of competition for resources in the form of 'good spots' and access to potential givers, and strong opinions about how one should conduct himself or herself while panhandling could support some form of voluntary self-regulation within the panhandling community. There was no shortage of passion when sharing these thoughts with interviewers, so there may be hope that if enough of these common themes are organized into an approach most
panhandlers find intuitive, that it could help shape a Panhandler's Code of Ethics. Such an approach might serve as a gentle reminder within and outside the community guiding a behavioral and procedural ideal to which all panhandlers could aspire, and which business owners and Police could point during moments when things aren’t running smoothly.

Given the Work Group's goal of reducing the need for panhandling as a strategy for survival in Northampton, the good news from the survey is that there is potential receptiveness to new ideas, expectations are modest, the main hope is for respect and safety, and none would rather be panhandling than doing something else. The Work Group is grateful to Northampton's panhandlers and buskers for adding their voices to the conversation as we consider the best approach to this issue.