

[Narrator] You've tuned in to another edition of The Breakroom, a

weekly conversation about how the City of Saint Augustine

works from those who do the work every day. Hosted by the

City of Saint Augustine's communications director,

Melissa Wissel. The Breakroom offers a closer look at the

different city departments and provides updates on current and

upcoming projects and events and now your host Melissa

Wissel. [Melissa] Welcome to The Breakroom. Thanks for tuning

in. We are back in studio this week to follow up on a

conversation we had back in August with former police chief

Barry Fox talking about the

city's efforts to help our

unsheltered homeless finding

solutions to provide services

and support to get folks back

on their feet reunited with

their families. Still lots to

talk about. Barry, welcome

back. [Barry] Oh, thank you for having

me. [Melissa] So, not only in the city

but we've got partnerships

going with continuous care,

home against Saint John's,

Saint John's County Government

as of course with the sheriff's

office. Give us an update.

Let's let's start with the

property. [Barry] Oh so. [Melissa] Our property.

[Barry] So our property. Yes.

[Melissa] We kind of talked about that but it was.

Yeah. Not quite happening yet.

[Barry] Yeah. It's official. That it is

official. The the landswap has
gone through. The property is

ours. Um we have lifted the
canopy on a it's got a

beautiful tree canopy on it. Um
so we have lifted the canopy.

We've cleaned the property.

We've mowed the property and

two weeks ago I went to the
Planning and Zoning Board and

I've got approvals to tear down
the buildings if needed after

assessments and those
assessments are in. Um we are

going to go take one building
down because we'll be preparing

it to move one of our service providers to that site and put

a fence up. So, yeah. [Melissa] And just so folks know, remind folks

this is behind Winn Dixie. [Barry] It is ninety and ninety-two South

Dixie and it's right right at 20seven in South Dixie. Yeah.

[Melissa] Great location. [Barry] It is. [Melissa] And like you said, a beautiful tree

canopy and talk about the service that we're moving there

first. [Barry] So, the first service we'll be moving there is once

we get the fence up and cleaned up. It'll we'll be dining with

dignity. We're going to be making that transition and then

we'll we'll try to work on some some hygienal issues such as

restrooms and something like
that and then we'll be reaching

out to anyone that has any kind
of services that are self

contained like showers or wash
and we'll start scheduling them

to be there on certain days
that will. [Melissa] Traveling haircuts?

[Barry] Um yeah, we could we could
probably do some traveling

haircuts. Maybe work with the
the tech center to see if there

are people will come out and as
a as part of their class and do

some haircuts but all those
things have to be worked out,

you know. Yeah. [Melissa] Tell me the
vision, the long-term vision

because this is not going to

happen overnight But we really

have a great vision. [Barry] We do. So
the the vision of the of the

program will be to really you
know the the city of Saint

Augustine is not going into the
homeless service providing

services to the homeless. [Melissa] It's
not overnight. [Barry] It it's not

overnight. What we're really
our vision is and the city's

vision is is we it's we're at
that point where we we need

somewhere where all the
different service providers

that are housed up underneath
that that continuum of care can

come and and provide services
because now they're at their

locations and it's hard for the
homeless to know where that

location is and you know your
your outreach personnel are

going out and they're finding
people and they're bringing

them back if they qualify. Well
what we want is that one

service where the homeless feel
comfortable to be at so that we

can bring in all the service
providers once, twice, three

times a week, all week if they
want and they can they can be

touching a captive audience for
lack of a better word. [Melissa] Touching their lives. Yeah. [Barry] Um

and and every day offering
services and we're you know

bringing wildflower clinic so we're
we're helping with that you

know because there's things if

we can solve things at a

service center then we can

solve emergency room trips

things that are costing

taxpayers we can solve trips to

the jail you know things that

are costing taxpayers and start

really kind of working on it

like that so so the vision is

is is the city is going to

support all these different

service providers because we

feel confident that every need

is being met and the gaps are

really just small and the and

those gaps when you really talk

about them are really just kind

of geographical or [Melissa] kind of

connecting getting each piece

connected. [Barry] Yeah, you're kind of
just getting each piece

connected but we've got a site
where each one of em can

connect and we can fill those
little gaps and a service

center or wellness center for
lack of a better term is we

believe is that part where we
can bring all the different

outreach teams from all the
different service providers

together. One, like I said, one
day a week or two days a week

or all week, it doesn't really
matter and and really be

touching those individuals that
want to come there and just

have a place to where they feel
safe and because there is a lot

of in in the homeless
community. There is a lot of

you know you segregate yourself
for your safety. You kind of

you know you're kind of trying
to find that safe place. But

our the city's point will be to
try to bring those services to

that location. But the thing
we'll be concentrating on in a

gap will be daily laundry
eventually. Daily showers and a

mail room because if you don't
have a mailing address you

can't you can't get benefits.
They won't sell them they won't

send them to general delivery.
In that mailroom. And those

three things are key for and
get you get you appropriately

washed and appropriately
showered and you know, I can

get you possibly employable and
we can help you from there. [Melissa] So,

I can come charge my phone, sit
with the counselor. [Barry] Yeah. [Melissa] Maybe

it's a career counselor. Maybe
it's mental health counselor.

[Barry] Maybe it's mental health
counselor. [Melissa] Dental appointments. [Barry] We've been. Yeah,

we've been talking to Lutheran
Services about some some

possibility of some services
there so that's that's in play.

So, there's a lot of things
that are in play that this

center can really really

kind of bring all those service

providers together and really
have that. You know, when I say

a captive audience, it's not
like they're going to walk on

the on the facility and gates
going to close that gate.

Right, right. But it's going to
be somewhere where it's for for

them that where they're
comfortable. [Melissa] There's a it's a

but there's a mission there
which is to really help really

help solve like you said, it's
filling those gaps so that you

can get someone off the street,
get them a job, get them housed

and care. [Barry] Where we can make the
most of outreach. [Melissa] Right. [Barry] Yeah,

absolutely. [Melissa] Uh so, you are
tuned in to the break room. I'm

Melissa Whistle, communication
director for the City of Saint

Augustine. Barry Fox is joining
me. He is our code enforcement

manager Heading up the city's
initiatives for homelessness

and we just started talking
about the city. Let's shift

gears a little bit. Um I think
I'm going to have to have you

come back because we're not
going to get all this in in one

more episode now. [Barry] You can
never. [Melissa] Um let's talk about

Saint John's County and the \$2.
2 million dollars that just

went towards that
groundbreaking. [Barry] Yes so.

[Melissa] Opportunity. That's huge. [Barry] Right
and and so I can't I I know

that Saint John's County is
involved. I can't speak to how

it come to home again. [Melissa] Sure.
[Barry] And I can't speak to the amount

but Troy and Ellen and and Mike
Davis are all doing a great job

out there homeless home against
Saint John's and they'd have

their groundbreaking for their
facility on 16 and their their

their vision for that is very
similar to the cities the only

difference is is they'll have a
housing component Now in a in a

I don't want to get outside of
my lane. [Melissa] Sure. [Barry] But I know that

there's a housing unit a

housing aspect to their

then there's they also have a
veterans housing aspect to

that. Now I can't clarify the
two. [Melissa] That's fine. Sure. [Barry] Or or if they're one

and the same. But I know that
they're working on two

different types of housing
aspects. And so Home Again is

really kind of you know moving
forward and putting things

together. We did have a we had
that that groundbreaking the

other day. We had county
commissioners. We had military

was present. [Melissa] the Mayor was there. [Barry] Um faith-based
faith-based leaders were there.

Uh there was an overwhelming
amount of city leaders there

because you know we're so
involved in that project and

and and Commissioner Garris is
involved in that board and the

mayor was there Mayor Sykes
Klein was there and I'm

going to miss someone
Commissioner Springfield I know

I'll miss someone all you know
the directors and David Burcham

yeah I know right and if I miss
some I apologize but I I think

counties yeah so okay I'm
going to move on from that

everybody was there and they it
was very appreciative [Melissa] it is it

is huge. it's a huge step [Barry] yeah [Melissa] and we're so
excited to be partnering. We

really are I think we're sort
of this joining forces. [Barry] Yeah.

You know in in this particular

in this particular issue for

communities it's it's paramount

that that the service providers

really kind of get a working

relationship and kind of stick

with it and and you know the

city is is you know we're I'm

you know I'm kind of the lead

for the city of of course I

have those that I answer to but

you know, it really key not to

duplicate services. [Melissa] Right. [Barry] You

know, but there are some things

that have to be duplicated just

because they have to be

immediate. [Melissa] Well, you can't you

you've there's probably we're

probably going to find a lot

more people that need the

services that one facility
alone can't necessarily have.

[Barry] Right and and if there's and if
there's you know, if there's an

a need out there where the one
one offering that service can't

just meet it, then, I'm sure
that that's a continuum of care

discussion and the city doesn't
want to step on anybody's toes

and we're not going to be
looking to try to re reinvent

or redo or reproduce someone's
service and we're not going to

be doing that but there are a
couple there is one out there

that we know that Saint Johns
County runs and we've ran it

through the police department
for 30 years and there is it

there is an absolute need for
that to be a duplicate of

service because it serves our
homeless at different times of

the day and night and and and
need. [Melissa] And you're talking about

[Barry & Melissa} family reunification program.
[Barry] Yeah. [Melissa] We're we're about out of

time but let's talk about that.
So. So that folks know that's

again like you said it's
another component. [Barry] It is. So

the family reunification
program started with the Saint

Augustine Police Department,
the city of Saint Augustine

roughly thirty, 31 years ago.
It was a vision of Steve

Frickies, a mentor of mine that
was at the police department

and it was a program that was
put together so that the

homeless basically when the
homeless wanted to not be home,

they wanted to move from
unsheltered sheltered again.

They wanted to go home. They
they were had patched up the

problems with the family. What
whatever the the issue was. We

would get them home because you
know Saint Johns County didn't

really have the ability to
house people. You know we had

Saint Francis House and their
mission has changed to more of

a permanent supportive or

temporary however you explain

it. And so they're not that
homeless shelter. So we we

started spending a little bit
of money and Steve worked it

out. So we started spending a
little bit of money in buying

bus tickets and sending people
home as long as you know we

could verify that there was
someone on the other end that

was willing to take them off
the street of family member we

could talk to that family
member and verify that and that

they weren't a violent
individual going back to a

situation where they were
victimizing someone we weren't

going to do that and and that
program's been in place for

like I said 30 what the 31
years that I've worked for the

city so I'll give it that much
this Saint Johns County when

Sheriff Hardwick Started his
reentry program. He's

duplicating that process
because he has one additional
added value to that to that
thing and which is when when

people enter into the reentry
program in the jail, they're

they're getting sober. [Melissa] Right.
[Barry] They're getting clean and and

it's key for that to be run out
of that program because you

want to bring those individuals
out of that program in that

jail clean and sober and you
want to reinstitute them into

an the a Hi, a background [Melissa] to their homes. [Barry] To a support system. I'm

sorry. In my terms I I just
went from a real estate class

to homelessness. Um to a
support system that can

continue to help them continue
to get better and and thrive.

So that's why it's key for that
for him to run that. So yes

that particular program is
duplicated but at different

times at different areas for
different needs. [Melissa] Different crossroads.

[Barry] Different yeah. Right. And
that's an acceptable

duplication. [Melissa] So and you're
right. The point of that is you

just spent dinner in jail.

You're sober. You're clean.

Let's get you home. Let's get
you while you. [Barry] Let's keep you

supported. [Melissa] Let's keep you
motivated. [Barry] Yeah. [Melissa] And let's help

get you home. [Barry] Yup. [Melissa] And we get
them on the bus and the city

has money in the budget for
that. [Barry] They do. The city has

always budgeted that. Um I
think Chief Hardwick's program.

I think they got they have
several one or two ways to fund

it. I won't get into that
because I can't say it. [Melissa] Right.

Um but I think there's one or
two ways to fund that so

they're they're doing that and

it's it's going to be key.

You're going to see it's
going to make a change that

these things are going to make
changes. So. [Melissa] Right. Yeah. Well

and on that note, I'm going to
start us on a sign off because

we didn't even get to talk
about code enforcement. You got

a lot going on in your code
enforcement office. You got new

staff there. [Barry] A short-term
rental. [Melissa] Short-term rental. So,

we're going to have you back
talk about that. [Barry] Yup, we will

do it. [Melissa] Okay. Well, great job on
all of the progress. I'm so

excited about what you were
telling us today because it

really puts us in a forward motion. We're not just Talking

about it. We're now in a place where we're going to start

seeing that fence. We're going to see that property

cleaned up at. [Barry] Yeah. [Melissa] At 207. And the and the and the

construction on 16. [Barry] Yeah there's a lot of citizens

waiting to see that happen and and see that progress. So it's

coming very soon. Um hopefully by mid December you'll start to

see a lot of changes there.

[Melissa] Okay. So thanks for coming by

Barry. [Barry] Thank you for having me.

[Melissa] You can now find us on your

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happening in and around the city and that you hear it here

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Until next time, thanks for

tuning in. [Narrator] You've been listening to The Breakroom, a

weekly program addressing projects and programs offered

by the City of Saint Augustine. Join us each week as the city's

communications director Melissa Wissel

has in-depth

conversations with the people

who make our town work to meet

the needs of our community. The

break room is produced by

communication specialist for

the City of St. Augustine Cindy

Walker. See you at this time

next week for another edition

of The Breakroom.