

Beyond Enforcement

How Ashland Built a Coordinated Response to Homelessness Without Creating a New Municipal Service

Steve Trivett | Mayor

Joshua Farrar | Town Manager

Martha J. Miller | Asst. Town Manager

TOWN OF ASHLAND | VIRGINIA

ASHLANDVA.GOV | VISITASHLANDVA.COM

The Challenge

As homelessness became more visible, with a growing number of people sleeping/camping on public property…

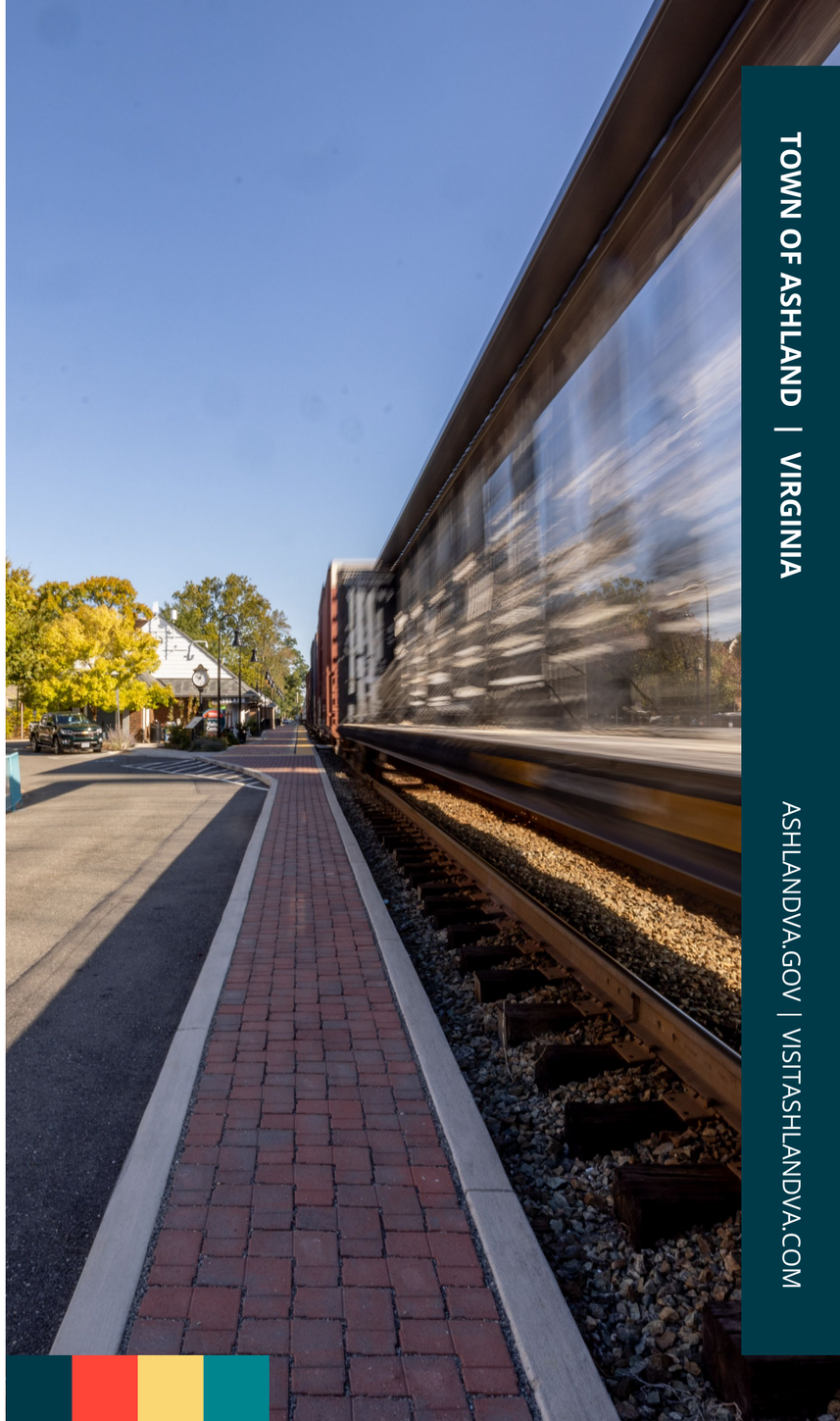
- residents and businesses were looking to the Town for a response.
- police were receiving increased calls of concern/for service for people experiencing homelessness.
- most of the services needed to address the underlying issues existed outside Town government.
- the Town was neither structured nor mandated to become a direct human-service provider.

How could the Town respond meaningfully without creating a new municipal service?

Where We Started: Enforcement

Following the U.S. Supreme Court decision clarifying local authority to regulate public camping:

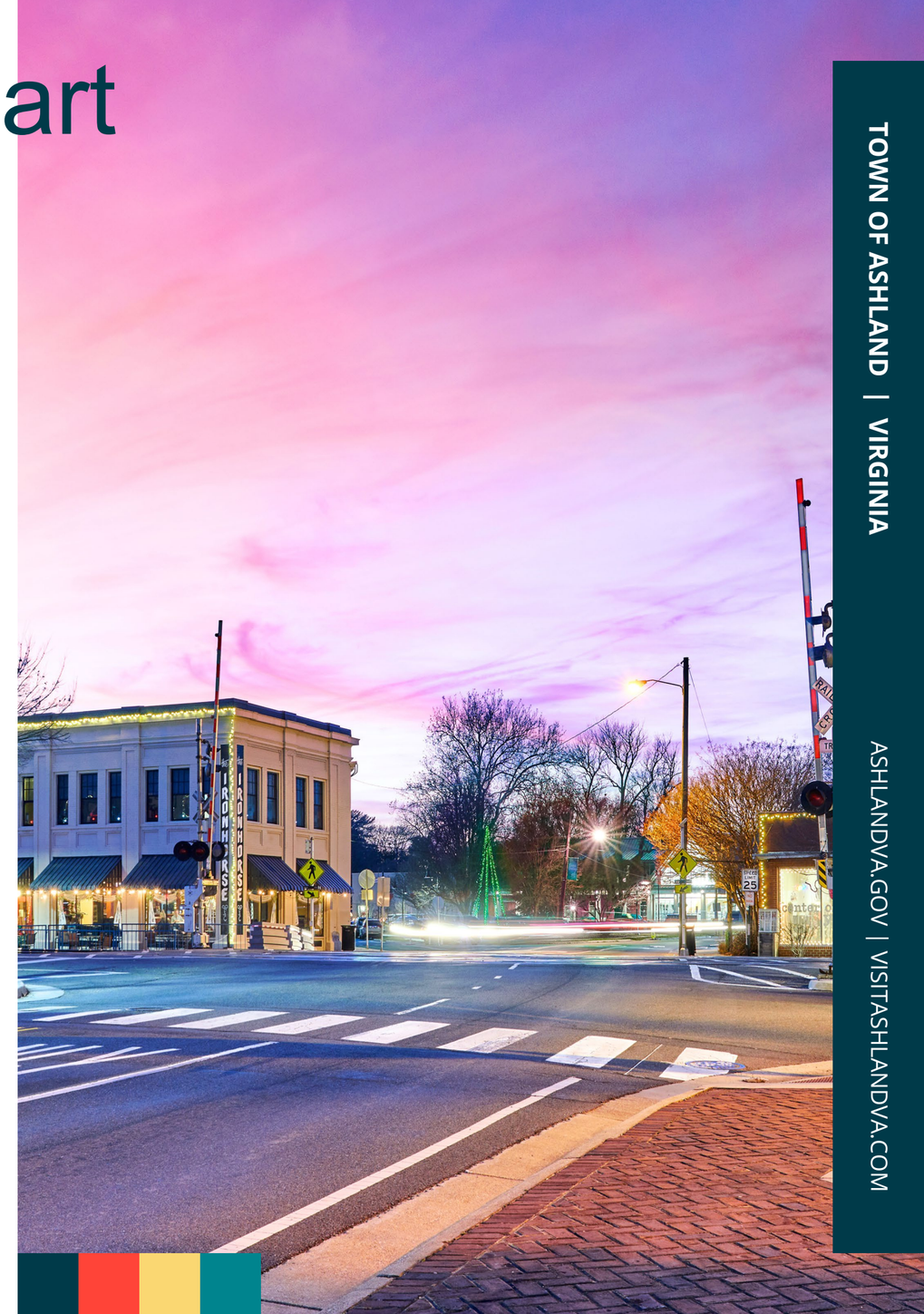
- Town Council requested a public camping and personal property ordinance.
- Ashland Police supported a clearer tool for addressing public-space concerns.
- Service providers & community members raised concerns about how enforcement could affect people experiencing homelessness.
- The ordinance went through multiple rounds of public engagement and revision.



Enforcement Answered Only Part of the Question

An ordinance gave the Town another tool, but it didn't address what came next.

- Where could an officer direct someone who needed help?
- Who was responsible for connecting that person with services?
- What options existed before enforcement became necessary?
- What could the Town realistically do when the services themselves weren't ours to provide?



Building a Broader Response

The creation of a Homelessness Task Force brought the people already working on pieces of the problem to one table.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ashland Police Department

Hanover Co Fire/EMS

SERVICE PROVIDERS

Greater Richmond Continuum of Care

Hanover Co Social Services

Hanover Co Public Schools

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Ashland Foundation

Faith Community

Randolph-Macon College

RESIDENTS & BUSINESSES

Community Perspectives

Volunteers

Work Groups:

Outreach | Emergency Response | Volunteer Cleanup | Policy & Legislation

TOWN OF ASHLAND | VIRGINIA

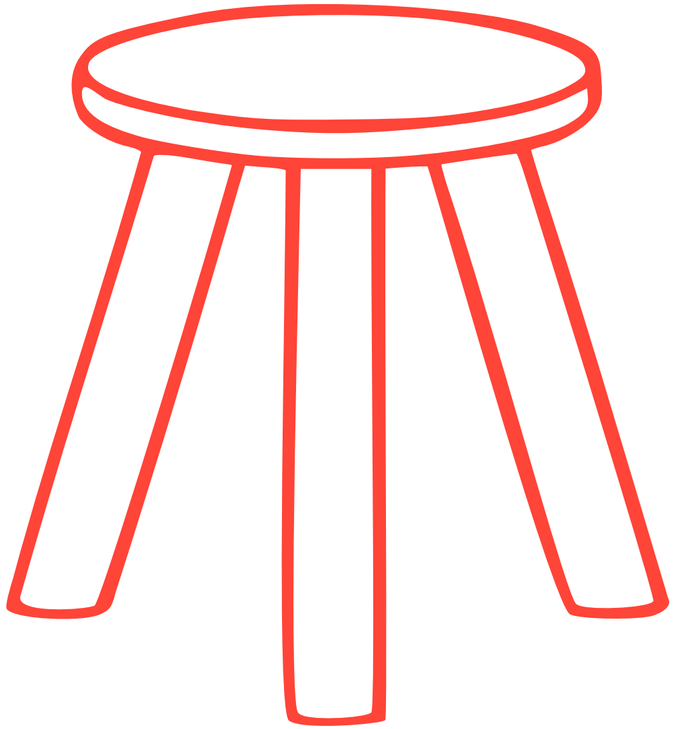
ASHLANDVA.GOV | VISITASHLANDVA.COM

From Coordination to Action

REGULATION

Ordinance & Voice Mail Line

Enforcement tool paired with a pathway to outreach to help divert people from citations.



CONNECTION

Shared Case Management

Improves communication & creates shared resources among organizations working with the same individuals.

CAPACITY

Flexible Funding

Council allocates $10,000 annually for flexible assistance. Ashland Foundation administers MOU, while GrCoC deploys funds and reports outcomes to the Foundation.

Building Capacity Outside Town Hall

TOWN OF ASHLAND

$10,000 annual investment

ASHLAND FOUNDATION

Administers partnership & accountability

Kindness That Counts Campaign

GRCoC

Coordinates flexible assistance

PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Immediate needs addressed that can help resolve or divert from crisis

The Town provides the resources.

↓

The Foundation provides the administrative bridge.

↓

The service network provides the services.

What Has Changed

Ashland now has more options available when homelessness intersects with local government.

- Police have a direct pathway to outreach providers.
- Providers have stronger connections with one another and APD.
- Flexible funding can address needs traditional programs cannot.
- Community members have a constructive way to help.
- Partners have established relationships before a crisis occurs.

More response options. Minimal fiscal impact.
No new municipal service.

What Hasn’t Changed

Coordination doesn't make a complex problem simple.

- Homelessness remains visible in Ashland.
- Service capacity remains limited.
- Police, providers, and community members don't always agree on the appropriate response.
- Not every individual’s situation has a satisfactory solution.

But what endures is our ability to coordinate —and to disagree yet continue to work together.

TOWN OF ASHLAND | VIRGINIA
ASHLANDVA.GOV | VISITASHLANDVA.COM

Lessons Learned/We’re Learning

1. Start with the role local government can play — not just the services it can't provide.
2. Convening can be a form of capacity. You may not employ the service providers, but you can help connect them.
3. Enforcement and services don't have to be competing approaches. A community may need appropriate regulation **AND** better pathways to assistance.
4. Build infrastructure outside government when appropriate. Nonprofit and community partners can provide flexibility municipal government cannot.
5. Don't mistake disagreement for failure. Strong partnerships can withstand different perspectives **IF** you establish and maintain trust.



Q&A

Steve Trivett | Mayor

Joshua Farrar | Town Manager

TOWN OF ASHLAND | VIRGINIA

ASHLANDVA.GOV | VISITASHLANDVA.COM