

# St. Vincent de Paul, Baltimore, and Baltimore City reach agreement

Father Richard T. Lawrence always looked at the many homeless living on St. Vincent de Paul's parish park as people rather than a nuisance.

So, when the pastor signed an agreement with Baltimore City to alter the park, he wanted to make sure the homeless would receive care.

A multi-week renovation is currently underway at an estimated cost of \$45,000. Yellow tape surrounds the park as new sod is put down and shrubs are being groomed. The homeless can return to the park upon the project's completion, but must leave daily with their belongings from 7-9 a.m.

"This is as good a compromise as we're going to reach," Father Lawrence said. "The city is under enormous pressure to be safe and pretty for tourists."

Workers from Downtown Partnership will clear and clean the park near the Jones Falls Expressway and Fayette Street during the two hours Monday through Friday. St. Vincent de Paul will do the same during the weekends.

The yearly upkeep provided by Downtown Partnership could cost between \$15,000 and \$20,000.

The parish is hoping local developers who have pushed for a change in the park can help financially.

Father Lawrence and Auxiliary Bishop Denis J. Madden have signed the agreement. Mayor Sheila Dixon must add her signature.

Although the homeless population is transient in the park, many have set up tents. Rodents have also become an unfortunate mainstay. The city and the parish have held numerous discussions over the years about the homeless.

Father Lawrence said his parish has an extensive homeless outreach that provides clothing and food. Many parishioners have been kind to those living in the park as

well.

“You’re always on the edge of compassion and enabling,” Father Lawrence said.  
“Everybody ought to have a decent place to live.”

Bishop Madden said he admires “the courage and generosity” of Father Lawrence in social outreach.