

Memorandum

TO: NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES AND
EDUCATION COMMITTEE

FROM: Jacky Morales-Ferrand

SUBJECT: SEE BELOW

DATE: February 23, 2015

Approved

Date

3/2/15

**SUBJECT: PLACE-BASED ENCAMPMENT PILOT STATUS / UPDATE ON
TEMPORARY HOUSING INITIATIVES: STORY ROAD
ENCAMPMENT RESPONSE REPORT**

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Neighborhood Services and Education Committee (NSE) accept this report on Place-Based Encampment Pilot Status: Story Road encampment response effort.

BACKGROUND

During the 2013 biennial homeless census and survey, census workers enumerated 4,770 homeless individuals in San Jose. For the City, this represents an 18% increase from the number identified in the 2011 census, when 4,034 individuals were counted. Out of the total 4,770 persons, 77% were living along creeks, riverbeds, in cars or other vehicles, or on the street. On a per capita basis, San Jose has one of the largest unsheltered populations of any major city in the United States. With regards to the waterways, trained surveyors counted 1,230 individuals living in those encampments, representing 26% of the total homeless population.

For years, the City actively worked to address the issue and impact of encampments along creeks and waterways within the city limits. This work included a long history of partnership with the Santa Clara Valley Water District and other local agencies to jointly remove trash, debris, and other waste from sites throughout. Concurrently, the City worked closely with its multiple partners, including the County of Santa Clara, Destination: Home, and the Housing Authority, to respond to the underlying cause of encampments – the regional crisis of homelessness – through service-enriched housing, proactive outreach, and other assistance. Despite significant collaborative efforts to move homeless persons into housing and clean the creeks, the number and size of encampments continued to grow.

To more directly respond to this ongoing challenge, the City Council appropriated \$2 million from the General Fund in the FY2013-14 budget for a rapid re-housing and supportive services strategy to permanently house homeless individuals from San Jose who live in encampments

along the waterways. Council appropriated an additional \$2 million in FY2014-15 and earmarked an additional \$2 million reserve in FY2015-16 for these efforts. The budgets also included \$1.67 million annually for citywide abatement of encampments and additional deterrence measures to ensure that the City continues to have the tools to address and reduce the negative impacts of encampments on the environment, neighborhoods, and the community as a whole.

In July 2013, the City's Homelessness Response Team selected the Story Road encampment, often referred to as "the Jungle," to focus the targeted rapid re-housing project. The subject of hundreds of media stories and articles ranging from the New York Times to National Geographic over the past few years, the site was by far San Jose's largest encampment and therefore also one of the areas of greatest need. The team selected this location because of its significant impact on the health and safety of the people who lived in the encampment and in nearby neighborhoods and the potential detriment to the environment. The site was also easily accessible to service providers, law enforcement, and encampment abatement crews, thus allowing the project to more readily provide its full complement of programming and services.

For 18 months, the Homelessness Response Team, along with multiple City departments and external agencies, developed and implemented a comprehensive plan designed to address the housing and stability needs of the homeless individuals at the site, as well as the environmental, safety, health, and legal concerns created by the unsafe and unstable nature of the encampment. Partners included the County of Santa Clara, Santa Clara Valley Water District, Destination: Home, several non-profit homeless service providers, and City staff from the departments of Environmental Services, Police, Parks Recreation and Neighborhood Services, and Public Works. Together, the team established a set of key goals for the site, including:

1. **HOUSING AND SUPPORTIVE SERVICES:** House and provide individualized supportive services to 200 homeless people living in the encampment with the goal of achieving self-sufficiency;
2. **ABATEMENT:** Permanently close the encampment by removing all structures, debris, hazardous waste, and bio-waste from the site during the final cleanup; and
3. **RE-ENCAMPMENT PREVENTION:** Prevent re-encampment of all cleared areas along Coyote Creek and restore the impacted environment over time.

ANALYSIS

HOUSING AND SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

As revealed in the 2013 homeless census, the encampment subpopulation exhibits a unique set of demographics from the rest of the homeless community: they are older, have been homeless for a longer period of time, and are more likely to be former San Jose residents. In fact, 91% of the encampment homeless reported living in the City at the time they lost their housing. Moreover,

96% of those surveyed also stated that they would willingly accept permanent housing over encampment living, if resources were made available.

The willingness to accept permanent housing combined with the vulnerability of the subpopulation, their former City residency, and the significant impact to the environment and surrounding community, made individuals living at the Story Road encampment a strong match for a rapid re-housing program. With the non-profit Downtown Streets Team serving as the lead agency, the program set out to provide housing, employment placement, and case management for approximately 100 employable participants from the encampment. Working with its partners – the County of Santa Clara’s Office of Supportive Housing and Destination: Home – the City leveraged another 100 subsidies to target and permanently house chronically homeless individuals from the site. Case management is a critical component to ensuring stability for both subpopulations.

Throughout the project, however, access to housing remained a consistent barrier. Even with the provision of case management and subsidies, the extremely competitive nature of the current rental market made it extremely difficult for homeless individuals exiting encampments to quickly enter into housing. The participants not only had to compete with San Jose residents with much stronger rental credentials, but many of the individuals also had additional barriers to entry, such as pets or criminal histories. To date, the project has **housed 166 participants**, with 70 more with guaranteed subsidies in hand searching with their case managers for housing. While the overall project will eventually exceed its housing goal, the persistent challenge of finding suitable placement sites in a timely manner underscores the lack of available housing for this vulnerable population.

Given the fact that not all participants were housed at the time of the closure, City staff reserved 60 shelter beds to cover any unmet need. In addition, the County activated its Cold Weather Shelter Program, which added 275 beds countywide to provide respite from the cold. One point of particular success was that staff was able to offer shelter and transportation to everyone who requested services throughout the clean-up effort.

A summary of the overall services and housing costs to date is provided in the table below:

Organization	Cost	Notes
San Jose Streets Team	\$417,923	Case management and employment placement services
Health Trust	\$235,831	Rental subsidies and housing search
TOTAL COST*		\$653,754

* Please note that the total costs of the services include only the city-funded share. The County of Santa Clara and Destination: Home also provided housing subsidies/support for chronically homeless individuals served at the site.

In addition to these incurred costs, due to the preparation time needed to select the site and service providers, award funding, and fully implement services, the program continues to maintain a large, fully funded operating reserve. These encumbered funds cover rental subsidies and case management for up to two years following housing placement for each participant.

ABATEMENT

In conjunction with engaging and housing the people living in the encampment, in early 2014, the City's Homelessness Response Team set the date of December 2014 to permanently close the site. The proximity of this encampment to residential and commercial neighborhoods had caused concerns about safety, quality of life, and economic impacts on adjacent businesses. An advisory group, consisting of City and County employees, non-profit partners, business owners, and nearby residents, met quarterly over the past year to discuss and provide input on the City's plan and its progress. Building and maintaining an open dialogue with the stakeholders impacted by the encampment was essential to ensuring that the City was meeting the needs of its constituents throughout the entire process.

At the same time, the City also convened a number of community groups and faith-based organizations that regularly provided food, supplies, and other items to the people living in the encampment. Group discussions included education about best practice services, communication about the City's plan close the encampment, and re-direction of energy to continue service in other capacities. Over time, strong homeless advocates joined this group and action items turned to broader community support for homeless persons, including the implementation of housing and service programs with professional providers, allowing the City to focus on the actual abatement effort.

Initially, the City and the Water District began the physical abatement work on the less populated eastern bank, adjacent to Remillard Court, in May 2014. Following the clean-up, the City installed several deterrent measures – a fence, parking controls, and no trespassing signage – to reduce the incidence of re-encampment in the site. To further support this work, San Jose Park Rangers from the Watershed Protection Team began regularly patrolling the area. As a result of these actions, no major re-encampment occurred along the eastern bank since the initial effort.

Building on the successes from this first phase of the project, the City continued to install deterrent tools in the western region of the encampment. In September, the City installed one gate at the main point of entry to the eastern bank of the encampment at the intersection of Senter and Story Roads. Staff also installed boulders along the of Story Road sidewalk to prevent unregulated entry. After a series of conversations with the advocacy group, the City elected to continue to allow access to the area until the permanent closure in December.

To address the ongoing environmental concerns and prevent the degradation of Coyote Creek while the overall project was being implemented, Environmental Services partnered with the team to implement a short-term plan to mitigate the potential impact of human waste and warn the general public about potential contamination issues in the creek. Three portable toilets

(available five days per week from 8am – 4pm) were deployed and outreach workers distributed bio-waste containment bags to all people at the encampment site. To provide coverage when the portable toilets were closed – due to safety concerns about the potential misuse for illegal activities or increased cost due to vandalism of the units – outreach workers provided participants at the sites with human waste containment bags. Staff also installed water contamination signage to provide public notification throughout the area.

Leading up to the closure, the San Jose Police Department worked closely with Housing on a proactive enforcement strategy, which included police presence through the Secondary Employment Unit to target individuals who posed significant immediate harm to other homeless individuals and community safety. These focused periodic enforcement actions allowed the City to address the most prominent safety concerns while the ultimate plan of the closure was being carried out. The effort led to the arrest of over 20 individuals on criminal charges that included assault and other serious crimes. During the cleanup, enforcement efforts continued to keep the site clear and ensure the safety of the work crews.

Beginning on December 1, the official posting and cleanup effort took just over two weeks to complete, ending on December 20, 2014. The City departments of Housing (outreach and services), Police (work crew security, traffic/crowd control), Environmental Services (bio-waste management and removal), Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services (rangers), and Public Works (fence installation and animal services) all contributed to the overall effort.

During the two week effort, the City and Water District removed a total of 618 tons of debris, 2,850 gallons of bio-waste, 1,200 needles, and 315 shopping carts. A summary of the overall abatement costs is provided in the table below:

Agency/Department	Cost	Notes
Environmental Services	\$31,724	Trash, hazardous, bio-waste removal/disposal
Public Works	\$107,063	Fencing, “No Trespassing” signage
SJPD	\$182,995	Security, enforcement, traffic/crowd control
Tucker Construction	\$167,998	Property Sorting and cleanup crew
TOTAL COST†		\$489,780

RE-ENCAMPMENT PREVENTION

Following the clean-up, the City closed off all vehicle access to the site using the previously installed gates. The City also erected 1,500 linear feet of eight-foot reinforced steel fencing to eliminate access to the western bank of Coyote Creek along Story Road. While deterrent measures, such as the fencing, have significantly reduced traffic in and out of the encampment,

† Please note that the total costs of the abatement effort include only the city-funded share. The Water District also contributed over \$200,000 through labor and heavy machinery/equipment for the abatement operation.

enforcement is also a key element to ensure protection of the waterways. To achieve this objective, the City deployed the Watershed Protection Team following the abatement.

Established through a partnership between the City and the Water District, the Watershed Protection Team has provided a continued enforcement presence at the site following the clean-up. This collaboration allows San Jose Park Rangers, Police, and Fish and Wildlife Wardens to patrol cleared encampment areas along the waterways. Following the Story Road encampment cleanup, this team has conducted regular patrols supported by Secondary Employment Unit Police officers to ensure that the site remains free of any encampments. To date, 18 arrests have occurred in the area as a result of these patrols.

Beyond enforcement, the City has plans to assess the environmental damage to the area and develop a site mitigation and restoration plan, including a timeline and cost analysis. Site activation, through planned volunteer clean-ups over the next several months, will provide an immediate way to restore the habitat and further support the City's efforts. Coordinated by Environmental Services, several community groups have already shown an interest in being part of this solution. Additionally, DOT and PRNS are examining long-term environmental restoration options for the site and the eventual installation of the nearby Coyote Creek Trail will further activate the surrounding area. Increased activity in the area through community cleanups, the construction and usage of the trail, and a consistent enforcement presence in the site all serve to greatly diminish the likelihood of re-encampment.

CHALLENGES

LACK OF AVAILABLE HOUSING OPTIONS

Due to the ongoing competitive nature of the rental housing market and the absence of alternative housing options, the inability to locate apartments to rapidly re-house people meant that many participants remained at the site, living in unsafe and unsanitary conditions even after they had elected to engage in services. Moreover, once the encampment closed, some participants were forced to relocate to other potentially unsafe and unsuitable areas due to the housing placement delay. In future projects, identifying both interim and permanent housing options before initiating the program will help ensure that participants are able to leave the site the moment they are engaged in services. The Housing Department is currently investigating several potential interim solutions including enhancing existing shelter space and capacity, safe parking sites for homeless individuals and families with vehicles, Hotel/Motel master leasing and conversion programs, and several non-traditional transitional housing models. Staff will return to the Committee next month with a complete report on homeless housing options that are either being explored or implemented in the City.

SITE INSTABILITY

When staff originally selected the Story Road encampment in August 2013, surveyors enumerated 176 people living at the site. While people were being housed out of the area on a weekly basis, the addition of services and support created somewhat of a logistical challenge with more people in need of help seeking services and more members of the community coming to provide support. This influx of people not only increased the total homeless population living at the site over the 18 month period, but also created uncoordinated and sometimes chaotic situations that resulted in an array of issues ranging from excess trash and pollution to altercations and even a few instances of physical violence. Going forward, it may be necessary to take steps, including some of the interim housing options outlined above, to expedite the time elapsed from the services intervention to the encampment abatement to avoid many of these problematic issues.

SUCSESSES

NEIGHBORHOOD AND LOCAL BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT

One somewhat unintended and beneficial outcome of the effort was the considerable and positive engagement, input, and support staff received from the surrounding community through the advisory group meetings. While initially the conversations with the group were understandably charged and even at times adversarial, the open dialogue and direct communication created a channel to help people better understand the City's extensive efforts. By the final meetings, nearby businesses such as Air Systems and Walmart were reporting increased business and better working environments for their employees; neighborhood groups discussed planning activation events like litter clean-ups in the surrounding area; and even the most vocal critics openly discussed the underlying housing issues that led to the encampment's existence.

COLLECTIVE IMPACT

The greatest benefit of the project was its ability to leverage resources from other governmental agencies and community organizations. From partnering with the County and Destination: Home to bring in resources for chronically homeless adults to working with Animal Services to provide vaccinations for participants' pets, staff utilized the place-based model to bring as many resources as possible to the site. While the project was originally funded to serve only 100 participants, the end result of this collective impact work will mean that well over 200 homeless residents will be placed in to permanent housing with extended support.

NEXT STEPS

The ultimate goal of the project was to establish a comprehensive approach that will result in a direct and lasting reduction of the environmental, health, and safety impacts of encampments throughout the City. Based on the overall success of the project to date, staff believes the pilot

program has created a model that could be replicated at other sites. With that in mind, however, there are several areas to consider before moving forward.

While the Story Road site was by far the largest and most problematic encampment in San Jose, over the past 12 months outreach workers have identified 294 unique encampments in the City with 13 being populated by 20 or more persons. Without a sufficient supply of affordable housing dedicated to the homeless population, the City and its partners must continue to be innovative in its plans to deal with the adverse impacts of encampments. At the same time, the City must also recognize the need to actively abate encampments before the sites become entrenched to protect neighborhoods, prevent pollution, preserve safety, and provide viable alternatives for the homeless persons living in unsafe and unsanitary conditions.

With one-time funding earmarked for the next fiscal year, staff is currently in the process of examining several high impact sites throughout the community for another project. To replicate the successful efforts of the Story Road response, however, funding will need to be identified beyond next fiscal year to provide necessary services for all participants and sufficient deterrent/enforcement measures to prevent re-encampment at all targeted sites. Continued and ongoing support of this model presents a clear and unique opportunity to move beyond the Story Road site and ensure that the dangerous, unsafe, and unsanitary conditions of such encampments no longer threaten any of our residents.

COORDINATION

Preparation of this memorandum was coordinated with the Office of the City Attorney and the Departments of Environmental Services, Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services, and Police.

Staff will be at the Neighborhood Services and Education Committee meeting on March 12, 2015 to answer any questions related to this memo and to provide a presentation on the effort.

/s/

JACKY MORALES-FERRAND
Acting Director of Housing

For questions, please contact Ray Bramson, Homelessness Response Manager, at (408) 535-8234 or ray.bramson@sanjoseca.gov.

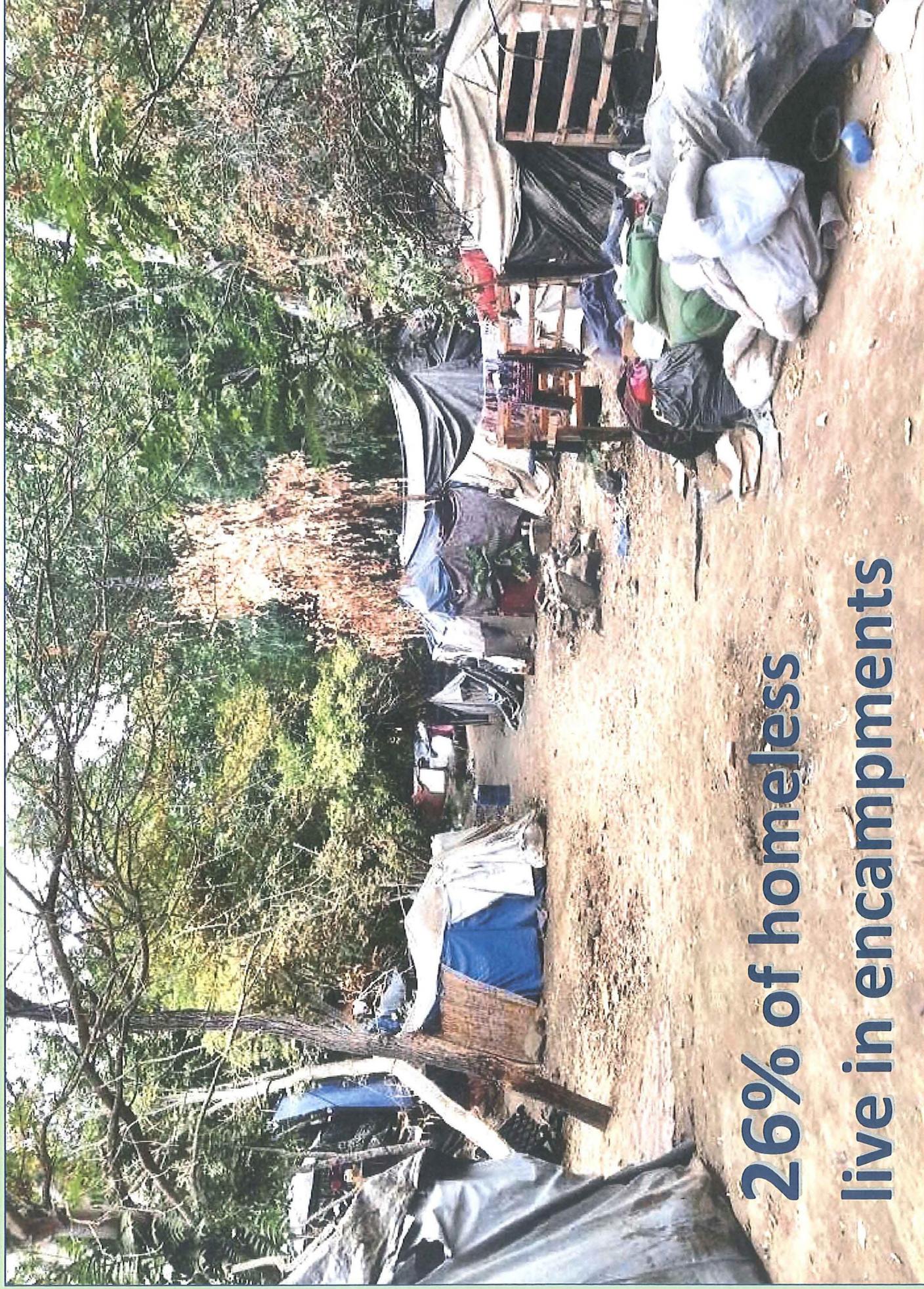


Place-Based Encampment Pilot Status

STORY ROAD ENCAMPMENT RESPONSE REPORT

Neighborhood Services and Education Committee

March 12, 2015



**26% of homeless
live in encampments**

HOUSING & SERVICES*

- **172** Housed
- **80** Connected and searching
- **24** Employed

* As of February 27, 2015

AURORA

- Lost home & kids due to husband's drug use
- Housed 10/15/14
- Working part time at property management company



LEONARD

- Divorced
- Substance abuse issues
- Housed 12/19/14
- Actively looking for work



ABATEMENT EFFORTS

- **618 tons** of trash removed
- **2,850 gallons** bio-waste removed
- Total cost of cleanup: **\$489,780**







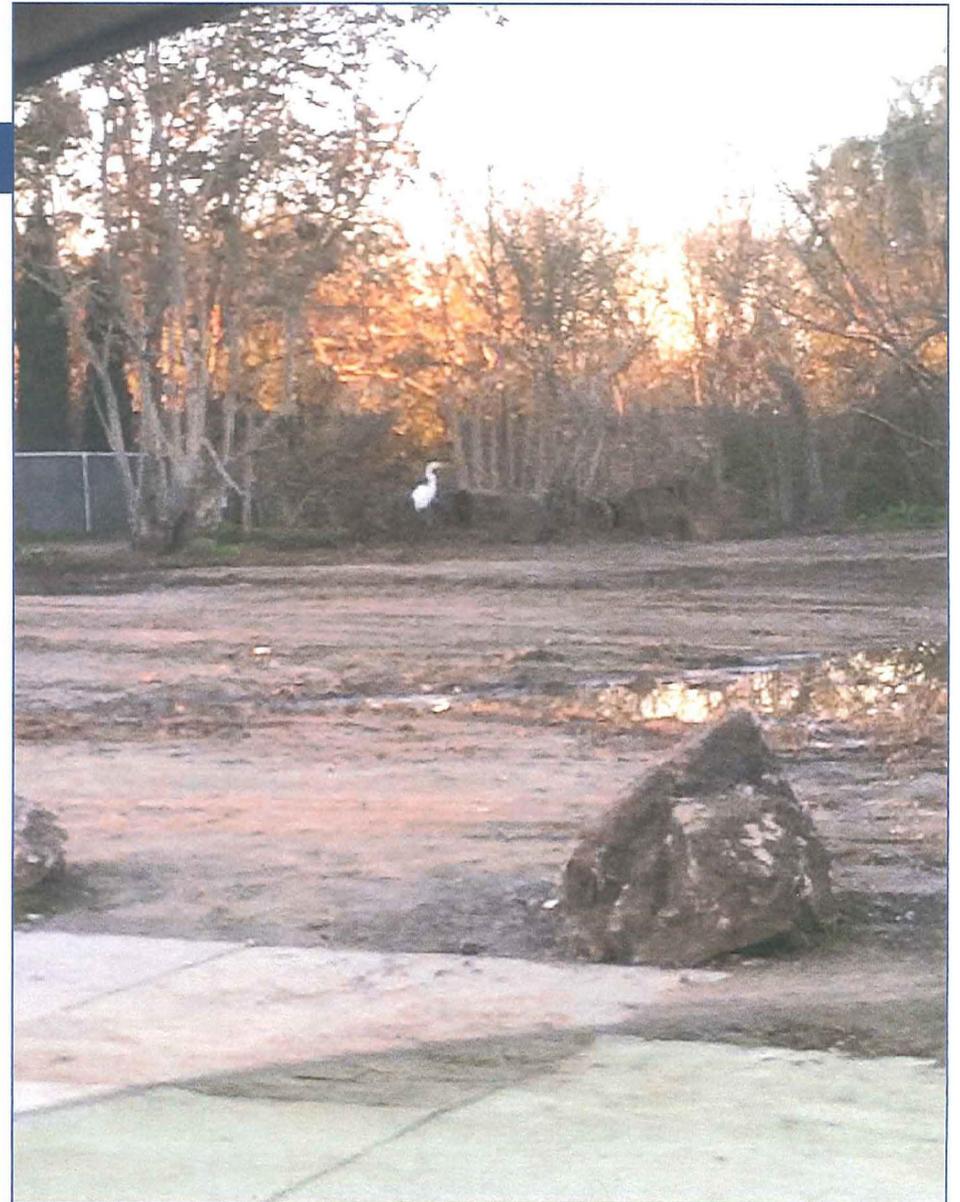
November 2014

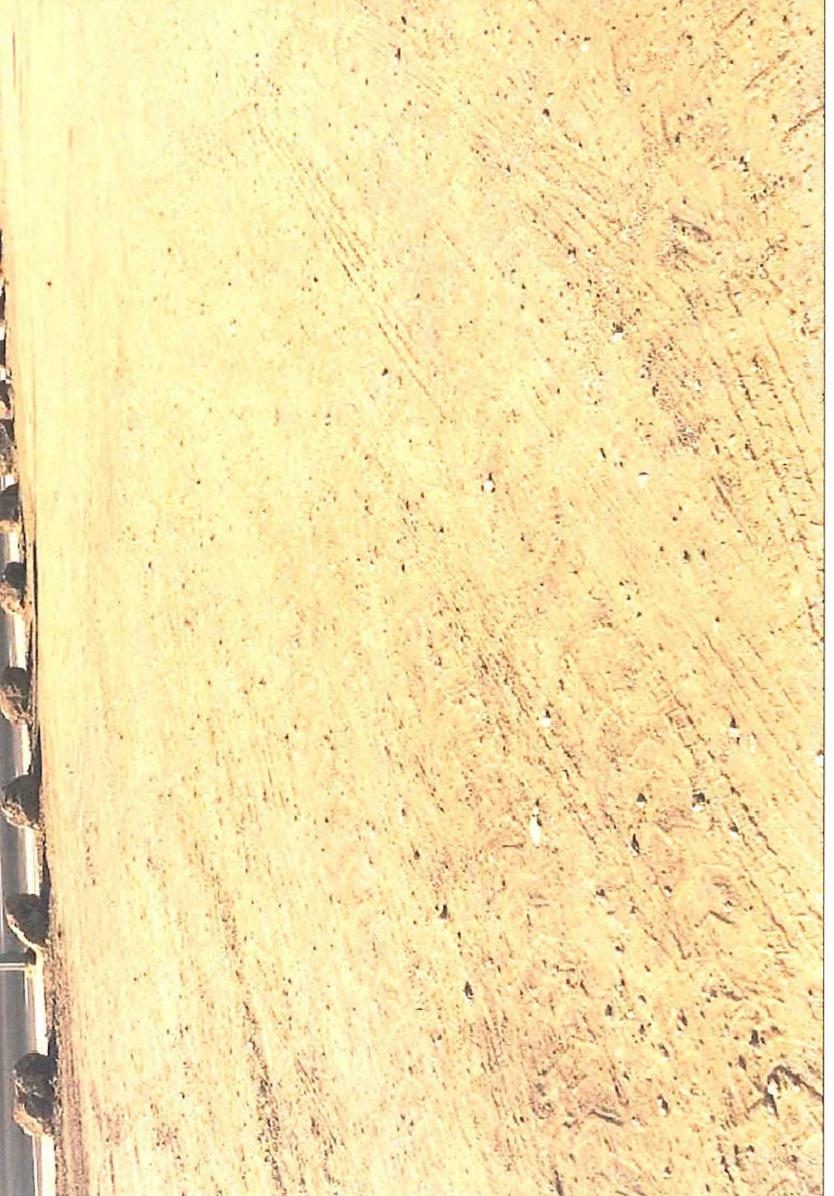


February 2015

RE-ENCAMPMENT PREVENTION

- Deterrents
- Enforcement
- Restoration







HOMELESSNESS RESPONSE TEAM PRIORITIES & NEXT STEPS

- Track existing participants
- Select new project area(s)
- Develop interim housing