

A Place to Be

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# Alternatives to Unsanctioned Homeless Encampments

A Report for the City of Oakland from the  
Goldman School of Public Policy,  
University of California, Berkeley

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## NAVIGATING THIS REPORT

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The breadth and depth of this report, while necessary for a meaningful analysis of the alternatives to Oakland's unsanctioned encampment procedure, likely poses a challenge for those who are interested in a brief overview of the issue. The report is intentionally structured in such a way that readers are able to read just one section and still gain an understanding of the issue.

For those who need a high-level overview, the Executive Summary (found on pages 6-11) provides a broad summary of the following:

- Problem definition
- Key findings from analysis of the status quo
- Key findings from Alternative #1 research (city-sanctioned encampments)
- Key findings from Alternative #2 research (Housing First innovations)
- Recommendations
- Next Steps

**For more detailed information about:**

**The City's motivation** behind initiating the project, as well as the report's research methodology and analysis, go to pages 13-18.

**The City's status quo** regarding standard operating procedures, stakeholder goals, and the current characteristics of homeless encampments throughout the City should visit pages 19-42.

**For best practices analysis regarding sanctioned homeless encampments and Housing First approaches** please see pages 43-76. This section covers how jurisdictions across the country are responding to homeless encampments in their communities.

**The authors' evaluation of the status quo against both alternatives** can be found on pages 77-99. This section outlines the criteria that the report's authors used to evaluate the status quo against possible policy alternatives as well as the evaluations themselves.

**Recommendations** please see pages 100-105. This section describes short-, medium-, and long-term recommendations for the City to improve its current approach to unsanctioned homeless encampments.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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**Introduction:** The City of Oakland spends \$9 million annually on homeless services, yet an estimated 600-1,200 individuals sleep on the street on any given night. Many of these individuals establish unsanctioned homeless encampments to sleep and store their belongings. As outlined by the City, the human health hazards and blight associated with camps prompts residents' complaints to city staff which triggers a cleanup. However, the status quo policy of continually sweeping camps is ineffective as it (1) does nothing to address the root causes of homelessness and (2) is disruptive to homeless individuals attempting to access the pathway to housing.

**Problem Definition:** The literature suggests that Housing First is not only the most effective, but also the *only* long-term solution to the problems associated with homeless encampments and ultimately homelessness. However, creating affordable housing is a challenge that the City of Oakland continues to face given rapidly rising rent costs and a diminishing City budget. The City needs an interim solution to address the needs of individuals living in homeless encampments while also reducing the City's social and administrative burden of continually clearing and cleaning those camps.

**Approach and Methodology:** In order to recommend alternative policies that would improve the status quo in Oakland, the authors performed a needs assessment of camp residents and city stakeholders, and analyzed best practice case studies of two alternatives (1) city-sanctioned campgrounds and, (2) Housing First innovations as they related to Oakland. Our best practices research informed our conception and evaluation of each alternative in terms of its effectiveness at reducing the burden of perpetual cleanup on city staff, the equity of anticipated distributional outcomes and finally, the feasibility of implementation.

### **Key Research Findings:**

#### **Status Quo: Oakland's Standard Operating Procedure**

The analysis of the status quo consisted of interviewing City stakeholders on each department's definition of the homeless encampment problem, strategies they currently use to address it, and the impact of these strategies on the homeless camps and their occupants.

One of the key takeaways is that city staff members have different perspectives on the problem itself, which prompts departments to define success in solving the problem quite differently. The diversity in perspectives is a product of each department engaging with homeless camps according to the overarching mission of that particular department. After clarifying the independent goals and duties of each department as they relate to homeless encampments, we found that these

often contradictory approaches became problematic when one department's definition of a successful outcome directly undermined another's.

This problem of the status quo undermining attempts of camp residents to get and stay on the pathway to housing became sufficiently clear throughout our needs assessment of the encampment residents. The needs assessment consisted of multiple interviews with outreach workers and a series of interviews with homeless camp residents throughout the City, facilitated by Operation Dignity. The key takeaway of these interviews is that these residents face serious barriers to both housing and shelter use that makes unsanctioned camps their only viable alternative. More importantly, despite best efforts of the City to coordinate with outreach services and give ample notice to camp residents, the process of clearing camps prevents residents from complying with important housing or health appointments. **In short, the status quo serves as a cyclical disruption for camp residents and creates an additional barrier on their pathway to housing.**

### **Alternative #1 – City-Sanctioned Encampment**

The report's authors looked at three case studies to gain a better understanding of the motivation, design, and operation of sanctioned campgrounds on the West Coast. These include Ontario, CA's *Temporary Homeless Services Area*, Portland OR's *Dignity Village*, and three locations in King County, WA: *Tent City #3*, *Tent City #4*, and *Nickelsville*. The report also analyzes various design features that are commonly found in sanctioned encampments; a description of each of these considerations can be found on pages 56–64.

The case studies vary in terms of the relative informal governance structures within camps; some camps sprung from political protests while others are self-governed by pragmatic individuals seeking an alternative to shelters. They also differ in terms of external involvement ranging from simple legal recognition to active service provision.

For the City of Ontario in San Bernardino County, CA, a unified and ongoing commitment from City leadership was essential to getting the project off the ground. Initially established in 2007, the encampment saw a rough period in terms of ballooning usage in its early years. Until very recently, the camp had stabilized to serving roughly 120 chronically homeless adults through a variety of local nonprofit and charitable groups; the camp closed last year after all but two of the residents attained permanent housing.

In Portland, Oregon, the camp *Dignity Village* initially grew out of a political protest in 2000 and became formally established as a nonprofit the following year. Not until 2006 did Portland's City Council sign a resolution designating the land the camp had settled on as a formal campground, which now serves up to 60

individuals. Due to its distance from downtown Portland, the *Village* does not serve chronically homeless individuals; as such, the average stay is 18 months. Though *Dignity Village* is technically contracted with the City to manage the camp, there are no City service providers on staff. *Village* residents are responsible for providing internal security, with residents participating in the decision-making process governing the camp. As residents are required to pay \$35 per month in rent, the campground is also financially self-sustaining.

Lastly, King County in the State of Washington has a number of sanctioned homeless encampments that rotate every three months throughout the County and City of Seattle. Developed in 2004, the policy ensures that a camp never stays at any one site, either private or public, for more than twice in a two-year period. Despite the transitory nature, community retention is high and the encampments consistently meet their maximum capacity of 100 individuals. This approach relies heavily on both strong internal governance by camp residents and engagement from the faith-based community, which often hosts the encampments.

### **Alternative #2 – Housing First Innovations**

The report's authors considered the Housing First approach as one of our alternatives. The City of Oakland already has access to housing programs, chiefly the Permanent Access to Housing strategy (PATH). Therefore, we sought examples of Housing First innovations that differ from Oakland's current model. Our team analyzed three case studies: *How's Nashville* in Nashville, TN; *Home Forward* in Portland, OR; and *Downtown Emergency Services Center* in Seattle, WA.

The three case studies analyzed had several similarities. For example, each city leveraged scattered-site units to house residents. These are apartments, typically rented from private market landlords, located throughout the jurisdiction of each city. The cities also all leveraged existing Federal funds to finance the expansion of Housing First. In addition, each city employed a Vulnerability Index to prioritize who would gain access to Housing First units, whether they be in scattered-site units or permanent supportive housing units. Two case studies, Portland and Seattle, included permanent supportive housing as part of their models. Finally, each city provides wraparound services to aid unsheltered residents in their effort to access housing.

Portland's *Home Forward* provides multiple programs for the people they serve. These include apartment assistance through low-income housing subsidized by HUD and managed by *Home Forward*; rental assistance, which consists of the management of Section 8 vouchers and their own programs to provide short-term rent assistance and support for veterans and renters with disabilities; and support services for recipients of Section 8 vouchers. *Home Forward* has also championed a Local Blended Subsidy (LBS) Program, "to improve the financial viability of adding

“banked” public housing units back into the portfolio.”<sup>1</sup> They combine tenant-paid rent, Section 8 funds, and public housing funds to achieve total per-unit rent that is competitive with market rates.

*Home Forward* also has a permanent supportive housing facility called Bud Clark Commons, which determines eligibility through the administration of a Vulnerability Index Tool by four medical clinics. The commons has an on-site operations team and case management that provide a number of supportive services including mental health, vocational rehabilitation, and money management services. When a resident no longer needs intensive supportive services, *Home Forward* staff work to support his/her applications to other public supportive housing units in an effort to create space for the most vulnerable individuals at Bud Clark Commons. This program is reserved for individuals earning 80 percent or below of area median income and has supported 284 units to date.

The *How’s Nashville* campaign is focused on ending veteran and chronic homelessness in Nashville, Tennessee. *How’s Nashville*, a play on “house Nashville,” offers an example of a solution that makes use of existing services and housing sources to increase the housing stock available to homeless adults. This model involves the centralized recruitment of private landlords, en masse, to participate in a countywide effort to dramatically increase the obtainment and retention rates of housing, mostly for chronically homeless individuals. The *How’s Nashville* campaign launched in 2013 and has since created 700–800 units of permanent housing. In addition to the existing stock of permanent housing, these units housed 900 people between June 2013 and December 2014. Housing is allocated over time with priority given to the most vulnerable unhoused individuals.

*Nashville’s* outreach case managers from existing nonprofit programs work with homeless individuals to apply for benefits and connect to housing. These workers implement the Critical Time Intervention (CTI) model, which has been shown in randomized clinical trials to have sizable and lasting housing successes for adult veterans and people experiencing severe mental illness and co-occurring substance use.<sup>2</sup> Property owners receive either 30% of any income that tenants have, or, for tenants with housing vouchers, the fair-market rental rate via the vouchers (Section 8 or VASH).

Seattle’s *Downtown Emergency Services Center* (DESC) owns and operates 10 permanent supportive housing buildings that house nearly 1,000 of Seattle’s former chronically homeless population. DESC’s housing developments target those most vulnerable due to mental illness and physical ailment and/or those most vulnerable as measured by high utilization of crisis services. Across their housing

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<sup>1</sup> “Moving to Work Annual Plan- FY2013,” Home Forward, pg. 69 (<http://www.portlandoregon.gov/phb/article/504428>)

<sup>2</sup> Herman, Daniel, et al., “Criminal Time Intervention: An Empirically Supported Model For Preventing Homelessness in High-Risk Groups,” *The Journal of Primary Prevention* 2007.

developments, 100% of residents have a mental disorder, and approximately 45% have a co-occurring substance addiction diagnosis.

Seattle's success has been well documented. Costs per resident in permanent supportive housing have been substantially lower when compared to control groups of people on housing waitlists. Utilization of crisis services, such as police and emergency rooms, declined substantially for those in Housing First. Residents who have been diagnosed with substance abuse disorders reduce their use increasingly with the use of Housing First. Seattle buttresses the chances of success by offering wrap-around services that include mental health and chemical dependency treatment, on-site health care services, daily meals and weekly outings to food banks, case management and payee services, medication monitoring, and weekly community building activities.

### **Recommendations:**

Based on our evaluation of the policy alternatives (which can be found starting on pages 77), we came to the following recommendations to improve the status quo. A deeper analysis of our recommendations can be found starting on page 100.

### **Improvements to the Status Quo:**

#### **Short-term:**

- Improve coordination with CalTrans' encampment removals to reduce the disruption to camp residents while still allowing successful abatement.

#### **Medium- to Long-term:**

- Improve interdepartmental coordination. City agencies have contradictory definitions of success and it would be more efficient to renegotiate and coordinate procedures in the context of the pathway to housing.
- Representatives of City agencies should attend Oakland PATH Rehousing Initiative (OPRI) meetings to align visions and goals across departments and better coordinate the status quo procedures with Oakland's pathway to housing.
- Oakland's City Council should create a position similar to the Housing Opportunities, Partnerships & Engagement (HOPE) branch of the Mayor's Office in San Francisco. A person in this position could help facilitate interdepartmental collaboration.

### **Sanctioning a Homeless Encampment in Oakland:**

#### **Short-term:**

- Ensure that the public is aware of the benefits of sanctioned encampment areas in an effort to preempt likely political backlash.

**Medium-term:**

- Develop relationships with the faith community in Oakland. Our best practices research in the section on Alternative #2 details how these relationships can be beneficial to addressing homelessness.

**Long-term:**

- Create a pilot sanctioned homeless encampment in Oakland. Our evaluation of Alternative #2 details the relative tradeoffs between the two types of encampments the City could sanction, but our research suggests that sanctioning a place to be for encampment residents would have a positive net effect for the City.

**Improving Housing First Outcomes:****Short-term:**

- Work with existing or new grant writers to identify new funding streams. Our best practices research suggested that having a dedicated grant writer on staff could help secure grant funding.
- Follow developments with the Navigation Center in San Francisco.

**Medium-term:**

- Develop relationships with landlord associations and/or property management groups. Housing First case studies emphasized the significance of building a network of landlords to support affordable housing units. We detail this in the *How's Nashville* and *Home Forward* case studies.

**Long-term:**

- Continue to expand the stock of affordable housing. While the City is devoted to this solution, we recommend City leaders explore the extent to which land-use regulations can be updated, and should continue to encourage the development of affordable housing through the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program.

## INTRODUCTION

The City of Oakland is experiencing an intractable problem with homeless encampments. Outreach workers and City staff estimate that, on any given night, the homeless population living in Oakland encampments ranges from 600 to over 1,200. The exact number is difficult to discern. These individuals struggle with a variety of personal and social problems, including mental and physical illness, poverty, HIV/AIDS, substance abuse, and criminal records. **The size, diversity, and substantial needs of the area's homeless population make the City's efforts to provide permanent supportive housing extremely difficult.**

In addition, Oakland's residential rental prices rose at a year-over-year rate of 11.5% in 2014,<sup>3</sup> faster than any other U.S. city. Rental vacancies are now tied with New York for the lowest rates in the country. As a result, the Housing First intervention strategy (which seeks to get homeless individuals off the street and directly into stable housing), despite demonstrated effectiveness and cost-savings in a variety of U.S. metro areas, is proving more and more cost-prohibitive for the City to implement. Case managers with Oakland's Permanent Access to Housing Program (PATH), for example, are struggling to find available, affordable units for their homeless clients, especially given the range of physical, substance abuse, and mental health constraints limiting these clients' housing options. **At present, the supply of appropriate, affordable units is simply too restricted relative to the Oakland homeless population's demand.**

In the meantime, encampments are becoming an administrative and fiscal burden for a variety of City departments. The City of Oakland spent approximately \$9 million in 2014 on homeless services and nearly \$50,000 on encampment cleanups themselves over the past two and a half years.<sup>4</sup> Encampments attract illegal activity and generate public health and safety problems for occupants, neighboring housed residents, and city stakeholders responsible for their cleanup. Negative spillover effects include: illegal dumping, graffiti and other forms of vandalism, unsanitary accumulation of human waste, rotting food, and other garbage, drug and alcohol use, noise generation, panhandling, and other quality-of-life problems for housed neighbors and businesses. **Given the increasing difficulty of finding affordable housing for Oakland's homeless community, and the high cost to the City of encampment management and cleanup, alternative policies are needed.**

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<sup>3</sup> "U.S. Apartment Rent Growth Accelerates to 4.7% Annually," RealPage Inc., January 5, 2015 (<http://www.realpage.com/news/u-s-apartment-rent-growth-accelerates-4-7-percent-annually-according-realpage-mpf-research-division-report/>).

<sup>4</sup> See Figure 7. Budget data from Public Works Department.

## PROJECT MOTIVATION

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The City of Oakland spends \$9 million annually on homeless services and significant staff time on encampment removal and related blight abatement through the Department of Human Services, Public Works, Building Services, and Oakland Police Department interventions, as well as through collaborations with the statewide agency CalTrans.

However, encampment residents quickly relocate or re-establish their camps, trapping the City in an expensive, cyclical pattern of clearing and cleaning encampments. Encampment residents re-establish camps because they face barriers to affordable housing and because accessing limited shelter services is a less attractive or unrealistic option for many of them. City stakeholders acknowledge that the current strategies for addressing the proliferation of encampments fail to permanently eliminate them and are insufficient in addressing their root causes.

The purpose of this report is to evaluate the needs of City Departments, homeless encampment residents, and other city stakeholders to inform an evaluation of alternative policies. The objectives of any alternative policy will be to (i) reduce internal costs associated with clearing and cleaning encampments, and (ii) generate more effective long-term outcomes for encampment residents and their neighbors.

# REPORT OUTLINE

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## Research

Our purpose in this report was to quantify and describe the complex, multi-stakeholder unsanctioned homeless encampment problem in Oakland, and evaluate two alternative policies the City could pursue for addressing it.

The report comprises five distinct phases of analysis, which each required distinct data and methods of inquiry.

## I. Needs Assessment

We first sought to understand the diverse needs and concerns of the stakeholders involved in the encampment situation—especially those of the encampment residents themselves. We provide synthesized results from interviews with encampment residents, their service providers, and city stakeholders. Conducted interviews include:

- Operation Dignity
- City Administrator’s Office
- Oakland Public Works
- Oakland Parks and Trees
- Oakland Police Department
- Office of Councilwoman Lynette McElhaney
- Homeless encampment residents
- San Francisco Mayor’s Office, Housing Opportunity, Partnerships, and Engagement (HOPE) Department
- Alameda County Homeless and Caring Court
- Alameda County Trust Clinic
- Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services

## II. Quantifications of Oakland’s Homeless Encampment Population and Services

Among those receiving or having received encampment outreach services, we provide de-identified quantifications of Oakland’s homeless encampment population, including:

- Demographics, disabilities, and location of the encampment residents (data courtesy of Oakland Human Services Department)
- Alameda County Continuum of Care shelter and permanent housing inventory (data courtesy of Alameda County BHCS)
- EveryOne Counts point-in-time homeless census
- General census data

### III. Quantification of Current Encampment Abatement Efforts

We also quantify the City's current encampment abatement procedures and expenditures, as reflected by:

- Public Works Department/call center data
- CalTrans encampment cleanup expenditures (courtesy of the City Administrator's Office)
- Oakland Police Department data on homeless encampment-related calls/interventions

### IV. Best Practices of Three Policy Alternatives

So that Oakland stakeholders can make informed decisions regarding encampment intervention policies, we analyzed two alternative policies in this report.

**Oakland's Status Quo: Standard Operating Procedures:** Under this scenario, the City would make no changes to its current policies and practices, and would allow present trends to continue. We include this option as a baseline against which the alternatives below can be compared. This section describes the standard operating procedure and role for each City Department involved in the current encampment abatement policy, as well as the current strategy of encampment abatement from Human Services, City administrative, law enforcement, and fiscal perspectives.

**Policy Alternative #1: City-Sanctioned Encampment:** Per the request of the Human Services Department, we include an analysis of a City of Oakland-sanctioned homeless campground (or multiple such campgrounds). This evaluation primarily consists of a description of prototypes and an assessment of best practices from nationwide case studies:

- Ontario, CA: *Temporary Homeless Services Area*
- Portland, OR: *Dignity Village*
- King County, WA: *Tent Cities #3, #4, and Nickelsville*

We also include a discussion of key design features (e.g., the governance structure, services provided, etc.) for the successful creation of a sanctioned encampment, basing our discussion off of a thorough review of the existing literature.

**Policy Alternative #2: Housing First Innovations:** We include case studies and an analysis of several best practices in Housing First service provision from around the country, and evaluate whether and how such innovations could be incorporated into Oakland's service portfolio:

- Portland, OR: *Home Forward*
- Nashville, TN: *How's Nashville*
- Seattle, WA: *Chronic Inebriate House*

## VI. Recommendations and Next Steps

We conclude with concrete, data-driven recommendations for Oakland's Human Services Department and other City leaders for ameliorating the unsanctioned homeless encampment situation, as well as a discussion of realistic next steps for implementing them.

## Evaluative Criteria

This report evaluates the three alternatives above on the basis of the following three criteria, listed in order of diminishing priority.

### I. Effectiveness

Effectiveness: degree to which the policy in question addresses the immediate problems associated with homeless encampments, comprehensively and across both the short- and long-term. Specifically, each alternative will be ranked according to the degree to which the policy is likely to:

- Preempt complaints from housed residents regarding encampments
- Use city staff time and funding efficiently [with respect to homeless individuals]
- Not simply offload the city's encampment burden onto other jurisdictions
- Meet public health standards [for outdoor spaces]
- Meet the health, safety needs, and long-term housing outcomes of marginalized residents

### II. Social Equity

Equity: a measure of the differential consequences of the policy for different stakeholders or constituents. In other words, is the intervention likely to have disproportionate impacts (positive or negative) for any particular group in Oakland?

The groups of interest for this measure include:

- Oakland's unsheltered population
- Housed residents of Oakland
- Businesses and property owners in Oakland
- City staff

The issue of homeless encampments inherently encompasses a tradeoff between some individuals' right to live where they choose (in Oakland) with others' right to be free of nuisance, to the extent that the cost of such freedoms does not hurt others.

The City of Oakland bears a responsibility to meet the needs and desires of both its unhoused and housed residents. However, the relative value (or disvalue) of each alternative varies by group membership. Equity therefore calls for weighing the inconveniences borne directly by unhoused Oakland residents more heavily than inconveniences borne less directly by housed residents. An equitable solution would not unduly diminish the quality of life of homeless individuals in its effort to remove inconveniences to housed residents, property owners, and the general public.

### III. Implementation Feasibility

Implementation Feasibility: the City's capacity to implement each alternative according to its original design.

This analysis will assess:

- Intra-government systems and workflows currently in place and required for successful implementation
- Relative measures of fiscal feasibility
- Likely buy-in from homeless individuals
- Inter-group dynamics among encampment groups, service providers, and city staff

## Analysis

We present an analysis of each alternative, as it could be applied to Oakland, using data obtained from our interviews and research. In order to rank our criteria in order of importance and arrive at our policy recommendations, we employ a Low-Medium-High scale. This scale is quantified as follows: Low=1, Medium=2, High=3. The priority rank order of the criteria used is operationalized as weights in our evaluation matrix; weights are given as 0.5, 0.3 and 0.2, from greatest to least priority. Weights reflect stakeholders' stated preferences about the relative importance of each criterion. A broader discussion of the report's evaluation can be found on page 78.

# OAKLAND'S HOMELESS ENCAMPMENTS

## Definition of “Encampment”

Throughout this report, the terms “homeless” and “unhoused” describe individuals who live without a permanent, legal, residential dwelling. “Unsheltered” indicates the subset of the homeless population not currently residing in an emergency or temporary shelter or other institution. For the purposes of encampment cleanup, the term “encampment” is used to denote either a makeshift shelter outdoors, such as a tent, housing one or more persons; or a group that habitually sleeps with or without shelter structures in a public space. “Camp” is used interchangeably with “encampment.”

## Quantification of Oakland’s Homeless Population

Calculating the number of homeless persons in the City of Oakland is a challenge. The most recent count of homelessness in Alameda County was prepared for EveryOne Home in 2009 and estimates that 56% of the use of Alameda County’s homeless services occurs in Oakland.<sup>5</sup> According to this report, the demographics of Oakland’s homeless population include:

- 2,091 homeless men, women, and children
- 30% chronically homeless
- 55% male, 44% female, 1% transgender<sup>6</sup>
- 71% African-American<sup>7</sup> (versus 28% of Oakland’s total population<sup>8</sup>)
- 61.9% are between the ages of 41 and 60<sup>9</sup>
- 18.9% of service users are veterans (versus 3.7% of Oakland’s total population<sup>10</sup>)

Data also suggest that mental health issues and substance use disorders are widespread among the Oakland homeless population:

- 31.2% disabled from severe depression
- 21.1% reported mental illness (other than serious depression)<sup>11</sup>
- 33% suffered from chronic substance abuse
- 27% homeless veterans disabled by serious depression and 44% suffering from PTSD<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Richard Spegilman & Jean C. Norris, “Alameda Countywide Homeless Count and Survey,” Spegilman Norris Associates, December 2009, ([http://www.everyonehome.org/media/resources\\_homeless-count09-FINAL.pdf](http://www.everyonehome.org/media/resources_homeless-count09-FINAL.pdf)).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p 26.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p 28.

<sup>8</sup> “U.S. Census Bureau: State and County QuickFacts,” Data derived from Population Estimates, American Community Survey, Census of Population and Housing, County Business Patterns, Economic Census, Survey of Business Owners, Building Permits, Census of Governments, December 04, 2014 (<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/06/0653000.html>).

<sup>9</sup> Richard Spegilman & Jean C. Norris, p 27

<sup>10</sup> “U.S. Census Bureau: State and County QuickFacts.”

<sup>11</sup> Richard Spegilman & Jean C. Norris, p A-46

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p A-47

Importantly, domestic violence is a significant precursor to homelessness; 25.8% of homeless families with minor children in Oakland left their last place of residence because of family violence.<sup>13</sup>

## Distribution and Characterization of Encampments

### Specific Geography

The Public Works Department tracks the cleanup orders received by the City. Though the geographic locations of encampments vary, complaints and problem areas for City administrators have been concentrated in a few areas of the city, primarily in the West Oakland and downtown areas (see Figure 1).

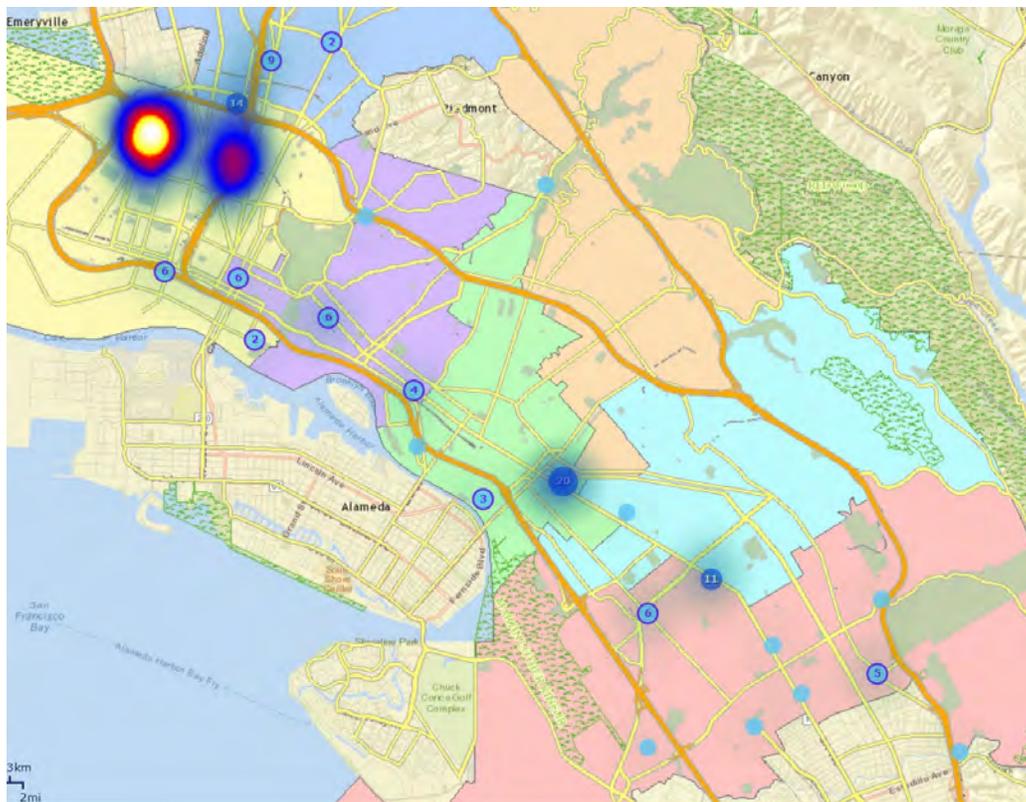


Figure 1. Encampment Hot Spots Map, courtesy of Public Works.

Interviews with Public Works and the City Administrator's office suggest that the following encampments (in no particular order) are repeatedly problematic and generate particularly large numbers of service requests:

- I-980 at 11<sup>th</sup> St.
- 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> St. & Castro St.
- MLK Corridor, esp. at 23<sup>rd</sup> St.
- The Wood St./Beach St./Mandela Pkwy corridor, up to the border with Emeryville
- A parcel enclosed by Hannah, Peralta, Helen & 32<sup>nd</sup> Streets

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., A-48

- Broadway & 6<sup>th</sup> St.
- I-580 & Fruitvale Ave.

Many encampments tend to cluster near the 980/880/24 freeway corridors, to take advantage of the overhead shelter provided by the freeway, the relative isolation of the location, and opportunities for panhandling near freeway off- and on-ramps.

## Camp Sizes

According to the Program Coordinator for Operation Dignity, an organization that provides outreach services to Oakland's encampments, camps in Oakland are relatively small, but numerous. The largest camps are usually no more than 30–40 people, with a few “mega-camps” popping up over the years with a maximum of 50 residents.

## Cultural Diversity and Tensions

Data from our interviews suggest that Oakland's homeless encampments are quite heterogeneous in their demographic makeup, clinical characteristics, and personal histories. East Oakland, for example, is more likely to host encampments composed of individuals who grew up in Oakland and whose families still live nearby. While these residents may return to family members' homes on occasion to take showers, do laundry, or share meals, issues with untreated mental illness or substance abuse precludes their return to full-time residence with their family. Such a cultural arrangement is not unique to Oakland and has been corroborated by ethnographic fieldwork of native San Franciscan homeless individuals in the Bayview/lower Portrero Hill neighborhoods.<sup>14</sup>

Whereas the same is certainly true among certain residents of West Oakland/downtown encampments, our interviews with Public Works and Operation Dignity suggest that these encampments are more likely to be occupied by transients or out-of-towners, some of whom may choose to spend part of the year in Oakland and part of the year in various other Pacific Coast cities. Inter-personal violence and politically motivated activist behaviors (such as the recent Occupy Oakland encampment) tend to occur in this area of the city, and these camps create a disproportionate share of the service request calls received (see Figure 1).

Often, camp divisions fall along racial, ethnic, and cultural-identification lines. Under an overpass, for example, the White and African-American encampment residents may be camped on opposite sides of the street, and will not interact much. Our interview with Operation Dignity outreach suggests that racial tensions are high in Oakland, as the homeless population is more diverse relative to encampments in other parts of the country. As a result of higher tensions, violence is a recurring issue among the community.

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<sup>14</sup> Bourgois, P. I. & Schoenberg, J. (2009). *Righteous Dopefiend*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

## Camp Membership

Camp membership is often determined by things like substance of choice, chronic homelessness status, or neighborhood of origin. Consequently, there are often very different service needs across camps, depending on who resides there. A camp of disabled, chronically homeless, Black men, for example, will have little in common (culturally and in terms of service needs) with a camp of White, runaway transition-age youths. Usually, the most important element in determining encampment membership and cohesion is trust. Camp residents will usually want to associate with those they know and whom they can trust to be members of a community.

## Outreach Encounters

Operation Dignity outreach and Oakland Public Works encampment abatement encounters a variety of service provision challenges at the encampment sites, including:

- *Public health hazards:* human waste, hypodermic needles, rotten food, and drug use. The most popular hard drugs tend to be heroin, methamphetamine, and crack cocaine. There is also prolific marijuana use in camps.
- *Social and inter-personal oppressions:* many residents identify as members of the LGBTQQI community and have unique service needs. Others are in need of HIV/AIDS treatment or are fleeing domestic violence. Homeless youths are often fleeing abusive family settings or have been overtly disowned by their families. All of these individuals require unique, personally tailored service interventions, as many have developed a serious lack of trust in the social and clinical services system.
- *Personal safety issues:* aggressive pets, weapons such as knives and machetes, and assault and other forms of violence.
- *General blight:* mattresses, box springs, shopping carts, graffiti, litter accumulation.
- *Criminal activity:* prostitution, drug sales and distribution, theft.
- *Physical structures:* Some encampments have very elaborate structures, built out of wood or other durable materials, often requiring extra effort for removal. Some encampments are elaborately furnished and decorated.

## Alameda County Shelter and Housing Resources

We analyzed Alameda County-wide data provided by Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services (AC BHCS) to determine the total number of permanent supportive housing and shelter beds available. AC BHCS houses the Continuum of Care coordinator responsible for submitted requests for HUD funding, so numbers reflect HUD-funded programs.

## Permanent Supportive Housing Inventory in Alameda County

As of January 2014, Alameda County had a total inventory of 2,486 permanent supportive housing (PSH) beds, managed either by the County or by nonprofit service providers. A total of 1,530 of these beds (roughly 61.5%) are available to

households without children, the units most amenable to the Oakland homeless encampment population.

Our counts indicate, however, that very few of these units are currently available for the unsheltered encampment population in Oakland; unsurprisingly, vacancy rates are extremely low on average. Of the 61 countywide PSH projects for which occupancy rates were available, 13 (roughly 21.3%) of the projects had occupancy rates *above* maximum capacity. We counted 22 projects (36.1% of total) with non-zero vacancy rates; these had an average vacancy rate of 8.5%. Accordingly, only 186 PSH beds were vacant in Alameda County as of January 2014. We estimate that only 114 beds, then, were available to adults without children (see Figure 2).

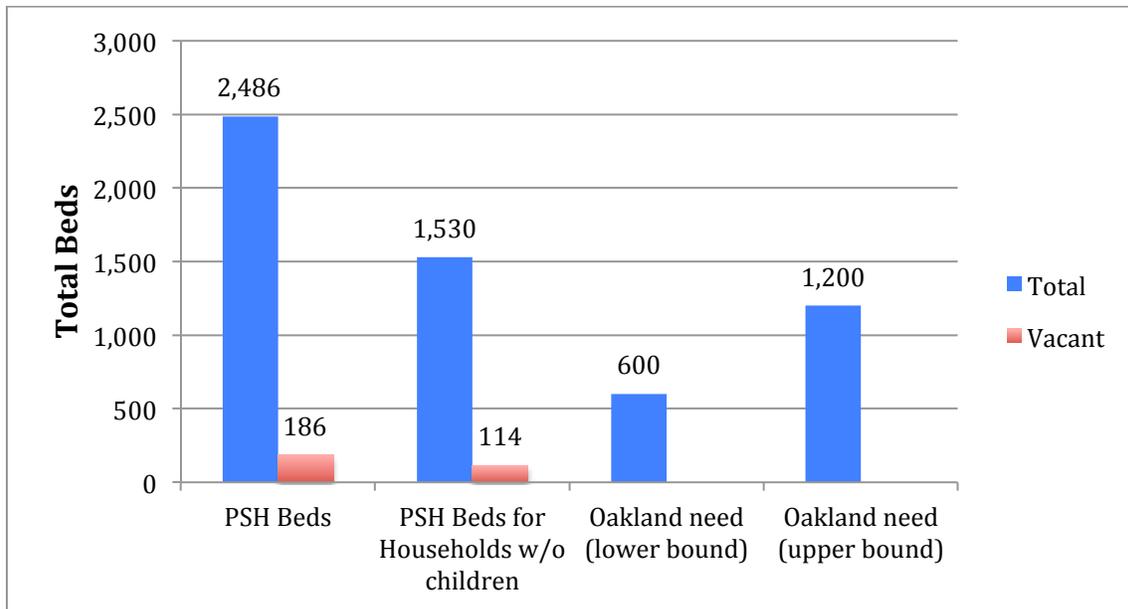


Figure 2. Permanent supportive housing bed need versus supply, data courtesy of Alameda County BHCS (data as of January 2014).

These numbers do not bode well for the City of Oakland for several reasons.

First, given the Operation Dignity estimates of between 600 and 1,200 unsheltered encampment residents, demand *far* outstrips supply, with between 5.3 and 10.5 homeless individuals in need for every available PSH bed.

Second, these counts are countywide PSH units and are not indexed to Oakland-specific demand; accordingly, the number of units available within Oakland specifically is *fewer* than the figure of 186 total beds (including 114 adult-without-children beds) calculated above.

Third and finally, though these data are over one year old as of this writing, it is unlikely that the situation has improved since that time. Estimates from EveryOne Home analyses from March 2014 indicate that 314 transitional housing units in Alameda County were amenable (in various states of readiness) for transition to

PSH.<sup>15</sup> Even if every one of these units were added to the current stock (which is highly unlikely to have occurred), total bed availability would still only be 500 units—100 beds short of the lower-bound estimates of need and 700 short of upper-bound estimates. Furthermore, because PSH beds are available to a specific population—e.g., homeless individuals with disabilities—the existing stock could only accommodate a fraction of the Oakland encampment population. This supply-demand mismatch problem is present in cities nationwide<sup>16</sup> but is particularly acute in cities with high median rents and low vacancy rates, such as Oakland.<sup>17</sup>

### Shelter Bed Inventory in Alameda County

Data from Alameda County BHCS from February 2015 similarly indicate that Oakland shelter bed supply is insufficient to meet need. Our counts suggest that, of the 1,047 shelter beds available on any given night in Alameda County, 646 (61.7% of total) are reserved for households without children. As the encampment population in Oakland tend not to have children, these are beds that they can technically access; 221 of the 371 total shelter beds (59.6% of total) are available for households without children in Oakland (see Figure 3).

Point-in-time vacancy rates are difficult to quantify and have less import for homeless individuals, as such estimates vary greatly nightly and by season; accordingly, such data are not available from BHCS. However, what is clear is that even if unsheltered communities were to utilize every eligible housing option, total bed availability is currently inadequate to meet the nightly demand of between 600 and 1,200 homeless encampment individuals (see Figure 4).

In addition, it is important to highlight that (i) homeless encampment individuals are unlikely to travel great distances (such as to South or East County) to access services, and (ii) many shelters in the area are restricted to certain populations (such as domestic violence survivors). Thus, the realistic bed supply for the Oakland encampment population is likely even smaller on any given night than the overall shelter bed availability numbers would suggest.

It is also important to note that some homeless encampment residents opt not to use shelter beds even when they are available. Homeless shelters often impose rules, regulations, and curfews that homeless individuals find prohibitive or unreasonable. They also frequently do not allow clients to bring more than a few personal belongings, and they disallow couples and pets from admission. Simply

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<sup>15</sup> Lyons, H. & Shum, S. (2014). Transitional Housing Assessment and Recommendations Report for EveryOne Home. *Corporation for Supportive Housing*. Retrieved from: <http://www.everyonehome.org/media/resources-TH.Analysis03.2014.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Loftus-Farren, Z. (2011). Tent cities: An interim solution to homelessness and affordable housing shortages in the United States. *California Law Review*, 99(4), 1037–1082.

<sup>17</sup> Quigley, J. M., Raphael, S., & Smolensky, E. (2001). Homeless in America, homeless in California. *Review of Economics and Statistics*, 83(1), 37–51.

put, many encampment homeless residents do not and will not use shelter services, for reasons that are not simply a function of inadequate supply.<sup>18</sup>

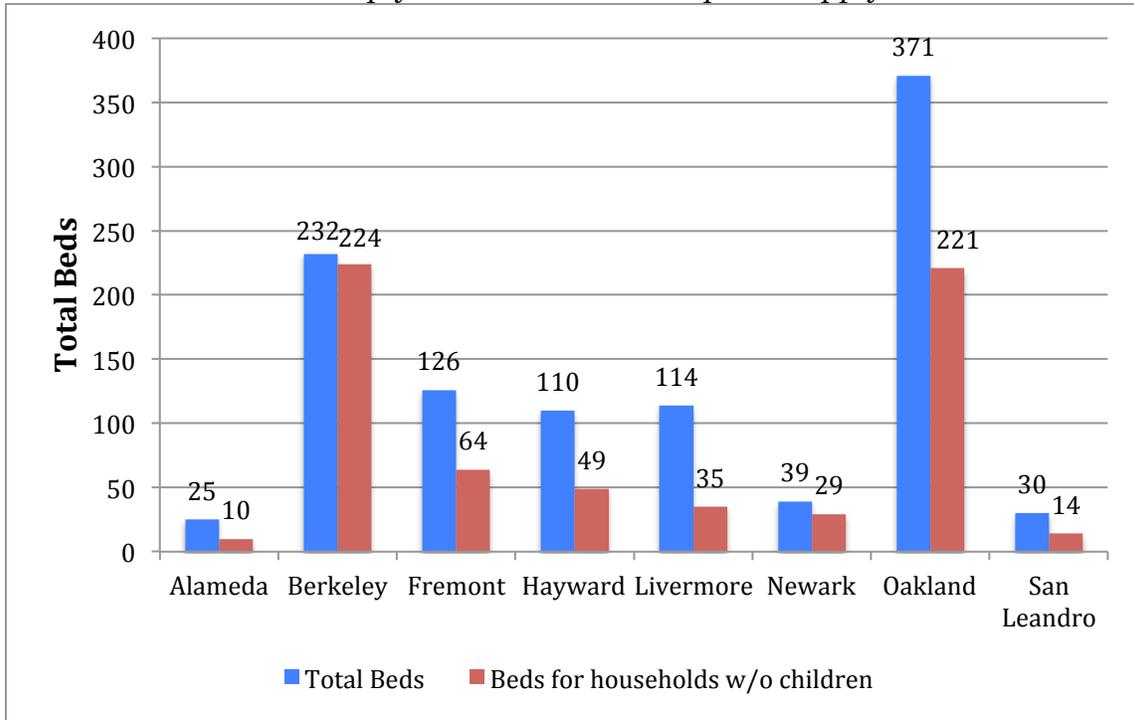


Figure 3. Shelter bed availability in Alameda County, data courtesy of Alameda County BHCS (data from Feb. 2015).

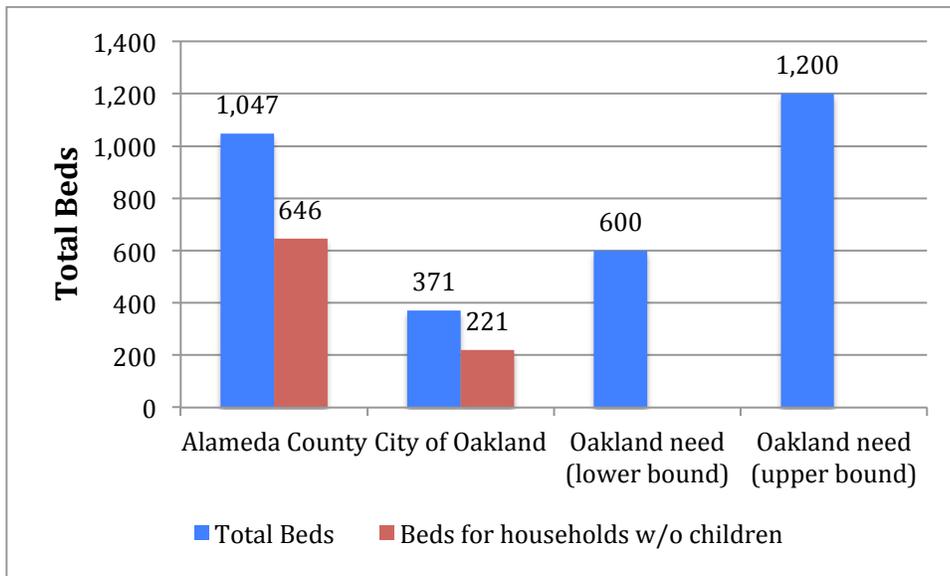


Figure 4. Total number of City of Oakland shelter beds, data courtesy of Alameda county BHCS (data from February 2015).

<sup>18</sup> Herring, C. (2014). The New Logics of Homeless Seclusion: Homeless encampments in America’s West Coast Cities. *City & Community*, 13(4), 285–309. <http://doi.org/10.1111/cico.12086>

New HUD guidelines have mandated a shift to a “coordinated assessment model” for housing units available within a Continuum of Care, and Alameda County is working to implement this shift. What this means for existing shelter beds and PSH units is a focus on allocating these limited resources to the most vulnerable members of the homeless population. Oakland has a disproportionate share of vulnerable homeless individuals, and may stand to benefit from this shift in service orientation. However, the degree of priority homeless clients are given depends on individual-level characteristic, and may not greatly alleviate the problem in Oakland.

## Shortage of Affordable Housing

Beyond Oakland’s permanent housing resources, there remains a shortage of affordable housing for extremely low-income residents. Oakland median rent prices increased 18% from April 2013 to March 2014, according to analysis on a rental listing site.<sup>19</sup> Oakland’s median rent for a one-bedroom was \$1,295 as of January 2015, according to another rental listing site.<sup>20</sup>

Meanwhile, HUD set the FY2015 fair-market price in the Oakland–Fremont metropolitan area at \$1,039 for an efficiency apartment and \$1,260 for a one-bedroom for FY2015.<sup>21,22</sup> This compares to a median annual household income in Oakland was \$52,583 between 2009 and 2013, or about \$4,382 a month,<sup>23</sup> making the cost of living in Oakland increasingly out of reach even for middle-class households (see Figure 5).

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<sup>19</sup> “Lovely—San Francisco Bay Area Rental Market Report Q1 2014”, Lovely. ([http://blog.livelovely.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/SF-Bay-Area-Rental-Market-Report\\_Q1-2014.pdf](http://blog.livelovely.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/SF-Bay-Area-Rental-Market-Report_Q1-2014.pdf)).

<sup>20</sup> “January 2015 California Rental Price Monitor”, Apartment List: (<https://www.apartmentlist.com/rentonomics/january-2015-california-rental-price-monitor>).

<sup>21</sup> “January 2015 California Rental Price Monitor”, Apartment List: (<https://www.apartmentlist.com/rentonomics/january-2015-california-rental-price-monitor>).

<sup>22</sup> ([http://www.huduser.org/portal/datasets/fmr/fmrs/FY2015\\_code/2015summary.odn](http://www.huduser.org/portal/datasets/fmr/fmrs/FY2015_code/2015summary.odn))

<sup>23</sup> “State and County QuickFacts for Oakland, CA”, US Census Bureau, (<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/06/0653000.html>).

### Rents Dramatically out of Proportion with Income



Figure 5. Rising rents in Oakland, data courtesy of Oakland Human Services Department (data as of December 2014).

## Encampment Abatement Expenditures and Activities

### Public Works Activity and Expenditures

Data from the Oakland Public Works Department suggest that the number of work orders for encampment-related cleanups has declined recently, but remains a large burden on the Department’s staffing resources and budget (see Figures 6 and 7).

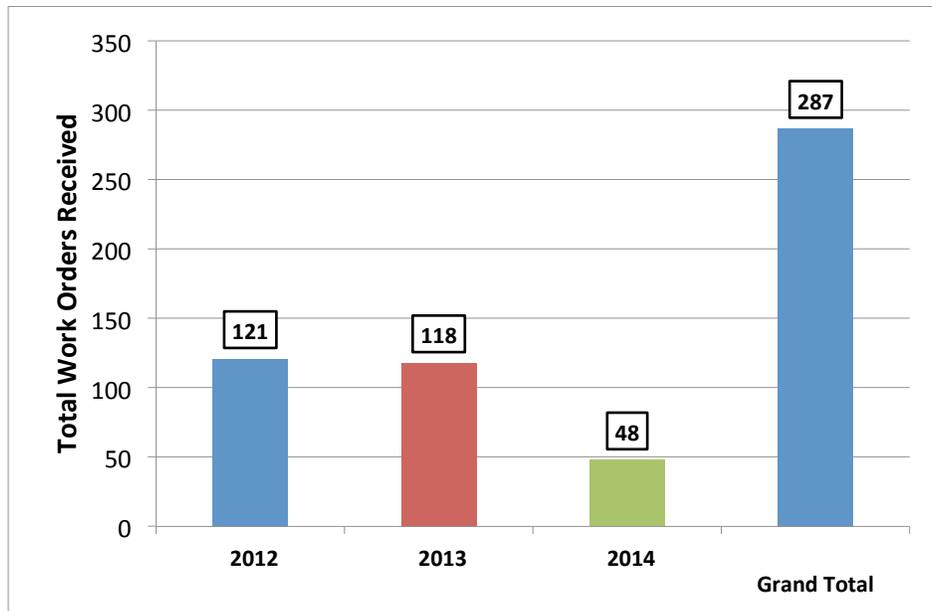


Figure 6. Encampment-related work orders received by the City, data courtesy of Oakland Public Works.

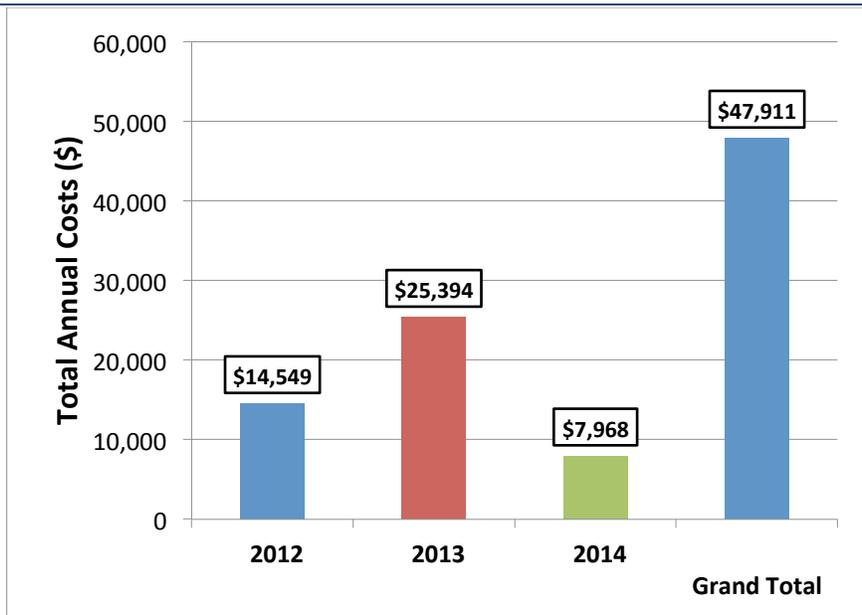


Figure 7. Annual Cost of Encampment Cleanups by Public Works, data courtesy of Oakland Public Works.

Importantly, these costs are not evenly distributed throughout the city; certain City Council districts experience a disproportionate share of the cleanup activity (see Figure 8):

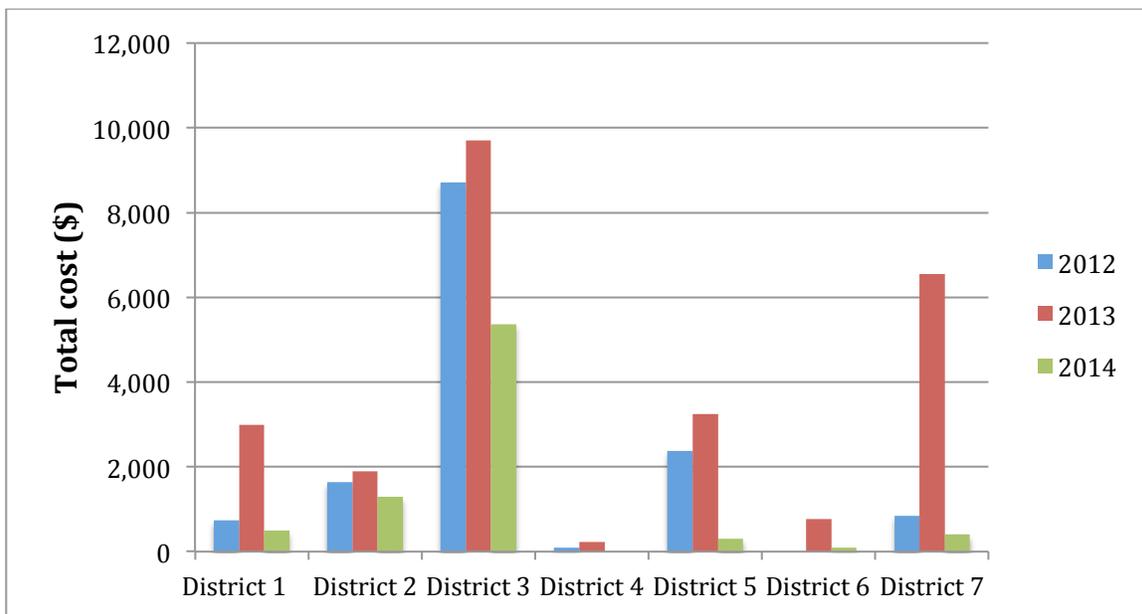


Figure 8. Annual encampment removal costs by district, data courtesy of Public Works.

### Oakland Police Department Activity

As of 2014, the Oakland Police Department had 612 police officers, its lowest numbers since the 1930s due to Great Recession budget cuts. The force is split into patrol officers and community resource officers, the former running traditional beats, and the latter allowing for more time and flexibility to engage with the

community. The City is broken into five Areas, each headed by its own captain and to some extent, with its own priorities and processes.

There are 57 community policing beats, and each has a Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council (NCPC) with corresponding Community Resource Officer. There are ten Neighborhood Service Coordinators citywide, serving approximately five beats each. Oftentimes, for neighborhoods where there are homeless encampments, encampments will be an issue the NCPC considers. The City is also currently running a pilot program, slated to expire May 2, 2015, in which a police officer and a clinician jointly respond to mental health–related calls to the police department.

Below are data provided by the Oakland Police Department on encampment-related police calls and police activity. The query includes a search for all *calls for service* (calls placed to dispatchers and calls generated by officers or employees in the field), *field contacts* (officers encountering homeless persons or encampments regardless of whether or not generated by a call for service), and *incident reports* (crime reports or supplemental crime reports regarding camps). The results returned are based on a search of all records that contain the keywords “homeless” OR “transient” AND “encampment” OR “camp.” Since 2005, there have been 1,270 OPD records with a noticeable peak in number of records between 2013 and 2014 (see Figure 9), and a noticeable concentration in West and North Oakland (see Figure 10). Our interviews indicate that the spike during 2014 shown in Figure 9 may be attributable to the increased visibility of homeless encampments as CalTrans increases their vegetation-clearing efforts. This is also discussed in the CalTrans Expenditures section below.

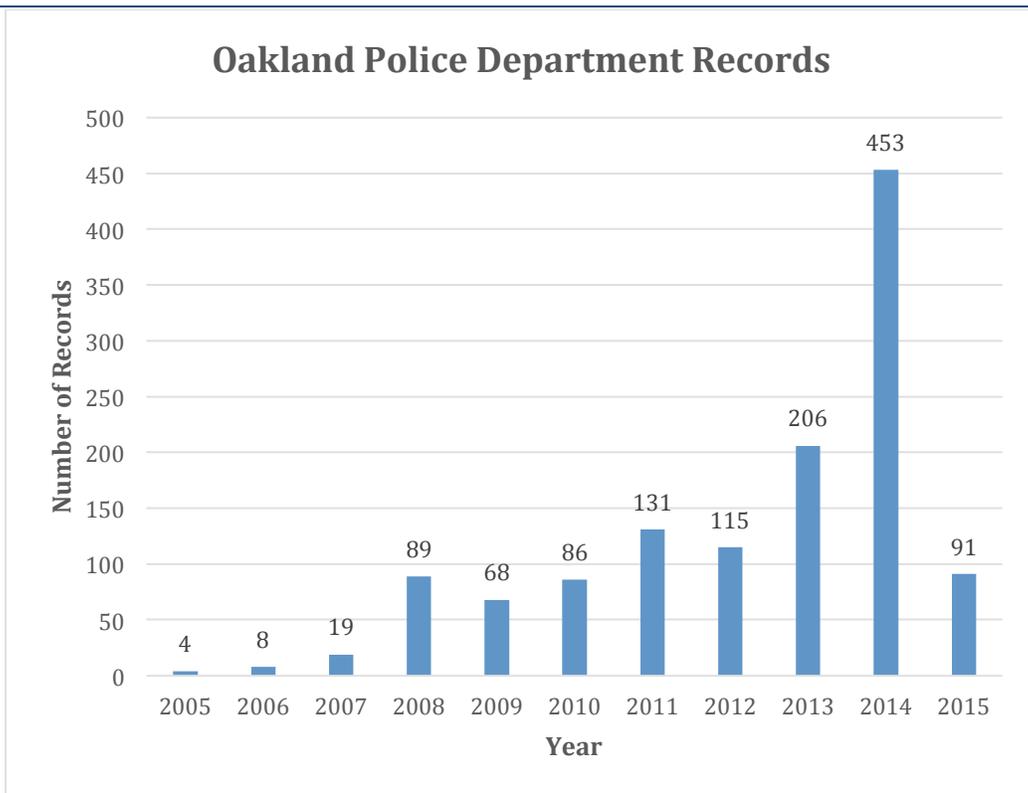


Figure 9. Annual number of records pertaining to the search parameters listed above, data courtesy of Oakland Police Department (estimates as of March 2015).

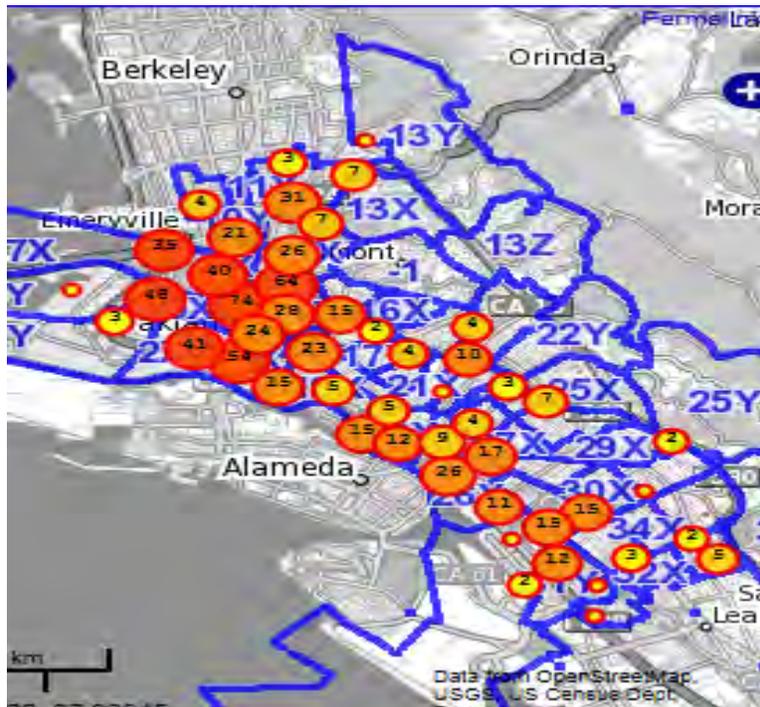


Figure 10. Heat map of Oakland areas that return the most OPD records for the search parameters listed above, data courtesy of Oakland Police Department (data as of March 2015).

## CalTrans Expenditures

One of the key non-city stakeholders in Oakland's unsanctioned homeless encampment abatement efforts is CalTrans, as many encampments are illegally situated on CalTrans property. Oakland Public Works interviewees have hypothesized that increased vegetation abatement by CalTrans along the I-980/880/24/580 freeway corridors in recent years has corresponded to an uptick in cleanup work orders received by the City, since vegetation abatement increases the visibility of encampments to passers-by. While the data shown in Figure 11 are by no means causal or conclusive, general trends over the past 3 fiscal years seem to support this link.

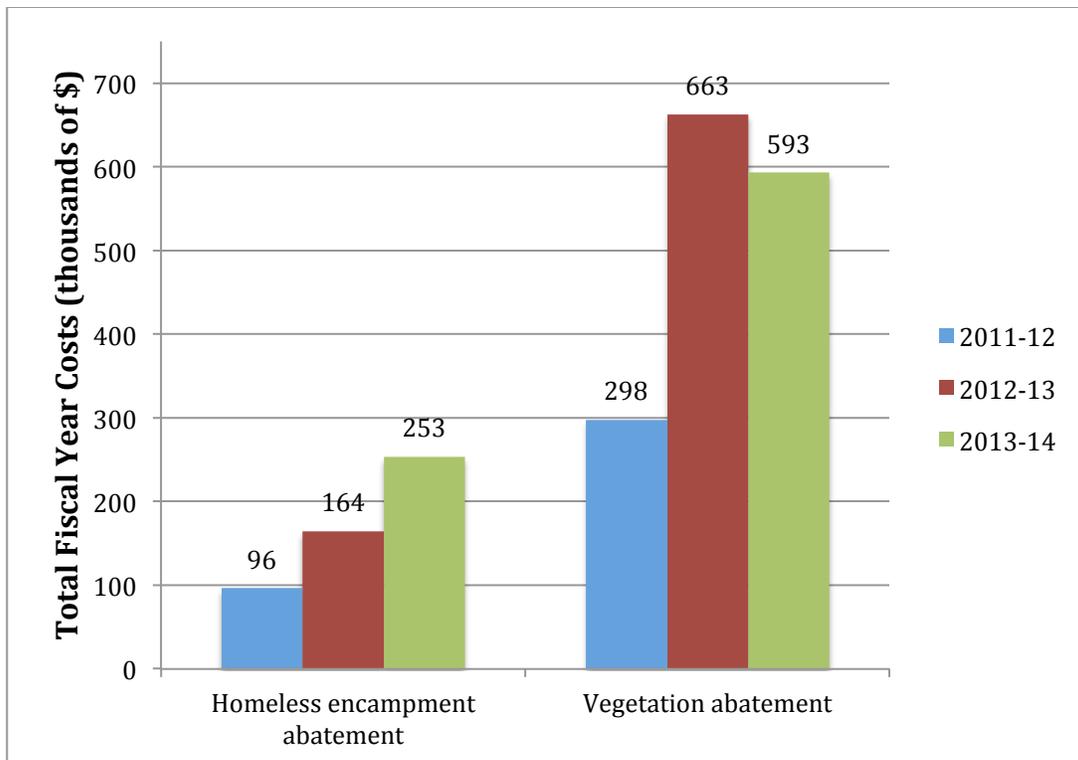


Figure 11. CalTrans fiscal-year expenditure on encampment and vegetation abatement, data courtesy of Oakland City Administrator's Office.

## Encampment Resident Needs Assessment

### Encampment Resident Perspective

The authors attended ride-alongs with Operation Dignity on three occasions in order to conduct interviews with encampment residents and learn about their top priorities and concerns when living on the street. A more thorough analysis of each need they expressed is discussed in the Design Feature Considerations section of this report. This section will briefly list each of the perspectives we encountered during our interviews.

## **Security**

A safe place to store belongings and freedom from harassment by police, CalTrans officials, and the City's security ambassadors was an oft-repeated concern for interviewees.

## **Sanitation**

Residents reported difficulty with accessing restrooms and shower facilities. Individuals usually utilize showers at shelters or faith-based groups. Operation Dignity distributes hygiene products, including wet-wipes, shaving razors, and feminine hygiene items. Though not having access to laundry services is a well-documented problem for homeless individuals, most people we interviewed did not mention access to laundry as one of their top concerns.

## **Freedom from Shelter Model**

A majority of the people we interviewed stated that a primary reason for their camping outdoors was because various rules prohibited them from utilizing shelters. Early wake-up times and early curfews meant that individuals were not able to get rest or conduct activities that would allow for a steady stream of income. Many also stated that most shelters banned pets and guests, and made storage difficult.

## **Utilities**

Several members of a secluded group of homeless individuals we interviewed stated that access to running water was their top concern. For this group, situated firmly in a light-industrial area, the City of Oakland provides bags and picked up garbage just as they would for other residential neighborhoods. Some interviewees pointed to access to electricity as an important factor in being able to cook or keep in contact with others, whether it was employment related or family and friends. A more politically minded individual suggested the City provide Wi-Fi or internet access to aid in this process.

## **Drug Use**

Some homeless individuals stated a preference that an encampment, were it to be sanctioned by the City, adopt flexible rules around drug use, though they were cognizant of the City's position regarding current drug law and law enforcement.

## **Community**

A large majority of camp residents reported that they stayed in their current encampment because of the sense of community and trust they had developed with their neighbors. A City-sanctioned campground would likely need to take existing relationships, either between friends or intimate partners, into account.

## **Privacy & Stability**

Most encampment residents reported that privacy was one of, if not their top, concerns. This issue can be reflected in the implementation of campground policies

around *community* and *security* and is discussed more extensively in the Design Feature Considerations section.

### **Social Services**

Some interviewees stated that, while the City had not offered them many services while they lived on the street, they also hadn't sought them out. Specifically, homeless individuals expressed that they lacked guidance around applying to public benefits for which they were eligible, and that this presented a barrier to being able to successfully sign up for social services.

### **Necessary Elements of Campground**

Current encampment residents voiced that the needs they have while living in camps would need to be addressed in any City-sanctioned campground, and stated that some form of representation would increase levels of buy-in should the City decide to sanction a camp.

### **Outreach and Direct Services Perspective**

Our interviews with Operation Dignity confirm that the needs and challenges of Oakland homeless encampment residents are as diverse as the population itself. To begin with, there are basic hygiene and health needs that often go unmet in homeless encampments, especially for women (a persistent lack of tampons/pads is a common problem, as are urinary tract infections). Some camp residents have HIV/AIDS infections. In addition, many individuals have characteristics that pose significant barriers to housing re-entry, such as serious mental illness, heavy substance abuse, or criminal offenses. Additional sub-populations of the encampment residents include, but are not limited to: veterans, individuals waiting for Section 8 vouchers, sex-trafficked youths, sex workers, and LGBTQQI runaways.

While the City of Oakland (and Alameda County) provides an array of specialized programs for each of these sub-populations, supply is always too limited relative to the demand. Consequently, many encampment residents have simply given up on trying to find affordable housing or appropriate services. Often, as a result of many years of unsuccessful engagement with case managers or other service providers, there is a serious lack of trust that the "system" will be able to provide any meaningful change. Symptoms of untreated mental illness can exacerbate this trust gap. Accordingly, it can take months or even years for outreach workers to develop meaningful, trusting relationships with the most difficult-to-serve homeless individuals.

As corroborated by the clinical psychology literature on change-readiness and the stages of change, different individuals fall at different places on the spectrum of

“preparedness for housing.”<sup>24</sup> Some are ready for housing and succeed immediately when provided a subsidized apartment, with little difficulty in achieving self-sufficiency thereafter; others have adapted to life on the street, and to the community they have built on the street, and so have a harder time adjusting to housing. While our interviewees were adamant that no homeless individual would willfully choose to remain homeless if provided adequate, appropriate, and affordable housing options, encampment residents may nonetheless be resistant to accepting services. Interviews with Oakland Public Works and the City Administrator’s office corroborate the claim that encampment residents do in fact routinely decline service offers. Direct service providers for Oakland encampment residents believe it is critical to understand the psychological challenges associated with learning to live inside again, or to adopting a daily routine of service engagement or employment engagement. As a result, interventions must often be quite creative—for example, slowly teaching an individual to sleep inside again by encouraging him/her to sleep inside just a few nights a week at first, or to sleep inside, but in a sleeping bag on the floor.

In sum, the expectation that housing provision immediately and completely ends homelessness is a misconception, especially for the chronically homeless. Supportive case management and other services are a necessary component of successful re-entry to housing and society, and the process can be a lengthy one before successful housing maintenance is achieved.

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<sup>24</sup> Velasquez, M. M., Crouch, C., von Sternberg, K., & Grosdanis, I. (2000). Motivation for change and psychological distress in homeless substance abusers. *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment*, 19(4), 395–401; cf. Levy, J. S. (2000). Homeless outreach: On the road to pretreatment alternatives. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services*, 81(4), 360–368.

# STATUS QUO

# STATUS QUO: Oakland’s Standard Operating Procedure

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## Stakeholder Perspectives on the Problem

### **City Administrator**

Responsible for the day-to-day operations of City agencies and departments, the office of the City Administrator sees the homeless encampment situation from a bird’s-eye view. In addition to working with Public Works, Human Services, City Council, the Trust Clinic, and the Oakland Police Department, the office also works closely with CalTrans, which regularly clears homeless encampments from its land. The City Administrator’s office views encampments as a challenging balancing act between legitimate concerns of both (i) neighborhood residents encountering the negative spillovers from encampments, and (ii) the Oakland homeless population, who have a right to be in the City. The needs of Oakland’s housed and unhoused residents are often in conflict with one another and have perpetuated an ongoing cycle of clearing and cleaning encampments, the residents of whom scatter and then resettle.

### **Councilmember Lynette McElhaney – District 3**

The tension between Oakland’s housed and unhoused residents is exemplified in Councilmember Lynette McElhaney’s district, which has a disproportionate concentration of homeless encampments (see Figure 5). The office receives numerous complaints from housed residents concerned about crime and other encampment-specific problems. While the Councilmember’s office agreed that the primary problem is a shortage of housing, the short-term concern of the office is addressing the immediate concerns of their constituents, which often requires directing Public Works to remove the encampments. A concurrent short-term problem is how to also care for encampment residents, who “deserve a place to stay.”<sup>25</sup>

### **Oakland Public Works**

The Oakland Public Works (OPW) Department is responsible for the physical removal of encampments and cleaning of encampment areas, coordinating service provision with Operation Dignity. Cleanup labor is divided between the Parks & Trees division—which has jurisdiction over parks, landscape medians, and other living landscapes—and the Keeping Oakland Clean & Beautiful (KOCB) division, which covers public right-of-way (streets and sidewalks). The Public Works Department is concerned with removal, and while our interviewees at OPW cited concerns about the lack of long-term effectiveness of the current strategy, these

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<sup>25</sup> Personal interview with Casey Farmer, aide to Councilmember Lynette McElhaney, on March 5, 2015.

concerns are not incorporated into the Department's characterization of successful encampment abatement, as it is beyond their respective capacity to address.

## **Oakland Police Department**

From the perspective of the Oakland Police Department (OPD), punitive measures are not an effective strategy for dealing with the root causes of homelessness. Further, the Police Department is often reluctant to issue citations against homeless individuals due to both the inefficiency of criminalizing homelessness, as well as the potential political ramifications. However, the Police Department is often asked to enforce quality-of-life issues that are disproportionately correlated with homelessness. Examples of citable behaviors include loitering, trespassing, nuisance, public intoxication, after-hours presence in parks, and violation of the City's no-camping ordinance.

## **Outreach Workers**

Operation Dignity (OD) provides ongoing outreach services to encampment residents and has a nuanced view of the situation's complexity. OD ultimately defines the problem as stemming from a lack of services and support for Oakland's homeless, its most vulnerable population.

*Problem #1: Shortage of affordable housing:* While encampment residents face barriers to housing, access to housing nonetheless remains the single most effective way to reduce homelessness.

*Problem #2: Barriers to Shelter Use:* Barriers include, but are not limited to: overly restrictive rules and regulations, shame associated with needing services, mental health issues triggered by an institutionalized environment, possession of more belongings than may be admitted, and the anticipatory threat of theft of belongings in shelters.

*Problem #3: Structural Sweeps of Camps:* The regular sweeping of camps is very disruptive to residents and, in an effort to protect their belongings, many of them miss service appointments in order to avoid having their possessions stolen or removed. While Public Works and Operation Dignity work together to post notice 72 hours in advance of every sweep, CalTrans sweeps may be unannounced, and this process proves to be very disruptive for camp residents.

*Problem #4: Variation in Problem Definition:* Certain city stakeholders frame the problem of homeless camps as a blight issue and see the efforts to sweep camps as nuisance abatement. Operation Dignity understands why city stakeholders view the camps as a liability and public health concern. However, OD expressed reservations about problem framings that do not highlight the unique, human needs of this sector of Oakland residents. Furthermore, general public opinion often views outreach services as

“enabling” and “encouraging” homelessness, a political framing that leads to a punitive stance and unforgiving abatement-oriented interventions. *Thus, individuals at Operation Dignity expressed a belief that reframing the problem might result in more effective policy interventions.*

### **Bay Area Community Services**

Bay Area Community Services (BACS) regularly conducts homeless outreach in Oakland. Like Operation Dignity, BACS ultimately defines the problem as stemming from a lack of housing affordable for extremely low-income individuals, a lack of supportive housing options for this population, and a lack of existing housing options that meet the preferences of the unsheltered population (e.g. with respect to proximity to certain services, supports, or neighborhood haunts; allowance of pets and visitors; etc.). BACS places special emphasis on the most vulnerable members of the homeless population with respect to health outcomes. Much of the agency’s outreach focus corresponds to the eligibility criteria for the housing programs that they offer: housing for seniors, adults with disabilities, or transitional-age youth.

### **Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services**

Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services (AC BHCS), which funds the Trust Clinic and partially funds Bay Area Community Services outreach, has an overview of services across the county, and bears the financial costs associated with chronic homeless. (The Trust Clinic serves any Alameda County homeless resident with comprehensive service provision and referral. These services include: dental, optometry, specialized medical care, mental health care, substance abuse treatment, food, shelter, referrals to legal and social services, and case management services.)

Both the AC BHCS Housing Director and Trust Clinic staff identified the primary problem as being the lack of affordable housing, citing emerging medical research that identifies housing as a pre-condition for positive health outcomes. They expressed concern for long-term health outcomes of street dwellers, addressable through increased and more diverse housing options. The BHCS Housing Director, offering a comparative perspective across multiple city jurisdictions during our interview, pointed to a lack of coordination among stakeholders in Oakland. *Specifically, he suggested that both housing and encampment cleanup options could be aided through a unification of mission and better communication among stakeholders.*

## **Encampment Cleanup Procedure**

### **1) Triggering a Cleanup**

A camp cleanup is triggered by a notification or complaint made to the City by Oakland’s housed residents. Most calls come through the Public Works Department call center. The SeeClickFix online system also offers the opportunity to report a homeless encampment. SeeClickFix has no specific menu option for homeless

encampments, so complaints are often reported as illegal dumping, park enforcement, or as a write-in option. Sometimes housed residents complain instead to the City Administrator or to their councilmember representatives about both encampments and the behavior associated with encampments (public drunkenness, noise pollution, human waste, litter, etc.). All notices of encampments (and related issues) on city property are relayed to Public Works staff.

Many encampments are on CalTrans property which is outside of the City's jurisdiction. The City Administrator's Office maintains contact with CalTrans and California Highway Patrol regarding encampments on land under each entity's respective jurisdiction. When Public Works maintenance staff find encampments during routine maintenance of City parks and greenery, they usually record the cleanup in the same internal reporting system in which public referrals are made.

## **2) Notice of Cleanup**

Standard Operating Procedures, which have been in place for 3 years, call for posting a 72-hour notice to alert encampment residents and community members of a scheduled cleanup. Either OPW or Operation Dignity posts this notice. As part of its contract with the City of Oakland, Operation Dignity concurrently offers services to individuals in the area according to the OPW cleanup schedule. The success of Operation Dignity's outreach efforts is reliant on the level of trust established between themselves and encampment residents, which must be built up over weeks and months through extensive, ongoing relationship-building efforts. Most encampment residents do not agree to seek shelter services or engage in a housing search during these visits; many individuals do relocate themselves and their essential belongings within the 72 hours leading up to the cleanup.

## **3) Cleanups**

Public Works staff arrive at the cleanup site prepared with materials for removing litter in the camp area. Per the Standard Operating Procedures, any belongings or possessions that are deemed to be of personal value are tagged and stored for 90 days at the East Oakland Public Works yard, though it is rare for homeless individuals to retrieve stored belongings (perhaps as a result of transportation barriers to the East Oakland location, and an inability to transport large amounts of belongings via public bus). In cases in which resistance is expected or encountered, the Oakland Police Department provides a presence for both enforcement and safety. Enforcement via citation (for loitering, trespassing, etc.) or arrest is rare. A private contractor removes any significant bio-hazardous waste. Once a camp is fully removed, the work order is closed.

## **4) Post-Cleanup**

After eviction, encampments sometimes disperse into multiple smaller groups that relocate to new areas. Sometimes whole groups relocate intact. Because many individuals have geographic preferences, camps typically relocate nearby or return to the same site.

## Obstacles to Improving Outcomes

### Defining Improvement

Encampment homelessness is a multi-faceted and complex issue. The negative spillover it generates therefore necessitates the involvement of multiple city departments, each of which is responsible for addressing different aspects of the problem, with different outcome goals. As previously mentioned in the Evaluative Criteria section of this report, (short-term) outcome goals for the purposes of this analysis include:

- Preempt housed resident complaints regarding illegal activity and nuisance
- Use city staff time and funding more efficiently
- Avoid offloading the encampment cleanup burden onto other jurisdictions
- Meet public health standards for outdoor spaces
- Meet the health and safety needs of marginalized residents

These goals are interrelated, and are reflected with varying emphasis by the different stakeholders encountering the problem from different angles.

### Lack of Affordable Housing

All stakeholders acknowledged that the primary barriers to reducing complaints about encampments are the extreme challenges that the homeless population faces in securing housing. In addition, the demand for services, including housing, exceeds supply. Moreover, many would-be tenants face barriers in screening for housing on the open market compared to competing, currently sheltered, prospective tenants. Without a permanent place for encampment residents to be, they relocate after encampment removals, reinforcing the cycle of complaints about the encampments.

Beyond this simple supply issue, however, most stakeholders mentioned a disconnect between the needs and preferences of encampment residents and conditions associated with housing and shelter options offered to them. The needs of Oakland's encampment residents are so diverse and subpopulation-specific that providing adequate services is a persistent challenge. Many encampment residents have found living outside to be preferable to available housing options and the associated lifestyles.

Given existing options, it makes sense that encampment residents locate where they do. Specifically, the homeless often congregate near places where they can access services.

### Barriers to Service Use

The social services needs of encampment residents, primarily addressed by Operation Dignity and other service providers, are often at odds with the cleanup and debris removal goals of Oakland Public Works and CalTrans. For example, when camps are successfully removed and belongings are either discarded or taken

to the Public Works yard for storage, abatement-related outcomes are temporarily satisfied. However, camp residents must then re-obtain belongings, either by (i) visiting the Public Works yard, (ii) engaging in criminal behaviors such as stealing, or (iii) being forced to rely on charitable sources.

Further, encampment residents may refuse to leave camps during cleanups in order to ensure that their belongings are not removed or discarded. As such, they often miss scheduled doctor, employment, or case manager appointments. Thus, cleanup efforts themselves contribute to the broader systemic problem that keeps encampment residents in a cycle of homelessness.

Importantly, Operation Dignity and BACS consider the lack of trust in service providers to be one of the most pervasive barriers to housing. Homeless individuals often do not trust outreach workers or the services to which outreach services may connect them. This lack of trust is due to a history of negative experiences with the social service system. As such, Operation Dignity faces its own barriers engaging encampment residents in services because they are perceived as aiding cleanup efforts, and by extension contributing to the disruptive cycle of eviction.

From the point of view of outreach workers, one obstacle in engaging encampment residents in services is that they are often difficult to find, which generates inefficiencies for outreach workers engaged in case management.

An outreach interviewee reflected on the problem, stating that outreach workers, herself included, often become accustomed to only addressing the short-term needs of clients they engage rather than working to concurrently optimize long-term outcomes, which would call for housing or increased stability.

Further, many encampment residents feel like the encampments are their homes. Indeed, cohesive encampment groups and established camp fixtures can offer much of the mental security, stability of routine, and effective safety that formal housing offers.

### **Dynamics Among Stakeholders**

Coordination among outreach agencies has increased in recent years. For example, Operation Dignity and Bay Area Community Services communicate regularly regarding clients and housing opportunities. Additionally, efforts are increasingly being made to connect outreach entities across city lines, where encampment locations spill into Emeryville and Berkeley. The hope is that this effort will allow agencies to build off of trust developed with unsheltered individuals and groups while reducing duplication of services over time.

However, no regular meetings occur between the primary stakeholders within the City of Oakland (including Community Housing Services, OPD, and Public Works). Infrequent communication among all stakeholders has resulted in a fragmented

approach not fully documented in the Standard Operating Procedures, particularly across OPD jurisdictions.

Individuals under County Behavioral Health Care Services also pointed to a lack of coordinated access to housing in the county. The result is that outreach workers and those they serve confront a disjointed pathway to housing with uncertainties of housing placement passed along to outreach workers and the people they serve. Relatedly, there is currently no prioritization of existing permanent housing resources according to particular criteria among the homeless population at the city or county level. Upcoming in the next fiscal year, however, County homeless service resources will begin a shift towards coordinated access to services on the basis of vulnerability. Vulnerability measures include physical, mental health, and substance use diagnoses and duration of homelessness, so chronically homeless encampment residents stand to be a target of greater housing energies from the County and through nonprofit entities.

**POLICY  
ALTERNATIVE #1  
SANCTIONED  
ENCAMPMENTS**

## **ALTERNATIVE #1: City-Sanctioned Encampment**

As an alternative to the current status quo, Oakland could consider sanctioning one or more encampments within the city. There are numerous examples of sanctioned homeless encampments across the United States, and their existence and unique characteristics are increasingly well documented in the literature.<sup>26</sup>

These encampments arise for a variety of reasons, ranging from the pragmatic (a place for the homeless to live when homeless shelter rules and regulations are prohibitive), to the ideological (self-governed and self-managed alternative lifestyle arrangements, sometimes fashioned in political protest). A thorough assessment of the full spectrum of encampment features is beyond the scope of this report. Instead, we limit our analysis to examples of city-sanctioned, city-funded, and/or city-operated campgrounds, except where specifically noted otherwise. We describe three case studies that exemplify different models of general design and location considerations for the City of Oakland to consider within this framework.

The authors evaluated these options within the context of effectiveness in addressing Oakland's unique challenges, concerns for equity, and implementation feasibility for Oakland.

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<sup>26</sup> Heben, A. (2014). *Tent city urbanism: From self-organized camps to tiny house villages* (1st edition). Eugene, OR: Village Collaborative.

Hunter, J., Linden-Reteck, P., Shebaya, S., & Halpert, S. (2014). *Welcome home: The rise of tent cities in the United States*. National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty & Allard K. Lowenstein International Human Rights Clinic, Yale Law School. Retrieved from [http://www.law.yale.edu/WelcomeHome\\_TentCities\\_final\\_report.pdf](http://www.law.yale.edu/WelcomeHome_TentCities_final_report.pdf)

National Coalition for the Homeless. (2010). *Tent cities in America: A Pacific Coast report*. Retrieved from <http://nationalhomeless.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Tent-Cities-Report-FINAL-3-10-10.pdf>

## Case Study #1: Ontario, CA: *Temporary Homeless Services Area*

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*The key to Ontario's successful implementation of this approach to homeless services was unified, ongoing commitment from a cadre of the city's top leadership, all of whom met regularly during the program design phase to create a program that would satisfy all stakeholders' concerns.*

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The *Temporary Homeless Services Area* (THSA) encampment in Ontario, CA, provides an excellent prototype for the City of Oakland. THSA represents the efforts of several departments and stakeholders within Ontario's government to unify around a single strategic plan to counter encampment homelessness with permanent housing and supportive services. This case study summarizes the THSA model using data from the 2010 National Coalition for the Homeless report on tent cities in America,<sup>27</sup> as well as a phone interview (conducted 3/16/15) with the City of Ontario's Housing and Municipal Services Director, Brent Schultz.

### Overview

THSA was founded in June 2007 by the City of Ontario to counter the problem of encampment homelessness in and around the downtown area. Concerned residents had begun providing tents to the small but visible population of roughly 30–50 homeless individuals, acts of kindness that had the unintended consequence of institutionalizing the population's presence. After several incidents of violence that were tied to the homeless community, the city countered by offering a sanctioned campground area on city-owned land near the regional airport. The city provided water, portable toilets, tents, and some other basic necessities with the goal of serving roughly 50–100 of the city's homeless. However, by the end of the summer, Schultz recalls, the encampment had ballooned to roughly 400 individuals, a size exceeding that which the city could serve. Furthermore, it was discovered that all but 120 of the 400-person population were not originally from Ontario, with some having traveled from out of state upon hearing about the encampment. Concerned about becoming a regional magnet for homelessness, as well as with ongoing incidents of gang-related violence occurring within the encampment area, the city designed formal plans for site improvements and a service provision contingency.

### Eligibility and Service Model

After their brief experiment with minimal services (in 2007), culminating in gang-related incidents on site, Ontario revamped THSA in several important ways. As a

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<sup>27</sup> National Coalition for the Homeless. (2010). Tent cities in America: A Pacific Coast report. Retrieved from <http://nationalhomeless.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Tent-Cities-Report-FINAL-3-10-10.pdf>

result of their out-of-town homeless population, which significantly increased the size of the encampment population, the city implemented a strict policy of serving only Ontario homeless residents—that is, homeless residents who had a verifiable link to Ontario. THSA officials checked education records, housing records, police/correctional records, and consulted with family and friends to verify residency or formal ties to Ontario. Schultz reports that this process ultimately reduced the population down to about 120 Ontario residents for whom the city could commit to providing services.

THSA was designed to serve chronically homeless adults; therefore, no one under 18 was allowed on the campground. Per the concerns of the city's public health department, no pets were allowed on-site. Drugs and alcohol were not formally banned, but THSA decided to enforce policing as it would in any other city neighborhood—that is, individuals using quietly within their tents and who were otherwise obeying camp rules were not harrassed, while those using in public were in violation of public intoxication laws and were subject to loss of their camping privileges. THSA enforced a 10 PM curfew, after which time anyone could leave the site, but no one could re-enter until morning. Only individuals who could produce a camping permit from THSA were ever allowed on-site.

Formal services for the homeless were provided by a variety of local nonprofit and charity groups and were coordinated through contract with Mercy House. With use of Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing (HPRP) funds (as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act in 2009), Mercy House also provided housing search and placement services for THSA residents. This effort has been so successful, Schultz states, that the city closed the encampment in 2014 after the population declined to only two individuals; the rest had been provided some form of housing, with a roughly 60% housing maintenance rate at 1-year follow-up. The Ontario Continuum of Care's yearly point-in-time homeless count dropped from 400 during the first summer of THSA to only 68 this year. Importantly, THSA was never designed to continue accepting new residents, or to become a permanent service provision institution—it was designed, from the start, to be truly temporary.

## Design Features

In 2008, Ontario ultimately settled on use of a 2.5-acre site near the regional airport. Basic services such as water and portable toilets were provided, and the city issued Coleman tents for the residents (these had to be replaced every 6 months because of wear and tear). Fencing with a gate that only opened from the inside (allowing for enforcement of the 10 PM exit-only curfew) was installed, and ample lighting further reduced criminal activity at night. BBQ pits for cooking were installed, as were campfire rings to prevent tent fires (a problem in the earlier incarnation of THSA).

Security was provided through formal contract with a security company, which became a significant and ongoing line-item in the THSA budget. However, Schultz

stressed the critical importance of not leaving security to the homeless residents themselves, a policy THSA experimented with unsuccessfully. While self-governance has been stressed by advocates as critical for an encampment's success,<sup>28</sup> the top-down creation of THSA by city officials was incompatible with the organic emergence of an internal governance structure. The absence of an internal structure threatened to destabilize the entire program, and security had to be hired.

### **Funding and Costs**

All services, site provisions, and basic necessities for THSA were provided by City of Ontario general funds. The startup costs and initial construction fees totaled \$100,000. Operating costs in the first year were \$400,000 and fell to \$300,000 annually in the second year and beyond. Security and staffing became the most unanticipated expenses; Schultz recalls that THSA officials at first underestimated the amount of staff time required to successfully run the camp.

Other sources of funding included Community Development Block Grant (CDGB) and Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG) moneys, as well as Ontario Continuum of Care apartment rental property income.

### **Implementation Feasibility Considerations**

When asked about implementation roadblocks such as significant political opposition or land-use/zoning restrictions, Schultz indicated that none were encountered. He stressed that the Ontario City Council supported the project from the beginning because of the desire to address the ballooning homeless population. Nevertheless, he indicated that the key to Ontario's successful implementation of this approach to homeless services was unified, ongoing commitment from the city's top leadership. All affected departments met regularly during the program design phase to create a program that would satisfy all stakeholders' concerns (for example, the decision to police the encampment site in the same way as the police force would any other neighborhood in Ontario).

Schultz also stressed the importance of good public relations management with the media, as well as the importance of thorough consulting with legal experts to ensure that activist groups such as the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) do not derail or delay the effort with litigation.

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<sup>28</sup> Heben, A. (2014). *Tent city urbanism: From self-organized camps to tiny house villages* (1st edition). Eugene, OR: Village Collaborative.

## Case Study #2: Portland, OR: *Dignity Village*

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*Portland's Dignity Village is uniquely independent from city services. Costs are entirely internalized and the estimated cost of housing a village resident is \$4.82 per night.*

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### Overview

Dignity Camp was established in 2000 as an unsanctioned campground on public land that served as both a political protest and an improvement from the constant upheaval of life on the streets. After moving a number of times and settling in the Sunderland yard, a recycling facility about eight miles outside of downtown Portland, the residents of Dignity Camp chose to strengthen their position by filing for 501(c)3 nonprofit status as *Dignity Village*. While filing, the encampment residents attempted to incorporate with the State of Oregon in 2001, but failed to secure a privately owned site. The residents then petitioned the City of Portland to remain in the Sunderland yard. Portland City Council agreed and signed resolution No. 36200 on February 24, 2006, which designated a portion of the Sunderland Yard as a formal campground under the terms of ORS 446.265, an Oregon statute allowing municipalities to designate two campgrounds to be used as “transitional housing.” *Dignity Village* was appointed the manager of that transitional campground in a three-year contract signed with the City in 2007. The contract was renewed following evaluation of the site in 2010 and was extended again in 2012, set to expire on November 30th, 2015. The ordinance requires *Dignity Village*, a contractor to the City, to comply with reporting standards specified in the contract. In particular, the most recent contract requires enforcement of a two-year time limit for resident stays in the *Village*.

The *Village* can house up to 60 individuals and operates under an internal governance structure that developed in an iterative process with camp residents after the initial sanctioning of the site. Located a 30- to 45-minute bus ride from downtown Portland, *Dignity Village* does not serve Portland's most difficult to serve homeless community as the transportation logistics alone provide a barrier to access.

### Who are the residents of *Dignity Village*?<sup>29</sup>

According to the 2010 evaluation of *Dignity Village* by Kristina Smock Consulting, the gender, age, racial and ethnic make-up of the *Village* are as follows<sup>30</sup>:

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<sup>29</sup> Kristina Smock Consulting, “An Evaluation of Dignity Village,” for the Portland Housing Bureau, February 2010, pp. 8–10.

## Gender

| Count (2009)                        | Male | Female |
|-------------------------------------|------|--------|
| Dignity Village                     | 69%  | 34%    |
| Street Count of Unsheltered Persons | 72%  | 26%    |

*Ibid.*, p. 10. Note: The number from Kristina Smock exceeds 100% and reflects estimates from Dignity Village.

## Race/Ethnicity

| Race                             | Dignity Village | Portland | Unsheltered Homeless | All Served by Homeless Providers |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|----------|----------------------|----------------------------------|
| White/Caucasian                  | 93%             | 79%      | 67%                  | 56%                              |
| Black/African-American           | 1%              | 7%       | 12%                  | 20%                              |
| American Indian/Alaskan Native   | 3%              | 1%       | 9%                   | 9%                               |
| Asian                            | 0%              | 7%       | <1%                  | 3%                               |
| Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander | 1%              | 1%       | 1%                   | 1%                               |
| Other/Multi-racial               | 1%              | 6%       | 7%                   | 10%                              |
| Refused                          | N/A             | N/A      | 5%                   | 3%                               |
| Ethnicity                        |                 |          |                      |                                  |
| Hispanic/Latino                  | 4%              | 9%       | 9%                   | 15%                              |

*Ibid.*, p. 9.

## Age

| Age   | % of Dignity Village Residents |
|-------|--------------------------------|
| 18–21 | 6%                             |
| 22–30 | 21%                            |
| 31–50 | 59%                            |
| 51+   | 15%                            |

*Ibid.*, pg 9

<sup>30</sup> The Kristina Smock Consulting Evaluation relied on data from Dignity Village's annual report which is not independently verified.

This age breakdown is comparable to the Portland Unsheltered Count meaning that the age distribution in *Dignity Village* is reflective of the larger homeless population in Portland as of 2009.<sup>31</sup>

## Eligibility and Service Model

According to an interview with the CEO of *Dignity Village*, the community is policed like any other neighborhood in Portland. One key success of this model is its relative safety and security. *Dignity Village* had a lower per capita rate of 911 calls resulting in dispatch of Portland City Police than the citywide average from 2007–2009.<sup>32</sup> While the average per capita 911-call rate is not a perfect correlate to issues of public safety or crime, our research supports that camps form based on a feeling of mutual trust and safety within the camp. While the contract with the city specifies that case managers and service providers are allowed on the premises to visit clients and connect them to supportive services, there are no resident support staff on site. It should be noted that *Dignity Village* is not designed to serve the chronically homeless. The average stay is 18 months and enforcement of the *Village* rules mandating “no constant disruptive behavior and no alcohol, drugs or drug paraphernalia” has resulted in a number of chronically homeless being evicted from the community.

## Design Features

*Dignity Village* started as an unsanctioned campground, but has developed into a community with more permanent structures. All 60 residents have small wooden homes without heat and running water. According to an interview with the CEO, the *Village* still relies on portable toilets and temporary showers for sanitation facilities. In terms of governance structure, residents participate in decision-making and politics; the self-deterministic and independent status of *Dignity Village* as a nonprofit entity is very important to the community’s success and identity as reported by the current CEO. Some of the residents view it as temporary housing; others view it as their more permanent home. However, the time limit of 2 years placed on residents’ stay with the renewal of the 2012 contract will certainly impact the ability of residents to make the *Village* their permanent home.

## Funding and Costs

In an interview with the CEO of *Dignity Village*<sup>33</sup>, monthly overhead costs were reported as follows:

- Insurance: \$200/month
- Garbage bill: \$400/ month
- Electricity (a few units have solar panels): \$250/month

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<sup>31</sup> “Report on the 2009 Portland/ Multnomah County Street Count of Unsheltered Persons,” April 2009.

<sup>32</sup> Kristina Smock Consulting, “An Evaluation of Dignity Village,” for the Portland Housing Bureau, February 2010, pg 3.

<sup>33</sup> Telephone interview with Rick Foot, Dignity Village CEO, March 16, 2015.

- Portable toilets: unknown
- Total Operating costs: \$1,700 month

Residents are required to pay rent of \$35/month to help cover operating costs making *Dignity Village* a financially self-sustaining model. The *Village* had difficulty keeping up with costs before implementing mandatory rent, especially in the wake of the national financial crisis, which dried up their stream of donations; however, they have since recovered and are consistently paying off outstanding bills. The evaluation by Kristina Smock Consulting compared the 2009 costs of *Dignity Village* to other service models and found it to be highly cost-effective.

| <b>Program Type</b>      | <b>Program Examples</b>  | <b>Estimated Average Cost Per Person Per Night</b> |
|--------------------------|--|--|
| Dignity Village          | Dignity Village  | \$4.82   |
| Warming Center           | Winter warming centers for families and individuals                          | \$12.59  |
| Emergency shelters       | Salvation Army's HOMES Men's Shelter and Transition Projects' Glisan Shelter | \$20.92  |
| Rent Assistance          | JOIN KNAC rent assistance and client services                                | \$24.60  |
| Supportive Housing       | Cascadia BHC and Transition Project's OTIS Project                           | \$32.37  |
| Emergency Motel Vouchers | HAP Short Term Rent Assistance program's emergency motel vouchers            | \$54.00  |
| Transitional Housing     | Outside In and New Avenues for Youth   | \$66.56  |

*Kristina Smock Consulting, "An Evaluation of Dignity Village," for the Portland Housing Bureau, February 2010, pg. 24.*

## Case Study #3: King County, WA: *Tent Cities #3, #4, & Nickelsville*

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*Seattle encampments are an example of the itinerant model in which camps rotate among properties owned by the faith community. This model more equitably distributes the burden of a sanctioned encampment across housed residents, but depends upon the continued capacity and benevolence of churches.*

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### Overview:

King County in Washington consists of 38 jurisdictions including the City of Seattle and is home to a distinct homeless encampment model unique in its organized rotation patterns. This model is exemplified by *Tent City #3*, *Tent City #4*, *Camp Unity* and *Nickelsville*. While *Tent City #3*, *Nickelsville* and *Camp Unity* primarily rotate sites within the City of Seattle, *Tent City #4* rotates among churches in the wider King County area. These rotating camps stay no more than three months at any one location for reasons described below.

While homeless encampments have existed in King County for decades, the level of organization observed among the camps that exist today began when the nonprofit organization SHARE campaigned for the first self-organized camp in 1990. In 1998, SHARE joined forces with the Women's Housing Equality and Enhancement League (WHEEL), a shelter model, with the goal of establishing a tent city. After two unsuccessful attempts to establish camps on public land, SHARE/WHEEL now manage *Tent Cities #3* and *#4* in addition to 15 indoor shelters, making them the largest shelter provider in King County.<sup>34</sup>

While there are a number of rules and regulations stipulating the conditions of hosting tent cities on public or private land in King County, the most unique element of these encampments is that they rotate every three months and never stay at any one site more than twice in a two-year period. This policy developed in 2004 when *Tent City #4* was facing eviction from a Seattle suburb and the camp was invited to stay with a local church under the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA). Under this Act, the religious community in King County absorbed the burden of hosting various homeless encampments on a rotating basis until the city formalized this network in 2010 with the passage of

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<sup>34</sup> Heben, A. (2014). *Tent city urbanism: From self-organized camps to tiny house villages* (1st edition). Eugene, OR: Village Collaborative, p. 98.

Washington State Law House Bill 1956, which grants religious institutions permission to host encampments.<sup>35</sup>

The sanctioning of encampments falls under Washington state’s 10-year plan to address homelessness and reflects initial acceptance of what the Committee to End Homelessness (CEH) has coined “interim survival mechanisms.” The CEH is a coalition of various stakeholders working to implement the 10-year plan and defines interim survival mechanisms as a short-term solution for “single adults without children who are experiencing crisis and living unsheltered in [their] communities.”<sup>36</sup> CEH also played a major role in the recommendations provided to Seattle Mayor Ed Murray by the Emergency Task Force on Unsheltered Homelessness, which included sanctioning encampments as an interim survival mechanism because they provide an important first step on the road to housing.

### Eligibility and Service Model

While the transitory nature of these communities is a result of local ordinances that require their regular relocation, they have high community retention and are reported to be consistently at their maximum capacity of 100 individuals.<sup>37</sup> In an interview with the director of the CEH, Mark Putnam, it was reported that the faith-based community requires residents to participate in advocacy on their own behalf. Mr. Putnam stated that this requirement can be a barrier to camp residents in their search for both work and housing. However, the time commitment specifics were unknown.

Eligibility for admission to the camps requires a background screening, as residents cannot have outstanding warrants or sex offense convictions.<sup>38</sup> Each camp is also self-governed with an elected executive committee member that works directly with a “tent liaison” at SHARE/WHEEL.

The camps also permit mobile service units to work with residents, but do not have full-time staff to provide supportive services. For example, *Camp Unity* hosts Alcoholics Anonymous meetings and has mental health counseling on site for the convenience of encampment residents.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid. pp. 100–101. See also, “RCW 36.01.290” Washington State Legislature, 2010 (<http://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=36.01.290>)

<sup>36</sup> “Supporting Interim Survival Mechanisms for Single Adults in King County,” Committee to End Homelessness ([http://www.cehkc.org/doc\\_reports/BRIEFInterimSurvivalMechanisms.pdf](http://www.cehkc.org/doc_reports/BRIEFInterimSurvivalMechanisms.pdf)).

<sup>37</sup> Heben, A. (2014), p. 100.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. p. 100.

<sup>39</sup> Heather Knight, “Sanctioned Homeless Tent Encampment Idea Pitched at Town Hall,” *The San Francisco Chronicle*, March 14, 2015 (<http://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/Sanctioned-homeless-tent-encampment-idea-pitched-6134268.php>).

## Design Features

### Mobility

The mobile nature of the encampments necessitates impermanent housing structures. *Tent City #3* is reported to use empty milk crates with blankets and sleeping bags piled on top as beds,<sup>40</sup> elements that can be easily broken apart and moved when the camp must change locations. While the transitory nature of these encampments is disruptive to its residents, the constant movement results in a more equitable distribution of the burden faced by housed community members who may not want a permanent encampment in their neighborhood.

### Security

Camp residents take turns on watch and essentially provide 24-hour security for other residents.

### Governance Structures

The camps managed by SHARE/WHEEL all share “principles of sobriety, non-violence, cooperation and participation.”<sup>41</sup> Each camp has its own rules and regulations around disruptiveness, tolerance of drug use, and the number of hours each encampment resident is expected to contribute to collective upkeep tasks like security. For example, *Tent City #3* requires that newcomers initially stay in a collective tent to ensure they can abide by the camp rules before moving into their own unit. This functions as an effective weeding-out period for individuals who cannot abide by camp rules.

## Funding and Costs

It is difficult to ascertain specific and exhaustive costs required to run the mobile encampments in King County. However, the city has been reported to fund certain services<sup>42</sup>. *Camp Unity*, for example, has a tent with computers and internet provided by the city to support job searches among camp residents.<sup>43</sup> In terms of direct financial costs, SHARE/WHEEL also requires that camps arrange and fund their own port-o-potties and trash pick-up<sup>44</sup> as they rotate among churches. While no record of direct financial support from the church community was unable to be obtained for this report, it is clear that the church bears a large portion of the social cost of hosting these encampments. This model removes the immediate administrative cost of abatement from the city and decentralizes the administrative

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<sup>40</sup> Heben, A. (2014), p. 103.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., pg 101.

<sup>42</sup> “Seattle To Provide Tent Cities With Internet So Homeless People Can Communicate, Look For Jobs,” Reuters, November 24, 2014 ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/11/25/seattle-homeless-internet\\_n\\_6215632.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/11/25/seattle-homeless-internet_n_6215632.html)).

<sup>43</sup> Heather Knight, “Sanctioned Homeless Tent Encampment Idea Pitched at Town Hall,” *The San Francisco Chronicle*, March 14, 2015 (<http://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/Sanctioned-homeless-tent-encampment-idea-pitched-6134268.php>).

<sup>44</sup> “Seattle Housing and Resource Effort: Tent Cities,” SHARE/WHEEL (<http://www.sharewheel.org/Home/tent-cities>).

costs of camp management across the churches and camp residents themselves. While this model effectively reduces the need for city abatement of camps, it heavily relies on the benevolence of the faith community to continue hosting the camps.

### **Implementation Feasibility and Considerations**

This model requires a very active and engaged faith community; to be viable in Oakland, city staff would need to begin building relationships with the faith community and interviewing key stakeholders about whether they might be interested in hosting mobile encampments. A benefit of mobile encampments is that the relative burden of hosting an encampment could be equitably distributed across districts to avoid the resident backlash associated with permanent encampments. In an interview with Mark Putnam, the Director of CEH, he reported that having neighborhoods host encampments has been a largely positive experience as well as an educational opportunity for community members to engage with and learn about homelessness.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Phone Interview, Mark Putnam, Director of the Committee to End Homelessness, March 24, 2015.

# ENCAMPMENT DESIGN FEATURES

## Design Feature Considerations for Sanctioned Encampments

The following are important design features for Oakland to consider when evaluating a city-sanctioned encampment area. They are informed by interviews with City officials, current encampment residents, sanctioned encampments from other parts of the United States, and from Andrew Heben's 2014 book *Tent City Urbanism: From Self-Organized Camps to Tiny House Villages* which provides a conceptual framework for homeless encampment design.

### Governance Structure:

The city needs to consider how much governance and formalized structure it will provide to the management of the encampment. Note that this is not a dichotomy between being governed and ungoverned; we do not recommend the latter as a sustainable design feature. Rather, the degree to which encampment residents *themselves* are able to participate in and manage the encampment's rules and operations is a critical consideration. Some encampment residents choose the streets over shelters because they do not wish to conform to the rigid schedules, rules, and regulations that shelters often impose. Therefore, attempts to impose too much city structure may backfire, creating the perception of an "outdoor shelter" that certain homeless residents will opt out of.

On the other hand, unorganized or minimally overseen encampments, especially if they allow alcohol or substance use, may create serious safety concerns for residents and neighbors/businesses alike. The experience of St. Louis, MO is informative in this regard.<sup>46</sup> In 2009 and 2010, a series of adjacent encampments emerged along the riverfront immediately north of downtown St. Louis, stretching over three city blocks on vacant land. Initially, the city decided to provide support in the form of running water and public toilets, and local law enforcement took a harm-reduction approach to substance use and criminal activity. Rudimentary, resident-run governance structures emerged, and any newcomer was welcomed. This led to a population that was mostly male, 44% chronically homeless, 45% with criminal records, and 54% with mental illness—a population not unlike the one Oakland encampments currently host.

Over time, and as efforts to house these individuals proved unsuccessful for some, criminal activity increased, and the camp was closed and removed by the city in 2012 after several fights, a stabbing, and the death of a resident. In light of this experience, Oakland will need to consider whether imposing rules and/or background screenings will be necessary, even if it alienates some individuals from using the camp. Indeed, very few formalized encampments we have encountered in

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<sup>46</sup> City of St. Louis. (2012). *Moving forward: Policies, plans & strategies for ending & preventing chronic homelessness*. Retrieved from <https://www.stlouis-mo.gov/government/departments/human-services/homeless-services/documents/moving-forward-2.cfm>

the literature have no background check requirements, with even the most lax encampments still screening for sex offenses (see, for example, the case study of *Tent Cities #3* and *#4* in King County, WA).

## Connection to Social Services

In what is perhaps the first formal academic typology of the nation's homeless encampments, UC Berkeley's Chris Herring has argued that government-sanctioned encampments can be characterized by policies of either *accommodation* or *co-optation*.<sup>47</sup>

*Accommodation* represents a policy in which city officials formally recognize an encampment and grant it the temporary or permanent right to exist through existing legal channels (for example, the amendment or passage of camping-related ordinances or the granting of conditional use permits<sup>48</sup>). Basic municipal services (such as policing and water) may be delivered, but no *formal* clinical or structural interventions are provided beyond those already in existence (e.g., Operation Dignity outreach). In short, an accommodated campground is merely allowed to exist at a designated site, free from threat of sweeps and eviction. Accommodated encampments may be formally partnered with or overseen by a nonprofit organization—or they may even be incorporated as a nonprofit itself (Portland's *Dignity Village* represents a well-known example of the latter approach). This may be a model to further consider if Oakland is seeking harm-reduction and containment of negative spillovers for those homeless individuals who are unable or unwilling to participate in permanent supportive housing or shelters.

*Co-optation*, on the other hand, involves the establishment of an institutionalized, city-run “outdoor shelter” that seeks to accomplish three broad administrative goals: (i) upgrade health and sanitation standards with public toilets and garbage disposal; (ii) rid encampments of illegal activities; and (iii) provide case management or other interventions to move residents out of homelessness.<sup>49</sup> Ontario's *Temporary Homeless Services Area* (THSA) provides a case study of this model. Formal social services were provided at THSA through partnerships with local nonprofits.

## Allowance of Substance Use

Most of the successful encampments documented in the literature—whether they be unsanctioned and self-governed or formally supported by local governments—do not allow substance use within the camp. This may be because residents are trying to remain clean and sober themselves, or because past experiments with lax law enforcement created serious safety concerns for encampment residents (see, for

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<sup>47</sup> Herring, C. (2014). The new logics of homeless seclusion: Homeless encampments in America's west coast cities. *City & Community*, 13(4), 285–309. <http://doi.org/10.1111/cico.12086>

<sup>48</sup> Loftus-Farren, Z. (2011). Tent cities: An interim solution to homelessness and affordable housing shortages in the United States. *California Law Review*, 99(4), 1037–1082.

<sup>49</sup> Herring, C. (2014).

example, the City of St. Louis' riverfront encampments, described previously). While disallowing substance use has the advantage of minimizing security risks and safety concerns, it comes with the downside of alienating the hardest-to-serve among the unsheltered homeless population—including those who would already be unlikely to utilize shelter services. Accordingly, Oakland must weigh the important tradeoff between inclusivity of the hardest-to-serve, and the administrative and budgetary burdens created by ongoing security provision.

Nevertheless, precedent exists for sanctioned and/or institutionalized encampments that allow for harm-reduction oriented substance use. The long-standing *Safe Ground* encampment along the American River in Sacramento, while not formally approved as an encampment by the City of Sacramento, has seen success with an internal division of its encampment into “drug-free” and drug-allowing areas. Absent a large plot of land, such a model may not be possible for Oakland to adopt. *Community of Hope* in Fresno, CA, provides another example; there is no ban on legal substances in the camp, and otherwise-intoxicated residents are allowed to stay provided they adhere to a code of conduct.<sup>50</sup> Finally, the St. Petersburg-sanctioned *Camp Pinellas Hope* in Florida does not allow any substances (and breathalyzes residents upon intake), but does operate an adjacent jail-diversion program called *Safe Harbor* that operates as a “wet” shelter for the homeless.<sup>51</sup> Though not technically an outdoor encampment, *Safe Harbor* does provide an alternative for homeless residents who are not ready to comply with sobriety requirements.

### Degree of Permanence

Another important consideration is the permanence of the encampment, both in terms of its residency requirements and its status within the city that hosts it.

Sanctioned encampments that are formally connected to social services vary with regards to resident length-of-stay limits. Specific information on the variation in existing models is difficult to discern from the literature. However, there are examples of encampments with different rules: *River Haven* in Ventura, CA, for instance, imposes a two-year time limit on residency; *Community of Hope* in Fresno, CA, imposes no such time limit. Such requirements likely vary according to the programmatic goals of the encampment. A more well-documented issue is the degree of legal recognition the encampment has, with some camps providing formal, indefinite city-council approval (*Dignity Village* in Portland, OR) and others subject to conditional-use permit requirements (*River Haven* in Ventura, CA).

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Hunter, J., Linden-Reteck, P., Shebaya, S., & Halpert, S. (2014). *Welcome home: The rise of tent cities in the United States*. National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty & Allard K. Lowenstein International Human Rights Clinic, Yale Law School. Retrieved from [http://www.law.yale.edu/WelcomeHome\\_TentCities\\_final\\_report.pdf](http://www.law.yale.edu/WelcomeHome_TentCities_final_report.pdf)

Another model to consider is the itinerant campground model, exhibited by *Tent City #3* and *Tent City #4* in King County, WA, in which encampments rotate between various sponsor churches on a regular basis (usually every 90 days).<sup>52</sup> Such an itinerant model has the benefits of minimizing the burden placed on host organizations and perhaps increasing political buy-in by reducing the burden on any single neighborhood or district.

## Location

A critical consideration for maximizing political buy-in from housed Oaklanders and Oakland businesses is selecting an appropriate location (or set of locations) for a city-sanctioned encampment. Fortunately, existing encampments around the nation provide an array of prototypes to consider.

*City-owned land:* Perhaps the most obvious choice for an Oakland-operated encampment is a plot of vacant, city-owned land. However, our review of the literature provides surprisingly few examples of such arrangements. Ontario, CA's *Temporary Homeless Services Area* does provide one example; it was located on city-owned land near the periphery of the city, and allowed for RV hookups for up to 20 homeless vehicle dwellers. *River Haven*, a small sanctioned encampment of 21 people in Ventura, CA, is also operated on city land under a conditional-use permit. However, perhaps because of the zoning and permitting challenges associated with securing the use of city-owned land for camping and basic services, examples such as these two are rare. We provide a brief analysis of two potential sites for a pilot encampment area in Oakland, as recommended by one of our interviewees, in Appendix 4.

*Faith community- or NGO-owned land:* Far more common is for an encampment to be located on land owned by religious organizations (which may provide First Amendment protection from lawsuits<sup>53</sup>) or social service nonprofits. *Community of Hope* in Fresno, CA, which has evolved into a mini-village of wooden structures (rather than tents), is a sanctioned homeless encampment area located on land owned by a nonprofit with which Fresno contracts. *Tent Cities #3* and *#4* in King County, WA are located on land owned by several sponsoring churches in the Seattle area, and *Camp Pinellas Hope* is operated on Catholic diocese-owned land in St. Petersburg, FL. The City of Oakland may wish to seriously consider developing partnerships with the local faith community to explore whether church land may be able to host an encampment.

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<sup>52</sup> Heben, A. (2014). *Tent city urbanism: From self-organized camps to tiny house villages* (1st edition). Eugene, OR: Village Collaborative.

<sup>53</sup> Hunter, J., Linden-Reteck, P., Shebaya, S., & Halpert, S. (2014). *Welcome home: The rise of tent cities in the United States*. National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty & Allard K. Lowenstein International Human Rights Clinic, Yale Law School. Retrieved from [http://www.law.yale.edu/WelcomeHome\\_TentCities\\_final\\_report.pdf](http://www.law.yale.edu/WelcomeHome_TentCities_final_report.pdf)

*Proximity to downtown:* Another critical dimension to the question of location is whether to locate the encampment close to downtown-area services more easily accessed by homeless residents, or to place it on land farther away from the downtown core. Our reading of the literature suggests that existing city-sanctioned encampments in California generally are located near the urban periphery, perhaps to maximize political feasibility and land-use constraints.<sup>54</sup> If it is true that CalTrans' recent acceleration of vegetation abatement under freeway corridors has catalyzed an increase in housed resident complaints to the city by making encampments more visible, then locating a sanctioned encampment in industrial or light-industrial areas—out of the direct view of businesses and housed neighbors—may maximize political buy-in from Oakland stakeholders. *Dignity Village* in Portland, for example, is located on industrial land near the PDX airport, about 7 miles from the downtown core.

Such a location comes with a key tradeoff: residents often feel disconnected from downtown services that require hours-long bus rides to access. For Oakland, this is a critical consideration, as residents may not wish to utilize an encampment that is perceived to be far away from downtown. However, finding acceptable land not already designated for future economic development in the denser downtown/West Oakland areas will be a key challenge.

## Safety & Policing

An important aspect for buy-in from homeless individuals, Oakland's housed residents, and city officials alike is the consideration of a campground's security mechanism. This includes concerns from encampment residents about their personal safety and the safety of their belongings, as well as apprehension from all parties about whether a campground will invite crime or violence to a neighborhood.

The Oakland Police Department might consider treating the campground like any other neighborhood, with community resource officers playing a larger role in building relationships of trust with encampment residents. The decision of whether the camp will allow substance use within a resident's tent looms large over any considerations about how local law enforcement will be involved in maintaining a safe environment for all of Oakland's residents.

Portland's *Dignity Village*, for example, is a self-governed and self-funded campground that employs its own twenty-four hour security system in which every resident is required to serve two shifts a week. A security desk checks residents in and out, and is responsible for checking on sick and disabled residents. Residents often serve as security personnel akin to paying "rent" to the camp. Similarly, Seattle's *Tent City #3* and *Tent City #4* also host their own round-the-clock security

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<sup>54</sup> National Coalition for the Homeless. (2010). Tent cities in America: A Pacific Coast report. Retrieved from <http://nationalhomeless.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Tent-Cities-Report-FINAL-3-10-10.pdf>

desk with residents working two shifts weekly.<sup>55</sup> Ontario's *Temporary Housing Services Area* (THSA), on the other hand, employs private security forces and requires that all residents carry with them a special state-issued ID card. Residents are also prohibited from inviting guests into the camp.<sup>56</sup>

Regardless of the model used, political buy-in will likely be difficult to obtain if issues of community safety—from the perspective of the camp residents and housed Oaklanders alike—are not given serious consideration.

## Sanitation

Adequate access to showers and restroom facilities shows a special understanding of the role of dignity in a homeless individual's life. The inclusion of some or all of the services listed below can be an important first step in regular hygiene, and therefore self-sufficiency, for encampment residents.

### Portland Loo

First installed in Portland, OR, the Portland Loo is a permanent, public restroom that makes privacy, maintenance, and safety top priorities. Historical estimates for past Loo installations range from \$126,000 to \$134,000. Costs include the base price, utility and foundation work, shipping, and installation.<sup>57</sup>

### Dutch Public Urinals

Pragmatism reigns in the Netherlands, and one example of this is the use of temporary public urinals during festivals and holidays. Typically, the urinal is a large, plastic platform, with a metal hook at the top for easy transport. The urinals are situated to face each other in the shape of an "X" so that four men are able to use the urinal at a time. While they don't provide much privacy, they have greatly reduced public urination on Dutch streets and buildings.

### Portable Laundry

Mobile laundry facilities that cater to homeless individuals have largely focused around nonprofits. One example is *Orange Sky* in Australia.<sup>58</sup> *Dignity on Wheels* is a more local organization servicing San Mateo and Santa Clara counties looking for funding to purchase a portable shower and laundry trailer.<sup>59</sup> Relevant to explicit goals for this project, the focus of making laundry services more available to encampment residents would reduce the visibility of homelessness by helping homeless individuals retain dignity and feel more included in their communities.

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<sup>55</sup> National Coalition for the Homeless. (2010). *Tent cities in America: A Pacific Coast report*. Retrieved from <http://nationalhomeless.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Tent-Cities-Report-FINAL-3-10-10.pdf>

<sup>56</sup> Herring, C. (2014). The New Logics of Homeless Seclusion: Homeless encampments in America's West Coast Cities. *City & Community*, 13(4), 291. <http://doi.org/10.1111/cico.12086>

<sup>57</sup> See "Features," The Portland Loo, ([www.theloo.biz](http://www.theloo.biz)).

<sup>58</sup> See "Home," Orange Sky Laundry, ([www.orangeskylaundry.com.au](http://www.orangeskylaundry.com.au)).

<sup>59</sup> See "Home," Dignity On Wheels, ([www.dignityonwheels.org](http://www.dignityonwheels.org)).

## Portable Showers

The nonprofit lava mae currently provides access to clean showers and toilet facilities to San Francisco's homeless community. Greywater is treated onsite and drained using the City's sidewalk catch basins, and black wastewater is picked up by a waste water hauling company. The mobile program uses nearby fire hydrants to power a specially renovated, former MUNI bus, and began service Spring 2015.<sup>60</sup> Companies like Portable Restroom Trailers, LLC sell new and used commercial-grade, ADA-compliant shower trailers that focus on private and easy-to-clean facilities. Trailers can either be semi-permanent or on-wheels for easy transport.<sup>61</sup>

## Storage

From the freedom to use public transportation and attend classes unencumbered by possessions, to the power to pursue employment and meet with health professionals and other service providers, the ability to safely store personal belongings can greatly improve a homeless individual's ability to transition back into society. San Diego's *Transitional Storage Center*, run by the Girls Think Tank and the San Diego Housing Commission, has a capacity of 353 bins, which translates to roughly 30,000 lbs of belongings no longer on the City's streets. The Center provides clients with access to their bins twice a day, in the mornings and evenings, and costs roughly \$1 per bin per day. The Center also employs one full-time attendant and one full-time attendant/security guard.<sup>62</sup>

## Summary

Our reading of the existing literature suggests that several things are important predictors of an encampment's duration and success. Importantly, most successful encampments have some degree of internal governance, or buy-in to a formal management structure, among their residents. Most encampments do not allow drugs or alcohol, or if they do, they minimize the use of illegal substances within encampment grounds. While not all successful camps require formal engagement with self-sufficiency social services, most do operate (for financial and logistical reasons) in partnership with local nonprofit and/or religious organizations. Nearly all have sex offense pre-screening requirements (though this may be for political reasons, as existing research suggests that strict restrictions on where sex offenders can reside may actually *increase* the risk that they re-offend<sup>63</sup>). Finally, encampments face an important tradeoff between (i) close proximity to downtown services, and (ii) removal from the public eye, often in industrial areas of a city, to maximize political buy-in and minimize complaints from the surrounding

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<sup>60</sup> See "Home," lava mae, ([www.lavamae.org](http://www.lavamae.org)).

<sup>61</sup> See "Home," Portable Restroom Trailers, LLC, ([www.portablerestroomtrailers.com](http://www.portablerestroomtrailers.com)).

<sup>62</sup> See "Transitional Storage Center," ([www.girlsthinktank.org](http://www.girlsthinktank.org)).

<sup>63</sup> Levenson, J. S. (2008). Collateral consequences of sex offender residence restrictions. *Criminal Justice Studies*, 21(2), 153–166.

community. Oakland will need to consider each of these features closely as it continues to develop the idea of a city-sanctioned campground.

# ALTERNATIVE #2 HOUSING FIRST

## ALTERNATIVE #2: Housing First Innovations

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### Case Study #1: Portland, OR

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*Home Forward is responsible for building Bud Clark Commons, one of a few facilities nationwide that blends different services for the homeless. They attribute their success to the relationships built with service providers, clinics, the police, and the neighborhood.*

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#### Overview

The Portland Housing Authority was created in 1941 and is now known as *Home Forward*, an agency that specializes in securing affordable housing and providing services to individuals who face barriers to housing. *Home Forward* is a unique local housing authority because of the relative flexibility they have in providing housing services. As one of 39 housing authorities, out of 3,000, which participate in the federal Moving to Work program, they are “granted a greater degree of regulatory flexibility in order to innovate new approaches to fulfilling their mission.”<sup>64</sup> They manage a number of programs including:

- Apartment assistance through low-income housing subsidized by HUD and managed by *Home Forward*;
- Rental Assistance, which consists of the management of Section 8 vouchers and their own programs to provide short-term rent assistance and support for veterans and renters with disabilities; and
- Support services for recipients of Section 8 vouchers.

#### Public Supportive Housing Innovation: Bud Clark Commons

*Home Forward* is also known for the innovative development of a Public Supportive Housing unit called the Bud Clark Commons, which was built in response to Portland’s ten-year plan to end homelessness and serves the most vulnerable homeless in Portland. While built as a joint collaboration between the Portland Housing Bureau, Multnomah County, and Transition Projects, *Home Forward* was the lead organization and owns and operates the building. For the purposes of this report, the Bud Clark Commons Model will serve as a case study for collaborative efforts to build Public Supportive Housing in an effort to house the most vulnerable homeless.

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<sup>64</sup> “Our History,” Home Forward (<http://www.homeforward.org/home-forward/our-history>).

## **Efficient Use of Federal Funds: Local Blended Subsidy Program**

*Home Forward* has also championed a Local Blended Subsidy (LBS) Program, “to improve the financial viability of adding “banked” public housing units back into the portfolio.”<sup>65</sup> They combine tenant-paid rent, Section 8 funds, and public housing funds to achieve total per-unit rent. This blended model has enabled them to bring more units to market and ultimately house more low-income individuals.

## **Eligibility and Service Model**

### **Bud Clark Commons**

This residence has

- 90 dormitory beds for men needing short-term housing (including 45 beds reserved for veterans);
- 100 studio apartments with project-based Section 8 subsidy;
- 30 studio apartments with public housing subsidy.<sup>66</sup>

Only the most vulnerable homeless are eligible for Bud Clark Commons, determined by the administration of a Vulnerability Index Tool by four medical clinics. However, individuals that do have a history of person-to-person crime or drug distribution are not admitted in the interest of the safety and security of neighboring residents.<sup>67</sup>

The Commons has an on-site operations and case management team that provide a number of supportive services including: mental health, vocational rehabilitation, money management services, etc. In the case that a resident no longer needs intensive supportive services, *Home Forward* staff works to support his/her applications to other public supportive housing units in an effort to create space for the most vulnerable individuals at Bud Clark Commons.

### **Blended Subsidy Program**

This program is reserved for individuals earning 80 percent or below of area median income and has supported 284 units to date.<sup>68</sup>

## **Funding and Costs**

Development of Bud Clark Commons was completed in 2011 and the total cost of development, excluding land, was reported to be \$28,750,000.<sup>69</sup> While the annual

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<sup>65</sup> “Moving to Work Annual Plan- FY2013,” *Home Forward*, pg. 69 (<http://www.portlandoregon.gov/phb/article/504428>)

<sup>66</sup> “Bud Clark Commons,” *Home Forward* (<http://www.homeforward.org/development/property-developments/bud-clark-commons>)

<sup>67</sup> “Moving to Work Annual Plan- FY2013,” *Home Forward*, pg. 72 (<http://www.portlandoregon.gov/phb/article/504428>)

<sup>68</sup> “Moving to Work Annual Plan- FY2016,” *Home Forward*, pg. 32 (<http://www.homeforward.org/sites/default/files/FY2016MTWPlan-Submitted12-01-14.pdf>)

<sup>69</sup> “Top 10 Projects: Bud Clark Commons,” *The American Institute of Architects* (<http://www.aiatopten.org/node/402>)

operational costs of the site are unknown, *Home Forward* receives a large majority of their funding from HUD as a result of their membership in the Moving to Work Plan (see Appendix 2). It is important to note that *Home Forward* has also been successful in their ability to develop and innovate with the Blended Subsidy Program to use Federal funds to support low-income housing units.

### **Implementation Feasibility and Considerations**

The innovative solutions championed by *Home Forward* are largely attributable to the funding they receive under the Congress-approved Moving to Work Program. Based on an interview with a *Home Forward* staff member, their competency around development helps bring in tax credits and additional subsidies to make their projects affordable. While Oakland faces a different rental market and a more restrictive budget, this case study illuminates the potential benefits of diversifying funding streams and working collaboratively with developers. One relevant suggestion for Oakland's PATH program is to budget for a grant writer position in an effort to access more streams of funding.

## Case Study #2: Nashville, TN<sup>70</sup>

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*How's Nashville is a public-private partnership in which landlords set aside housing units. The program works towards the twin goals of ending veteran and chronic homelessness. Since 2013, How's Nashville has housed more than 900 people.*

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### Overview

*How's Nashville* is a campaign focused on ending veteran and chronic homelessness in Nashville, Tennessee.<sup>71</sup> The program offers an example of a solution that makes use of existing services and housing sources to increase the housing stock available to homeless adults. This model involves the centralized recruitment of private landlords, en masse, to participate in a countywide effort to dramatically increase the obtainment and retention rates of housing, mostly for chronically homeless individuals. The Metropolitan Homeless Commission (MHC) serves as the public entity spearheading and guiding the campaign. The Commission was created in 2011 to implement Nashville's 10-Year Campaign to End Homelessness. MHC designed the project to follow a collective action model, an innovation in interagency collaboration involving a concerted effort to avoid typical institutional barriers to social problem solving. The *How's Nashville* campaign launched in June 2013 and has since housed about 1,000 individuals using new and existing permanent housing stock to date. Over thirty partner agencies participate in the implementation of the campaign, which makes use of the strengths of each entity.

### Eligibility and Service Model

In order to reach the target population of veteran and chronically homeless individuals, the campaign kicked off with a comprehensive registry of sheltered and unsheltered homeless, complete with photo and a health vulnerability index. Housing is allocated over time with priority given to the most vulnerable unhoused individuals.

Outreach case managers from existing nonprofit programs work with homeless individuals to apply for benefits and connect to housing. These workers implement

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<sup>70</sup> This case study is based on the How's Nashville [website](#) and on interviews (dates indicated) and email communications with MHC Executive Director Will Connelly (4/1/15), Assistant Director Judy Tackett (4/7/15), and participating landlord Kirby Davis (3/25/15 and 4/23/15); in addition to email communications with all three.

<sup>71</sup> How's Nashville is the Nashville outpost of the national 100,000 Homes campaign and the Zero: 2016 campaign orchestrated by Community Solutions.

the Critical Time Intervention (CTI) model, which has been shown in randomized clinical trials to have sizable and lasting housing successes for adult veterans and people experiencing severe mental illness and co-occurring substance use.<sup>72</sup>

Private landlords provide most of the housing stock. Participating landlords agree to set aside some portion of their units for housing individuals referred through the centralized vulnerability list. Kirby Davis, a large-scale Nashville property owner and manager with a personal interest in the betterment of the community, was integral in the setup of the program. Davis had served as president of the local and state apartment associations and is respected in the for-profit property owner community. He convened the largest property owners in the area and made a largely moral case for participating in the effort.

Landlords forego rent that they might otherwise receive in order to participate in the program. Instead, they receive either 30% of any income that tenants have, or, for tenants with housing vouchers, the fair-market rental rate via the vouchers (Section 8 or VASH).

Landlords also provide the following accommodations for program participants:

- Background check fees are waived
- Credit check is waived
- Alternative screening criteria are used
- \$100 security deposit
- Landlords are encouraged to be lenient initially, or proactively helpful in helping tenants to adapt to indoor living

In return, landlords receive no financial incentives—only the following assurances:

- 24-hour case management call line will be available for addressing landlord concerns with participating tenants
- Evidence-based case management model (Critical Time Intervention) will be available to tenants for 9–12 months after move-in
- Arsonists and sex offenders will be completely screened out
- Renters sign regular leases and will be expected to abide by the terms
- Landlords will have the final say in accepting tenants

## Design Features

### **Risk reduction funding pool**

This program-specific insurance may be used to reimburse landlords in the event that participants damage the apartment beyond the value of the security deposit.

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<sup>72</sup> U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2013). Critical Time Intervention. *USICH*. [http://usich.gov/usich\\_resources/solutions/explore/critical\\_time\\_intervention\\_cti](http://usich.gov/usich_resources/solutions/explore/critical_time_intervention_cti)

### **Case management for newly housed residents**

This element is considered critical both among service providers and also among participating landlords. According to the essential principles of the Housing First approach, case management cannot be required as a condition of housing tenure. It is, however, important that support be *available* to those program participants wishing to use it. Further, case management intensity can be scaled appropriately according to need.

### **24-hour landlord liaison call line**

This call line represents the Metropolitan Homeless Commission's commitment to providing all necessary services to respond to crises and keep participants housed. This removes a potential barrier to landlords who might be hesitant to participate, and allows them to focus solely on providing housing.

### **Monthly stakeholder meetings with frontline workers**

Monthly meetings bring together project administrators and case managers connecting participants to housing from the participating service providers. These meetings are an integral part of keeping front-line workers in line with overall goals, in reporting progress according to monthly reports, and in facilitating networking and case conferencing.

### **Monthly breakfasts for participants**

These meetings facilitate peer mentoring among recently housed individuals and community building. They are also an opportunity for MHC to regularly hear feedback on the program.

## **Funding and Costs**

As *How's Nashville* is dependent on the existing service infrastructure, much of the funding is effectively the usual funding sources for participating nonprofits.

Funding sources include local government, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding for move-in costs up to 1,000 per person, and an additional federal source. Additional grants currently in use by the Metropolitan Homeless Commission include \$1,518,000 in partial 2-year budget. This figure includes \$240,000 in tax-deductible private donations to MHC directly; a public fundraising event generated additional funding for the initiative. In addition, the local housing authority has allocated up to 18 Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers per month for *How's Nashville* participants. See Appendix 3 for more information on funding resources.

## **Implementation Feasibility Considerations**

### **Applicability to Oakland: Benefits**

In contrast to other Housing First options analyzed in this report, this diffuse housing stock absorption model would allow for a relatively quick startup. The

model relies on existing housing infrastructure; no new construction or rental payment system is needed. Additionally, any of the design features listed could in theory be applied independently to Oakland's current network of permanent housing.

Additionally, Oakland Housing Authority has been willing to prioritize resources for homeless individuals, which is a critical component of the Nashville model.

### **Applicability to Oakland: Drawbacks**

Unlike Oakland, Nashville's city and county government are one entity. The Metro Homeless Commission effectively has jurisdiction over the county and is more readily connected to cost offsets from health care savings, sheriff's department savings, etc. Thus the fiscal or political feasibility may not be as comparable, as a cost-savings argument would not hold for Oakland itself.

Moreover, this model is reliant on the goodwill of landlords, or on the clout of influential property owners working with the city. The model also assumes that housing vouchers or other housing subsidies can be secured for most participants; only a small minority (an estimated 10%) of participating landlords are truly foregoing most of the market rent on apartments they contribute. Further, the model relies on large landlords with the financial flexibility to set aside 1% of their units for this program. As this report does not include an analysis of Oakland's rental landscape, further analysis is needed to demonstrate comparability.

Additionally, Nashville tried and failed to accommodate the preferences of prospective residents with respect to location within Nashville, but found that the scarcity of units was not conducive to this accommodation. According to input from Oakland outreach workers, however, choice over housing location would be critical to the success of any similar effort in Oakland.

Relatedly, Oakland landlords would be taking a risk in participating, as California property insurers can drop property owners or raise insurance rates on them for accepting tenants paying subsidized rates.<sup>73</sup>The landlords of *How's Nashville* faced no comparable problem, as they were able to verify that no rate increase would take place.

Lastly, the campaign reports an insufficient number of case managers available to work with participants after move-in, although case management is not required. This issue would have to be addressed if Oakland were to implement such a model.

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<sup>73</sup> Karr, Theresa (04/24/2015), Personal Interview.

## Case Study #3: Seattle, WA

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*Seattle's DESC provides permanent supportive housing to nearly 1,000 formerly homeless individuals. Improved health outcomes for the individuals as well as improved outcomes for society have been demonstrated.*

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### Overview

Founded in 1979, *Downtown Emergency Services Center* (DESC) shifted their model of homelessness service provision in 1994 when they opened their first permanent supportive housing building. Since then, DESC has built nine additional buildings, has one currently in development, and recently signed an agreement for their twelfth building. Today, DESC owns and manages nearly 1,000 units of supportive housing. In addition, DESC's case managers have access to Shelter-Plus-Care and Section 8 housing subsidies that have enabled the organization to identify approximately 300 scattered-site units across Seattle. Each year, DESC moves hundreds of homeless people off the streets of Seattle and into permanent supportive housing while providing additional support services to more than 7,000 individuals from the most vulnerable street-based populations, particularly those with mental illness and substance use challenges.

DESC has worked with the City of Seattle to ensure that the planning code includes the ability for them to build supportive housing across the city. Prior to selecting any site, DESC works with their Property Development Director, who is a land use attorney, to ensure that the site falls under the land use codes. Afterwards, they notify and educate neighbors. They also rely on protections under the Fair Housing Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. "Never say you're going to do a project and then don't follow-through with it [because of neighborhood push back]. If you cede to one group, it will inspire the next neighborhood all the more when you want to develop a project there," said Bill Hobson, Executive Director of DESC, whom the authors interviewed for this section.<sup>74</sup>

### DESC's Model

DESC's Housing First Principles:

1. Housing is a basic human right, not a reward for clinical success.
2. Once the chaos of homelessness is eliminated from a person's life, clinical and social stabilization occur faster and are more enduring.

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<sup>74</sup> Personal interview, Bill Hobson, (March 31, 2015).

Seven Standards of DESC's Housing First Approach:

1. Move people into housing directly from streets and shelters without preconditions of treatment acceptance or compliance.
2. The provider is obligated to bring robust support services to the housing. These services are predicated on assertive engagement, not coercion.
3. Continued tenancy is not dependent on participation in services.
4. Units are targeted to the most disabled and vulnerable homeless members of the community.
5. Embraces harm reduction approach to addictions rather than mandating abstinence. At the same time, the provider must be prepared to support resident commitments to recovery.
6. Residents must have leases and tenant protections under the law.
7. Can be implemented as either a project-based or scattered site model.

To improve on success rates, DESC residents have access to supportive services 24 hours/day, 7 days/week. Services include the following:

- State-licensed mental health and chemical dependency treatment
- On-site health care services
- Daily meals and weekly outing to food banks
- Case management and payee services
- Medication monitoring
- Weekly community building activities

DESC provides housing to the most vulnerable street-based populations in Seattle, namely individuals with mental illness and/or physical ailment, and/or those who are the highest utilizers of crisis services. To ensure that housing units are provided to their target population, DESC employs a standardized vulnerability assessment. Across their housing developments, 100% of residents have a mental disorder, and approximately 45% have a co-occurring substance addiction diagnosis.

One of the most publicized housing developments under DESC's purview—*1811 Eastlake*—focuses on high utilizers of crisis services who are also diagnosed with chronic alcohol addiction. *1811 Eastlake* houses 75 formerly homeless men and women. Residents are not required to abstain from consuming alcohol and are not required to engage with supportive services. Instead, *1811 Eastlake*, like all of DESC's properties, employs what they call assertive engagement, by which on-site service providers frequently offer services without coercion to access those services. Evaluations of *1811 Eastlake*, as well as other DESC housing developments, have yielded the following data:

- *1811 Eastlake* saved taxpayers \$4 million in its first year alone. In the year prior to its opening, high crisis service utilizers cost an average of \$86,062 per

person. One year after providing housing at *1811 Eastlake*, the average resident cost \$13,440.<sup>75</sup>

- In the year prior to being housed at *1811 Eastlake*, median costs per participant were \$4,066 per person per month (jail, detox centers, hospital-based medical services, alcohol and drug programs, and emergency medical services). Monthly median costs dropped to \$1,492 and \$958 monthly at six and 12 months following housing, respectively.
- During the first six months of operation at *1811 Eastlake*, Seattle/King County saw a cost savings of 53% per resident compared to a control group who were on a housing waitlist.
- In the first year of residence at *1811 Eastlake*, alcohol use dropped by one-third.
- 84% of Housing First residents retained housing at 12 months. Half spent every night in their residence while half spent some time in other living environments.<sup>76</sup>
- Only 23% of participants returned to homelessness during 2-year follow-up. Alcohol and other drug use, physical and mental illness, and homelessness history were not predictive of who returned to homelessness. Active drinkers were more likely to stay in housing projects than nondrinkers.<sup>77</sup>
- For each month of living in Housing First, participants' average alcohol consumption decreased 3%. The exposure effect was also associated with an additional 6% increased odds of a participant not drinking to intoxication for each month in Housing First. Each month was also associated with a 2% reduction in symptoms associated with alcohol dependence.<sup>78</sup>

## Costs and Financing

For the purposes of our analysis, we asked Bill Hobson, Executive Director of DESC, to provide cost estimates and expectations regarding financing for their new building currently under construction. Our assumption is that this point estimate will be most proximal to the costs of constructing new permanent supportive housing in Oakland. Please note that many limitations are present, including different housing markets and regulations of those markets that will most likely inflate the price to Oakland.

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<sup>75</sup> Larimer, M., Malone, D., Garner, M., Atkins, D., Burlingham, B., Lonczak, H. & Marlatt, G. (n.d.). Health Care And Public Service Use And Costs Before And After Provision Of Housing For Chronically Homeless Persons With Severe Alcohol Problems. *JAMA: The Journal of the American Medical Association*, 1349–1357.

<sup>76</sup> Pearson, C., Montgomery, A., & Locke, G. (n.d.). Housing Stability Among Homeless Individuals With Serious Mental Illness Participating In Housing First Programs. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 404–417.

<sup>77</sup> Collins, S., Malone, D., & Clifasefi, S. (n.d.). Housing Retention in Single-Site Housing First for Chronically Homeless Individuals With Severe Alcohol Problems. *American Journal of Public Health*, S269-S274.

<sup>78</sup> Collins, S., Malone, D., Clifasefi, S., Ginzler, J., Garner, M., & Burlingham, B. (n.d.). Project-Based Housing First for Chronically Homeless Individuals With Alcohol Problems: Within-Subjects Analyses of 2-Year Alcohol Trajectories. *American Journal of Public Health*, 511–519.

Total Cost: **\$17 million**

- Sources of Funding:
  - Seattle City Housing Levy: \$4.5 million
  - State Housing Trust Fund: \$1.0 million
  - King County Housing Fund: \$0.5 million
  - McKinney: \$0.5 million
  - Low Income Housing Tax Credit: \$10.5 million

Seattle's operational financing is projected to be the following:

- McKinney: \$850,000
- Tenant rents (30% of income): \$210,000 (projection)
- Small City/State Operational and Maintenance grants bringing the total operational budget (including services): \$1.2 million

## Implementation Feasibility

### Applicability to Oakland: Benefits

The primary indicator of applicability is that stakeholders we interviewed expressed similar values to those articulated by stakeholders in Oakland. In particular, Seattle values Housing First as a model wherein participants are provided housing without precondition. Wrap-around services are offered through assertive engagement. Substance use treatment success is not a barometer for service provision, and participants are allowed to use substances in the privacy of their own homes. In fact, Bill Hobson, Executive Director of DESC, argued against the terminology *wet house*, saying that when people who are housed through other means drink in their apartments, society does not refer to it as a wet house; we refer to the housing of previously unsheltered populations as wet houses out of the same source of disrespect as other characterizations of unsheltered and previously unsheltered populations. The report's authors heard all of these values expressed throughout our interviews with Oakland's stakeholders.

### Applicability to Oakland: Drawbacks

Seattle has spent more than 20 years building nearly 1,000 units of permanent supportive housing. They accomplished this feat, in part, by working with city bodies to ensure the planning codes allowed for such use. Seattle's planning codes enable DESC to select sites they know are permissible from the beginning. Our evaluation did not include an analysis of Oakland planning and land use codes; however, we spoke with stakeholders who underscored the political difficulties that sanctioned encampments and permanent supportive housing would have with the Planning Commission. Further study and potential advocacy will be required to move forward with planning large-scale permanent supportive housing projects.

Our analysis also did not include an examination of how other laws, beyond local land use codes, would affect the development of permanent supportive housing. For example, the California Environmental Quality Act has a reputation of being used to thwart undesirable housing developments. Oakland may also have rules that allow for housed resident appeal of projects that delay, and sometimes halt, development of housing. Further study and potential advocacy will be required in this arena as well. In addition, Seattle's financing structure for building permanent affordable housing includes substantial contributions from the State of Washington. Since the defunding of redevelopment agencies in California, state funding may not be available, and more creative means of financing may be required.

Another component of Seattle's success has been working with landlords and leveraging Shelter-Plus-Care and Section 8 housing financing to house approximately 300 formerly unsheltered people in scattered site units. While we spoke with several stakeholders about available financing, our analysis does not include a deep dive into how current financing structures available to Oakland can be leveraged to house people in scattered site units. However, our interviews suggested that fewer landlords are accepting Section 8 tenants because of the incentives of the booming rental market and the disincentives of Section 8, including upgrading buildings to federal standards and affording rental protections to lower paying tenants. If this is the case, the financing Seattle employs for scattered site units may not be applicable, and identifying additional incentives for landlords may be necessary to house people in scattered site units. In addition, a cursory internet search on city-landlord relationships indicate some degree of animosity between landlords and the city of Oakland, which may frustrate the relationship development necessary to bring scattered site units on board.

# EVALUATION

# EVALUATION OF ALTERNATIVES

## Analytic Framework

To rank our criteria in order of importance and arrive at our policy recommendations, the authors used the following evaluation matrix. Using the data obtained from our interviews and analyses, we score each of the alternatives using the following weighting system. Weights reflect city stakeholders' stated preferences about relative importance of each criterion.

| Criteria                            | Status Quo | Alternative #1:<br>City-Sanctioned<br>Encampment | Alternative #2:<br>Housing First<br>Innovations |
|-------------------------------------|------------|--|---|
| Effectiveness (.50)                 | 1          | 2  | 2   |
| Equity (.30)                        | 1          | 3  | 3   |
| Implementation<br>Feasibility (.20) | 3          | 2.5  | 1   |
| <b>Total:</b>                       | <b>1.4</b> | <b>2.4</b>                                       | <b>2.1</b>                                      |

**Key: Low=1, Medium=2, High=3**

Each of the three policy alternatives were evaluated for their effectiveness, equity implications, and implementation feasibility (criteria defined on pages #18–19). For each criterion, we assign a numerical value that captures that policy's performance. Total scores sum the scores by criterion by their corresponding weights.<sup>79</sup> A relatively high score corresponds to a preferable alternative.

## Oakland's Status Quo – Current Costs of Homeless Encampment Abatement

### Effectiveness: Low

In evaluating the effectiveness of the status quo, we analyze the degree to which it addresses the immediate problems associated with homeless encampments: housed resident complaints, human health concerns of housed and unhoused residents, and efficient use of City resources in addressing the causes of homeless encampments. Second, while this analysis is concerned with short-term amelioration of the concerns around homeless encampments, we also consider the long-term effectiveness of the status quo as it contributes to the pathway to housing.

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<sup>79</sup> Total scores are calculated by multiplying each criterion's score by its respective weight and adding these weighted sub-scores together. So, the total score for column 2 is calculated as  $2*(0.5) + 3*(0.3) + 2.5*(0.2) = 2.4$ . This score would indicate that Oakland officials could expect a City Sanctioned campground to perform the best as measured by effectiveness, equity and implementation feasibility.

## **Housed Resident Complaints**

Encampment sweeps by Oakland Public Works (OPW) are triggered by housed resident or stakeholder complaints about the establishment or existence of a homeless encampment. OPW posts a 72-hour notice, Operation Dignity dispatches outreach services, and the camp is cleared after the 72-hour warning period. The Oakland Police Department's practice of providing follow-up enforcement at recently cleared sites, while effective at deterring resettlement, has not been incorporated into the Standard Operating Procedures and is not currently consistent or sustainable.

*Short-term:* The observed Standard Operating Procedure of the city is effective at responding to the most recent housed resident complaints in the short-term as the mechanism of response is directly related to a complaint being made.

*Long-term:* The current procedure is not effective at preventing camps from reestablishing themselves after a sweep in the long-term because homeless individuals have little choice but to move to a different site. Oakland's encampments exist because encampment residents face barriers to housing and shelter services; absent other alternatives for homeless individuals, camps simply re-emerge or relocate shortly after a sweep. Thus, it is reasonable to believe that there will be no mitigation of housed resident complaints under the status quo. While increased enforcement has been effective at preventing encampment residents from returning to a specific site within a 1- to 2-day window, it has not been observed to decrease the number of homeless encampments throughout the city. Therefore, short-term effectiveness is not currently translating into long-term solutions for Oakland's homeless residents.

**Given this analysis, we rate the status quo, as it relates to reducing the number of resident complaints, as "low,"** as the city can reasonably expect the number of complaints to remain consistent although differentiated by location. Resident complaints will likely continue to emerge as camps rotate between and within districts, though some communities may be more vocal than others.

## **Human Health Hazards**

The city is concerned with the human health hazards associated with camps, as defined by accumulated waste, human waste, and drug paraphernalia, for both encampment residents and neighboring housed residents. A primary measure of effectiveness is the degree to which encampment abatement Standard Operating Procedures reduce human health hazards in the short and long-term.

*Short-term:* The Public Works staff is highly effective at resolving human health concerns in the short-term. In responding to a complaint, they clean a camp and remove any hazardous materials, creating a safer space for encampment residents who may return to the site as well as neighbors who reside nearby. However, the

encampment residents themselves are most susceptible to human health hazards as they reside directly in the camp. It is important to note that many encampments have an internal process of cleanup in which residents gather and dispose of garbage to avoid complaints from housed neighbors and to maintain their own living space.

*Long-term:* Negative health outcomes<sup>80</sup> and high degrees of morbidity<sup>81</sup> are highly correlated with homelessness, so homelessness itself is a human health concern for the city. While encampment cleanups reduce the prevalence of immediate health hazards and arguably improve health by clearing dangerous materials, they do not address the long-term health consequences of being without shelter. While the health outcomes of *sanctioned* encampment residents have not been studied in comparison to those of *unsanctioned* camp residents, it is clear that the status quo does not improve the long-term health outcomes of any encampment residents. The status quo policy is not designed to address the causes of homelessness, but rather to ameliorate blight, a symptom of homelessness.

Therefore, the failure of the status quo to address long-term health outcomes of homelessness is a result of the limitations of the policy design. While the intention of the status quo policy is not to solve the problem of homelessness, it would be an inefficient use of staff resources if it were to do nothing to ameliorate homelessness. According to our interviews with encampment residents and outreach staff, the status quo arguably undermines progress towards health improvements by disrupting residents' sense of stability (i.e., being able to safely leave their belongings for fear of sweeps and comply with health related appointments).

**Given these concerns, we rate the status quo as it relates to improving human health as “medium”** Short-term effectiveness at removing immediate health hazards is compromised by the policy's long-term inability to address the root problem of homelessness.

### **City Staff Resources**

Effective use of city staff resources necessitates a Standard Operating Procedure that uses resources more efficiently. For example, if city staff clear an encampment, doing so can be considered an effective use of resources if it reduces the number of camps in the long-term.

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<sup>80</sup> Lebrun-Harris, L. A., Baggett, T. P., Jenkins, D. M., Sripipatana, A., Sharma, R., Hayashi, A. S., et al. (2013). Health status and health care experiences among homeless patients in federally supported health centers: Findings from the 2009 Patient Survey. *Health Services Research, 48*(3), 992–1017. doi:10.1111/1475-6773.12009

<sup>81</sup> O'Connell, J. J. (2005). *Premature mortality in homeless populations: A review of the literature*. Nashville: National Health Care for the Homeless Council, Inc. Retrieved from <http://santabarbarastreetmedicine.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/PrematureMortalityFinal.pdf>.

The literature supports that the most effective solution to homelessness is increasing access to affordable housing. The procedure of clearing and cleaning camps is ineffective, then, in that the approach does not relate or contribute to a solution to homelessness. According to our interviews with both outreach staff and encampment residents, the cycle of sweeps may actually serve to undermine residents' efforts to connect to housing and job services as they need to stay and watch their belongings to ensure their belongings are not lost in a sweep. The status quo is arguably one of the barriers that homeless individuals face to finding housing; it keeps them in a constant cycle of disruption that prevents long-term planning.

**Therefore, the status quo as it relates to efficient use of city staff resources is “low” in effectiveness** as the cyclical nature of the policy prevents progress towards achieving the goal of reducing the number of homeless encampments.

**Overall, we rate the status quo “low” in terms of its ability to effectively create a pathway to housing.**

### **Equity: Low**

**We rate the status quo as being “low” on the equity scale for the reason that homeless individuals bear the primary costs, with no corresponding positive tradeoff.**

Beyond being a zero-sum game, with housed residents and businesses benefiting at the expense of encampment residents, this alternative is typically a *negative-sum* game: Oakland Public Works (OPW) spends resources on clearing an encampment only to have it relocate and possibly split into multiple encampments, usually with no lasting effect on the housed community overall. Evicted residents bear the primary costs of this alternative, in addition to OPW. Camp clearings are disruptive in themselves. The trend of cleanups produces expectations that increase homeless individuals' focus on short-term needs and immediate coping strategies, rather than permitting encampment residents a level of stability that might allow for planning along an extended time horizon. Thus the short-term (assuming eventual resettlement nearby) interests of housed residents and businesses are prioritized above the short-term and long-term interests of encampment residents.

Among housed residents and businesses, the status quo ostensibly offers relief from the accompanying nuisances of encampments when encampments relocate from one spot to another. This nuisance rotation in theory provides some measure of distributional equity. However, according to interviews with the Oakland Police Department (OPD), districts with less criminal activity are able to devote more energy to issuing complaints regarding quality-of-life crimes, and so may receive

OPW attention disproportionate to the quantity of problem encampments in the area.

Among unsheltered residents, the current approach, by design, targets outreach service efforts at encampments that generate complaints. Over time, the likely result is that the most disruptive encampment residents, or those located in areas most apt file complaints, receive more opportunities to connect to services, including housing. This outcome could be considered inequitable in that homeless individuals whose presence or activity constitutes nuisance for their housed neighbors, including through illegal actions, receive more opportunities to connect to services via outreach worker; fewer services are available for individuals who generate less attention, or are simply more isolated from residences and businesses.

On the other hand, this outcome may be considered equitable along a vulnerability dimension. While disruptiveness does not perfectly correspond to vulnerability, one might assume that many individuals are disruptive due to substance use or mental illness, factors that also correspond to vulnerability. Along a health vulnerability dimension, then, the fact that such individuals receive more engagement efforts is a positive outcome.

Framing equity in terms of long-term outcomes also yields a “low” equity rating, for similar reasons. This rating simply reflects the fact that there is no direct line to available housing as an immediate recourse to encampment eviction. A lack of available resources means encampment residents are no closer to permanent housing after an encampment clearing. Accordingly, housed residents and businesses are no closer to a permanent solution to encampment-related nuisances.

### **Implementation Feasibility: High**

Given the operational reality of the status quo, implementation feasibility is defined as the likelihood that the status quo can continue. Based on our interviews with city stakeholders of the status quo, it is clear that the procedure of clearing and cleaning encampments is fine-tuned and sustainable, assuming that funding for Public Works and Operation Dignity remains consistent.

## Alternative #1: City-Sanctioned Campground

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*In this section, we discuss how an official City campground aimed at serving homeless residents would rank on criteria of effectiveness, equity, and implementation feasibility. Overall score: 2.4 (Alternative #2 ranks 2.1)*

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### Overview

In evaluating the likelihood for success of a city-sanctioned campground for unsheltered homeless residents, Oakland city leaders and stakeholders will be chiefly concerned with the extent to which such a policy proposal will achieve its goals. Specifically, this section evaluates the extent to which a city-sanctioned encampment policy would (i) reduce the burden on city departments associated with repeatedly removing/cleaning encampments; as well as (ii) ensure that homeless individuals are provided with sufficient services to not only meet their survival needs, but also achieve better long-term housing and health outcomes. We also recognize that serving Oakland’s entire encampment population in one or even several encampments is likely not possible, given the sheer size of the City’s encampment population. Therefore, our projections below should be considered *marginal improvements* from the status quo (in the context of a pilot campground, for example).

### Effectiveness: Medium

Our interviews with Oakland stakeholders and encampment residents suggest that the effectiveness of a city-sanctioned campground depends critically on whether Oakland decides to pursue a *co-opted* encampment or an *accommodated* encampment. Recall that a *co-opted* encampment is a city-run, shelter-style encampment with formal social services, while an *accommodated* encampment provides legal recognition to existing encampments, but does not provide or require any additional social services than those already provided. For the purposes of this analysis, we consider both approaches when weighing the effectiveness of the policy, and score the city-sanctioned campground model as “**medium**” on the effectiveness criterion.

**Goal: Pre-empting resident complaints, reducing city staff time and fiscal burden associated with cleanups, and avoiding offloading to other jurisdictions**

From the City of Oakland’s point of view, homeless encampments represent a multi-departmental resource drain. Of principal importance, according to the data we

received and the interviews we conducted, is reducing the number of encampment cleanup requests and cleanup site visits. We find that either an *accommodation* model or a *co-optation* model would be effective at achieving these goals.

Without a concurrent public education campaign to educate Oakland's housed residents about the creation of the sanctioned camp(s), the city might not actually experience a decrease in complaints received in the short-run. In other words, residents may continue to call in cleanup requests for the campground if they are unaware that the city has formally sanctioned it. The examples of *Tent Cities #3* and *#4* in King County, WA present an excellent case study to this effect: housed resident complaints to the City of Woodinville actually *increased* soon after a church-hosted campground was approved, but these eventually receded as neighboring (housed) residents became familiar with the policy and saw that there were no increases in crime or other quality-of-life violations.<sup>82</sup>

We note that the number of complaints received would depend heavily on the location of the encampment. Camps that are generally out of the residential public's eye (in light-industrial areas of the city, for example) tend to receive fewer resident complaints than those in a prominent, visible location.<sup>83</sup> Siting the encampment in a remote part of the city does pose an important trade-off, though, as residents may be less likely to use the encampment if it is far removed from downtown services.<sup>84</sup> A number of our interviews with Oakland's encampment homeless individuals, as well as with Operation Dignity and the Trust Clinic, corroborate the importance of considering this tradeoff. Even if the number of complaints received does not improve, however, the policy would most certainly reduce the administrative drain associated with encampment abatement, since the Public Works and/or Police Departments would no longer be responsible for removing any sanctioned encampment(s). Either encampment option, by granting a legal place to be for the encampment homeless population and thus reducing their transience, will likely reduce offloading the problem onto neighboring jurisdictions.

As for the abatement of graffiti, illegal dumping, or other criminal activity, we believe that a co-opted encampment would be more effective than an accommodated encampment in relieving administrative burden. For example, Ontario's co-opted THSA encampment saw declines in peripheral drug-related and other criminal activity after hiring private security, installing heavy floodlights, and enclosing the area with a locked and gated fence that could only be opened from the inside at night. An accommodated encampment, in contrast, which has minimal city oversight, would be less effective at reducing associated blight and criminal activity

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> cf. Heben, A. (2014). *Tent city urbanism: From self-organized camps to tiny house villages* (1st edition). Eugene, OR: Village Collaborative.

<sup>84</sup> National Coalition for the Homeless. (2010). *Tent cities in America: A Pacific Coast report*. Retrieved from <http://nationalhomeless.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Tent-Cities-Report-FINAL-3-10-10.pdf>

unless it is also accompanied by a high degree of internal, resident-run governance. Our interviews with Oakland encampment residents did not suggest that this type of governance was common in existing encampments.

Therefore, precise projections of reductions in administrative burden<sup>85</sup> are variable, and depend on the type of encampment (accommodated or co-opted). Given that the city is concerned with reducing the number of blight-related complaints, we score this policy as “**medium**” in effectiveness on reducing administrative burden.

**Goal: Ensuring adequate health and safety standards, as well as better long-term housing outcomes, for encampment residents**

A successful encampment depends critically on the extent to which homeless residents will participate in the campground and whether their long-term health and housing outcomes are improved. Again, scoring this policy on these public health-related criteria depends critically on the type of encampment that is sanctioned (co-opted or accommodated).

Many of our interviews with Oakland encampment residents indicated that having access to toilets, running water, and other basic hygiene was a foremost desire for a sanctioned encampment. Operation Dignity corroborated this sentiment, adding concerns about hypodermic needles as well. If Oakland provided either a co-opted or accommodated encampment site with basic sanitation services, stakeholders would likely expect to see an improvement in public health outcomes for the unhoused community.

Once again, though, public health outcomes would vary depending on the type of encampment Oakland implements. Accommodated encampment(s) necessarily reach a wider variety of encampment residents because they have minimal government-imposed rules and regulations. Those who have rejected shelters or other services would be more likely to use such a site. Interviews with Oakland Public Works suggest that a non-trivial portion of the encampment population has rejected outreach, shelter, or other supportive services for a variety of reasons; they generally prefer to be left alone for the time being. If these residents had access to sanitation and hygiene, then Oakland could expect a reduction in infectious disease, unclean needle use, and other public health problems.

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<sup>85</sup> Though we were not specifically charged with evaluating potential costs savings in this report, our analyses nonetheless allow us to provide some rough estimates of potential fiscal effects of running a sanctioned encampment. Data we received from the Public Works Department suggest that the total cost of encampment abatement in 2013 was just over \$25,000 (see Figure 7), which was the per-month cost to the City of Ontario of operating THSA between 2007 and 2014. Cost savings to Oakland as a result of decreased encampment abatement, then, may be offset by the cost of actually running the encampment. An accommodated campground (which does not provide security and case management, as THSA did) would certainly cost much less (security alone at THSA cost \$11,000/month to the City of Ontario).

A co-opted campground, on the other hand, provides a wider array of case management and other supportive services, but might be more likely to alienate the hardest-to-serve encampment residents, who are unable or unwilling to engage with any form of institutionalized service-provision model. Oakland thus runs the risk of “creaming” its clientele with this type of encampment (a phenomenon for which the co-opted campgrounds like *Camp Pinellas Hope* in Florida have been criticized.)<sup>86</sup> Improvements in health conditions, therefore, are likely to be “**medium**” for this policy—some, but not all, public health concerns will be positively impacted.

Finally, nearly every city official we interviewed expressed concern about long-term housing outcomes for encampment residents, recognizing that housing is ultimately the solution to homelessness. We address specific policy proposals pursuant to this concern in Alternative #2. Importantly, Oakland’s housing market is extremely restricted right now, so an interim solution of some kind will be necessary. **Sanctioned encampments provide one potential short-term solution that might be implemented while longer-term solutions are being discussed.**

Regardless of the type of campground model Oakland employs, we believe a sanctioned encampment will likely provide some benefits for the housing prospects of its residents. An accommodated campground policy, while not formally tied to housing-oriented case management, may nonetheless provide marginal benefits to residents by increasing their stability. Our interviews suggest that currently, Oakland encampment residents will voluntarily miss service appointments if they fear their belongings may be thrown out during an encampment sweep. Having a place to permanently keep belongings may allow residents to better engage with services, with a possible long-term effects on housing. On the other hand, should the city move forward with a service-intensive co-opted campground, case management services can formally be offered to the currently under-served. Also, outreach workers and case managers will be able to deliver housing-oriented services more efficiently, as a stable campground for clients will reduce the time and cost often required just to locate transient clients (a transaction cost emphasized by our service provider interviewees). However, for reasons previously stated, a co-opted campground model might alienate the hardest-to-serve, service-averse encampment residents, reducing overall effectiveness. Furthermore, interviews with the Trust Clinic and Operation Dignity reveal underlying concerns that the creation of a sanctioned campground may distract city officials from also continuing to invest in long-term housing solutions for the homeless—a concern that has been mirrored in the academic literature.<sup>87</sup> We thus believe that a sanctioned campground will be “**medium**” in effectively creating pathways to housing.

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<sup>86</sup> Heben, A. (2014). *Tent city urbanism: From self-organized camps to tiny house villages* (1st edition). Eugene, OR: Village Collaborative.

<sup>87</sup> Loftus-Farren, Z. (2011).

## Equity: High

The City of Oakland initially began exploring alternative means of serving the city's homeless community as it became clear that current abatement strategies have proven to be costly and ineffective. While the city considers housing the homeless as the most effective and equitable alternative to clearing encampments, city officials need a short-term solution to address the cyclical problem of recurring abatements.

Finding a more equitable distribution of resources while still meeting the needs of various stakeholder groups will be a challenging, but essential consideration of these short-term solutions. This section will conduct an evaluation of the needs and impacts of each policy on various stakeholder groups, including Oakland's housed residents, as well as businesses and other property owners, including the city and the CalTrans' District 4, which includes Alameda County.

Whether a policy alternative can be deemed equitable requires that we compare these groups to one another and balance their individual needs. Namely, this section seeks to answer the question, "Can we improve the wellbeing of homeless individuals in Oakland, without making other groups considerably worse off?" Thus, equity is defined as a measure of distributional consequences across various stakeholder groups; the criterion was evaluated using the parameters listed below.

### **Access to basic human rights for Oakland's homeless residents**

The city's goal in exploring a city-sanctioned campground as a way to better serve its homeless community is to fulfill a number of fundamental human rights that are either currently difficult or impossible to access for this group. These include access to food and water, personal safety, medical care and basic hygiene like showers, laundry, and feminine hygiene-related items, shelter stability and freedom from harassment by city officials, as well as freedom from hazardous "fence-line" areas that are close to industry and transportation routes. Indeed, the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* holds that "everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including...housing and...necessary social services."<sup>88</sup>

Should Oakland pursue a pilot program in which it sanctions a campground, city officials may encounter issues of within-homeless group inequity. Since the project would only be able to serve a limited number of individuals, the first group of homeless residents to utilize the camp would by definition be better off than others.

- An *accommodated* campground in which the city formally recognizes an existing encampment (and may or may not provide utilities and other social services) could lead to real or perceived inequalities between racial or

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<sup>88</sup> Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, November 1948

cultural groups who are not served during the first round of campground use, or who were not part of the previously established camp.

- A *co-opted* encampment model in which the city plays an expanded role in establishing resources for health, sanitation, security, governance, and social services linked with an official campground would better serve various groups of individuals, but might in turn alienate the hardest-to-serve individuals who would see the City's involvement as prohibitive.

A sanctioned campground's ability to fulfill some, if not all, of these basic needs would greatly improve the health and wellbeing of Oakland's homeless community regardless of which group is served at the outset, and would ensure a "high" rating for this parameter.

### **Effects for housed residents of Oakland**

An expensive rental market, in conjunction with continuously increasing local home prices and a list of other influential non-housing factors, has led to an ever-increasing barrier for low-income and homeless individuals seeking to make the transition to a permanent residence. The issue is compounded by the fact that Oakland's homeowners and other housed residents often have very little contact with homeless individuals. City officials indicate that interactions between the two groups usually center around housed residents reporting illegal, unsafe, or primarily unwanted activity by those living on the streets. Elected representatives and city officials are pressed by constituents who claim that homeless encampments can invite criminal activities and neighborhood blight.

The implementation of a city-sanctioned campground, either *accommodated* or *co-opted* would impact Oakland's housed residents in a number of ways, but these considerations depend almost exclusively on whether the encampment is moved closer to or farther away from dense residential areas.

The benefits to residents in which a sanctioned campground results in homeless individuals utilizing services *away* from their original location would include freedom from issues of perceived public nuisance and blight brought on by unsanctioned encampments, possible renewed access to local public parks, increased public safety as previously unhoused residents gain access to social services, and the potential for a stabilization of home values as previously unhoused individuals begin to utilize the city's campground and move away from residential neighborhoods.

We must also consider that, while some residents may rejoice at the displacement of homeless individuals currently camped near their neighborhoods, it is possible that the city moves a sanctioned campground closer to other communities that previously were *not* subject to encampments. The construction of a semi-permanent to permanent campground by the city could negatively impact the home values of the community that hosts the camp. Additionally, harms related to an official

campground of either model may include increased confrontation as the city legitimizes a camp. Residents would also lose freedom to report nuisance related to encampments themselves.

These considerations also account for the fact that the implementation and ongoing operation of a city campground will cost money. With a limited budget, expenditures by the city to form and maintain a campground specifically for homeless residents may negatively impact funds slated for other city programs, and residents may view the program as the city subsidizing a project that not all taxpayers will utilize (and which may also negatively affect their personal wellbeing). There will likely be some fiscal benefits, both short-term as the city saves on costs associated with shutting down unsanctioned encampments and long-term costs associated with hospital room visits and involvement with the criminal justice system. It is difficult, then, to project the overall financial net gains or losses.

Without knowledge of the location or design elements the City will implement in its campground, it is difficult to accurately rate this parameter. In addition, various camp models will greatly influence how the criterion is scored. For example, from a housed resident's perspective, a camp that rotates between various locations will affect him/her differently than a permanent *co-opted* or *accommodated* campground. Therefore, equity from the point of view of Oakland's housed residents is rated as "low."

### **Oakland's business community**

Business complaints to the city regarding homeless encampments often include quality-of-life crimes like public drunkenness and public urination on business property. Business owners understandably cite issues of liability and vandalism when it comes to trespassing individuals. If unhoused residents had a sanctioned campground, business would arguably be positively impacted, and could potentially anticipate a reduction in the crimes listed above.

Similarly, businesses in Oakland would likely appreciate a city-sanctioned campground for its potential to provide previously homeless individuals a place to use the restroom and sleep at night. Indeed, Chris Herring notes complaints by businesses often fall after campgrounds are sanctioned, and quotes a homeless policy manager in Fresno who stated that a camp had "taken pressure off of the downtown parks and pedestrian mall."<sup>89</sup>

It is important to note that, if the city were to sanction an already existing encampment using the *accommodated* model, it would likely not impact the behavior of homeless individuals who are not currently living in that encampment community.

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<sup>89</sup> Herring, C. (2014). The New Logics of Homeless Seclusion: Homeless encampments in America's West Coast Cities. *City & Community*, 13(4), 295. <http://doi.org/10.1111/cico.12086>

Through this lens, equity receives a “**high**” score when viewed from the perspective of Oakland’s business community.

### **The City of Oakland and Other Local and State Agencies**

Oakland’s Planning and Zoning Commission has pointed to sanctioned encampments as a potential barrier for economic development and questioned the type of zoning needed to authorize an official campground.

On the other hand, organizations that own property around Oakland, such as the City, BART, and CalTrans would likely benefit from a sanctioned campground as it reduces their legal liability, as well as costs related to security and cleanup.

For this reason, equity is rated a “**medium**” considering these public stakeholders.

### **Implementation Feasibility: Medium/High**

Defined as the city’s capacity to implement a campground model according to its original design, implementation feasibility was assessed within the following parameters and scored as “**medium/high**” on a scale of low, medium, or high feasibility.

#### **Intra-government systems and workflows currently in place and required for successful implementation**

An analysis of implementation feasibility for any project is necessarily predicated upon underlying political support from the community. While our stakeholder interviews confirm that political buy-in for a sanctioned encampment would be very difficult to gain from proximate community members and the hosting councilmember, the authors assume sufficient political support in the following analysis, as the City has asked us to ignore issues related to political feasibility for the purposes of this report.

The successful implementation phase of a city-sanctioned campground in the context of city system workflows would require (1) utility access such as garbage pickup, toilets, water and (2) security for encampment residents and neighbors. First, garbage pick-up could be extended to the site if granted a legal address, and new camps typically utilize port-a-potties as toilets in the early phases of camp development. Both of these services fit within the budgets provided in our case study analyses above and are highly implementable camp features. However, providing running water would require a more substantial city investment and would be site-based, providing a challenge to implementation feasibility. Second, the ability to provide security given Oakland’s high crime-to-police officer ratio could be a barrier to implementation. However, successful camps often generate their own internal governance structures with rules and regulations that reduce the

need for constant surveillance and security.<sup>90,91</sup> For example, “the annual rate of 911 calls resulting in the dispatch of Portland Police to *Dignity Village* was lower on a per-capita basis than the city-wide average.”<sup>92</sup> We note that complaints of criminal activity were also reduced in Ontario after the establishment of their tent city, but the City ultimately decided to dedicate \$11,000 of its \$25,000 monthly operating cost to a private security contract after experiments with client-run security were deemed unsuccessful. Nevertheless, given our best practices research, it is likely that security will not be a barrier to implementation in the long-term. Therefore, implementation feasibility as a matter of intra-governmental systems and workflow is scored as “**medium**,” as opposed to “high,” primarily due to the potential challenge of water access.

### **Relative measures of fiscal feasibility**

Based on the minimal operational costs of sanctioned encampments in Portland, King County, and Ontario (see case studies), a campground alternative is highly fiscally feasible. In fact, best estimates in the academic literature suggest that operating a tent city costs \$30–60 per person per month, while it costs \$1,634–\$2,308 per person per month for housing in a shelter, transitional housing unit, or permanent supportive housing unit.<sup>93</sup> Given the high cost of regular abatement of unsanctioned campgrounds, there is the potential for cost savings if campgrounds are (1) internally managed by encampment residents, (2) require service hours from residents for camp maintenance, and (3) if the sanctioned site is in an abatement “hot spot” area (see Figure 1). We therefore score fiscal feasibility as “**high**.”

### **Buy-in from homeless individuals**

Based on our interviews with encampment residents, buy-in is highly unlikely if the campground is a shelter-based model as most individuals living in encampments have high barriers to accessing shelters. Indeed, the “outdoor shelter” model for city-run encampments (such as THSA in Ontario<sup>94</sup> and *Camp Pinellas Hope* in St. Petersburg, FL<sup>95</sup>) has been criticized by residents for re-creating the institutionalized rules and regulations that many are explicitly seeking to avoid by

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<sup>90</sup> Heben, A. (2014). *Tent city urbanism: From self-organized camps to tiny house villages* (1st edition). Eugene, OR: Village Collaborative.

<sup>91</sup> Herring, C. (2014). The new logics of homeless seclusion: Homeless encampments in America’s west coast cities. *City & Community*, 13(4), 285–309. <http://doi.org/10.1111/cico.12086>

<sup>92</sup> Kristina Smock Consulting, “An Evaluation of Dignity Village,” prepared for the Portland Housing Bureau, February 2010, pg. 2.

<sup>93</sup> Loftus-Farren, Z. (n.d.). Tent cities: An interim solution to homelessness and affordable housing shortages in the United States. *California Law Review*, 99(4), 1037–1082.

<sup>94</sup> National Coalition for the Homeless. (2010). *Tent cities in America: A Pacific Coast report*. Retrieved from <http://nationalhomeless.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Tent-Cities-Report-FINAL-3-10-10.pdf>

<sup>95</sup> Hunter, J., Linden-Reteck, P., Shebaya, S., & Halpert, S. (2014). *Welcome home: The rise of tent cities in the United States*. National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty & Allard K. Lowenstein International Human Rights Clinic, Yale Law School. Retrieved from [http://www.law.yale.edu/WelcomeHome\\_TentCities\\_final\\_report.pdf](http://www.law.yale.edu/WelcomeHome_TentCities_final_report.pdf)

living outside.<sup>96</sup> Buy-in is also variable dependent upon each homeless individual's attachment to their current community. Some homeless individuals stated an unwillingness to separate from their communities while others said they would "cut ties" if necessary to access a sanctioned campground. Given the number of homeless individuals in Oakland on any given night versus the limited number of spaces in any sanctioned campground, it is highly likely that a camp will attract a sufficient number of encampment residents in the short-term. However, long-term buy-in will likely require an iterative community building process, and some encampment residents may never be a good fit for the governance structures that organically develop within the campsite.

Second, the location of the camp will determine not only buy-in, but also the specific needs of camp residents. Oakland could sanction a campground in the more industrial areas of the city to reduce neighborhood complaints, but staff would need to consider the potential costs of further isolating homeless residents and would need to consider strategies to support their connection to needed services and ensure general access to the city.

It is also imperative to note that the success of independent camp models rests upon the self-organization of camp residents and a commitment to independence that enables the iterative development of an effective governance structure, as seen in *Dignity Village*. With no encampment currently pushing for this form of recognition in Oakland, the result of sanctioning an encampment and expecting the development of similar self-sufficiency may not be practical. Similarly, if an encampment were to be sanctioned closer to downtown services in Oakland, it may necessitate supportive services, as the resident population needs may be different than those currently surviving in the industrial areas of the City.

Thus, we rank implementation feasibility as measured by homeless buy-in as "medium."

### **Inter-group dynamics among encampment groups, service providers, and city staff**

Oakland has an unusually diverse homeless population that has formed communities along racial, cultural, and ethnic lines. Accordingly, tensions and even campsite violence have been an ongoing issue for some encampments, more so than in cities with more homogeneous homeless populations. According to our interviews with camp residents and outreach workers, it would not be feasible to create a campground with random members from each community. In addition, it is reasonable to believe that if a single community received access to a campground that it could cause dissonance and frustration among homeless individuals from communities who did not receive access. However, this arrangement would still be

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<sup>96</sup> cf. Herring, C. (2014). The new logics of homeless seclusion: Homeless encampments in America's West Coast cities. *City & Community*, 13(4), 285–309. <http://doi.org/10.1111/cico.12086>

an improvement over the status quo, as camp residents would be better off and communities without access would be no worse off.

In terms of service providers, allowing them to access the camp so they can locate and serve their clients quickly would require specific provisions in any contract between a camp and the city, but is still highly feasible to accomplish. Finally, our stakeholder interviews did not reveal any city staff dynamics that would serve as a barrier to implementation of a campground. Therefore, implementation feasibility as measured by inter-group dynamics is ranked as “**high**.”

This category received an overall rating of **medium/high** because implementation feasibility varies as a result of the *type* of encampment model the city sanctions. An accommodated model would be less costly and require less city monitoring whereas a co-opted model requires more city resources to ensure the provision of services. These models would also serve different populations. An accommodated model is best suited for camps that are relatively cohesive and organized compared to a co-opted model which would work best for higher needs clients who require increased support from the city. Therefore, implementation feasibility for an accommodated model would be “high” and implementation feasibility for a co-opted model would be “medium,” averaging in an overall rating of “**medium/high**.”

## Alternative #2: Amendments to Housing First

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*In this section, we discuss how the City's efforts in the Housing First model would rank on criteria of effectiveness, equity, and implementation feasibility. Overall score: 2.1 (Alternative #1 ranks 2.4)*

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### Overview

This section presents our evaluation of the various amendments to Oakland's current Housing First approach to housing its homeless population. While we recognize that this solution cannot feasibly address more than a small fraction of Oakland's homeless population in the foreseeable future, the three Housing First case studies examined in this report provide discrete elements that can be incorporated into Oakland's approach. Importantly, Housing First efforts should not be considered a mutually exclusive alternative to efforts to address encampment issues directly, but must be considered in parallel, with expected effects on different time scales.

### Effectiveness: High

In an effort to aid in City stakeholders' decision about how best to allocate resources, this section evaluates the Housing First approach by considering the incremental changes that could be made to the City's existing efforts to house its homeless population.

As each innovation could be considered on its own or in any number of combinations with other changes, this evaluation section merely considers the common elements among the case studies. The common element is the essence of the Housing First approach: the act of housing people with substantial obstacles to housing without behavioral prerequisites. Defined as such, Housing First has been demonstrated repeatedly to aid populations oft-deemed unready for housing to maintain housing; improve their health; and reduce their burden on other services. Specifically, the expected effect is that a more capacious and efficient Housing First approach would enable some current encampment residents to exit homelessness into permanent housing, to the benefit of their health. Given these assumptions, we rate the effectiveness of improving Housing First as "**medium.**"

Within the homeless population, we assume many of the housing units used for the program will go to unsheltered homeless individuals currently captured in Oakland's working definition of encampments. We make this assumption partly in light of the news that the County as a whole will be shifting towards a Coordinated

Assessment approach that will target the City's most vulnerable population; the most vulnerable homeless individuals tend to be those who live outside alone, followed by those in groups.<sup>97</sup>

**Goal: Pre-empting resident complaints, reducing city staff time and fiscal burden associated with cleanups, and avoiding offloading to other jurisdictions**

*Short-term:* Due to the comparatively long scale-up time of most Housing First approaches, any of the amendments to Housing First would have little to no effect in the early months of implementation. Additionally, because the transition from outdoor to indoor life is not immediate for individuals who receive housing, it is reasonable to expect a couple months of lag time for the aesthetic effects of housing a particular encampment's resident(s) to take place. We therefore rate the short-term effectiveness of Housing First amendments for this goal as being "low."

*Long-term:* We predict that in the long term, resident complaints would decrease. As the size of Oakland's unsheltered population decreases due to moves into permanent housing, resident complaints regarding the presence or activities of the population would presumably decrease. Much of this decrease would be attributable simply to removing homeless individuals from public view. While public perception of who is housed and who constitutes an encampment resident is likely not completely accurate, some of the activity associated with homelessness would no longer occur in public. For instance, the alcohol and drug activity that would otherwise take place in public spaces would instead take place in the privacy of participants' housing units.

Whereas one could argue that reduced public disruptions would simply translate into increased disruptions to indoor apartment neighbors, anecdotal evidence suggests that recently housed individuals tend to be no more problematic than their neighbors after a short adjustment period.<sup>98</sup> Empirical evidence on housing maintenance rates concurs with this story, as in the case of decreased substance use of Seattle's Chronic Inebriate House residents.<sup>99</sup>

Public Works could expect to spend less time and resources on the cleanup of physical belongings and accumulated trash, as encampment residents obtain housing and move their belongings indoors. While individuals who have spent a long time homeless are often reluctant to give up the possessions that enabled them to sustain themselves while outdoors, even unwieldy, appropriated belongings such

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<sup>97</sup> Personal interview with Lucy Kasdin and Robert Ratner, Mar. 20, 2015.

<sup>98</sup> Personal phone interview with Kirby Davis, COO of Freeman/Webb Companies (Property owner and manager in Nashville), Mar. 25, 2015.

<sup>99</sup> Collins, S., Malone, D., Clifasefi, S., Ginzler, J., Garner, M., & Burlingham, B. (n.d.). Project-Based Housing First for Chronically Homeless Individuals With Alcohol Problems: Within-Subjects Analyses of 2-Year Alcohol Trajectories. *American Journal of Public Health*, 511–519.

as shopping carts have been moved inside with individuals as they adjust to sheltered living once again. Corresponding dumping of belongings or rubbish would likewise decrease over time as encampments are permanently cleared.

In the long term, then we expect that the effectiveness of Housing First innovations for this goal would be “**high**.”

**Goal: Ensuring adequate health and safety standards, as well as better long-term outcomes, for encampment residents**

*Short-term:* Here again the long scale-up time of housing interventions to homelessness impede short-term effects. One can imagine, however, that even for individuals who adjust slowly to housing, spending the night in one’s housing during especially cold or otherwise hazardous weather has a direct and immediate positive impact on health compared to the counterfactual. Nonetheless, the bulk of housing outcomes occur in the long-term. We anticipate that the short-term effectiveness of amendments to the Housing First approach on health outcomes would be “**low**.”

*Long-term:* The Housing First approach is associated with improved health outcomes that have surprised outreach workers accustomed to working with the homeless population. For instance, according to the empirical evaluation of Seattle’s Chronic Inebriate House, participants’ average alcohol consumption decreased 3% for each month of living in Housing First, and symptoms of alcohol dependence decreased an average of 2% per month.<sup>100</sup>

Another Housing First study has found that, in fact, factors such as alcohol and drug use, illness burden, psychiatric symptoms, and homelessness history were not predictors of returns to homelessness.<sup>101</sup>

Thus we rate the long-term effectiveness of Housing First innovations as “**high**.”

### **Social Equity: High**

Our analysis indicates that the desired outcomes for unsheltered residents, housed residents, and business and property owners will converge. Social equity, for the purposes of this analysis, considers differential consequences and disproportionate impacts to these three umbrella groupings of stakeholders. Because interests converge, our ranking for this criterion is “**high**.”

#### Unsheltered Residents

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<sup>100</sup> Collins, S., Malone, D., Clifasefi, S., Ginzler, J., Garner, M., & Burlingham, B. (n.d.). Project-Based Housing First for Chronically Homeless Individuals With Alcohol Problems: Within-Subjects Analyses of 2-Year Alcohol Trajectories. *American Journal of Public Health*, 511–519.

<sup>101</sup> <http://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/abs/10.2105/AJPH.2013.301312>

As noted previously in our report, being unsheltered increases risks of poor health outcomes, violence, and other harms such as the persistent threat of dislocation. Housing unsheltered populations provides them with reliable access to essential structures that improve health via basic sanitation and the cognitive stress relief of no longer living on the street, reduced incidence of violence via living inside, and reduce the likelihood of dislocation due to punitive laws regarding being homeless. Our team ranks this criterion for unsheltered populations “**high**” because it will have the biggest and most direct impact on their primary need – housing.

### Housed Residents

Housed residents’ primary interactions with unsheltered populations, according to our research, are presently antagonistic. Residents frequently complain to elected officials and city departments about the propagation of encampments; the crime, blight, and public health concerns encampments generate; and the presumed decline in property values attributed to the persistent presence of encampments. Under the status quo, housed residents’ relationships with encampments are such that unsheltered populations are treated as little more than nuisances.

Under the Housing First alternative, housed residents’ concerns will be addressed. By housing unsheltered populations, the presence of encampments likely will decline consistently. Concerns about crime, blight, public health, and property values will diminish, and housed residents’ interactions with the target population will most likely become less antagonistic. Some housed residents may express similar concerns when a permanent supportive housing project is proposed near their homes; however, according to Bill Hobson, Director of *Downtown Emergency Services Center* in Seattle, research has demonstrated that their concerns are unfounded—in fact, some subsidized housing developments may *increase* surrounding property values.<sup>102</sup> Education about the importance and benefits of permanent supportive housing will be required for currently housed residents as the housing is built; however, we still rank the equity for housed residents as “**high**” because the problems associated with encampments will dissipate while the research demonstrates the benefits of permanent supportive housing far outweigh the costs.

### Business and Property Owners

As noted earlier in this report, business and property owners primarily interface with unsheltered populations, similarly to housed residents, via complaints to the city. Their concerns vary from housed residents, however. Problems include public urination and other unsanitary activities, devaluation of business through the perceived blight of encampments, and liability concerns. Under the Housing First

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<sup>102</sup> Ellen, I.G. (2008), “Spillovers and Subsidized Housing: The Impact of Subsidized Rental Housing on Neighborhoods” (pp. 144–158). In N.P. Retsinas & E.S. Belsky (Eds.), *Revisiting Rental Housing: Policies, Programs, and Priorities*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Joint Center For Housing Studies.

alternative, unsanitary activities will substantially decline as newly housed individuals have reliable access to sanitation facilities. In addition, business devaluation due to perceived blight will cease as encampments are permanently removed, and liability concerns will diminish as well. Given the improvement along all dimensions for the business and property owner stakeholders, our team ranks the social equity criterion as “**high.**”

### **Implementation Feasibility: Low**

Defined as the City’s capacity to implement housing first innovations to house encampment residents, implementation feasibility was scored as “**low.**”

Without an extensive analysis of Oakland’s PATH program, evaluating the implementation feasibility of Housing First in Oakland is limited. While the shortage of affordable housing was well documented above (see page 27), the likelihood of implementing a program that increases the housing placement rate for encampment residents is “low” by default of the housing shortage. While innovative strategies exist, as demonstrated by our case studies, successful implementation of those programs was largely dependent upon access to funding and the collaborative support of a diversity of stakeholders.<sup>103</sup> In considering the likelihood of both developing new permanent supportive housing and of blended rental subsidies, the analysis of implementation feasibility for housing first was assessed according to the following:

#### **Intra-government systems and workflows & relative fiscal feasibility**

A deeper analysis of the PATH status quo is needed to fully evaluate the inter-governmental systems and workflow. However, in interviews with city stakeholders, it was noted that those benefiting from rising rents in Oakland would actively oppose the development of permanent supportive housing. Similarly, landlords are reportedly less likely to accept Section 8 vouchers because they are increasingly able to get more than HUD’s fair-market rental rate.<sup>104</sup> While Oakland could implement a program like the blended rental subsidy program in Portland, it would require more institutional investment in securing HUD funding, including from the Oakland Housing Authority. Given the current struggle to secure affordable units and the increasing potential for landlords to move away from Section 8 towards market rate, implementation feasibility for housing first is “**low.**”

#### **Buy-in from homeless individuals**

Based on interviews with homeless encampment residents and outreach staff, some encampment residents expressed anxiety associated with living indoors. However, while outreach staff on the county-level expressed the need for a period of transition

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<sup>103</sup> See Seattle and Portland’s Home Forward Case studies on pg. xx and xx.

<sup>104</sup> Laura McCamy, “Affordable Housing Out of Reach for Many Low-Income Oakland Seniors,” March 24, 2015 (<http://oaklandlocal.com/2015/03/affordable-housing-out-of-reach-for-many-low-income-oakland-seniors/>).

into housing for many homeless individuals, they reported that when given the opportunity to have their own unit, the majority of homeless individuals want to move indoors. Retention rates for the recently homeless vary, so providing housing will not ensure that those individuals will remain housed. Implementation feasibility from the perspective of homeless individual buy-in is therefore **“medium.”**

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of our completed interviews, analyses, and policy evaluations, we provide the following recommendations for how the City of Oakland can best move forward in addressing the persistent homeless encampment problem, both now and for longer-term success.

### IMPROVING THE STATUS QUO:

#### *Short-term: Improve coordination with CalTrans encampment removals.*

Our interviews suggest that CalTrans encampment removals are much more disruptive to encampment residents than removals by Oakland Public Works, which are well-coordinated with Operation Dignity. In the context of existing monthly meetings with CalTrans, we recommend that the City improve coordination of CalTrans sweeps with Operation Dignity and other service providers. **Allowing Operation Dignity to do outreach on CalTrans land will improve their ability to get these homeless individuals into housing.** The City can use the following frames when discussing the issue with CalTrans:

- i. Better coordination of encampment removal with service providers allows homeless individuals to better achieve their housing goals. This will ultimately reduce the fiscal burden of encampment abatement for CalTrans.
- ii. Coordinated service provision with encampment removal will reduce CalTrans' public health and safety liabilities, as unregulated and unserved encampments accumulate used syringes, human waste, and other serious public health problems on CalTrans land.

#### *Medium- to Long-term: Improve interdepartmental coordination and set common goals.*

While everyone we spoke to recognized the magnitude of the homeless encampment problem, individual City departments are often at odds with one another in terms of respective outcomes and goals. For example, Public Works defines a “successful” encampment removal episode as the complete physical abatement of an encampment, even if the same encampment returns a week later. This definition is naturally anathema to the way an organization like Operation Dignity would characterize their goals. Given the disruption this creates for homeless service providers, other stakeholders in the City similarly would not consider this a successful outcome at all. **We recommend that diverse stakeholders meet regularly to devise common outcome goals and definitions of success. The City can institutionalize a greater degree of collaboration in at least two ways:**

- i. City staff should collaborate further with OPRI to ensure City activities don't unnecessarily undermine pathway to housing efforts.
- ii. Recommend that City Council create a position similar to the Housing Opportunities, Partnerships & Engagement (HOPE) branch of the Mayor's

Office in San Francisco. This office, chaired by Bevan Dufty (whom we interviewed for this report), is tasked with overseeing inter-departmental, collaborative efforts to end homelessness in San Francisco, and has recently launched the Navigation Center (discussed below).

## SANCTIONING A HOMELESS ENCAMPMENT IN OAKLAND:

***Short-term:*** Launch an awareness campaign about the benefits of sanctioned encampment areas.

Our research suggests that, in cities where sanctioned encampment areas have been successfully implemented, political opposition to the idea was initially fierce. However, as was the case with *Tent Cities #3* and *#4* in the Seattle area, resident complaints dropped substantially once housed residents and neighbors saw that the encampment did not lead to additional crime or immediate depreciation of property values. **An awareness campaign about the benefits of a sanctioned encampment—geared at city officials and residents alike—will help pre-empt some of the political opposition to a sanctioned encampment that will undoubtedly arise in the short-term.**

***Medium-term:*** develop relationships with the faith community in Oakland.

Around the nation, partnerships with the faith community have proven essential for the successful implementation of sanctioned homeless encampment areas. Faith group partners have provided services, food, equipment, goods, and in some instances (notably in Washington State) have actually hosted the encampment on their property. **A strong relationship with the faith community can help mitigate the administrative and fiscal costs associated with operating an encampment, but Oakland does not appear to have a history of strong working relationships with such groups.** We recommend the City begin cultivating such relationships and partnerships.

***Long-term:*** Create a pilot sanctioned homeless encampment in Oakland.

We do not endorse the creation of a sanctioned homeless encampment as a long-term “solution” to Oakland’s homelessness problem. Housing remains the only solution to homelessness. However, in order to **improve the condition of the homeless community in the interim, Oakland should follow the lead of other cities in California, Oregon, Florida, and Washington by creating a pilot sanctioned homeless encampment area within the city.** The City has two options for how a pilot program of this policy can be accomplished (these models were discussed in greater detail in our previous analysis of Alternative #2):

- i. **Formally sanction an existing encampment** (i.e., the *accommodated encampment* model): Oakland could work with Operation Dignity, the Trust Clinic, and/or other outreach service providers to identify an encampment that has enough self-governance and internal stability that it could be formally recognized with a conditional use permit, City ordinance, or other

legal mechanism. This will reduce the City’s encampment abatement burden and will minimize operating costs relative to a *co-opted* model (see (ii) below), but will be less integrated with a “pathway to housing” approach. It will also limit formal legal recognition to members of the encampment chosen for the pilot. **The City should use this approach if it is chiefly concerned with reducing its encampment abatement burden while minimizing additional operating costs.**

- ii. Create a City-run encampment and outdoor services area (i.e., *the co-opted encampment* model): Oakland could create an “outdoor homeless shelter” for individuals currently on the streets. This model would likely alienate certain encampment residents who are averse to any formal homeless services, and would cost more for the City to operate (including the cost of security guard contracting and social service provision). However, it would allow the City a greater degree of control over who accesses the site, and would enable the City to fill a large gap in its current OPRI model: what to offer individuals who are waiting for housing, but who cannot or will not use traditional shelter services. **The City should use this approach if it wants to integrate the encampment into a larger portfolio of homeless services to get the unhoused into permanent housing.**

Both of these options require the difficult implementation barriers of political endorsement and finding an appropriate physical site (*our report provides an analysis of two potential sites for a pilot encampment in Appendix 4*). Either could be successful in Oakland, as they have been in other cities—they merely serve different purposes. On the basis of our interviews with encampment residents, Operation Dignity, and other stakeholders, however, **we believe a co-opted encampment is slightly more appropriate for Oakland at this time, for two important reasons:**

- i. We have identified few existing encampments in Oakland that have the requisite internal self-governance necessary for an accommodated model. For this approach to be successful, encampments must have the political wherewithal to successfully self-govern and self-police. Operation Dignity should work with the Human Services Department to identify such encampment(s) if and as they exist, but absent such structure, accommodation is not a recommended model.
- ii. The encampment homeless population in Oakland has a higher degree of racial, cultural, and drug-choice tensions, as well as intra-camp violence than that in other cities (especially the Pacific Northwest, where accommodated encampments are most common). Oakland’s homeless population has a high degree of unique and pressing service needs as well, including mental and physical disabilities and substance abuse disorders.

**As such, we believe this population may benefit from the intensive services that can be offered through a co-opted model.**

## IMPROVING HOUSING FIRST OUTCOMES:

***Short-term:** Work with existing or new grant writers to identify new funding streams.*

1811 Eastlake in Seattle provides an example of the cost-savings and social service outcome improvements that can occur by targeting a specific, high-needs sub-population of the homeless (i.e., chronic alcoholics) for permanent supportive housing. Of course, providing such housing and services is costly and requires dedicated sources of funding. **We recommend the Human Services Department**, in conjunction with Alameda County/EveryOne Home, **work with existing grant writers** (or create internships or new positions for this purpose) **to identify sources of funding for housing high-needs populations that are disproportionately represented in Oakland.** Prioritizing homeless sub-populations for housing by need will soon be institutionalized as Alameda County moves toward the HUD-mandated coordinated assessment model for permanent supportive housing. However, new housing opportunities can and should be funded for populations that disproportionately live in Oakland, but who might not score highly on the Vulnerability Index measure.

***Short-term:** Follow developments with the Navigation Center in San Francisco.*

The City and County of San Francisco is currently operating an innovative new pilot program, spearheaded by the Mayor's HOPE Office, called the Navigation Center. This "pop-up shelter" is designed to specifically serve encampment populations who have barriers to traditional shelter services: for example, couples, or individuals with pets, or with more belongings than are typically allowed at a shelter. By working around these barriers, case managers in San Francisco believe that better long-term outcomes can be achieved. While it is too early to recommend that Oakland develop a similar program (the Navigation Center opened its doors in March of 2015), **we do highly recommend that Oakland leaders follow developments at the Navigation Center closely.** Should it prove successful, it may serve the exact needs that Oakland's homeless encampment population tends to have as well.

***Medium-term:** Develop relationships with landlord associations and/or property management groups.*

The City of Nashville, TN has successfully added over 800 affordable housing units to their portfolio by working directly with landlords to acquire individual, scattered-site affordable housing units. In Oakland's currently increasingly costly housing market, it is more important than ever to expand the number of affordable units as quickly as possible. **We recommend cultivating working relationships with landlord associations and/or property management groups** (perhaps in conjunction with the Oakland Housing Authority and/or the Housing & Community Development Department) **to pursue a strategy similar to Nashville's.** This strategy has two advantages:

- i. It minimizes costs associated with building new or rehabilitating old units, as ready-to-rent units are added to the affordable housing portfolio.
- ii. It is amenable to existing rental subsidy programs (such as the HUD-VASH, Section 8, or TBRA programs) already administered by Oakland and by Alameda County.

***Long-term: Continue to expand the stock of affordable housing.***

City leaders already recognize that housing is the ultimate solution to homelessness. However, increasing the supply of housing is an expensive and long-term undertaking. Despite current budget setbacks, Oakland should not abandon its commitment to increasing the stock of affordable housing in the city. **City leaders should explore the extent to which land-use regulations can be updated, and should continue to encourage the development of affordable housing through the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program.** In conjunction with population-specific funding sources described above, Oakland can ensure that housing remains accessible and affordable for the homeless.

# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1: Interview Questions

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### Questions for homeless individuals:

- How long have you lived on the streets? Where did you sleep last night, one month ago, six months ago, and one year ago?
- Where have you lived in Oakland, Bay Area, and/or other states?
- Did you choose to live in an encampment? If you stay at a single encampment, why?
- If they're varied, why have you moved? What are your top concerns?
- What services have been offered to you while living on the streets? Which services do you access? What do you think is missing?
- Has your camp been cleared by the City? By CalTrans? What happened?
- What would a successful city-sanctioned encampment look like?
- Can you speak to the governance structure of your encampment?

### Questions for (local & national) service providers:

- What challenges do your clients face? Can you describe a typical client that you serve? Is there a lot of variety?
- How should the City explore sanctioning an encampment? Who should it serve first and what would it look like?
- What design features do you think are working best? Which aren't working?
- How does your jurisdiction handle the issue of homelessness? What are its biggest challenges on the ground when handling this issue?

### Questions for City of Oakland officials:

- What is your department's role in the City's response to dealing with encampments and/or how does your office interact with homeless individuals more broadly?
- What do you think the City is doing right? What should it do differently?
- What would a successful city-sanctioned encampment look like from your Department's perspective?
- What barriers do you see to the City sanctioning an encampment?
- How do you coordinate with other City departments/agencies?

# Appendix 2: Home Forward's Sources and Uses of Funding - FY2016

## Sources and Uses of Funding

### Sources and Uses of MTW Funds

Due to the timing of Home Forward's annual budget cycle, the forecasts below are only preliminary. Home Forward's annual budget is presented to the Board for adoption at the March Board meeting each year. In order to meet HUD guidelines, the annual MTW Plan is presented for initial review in October and then adoption in November. Thus, these preliminary forecasts are projected months prior to adoption of the budget and often require changes during the budget process. Planned Sources and Uses of MTW funds are based on the prior fiscal year's actual activity with a 2% adjustment for inflation. Proration levels are assumed to be unchanged from the prior fiscal year.

| Estimated Sources of MTW Funding for the Fiscal Year                                  |  |                      |
|---|--|----------------------|
| PHAs shall provide the estimated sources and amounts of MTW funding by FDS line item. |  |                      |
| Sources   |  |                      |
| FDS Line Item   | FDS Line Item Name                     | Dollar Amount        |
| 70500 (70300+70400)   | Total Tenant Revenue                   | \$ 3,943,000         |
| 70600   | HUD PHA Operating Grants               | 71,575,000           |
| 70610   | Capital Grants                         | 2,156,000            |
| 70700 (70710+70720+70730+70740+70750)   | Total Fee Revenue                      | 0                    |
| 71100+72000   | Interest Income                        | 1,000                |
| 71600   | Gain or Loss on Sale of Capital Assets | 0                    |
| 71200+71300+71310+71400+71500   | Other Income                           | 2,435,000            |
| <b>70000</b>  | <b>Total Revenue</b>                   | <b>\$ 80,110,000</b> |

Estimated Uses of MTW Funding for the Fiscal Year

PHAs shall provide the estimated uses and amounts of MTW spending by FDS line item.

| Uses   |  |                      |
|--|--|----------------------|
| FDS Line Item  | FDS Line Item Name                               | Dollar Amount        |
| 91000<br>(91100+91200+91400+91500+91600+91700+91800+91900) | Total Operating - Administrative                 | \$ 7,321,000         |
| 91300+91310+92000  | Management Fee Expense                           | 0                    |
| 91810  | Allocated Overhead                               | 2,659,000            |
| 92500 (92100+92200+92300+92400)                            | Total Tenant Services                            | 390,000              |
| 93000 (93100+93600+93200+93300+93400+93800)                | Total Utilities                                  | 2,230,000            |
| 93500+93700  | Labor  | 0                    |
| 94000 (94100+94200+94300+94500)                            | Total Ordinary Maintenance                       | 5,528,000            |
| 95000 (95100+95200+95300+95500)                            | Total Protective Services                        | 102,000              |
| 96100 (96110+96120+96130+96140)                            | Total insurance Premiums                         | 326,000              |
| 96000 (96200+96210+96300+96400+96500+96600+96800)          | Total Other General Expenses                     | 2,834,000            |
| 96700 (96710+96720+96730)                                  | Total Interest Expense and Amortization Cost     | 83,000               |
| 97100+97200  | Total Extraordinary Maintenance                  | 8,000                |
| 97300+97350  | Housing Assistance Payments + HAP Portability-In | 58,629,000           |
| 97400  | Depreciation Expense                             | 3,728,000            |
| 97500+97600+97700+97800                                    | All Other Expenses                               | 0                    |
| <b>90000</b>   | <b>Total Expenses*</b>                           | <b>\$ 83,838,000</b> |

\* Excluding Depreciation Expense (a non-cash category), MTW Sources equal MTW Uses.

“Year 17 - FY2016 Moving to Work Annual Plan,” Home Forward, March 12, 2015, pp. 55-56  
 (<http://www.homeforward.org/sites/default/files/FY2016MTWPlan-FINAL.pdf>)

## Appendix 3: *How's Nashville* Funding Sources

| How's Nashville Current Funding Sources        |   |  |   |                                  |
|--|---|--|---|----------------------------------|
| Source   | Amount  | Timeframe                                    | Purpose   | Scope                            |
| Local: SOAR grant                              | \$173,000   | 1 year                                       | Benefits (SSI/SSDI) advocacy, partly to enable tenants to pay 30% to landlords                  | [Dependent on caseload]          |
| Local: Case management                         | \$405,000   | 2 years                                      | Case management for recently housed   | 120 people annually, 9–12 months |
| Federal: unspecified                           | \$500,000   | 2 years                                      | Pre-housing case management   | 100–120 people                   |
| Federal, via PHA: CDBG                         | \$200,000   | 2 years                                      | Move-in costs   | 200 people max                   |
| Federal, via PHA: Section 8 vouchers           | Up to 216 vouchers, (dependent on waitlist attrition) at HUD fair market rate   | 1 year (rolling availability w/ monthly cap) | Voucher for rent for low-income persons for housing for as long as the person remains eligible. | Up to 216 max tenants            |
| Private donors (tax deductible, direct to MHC) | \$240,000   | To date (~2 years)                           | Miscellaneous   | --                               |
| <b>Summary:</b>                                | \$1,518,000 in partial 2-year budget, plus 216 housing vouchers, serving up to 216 individuals in total to contribute to pre-existing infrastructure. |  |   |                                  |

The above table was constructed using data from a personal email communication with Judy Tackett, Assistant Director of the Metropolitan Homeless Commission (Apr. 27, 2015).

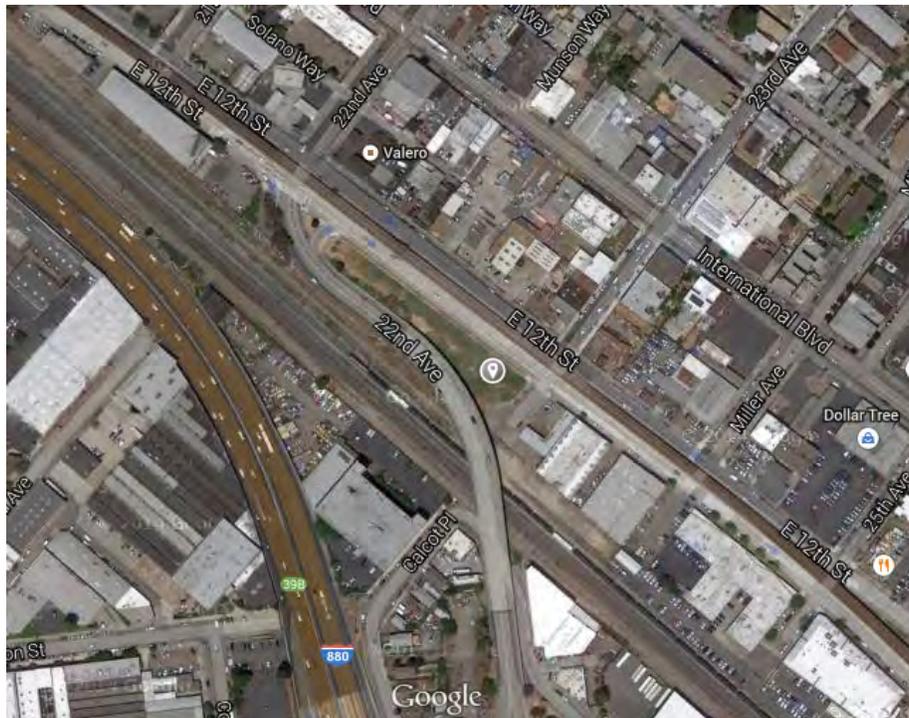
## Appendix 4: Potential Sites for Pilot Sanctioned Encampment in Oakland

Over the course of our interviews, two potential sites were recommended as possibly amenable to a pilot sanctioned encampment area. We visited both of these sites, and our analysis of their feasibility (accompanied by photos we took) is provided below.

### Potential Site #1: E. 12<sup>th</sup> St. between 22<sup>nd</sup> Ave. and 23<sup>rd</sup> Ave.

The first site recommended to us is a currently vacant, grass-covered plot of land at the corner of E. 12<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>, in the Fruitvale district of East Oakland (see map in Figure X below). We estimate the length of the plot to be roughly 450 feet, with a width of 100 feet at its narrowest (the western end of the lot) and 150 feet at its widest (the eastern end), for a total estimated area of roughly 57,500 sq. ft.

Assuming the city issues tents or tent permits on 9 ft. x 9 ft. individual plots with 5 feet of passable space surrounding between each tent, and that (i) roughly half of the total square footage (28,750 sq. ft.) is used for sleeping spaces and (ii) the other half is used for portable toilets/hygiene stations, dumpsters, common areas, cooking areas, and/or clinical intake/office space, we estimate that the site could comfortably accommodate up to 146 tents. Of course, if couples are allowed to stay in individual tents, considerably more individuals could be served.



*Figure X. The location of Site 1 is E 12<sup>th</sup> St between 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> Avenues in the Fruitvale District (District 5), as marked by the grey pin in the map above.*

*Advantages of Site #1:* Our visit to Site #1 revealed several considerable advantages. First, the site is believed by the City Administrator's Office (per our

interviews) to be owned by the city, thus minimizing acquisition costs and processes. The site is located in a light-industrial/commercial area of the city right near a freeway off-ramp; with few residential neighborhoods in the immediate vicinity, political opposition would seem easier to surmount. Location next to a freeway off-ramp and freight train tracks, while undesirable for physical health reasons (pollution being a top concern), offers some considerable logistical advantages, as it would allow quick access to and from other areas of the city and county for case managers, probation officers, and other service providers. A cul-de-sac at the terminus of 23<sup>rd</sup> Ave. offers a natural parking area for mobile dental vans, tuberculosis test/medical vans, and other basic services that would be needed by the residents. Nearby services include a Dollar Tree and a McDonald's 2 blocks away. Finally, the lot already seems to be well-equipped with drainage pipes in the middle of the area, offering what appears to be the built-in infrastructure for common space and/or restrooms and hygiene stations that would allow for water use. (See Figures Y and Z for infrastructure photos). Finally, the site is located in City Council District 5, whose current council member has discussed homelessness as his top budget priority, allowing the potential for the needed advocacy to pass the city's political process.



*Figure Y. Site 1 appears to be equipped with the drainage infrastructure to allow for portable hygiene stations with water (right-hand photo), while the cul-de-sac at the terminus of 23<sup>rd</sup> Ave. would be a natural parking area for mobile medical/dental vans, clinical drop-off/pick-up, and other homeless services (left-hand photo).*

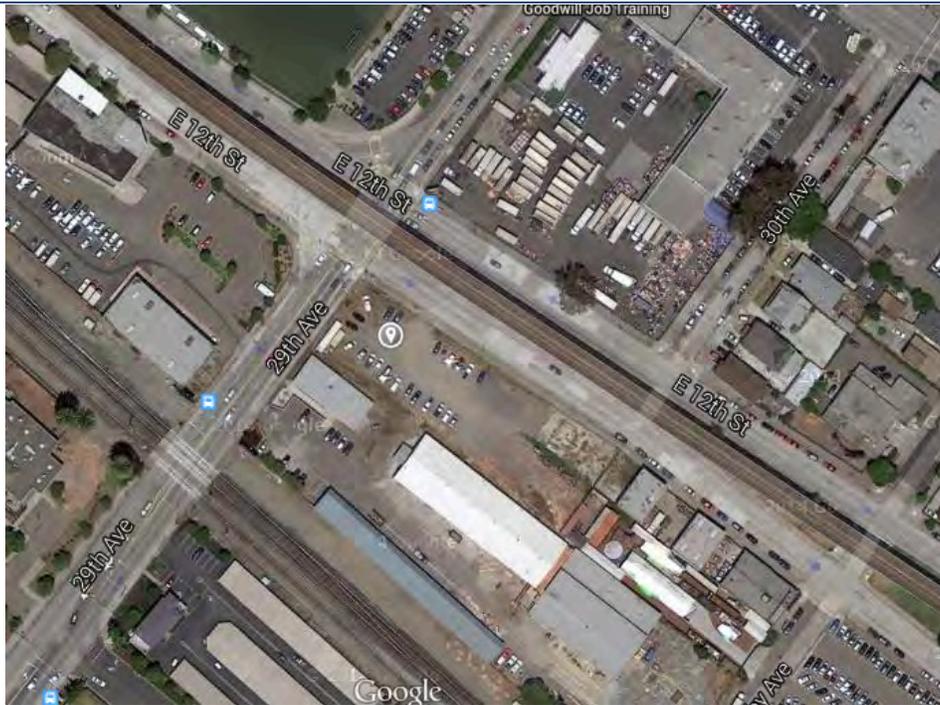


*Figure Z. Photos taken from Site 1. The site seems large enough to allow for common areas (left-hand photo) to be offered as well as individual plots for tents (right-hand photo).*

*Disadvantages of Site #1:* Our chief concern about Site #1 is the distance from downtown services. The site is between two BART stops (roughly 2 miles from the Lake Merritt station and 1 mile from the Fruitvale station). While the nearest AC Transit bus stop is only 1 block away at 23<sup>rd</sup> Ave. and International Blvd., it requires a 30–40 minute (depending on traffic conditions) bus ride on Line 1 to reach the Alameda County Social Services Office at 2000 San Pablo Ave. in downtown. Our research suggests that such a distance from the downtown area, while not prohibitive, would be a disincentive to certain encampment residents using the site. Other concerns include (i) the noise and pollution owing to the site’s location under a freeway off-ramp and alongside freight train tracks, and (ii) the direct overhead visibility down onto the site from the BART, which intrudes on camp resident privacy.

Potential Site #2: E 12<sup>th</sup> St. at 29<sup>th</sup> Ave.

The second site that was recommended to us over the course of our interviews is a vacant lot just a few blocks from Site 1, at the intersection of E 12<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> (see map in Figure A below). The site is currently for lease (though we are unsure of its zoning restrictions) and the sign advertising its availability lists the size as 50,000 sq. ft., slightly smaller than our estimate of the size of Site #1. Again assuming the city issues tents or tent permits on 9 ft. x 9 ft. individual plots with 5 feet of passable space surrounding between each tent, and uses half the space for tents and the other half for common areas/hygiene stations, we estimate that roughly 127 tents could be accommodated.



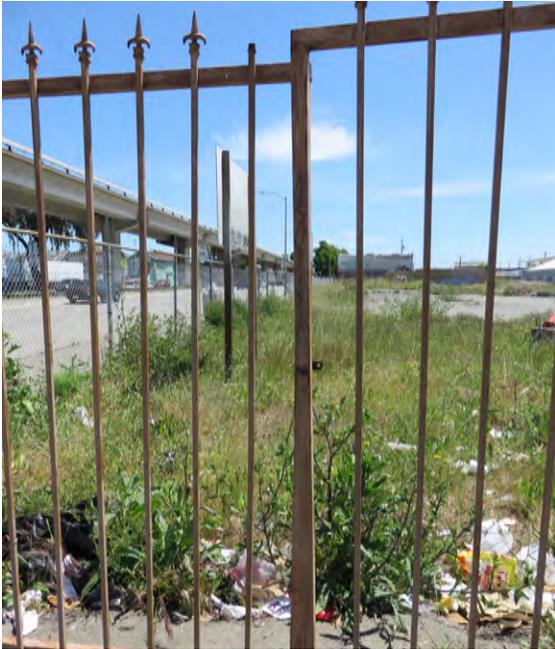
*Figure A. The location of Site 2 is the vacant lot at E 12<sup>th</sup> St and 29<sup>th</sup> Ave., also in the Fruitvale District (District 5), as marked by the grey pin in the map above.*

*Advantages of Site #2:* Site #2 is slightly better situated than Site #1 in terms of access to public transit infrastructure. Again located only 1 block from an AC Transit stop with Line 1 access to downtown (an estimated 35–45 minute ride to the Alameda County Social Services Office, depending on traffic conditions), the site is only 0.4 miles from the Fruitvale BART station, allowing much quicker access to downtown services. Nearby services include a Goodwill Job Training Center, located directly across the street. Site #2 appears to be equipped for running water (see the photo on the left-hand side of Figure B), a luxury Site #1 does not appear to have. The area is already fenced in, reducing start-up costs to the city. Finally, the site is not as immediately close to the freeway as Site #1, reducing the health concerns associated with pollution.



*Figure B. Site 2 appears to be equipped for running water (left-hand photo), and is currently available for lease (right-hand photo).*

*Disadvantages of Site #2:* Despite its key infrastructural advantages relative to Site #1, we do not believe Site #2 is a politically viable location for a pilot sanctioned encampment area. First, the lot is privately owned, and even though it is for lease, zoning restrictions and/or landlord concerns may prevent its use as an encampment area. Additionally, and of greater concern, the site is located literally next door to a charter school (see right-hand photo of Figure C) and across the street from an elementary school. This has two obvious disadvantages: (i) it minimizes the likelihood that the site will survive the city's political process, and (ii) even if it does survive city politics, it will preclude the city's ability to serve sex offenders because of Jessica's Law restrictions, thus further marginalizing an already marginalized segment of the homeless population.



*Figure C. Site 2 is a fenced-in plot of land that is better situated than Site 1 in terms of access to public transit, but its location literally next door to a charter school (right-hand photo) likely makes the site politically untenable.*

#### Conclusion

**We recommend that the city consider Site #1 as a viable location for a pilot sanctioned encampment area.** The more remote location seems more likely to survive Oakland city politics (to this end, it may already be owned by the city), and it has the potential to accommodate almost 150 tents. While not perfect, the site appears to be a promising first step in the right direction towards sanctioned homeless encampments.