

Impact Analysis on Farrell Encampment Sweeps Coalition on Homelessness, April/May 2018

The Coalition on Homelessness has been vigorously documenting the impact of the Farrell sweeps that commenced on Wednesday April 25th through on-site observation, monitoring, and information-gathering from both those residing in the encampments as well as stakeholder departments including DSHS, DPW and SFPD, as well as analyzing data from 311 complaints regarding encampments called into the city.

Details of Recent Sweeps

On Friday April 20th, San Francisco Mayor Mark Farrell leaked to Chronicle reporter Phil Matier that he planned on clearing the Mission District of encampments, and an article appeared that Saturday saying as much. We responded by going to the area near Division Street that was to be swept, investigating and talking to homeless encampment residents in that area through Tuesday night April 24th when notices appeared in the Mission area warning against sidewalk obstruction. None of these notices announced the removal of encampments, nor did they notify campers of where to ascertain assistance with their housing crisis. On Wednesday April 25th at 5:00 am, the SFPD and the Department of Public Works commenced to remove encampments in the Mission District, focusing on Division Street and surrounding areas to the South. In our investigation, we found that comprehensive offering of services at the locations of tent sites before sweeps had not occurred, with limited exceptions. Instead, flyers were distributed that advertised the only “service” being offered to encampment residents: a 7-night stay on a mat on the floor of the dining area at Next Door shelter. However, the fliers failed to mention that individuals could not bring more than a small amount of property with them to the shelter. There were 7-day shelter beds for about 1/3 of estimated camp residents. In the end only 8 were successfully sheltered. After their 7-night stay on a mat in Next Door shelter’s cafeteria, they were released back to the streets. In addition, Homeless Outreach Team members, instead of visiting encampments during the sweeps, were stationed a few blocks away from the area being swept, on the corner of Folsom and 16th Streets. This meant those in encampments needed to rely on police to communicate where to go for help, move their property with them to talk to social service workers, or leave their property behind for destruction by the city. Since Wednesday the 25th of April, the sweeps have continued during working hours.

Effective solutions to street homelessness have been enacted in the past in San Francisco, when thoughtful relocation plans were developed, campers were engaged in crafting solutions, ample notice was given, property storage was available and most importantly temporary accommodations were made available which led directly to permanent housing. However, none of those effective strategies were chosen to be used by City officials last week. Instead, encampments were pushed from industrial and out-of-the-way spaces into residential areas, which, according to our analysis of 311 data on encampment-related complaints, has led to increased complaints from housed residents. This has been a consistent result in past sweeps as well. After the high-profile Division Street sweeps after the Super bowl in the first week of March, 2016, government data showed that complaints about encampments went up significantly. In February 2016, the month preceding the

Super Bowl sweeps, the City received 4,349 complaints, and in March 2016 the number of complaints increased to 5,058.

In sum, our investigation determined that there was no notice given to encampment residents, no relocation plan, no placement into a location that could solve their homelessness, and the operation did not follow federal guidelines nor best practices to ensure effective outcomes and resulted in increased complaints from city residents regarding the presence of tents in their neighborhoods.

National Best Practices and Standards

The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness report *Ending Homelessness for People Living in Encampments: Advancing the Dialogue* provides communities with guidance for developing a local action plan to respond to encampments that engages both residents of encampments and an array of community partners and that results in the provision of permanent housing solutions for encampment residents. We've identified four key elements for such action plans, summarized here and described in more detail within the publication:

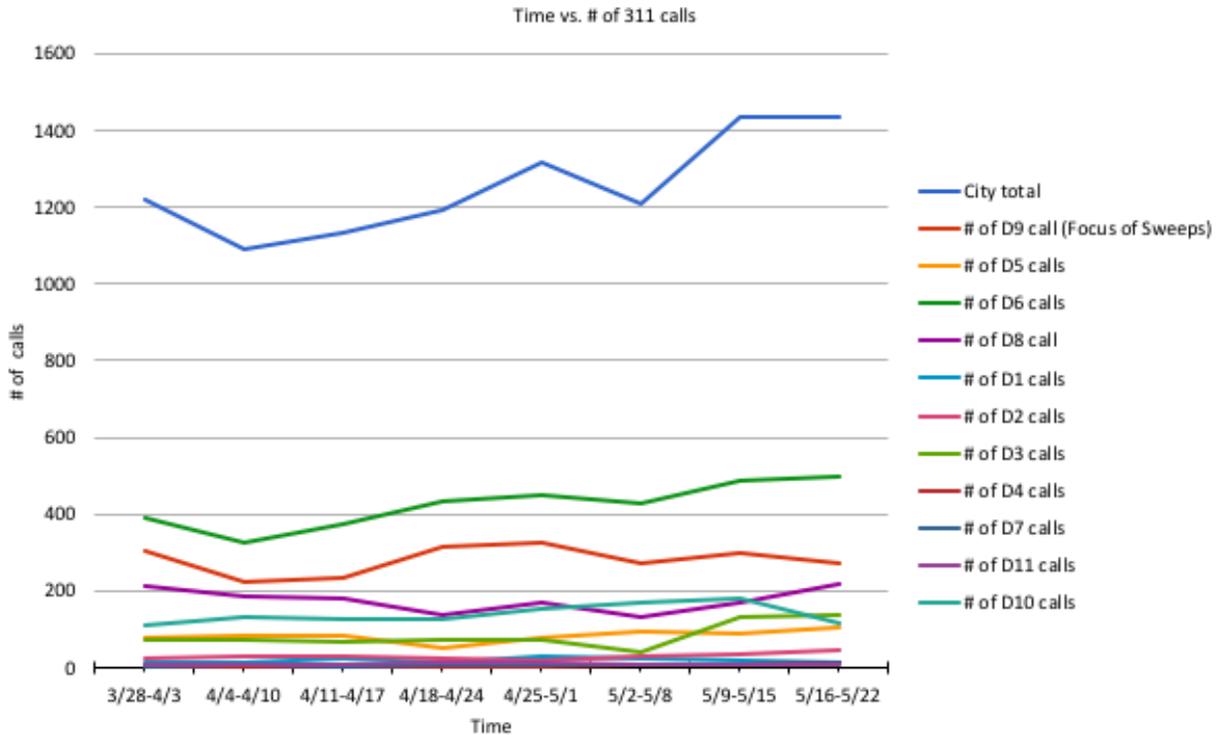
1. Preparation and Adequate Time for Planning and Implementation: Action plans should ensure that there is adequate time for strategizing, collaboration, outreach, engagement, and the identification of meaningful housing options. Adequate time is essential to achieve the primary objective of meeting the needs of each person in the encampment and assisting them to end their homelessness.
2. Collaboration across Sectors and Systems: Action plans should include collaboration between a cross-section of public and private agencies, neighbors, business owners, and governmental entities, based upon on where the encampment is located. The action plan should feature strong communication among a broad range of community service providers and managers of the permanent housing resources that are being utilized in order to maximize efficiency, align resources, and address system gaps.
3. Performance of Intensive and Persistent Outreach and Engagement: Action plans should involve agencies that have strong outreach experience and demonstrated skills in engaging vulnerable and unsheltered people. Effective outreach is essential for effectively connecting people with coordinated assessment systems, resources, and housing options.
4. Provision of Low-Barrier Pathways to Permanent Housing: Action plans should focus on providing people with clear, low-barrier pathways for accessing and obtaining permanent housing opportunities and should not focus on relocating people to other encampment settings.

https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/Quick_Guide_Ending_Homelessness_for_People_Living_in_Encampments_Aug2015.pdf

Impact

The Sweeps were and continue to be ineffective

As the city only placed 8 individuals into shelter for 7 days, without any access to permanent housing or a longer shelter stay, encampments did not disappear from the City, but relocated to surrounding neighborhoods, or to another block in the same neighborhood. We have fielded several complaints from housed residents who now find themselves with people camping in front of their homes since the sweeps. This led us to conduct an analysis of encampment-related 311 complaints one month before and one month after the sweeps. We found that the effort simply led to increased tent complaints in almost every district in the city.



We analyzed 311 calls related to encampments one month leading up to the sweeps and one month after. We found no decrease in the number of complaints, and, in fact, found that the number of complaints has risen. The complaints grew from 4,633 in the month preceding the sweeps compared to 5,399 in the month following the sweeps, a 16% increase. Increased calls came from every district including the district that had experienced sweeps, outside of D8 where complaints decreased slightly, by 3%. In District 9, where the sweeps were concentrated, complaints rose from 1,073 the month before the sweeps to 1,166 the month after, and increased by 25% in District 5, by 22% in District 6, and increased by 25% in District 10. The highest raw increase was in D6 with an additional 337 complaints. D3, D7 and D4 also saw significant increases.

We have attached chart of encampment complaints the city’s 311 system received here.

Date	Center of Sweeps # of D9 calls (Focus of Sweeps)	Surrounding Districts				Outer Districts					City total	
		# of D5 calls	# of D6 calls	# of D8 calls	# of D10 calls	# of D1 calls	# of D2 calls	# of D3 calls	# of D4 calls	# of D7 calls		# of D11 calls
3/28-4/3	302	76	391	214	111	16	26	70	4	2	6	1218
4/4-4/10	225	81	328	187	131	15	30	74	3	6	8	1088
4/11-4/17	232	81	374	183	127	22	31	69	1	5	9	1134
4/18-4/24	314	53	432	135	128	15	24	72	3	6	11	1193
START OF SV 4/25-5/1	328	76	448	172	153	29	17	75	3	7	11	1319
5/2-5/8	271	94	427	133	172	22	29	39	7	6	8	1208
5/9-5/15	297	91	489	170	180	19	33	132	10	7	8	1436
5/16-5/22	270	103	498	219	115	16	44	137	13	11	10	1436
District total:	2239	655	3387	1413	1117	154	234	668	44	50	71	10032
Pre-Sweep Total:	1073	291	1525	719	497	68	111	285	11	19	34	4633
Post-Sweep Total:	1166	364	1862	694	620	86	123	383	33	31	37	5399
# Change	93	73	337	-25	123	18	12	98	22	12	3	766
% Change	8%	25%	22%	-3%	25%	26%	11%	34%	300%	63%	8%	16%

The Service Resistance Myth

As of May 23, 2018, there are 1,060 individuals on the City’s single adult [Shelter Reservation Waitlist](#). San Francisco has only 10 single adult homeless shelters, and a handful of navigation centers and transitional housing beds, totaling about 2,500 beds. With a total of over 7,000 homeless people nightly in San Francisco, there are 28 shelter beds for every 100 homeless people. When given the option between safe accessible affordable housing and the street, with the exception of rare cases, homeless people choose housing. However, the city rarely offers housing, and when it does have something to offer, it is typically a short term stay that doesn’t result in permanent housing, but requires more loss, such as giving up property, or pets.

When long term stays in congregate settings that allow people to stay with partners, pets and property, such as at navigation centers, are offered to homeless people, they inevitably are used by most everyone. However, there are a small portion of people living without housing for whom navigation centers are inappropriate because of behavioral health issues. This should be viewed as a failure of the system, not the individual. Other times, congregate stays in traditional shelters are offered, where rules about curfews, drug and alcohol use, and pets, partners, and possessions are more restrictive than in Navigation Centers. Because of these restrictions, such services are accepted by even fewer people. Here are some reasons that traditional congregate stays fail to meet the needs of those in encampments:

- they are only available at a time when someone is working,
- a person is severely traumatized and/or severely mentally ill and living in a congregate setting is inappropriate,
- the services are not accessible,
- the services require separation from care giver or receiver, separation from survival gear, separation from pet,
- service is available for short time and would further destabilize individual or family unit.

Specific Examples of loss among homeless victims of encampment sweeps

We found that the net result of the sweeps was increased human suffering and trauma. Homeless people, already in crisis, were further traumatized, which leads to disconnection from services,

loss of hope, loss of survival gear, increased psychiatric episodes and diminished physical and behavioral health. Here are some stories of the real human impact from the streets.

Foremost San Francisco artist [Ronnie Goodman](#) lost his original archive linocut sheets and wood cut blocks to the sweeps. Like many others, his property was confiscated and destroyed. These items are irreplaceable and represent an important part of San Francisco's artistic legacy.

We met one man named Byron who had not been approached by anyone from the Homeless Outreach team and when asked what he had been offered he said, "They didn't offer us nothing, they just said, 'get up and move'". The Coalition on Homelessness could not find any printed notices in the surrounding area.

Claire, a young woman who has Asperger Syndrome was not only ridiculed by police, but a police officer cut her while slashing her tent with a knife while she was in the tent. When asked how she was coping she stated, "Not like anyone cares about me or us or anyone for that matter. The city hates us!"



Photo provided by Kelley Cutler

Another man reported he had been moved four times in one day after the sweeps started; he just keeps moving and has nowhere to go.

It was reported by one homeless person that they have experienced severe sleep deprivation since the sweeps started. Our outreach shows that sleep deprivation is a common occurrence among homeless encampment residents. Sleep deprivation is the cause of heart disease, diabetes and a host of medical conditions.

On May 1st, a housed resident of the Fillmore district reported an increase in enforcement against street-based homeless people, resulting in the homeless people having to move every day. She had contacted Coalition on Homelessness staff asking for help for a man named Jason who lives in an encampment in her neighborhood. Jason is number 200 on the single adult shelter waitlist and in the meantime has nowhere to go, so he just keeps moving.

On May 3rd, a resident of the Union Square district reported a sweep of street-based homeless people, saying "Cops just cleared the alley. He pulls up, gets out, snaps some expandable stick out and starts waving it around and follows everyone out of the alley. Brian said they do it a few times a day now. I asked the cop what they were doing wrong? The officer shook his head and said; 'I'm just doing what I'm told, apparently existing is wrong.' Cops are miserable about this part of their job. Their union needs to step up and protest them being used this way!"

On May 16th, a homeless service provider reported "As I was walking out of Castro Coffee around 10:30am this morning, I saw a young woman who appeared to be homeless crying and running across Castro, near Market, towards the F train turnaround. I saw a DPW pick-up truck parked there, with two volunteer DPW workers in vests who had just finished loading a bunch of stuff from the sidewalk into the bed of the truck. The belongings included two suitcases, a sleeping bag, and a shopping cart. As I approached, I heard the young woman begging the two men to give her back her sleeping bag, at least, and the two men were refusing, saying she shouldn't leave her belongings unattended. She said she'd been away for ten minutes, just trying to get a cup of coffee. I walk up and ask them to release her belongings, and they refuse initially, saying they're volunteers and they can't take stuff out of the truck once it's in there. I asked what the purpose of that rule was, and they just kept saying they needed their supervisor. Then they said they needed to go to another call, and I said to at least give her a tag and receipt for her belongings. Again, they refused. I kept pushing for them to either give her back her belongings or give us a tag. The two men kept claiming they were just doing their jobs, and I said, 'Your job is to take people's belongings? That's stealing.' One of the volunteers then called me a bitch and told me to get away from them, that they were just doing their job, and it's not their fault. I told him not to call me names for asking him to follow procedure and law. The other volunteer seemed nicer but also kept saying, 'We're just doing our jobs.' Every time they said it, I reminded them that they had a choice, and they were choosing to take belongings that help people survive while living outside.

On May 17th, Javon Edwards Bridges, a Street Sheet vendor, reported being harassed while legally selling papers. "Today a SFPD officer told my husband and I that we we're going to be his next project. We went to Trader Joes today to sell Street Sheet like we normally do but he stopped us and told us we couldn't 'set up shop there and beg for change'. We told him we we're selling a newspaper and he said, 'no you're not on my watch'. I told him legally I'm allowed to and that's when he said, 'you guys are gonna be my next project'. I asked what that meant, and he just

repeated it. I got upset and started crying wrote down his name and badge number and as we walked away he took a picture of us. I'm not sure what to do about this.”

Krystale, who's been moved around from place to place on a daily basis reported that she was woken up abruptly by an officer who threatened to seize her kitten if she didn't get up and move. He gave her less than a half hour to get all of her things and move or he would take her kitten to the SPCA to put her kitten to sleep. She stated " Why would he do that? She is my kitten, I love her she needs me and I need her. If that happened I would not be able to function, I would give up." Today she was moved 2 times within a 2-hour time frame. "I was woke up by rude cops kicking my suitcases telling me to get the [expletive] up, telling me to move again. I ask where and all I hear is jokes and they are basically making fun of me and the fact I'm homeless. It's hard to get up at a moment's notice and pack everything again while they snicker and laugh and are just [expletive] rude. Don't they know I am a human being? I am so tired I'm [expletive] exhausted every day. Sometimes 3 times a day I move my things, I just wanna be left alone. I just want to sleep. I'm sick of everyday being [expletive] with and made to feel like nothing. They make me feel like I'm just a joke to them. I'm a normal regular woman, I'm just homeless with a kitten. I don't hurt steal or put anyone in danger. I just wanna place to sleep and rest without all the drama and b.s. we have been subjected to.”

Sushi's comments on the Sweeps, “In the last month I have noticed a severe difference, and not in a good way.” He reports having 2 laptops, books, a gameboy, and pieces of his tent confiscated by City employees. Officers told him, “Well, you shouldn't have gotten caught with your stuff outside.”

International Perspective

Quotes from United Nations Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing Leilani Farha who visited the United States earlier this year and is releasing a report on her findings on informal settlements shortly.

“If I turned to San Francisco and there were 100 people who were homeless, I might say, ‘Hmm, this is probably about psychological disability, drug dependence, a history of sexual abuse in their childhood’ or something like that. I might be able to say that it is very individualized. But when you're seeing the numbers of people who are homeless here and in every other city, you just know it's structural.”

“In international human rights law,” Farha said, “providing shelter to people who are homeless is the absolute minimum standard for any country, regardless of resources.”

“There's a cruelty here that I don't think I've seen,” she said.

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/jan/22/un-rapporteur-homeless-san-francisco-california>

Leilani Farha said she "can't help but be completely shocked" by what she saw on a tour of San Francisco's homeless communities.

"Every single person, whether it was in passing or in a long conversation, said they just want to be treated like a human being," said Farha, who is a lawyer by training and lives in Canada. "What does that say? That is bleak."

"If I could add, the other thing that just struck me ... but I'm sorry, California is a rich state, by any measures, the United States is a rich country, and to see these deplorable conditions that the government is allowing, by international human rights standards, it's unacceptable. I'm guided by human rights law."

"It's damaging because they always have to move," she says. "They're treated like nonentities. Sometimes they say (belongings are) put in storage, but more often they'll dump everyone's possessions into one Dumpster. It's horrible. It's not dignified. The people have nowhere to go. It's illogical. It's tragic."

"I understand there may be some health issues around these encampments," she said. "The way to deal with health issues is to get them into shelters, but without the heavy-handedness that regulates those places and keeps people out."

<https://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/Leilani-Farah-UN-rapporteur-homelessness-SF-CA-12519117.php>

Cost

According to the [Budget Legislative Analyst Office](#), we are spending \$20.7 million on criminalizing homeless people without any positive outcomes. That money is equivalent to the cost of 1,300 housing subsidies.

Conclusion

The sweeps by the City are just another ineffective, inhumane method of "cleaning up" public space without addressing the underlying causes of homelessness. One could assume that Mayor Farrell's public comments about the sweeps encouraged more residents to call and complain about encampments, but the question still remains: "why did the district where the sweeps were concentrated have an increase in complaints?" At the very least, District 9 should have seen a near elimination of complaints given the relentless nature of police action in that neighborhood if Mayor Farrell's stated goals were met or if sweeps are at all an effective way to rid the city of tents. Instead, the City now is in the situation of needing to respond to even more complaints overall. If we are to successfully address encampments and homelessness, we must follow best national practices. The residents of encampments should be given appropriate notice before being asked to leave and should only be asked to leave when there are appropriate alternative spaces that can be offered to them. These spaces must be connected to a path to permanent housing. The City should see that all shelter and housing placements are appropriate to the needs of people on the

streets, including people who are chronically mentally ill. This means access to supported living spaces, and not simply congregate living spaces. If the local government finds itself unable to expand this capacity under current budget constraints, then the city should support any pertinent revenue measures in order to achieve this goal. Until then, regular cleaning, garbage service, access to bathrooms, and creating clean safe spaces for homeless people to sleep in are effective responses to street homelessness that not only increase the dignity of those forced to sleep on the streets but address the concerns of neighbors. In addition, it is a poor use of public funding to have SFPD focused on moving destitute people from one block to the other.

Homeless people should not be forced to sleep on the streets, and in tents. Their suffering can be resolved with a home.