



HERMAN GOLDSTEIN AWARD SUBMISSION



Vacation of the Devil's Play Ground



*On behalf of the Eureka Police Department, we salute you, mourn with you and pray for you all!
Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria!*



Team

Presenters

Stephen Watson, Chief of Police, Eureka, CA

Brian Stephens, Captain, Eureka Police Department

Kelly Johnson, Supervising Mental Health Clinician, Department of Health and Human Services, Humboldt County, CA

Other Team Members Present

Officer Wayne Rabang, M.I.S.T/Homeless Enforcement Officer, Eureka Police Department

Pamlyn Millsap, Homeless Liaison, Eureka Police Department

Clearing the Marsh

Fires, shelters and a lawsuit
in the last days of the Devil's Playground



7 Coastal dependency

23 Torch the weed

24 Ewok art walk

Overview

Project

Broad-based, collaborative efforts - reduce number of homeless in Eureka and eliminate the “Devil’s Playground.”

Background

Previously strong fishing and timber industry; declining economy = poverty, drug addiction and mental illness

One of the worst per capita homeless problems in the nation

Multiple strategies with limited success

The Palco Marsh, a former mill site, became the “Devil’s Playground” & ground zero for houseless individuals and advocates

Approach

Focus on careful planning & a compassionate response using as little force as possible

Solution

Collaboration of police, community, homeless advocates, social services, and government working to find sensible, reasonable and sustainable solutions based on analysis, debate, research and compassionate response.

Steps

1. Understand the problem
2. Analyze it
3. Create a response
4. Re-adjust the response
5. Assess the outcome

Result

Housed many, cleared the marsh, extended the waterfront trail

**Solutions regarding the homelessness rarely easy;
on-going efforts and collaboration are key**

Humboldt County

Eureka

- Isolated behind the redwood curtain
- 270 miles north of San Francisco; 400 miles south of Portland
- County population about 130,000
- Eureka population 28,000 (daytime, about 55,000); largest city in three surrounding counties; center of services & government etc.
- Along the Highway 101 corridor; mild weather



Homelessness

Average homeless rates per 100,000

- US: 210
- California: 294
- San Francisco: 795
- Humboldt County: 1,407
- Eureka: 730 homeless (469 unsheltered)- pop: 28,000

Equivalent of 2,600 per 100,000 *

EPD - five types of homeless

- Criminal
- Those with substance use disorders (alcohol, meth, heroin, etc.)
- Severely Mentally Ill
- Destitute
- Trimmigrants

* Per 2015 Point in Time Count

Services & Community Attitudes

Mixed community response

People need services

OR

Services enable homelessness

Services

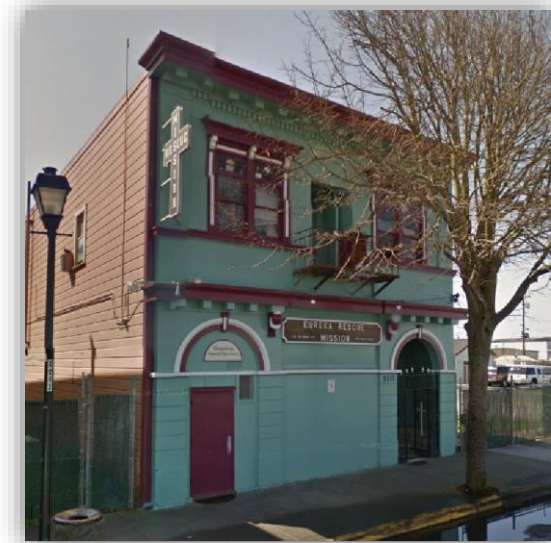
Eureka Rescue Mission, Betty Kwan Chinn Homeless Foundation, St Vincent de Paul, etc. - food, shelter, services

Shelters/sleeping places

No legal overnight camp, safe parking, etc.

The Eureka Rescue Mission offers only overnight emergency shelter in Eureka

- Faith based
- No dogs
- No couples
- No belongings
- Rules enforced
- Too “High barrier”



Community Responses

Multiple groups over the years– little impact

October 2013: CHIPs (Community Homeless Improvement Project), monthly meetings

Participants included

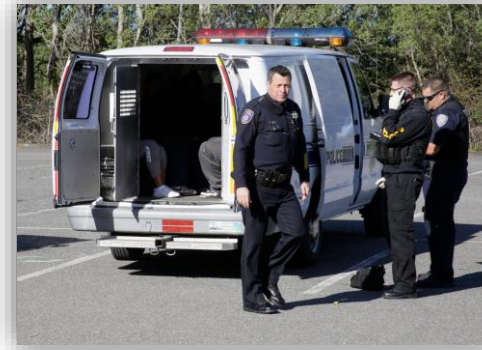
- Department of Health and Human Services
- Members of the Board of Supervisors
- County Sheriff Dept.
- City officials
- Business owners
- Nonprofits/service providers
- Advocates

But no effective long-term solutions

Law Enforcement Responses Over the Years

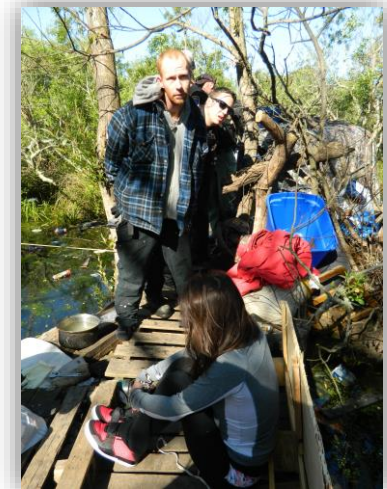
General enforcement, on-going

- Sweeps & clean-up operations (short term fix)
- Tried to move people on



Rigorous enforcement - minimal impact

- 2011-2013: 639 arrests for municipal code violations
- Of 325 suspects, 22 defendants accounted for 25% of all cases
- Responded to multiple shootings in Devil's Playground; recovered numerous firearms





Exorcising the Devil's Playground

~via the Crime Triangle

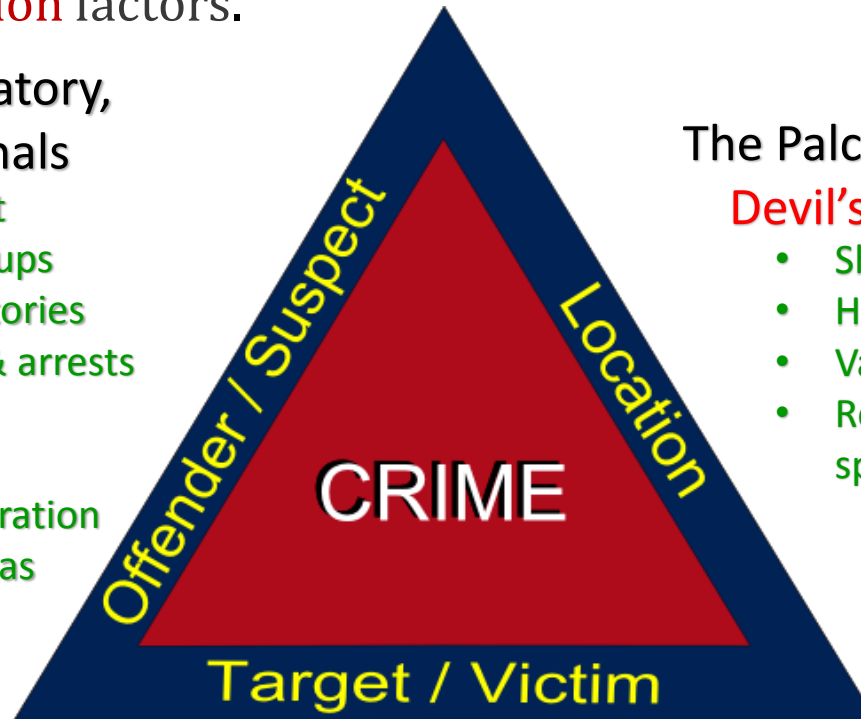
- Identify and *solve* trending crime problems (the DP) by analysis of **victim**, **suspect**, and **location** factors.

The homeless & predatory,
opportunistic criminals

- Focus Strategies report
- Homeless working groups
- Surveys & criminal histories
- Enforcement sweeps & arrests
- Pulling levers
- MIST & Service Fairs
- Partnerships & collaboration
- Overnight sleeping areas

The law-abiding public

- Community surveys
- Communication,
education & awareness



The Palco Marsh, AKA:
Devil's Playground

- Shrink the footprint
- Hot spots policing
- Vacate the marsh
- Reclaim & repurpose the
space (waterfront trail)

The Problem Analysis Triangle

<http://www.popcenter.org>

EPD Seeks to Better Understand the Problem (s)

Problem solving training

Surveys

- Homeless (about 112 surveyed)
- Community members (over 2,000 responded)

Homeless- EPD ran criminal histories

99 of 112 had criminal history *

- 67% - drug history
- 60% - history of theft
- 49% - history of serious violence

9 of the 13 with no criminal conviction had no ID

**criminal history: crimes other than those related to homelessness (i.e., camping)*

Interviews/Self Reporting

Average age: 38

57% - victim of crime

12% - frequent victimization

91% - desire housing (their terms)

52% - chose where to sleep based on safety

Majority lived in Humboldt 5+ years

> 50% have mental illness

Majority with substance abuse addiction (many heroin or meth)

50+% had dogs - warmth, companionship and safety (but a barrier to services and housing)

Other Findings

Greenbelts

Many campsites fortified with

- Locks
- Makeshift doors
- Perimeter fences

Many were buried in vegetation or underground

Several were armed with firearms



Survey of Community Members

Citizen Survey

- 73% afraid to walk in open space
- 80% change shopping habits due to fear of homeless
- 65% of businesses report losing customers due to homeless
- 50% don't feel safe leaving work, 80% receive customer complaints and 83% interact monthly or more frequently with homeless

Crime Survey

Of 51 violent crimes in one quarter, 22 had transient victim or suspect

- 52% of the assaults involved a transient
- 32% of robberies involved a transient
- 33% of rapes involved a transient

Research

- POP analysis, google and academic searches
- Focus Strategies report assessed the community: Very high rate of homelessness
 - Challenging population (high rates mental illness & substance abuse)
 - Recommended Housing First
 - Recommended establishing multiple services (MIST, AOD, Mental Health)
- Rapid Rehousing



"I've been to some of your encampments. Homelessness here is as rough as I've seen it, and I've been doing this a long time."

~ Megan Kurteff Schatz
(Founder – Focus Strategies)

Working Theory

The working theory for EPD & partners:

1. Focus on Rapid Rehousing
2. Increase capacity to help mentally ill
3. **Destroy** sense of comfort and entitlement
4. Reduce inflow of “trimmigrants”
5. Reduce visual and ecological blight of marsh

Key elements: broad collaboration focused on finding sensible, reasonable and sustainable solutions based on analysis, debate, research and compassionate response

Measure Z = Resources (Nov. 2014)

County-wide ½ cent local sales

To maintain and improve essential services:

- Law enforcement & emergency response
- Public health & safety
- Substance abuse rehabilitation
- Mental health treatment

Funds for staff and resources to address issues pertaining to homelessness

Funding Amounts (MIST)

- FY 2015-16: \$405,000
- FY 2016-2017: \$459,999
- FY 2017-2018: \$419,000

Over \$1.2 Million over 3 years dedicated to homeless issues in Eureka

1. Rapid Rehousing

Focus on rapid rehousing

- Great goal
- EPD, DHHS and Betty Kwan Chinn, homeless advocate, all housed people independently though personal leverage, but an overall rapid rehousing plan was not probable in the near term

Shortage of funding, staff and housing

2. Increase Capacity to Manage Homeless By Helping the Mentally Ill

Pamlyn Milsap, EPD Homeless Liaison

MAC (Multiple Assistance Center)

- Previously used for families
- Re-purposed for homeless adult males and females. No SMI or those with history of violence
- Became de facto triage center
- Average 32.9 people were housed nightly for 30+ days & assessed for housing and help
- Focused on stabilizing, services and housing
- Average stay 58 days
- July 1, 2015-June 20, 2017
 - 292 unique residents
 - 90 permanently housed



Feb. 2016

101 (77%) reported to have a mental illness

68 (52%) reported to have 3 or more conditions

Effective for many but bottle neck and overstay problems

MIST

Mobile Intervention and Services Team

Innovative new pilot program launched in early 2015

Purpose

Collaborative effort between EPD and DHHS to help Eureka's most vulnerable mentally ill homeless people

Prioritizes individuals with frequent contact with police and emergency services

Earlier and integrated team response

- Target *high end users of services*
- Increase likelihood of securing housing and stability
- Increase successful system/service navigation and avoid incarceration of mentally ill homeless



In 2016, 353 unique individuals were contacted by the Team over 3,000 times

Expected Outcomes of MIST

Overarching Goal: Increase outreach, assessment, and treatment to those with severe mental illness who come to the attention of law enforcement. Intended to *decrease*:

- Number of law enforcement encounters with mental health clients
- Emergency department admissions
- Psychiatric hospitalization & Crisis Stabilization Unit admissions
- Arrests, incarceration & 5150 holds
- Homelessness- by increasing engagement & service entry



MIST – Service Prioritization Matrix

MIST created a metric to assist the team in identifying and prioritizing the top 10 high end users of services:

- Police
- Fire
- Emergency Medical Services
- Hospitalization
- Mental Health/Sempervirens

MIST
Mobile Intervention & Services Team
DHHS • EPD

MIST Service Prioritization Matrix

Client's Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____
Date Matrix Completed: _____ By: _____ Range: ____/____/____ - ____/____/____

EMERGENCY SERVICES (MEDICAL/MENTAL HEALTH)

In the past 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 6 ☐ months, how many times has the individual...

1. Received health care at an emergency department/room? _____
2. Taken an ambulance to the hospital? _____
3. Been taken to a mental health facility/crisis stabilization unit for an involuntary mental health detention (5150 W&I hold)? _____

(1-2 = 1 point, 3-4 = 2 points, 5+ = 3 points. Max value 3 points each question, 9 points total this section.)

Total: _____

PUBLIC SAFETY/LAW ENFORCEMENT SERVICES

In the past 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 6 ☐ months, how many times has the individual...

1. Been Arrested? _____
2. Been cited? _____
3. Generated a call for service (police or fire)? _____

(1-4 = 1 point, 5-9 = 2 points, 10+ = 3 points. Max value 3 points each criteria, 9 points total this section.)

Total: _____

Is the individual currently on the City Attorney's stay away order list (includes summary probation with stay away conditions from a location in Eureka)? _____

(Yes = 1 point, more than one location = 2 points. 2 points total this section)

Total: _____

OTHER

Justification for additional or fewer points (comments explaining reason required):

5 points +/- max
Total: _____

TOTAL SCORE: _____ (25 points possible)

MIST Client Profile

Well-recognized MI 50-year-old homeless man

- Numerous complaints and calls for service (CFS) in Eureka
 - Over 185 CFS since June 2013
- Through MIST, moved into new housing in Arcata in September 2015
- Remains independently housed
 - Is happy in his new community
 - Has learned to use the bus system
- Has a case manager that he trusts
- Has re-connected with family

EPD/APD had received only five CFS regarding him in the 5 + months after he was housed

Service Fairs

April 2015-May 2016, EPD/MIST coordinated approximately 9 services fairs behind the Bayshore Mall/adjacent to the Devil's Playground

Service fairs offered

- Direct services (medical, enrollment)
- Referrals (housing, etc.)

Service Fair

2/26/2016
Bayshore Way Overflow Lot- **RAIN OR SHINE**
9:00-12:00 Last Friday of every month

Partners and Providers

Teen Challenge* TAP* DETOX*
Humboldt Domestic Violence Services*
Veterans Services* North Coast Veterans Resource Center*
Rescue Mission* Friends of the Marsh* Street Outreach Services*
MIST* Open Door Clinic* AHHA* Redwood Legal Assistance*
Housing Authority* Raven Project* Humboldt Recovery* EPD*
Game Over* DHHS* HRC*

Services provided with dignity*respect* and understanding

Services

- *Counseling
- *Medical Care
- *Support for LGBTQ
- *Housing Information
- *Drug and Alcohol treatment
- *Flu Shots
- *Pet Care Information and referrals
- *Food By: Friends of the Marsh
- *Mental Health Services
- *Behavioral Health Services
- *Family Planning
- *Skilled Nursing Information
- *Sex Trafficking Survivor Support
- *Health Education
- *Native American Services
- *HIV support and information
- *Referrals to ongoing services
- *MAC referrals and screening
- *Income Information
- *Treatment information
- *Transportation Assistance (TAP)

HUMBOLDT SERVICE FAIR

Open Door
Community Health Centers
Mobile Health Van
At the Bayshore Mall
Friday, February 26, 2016
9am - Noon
Sick? Need Health Care?
Need Flu Shot?
Come See Us!
(18 years & older please)



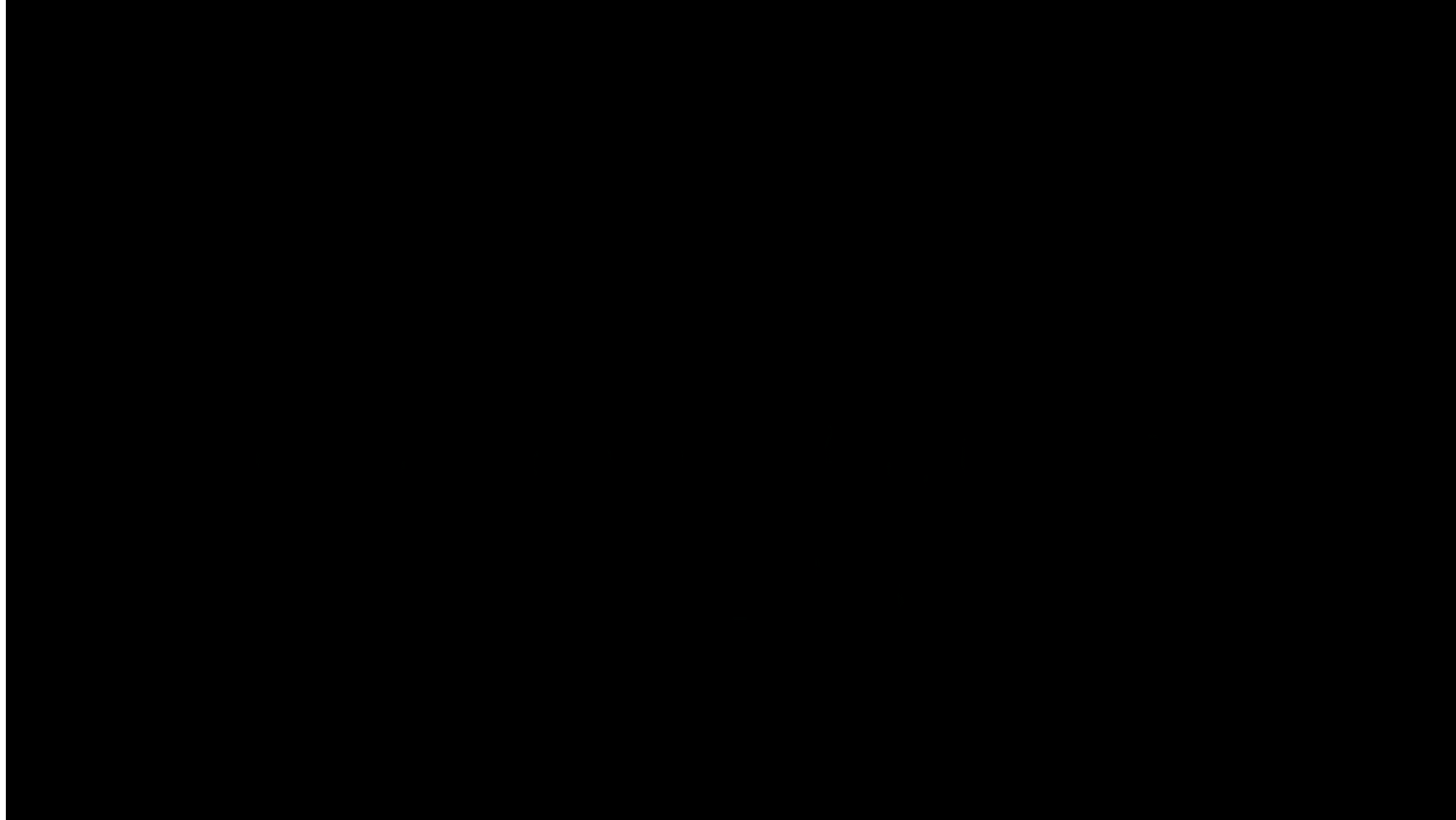
Walk-in Clinic - First Come Basis
No Insurance? Not a Problem!
No one is turned away due to inability to pay






The Service Fairs were started by Eureka Police Department in hopes of helping those that need a hand up. Many individuals have connected with supportive services and transitioned off the streets because of these fairs. For more information on how you can help, contact Steven Porter at humboldtservicefair@gmail.com or pnillsap@ci.eureka.ca.gov
Or friend us on Facebook : Humboldt Service Fair . Any and all Service Providers are welcome!

Devil's Playground



Devil's Playground

Former mill site behind Bayshore Mall occupied for more than 20 years

250-300 living in marsh at any time

Population changed

- Changed to more hardened and aggressive criminal element
- Sheltered by traditional homeless

Created dangerous subculture of violence & predation

Threat to public safety in the area & vulnerable living in the camps

Significant increase in violent crime, guns, drugs & aggressive theft associated with encampments

Devil's Playground- Environment

Garbage

- City Parks and Recreation & Friends of the Marsh (advocates) cleaned up tons of refuse each week
 - 2015: 324.26 tons
 - 2016: January- April, 177.7 tons

Environmental damage

- Removal and burning of native vegetation
- Dumping hazardous waste
- Estimated 186,000 pounds of human waste

Fires & health related service calls

- Hundreds of calls to Humboldt Bay Fire District
- Became mutual aid calls w/ EDP because of safety concerns



Crime in the Devil's Playground

In 2014, EPD responded to

- 3 stabbings
- 3 shootings (two victims sustained gunshot wounds to the legs)
- 5 assaults with other deadly weapons
- 1 armed robbery
- 1 arson

First three months of 2015, on or around property EPD took 190 crime reports

- *83 property crime reports* (including 64 for shoplifting)
- *34 warrant arrests*
- *9 violent crime reports* (including 2 robberies, a felony assault on a peace officer, and 2 ADW/stabbings)
- *4 illegal weapon cases* (2 illegal firearm possessions, 1 firearm brandishing, 1 other illegal weapon possession)
- *14 drug and alcohol-related reports*

Devil's Playground- Up Close









3. *Destroy Sense of Comfort & Entitlement*

Warrant Sweeps & Probation Searches

Seized additional weapons & made 27 arrests
All were released in a short time

When choosing a camp, people want

- Access to services
- Proximity to friends and possession of dogs
- Isolation



Maintain Order & Improve Safety

Leverage space to achieve order and deter violence

In one week- 1 transient-related homicide and 4 stabbings

- Maximum enforcement in “no go” zones
- From over a linear mile to about 1/2 mile
- Zero Tolerance - No camping/illegal lodging

Minimal enforcement area

No overt permission

Minimal camping-related enforcement

Non-compliance = maximum enforcement





Time To Draw A Line In The Sand!



4. *Reduce Inflow of Transients*

Marijuana industry draws large number of transients every year

EPD attempted to deter new “trimmigrants”

- EPD placed Craigslist ads
- Respondents (several hundred) directed to send photo
- EPD sent warning letter to respondents
 - Illegality
 - Danger of “trimming” (murders, sexual assaults and fraudulent employment practices)



Little to no measurable affect

5. Reduce Visual Blight and Ecological Disaster in Marsh

Clean Ups

- Park and Recreation & Friends of the Marsh (advocates) cleaned up tons of refuse each week
- Staff collected hundreds of “borrowed” shopping carts and removed camps outside of the zone

In the short term, it seemed to control issues but without regular maintenance...?

Address the criminal opportunists/predators

POP

- Assigned to the Marsh for over 8 months!!!

•Special Operation – HCDTF/DEA

Shopping Cart Ordinance



Conclusion- Vacate the Devil's Playground

Compressing 100s of people with mental health and addiction issues did not work

- Easier for police to manage
- Caused other problems (increased violence, etc.)

No time to see if issues self-correct!

WE MUST:

- Alleviate the theft and public safety concerns
- Address the blight
- Stop the environmental damage

Other Factors

- Law Suits
- Trail

Preparation for Vacation of DPG

Noticing

- Months warning the residents of DPG clearing
- Chief held a meeting encouraging homeless to make plans
- All provided fliers, cajoled into services and walked to DHHS employees

Service Fairs - MIST conducted through eviction process

Transportation Assistance Program (TAP) - Sent people home

MAC - Repurposed into a homeless/mental health triage center

Emergency Temporary Housing - More than 100 people

Betty's (Blue Angel) Container Village

Business community & Ms. Betty Kwan Chinn built 40 units

Faith Based Community - Offered outreach and support



Final Vacation of DPG- May 2-4, 2016

On May 1, 143 campsites were left, some abandoned and several set on fire

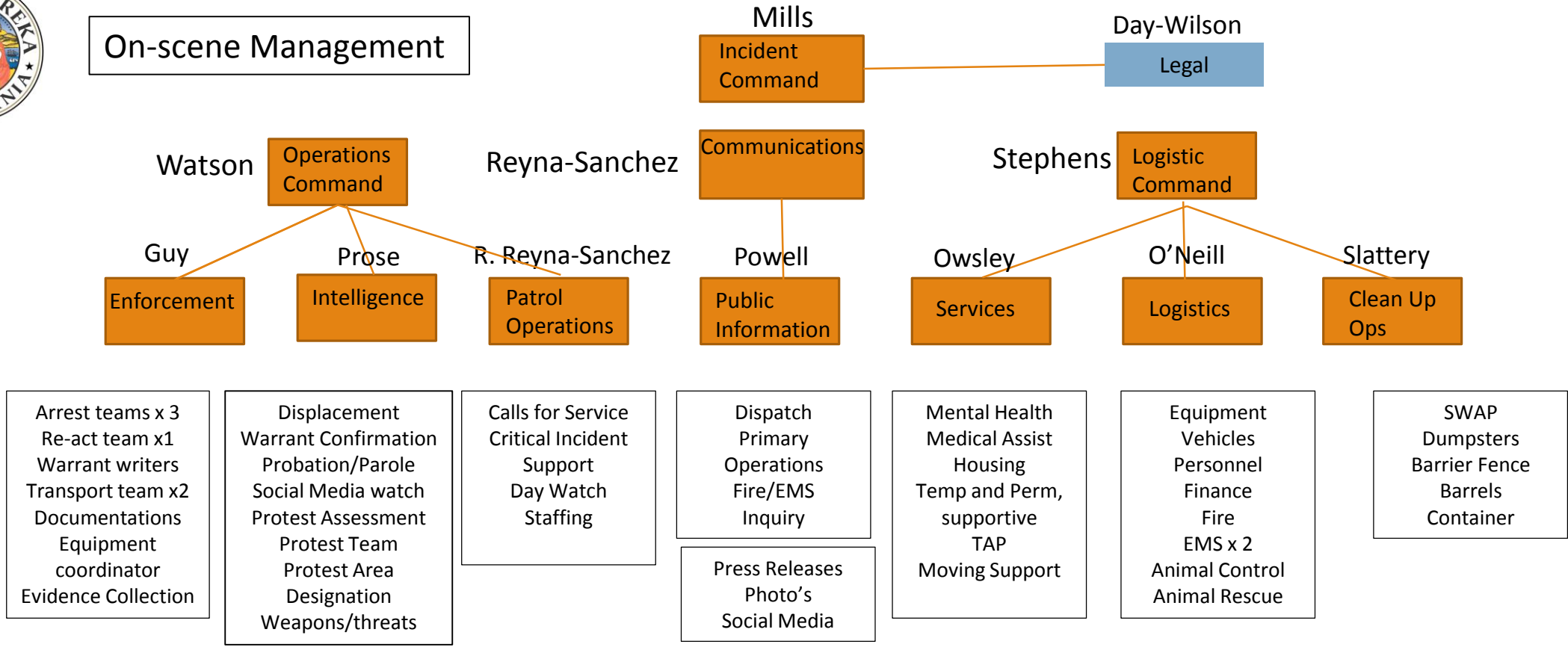
Logistics/Coordination

- Threats of “Ruby Ridge” event
- Contingency Plans
- EPD Only – Enforcement/Clearing
- Multi-Agency Event – ICS
- City OES Activated
- City Insurance Adjuster
- Observers
- Clergy
- Media

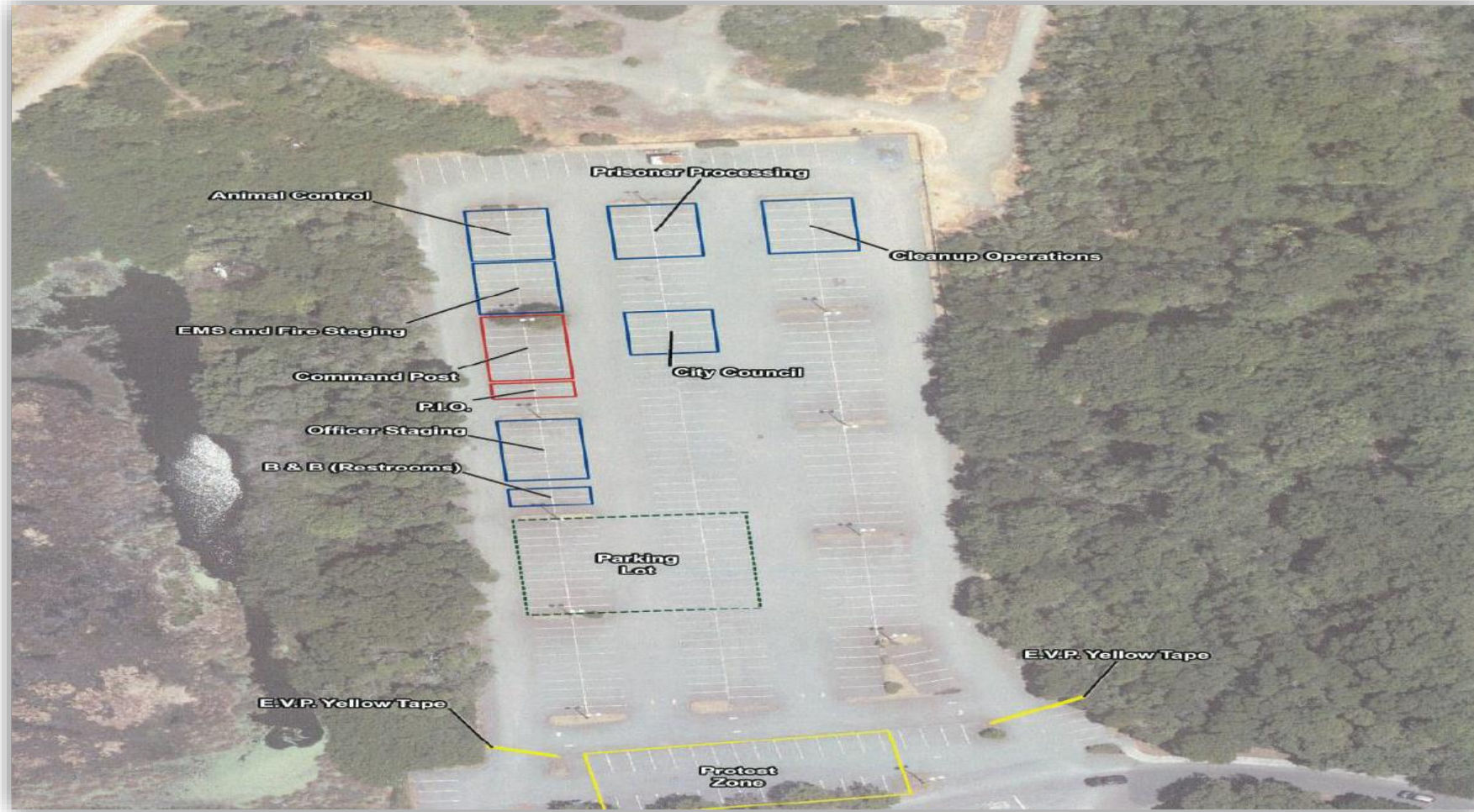




On-scene Management



Command Post



Operational Areas



Phase 1 & 2



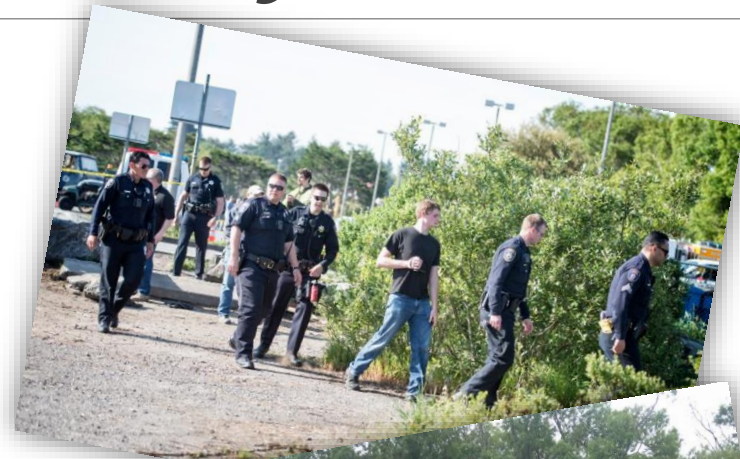
Phase 3 & 4



Phase 5



Final Vacation of DPG- May 2-4, 2016



Final Numbers and Results

Clearing

- 114 tons of waste was collected
- Others arrested off- site



Property Management

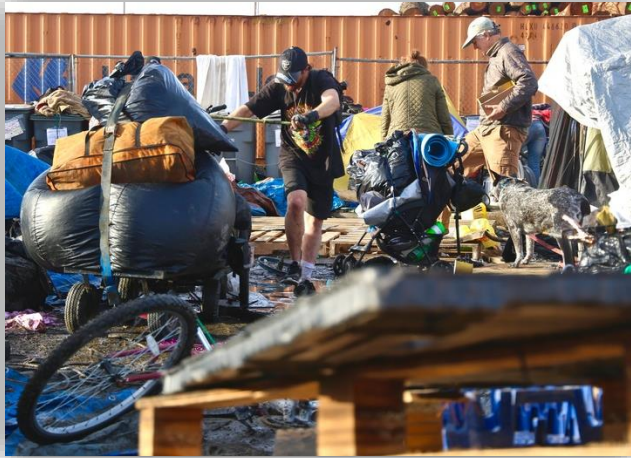
- 7 shipping containers of items collected
- Held for 90 days

Other Strategies

Daily bed counts at shelters

Temporary sleeping facility

- Goal to have a bed for every head
- 3 locations rotated monthly - could house up to 60 people



They were highly compressed and became magnets for crime. Burglaries followed each time it was moved.

Betty's Village- GECOP

Greater Eureka Community Outreach Project



Established

- May 1st 2016

Collaboration

- DHHS/MIST, business community, Betty Chinn, Eureka Police Department, city staff and the homeless

Converted shipping containers

- Created emergency housing for up to 40 chronically homeless individuals

Services

- Case management provided for residents

**Community fought it at first
& begged for it later**



GECOP—The Numbers

12 months

- 221 served
- 66 re-established with mental health services
- 40 entered substance abuse treatment
- 73 gained employment
- 70 were housed
- 16 enrolled in GED or college courses
- 65 dogs were housed with their owners
- 48 exited the program, 47 asked to leave (18 re-entered)



Outcomes

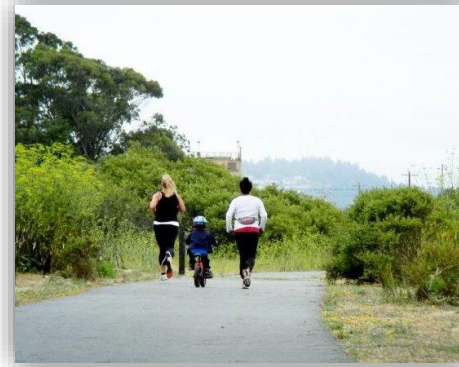
Walking and bike path completed

In a lawsuit to prevent EPD from vacating the marsh, the Federal Court ruled in favor of the City on three of the four allegations made by the ACLU

- The final item, cruel and unusual punishment is open for additional debate.

After vacation of Devil's Playground there were rarely ANY transient campers in the marsh

- Recreational users deter illegal activity
- On-going monitoring
- Some camps re-established; require enforcement



Outcomes - Year Following Vacation

Housed

300+ housed as a result of Betty Kwan Chinn, DHHS, EPD and partner efforts

Mall

Theft at the mall decreased 43%. Calls for police service decreased 30%

3rd and Commercial Street/ Free Meal

Recalcitrant group- resists services & are focal point of enforcement activity; leveraged deterrence key to controlling behavior

On-Going Challenges

Prevalent mental illness & addiction

Prop 64 (marijuana initiative)

The early release of prisoners (AB 109, Prop 47, 57)

Homeless dumping by other cities & advertising of “free housing”

Trimmigrants

Displacement

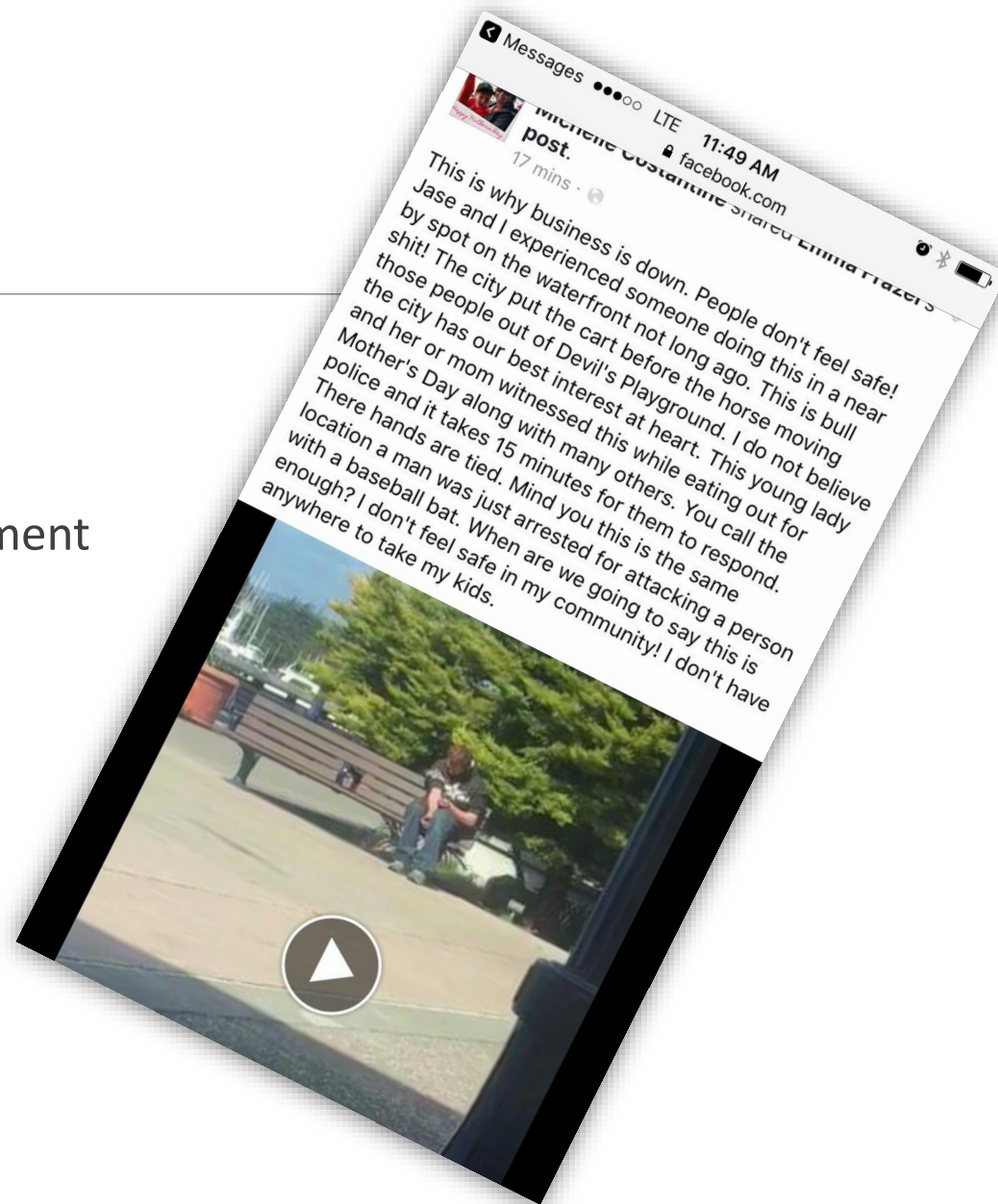
30-40 persistent people receive majority of enforcement



It takes a massive collaborative effort to find any level of success

On-Going Challenges

➤ Addiction & Displacement



The Future

Extended Hikshari Trail

MAC becomes Waterfront Recovery Services facility

- 56-bed treatment facility (residential and medically-managed detox services)

MIST expanded, increasing capacity to serve the homeless

Addressing displacement at Saint Vincent de Paul Dining Facility (“Free Meal”)

- Trying to establish a Day Center (low barrier day use area + property check-in & navigation center)
- Service providers realize they need to be part of the solution

Homeless Leadership Group

- Comprised of city, county and agency officials working to develop comprehensive strategies

Continued enforcement

- Over 1,000 EMC cites/arrests to date in 2017
- Accountability for behavior vs. “criminalizing” homelessness

Questions?



The City of Eureka



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