

# Report on the Alternative Response Study

## TACOMA, WASHINGTON

May 21, 2021



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## 1. Introduction and Executive Summary

The Matrix Consulting Group was retained by the City of Tacoma to conduct the Alternative Response Study for the Tacoma Police Department. The study is designed to provide analysis and recommendations on the feasibility of alternative response to mental health crisis, homelessness-related issues, and certain types of calls for service traditionally handled by police officers that could be handled by civilian responders.

### (1) Study Overview

The project team conducted extensive research and analysis to analyze the effectiveness of current approaches and examine the potential to implement alternative response programs, as well as the impacts of such approaches on cost and public safety outcomes.

Input from key stakeholders has been critical to this effort in developing our understanding of current approaches and challenges, as well as issues to examine in the study. The project team met via Zoom with stakeholders from multiple agencies, including the Tacoma Police Department, Tacoma Fire Department, and the Neighborhood and Community Services Department.

The following report presents the analysis of the study, including a series of recommendations associated with its findings. It is organized as follows:

- **Current Approaches to Encampments and Mental Health:** Profile of staffing, as well as roles and responsibilities, a review of the model the unit's operational philosophy is based on, and activity related to its efforts.
- **Diversion of Homelessness and Mental Health Crisis Calls:** Analysis of opportunities to shift major functions of the HOT team to other agencies and create a new non-police team of civilian responders to calls centered on mental health crisis and homelessness-related issues.
- **Diversion of Non-Emergency Calls to Civilian Response:** Alternative model for handling a wide range of non-emergency calls for service that do not require a sworn officer, instead shifting the responses to a new civilian classification.

The analysis examines challenges and potential alternatives or improvements to current approaches, making recommendations in each area. Each recommendation is designed to facilitate achievement of one or more desired outcomes, including:

- Diverting certain police workloads to more specialized or more appropriate means of handling those workloads, including non-emergency calls and incidents involving mental health crisis.
- Increased numbers of unsheltered homeless individuals placed in treatment and housing.
- Reduction in public safety issues tied to encampments.

These goals both inform the analysis and provide a set of objectives to achieve in evaluating any alternative models for service provision.

## (2) Key Findings and Recommendations

The study finds that current approaches to respond to homelessness related issues, including encampment enforcement, do not achieve desired service outcomes, such as placement into short-term housing and treatment, placement into long-term housing, reduction in law enforcement contacts, and improved mortality for unsheltered homeless populations. The co-response model of pairing officers with clinicians in the field to respond to mental health crisis events is highly effective, but the Homeless Outreach Team is not typically deployed as the primary unit to these types of calls, nor are they deployed during the hours in which they are most likely to occur.

The shared roles between the HOT team and NCS for outreach to homeless encampments and attempts to connect individuals with services poses organizational difficulties and hinders effective coordination on these issues. To address this, outreach responsibility should be fully shifted to NCS, with two additional outreach worker positions needed to handle the increased workload.

The project team examined the feasibility of two alternative service models for diverting certain types of incident response and proactive outreach activities that are currently handled by the Tacoma Police Department:

- Mental health crisis and response to homelessness-related issues: A new crisis response team should be created outside of the police department that is able to

fully divert a significant portion<sup>1</sup> of these calls from sworn officers. Two teams of a designated clinical responder (DCR) and an EMT should be established to provide 16-hour coverage, and can be expanded to four teams to extend coverage to seven days per week.

- The DCR position provides for a clinician to be on-scene and serve as the primary communicator in mental health crisis situations, while also being able to place individuals on involuntary holds.
  - EMTs are advantageous given that they can provide certain acute medical care, thus expanding the types of calls they can respond to, as well as providing for a cost effective personnel classification relative to other alternatives.
  - In many situations, police personnel are still needed, such as when involuntary holds need to be made or when weapons and/or violent behavior are involved at the scene. Thus, this approach should be thought of as more a specialized service to handle these types of events, rather than a complete removal of police presence.
- Non-emergency call diversion: A new classification should be established within the police department to respond to and take reports on non-emergency calls for service that do not require a sworn officer. Based on the scope of comparable programs in other departments:
    - Up to 7,829 calls for service can be diverted to civilian response, comprising about 9.4% of all calls handled by TPD patrol officers
    - Diverting this many calls from patrol officers would increase patrol proactive time from 36% to approximately 43%.
    - The 2020 Matrix study recommended adding 12 officers to patrol in order to reach 40% proactive time. By reducing patrol workload through call diversion such that proactive time reaches above 40%, this would remove the need to add these officers.
    - However, it must be noted that these changes will require working with South Sound 911 and police labor representatives in order to implement.

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<sup>1</sup> The percentage of calls involving mental health crisis that are diverted under this approach is more nuanced than that for non-emergency call diversion. This is because among the incident types recorded in CAD that most often correlate to mental health crisis events, the vast majority of these calls do not. Welfare checks, for instance, involve many other types of situations that would fall outside of the parameters what could be considered a mental health crisis event. Instead, the divertible calls analysis uses estimates and assumptions for the percentages of those calls that involve mental health crisis and can be diverted to a civilian team.

The report provides detailed overviews of the specific types of calls that each program could handle, staffing and deployment needs, and associated cost estimates for establishing and operating these programs.

The following provides a comprehensive list of the recommendations made from this analysis:

### Summary of Recommendations

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#### Encampment Response

Work with South Sound 911 to create additional incident type definitions to better capture data related to issues involving homelessness and mental health crisis.

Create additional fields within the 311 system to better capture data related to encampments, including the size of the encampment, whether the initial report was founded or unfounded, and to log dates at which teams conduct outreach.

Transfer HOT team's partial responsibility for encampment outreach and connection with services fully to NCS.

To accommodate the additional workload, NCS outreach worker staffing should be increased by two positions, with one of those positions functioning as a lead.

- The cost of adding the two Program Development Specialist positions is approximately \$134,900.

Develop formal criteria for prioritizing encampment response, such as a points-based system using factors including encampment size, whether inside or adjacent to residential neighborhoods, and status of availability for low-barrier shelter spots.

Identify a set of series of performance metrics that are reviewed periodically, including number of individuals placed in shelter or services by type, the percentage of interactions ending in use of force, as well as percentage of interactions resulting in arrest.

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#### Crisis Response Diversion

Adopt a warm handoff approach for individuals being released from treatment, where the crisis response team meets with the individual patient's clinical team and the individual to discuss care plan, set up appointments, and provide transport.

Form a new mobile crisis response team that is independent of the police department and responds to calls involving mental health crisis and homelessness-related issues.

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A new crisis response team should be staffed by civilians, with two teams that are each comprised of 1 Designated Clinical Responder and 1 EMT.

The crisis response team should work 8-hour shifts, with the first shift working from 6:00 AM to 2:00 PM, and the second working from 2:00 PM to 10:00 PM.

Initial information technology startup costs for the crisis response team are estimated at \$26,640.

To staff the crisis response team five days per week without a relief factor, 2 DCRs and 2 EMT positions are required, for an estimated total cost of \$472,998, including personnel costs, equipment, and vehicles.

To staff the crisis response team seven days per week with a relief factor, 4 DCRs and 4 EMT positions are required, for an estimated total cost of \$945,996, including personnel costs, equipment, and vehicles.

In either funding scenario, the cost of two DCR positions can be offset by transferring the two DCR positions in the police department to the new crisis response team.

Contingent upon implementation of both the crisis response team and civilian call diversion programs, along with the transfer of outreach responsibilities fully to NCS, the positions allocated to the HOT team can be transferred to patrol to fill currently vacant positions.

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### **Non-Emergency Call Diversion**

Divert a wide range of non-emergency calls for service to civilian responders, comprising up to 9.4% of all calls currently handled by sworn officers.

Create a new civilian community service officer (CSO) classification within the Tacoma Police Department that responds in the field to certain types of non-emergency calls in the field.

Add 10 community service officers and 1 CSO Supervisor position to staff the new civilian response program, at a cost of \$540,265 in initial costs and \$1,009,811 in annual personnel expenditures.

## 2. Current Approaches to Encampments and Mental Health

### (1) Overview

The analysis of current approaches to homelessness and encampments is organized as follows:

- **Overview of the Homeless Outreach Team (HOT):** Profile of staffing, as well as roles and responsibilities, a review of the model the unit's operational philosophy is based on, and activity.
- **Evolution of the Response to Encampments:** Examination of how encampments, 311 requests, and response from HOT team and other city departments has shifted over the past two years, as well as an analysis of how successful the approaches have been in achieving desired outcomes such as placement in treatment or housing, decreased recidivism, and reducing the volume and severity of public safety issues related to encampments. Additionally, implications for future policy decisions are discussed.
- **Interagency Coordination:** Review of current coordination between TPD and NCS in conducting outreach and encampment clearing support, as well as challenges in delineating responsibilities, creating and sharing data, and defining a common set of desired outcomes and success metrics.

Each section concludes with a summary of findings and conclusions made from the analysis, as well as next steps for the study in further analyzing these issues.

The study focuses on the Tacoma Police Department and its approach to issues involving homelessness and mental health. At the core of the department's effort is the Homeless Outreach Team (HOT), which specializes in proactive approaches to outreach and enforcement. The issues of homelessness and mental health crisis response expand far beyond this unit, however, and the work of HOT and the Tacoma Police Department are part of a larger picture of the City of Tacoma's response to these issues. Their work is intrinsically linked to other City departments, such as the Neighborhood and Community Services Department (NCS) and the Tacoma Fire Department (TFD), other governmental entities, non-profit organizations, and health care providers.

Consequently, the focus of this analysis, as well as the study in general, also examines the wider context of homelessness and mental health issues in Tacoma. In particular, the roles and work of NCS, which partners with the TPD's HOT team frequently, is closely tied to the analysis and findings of the study.



## (2) Overview of the Homeless Outreach Team

The following table summarizes the staffing and key roles of the Homeless Outreach Team within the Tacoma Police Department, which specializes in responding to issues relating to homelessness and mental health crisis intervention:

Unit	# FTEs	Classification	Roles/Responsibilities
Homeless Outreach Team	1	Sergeant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 of 4 officer positions is currently vacant.</li> </ul>
	4	Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The units responds to 311 calls involving encampments and homelessness-related issues, as well as certain 911 incidents.</li> </ul>
	1	Designated Clinical Responder (DCR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Responds and self-dispatches to incidents centering around persons experiencing mental health crisis.</li> <li>Proactively focuses on issues relating to homeless encampment.</li> <li>Conducts outreach to homeless individuals, connecting them with services as able to.</li> <li>Supports the work of NCS and other City of Tacoma agencies in their work responding to and clearing homeless encampments.</li> <li>Created to connect homeless individuals with services and operate co-response to mental health crisis events.</li> <li>Works Tuesday through Friday from 0800 to 1600 (8a–4p).</li> <li>Co-responds with the DCR, as available, to calls that involve persons experiencing mental health crisis.</li> <li>The DCR position works as a contract with the health care provider MultiCare.</li> </ul>

Additionally, Patrol has one authorized (budgeted) DCR position, although it is currently vacant and has never been filled.

### (2.1) HOT Team Activity Recorded in CAD

A significant portion of the work of the HOT team involves outreach to encampments and support to other agencies at those locations, and much of this activity is not recorded in the department's computer-aided dispatch (CAD) data. As a result, the data paints an

incomplete picture of the unit, but it does show the internal support the unit provides. This includes as a backup unit responding to mental health crisis events, as well as backup to patrol units. The following table provides these statistics, as well as the average number of HOT team units responding, including both officers and the sergeant:

HOT Team CAD Activity (2019–2020)

Incident Type	# Incidents	Avg. HT <sup>2</sup>	Avg. # HOT Units <sup>3</sup>
SUBJECT STOP	784	27	1.2
SECURITY CHECK	642	34	1.3
INFORMATION FOR POLICE	333	32	1.3
UNWANTED PERSON	277	30	1.3
UNWANTED LOITERER	245	29	1.2
SUSPICIOUS - PERSON	219	31	1.3
TRESPASS	187	32	1.3
WELFARE CHECK	183	36	1.2
TRAFFIC STOP	148	16	1.1
PARKING PROBLEM	126	23	1.1
SUSPICIOUS - VEHICLE	102	27	1.2
AGENCY ASSIST	91	67	1.2
WARRANT SERVICE/SUBJ	70	104	1.6
DISABLED VEHICLE IN ROAD	38	16	1.0
FIRE (CALL XFER)	34	38	1.2

None of the incident types available in the computer-aided dispatch system can be reliably matched to correspond with a mental health crisis event, nor do they provide significant differentiation of events related to the experience of homelessness. Establishing better protocols for categorizing this data is critical for understanding the need for certain types of resources, such as trained mental health crisis responders.

Some departments add flags to report forms if the interaction involves homeless individuals, occurs at or around an encampment, or potential behaviors related to mental health crisis. This approach has significant limitations and issues, for a number of

<sup>2</sup> HT, or handling time, is defined as the total time in which a patrol unit was assigned to an incident. It is calculated as the difference between the recorded time stamps the unit being dispatched and cleared from the incident.

<sup>3</sup> Avg. # HOT Units refers to the average number of Homeless Outreach Team personnel, including both officers and the sergeant, that responded to an incident that at least one of them responded to.

reasons. Inconsistencies among patrol squads, and particularly at the officer level, in the consistency of labeling incidents appropriately are virtually impossible to avoid. Additionally, the flag-based approach requires assumptions to be made, with varying degrees of adequacy. It would be incumbent upon patrol officers to recognize the signs of mental health crisis; and without uniform training or buy-in, this would not be done uniformly.

Instead, a better approach would be to add new incident types, which requires working with South Sound 911 to develop and implement, potentially with some degree of training involved.

The following provides a list of incident types and sub-types that can be added to better capture and stratify data related to homelessness issues and mental health crisis:

Misc. Issue at Encampment	Behavioral Health Issue – Non-Violent
Suspicious Vehicle – RV Camper	Behavioral Health Issue – Violent
Encampment – Public Property	Behavioral Health Issue – Violent w/ Weapon
Encampment – Private Property	Waste Issue
Encampment – Blocking Sidewalk	Unwanted Person – Camper
Panhandling	

It is important to note that, while detail is helpful, a balance should be achieved between this goal and confusion caused by adding too many similar or overlapping incident types, which can work against the original goal of expanding the incident type definitions.

Additionally, new fields should be added to the 311 database, particularly to add information relevant to encampment calls.

- # Tents/Dwelling: In order to analyze distribution of population and assess relative priorities.
- Founded/Unfounded: Many reports are made of encampments that do not appear to exist upon inspection. This would allow for better data filtering to exclude these.
- Dates Outreach Conducted: In order to gauge outreach activity against target performance.

### Recommendations:

Work with South Sound 911 to create additional incident type definitions to better capture data related to issues involving homelessness and mental health crisis.

Create additional fields within the 311 system to better capture data related to encampments, including the size of the encampment, whether the initial report was founded or unfounded, and to log dates at which teams conduct outreach.

## **(2.2) Original San Diego Model for Police Homeless Outreach**

The TPD Homeless Outreach Team was created to connect homeless individuals with services and operate co-response to mental health crisis events. In its design and operational practices, it is similar to the HOT teams and other analogous units in many departments throughout the country, particularly those on the West Coast.

Originally, the unit was formed around the San Diego model, where the police department developed a hybrid approach of outreach and enforcement to homelessness-related issues. The model can be characterized as a ‘carrot and stick’ approach that seeks to connect individuals with services, while addressing criminal activity and enforcing local ordinances, particularly as a push to get individuals to see homelessness as less viable than entering into services.

In 2019, then-mayor of San Diego, Kevin Falcouner characterized the approach in a 2019 article posted to the Hoover Institution:

“...For individuals of sound mind who choose to refuse shelter and services, and for criminals who hide among and prey upon our homeless population, those are not options in our city anymore. Our new mantra is simple: We must punish crime, not ignore it. We must end suffering, not condone it. We must reduce homelessness, not promote it.

But do not confuse San Diego’s resolve with a lack of compassion. For those without a home trying to lift themselves out of extreme poverty, San Diego is ready to help by providing services with dignity. There’s a place for people, and it’s not on the streets.

San Diego no longer accepts a sidewalk, a riverbed, or a tarp to be used as a home—because we got a glimpse into how bad things can get...”

– Fmr. Mayor Kevin Falcouner (San Diego)

As part of this push, San Diego PD was involved in as many as 250 abatements (i.e., clearings) of homeless encampments per month at the program’s peak.

The City of San Diego has since moved away from this approach, however, citing lack of effect in reducing the overall number of encampments. Instead, the focus has been on de-emphasizing the role of police in a proactive/outreach capacity paired with potential

enforcement in response to homelessness in favor of housing and social services. This does not remove the police from their enforcement when encampment clearings are conducted. The enforcement component was largely seen as hindering the outreach efforts, given effects on diminishing trust with the homeless population and lack of ability for jails to hold individuals for such violations. A number of other cities that have implemented similar programs have also moved away from the enforcement-centric aspect of the model.

In Tacoma, although this component was part of the original philosophy in establishing the program, the unit quickly pivoted toward a diversion-focused model, as outreach became a primary activity of the unit. With the lack of jails able to and willing to hold individuals for significant periods of time over violations common among or related to the experience of homelessness, TPD could not fully implement the enforcement component in practice. Instead, this became limited to observed and reported crimes that are more severe, as well as the nature of the presence of sworn law enforcement officers, the effect of which could be diminished after frequent interactions with the same individuals.

The role of TPD's HOT team is multifaceted, comprising both reactive and proactive elements. The team conducts outreach to the homeless community and in response to 311 requests regarding encampments, attempting to build positive relationships and connect individuals experiencing homelessness with services and shelter. Following the outreach process on the scheduled day of removal, the HOT team provides security and enforces the clearing of the encampment. This is a critical role, and cannot be replaced by another function or organization. Even if the HOT team were dissolved or their outreach roles otherwise shifted away to another organization, their role in enforcing the encampment removal is essential and would still need to be fulfilled by patrol officers.

### (3) Response to Mental Health Crisis

In addition to the unit's role in homeless outreach and enforcement, the HOT team responds to situations involving persons experiencing mental health crisis, and is the only resource within the department (excluding the unfilled patrol DCR position) with a clinician on staff. The following sections define and discuss these roles.

#### (3.1) Involuntary Commitments

The designated clinical responder (DCR) position is central to the ability of the HOT team to respond to mental health crisis events.

As a licensed clinician, the DCR can place individuals on 154-hour (as of this year) involuntary psychiatric holds should they meet the criteria. Without the DCR, officers would instead need to bring the individual experiencing crisis to a health care facility for examination and potentially a diagnosis. This was a challenge given the reluctance of health care facilities to admit individuals, and also partly due to the delay from the initial events causing the officers to perceive mental health crisis, transport, and evaluation. These factors led to a high rate of involuntary holds not being made, which gradually increases the reluctance of officers to try again in the future, making diversion from jail much less likely.

Consequently, the DCR provides a strong diversion mechanism by allowing for service connections to be made more often in situations where mental health crisis has created a dangerous situation for themselves and/or others.

### **(3.2) Co-Response to Mental Health Crisis Events**

The co-response model that the unit approach takes on with the DCR position is nationally recognized as a leading approach to crisis intervention, as it diverts the role of field crisis identification and communication from law enforcement to a highly specialized clinician. In comparison with the CIT (crisis intervention training) model, which gives officers a 40-hour course on recognizing and responding to mental health crisis, it can achieve significant outcomes in reducing use of force and arrest in events centering around mental health crisis, although further research is needed.

An advantage of the co-response model is that it does not depend on making broader organizational culture shifts to implement, can be reasonably assumed to provide a greater effect on achieving outcomes such as reduction of use of force and arrest in mental health crisis situations. Another primary strength of the model is that it centers on clinicians that can focus solely on their behavioral health skillset, while not concurrently focusing on responding in the capacity of an officer to the scene of an emergency situation

To make a co-response program effective, it is essential that the specialized teams are available when the calls principally occur. If the program is only staffed for day shift hours, then co-responders are not available during the hours where mental health crisis events generally occur. In a scenario where the HOT team unit is not available to respond, whether during the unit's hours or not, or even on days in which the unit is not working, patrol officers increasingly become the primary responders to these events.

The HOT Team does not have coverage across multiple shifts unless personnel flex their hours, and typically they work from 0800 to 1600 Tuesday through Friday. Outside of

those times, co-response is not possible, and consequently, the primary unit dispatched to mental health crisis events is generally patrol – even during the HOT team’s hours. An issue complicating response further is that South Sound 911 cannot see which officers are CIT trained when dispatching. These two issues greatly lower the probability, even for the hours in which the HOT team is on duty, that the first officers on scene will be either CIT trained or, critically, with a clinician operating in a co-response capacity.

If the currently vacant second DCR position that is organized in Patrol were eventually filled, it would likely become the primary resource for co-response with patrol to crisis events, reducing HOT team’s role in mental health crisis events. This would not expand the hours of coverage in which co-response to mental health crisis events is possible, should the DCR work on day shift. Given the importance of co-response in achieving improved outcomes to mental health crisis situations, such as lowering use of force and arrest rates, there could potentially be much greater value in expanding hours of and days in coverage, and organizing both DCRs in the same unit. These issues and potential solutions will be examined further in subsequent analysis as part of the study.

### **(3.3) Summary of HOT Team Findings Related to Crisis Response**

Issues identified as part of a review of current HOT team operations include the following:

- The co-response model for mental health crisis intervention is highly effective in achieving improved outcomes related to the likelihood of use of force and arrest, and should be prioritized.
- When dispatching calls that likely involve an individual experiencing mental health crisis, dispatching protocol does not prioritize the HOT team as primary responders or CIT-trained officers among patrol.
- The effectiveness of the co-response model depends on the co-responders being available. Organizing the second (currently unfilled) DCR position in patrol misses an opportunity to expand coverage hours and days, and additionally risks creating divergent approaches to mental health crisis response.

### **(5) Evolution of the Response to Encampments**

The following sections examine homelessness in Tacoma and the city’s response to encampments, as well as how those practices have changed over time. The focus of this is on the wider picture of the city’s approach and not exclusively the role of the HOT team. This is important because the HOT team operates in support of the city’s strategy to be

responsive to issues stemming from encampments, as well as to mitigate homelessness and support individuals in need of assistance.

To this point, the City of Tacoma opened the Stability Site in 2017 in order to provide a low-barrier secure area for homeless individuals to reside. This occupies a significant share of the city's overall encampment response spending, at around 60% of total funding (HUD/Abt Associates, 2020).

#### **(4.1) Data Used to Construct the Analysis**

The project team received data detailing 311 requests pertaining to homelessness-related issues, particularly encampments and other forms of dwelling that do not meet the formal criteria of an encampment, which Tacoma defines as involving structural components such as tents or pallets. Homeless individuals sleeping on the sidewalk, thus, would not meet this criteria, but could still be called into 311 as a homeless/encampment-related request. As a result, for the purposes of this report, these categories will be referred to as simply "encampments" in the broader sense.

Call types are not categorized with additional detail. Characteristics of the encampment, the response, and disposition are all entered into a single narrative field. To help illustrate this, the following examples show six calls that occurred from July 7 to July 8, 2020, along with their comment field (original text is used with some slight formatting/spelling corrections):

##### **Example Comment Fields for 311 Encampment Requests**

Event	Comment
W164877-070720	Person camping at the SW corner of 6th and S. Ainsworth Ave.
W164897-070720	Two community members sleeping on the sidewalk every night.
W164939-070720	Garbage spread all over was picked up 7/7/20, but the people are still there.
W165028-070820	4 tents , garbage Human waste encampment requires attention
W165034-070820	Tacoma Municipal Code Violation.- Misdemeanor 8.12.180 Unlawful Camping. taking place in Franklin Park on top if hill near school. Previous service request W158023-041520 was answered unsatisfactorily. Four tents on the open lot above Franklin Park NE.
W165082-070820	A new tent/camp went up today right on the corner of the intersection. It's frustrating because we literally just this morning had CLO's finish dealing with some other folks who have been car-camping for weeks and we thought we might get a break for a little.



Using the attributes contained in this data, the project team is able to determine which data points represent populated encampments, versus reports that were unfounded, among other issues.

### (4.3) Ability to Meet Encampment-Related Workload

Upon their creation, new encampment request events in 311 are assigned a required completion date. There is not a set standard for when that date is, as it varies based on the type of issue present, whether the issue creates a significant public safety issue, the type of property it is on (e.g., right of way, public park, etc.), and other factors. On average, 2019-2020 encampment events have a required completion date that was 34 days after the creation date, with a much lower median of just 15 days.

The project team examined the ability of requests to be completed within a month after their creation over the course of 2019 through 2020. Because of COVID-19 guidelines, many requests could not be fulfilled, and thus remain open until these restrictions are lifted, which in turn lowers the fulfillment rate by a significant percentage. The following table provides this analysis:

Consistency in Fulfilling New 311 Encampment Requests Within 30 Days

	Month	New Encampment 311 Requests	% Fulfilled <30 Days
2019	Jan	78	100%
	Feb	56	100%
	Mar	116	100%
	Apr	166	98%
	May	213	99%
	Jun	176	95%
	Jul	187	97%
	Aug	237	78%
	Sep	182	51%
	Oct	122	56%
	Nov	119	1%
	Dec	93	17%
2020	Jan	105	56%
	Feb	88	72%
	Mar	114	74%
	Apr	155	76%
	May	162	64%
	Jun	200	48%
	Jul	216	47%

Month	New Encampment 311 Requests	% Fulfilled <30 Days
Aug	331	42%
Sep	368	42%
Oct	299	32%
Nov	263	14%
Dec	236	20%

Following the onset COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent reduction in encampment clearing activity, the percentage of new requests handled within a month dropped precipitously. The first seven months of the time period averaged a 98% 30-day completion rate, compared with just 35% for the last seven months. This is to be expected, given the policy change to conduct encampment clearings only in situations where there is clear danger to public safety or if there are other aggravating circumstances.

Nonetheless, the high completion rates in 2019 and early 2020 suggest that NCS and HOT teams were mostly able to keep up with incoming workload. The process of responding to encampments, offering outreach, posting for removal, clearing the site, and cleaning the site is not instantaneous. From beginning to end, the process could take multiple weeks or months depending on factors such as size, location (e.g., whether it is on WSDOT property), and others. As a result, high fulfillment rates within 30 days – even if it does not reach close to 100% – indicate that capacity has not been exceeded, and that current staffing levels are adequate to handle the incoming rates of requests being generated.

*Trends in encampment activity, as well as data on the effects of clearing encampments are discussed further in the appendix, which begins on page 50.*

## (5) Outreach Activity and Encampment Response

It is important to note that, in the experience of TPD and other jurisdictions, when outreach is conducted, as well as when encampments are cleared, it is important to note that most individuals do not accept services. This is a significant challenge, and underscores the point that more outreach does not necessarily result in more placement. For a variety of reasons, including preferences, lack of suitable shelter space, barriers to being accepted into a shelter, and other factors, individuals often refuse to seek shelters, temporary housing, or inpatient services. To achieve the desired outcome of more individuals placed in services, several aspects of outreach are important to consider:

- Does space exist in shelters with barriers that are low enough for individuals to gain entry to?
- Are there mitigating issues, such as trust in law enforcement, that hinder the ability to make connections?
- Does a lack of continuity in care or lack of case management support limit the ability for personnel conducting outreach to understand the individual's specific barriers to seeking services?

To further the desired outcome of connecting individuals with shelter, the issue of trust is difficult to solve. While, TPD has made significant efforts and achieved progress in building positive relationships with homeless individuals through its proactive approach, individuals own experience with officers – whether in TPD or elsewhere – as well as a wider cultural view toward law enforcement, will color their perception of interaction with HOT team officers to an extent and limit the amount of trust that can be developed. Likewise, TPD necessarily retains a highly visible role in encampment removal actions in the role of enforcement.

As a result, there are inherent advantages in having all outreach done by entities that are not law enforcement entities, which reserves TPD's role for responding to incidents at those locations, as well as in enforcement of encampment removal actions. Among the three factors stated previously, transferring outreach responsibilities to outside of law enforcement provides the most tangible benefit toward achieving the desired outcome of increasing connection with services.

In summary, the following findings can be made from the analysis of effects from the city's response to encampments, as well as from the analysis of encampment activity trends in the Appendix beginning on page 50:

- Using pre-COVID data (i.e., without restrictions on clearing actions) from the 311 system, the vast majority of 311 encampment requests were fulfilled within 30 days, indicating that staffing was sufficient to handle incoming workload related to encampments.
- Analysis of 311 data provides significant evidence that completing requests to clear encampments limits growth in the total number of encampments, but does not reduce the number of encampments.
- Evidence indicates that following abatement by HOT and NCS, there is a high likelihood of new encampments being formed nearby, indicating a scattering

effect that over the long-run results in an essentially net-zero effect on the number of encampments or their visibility.

- However, in the absence of encampment clearing activities, the number of encampments rises and eventually levels off at an 'unrestrained' or equilibrium level.
- Abatement of large encampments increases the degree to which encampments are dispersed and cover a greater area. This should be considered when prioritizing which encampments to respond to within the relative context of other factors.

#### (6) Interagency Coordination on Outreach and Response

The Tacoma Police Department HOT team operates alongside other city departments and non-profit organizations in responding to and providing services to individuals experiencing homelessness.

Most frequently, the HOT team works with the Neighborhood and Community Services Department (NCS) in responding to encampments. The process, prior to being changed in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, worked as follows:

## Process of Clearing Reported Encampments

City is notified of an encampment when it is either:

- Called in by community member.
- Identified by city employees or other government agency, such as WSDOT.
- Council member refers issue after hearing from community.
- HOT team or NCS notice encampment.

Outreach is offered to individuals at the encampment by HOT team and/or NCS outreach workers.

### PRE-COVID-19

*(Or if overwhelming need exists, such as the presence of criminal activity)*

Notice for future site removal and cleanup is posted.

Site monitored to see if individuals still reside at encampment, and any additional outreach is conducted.

City cleans encampment on scheduled day, with HOT team on scene providing security and lawful direction to disperse from camp.

Remaining property taken in and cleanup concludes with site reclamation if needed.

### FOLLOWING COVID-19 POLICY CHANGES:

HOT team and NCS continue monitoring and providing outreach.

In the outreach phase, both NCS and the HOT team attempt to connect homeless individuals with services and, if possible, relocate them to a safer environment that can better address their hygiene needs, offer counseling, other resources, with the goal of ultimately achieving stable housing.

The outreach effort is not a linear process, and can take many forms based on the individuals present, their willingness to seek services or shelter space, and issues such as the presence of narcotics or criminal activity apparent that may shift the role of the HOT team. The designated clinical responder attached to the HOT team has the ability of

placing individuals on involuntary holds if individuals present are experiencing mental health crisis.

- Connecting individuals with services is also not necessarily straightforward. Even among individuals who want to seek services, there are numerous potential barriers to successful admittance and retention in a program.
- Some programs only admit single individuals, and couples may prefer to stay together.
- Programs may not accept individuals with dogs.
- Requirements for not using drugs or alcohol may preclude an individual from staying at a shelter.
- Disruption of individuals' current practices for acquiring anything from food, money, to drugs or alcohol should they have a substance use disorder.
- Preference for living in relative isolation compared to other options.
- Past traumatic experience in programs.
- Previous/existing ban from a shelter or program.
- Existing social network in encampment and homeless community.
- Other reasons, varying by individual.

The point-in-time count of homeless individuals conducted in 2019 by Pierce County found that 42% of homeless individuals in Tacoma are unsheltered.

Often, the practice of conducting outreach to those that do want to seek services and/or shelter can involve various work to make the transition possible. This could include anything from transport to the location, helping them acquire medical care (e.g., transit to or from methadone clinic for narcotic use disorder), locating documents needed, storage of property, or helping them set up appointments.

Ultimately, these are shared responsibilities between NCS outreach workers and HOT team officers and DCR. None of the outreach duties and their related work fall exclusively under either NCS or the HOT team. Neither team has a shared supervisor or formal memorandum guiding how they will work together. Supervision for both teams follows the chain of command within their agencies, with TPD in particular involving a more extensive chain of command through the sergeant, lieutenant, captain, assistant chief, and ultimately the chief. NCS outreach workers do not have a field supervisor, which complicates the picture of responsibilities between the two agencies further. Both NCS

and TPD report instances where they expected the other party to complete or be willing to complete a task, but the response was that it was not their task.

Additionally, resulting from the lack of delineated roles and shared organization or working agreement is the absence of a clear plan or goals. As part of the city's overall response to encampments and homelessness-related issues, the efforts between NCS and the HOT team does not have defined goals, outcomes, and a common set of metrics that are tracked toward those outcomes.

Alternatives within the existing structure to address issues are limited. Creation of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that formally defines roles and responsibilities, does not address the inherent structural issues posed by having two different departments involved in outreach and support related to connecting individuals with services. Given the dual chains of command, despite both departments being part of the City of Tacoma, it would also not likely be possible to create a new director position that would coordinate responses to homeless encampments and calls across both the TPD HOT Team and NCS outreach workers. Differences in policies and data management practices also hinder the potential for information sharing to be improved.

Consequently, any alternatives to address the issues with response to homelessness-related issues must re-imagine the structure for how these services are provided. Given that the current interdepartmental approach to outreach poses a number of issues with coordination and data sharing, it is clear that centralization of those responsibilities within a single organization has relative advantages.

Instead, the alternative service model should shift any portion of outreach conducted by the TPD members of the HOT team to NCS, which currently has 2 outreach workers functioning in that role. To be able to accommodate all outreach responsibilities, NCS outreach worker staffing should be increased by two positions, with one functioning as a lead in order to provide field supervision for the team. Should a security issue arise or be anticipated, NCS can request TPD patrol to respond on scene in a backup capacity.

Nonetheless, law enforcement is the only entity that can actually enforce the removal of encampments, and their role in doing so cannot be diverted. Even under a scenario where all of the HOT team's functionality was diverted to other providers, the workload involved in enforcing encampment removal and providing security in these actions would be transferred to TPD patrol units. As a result, TPD will continue to team with NCS in these efforts – the recommendations only realign the roles and responsibilities between them, fully transferring outreach responsibilities to NCS.

Average compensation for NCS outreach workers, who are classified as development specialists, is estimated at around \$67,450, using the latest available figures. The total cost of adding the two additional positions would be approximately \$134,900.

#### (7) Recommendations

Transfer HOT team's partial responsibility for encampment outreach and connection with services fully to NCS.

To accommodate the additional workload, NCS outreach worker staffing should be increased by two positions, with one of those positions functioning as a lead.

- The cost of adding the two Program Development Specialist positions is approximately \$134,900.

Develop formal criteria for prioritizing encampment response, such as a points-based system using factors including encampment size, whether inside or adjacent to residential neighborhoods, and status of availability for low-barrier shelter spots.

Identify a set of series of performance metrics that are reviewed periodically, including number of individuals placed in shelter or services by type, the percentage of interactions ending in use of force, as well as percentage of interactions resulting in arrest.



### 3. Diversion of Homelessness and Mental Health Crisis Calls

With the enforcement component diminished and tested to not be effective in achieving desired outcomes, it is worth examining the relative advantages between the police department conducting outreach versus other departments. TPD has been highly proactive in developing positive relationships with the homeless community through the work of the HOT team, as well as on a more general. Despite these efforts and successes, there are inherent barriers and challenges in furthering trust between law enforcement and the homeless population.

These challenges make it more difficult to make inroads when attempting to connect homeless individuals with services, regardless of the progress TPD has made in developing positive relationships with these communities. As a result, the city should pursue other responses to homelessness-related issues, replacing the current model which includes the HOT team organized under the Tacoma Police Department.

#### (1) Needs to Address in an Alternative Model

There are several needs that must be addressed in any alternative model that are currently fulfilled by the Homeless Outreach Team and TPD patrol:

- Outreach workload that is currently handled by the HOT team that would otherwise fall to NCS outreach workers.
- Security during encampment clearing actions
- Response to mental health crisis events
- Security for clinicians in mental health crisis events
- Response to calls for service involving encampments or other homelessness-related issues

As discussed in the previous section of the report, the outreach conducted by the TPD HOT team members should be transferred to NCS, with a corresponding addition of two outreach worker positions added to NCS.

Given that the current interagency approach to outreach poses a number of issues with coordination and data sharing, it is not feasible to transfer these responsibilities to a third agency or organization should the HOT team be displaced from the role. Instead, the alternative service model should shift any portion of outreach conducted by the HOT

team to NCS, which currently has 2 outreach workers functioning in that role. To be able to accommodate all outreach responsibilities, NCS outreach worker staffing should be increased by two positions, with one functioning as a lead in order to provide field supervision for the team. Should a security issue arise or be anticipated, NCS can request TPD patrol to respond on scene in a backup capacity.

Likewise, security and enforcement during encampment clearing operations and on mental health crisis issues can be handled on a request basis, as there is not a fundamental need to have that provided by a standalone team of officers. Granted, this does have impacts on patrol workload, but it is not a significant enough workload to justify full time positions serving in that role.

Nonetheless, it is clear that **the HOT team spends a significant amount of time developing positive relationships through the outreach function**, and shifting to an enforcement/support role only would *re-focus* the relationship between law enforcement and the homeless community around the pretense of relationship, which must be acknowledged as a weakness of the shifted approach.

## (2) The Civilian Crisis Response Model

In responding to mental health crisis events, the feasibility of diversion involves more complicated questions, and has certain limitations. For instance, a key aspect of the designated clinical responder (DCR) position is the ability to place individuals on involuntary holds. This inherently requires a need for an officer to be present given the likelihood of some level of force being needed in such a scenario where an individual is detained or transported, even if that force is low-level.

In an alternative model where the team is organized outside of the police department, there may be greater challenges in filling the positions. The perception and reality of safety issues posed by responding to individuals experiencing mental health crisis would likely be of concern to many clinicians that consider applying to the role, particularly if they are not paired up with an officer.

Even with these limitations in mind, the bulk of situations that the HOT team responds to do not involve use of force, and do not necessarily require the clinician to be paired with an officer. This includes incidents involving encampments, panhandling, persons experiencing mental distress or crisis but otherwise not posing a threat to the public, or individuals making suicidal threats.

A specialized team could be formed to handle these types of calls, a model that has significant precedent around the country and particularly in the Pacific Northwest, having

been pioneered by the Eugene CAHOOTS team in the late 1980s. The types of calls that such a unit would be tasked with handling often involve a nexus between needs for mental health services, connection to homeless services, and in situations such as trespassing, communication with the individual about what the individual must do to resolve the issue.

Despite frequently responding to mental health crisis events, the Eugene CAHOOTS team requested backup in only 0.6% of the roughly 24,000 calls they responded to in 2019. Nonetheless, it should be acknowledged that diverting these types of calls to civilian response does not entirely remove the need for police presence at these events, particularly the more critical incidents involving an individual engaged in or appearing to display a propensity to commit violent acts.

This requires the team to include several different roles:

- A crisis intervention worker or clinician that is trained to respond to mental health crisis events.
- A civilian responder that triages the handling of the call and handles procedural issues such as resolving trespassing situations (i.e., largely the function of a civilian community services officer/CSO role).
- An EMT-trained responder that can provide basic medical care and administer naloxone (Narcan) in emergency situations.
  - Data is not available for how often this is necessary in police/HOT team deployment scenarios.
  - Nonetheless, similar units operating under the same service model, such as the Eugene CAHOOTS program, staff an EMT to provide for additional functionality and a wider range of services beyond mental health.
  - Alternatively, the team could be staffed with a second clinician, but there is less marginal value provided by the second, given that one would necessarily be functioning in a lead communication role. As a result, greater value is added by adding a different *type* of employee.

These roles are not mutually exclusive – one employee can fulfill two roles. Generally, this type of model operates by pairing an EMT with a crisis intervention worker that takes in the lead in handling the procedural elements. This works effectively because the clinician or social worker is the primary communicator in crisis situations.

Given these considerations, teams of two can be established, with a crisis intervention worker under the existing classification of designated clinical responder (DCR), and an

EMT working in an assisting role. Each team would use one vehicle designated for the purpose, which should be outfitted similarly to a patrol vehicle in terms of the hardware installed, but should be visually distinct.

### (3) Alternative Response Scope

Determining the potential for a mobile civilian crisis team to respond to events is not as straightforward as mirroring the calls that the HOT team currently responds to, as a civilian team would have different roles. While the HOT team is largely proactive in its approach to encampments and outreach, the crisis team would essentially function in a reactive capacity, responding to calls featuring a nexus with mental health crisis or homelessness-related issues. Additionally, there would be a somewhat limited scope for a full diversion to be made. If an emergency call occurred featuring an individual experiencing mental health crisis with a knife drawn, the crisis team could not respond on its own – patrol officers would still need to be deployed in response.

There are no specific incident type codes or flags that correspond to events where mental health crisis is involved or that a civilian would be able to respond to. Recommendations have been made earlier in the report to work toward addressing this issue by adding new incident types and subtypes of existing definitions to better stratify categories of response, while not requiring new processes to be implemented, such as adding flags in the CAD/RMS system for these types of events.

Nonetheless, incident types that signal the types of events that a civilian crisis team could potentially respond to. As with the CSO call diversion analysis, estimates must be made based on the percentage of calls that a mobile crisis team could potentially respond to. This is done based on the experience of the project team, which includes former sworn law enforcement personnel.

To focus specifically on the potential scope of a crisis/community response team, the CAD data is filtered to only calls occurring from 6:00AM to 10:00PM. As with the CSO analysis, 2020 data is used for the analysis. The following table provides the results of this analysis, showing the estimated number of calls that could be diverted among the most significant categories:

## Estimated Potential for Homelessness and Mental Health Crisis Call Diversion

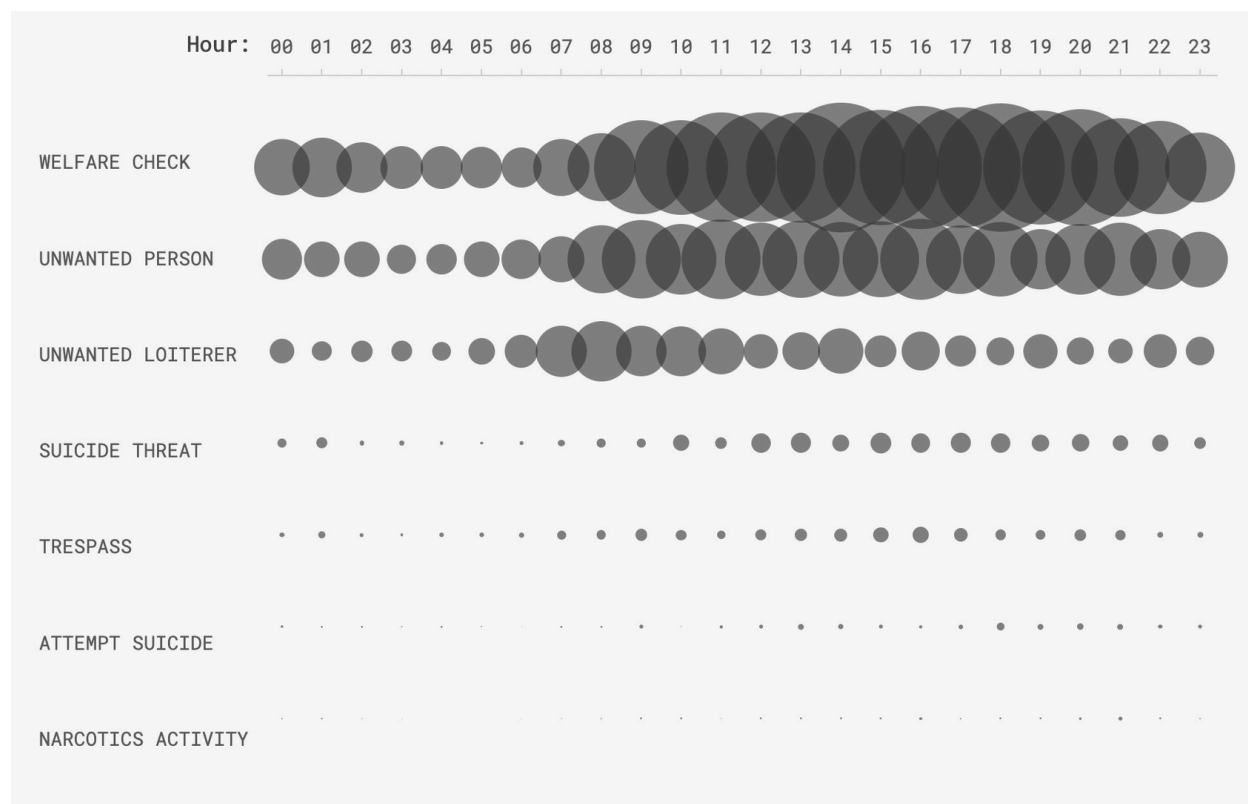
Call Type	# CFS	% Di v.	# Di v e r t e d	Avg. HT
WELFARE CHECK	6, 539	25%	1, 635	27. 5
UNWANTED PERSON	4, 473	15%	671	23. 8
UNWANTED LOITERER	2, 518	20%	504	19. 4
SUICIDE THREAT	989	50%	495	46. 6
TRESPASS	686	10%	69	37. 7
ATTEMPT SUICIDE	264	60%	158	63. 2
NARCOTICS ACTIVITY	123	20%	25	19. 2
PANHANDLING	46	60%	28	8. 9
<b>Overall</b>		<b>23%</b>	<b>3,583</b>	<b>29.9</b>

At a baseline estimate of 3,583 calls that have the potential to be diverted, this equates to approximately 9.8 divertible calls per day, or about 0.63 per hour over the 16-hour period. With an average handling time of just under 30 minutes, and a lower report writing time than would be the case for a CSO program taking crime reports, workload is sufficient for one on duty team handle the calls occurring.

Hours of deployment should be focused around the times in which these events are most likely to occur, maximizing call diversion opportunities and the probability of significant outcomes being achieved, such as connection with services or reduction in the rate of police use of force.

The following table provides a visualization of the frequency of the event types selected for the civilian community crisis response team:

## Frequency of Divertible Homelessness and Mental Health Calls



Although occurrence rates are fairly broad, there is a clear period of highly increased activity for the two most significant call types – “WELFARE CHECK” and “UNWANTED PERSON” – that lasts from around 7:00AM (0700) to 10:00PM (2200). The increased activity levels then subsequently taper off into the early morning hours.

If the starting hour of this range is extended back one hour to 6:00AM, a 16-hour period ending at 10:00PM could be staffed by two back-to-back 8-hour shifts. Importantly, this would allow for a single vehicle to be shared by two shift teams.

#### (4) Case Management Approaches Upon Release From Treatment

Establishing a team that is fully oriented around crisis response present opportunities to provide new types of services for those who are placed on involuntary holds or connected with inpatient treatment, with the goal of reducing recidivism in criminal justice system contacts and increase the potential for better clinical outcomes, including survival and placement into long-term housing.

When individuals accept treatment or are placed on involuntary holds when needed, they are able to receive acute care and can have improved likelihood of better mental health

outcomes. When they are released without continuation of care, however, the likelihood of recidivism is extremely high, as individuals often return to the same environments that presented factors contributing to prior behavioral health crises. This risk is exacerbated by the sudden disconnect from care and connection to services upon release from treatment.

The warm handoff approach seeks to address these issues by ensuring that the release from a treatment facility does not represent a complete disconnect from the care provided. A mental health worker, or in this case, the crisis response team, would meet with and pick the individual up from the treatment location and discuss the treatment plan details with the individual. They can assist the individual with setting up future appointments, locating ID or other documents needed for housing or other services, and even offer to provide transport to future appointments (e.g., treatment at a methadone clinic). At the time of release, the team can then offer to transport the individual to their desired location. A time at which the team can follow up with the individual by conducting a site visit can then be planned as well.

Critically, this also brings the crisis response team into the medical/mental health care team, as they would meet with the treatment facility staff and discuss their case and the specific aspects of their care plan. This information can then be logged in the team's records management system, where it can be pulled up later when making contact with the individual in the future.

This is a key advantage of the crisis response team approach, as it further orients the practice away from the criminal justice system by centering the civilian team within any plan for treatment that was discussed with the individual patient.

Recommendation:

Adopt a warm handoff approach for individuals being released from treatment, where the crisis response team meets with the individual patient's clinical team and the individual to discuss care plan, set up appointments, and provide transport.

#### (5) Costs of Establishing Homeless and Mental Health Crisis Alternative

In addition outlining the various service alternatives available and their impacts, it is critical that the analysis also examine their feasibility from a financial standpoint. To do this, the project team has developed estimates for the full cost of positions involved in alternative models, as well as associated equipment and startup costs.

## (5.1) Compensation

Compensation costs are modeled using analog data within the same hiring market.

For EMTs, pay estimates must be extrapolated from private survey data, given the lack of suitably comparable positions to use in city and county agencies. Using online data for EMTs within the Tacoma hiring market, the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile pay rate is \$43,783. At an estimated benefit rate of 50% gross pay, this equates to a **total position cost of \$65,675 per EMT**.

The designated crisis responder (DCR) contracted through MultiCare has a midpoint pay level of approximately \$77,979 annually. Additional positions, even if publicly funded, would likely be at an equivalent market rate. Consequently, the MultiCare contract provides an accurate data point for estimating field clinician pay in an alternative service model. Using this estimate with a benefit cost rate of 50% added on results in a total position cost of **\$116,969 per DCR/field clinician**.

## (5.2) Equipment and Vehicles

Equipment costs for DCRs and the civilian CSO position would be essentially the same, with the portable radio and microphone system comprising the bulk of the cost:

### DCR/CSO Equipment Costs

Portable Radio, Lapel Mic., Belt Holder	\$4,200
Flashlight w/ AC Charger 40k Cdl	\$118
2 Wash and Wear Polo w/ Insig.	\$60
2 Pants, Wash & Wear @\$51.99ea	\$104
Patrol Jacket	\$150
Duty Utility Belt 5.11 (Outer Belt)	\$50
Uniform Pant Belt (Inner Belt)	\$12
Sabre Red Pepper Spray	\$15
Pepper Spray holder 5.11	\$18
4 Belt "Keepers"	\$13
<b>Equipment Costs Per DCR</b>	<b>\$4,740</b>

At four positions staffing the alternative model for homelessness and mental health crisis response, the unit would require \$18,960 in equipment-related expenditures.



Costs for outfitting a crisis response vehicle would be similar to that of a patrol vehicle, including costs for MDTs (mobile data terminal), mobile radio, and an equivalent base model vehicle:

#### CSO/Mental Health Crisis Response Vehicle Costs

Ford Explorer	\$32,675
Mobile Radio (800 MHz)	\$4,200
Decals and Wraps	\$500
Labor and Installation	\$1,000
MDT Cost and Installation	\$6,000
<b>Cost Per Unit</b>	<b>\$44,375</b>

With two community mental health crisis response teams working back-to-back 8-hour shifts, one vehicle could be shared, resulting in a total vehicle cost of \$44,375.

### (5.3) Information Technology

While the CSO program could be housed of the police department with existing information technology infrastructure, a mobile crisis team would require additional one-time startup expenditures to fulfill these needs:

#### Information Technology Startup Costs (Initial Estimates)

Unit Price	Unit Price	# Needed	Cost
Records Management	\$10,000	1	\$10,000
Desktop Computers	\$1,200	3	\$3,600
Multifunction Printer	\$1,500	1	\$1,500
Network Equipment	\$10,000	1	\$10,000
Microsoft Suite	\$240	3	\$720
SQL (Client Access License)	\$820	1	\$820
<b>Total IT Startup Costs</b>			<b>\$26,640</b>

### (5.4) Summary of Homelessness and Mental Health Response Team Costs

The following tables aggregate each cost element into a summary of the costs of establishing a community mental health and homelessness response team independent from the police department. Separate figures are provided for establishing two teams, which would provide for coverage five days per week without a relief factor, and four teams, which would provide seven days of coverage per week with a built in relief factor.

**These figures do not include the \$26,640 estimated information technology startup costs.**

Crisis Response Team Formation & Operating Costs (2x Teams, 4 Days/Week)

Category	#	Unit Cost	Total
DCR/ Clinician	2	\$116,969	\$233,938
EMT	2	\$65,675	\$131,350
Personnel Costs			\$365,288
Vehicles	2	\$44,375	\$88,750
Equipment Sets	4	\$4,740	\$18,960
Veh. / Equip. Costs			\$107,710
<b>Total Costs</b>			<b>\$472,998</b>

Crisis Response Team Formation & Operating Costs (4x Teams, 7 Days/Week + Relief)

Category	#	Unit Cost	Total
DCR/Clinician	4	\$116,969	\$467,876
EMT	4	\$65,675	\$262,700
Personnel Costs			\$730,576
Vehicles	4	\$44,375	\$177,500
Equipment Sets	8	\$4,740	\$37,920
Veh./Equip. Costs			\$215,420
<b>Total Costs</b>			<b>\$945,996</b>

In total, the costs of establishing and operating a community crisis response team are estimated at **\$472,998 for five-day coverage and \$945,996 for seven-day coverage**. These estimates have been developed using comparative data and pricing information for vehicles, as applicable. Personnel costs have been estimated using comparative data due to the lack of current classifications existing within the City of Tacoma that would be appropriate to use as direct comparisons.

The cost of the DCR positions should be offset by transferring the two authorized DCR positions in the police department to the new unit, given that the responsibility for crisis response is being diverted from the police department and the HOT team.

**Creating these units does not result in the defunding of positions allocated to the HOT team.** Contingent upon both the crisis response team and the CSO diversion programs being implemented, however, those positions can be reallocated back to patrol to fill vacant positions. The goal of the analysis is to provide more specialized services that are tailored to the workloads being diverted, rather than just to divert them from the police department for that purpose alone.

#### (6) Crisis Response Team Recommendations

Form a new mobile crisis response team that is independent of the police department and responds to calls involving mental health crisis and homelessness-related issues.

A new crisis response team should be staffed by civilians, with two teams that are each comprised of 1 Designated Clinical Responder and 1 EMT.

The crisis response team should work 8-hour shifts, with the first shift working from 6:00 AM to 2:00 PM, and the second working from 2:00 PM to 10:00 PM.

Initial information technology startup costs for the crisis response team are estimated at \$26,640.

To staff the crisis response team *five* days per week *without* a relief factor, 2 DCRs and 2 EMT positions are required, for an estimated total cost of \$472,998, including personnel costs, equipment, and vehicles.

To staff the crisis response team *seven* days per week *with* a relief factor, 4 DCRs and 4 EMT positions are required, for an estimated total cost of \$945,996, including personnel costs, equipment, and vehicles.

In either funding scenario, the cost of two DCR positions can be offset by transferring the two DCR positions in the police department to the new crisis response team.

Contingent upon implementation of both the crisis response team and civilian call diversion programs, along with the transfer of outreach responsibilities fully to NCS, the positions allocated to the HOT team can be transferred to patrol to fill currently vacant positions.

## 4. Diversion of Non-Emergency Calls to Civilian Response

The following analysis examines opportunities to divert call for service workloads from responses by sworn officers, providing a summary analysis of the feasibility of establishing a field civilian classification that can handle certain types of low priority, non-emergency calls.

It is important to note that the program examined in this chapter is not mutually exclusive of the homelessness and mental health alternative program. The entirely separate scope of activities between the two alternative programs allow them both operate in parallel.

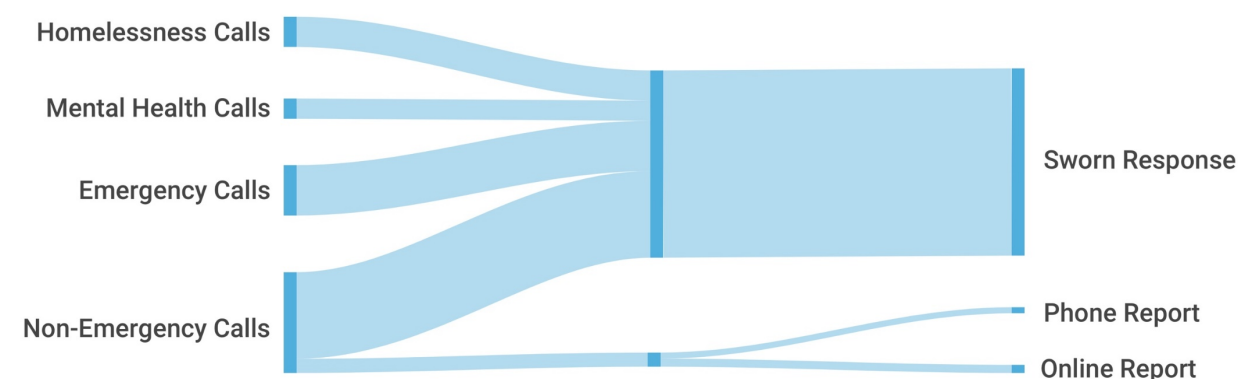
### (1) Background and Objectives of Call Diversion

In recent years, more and more has been asked of police officers. Police have been called to function as social services in responding to issues of homelessness, intervene in situations involving persons experiencing mental health crisis, and serve numerous other roles beyond what was expected in the past. At the same time, service level expectations have not diminished. Perhaps more than ever, police have been asked to respond to minor, non-emergency calls such as non-injury accidents, and calls that simply do not need to be not law enforcement matters.

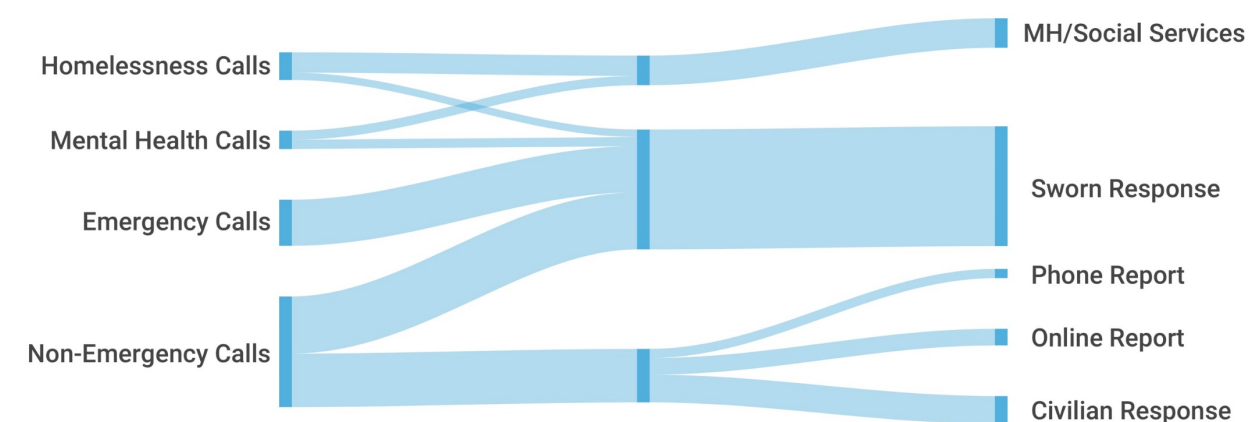
Although this analysis focuses on the establishing a civilian field responder classification to handle low-priority calls for service, it is critical to stress that this is part of a greater picture of call diversion. Reducing police workload involves using not only civilian field responders, but emphasizing and expanding phone and online reporting, as well as using other city agencies and non-profit organizations to handle certain types of calls, particularly those with a social services nexus, such as those relating to mental health or the experience of homelessness.

The following pair of diagrams provide an illustrative model for how call diversion can reduce the involvement of police in handling certain types of workload, handling those calls through other means instead:

### Before Implementing Call Diversion Approaches



### After Implementing Call Diversion Approaches



As this shows, call diversion is a multitude of different approaches that can jointly work toward developing alternatives to sworn response and free up patrol officers' time to be proactive and focus on more severe calls for service.

To determine the number of calls that could feasibly be handled by a civilian field responder, the project team examined the CAD data used for the patrol analysis in the previous study updated for 2020, **examining only incidents that have been identified as community-generated calls for service handled currently by patrol officers**. The same methodology has been used to ensure exact comparability between the two datasets.

## (2) Using CAD Data to Examine Call Diversion Potential

The analysis of determining what types of workload can be diverted to alternative call responders begins with the community-generated calls for service currently handled by

TPD patrol units over 2020. Unique calls are tabulated by incident type and filtered for eligibility using the following process:

- 1) Specific types of calls are selected that are diverted to civilian and alternative response means in other departments around the country, such as minor non-injury accidents, petty theft reports, cold burglary reports, and low-priority calls relating to the experience of homelessness that do not pose a reasonable degree of risk to the responder.
- 2) These call types are compared with other agencies around the country that have CSO programs, to confirm which types of calls civilians handle, and what percentage of these calls are diverted from patrol office response.
- 3) Based on the results of the comparative analysis and the experience of the project team, estimates are developed for the percentage of calls that a civilian would be able to handle safely and effectively without the assistance of a sworn officer. Important to this are inferences made in terms of how TPD classifies incidents compared to other jurisdictions, such as whether the CAD system uses categories that are broader and more inclusive of a wider range of events and associated severity.
  - Confidence levels vary somewhat by call classification. For instance, the “MVC (*motor vehicle collision*) – NON INJURY” incident type is a highly specific category that speaks directly to a key factor in determining whether a civilian could respond – in this case, whether the accident involved any injuries. Because of this specificity, 100% of incidents under this category are estimated to be eligible for diversion to civilian response.
- 4) Workload hours diverted are then estimated based on average primary unit handling time for the incident, as well as a pro-rated estimate of report writing time associated with the call.

For instance, residential burglary incident categories can be more nuanced, given the severity of a small percentage of these types of calls. A CSO would not be able to respond to an in-progress burglary or a burglary alarm – consequently, the percentage of calls that this would entail must be filtered out. This percentage is based on other agencies where the CAD system distinguishes between the initial status of the burglary, such as whether it is cold (occurred in past), in progress, just occurred, or another circumstance. These percentages are then modeled into the analysis for a more generic residential burglary call type, with the added information provided by the comparative analysis.

### (3) Comparative Analysis of Call Diversion Approaches

In order to provide a foundation for the analysis of call diversion feasibility, the project team conducted a comparative review of agencies that deploy civilian CSOs to handle calls for service in the field. For each of these agencies, CAD data has been analyzed using the same methodology, which uses records showing all units that responded to a call, how it originated, and a means of identifying what type of unit each radio call sign corresponds to.

Agencies can have vastly different approaches to categorizing calls, which can make comparisons difficult. In this case, agencies have been selected partly for their similarity in call types. This is partly aided by the fact that the agencies are all from the same state, as many of the call types reflect state penal code numbering systems. Nonetheless, some aggregation of call types was needed in order to group calls under the same broad categories. For instance, one CAD database may have a call type for “Missing Juvenile” but not “Runaway Juvenile”, while others have distinct call types for both. Given that the former case would also include calls that would fit under the other definition, these call types are aggregated as one.

Call types with upgraded severity are excluded. For instance, in agencies where there is a separate, less common call type for burglaries in progress, these are excluded.

It should also be noted that in the call types shown in the comparative data do not comprise all of the calls that each agency’s CSOs respond to. Call types were selected for their comparability between different agencies, as well as their impact (i.e., how many calls of that type were handled by CSOs). Consequently, there are a plethora of call types that each agency’s CSOs handle but are not included as table category. Many of these additional call types correspond to various type of minor ordinance/code violation, report, or other information for police.

Furthermore, there are important considerations for how the percentages should be interpreted. The data shown is based on the number of calls that CSOs responded to out of all occurrences of those call types during the hours and days they were on duty for. There may have been significant numbers of additional calls that CSOs *could* have handled – in that there were no characteristics of the call that required a sworn officer – but did not for a variety of reasons that do not relate to the call itself. For instance, the CSO(s) could have been sick, on vacation, or another type of leave, or calls could have occurred concurrently and prevented a CSO from responding to both, resulting in a patrol officer being assigned the call.

The overall diversion rate statistic shown in the table displays the percentage of calls for service that CSOs handled during the hours and days they are on duty for. This includes the calls that are diverted that do not fit under any of the categories included in the table. Nonetheless, the overall diversion rate functions as an effective barometer of how well diversion has been implemented.

The following table summarizes the results of this comparative analysis, showing percentage of calls that were diverted to CSOs in each agency by type of call:

% of Calls Handled by CSOs During Their On-Duty Hours

Type	Fremont	Rancho Cordova	Roseville	Mountain View	West Sacramento	Avg.	Max
Traffic Hazard	50%	11%		50%		37%	50%
Theft	25%	41%	39%	35%	53%	39%	53%
Accident (Non-Inj.)	20%	22%	14%	42%		25%	42%
Theft From Vehicle	65%	41%	56%	46%	66%	55%	66%
Auto Theft	66%	45%	42%	55%	62%	54%	66%
Recovered Stolen	65%	44%	35%	58%	21%	45%	65%
Lost/Found Property	70%	18%	47%	67%	50%	50%	70%
Graffiti	56%		80%		50%	62%	80%
Vandalism	15%	20%	37%	47%	49%	34%	49%
Runaway/Missing	50%	25%	40%	48%	37%	40%	50%
Burglary-Residential	60%	38%	39%	52%	50%	48%	60%
Burglary-Comm.	74%	60%	39%	60%	50%	57%	74%
Fraud		15%	33%	49%	63%	40%	63%
Parking Complaint	82%		27%	70%		60%	82%
Grand Theft		21%	31%	30%	59%	35%	59%
Accident (Min. Inj.)	16%	15%	12%	47%		23%	47%
Pickup		12%		93%		53%	93%



Type	Fremont	Rancho Cordova	Roseville	Mountain View	West Sacramento	Avg.	Max
Diversion Rate	20%	11%	10%	29%	12%	16%	29%

From this analysis, it is clear that there are prevailing practices and significant precedent for a wide range of calls to be handled alternatively by civilian responders. This includes many calls involving the report of crimes, such as burglaries (cold only/past tense), fraud, and theft incidents; as well as a number of process-oriented workloads such as events involving lost/found property or recovered stolen property.

The common traits among the selected call types principally include the following:

- Lack of on scene suspects/perpetrators; consequently, low risk involved.
- Lack of two conflicting parties (such as in a domestic incident).
- Arrests do not need to be made in responding to the call.

Dispatchers would need to be trained and provided with a list of call types that can potentially be diverted, at around 26 different types. Within these call types, dispatchers would check for the first two conditions to be met – lack of on-scene suspects, and a lack of two conflicting parties involved. In other words, they would differentiate that the event is a past-tense report. Existing processes for call notes that are provided by call takers typically provide this differentiation already. Consequently, likely the only training needed would be on the part of dispatchers to check for these conditions and dispatch a CSO over a patrol officer if they are on duty.

#### Illustrative Dispatcher Checklist

*If **YES** to the following:*

Does the incident type assigned by the call taker match the list of those eligible for CSO?

Did the issue already occur (i.e., it is not in progress)

If the event is a traffic accident, are there injuries?

*And if **NO** to the following:*

If the event is a burglary, has the caller entered the house?

Is the event a dispute (i.e., involving multiple parties?)

Is there a suspect identified?

Are there weapons involved or any form of violence, including threat of violence?

As an additional layer, Patrol supervisors examining call notes as they come out, as well as the CSO who is assigned to the call, would be able to provide an additional check to ensure that the calls meet the criteria assigned.

Nonetheless, the characteristics that have been outlined ensure that a civilian would be able to safely handle the call. Information obtained through the normal dispatching process would be able to confirm that the reports are past tense, and that the event is not in progress. This is particularly important for burglary calls, and is a key reason why the diversion percentages are limited to an average of 48% and max of 60%. It should be noted that police labor groups will need to be consulted and on be on board for some of these changes, however.

In many cases, particularly Rancho Cordova, Roseville, and West Sacramento, the percentages may have been driven down due to staffing, as theoretically the characteristics of a call that would make a civilian eligible to handle them would not be significantly different from city to city, to a reasonable extent. As a result, the max values for the percentage of calls diverted are ultimately more relevant to this analysis, in examining what the upper potential is for Tacoma to divert calls for service.

#### (4) Analysis of Call Diversion Potential

Based on the comparative analysis of other departments that deploy CSOs to respond to lower priority calls for service, the project team conducted an analysis of the feasibility of implementing program with similar scope in Tacoma.

TPD call types were mapped against the categories used in the comparative analysis, with percentages assigned that reflect the upper potential (max) values from the other agencies. Some discretion is used based on the experience of the project team, which includes former law enforcement, to accurately gauge the types and percentage of calls that a civilian responder could safely and effectively respond to.

The following table presents the results of this analysis:

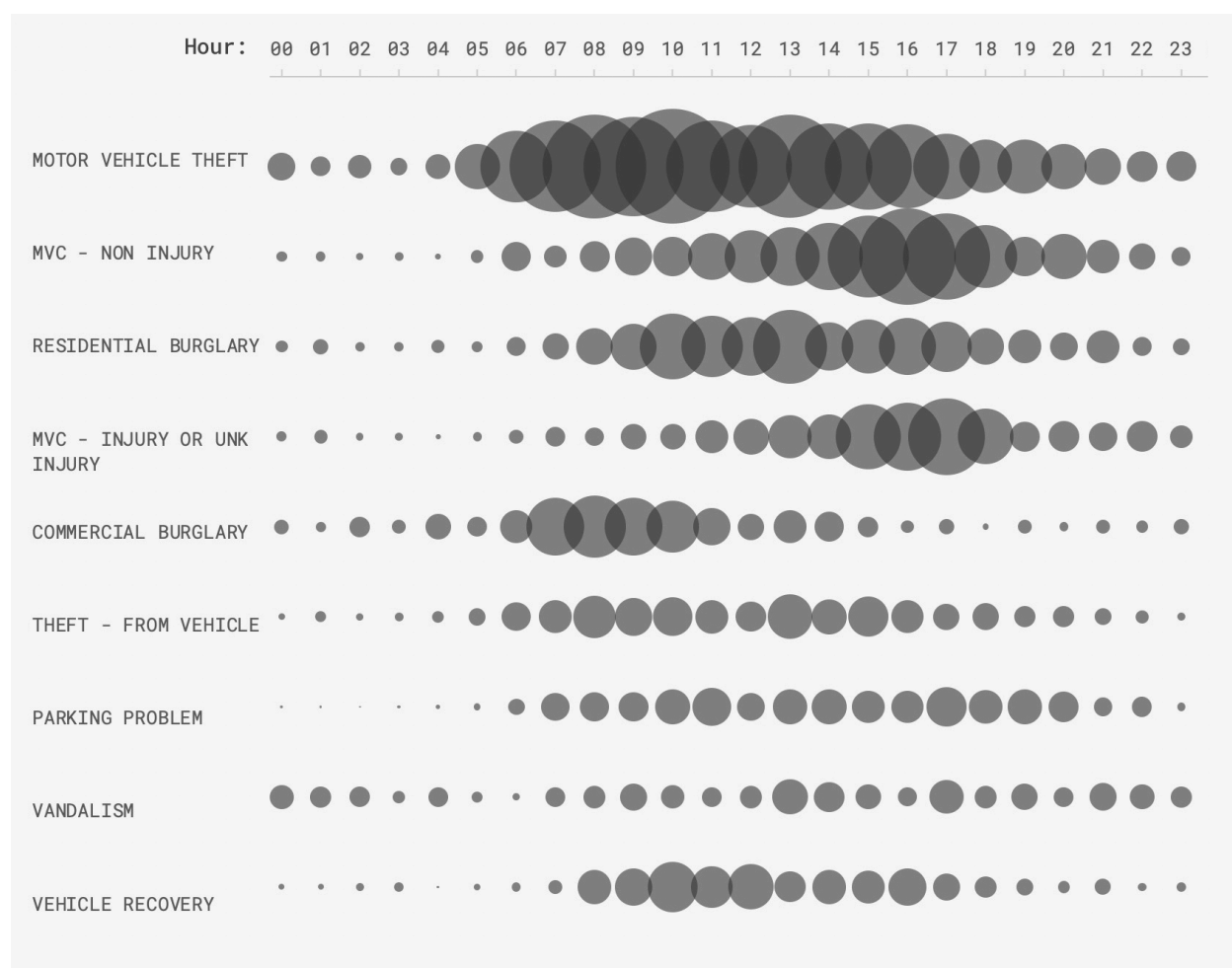
## Estimated Potential for Non-Emergency Call Diversion

Category	Call Type	Total# CFS	% Div.	# Diverted
Cold Report	Motor Vehicle Theft	1,985	65%	1,290
	Residential Burglary	1,138	60%	683
	Commercial Burglary	750	75%	563
	Theft - From Vehicle	795	65%	517
	Identity Theft	617	60%	370
	Check/ Credit Card Fraud	566	60%	340
	Vandalism	595	50%	298
	Fraud/ Forgery	433	60%	260
	Theft	494	50%	247
	Trespass	629	10%	63
	Graffiti	23	80%	18
Missing/ Runaway	Runaway Pick Up	122	90%	110
	Runaway	183	50%	92
	Missing Person	151	50%	76
	Found Child	59	50%	30
	Missing Child	52	50%	26
Parking/ Traffic	Parking Problem	773	80%	618
	MVC - Non Injury	1,297	40%	519
	Disabled Vehicle In Roadway	449	50%	225
	Hazard - Traffic	450	50%	225
	MVC - Injury or Unknown Injury	959	15%	144
	Hazard - Sign/ Signal	232	50%	116
	Abandoned Vehicle	76	80%	61
	Hazard - Miscellaneous	94	50%	47
Property	Vehicle Recovery	719	65%	467
	Found Property	605	70%	424

In total, the analysis demonstrates that up to 7,829 calls for service, or 9.4% of all calls for service handled by TPD patrol officers can be diverted to civilian responders, subject to discussion with police labor groups. These numbers reflect 2020 data using the same methodology that was used for the original study of TPD patrol workload in 2019, with insignificant differences between the two years.

Decisions regarding when to deploy civilian call responders should be based on activity levels in order to maximize diversion of calls. The following chart provides a visualization of this, showing when the most common types of divertible calls are most likely to occur:

Frequency of Divertible Calls by Hour



With the exception of vandalism, activity for the most common divertible call types is generally concentrated from around 6:00 AM to 10:00 PM. This 15-hour range could easily be covered by two 10-hour shifts, allowing for a five-hour overlap period, which would occur during peak activity hours and allow for calls to be handled by CSOs while still remaining within capacity to handle them without queueing.

## (5) Staffing the Civilian Call Responder Alternative

There is significant potential for implementing a call diversion program based on analysis of divertible call types. Consequently, the staffing resources that would be needed to staff such a program must also be examined.

Approaches to deployment vary among the agencies included in the comparative review, with most deploying CSOs across two shifts in order to achieve greater coverage. Almost all have CSOs working seven days per week.

Among the cities included in the comparative review, CSOs handle and divert an average of just over 500 calls per year:

Overview of Comparative Call Diversion Programs

City	% Diverted	# CSOs	Calls / Yr. Per CSO
Fremont	20%	7	688
Rancho Cordova	11%	4	471
Roseville	10%	4	238
Mountain View	29%	4	516
West Sacramento	12%	2	702

On 10-hour shifts with standard net availability factors (accounting for leave, training, etc.), the average of 523 calls per CSO equates to around 3.3 calls per shift. Consequently, the higher number of around 700 per CSO for Fremont and West Sacramento CSOs is easily attainable, and is akin to a more reasonable levels of staff utilization. At 700 calls per CSO, each is handling around 4.4 calls per shift. With report time factored in, the resulting utilization levels allow for workload to be sufficient while still allowing for a buffer factor should activity be higher on certain days. This is particularly important because the more narrow a scope of calls that a civilian responder is able to handle to, the greater day-to-day variability there will be in how busy they are, which impacts staff utilization considerations.

Staffing needs can be determined either based on this ratio, or from a workload-based approach similar to the patrol analysis in the original study. Using the 700 calls per CSO target, staffing needs can be calculated as follows:

## Calculation of CSO Staffing Needs: Ratio Method

% of CFS Diverted	12.3%
# of Calls Diverted	7,829
Target Calls Per CSO	700
FTEs Needed	11

Alternatively, workload can be used to construct CSO staffing needs similar to the analysis presented in the patrol staffing calculations as part of the original staffing study completed in mid-2020.

The workload-based approach takes into account several factors, building up the total number of hours that must be staffed, both from various workload elements, as well as non-utilized hours that provide for a degree of buffer in order to account for call variability:

## Calculation of CSO Staffing Needs: Workload Method

# of Calls Diverted	7,829
Avg. HT/ Call (min.)	59.1
Backup Rate Diverted	0.4
Reports Per Call	0.4
Time Per Report (min.)	60
Total Workload Per Call (hrs.)	13,928
Target Utilization	80%
Total Hours to Staff	17,410
Net Available Hours Per CSO	1,640
<b>FTEs Needed</b>	<b>11</b>

The 11 positions confirmed by both analyses should be staggered across two shifts, with the first shift being organized with 6 CSOs in order to account for the higher call load, and the second shift with 5 CSOs. Two of the positions should function as working leads, reporting to the patrol sergeant on duty if organized under the police department. These considerations are examined further in the next section.

## (6) Options for Organizing Civilian Call Responders

It is possible to organize CSOs outside of the police department; however, there are potential issues to consider in doing so:

- When reporting a crime such as a burglary, the caller may have some expectation that the crime will be investigated. Even if the case is unlikely to be actively investigated regardless of whether a CSO or police officer takes the report, a CSO responding from a department that does not have detectives may remove any appearance that an active investigation will take place.
- There may be a greater disconnect in community member expectations for “calling the police” if a CSO is from another city department, particularly in sensitive situations such as a runaway juvenile.
- CSOs would still be operationally interacting with police officers across virtually every facet of their job
  - Radio traffic, such as when triaging response
  - Handling or coordinating the handling of evidence
  - Using the same CAD/RMS system
  - Calling for backup should it be needed

Police officers interact with staff from other city departments on a daily basis across many of these dimensions, but the level of interaction, particularly given the operational overlap that is inherent to call diversion, that would take place with CSOs is on an order of magnitude greater.

Additionally, there are also cost implications to this issue. Organizing the CSOs within the police department could make use of existing management structures, facilities, and information technology infrastructure and equipment. A standalone agency, by contrast, would require each of these to be purchased independently. In either option, equipment and vehicles would still nonetheless need to be purchased for the new CSO positions, however.

A potential middle-ground approach would be to keep CSOs within the Tacoma Police Department, but to ensure that their uniforms are functionally distinct such that callers can visibly tell that the CSO is not a law enforcement officer, but is equipped to handle their needs effectively. This approach is used almost universally throughout the country. Among the five agencies included within the comparative analysis, all five organize the CSOs within the police department using this approach.

Given these considerations, the alternative civilian non-emergency call responder program should be organized within the police department, but have uniforms that distinguish them from sworn officers and emphasize the community-focused mission behind the program.

Publicizing the CSO program will be needed to inform the community of the CSO program and what their roles are. This can be done using billboards, ads in the paper, a mail campaign, and even a video that can be spread on social media accounts ([San Jose PD developed a good example of this approach](#)).

Job descriptions can be created using other departments' postings as an example. These are readily available online, including the following examples: [Modesto \(CA\)](#), [Eureka \(CA\)](#), [Robbinsdale \(MN\)](#), [Elk Grove \(CA\)](#), [Green Bay \(WI\)](#), [Riverside County \(CA\)](#)

#### (7) Costs of Establishing Homeless and Mental Health Crisis Alternative

In addition outlining the various service alternatives available and their impacts, it is critical that the analysis also examine their feasibility from a financial standpoint. To do this, the project team has developed estimates for the full cost of positions involved in alternative models, as well as associated equipment and startup costs.

##### (7.1) Compensation

Compensation for CSO positions is estimated from several data points, given that civilian field responders are not a common practice in Pierce County. This renders any comparisons with other agencies' compensation rates to not be entirely on level ground.

Nonetheless, Seattle PD does have a community service officer classification that operates with different roles and responsibilities, focusing more on community engagement and related activities. Average pay for the classification is approximately \$76,086. The CSO supervisor position earns about \$10,000 more, at an average reported figure of \$86,923.

The project team also surveyed California agencies that have more comparable CSO roles, focusing on Riverside County, which has a cost of living that is within 15% of Pierce County, WA. From these agencies, a total average position cost (including pension, Medicare, health insurance, etc. costs) of \$83,282 was assessed.

Given that this somewhat closely matches Seattle figures despite the more expanded role of the position, the Seattle CSO rate can be used as a base. Scaling for cost of living and rates for public employee pay between Seattle and Tacoma, we can estimate the average pay for a Tacoma CSO at \$60,421. At a 50% benefit rate, this would equate to a **total**



**position cost of \$90,631 per CSO.** This would be relatively constant whether the position is organized under TPD or another agency.

The Seattle PD supervisory CSO position earned 14.2% more than the average line-level CSO, determined through public employee pay data. Using this scaling factor, a Tacoma CSO supervisor would earn approximately \$69,001. With benefits added at the same 50% rate, this results in a **total position cost of \$103,501 per CSO supervisor.**

## (7.2) Equipment and Vehicles

Equipment costs for CSOs and the CSO supervisor would be essentially the same, with the portable radio and microphone system comprising the bulk of the cost:

### CSO Equipment Costs

Portable Radio, Lapel Mic., Belt Holder	\$4,200
Flashlight w/ AC Charger 40k Cdl	\$118
2 Wash and Wear Polo w/ Insig.	\$60
2 Pants, Wash & Wear @ \$51.99ea	\$104
Patrol Jacket	\$150
Duty Utility Belt 5.11 (Outer Belt)	\$50
Uniform Pant Belt (Inner Belt)	\$12
Sabre Red Pepper Spray	\$15
Pepper Spray holder 5.11	\$18
4 Belt "Keepers"	\$13
<b>Equipment Costs Per CSO/CSO Supv.</b>	<b>\$4,740</b>

At 11 positions staffing the CSO program, equipment-related expenditures total approximately \$52,140.

Costs for outfitting a CSO vehicle would be similar to that of a patrol vehicle, including costs for MDTs (mobile data terminal), mobile radio, and an equivalent base model vehicle:

### CSO Call Diversion Vehicle Costs

Ford Explorer	\$32,675
Mobile Radio (800 MHz)	\$4,200
Decals and Wraps	\$500
Labor and Installation	\$1,000
MDT Cost and Installation	\$6,000
<b>Cost Per Unit</b>	<b>\$44,375</b>

Given the overlap in 10-hour shifts, vehicles cannot be shared among the day and swing/evening shift CSOs. As a result, 11 vehicles are required, at a cost of \$488,125.

### (7.3) Information Technology

Because the CSO program could be housed within the police department with existing information technology infrastructure, no additional major expenditures are needed to fulfill operating needs.

### (7.4) Summary of CSO Call Diversion Program Costs

The following table aggregates each cost element into a summary of the costs of establishing an alternative program for handling certain calls for service:

#### CSO Call Diversion Program Formation and Operating Costs

Category	#	Unit Cost	Total
Vehicles	11	\$44,375	\$488,125
Equipment Sets	11	\$4,740	\$52,140
<b>Total Startup Costs</b>			<b>\$540,265</b>
CSO Supervisor	1	\$103,501	\$103,501
CSO	10	\$90,631	\$906,310
<b>Total Personnel Costs</b>			<b>\$1,009,811</b>

In total, the costs of establishing and operating a civilian response alternative are just over \$1 million. About one-third of the expenditures are startup expenses, the majority of which are from the purchase of new vehicles, which will not be re-incurred annually outside of long-term replacement plan costs and regular maintenance needs.

## (8) Recommendations

Divert a wide range of non-emergency calls for service to civilian responders, comprising up to 9.4% of all calls currently handled by sworn officers.

Create a new civilian community service officer (CSO) classification within the Tacoma Police Department that responds in the field to certain types of non-emergency calls in the field.

Add 10 community service officers and 1 CSO Supervisor position to staff the new civilian response program, at a cost of \$540,265 in initial costs and \$1,009,811 in annual personnel expenditures.

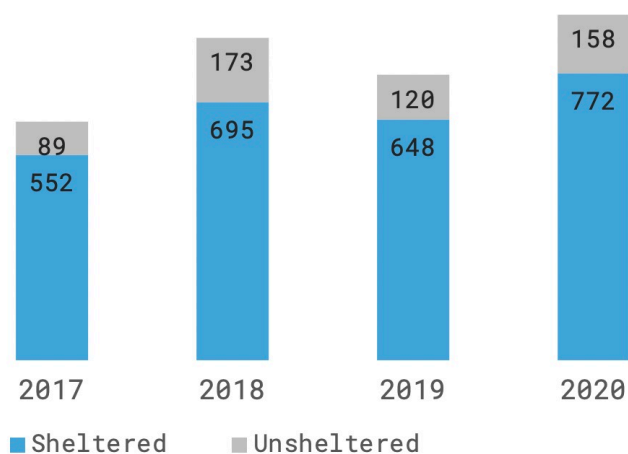
## APPENDIX: Data on Encampment Activity and Effects of Removal

### (1) Trends in Encampment Activity

In 2019 Ninth Circuit ruling was issued that limited encampment clearings when there is no shelter space available, which the City of Tacoma has abided by since 2017 when it was in the lower courts. Then, with the COVID-19 pandemic and related CDC guidance on clearing encampments, the city was further restricted in that much of the otherwise available shelter space was in congregate facilities. As such, there had to be non-congregate shelter space available for encampments to be cleared. This largely halted major encampment clearing operations unless there was a danger to public safety, impeded roadways, or if significant criminal activity was evident at the location.

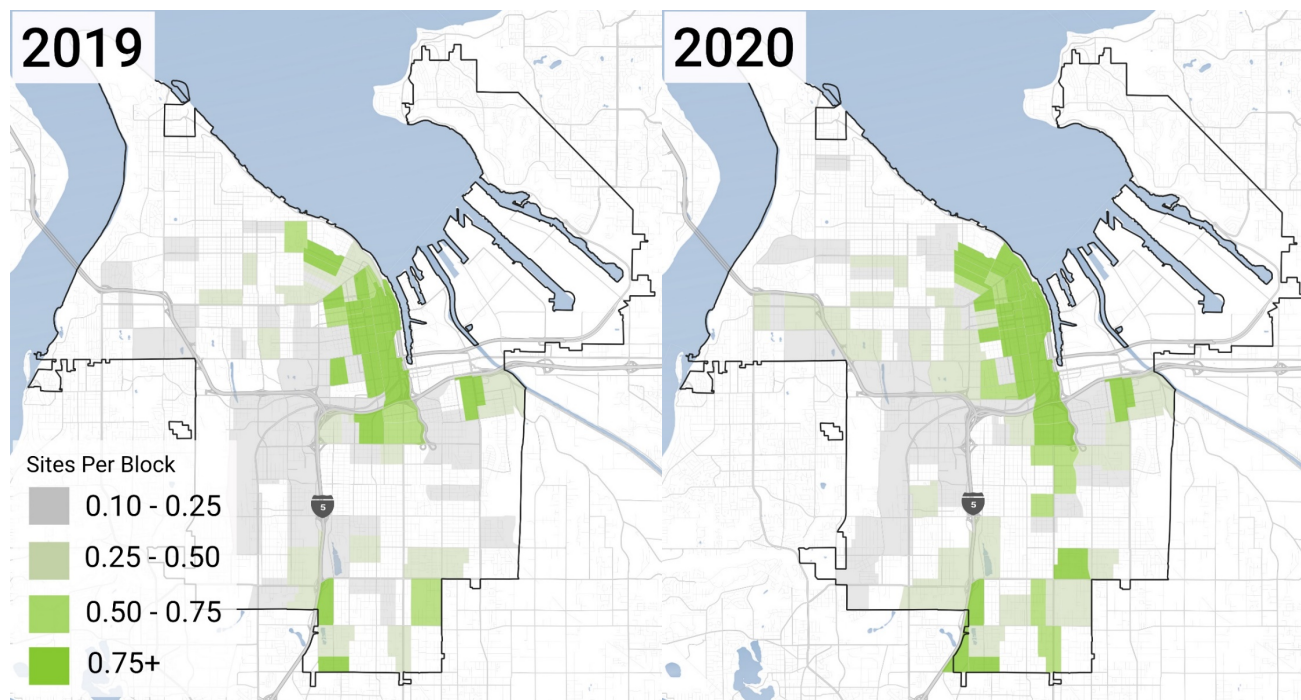
At the same time, with unemployment and evictions skyrocketing as a result of the pandemic, many cities have found their homeless populations increase dramatically over 2020. In Tacoma, moderate increases were reported in 2020 among both sheltered and unsheltered homeless populations:

Tacoma Homeless Population (Pierce County Point In Time Count)



To examine the geography of how the number of encampments changes from 2019 to 2020, the project team mapped the 311 encampment addresses geographically and measured their density by Census block group:

## Density of 311 Encampment Requests by Block Group

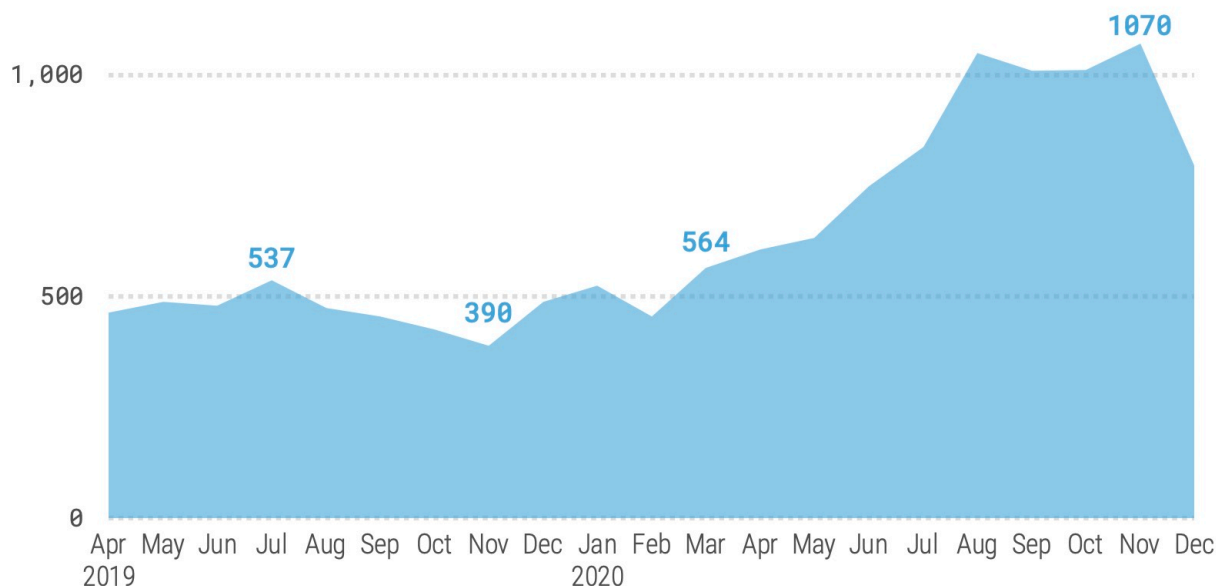


Despite the total number of encampments doubling from the past year, the geography of where encampments are concentrated did not change significantly. For the most part, the areas that already had numerous encampment requests being generated received more in 2020, most of which falling under the highest category (over 0.75 per city block).

## (2) Relationship Between New and Completed Requests Related to Encampments

The following chart provides a visualization of this, showing the total number of open (i.e., not fulfilled/closed) 311 encampment requests at the end of each month:

## Encampment 311 Requests Remaining Open at End of Month

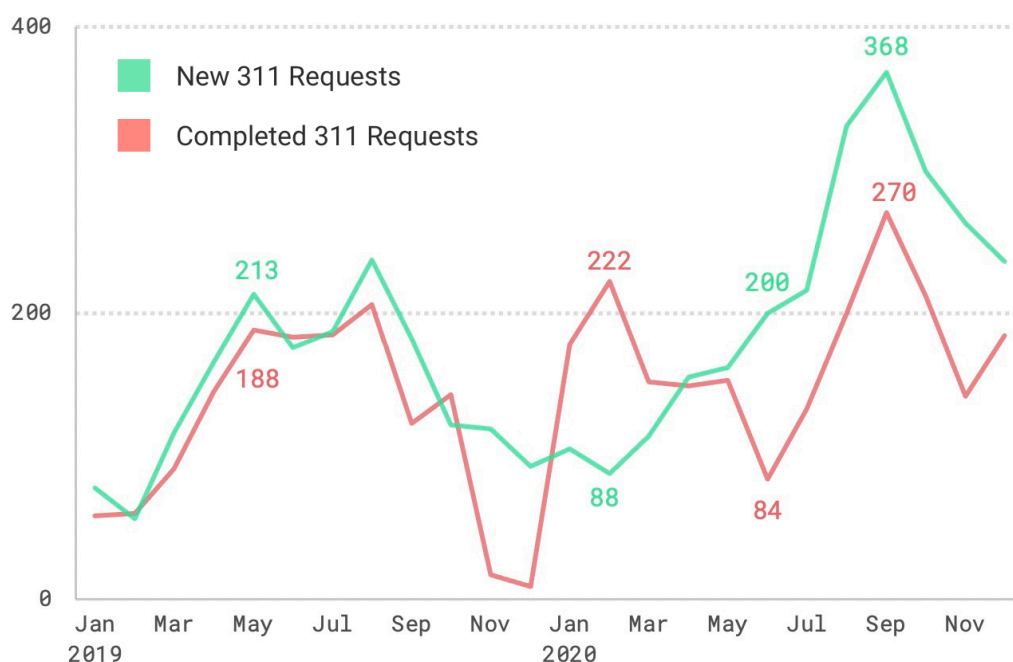


Following the onset of the first COVID-19 lockdowns March 2020, a backlog grew precipitously before reaching a plateau by the summer. With the changes to the level of enforcement being conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, the data suggests that, in the absence of encampment clearing activities, the number will rise – but not indefinitely.

Furthermore, based on the lack of a downward trajectory in the number of encampments prior to the COVID-19 policy changes, there is a clear point of diminishing returns where further enforcement clearing does not actually reduce the number of encampments.

Instead, the relationship between the number of new 311 requests and the rate at which they are closed shows that the two are highly interrelated:

New vs. Completed 311 Encampment Requests by Month



The number of completed encampment-related 311 requests tracks closely with the number of new encampments that are reported. But if the rate at which requests are completed is compared with the previous chart showing total remaining encampments, there is little evidence to suggest that higher activity in enforcement actions have a meaningful effect on reducing the number of encampments at any one time.

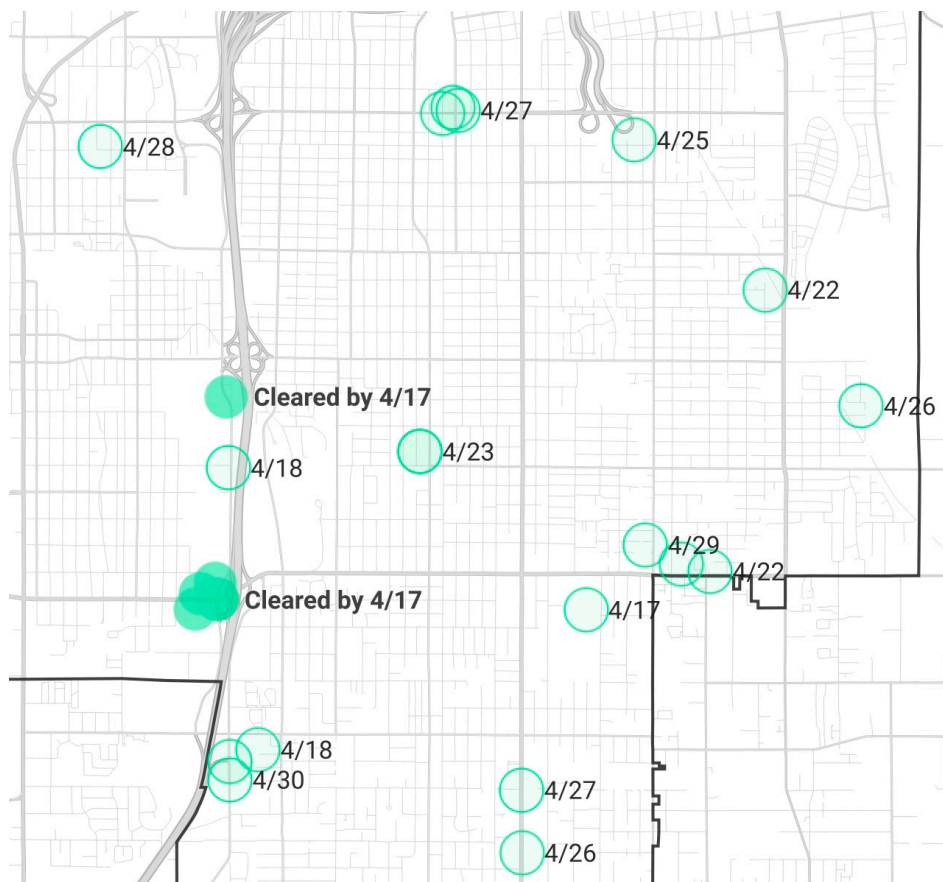
### (3) Effects of Removal on New Encampment Formation

The vast majority of those cleared from the encampment will remain as unsheltered homeless, as most individuals refuse services. Thus, there is high likelihood that the individuals will relocate to a new location to set up an encampment.

This results in a post-encampment clearing process of diffusion and dispersal of encampments that is evident in the two years of data received by the project team. As encampments are cleared, a number of new encampments are often formed in the surrounding area over the following 1-3 weeks.

The following map provides one example of this, where a few encampment areas were cleared on or by April 17 (shown by the *solid* green circles), and in the following weeks, many new encampments were formed and reported in the surrounding areas (as shown by the *outlined* green circles):

**Example:** After clearing two encampments, many new encampments are reported in the South End neighborhood over the following two weeks.



**Methodological Note:** To map was constructed with 311 encampment data, which was screened using the entry and close comment fields. The cleared encampments (solid circle) refer to instances where the comment for closing out the record specifies that it was a populated encampment. Likewise, for new encampments, only entries referring to populated encampments being reported in the new entry comment field.

Dates for the outlined green circles refer to the date that the encampment was reported and created in the 311 system.

The project team also created an animated version of this map that shows encampment creation and clearing over the two-year period. It can be viewed at the following links:

**South Tacoma:** <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1O600h0Egcee3zh1z1qh1mxuNsAXYBN8M/view?usp=sharing>

**Citywide:** <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1QWIBUKV9lx2wd9he7K8tQyBQ5/view?usp=sharing>

**Note:** In the animated version of the map, encampment clearing actions are shown with red outlined circles.



In the previous map focusing on 4/17 clearings, the 311 events' comment fields mostly describe the encampments as having more than one tent, and often in the range of 2-6 tents when a number is specified. A number of factors contribute to this. The larger an encampment is, the more visible it becomes, and the more likely it is to be the subject of public attention and government action.

On the other end of the spectrum, it is well understood that homeless individuals camping by themselves in less public (i.e., more isolated/hidden) environments are much more likely to be victimized by criminal activity (Ellsworth, 2019)<sup>4</sup>, while also being less likely to report those crimes to law enforcement. Given this high degree of vulnerability, a collective security can likely be offered from encampments that are medium to large in size, in addition to a sense of community<sup>5</sup> (HUD/Abt Associates, 2020).

Regardless, it is also noting that encampments can impact businesses that are at the location of the encampment, and in residential neighborhoods, individuals' quality of life can be adversely impacted by the proliferation of visible encampments. Consequently, responding to and addressing encampment calls is able to mitigate these impacts, even if the effects are temporary and diffuse the issues to elsewhere within the city.

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<sup>4</sup> Joshua T. Ellsworth(2019) Street Crime Victimization Among Homeless Adults: A Review of the Literature, *Victims & Offenders*, 14:1, 96-118, DOI: 10.1080/15564886.2018.1547997

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Policy Development and Research, Lauren Dunton et al. *City Approaches to Encampments and What They Cost*, Abt Associates, 2020.