

HOMELESS TASK FORCE

The logistics of how to legally and peacefully remove encampments

WHY?

- ❑ Fresno's homeless encampment problem was becoming a health, safety and public nuisance issue
- ❑ City had three very large, illegal homeless encampments that all took up several blocks of City streets and private property
- ❑ They had not been addressed since 2011 due to a lawsuit filed in 2007 that the City was forced to settle
- ❑ After a major cleanup operation in 2011, the encampments were allowed to come back as another law suit was filed (still pending)

WHAT TO DO

- ▣ The encampments grew to such a scale that vehicles could no longer safely travel through or around them.
- ▣ Had spilled into the streets and the crime associated with them became a major concern.
- ▣ Two shootings and a murder were committed in one of the encampments and the crime had gotten out of control
- ▣ Decision was made to have a large scale operation to try and stop the violence.

OPERATION ZERO TOLERANCE

- ▣ 21 day operation focusing on the areas encompassing all three encampments
- ▣ Nearly every special unit involved
- ▣ 85 Felony arrests were made
- ▣ 138 Misdemeanor arrests
- ▣ 289 Citations issued
- ▣ 113 vehicles impounded
- ▣ 1 large Marijuana grow discovered
- ▣ 41 drug related arrests made

ACTION PLAN

- ▣ Decision was made that another large scale cleanup was to be done and that a team would be created to maintain the efforts
- ▣ Team would be made of up not only Fresno Police, but would involve Code Enforcement, Sanitation, City Managers Office and work with assisting agencies that deal with chronic homelessness
- ▣ Pilot program of 1 year to address the problem of encampments and chronic homelessness

UNIT START UP

- ▣ Unit began August 19, 2013
- ▣ 1 Sgt, 4 Officers, 2 Code, 2 Sanitation
- ▣ Training with Jim Betts re: A.O. 6-23
- ▣ All members wearing Taser Body Cameras
- ▣ Housed out of SW Station
- ▣ Three encampment clean-ups were already planned and posted

MISSION

- ▣ Facilitate and coordinate with City Code Enforcement and Sanitation to complete the scheduled cleanups
- ▣ Keep the areas clean and encampment free after the initial cleanups
- ▣ Locate and remove any future “settlements” and “encampments”
- ▣ Foster relationships with non-profits and other agencies to assist with program placements
- ▣ Enforce “quality of life” crimes

Santa Clara E/F/G Golden State

- ▣ Encampment encompassed all three streets from Ventura to Santa Clara as well as G St to California and Golden State, E St off-ramp
- ▣ Approx 100-125 residents
- ▣ Numerous complaints from area as well as violent crime (City's 22nd Murder)
- ▣ Took 2 full days to clean up, 11 hr days
- ▣ Removed 138 tons (276,000 lbs) of debris

From Above



Before Clean Up



Before Clean Up



Before Clean Up



After Clean Up (Santa Clara)



After Clean Up (E St)



After Clean Up (G St)



E St Alley (Old Germantown)

- ▣ Clean up began on Sept 3 and lasted one full 12 hour day
- ▣ Found that encampment grew after first clean up and debris doubled
- ▣ Extremely filthy conditions, all structures were built on dirt, much worse conditions than first clean up
- ▣ Used as an illegal dump
- ▣ Removed 90 tons (180,000 lbs) of debris

From Above



Before Clean Up



Before Clean Up



After Clean Up



After Clean Up



H St and Monterey

- ▣ Began Clean Up on Sept 9
- ▣ Cleared structures in one day, took another half day to finish moving residents out
- ▣ Contained the worst sanitary conditions and had the most resistance from residents
- ▣ Pastor Ray and his church were left to last and hand packed
- ▣ Removed 58 Tons (116,000 lbs) of debris

From Above



Before Clean Up



Before Clean Up



After Clean Up



After Clean Up



NIELSEN CLEANUP South Side



North Side



Total Picture



PROPERTY OWNERSHIP? ISSUES WITH ASSISTANCE

- ▣ Two large parcels of land, owned by two different entities, with three different interested parties.
- ▣ BNSF Railroad, Zacky Farms, Fresno Irrigation District.
- ▣ BNSF Railroad refused to acknowledge ownership and Fresno Irrigation District was reluctant to clean area in canal until rest of area was clean, Zacky Farms was in escrow and would only pay for signage but no cleanup

SOLUTION

- ▣ Gabrelian Brothers who own paper mill at 2290 G' St agreed to post signs, take responsibility of land and assume land once cleanup complete. Received legal agreement with BNSF that it will now be their land. Agreed to prosecute if necessary for PC 602L
- ▣ Zacky provided signage
- ▣ FID would do simultaneous cleanup

October 23rd

- ▣ Commenced with cleanup on North Side property (Zacky) at 0700
- ▣ Most of structures were abandoned
- ▣ Remaining residents were helpful with cleanup and compliant
- ▣ 6-8 advocates were on scene with cameras, most were non-problematic but a few were reluctant to cooperate
- ▣ Concluded cleanup with no significant issues

ABANDONED



2290 G St

- ▣ The Southside of the cleanup (BNSF/Gabrelian) was very bust as many homeless advocates were on scene. They were being a nuisance as many would block the path of the workers and try to prevent our videographer from doing his work.
- ▣ 12-15 advocates on scene
- ▣ Advocates had plan in place to stop cleanup

CINNAMON'S PLACE



THE PLAN

- ▣ Advocates had pre-determined members who were to be arrested by police for trespassing or interfering with police.
- ▣ List was distributed amongst the group
- ▣ Agreements were made with Jim Betts with regard to allowing in “their” vehicles
- ▣ Agreement was broken and the group blocked entry of City’s heavy equipment

BLOCKING THE WAY



Viewed on (f) (b) (7) - Tue, 12/12/2012 11:59 GMT-0800

PATIENCE

- ▣ Decision was made to continue with our efforts and assist the residents with packing and hand crews.
- ▣ Homeless were not refusing to leave, only the advocates were causing interference
- ▣ Once “Cinnamon” gave into moving, the advocates began to lose interest
- ▣ Once it was safe and clear, the heavy equipment was driven in and remainder of cleanup was done

RESULTS

- ▣ In all 98 tons of debris was removed
- ▣ Cleanup took until 1800 hours (11 hrs.)
- ▣ No arrests were made
- ▣ Fresno PD assisted one homeless woman with a ride to a new location, after all the advocates refused to help her
- ▣ New fencing was put up around property two days later.
- ▣ No re-encamping!

ALL CLEAR



DAILY WORK

- ▣ Officers work from 6am-4pm, seven days a week in two man teams
- ▣ First few hours are spent addressing the homeless who sleep on the streets around the Poverello House and G' St.
- ▣ Make rounds at all previous clean-up locations and known hotspots around downtown
- ▣ Respond to homeless encampment related issues when available
- ▣ Answer, log and respond to requests from Patrol and City Council

“SETTLEMENTS”

- ▣ Average settlement is 1-4 people, tents, shopping carts and trash
- ▣ Takes anywhere from 1-4 hours to address settlement. Includes checking for warrants, dealing with stored property, garbage cleanup
- ▣ Address up to 20 per week
- ▣ Most are known homeless who move around
- ▣ Deal with approx 75 chronic homeless

Callisch and Illinois



Before Clean Up



After Clean Up



H St and El Dorado



After Clean Up



FIRST AND TULARE



F and Santa Clara



Olive and Chestnut



Olive and Hughes



Shaw and Brawely



First and Tulare



Too Much Stuff??



Fig Garden Loop



Maple and California



Underlying Issues

- ▣ Rampant drug and alcohol abuse
- ▣ Untreated Mental Illness
- ▣ Generational homelessness
- ▣ Self-medicating for social anxiety issues
- ▣ False hope from well meaning, but unfulfilled groups promising assistance
- ▣ Fear
- ▣ Unwillingness to accept help and/or change

GOALS

- ▣ Can't end homelessness, but can address the impact it has on the public
- ▣ Maintain and prevent any “encampments” from being established
- ▣ Address the blight that is associated with lifestyle
- ▣ Through enforcement and compassion encourage and assist as many as possible into programs and services

CONTACT

- ▣ Sgt Robert Dewey robert.dewey@fresno.gov
- ▣ Encampment call center 621-7788
- ▣ City One Call Center 211