

Healthy Street Operations Center: “Safe and Clean Streets”

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Creating and implementing effective solutions to combat homelessness is a vexing issue and a priority for cities all across the United States. Lack of affordable housing, substandard wages, and job insecurity has dramatically increased the rate of poverty (Wolch 1998, 8). The sight of tent cities has become a fixture in urban landscapes and serves as a visual testament to the harsh reality of economic instability that permeates our lives. Decreased availability of jobs, housing, and a living wage has contributed to the high rates of homelessness many cities are grappling with daily. These systemic factors are intensified by the criminalizing tactics which scholars referred to as coercive policing; The tactics are used by city agencies and police against homeless people to protect tax revenue and tourism.

During the increasing globalization of markets during the eighties and nineties, neoliberalism ideology became attractive to policy-makers striving to remain competitive, thus resulting in severely undermined social safety nets and the eradication of alternatives to low-wage jobs. Deep-seated ideas that poverty results from individual choices has greatly influenced policy resulting in programs such as George Bush’s “Compassion Agenda” or Bill Clinton’s “Continuum of Care” program (Sparks 2012, 1516; Wolch 1998, 8-9).

These programs cut funding and created stringent criteria to receive financial aid. Federal cuts to welfare programs in combination with societal beliefs about poor people have economically isolated

a significant portion of the population. These ideas have exacerbated the conditions of poverty and homelessness (Wolch 1998, 8-10) In addition to fueling poverty and homelessness, these policies have had lasting impacts to how cities capacity and approach to managing these issues. Draconian cuts to welfare programs, the revitalization of downtown centers, and a push for smaller governments, during the Bush and Clinton administrations, led to the creation of Business improvement districts emphasizing private-public partnerships. Business improvement Districts act as both a regulating force and a deterrent of activities perceived to threaten consumer spending fueling poverty and homelessness (Lippert 2012; Steffen 2012). The concentration of wealth among a smaller group of people along with wage inequalities has contributed to an increased homelessness in cities like San Francisco (Murphy 2009).

Cities are left to grapple with this human crisis in the face of inadequate resources resulting in misguided policies. Negative perceptions of law enforcement in marginalized communities and their limited scope of practice rarely elicit police officer’s images as caretakers or protectors. Cities like San Francisco and Denver have resorted to direct and third-party enforcement of ordinances to ban everyday life-sustaining activities that essentially remove homeless people. (Robinson 2017, 49). San Francisco has promoted this negative pattern through their dispassionate response to homelessness in the Healthy Streets Operation Center (HSOC).

San Francisco established HSOC, a coalition of agencies, in January of 2016, in response to an increasing number of complaints to the San Francisco Police Department, a department ill-equipped to handle the enormity of this growing crisis alone. HSOC includes The Department of Public Works (DPW) The Department of Health (DPH) The Homeless Outreach Team (HOT). They were tasked with collaborating on a coordinated care response for San Francisco’s unsheltered population. HSOC’s mission states that it aims to keep San Francisco’s streets “safe and clean”, fulfill shelter and service needs for those living on the streets and address “homelessness and street behavior” through a coordinated response between city agencies (sfcontroller.org 2019). “Street behavior” is not clearly defined in HSOC publications but alludes to criminal activity which becomes synonymous with homelessness. HSOC’s approach reflects deeply entrenched cultural views of homelessness as an issue deserving of charity as well as punishment. These conflicting values are evident in their public image and verbalization of compassion. HSOC uses these tactics in supporting the public health of San Franciscans while taking actions like sweeps which endanger the health of San Francisco’s highly vulnerable unsheltered population. DPW’s “outreach efforts” in the guise of sweeps removing unsheltered individuals from areas where their presence is perceived as a threat to consumption and customer and property owner safety. Through sweeps, DPW forcibly moves those

living unsheltered to the periphery of the city, taking personal items and eliminating shelter. Confiscation of food, medicine, clothing or shelter leaves individuals completely exposed and compromises survival.

My research challenges the continued funding of these actions carried out by the Healthy Street Operations Center against the unsheltered population. The mission of the Healthy Street Operation Center is to:

Provide a coordinated City response to unsheltered experiencing homelessness, individuals struggling with behavioral health issues, street cleanliness, and related public safety issues to ensure San Francisco's streets are healthy for everyone.

My research suggests San Francisco's financial interests, not the well-being of those living unsheltered, are the driving force behind homelessness policy in San Francisco. San Francisco has remained steadfast in using punitive measures to manage its homelessness crisis. As of 2015, San Francisco has passed more municipal ordinances banning everyday activities such as sitting, walking, and sleeping in public places, than any other city in California (Herring 2015). SFPD and DPW, use public 'health and safety' to issue move-along orders, seize property and criminalize activities required for basic survival such as panhandling and sleeping in public. HSOC achieves this by skewing the limits of citizenship. This research makes clear that those living unsheltered do not have access to the same rights and freedoms as those who own property or operate businesses. HSOC selectively works to create 'safe and clean' streets for property and business owners while employing laws that criminalize the life-sustaining activities of those living unshel-

tered. HSOC in conjunction with DPW and SFPD through citations, arrests and sweeps promotes unsafe living conditions and barriers to a clean environment. In addition to creating 'safe and clean' streets, HSOC seeks to connect individuals with services and shelter, however San Francisco's annual homeless count found 5,180 individuals were living unsheltered out of a total of 8,011 counted as homeless (Hsh.sf.gov.org 2019).

The Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing (HSH) established in July of 2016 to provide health and housing referral services, as well as temporary housing solutions to San Francisco's unsheltered population. HSH oversees San Francisco's Navigation Center system, which serves as a temporary housing solution in spite of severe constraints. The first navigation center opened in 2015 with five currently in operation and an additional center set to open in December of 2019. Cumulatively, San Francisco's navigation centers can hold up to 595 people. The Navigation Center's primary purpose is to get people off the streets and into permanent housing. Navigation Centers allow a minimum 2-night stay for those utilizing Homeward Bound, a program which grants one-time bus tickets to people willing to leave San Francisco, 7-night stays for emergency cases, and 30-night stays with extensions reserved for those willing to cooperate with 'exit-plans' (Hsh.sfgov.org, 2019). Limited shelter capacity and strict timelines, Navigation Centers fail to meet the shelter and service needs of San Francisco's homeless population.

HSH works closely with the San Francisco Police Department in moving unsheltered people off the streets and into the Navigation Centers. Lack of shelter and resources combined with punitive measures such as sweeps and arrests frequently undertaken

by DPW and SFPD cast doubt on HSOC's true function and ability to provide alternatives to those living unsheltered. HSOC's coordinated care response does little more than temporarily remove the unsheltered out of contested locations. This work builds upon literature centered around the criminalization of homelessness and demonstrates how HSOC uses "public health" to isolate and criminalize San Francisco's homeless population by protecting the interests of the business community and property owners.

In 2017, San Francisco's Homelessness and Supportive Housing budget was \$239 million. Two percent was designated for health services, 7% for street outreach services, and 18% for temporary housing (Hsh.sfgov.org 2019). Despite the 239-million-dollar budget dedicated to relieving homelessness, homelessness persists. The continued criminalization of those engaging in life-sustaining activities exacerbates the already dire conditions of poverty many homeless people already experience.

Extensive research has been published on the conditions in which poverty and to what extent certain demographics are disproportionately subject to these conditions over others. For example, Incarceration, where African American and Latino males are over-represented, creates debt for both the incarcerated individuals and their families through the loss of income and the accumulation of interest on fines. Incarceration affects families psychologically and emotionally which can greatly impact one's ability to work, further driving people already vulnerable deeper into poverty. (Comfort 2002) This financial instability puts people at higher risk for becoming homeless. Homelessness neither absolves them from prior debt nor prevents them from acquiring more. Being unsheltered is

financially burdensome due to various ordinances and laws that ban activities such as sitting, standing, or sleeping in public places which often result in fines. Fines are an outgrowth of underlying beliefs about personal accountability as opposed to structural causes. It can be impossible for individuals, who are poor or homeless, to pay back fines as they continue to collect interest contributing to an accelerated acquisition of debt, driving them deeper into poverty (Harris 2016). In many cases outstanding fines create financial hardship for the homeless; Interests accumulate leading to ticketing and arrest driving them further into poverty. Deeper poverty increases the probability of becoming homeless. Punitive approaches to homelessness replicated in city after city, where governments have invented a myriad of names to describe the same basic program, aimed to remove homelessness from “public” view. The removal of unsheltered individuals is achieved through outlawing sleeping, sitting, loitering, and panhandling. Since *Martin V. Boise*, it is illegal to arrest people for sleeping in public if there is no available shelter (The Law Center 2019). Despite inadequate availability of resources for those experiencing homelessness in San Francisco, police continue to penalize them. In addition to overt methods of policing homelessness, covert operations include neighborhoods that are in opposition of homeless shelters in their zip code indirectly policing the homeless population. (Foscarinis 1996) Three main approaches have been identified in cities’ attempts to curtail homelessness; Aggressive Patrol, Coercive Benevolence or Therapeutic policing, and harm-reduction policing. Aggressive patrol is a byproduct of “Broken Windows” policing, responsible for New York’s well-known “Zero-Tolerance” and “Stop and Frisk policies.” Co-

ercive Benevolence/Therapeutic policing uses police power to detain and offer social service solutions as an alternative to punitive measures while Harm-Reduction acknowledges ‘structural failings’ in the circumstances of individuals. (Beckett, Herbert, Stuart, 2018) Aggressive Patrol and Therapeutic policing appear to be the most utilized and most exclusionary due to deep-seated underlying beliefs about lack of hygiene or disease among unsheltered people. These widely-held beliefs are used as justification by property owners and businesses to remove any trace of homelessness from these spaces to protect consumption through the preservation of ‘safety and cleanliness’(Randall 2003). Promoting consumption has led to the creation of business districts assuming roles traditionally held by governments. Cities dependent on the tax revenue of businesses often support policies that preserve the private-public partnership prioritizing business needs over the needs of residents (Clark 2015). Business improvement districts with the support of cities have implemented programs which have reduced the visibility of homelessness in entertainment and shopping districts but have increased their presence on the fringes of cities creating barriers to survival (Herring 2014). These coercive practices effectively isolate unhoused individuals, relegating them to restricted spaces to protect the interests of the business community and property owners. (Speer 2018)

Methodology

This study relies on textual analyses of documents requested from the city of San Francisco, under the Freedom of Information Act, from all HSOC participating agencies mentioning homelessness. These documents include HSOC’s email communications, meeting agendas, minutes, 311 complaints, and en-

vironmental service work orders. These documents provide evidence that suggest HSOC overwhelmingly catered to taxpayers and business owners. In addition, there is also a strong correlation between 311 complaint resolution efforts and encampment clearance within specific San Francisco geographic locations. This study does not immediately render any ethical issues but has limitations. The documents used here for textual analysis are from 2018 and which represent a limited period of time and do not reflect recent changes to policy or protocols. I am also confined to records that overtly mention “homelessness” which may present a narrow window of HSOC’s approach to homelessness. However, the thousands of documents analyzed including emails, data reports, power points, agendas, and meeting minutes, were not written with the intention to be shared with the public. Their exposure allowed an unadulterated view into the inner-workings of HSOC. These documents indicate that specific economic factors are driving police policy and citywide approaches towards homelessness and encampments.

Healthy Streets Operations Center

The contrast between rich and poor has become disturbingly stark as tent encampments juxtapose cranes jutting over the skyline foreshadowing luxury condominiums and rising rents. In the wake of real estate and tech booms, many people have lost their homes, reportedly due to the inability to compete in the current job market or eviction from their longtime homes through legislation such as the Ellis Act. (Sfbos.org 2013) No doubt, many moved away due to the exorbitant cost of living. The 8,011 counted homeless population is up 17% from 2017n(Hsh.sfgov.org 2019). HSOC states they aim to achieve

these goals for all San Franciscans, through a coordinated response between city agencies such as the San Francisco Police Department (SFPD), Department of Health (DPH), Department of Emergency Management (DEM), Department of Homelessness and supportive Housing (HSH) in collaboration with The Department of Public Works and others. Though HSOC is a coalition of agencies founded to serve the homeless population, the analysis of countless email threads suggest HSOC functions as an extension of the SFPD to protect San Francisco's financial interests rather than serve San Francisco's unsheltered residents. To mitigate potential threats to tourism and other types of consumerism posed by homelessness, San Francisco has devoted a significant amount of resources in an attempt to curtail it. In 2017, San Francisco allocated 66% of its \$239 million dollar fiscal year on permanent housing. Despite the significant amount of funding allotted for permanent housing, three additional navigation centers were opened in 2018, more and more people find themselves living on the streets. In a city that is 7x7 square miles, already limited space has been encroached upon by luxury housing and commercial development pushing those living unsheltered to the foreground. Increased visibility of homelessness as well as those experiencing mental health crises or engaged in life-sustaining activities such as panhandling, sleeping, bathing, or using the restroom, by the unhoused, create discomfort and can be perceived as barriers to the lives of the housed. (Speer 2018). Emails from residents, witnessing these events, to district supervisors, frequently mention feeling unsafe and express concerns about unhygienic conditions. These beliefs create tension between residents and the business community which deem the activities of homeless

people unsafe and unclean. (Amster 2003) Internal documents from the DPW show that SFPD are regularly employed to supervise the sweeps and confiscation of personal belongings by issuing citations, arresting, or evicting homeless residents from these contested spaces in response to resident and business complaints. Life-sustaining activities are necessary to the survival of the housed and unhoused, however, unsheltered individuals have no choice but to perform in public view and are subject to arrest or citation as a result.

Propertied Status

Initially established in response to resident complaints in the Mission District, HSOC expanded citywide on January 16, 2018, to serve all "San Franciscans." Upon analysis of emailed complaints to HSOC and city supervisors, "San Franciscan" is defined by these agencies through the quality and frequency of their response to those who support San Francisco's financial interests. HSOC focuses its efforts on business owners, property owners, and taxpayers. DPW, SFPD, and the other participating agencies of HSOC collaborate with residents and business community members to eliminate signs of homelessness from their neighborhoods despite its message of keeping 'safe and clean' streets for all San Franciscans. Residents and business community members can submit complaints regarding homelessness and encampments by calling 311 or submitting complaints through its app, which routes calls to the appropriate agency depending on the nature of the complaint. Residents and business owners call in various complaints concerning homeless behavior. The most common complaints are about tents that block sidewalks, which businesses claim discourage customers from frequenting their shops, and those from residents about encampments

being too close to schools. Other complaints include drug use, chop shops, syringes, fire hazards, and urine and feces in public places. The nature of complaints as well as who is submitting them show a clear delineation between the protected and non-protected classes. Residents wield their "taxpayer" status freely as justification for demanding swift action from police against encampments as a barrier to "safe and clean" streets. These tactics yield temporary results. The idea of taxpayer status as inherently more entitled than those who do not mirror 'propertied citizenship' viewing access to rights as congruent with ownership of property. (Herring, 2019, 795; Sparks 2012) Propertied ownership upholds the idea that the city is as a product, viewing government and its agencies act as a broker of services for those who can pay.

In addition to propertied status, political status plays an important factor in how quickly one can obtain services. Emailed complaints from longtime homeowners and residents to Hillary Ronen, District Nine Supervisor, document the discomfort residents have over witnessing the unsheltered community engaged in life-sustaining activities like cooking, sleeping, and the suspicion of drug use in their neighborhood. In response to the concerned constituent, Hillary Ronen copied DPW, regarding this encampment of homeless people in the neighborhood underscoring its urgency by informing them of her own daughter who attends school nearby. This received prompt assurance from Rachael, representing DPW, that the homeless outreach team would be "plugged in." This email exchange highlights both the exclusion of homeless voices as well as the influence political and propertied status has on city agencies. Unhoused people are not afforded the same rights as business and property owners. Home-

lessness is viewed as a result of a personal defect and therefore, not equally entitled to its services as non-participants in the system. To protect the assets of San Francisco, HSOC has invested in protecting the safety of those which support the financial interests of the city: Business Community, Property Owners, and their offspring.

Tourism

Ramped up efforts by DPW, SFPD, and BSES. to steam clean, remove homeless encampments, and confiscate property, in high tourist areas to prevent threats to revenue neglects the needs of other neighborhoods. It aids in HSOC's mission of keeping streets 'safe and clean' for all San Franciscans. Citing individuals for quality of life ordinances, and confiscating property in high-traffic tourist areas only serves to perpetuate and postpone the inevitable, a broken system.

Business Improvement Districts/Community Benefit Districts

Rincon Hill/East Cut has transitioned from a primarily commercial area to a high-income residential area and home to many of San Francisco's corporate headquarters. Established in 2015, the Community Benefit District provides services such as community guides, special event programming, business and economic development, and neighborhood safety and cleanliness. The benefits a privileged status can bring are particularly strong and visible in districts with high concentrations of wealth or exposure to tourism. These districts may be eligible to become a Business Improvement District (BID) or Community Benefit District status (CBD) where they can hire their own dedicated staff to handle services normally provided by the City. For example, The Rincon Hill/East Cut Community District maintains an active private-public partnership with the City of San

Francisco as a community benefit district where they provide their own cleaning, outreach, and street ambassador services that the city would normally provide. It is the sixth most expensive zip code in the nation to live in boasting an average rent of \$,4,858 per month and a median property value of 1.6 million reflecting the high desirability of the neighborhood. (Brinklow 2019) There is even an online store featuring East Cut hats and sweatshirts available for purchase. Its website advertises Rincon Hill/East Cut as "San Francisco's most hospitable neighborhood." Analysis of textual exchange between the Rincon Hill/ East Cut's community benefits district and HSOC suggests a primary function of their partnership is to monitor and remove signs of homelessness within the boundaries of Rincon Hill/ East Cut. An excerpt from the neighborhood's community development June 2018 operation's report states:

Moreover, the staff continues to be very active in providing welfare checks to the homeless, contacting 311 daily reports regarding homeless encampments. With the new additions to the cleaning staff, the team has been more productive and able to realize faster response times to stakeholder calls.

This excerpt from the Daily Operations' Report and email exchanges between the Rincon Hill/East Cut CBD staff and HSOC demonstrate the CBD's primary functions are to survey the neighborhood for homeless individuals and encampments and reporting them to 311. This Data triggers a response from SFPD, DPW, and HSH which work in collaboration with the Rincon Hill/East Cut's publicly funded but privately hired cleaning crew to respond to "stakeholder" calls. The Rincon Hill/East Cut Community Benefit District works very closely

with HSOC to prevent and remove encampments including using 311 to report homeless encampments. Email correspondence between the Rincon Hill/East Cut CBD reveal that homeless and encampment reporting is a regularly performed duty of CBD staff. In addition, HSOC schedules regular walk throughs and meetings to gather concerns to help formulate an action plan and tie in the appropriate agencies. Homeless encampment removal requests are routed to both SFPD as well as HOT, and DPW. Because DPW can't remove any tents or other property without the presence of the San Francisco Police to bag and tag items, cite, and or arrest people. In many ways, The Rincon Hill/East Cut CBD acts as a broker for police services. The policing of homelessness in this neighborhood is a collaborative effort between HSOC and the CBD. The "health and wellness checks" and daily reporting to 311 of homeless people and encampments, carried out by the CBD staff, are framed as essential for the "quality of life" and "economic viability" of the neighborhood according to the website. However, it is difficult to prove that the citation and arrest of the unhoused and the confiscation of their stuff would yield positive health outcomes for unhoused individuals. The unsheltered residents of Rincon Hill/ East Cut neighborhood do not have a non-profit 501c3 status and are not able to receive funding through the city of San Francisco to make changes to the neighborhood reflecting their needs for safety. The excerpt from the Rincon Hill/East Cut neighborhood mentions "...the team has been more productive and able to realize faster response times to stakeholder calls." The stakeholder calls in this example are referring to homeless and encampment related concerns reported by owners, renters, and the businesses. Based on the distinction made between

the “stakeholders” who initiate the calls and those that are the subject of the calls, it is clear that it is the “stakeholders,” who make up the “neighborhood” which this organization is built around. Though the Rincon Hill/ East Cut neighborhood mentions their staff performs “health and wellness” checks on homeless individuals, it is mentioned within the context of reporting these concerns through 311 as well as faster response time from cleaning teams. The objectives of the Rincon Hill/ East Cut Community Benefit District are structured to serve the “stakeholders” which does so with the help of San Francisco municipal funds and HSOC. Typical concerns expressed by this neighborhood and others like it frequently cite homelessness as a health and safety concern which receives a prompt response from HSOC Department Representatives. However, no equivalent exists for unsheltered residents of San Francisco to report their safety concerns, nor are they responded to in the same way. Homeless encampments are not able to organize in a way that allows them access to municipal funds to further their interests and are often met with scorn and orders to move.

In my textual analysis, I came across a program the city of San Francisco oversees called the “Fix-It-team”, established in 2016. The “Fix-it Team, much like CBDs and BIDS, addresses “quality of life concerns.” These concerns are identified through crime data supplied by SFPD, 311 and resident feedback obtained during neighborhood walk-throughs. Their plans address graffiti, litter, streetlights and homeless encampments, and general concerns. Through sustained community engagement, the fix-it team both reinforces the neighborhood symbolically and spatially. The ‘neighborhood’ is defined in several ways; The fix-it team aids in this definition by de-

termining who feedback is collected from and how it prioritizes its response. The objectives in the fix-it teams’ 2017-2018 report are related to the maintenance and beautification of the built environment. To achieve these objectives, the fix-it teams offer a form of surveillance of unhoused people for the city of San Francisco by providing welfare checks. Through “welfare checks,” information about homeless residents are collected and forwarded to 311 by the CBD. internal email threads between HOT and HSH show running records of “resistant individuals” who warranted continued outreach attempts. Encampment locations and specific individuals are identified and reported through 311 which can then initiate the removal process by HSOC. Though HSOC advertises that they provide service referrals and housing, internal documents show that these encounters often end in tent removal and property confiscation.

Conclusion

San Francisco has earned a reputation of maintaining some of the harshest policies towards homelessness (Herring 2016). Programs like the Zero Tolerance program in New York City and the Matrix Program in San Francisco informed by “broken windows policing” has unleashed a torrent of ordinances focused on low-level misdemeanor crimes (Sparks 2018). Similarly to the Zero Tolerance program HSOC criminalizes homelessness through enforcement of these ordinances. HSOC’s goals of leading with compassion and making streets safe and clean for all San Franciscans translates into a vigilant response to San Francisco’s citizens’ discomfort and concern over homeless and encampment visibility resulting in either coercing unsheltered residents into limited temporary housing or removing them from the space altogether. This is achieved through sweeps, citation and arrest. My

research uncovered several emails between DPW, HSH, and HOT regarding penal codes, furnished by Commander David Lazar of SFPD, to be enforced against encampments supporting the removal of people and their belongings from public and private property. This reflects both a legacy of “broken windows” policing by enabling the arrests and citations for life-sustaining activities such as sitting and sleeping. (Herring 2019; Sparks 2018; Robinson 2017) as well as the participation of HSOC agencies in the policing and criminalizing of unsheltered communities.

Homelessness has risen by 14% since 2017 in spite of HSOC. (Hsh.sfgov.org, 2019) Though unemployment in May of 2019 was at 2.19%, the lowest reported since 2010, and rental values decreased in the last quarter of 2019, 10% of San Franciscans live below the poverty line with a cost of living higher than almost all peer cities excluding the San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara region, the hub of the bay area’s technology economy. (Sfgov.org, 2018) San Francisco’s HSOC maintained an operating budget of 260 million dollars during the 15-16 fiscal year which increased significantly compared to the 160-million-dollar operating budget of 2011-2012. Despite increased funding the rate of homelessness grew in 2017. There are no indications that the ill effects experienced by the unsheltered population at the hands of HSOC will subside as long as San Francisco continues to fund the Healthy Street Operations Center. Homelessness will continue to plague San Francisco until policymakers take concrete steps towards equitable solutions that counter the scarcity of municipal resources and address the structural inequalities at the root of poverty and homelessness.

In addition to these agencies villainizing homelessness in their attempts to curtail it, HSOC

siphons funding away from the potential development of programs which could address the underlying causes of poverty and housing insecurity. Instead the funding of HSOC results in the displacement of unsheltered people from “contested” urban spaces (Stuart 2014). Negative perceptions and attitudes towards homelessness and its perceived threat to profits move powerful business and property owners to use their economic and social capital to remove and criminalize unsheltered people. HSOC’s framing of these actions around public health evokes a negative image of a homeless person as unruly, unclean, and unsafe promoting the criminalization of unhoused individuals and their removal from urban spaces in the name of safety (Steffen, p. 177). The outcome of the coercive care approach which issues harsh penalties for sleeping outside with the expressed intent of ‘getting homeless people off the streets’ creates quality of life concerns for homeless individuals. This idea of “care” fueling these policing practices is not yielding the desired results (Robinson, 2019).

This research explores ways in which business and property status drive policies surrounding homelessness in San Francisco. During 2016-2017, the San Francisco Public Works Department spent 49.3 million dollars, 70% of their budget on street environmental services (sf.gov, 2016). Cleaning schedules that frequent high-income or revenue generating districts, 311 reports of citizen complaints, and meeting agenda items listing encampments suggest a strong connection between the response of environmental services and property status and revenue generating industries. The enforcement of San Francisco health codes §§ 581 and 596 designed to “remove conditions...declared to be a public nuisance” gives San Fran-

cisco Police the authority to remove people and things deemed contaminated or unsanitary because of their perceived threat to “public health.” These ideas about homeless people are insidious and create barriers to survival for unsheltered people through arrest, citation and the destruction of property. These actions prioritize the health of those seen as contributors to San Francisco’s prosperity and are carried out at the expense of the severely marginalized and disenfranchised.

The Healthy Street Operations Center employs laws for the purpose of protecting the public health of property owners through the coercion of unsheltered people into services thus removing them from view. HSOC at best is ineffective and at worst, immoral. HSOC is not designed or equipped to end homelessness, and in many cases compounds its harsh conditions. Despite the modest increase of people living unsheltered after HSOC’s inception, the city of San Francisco continues to fund it. In 2019, The San Francisco Department of Public Health received a three million-dollar-grant that was used to expand drop-in center hours and expand mental health services. Funding could be used more effectively by eliminating barriers such as lack of affordable permanent housing and employment which creates homelessness in the first place. Mayor London Breed should call for an immediate end to encampment sweeps and the criminalization of life-sustaining activities such as sleeping in public spaces and panhandling. HSOC’s ineffectiveness and inhumane approach to “serving” San Francisco’s most vulnerable should invoke a serious re-examination of HSOC by Mayor London Breed and the board of supervisors.

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