HELPING THE LAST, THE LEAST, AND THE LOST:

Compassionate Planning for Baltimore's Unsheltered Homelessness

by
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has been approved

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Executive Summary

Since the 17th century, American cities have been challenged by the problem of unsheltered homelessness. Distinct from those people who sleep in shelters, temporary or transitional quarters, or temporarily stay with a relative or friend, a person is "unsheltered" when they sleep for at least one night in a place that is not fit for human habitation. While many people experiencing unsheltered homelessness live alone, others live in encampments with others for safety and strength in numbers. While encampments provide otherwise itinerant street dwellers with the advantages of communal living, including enhanced safety, pooled resources and labor, and camaraderie, they pose significant challenges for cities and the various stakeholders of their public spaces. Urban policies have frequently viewed the presence of encampments as nuisances, threats to public safety and public health, and as obstructions to the orderly functioning of the cities. These policies have often been promulgated with little concern for the well-being of those who live in these encampments, or have worked at cross purposes with more compassionate public practices and services designed to assist encampment dwellers.

Like many American cities, Baltimore has struggled to deal with unsheltered homelessness and to create effective and humane policies concerning encampments and the citizens that have little choice but to dwell in them. Over the past decade, the city has had several of these encampments, one of which at the intersection of Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard (MLK) and West Mulberry Street west of downtown, is the subject of this project. How should Baltimore City treat their residents who happen to be homeless and unsheltered? What planning policies and housing solutions can assist the unsheltered homeless in their efforts towards residential autonomy?

This research project examines the condition of unsheltered homelessness in Baltimore and chronicles the lives of ten people who lived in a homeless encampment west of the downtown central business district. It attempts to document and understand their perspectives, in the hopes of informing urban planning practices concerning homelessness and the governance of public space. It aims to reform the policies that treat unsheltered homeless as a public nuisance that must be hidden from the public view. It begins to develop more humane and effective practices that accepts the presence of homeless people in the public spaces of American cities and provides them with the maximum opportunities for comfort, health, safety and respect while also helping them obtain permanent housing and jobs.

This paper argues for Baltimore City to develop more compassionate communication and public health policies for dealing with unsheltered homelessness and existing encampments. City officials should also consider supportive housing solutions that range from temporary to permanent, which can be used to improve living conditions at existing encampments and future sites across the city. While the physical needs of unsheltered residents need to be addressed, their emotional needs cannot be forgotten. Planners can help fulfill these needs through planned and unplanned interactions with the unsheltered homeless.

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(source: OpenStreetMap)

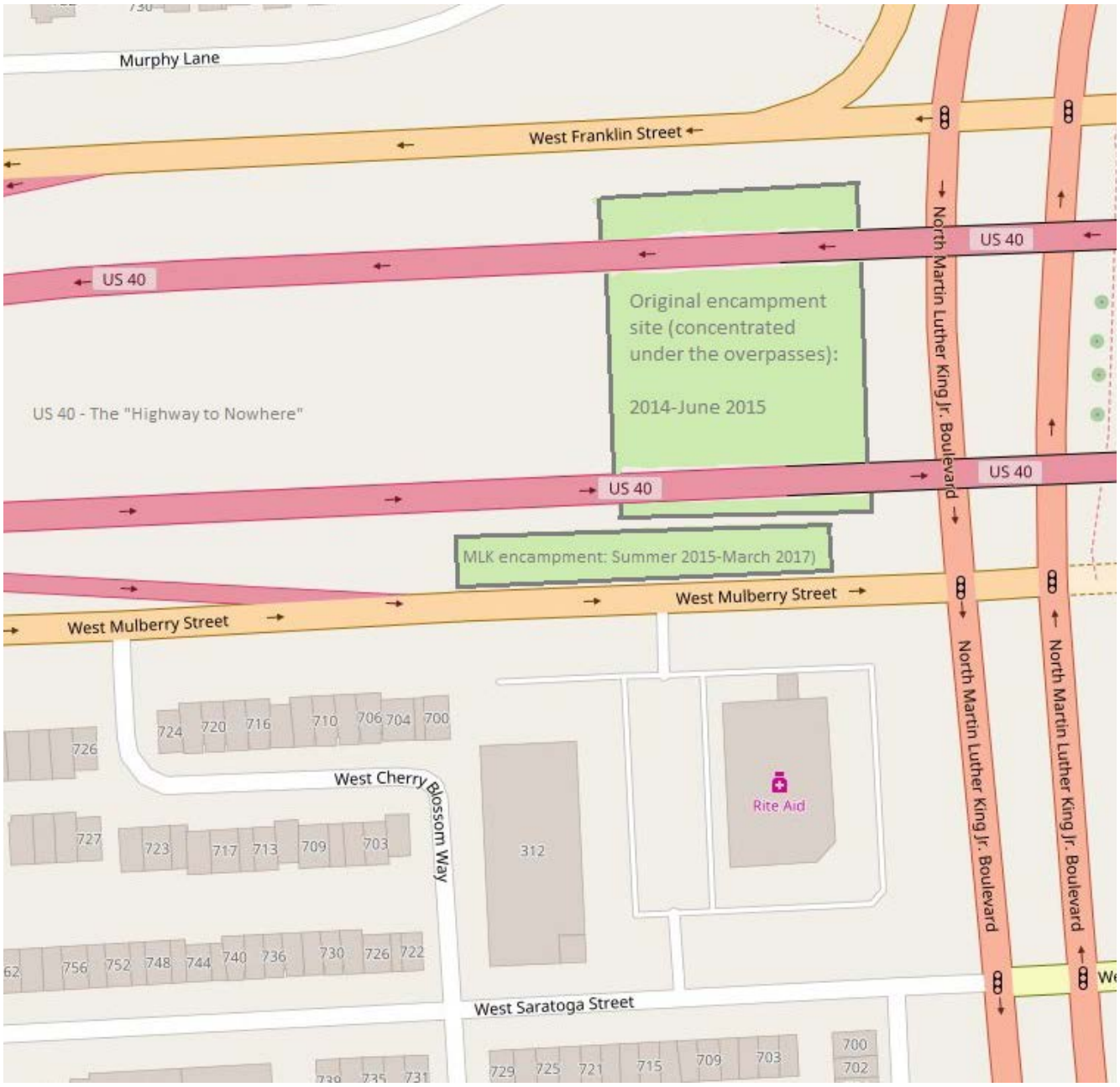

Figure 1: A panoramic view of the MLK Encampment, March 2, 2017

Chapter 1: Introduction

The intersection of Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard (MLK) and West Mulberry Street west of downtown Baltimore bustles with cars, trucks, and people. As the stoplight turns red and traffic halts, a woman named Cricket with graying roots and blonde hair holds up a cardboard sign - "Homeless and in need of a blessing and prayers" - with one hand and a Styrofoam cup in the other. She begins walking down the leftmost traffic lane of MLK. With her face blemished and her eyes drooping from fatigue, she starts asking for change. The first driver quickly turns his head away and looks out the passenger window; the driver in the car behind him pretends to fiddle with her radio. The third driver cracks the window and throws a few coins in her cup, quickly moving his hand back to the electric window knob to put the window back up. She recognizes the woman in the next car, a beat-up black Honda. As tired as Cricket herself, the woman puts a bill in Cricket's cup and makes some small talk with her until the light turns green and the driver in the car behind her begins angrily blowing the horn. Even though Cricket has gotten used to people treating her like an obstruction, their ignorance doesn't get any less crushingly defeating. She walks back to the median and watches the vehicles speed away.

Her 22-year-old son Drew, stationed at the median perpendicular to her on West Mulberry, now starts walking down his lane, sign and cup in hand. His long brown dreadlocks sway across his back; his brown t-shirt is soaked in sweat. Every minute, the cycle repeats until Cricket's husband Steve relieves her and takes her lane. Like his stepson, Steve is easily recognizable walking the lane, wearing a tattered baseball cap and donning a long gray beard. They are hoping to make enough money today to pay for Cricket to purchase a round-trip Greyhound fare so that she can see her trusted oncologist tomorrow in Richmond. If they don't make enough, she will need to postpone her appointment for the third time. While they are physically asking for coin change, there is another type of change they desire more: a change in their lives that includes a home and small income.

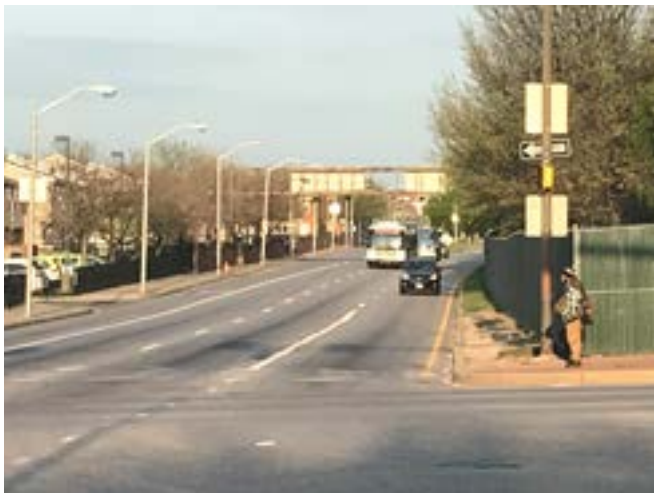

Figure 2 (left): Cricket Walks the Lane on MLK
Figure 3 (right): Drew Waits on the Corner of West Mulberry and MLK

On the night of Sunday, January 25, 2015, 2,796 people were counted in the biannual Point-in-Time Count experiencing homelessness in Baltimore City. This number includes 2,459 sheltered homeless people and 337 unsheltered homeless people. Sheltered homeless people sleep in either permanent supportive housing, transitional housing (which is housing that is coupled with behavioral and/or substance abuse services), rapid rehousing, safe haven housing, or emergency shelters) Unsheltered homeless people sleep at least one night in a place not meant for human habitation, such as an abandoned house ("bando"), on the street (such as along a sidewalk, steps, on a bench, or in a bus shelter), in a motor vehicle (car or RV in a parking lot), or in a grassy area (such as a park or just a patch of grass on public or private property) (The Journey Home 2015). The Point-in-Time count is considered a gross underestimate of the homeless because it does not factor in people who are staying with family members or friends but still access service programs such as food and health care. Also, some homeless people remain hidden because they do not want to be counted. There are currently not enough beds for all of Baltimore's homeless residents in emergency shelters, permanent supportive housing, transitional housing, safe haven housing, or rapid rehousing. (Wenger, City set to clear homeless encampments along Fallsway, under I-83 2014). Barring that, some beds are reserved by gender and/or particular situations, such as women dealing with domestic violence and men dealing with substance abuse. Therefore, every person does not qualify for every bed. Many non-traditional families, which are household groups that do not match a typical nuclear family of husband, wife, and children under age 18, will choose life on the street rather than being broken up and sent to multiple shelters or temporary housing. The factors that push people into unsheltered homelessness include loss of employment, health issues, substance abuse, lack of family support, and the rising cost of housing. Many stay homeless for months and years as they wait to qualify for affordable housing and other services through the local, state, and federal governments due to long waiting lists. Unfortunately, the unsheltered homeless must move often because they do not have a legal place to stay while living outside.

Figure 4: The Paths in Front of the Tents are Well Worn

While some Baltimoreans living on the street are alone, spending their days and nights along sidewalks, benches, doorways, alleys, and parks, others form small informal encampments to increase personal safety and provide strength in numbers. These encampments are often set in voids (empty, undesirable) spaces – whether hidden in undeveloped park land with little foot traffic or along major boulevards against and underneath the ends of Baltimore's unfinished and cancelled interstate highways. Two heavily populated encampments are on the edges of cancelled highways: the end of I-83 downtown (the "Fallsway Encampment", currently along Guilford Avenue under I-83) and the end of limited access US 40 in West Baltimore (the "MLK Encampment", currently along the exit ramp from US 40/Mulberry Street to Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard). The out-of-place, 1.39-mile stretch of highway is locally known as the "Highway to Nowhere" because it was planned to be part of a larger highway, I-170, which was cancelled in the early 1980s (Pruett 2017). There are several reasons why interstate highway termini provide a good location for an encampment: they have several overpasses that can be used for shelter and protection from the elements; they are heavily trafficked with multiple intersections with wide medians ideal for panhandling for money and goods; and they are large barriers between neighborhoods that are aesthetically unpleasing and unfriendly for pedestrians to cross. They are voids that are otherwise undesirable for any other use.

Figure 5: The "Highway to Nowhere" overshadowing tents, December 25, 2016

Cricket and Drew, as well as Cricket's husband Steve, have lived in the MLK encampment since late summer 2015. The encampment first formed in 2014 under the US 40 overpasses when people started sleeping under the bridge alongside lone resident Turkey Neck, nicknamed as such because of a large goiter on the side of his neck. The residents solely used the overpass for cover until anonymous benefactors gave them tents. The presence of the tents attracted attention to passersby, advocates, case workers, and city officials. Baltimore City forced residents to move in June 2015, stating the vague reason that the encampment was "not safe" and "that particular location encourages panhandling in the middle of a busy intersection" (Pyke 2015). The city offered encampment residents emergency shelter space, but this was unhelpful because the residents feel unsafe in shelters. The residents were ultimately displaced and scattered, making it harder for case managers and service advocates to find them (Pyke 2015). After cleaning the area, Baltimore City Department of Public Works (DPW) erected a fence so that the former residents couldn't return to the same spot. Rather than addressing the condition and needs of the people, Baltimore City officials saw the problem as an issue with the use and control of public space. Yet Turkey Neck and James later returned to the site, moving slightly south to an uncovered location alongside a highway ramp. While this new location offers wind protection, it does not offer defense from precipitation. Weeks later, Cricket's family moved to the site. As months passed, more people came and left the encampment, with its highest population reaching 15 people.

Figure 6: Former camp location under the bridges, December 25, 2016

This research project examines the condition of unsheltered homelessness in an American city. It chronicles the lives of a few of these unfortunate people who find themselves living on the street and attempts to document and understand their perspectives, in the hopes of informing urban planning practices concerning homelessness. It aims to reform the policies that treat unsheltered homeless as a public nuisance that must be hidden from the public view. It begins to develop more humane and effective practices that accepts the presence of homeless people in the public spaces of American cities and provides them with the maximum opportunities for comfort, health, safety and respect while also helping them obtain permanent housing and jobs. How should Baltimore City treat their residents who happen to be homeless and unsheltered? What housing and economic city planning actions and urban policies can assist the unsheltered homeless in their efforts towards residential autonomy?

I started interacting with the MLK encampment residents in Spring 2016. This paper derives from a one-year ethnography of some of the residents experiencing homelessness at the encampment. This research was accomplished using a qualitative method of collecting oral histories, anecdotes, and unstructured interviews from the residents of the site in order to learn how the residents ended up there, why they stay there, their day-to-day activities, and their goals for the future. I also asked residents how they would solve unsheltered homelessness and explored how these ideas have worked in practice in other cities.

Baltimore City has long considered homeless encampments a nuisance rather than a temporary solution. While small encampments have existed in various locations around downtown Baltimore for decades, they did not gain widespread attention until the Occupy Wall Street encampment formed in McKeldin Square near the Inner Harbor in 2011. Not only were the free food, blankets, and tents appealing, but people experiencing homelessness found that they had a lot in common with protestors: they felt forgotten by their city and its leaders. The encampment in McKeldin Square attracted extra attention because of its proximity to the Inner Harbor and other tourist locations. Baltimore City officials forced the people out of the square in order to restore it for more suitable uses

since the site sits prominently in the public view. Rather than addressing the reasons why people were residing in the square, Baltimore City officials prioritized moving them out of sight. After the disbanding of Occupy in downtown, a new site formed along the Fallsway: Camp 83 (named after its location under I-83). Baltimore City officials demolished the site in 2013, 2014, and 2015, vaguely citing litter, drug, and safety issues as their justification.

There are better ways for Baltimore City officials to treat its unsheltered homeless residents than to bulldoze their campsites with little warning and nebulous reasoning. Using code enforcement to evict residents and demolish encampments without a solid plan is ineffective and inhumane because it scatters residents and leaves them without resources for overcoming homelessness. Baltimore City officials should create procedures and policies for overseeing encampments as well as improve communication with the residents, case managers, and other advocates when problems arise. Most simply, they should compassionately engage with the unsheltered homeless population and get to know them as people, which would go a long way to ameliorate relationships between the officials and unsheltered residents. City officials should also look to the encampment residents for innovative housing and economic solutions for the unsheltered population because they have firsthand experience and unique perspectives on what could work. Baltimore leaders should also look to the solutions developed by other cities and brainstorm on how to adapt and implement them here.

Figure 7: Advocates Stationed Around the Encampment upon Its Closure, March 3, 2017

Chapter 2: A Brief History of Homelessness in US Cities

Homelessness in Baltimore and in the United States has been a problem since the 17th century. While the reasons for homelessness have always been complex and not uniform within any era, the overarching reasons have included the small supply of housing due to immigration and agricultural migration; loss of housing due to depressions/economic crises; and federal funding cuts for affordable housing. From the beginning of colonial settlements to the present day, homelessness in America has waxed during times of recession and waned during prosperous times. Unsurprisingly, homelessness decreased during wartimes due to new defense jobs, military enlistments, and selective service drafts. Considering that Baltimore was first settled in 1729 and was a major port city, it closely followed the historical nationwide trends in homelessness. There were five distinct periods of homelessness in America: the colonial period, urbanization, Civil War and Industrialization, the Great Depression, and the present period (1980s-present). Examining this history is important because it sets the stages for many of the same issues surrounding homelessness in 2017: lack of affordable housing, loss of housing, and housing scarcity.

While the primary causes of homelessness during the colonial years were related to agricultural worker mobility, territorial skirmishes, and scarce housing, the early Puritan settlers believed that homelessness was instead caused by sinfulness and considered it a "moral deficiency"(Carlson 2012; Fischer 2011) They held the ideological mindset now known as the Protestant Work Ethic. If a person experiencing homelessness was truly a good, hard working and disciplined Christian, they would have their needs met by God. This expectation created a tremendous burden for individuals or families experiencing homelessness, who were often forced to travel from town to town until they arrived at one where the leaders of the community found them worthy of forgiveness and mercy (Fischer 2011).

Figure 8: Colonial Settlers (Source: Homeless in the Flathead)

With the rise of urbanization in the 1820s and 1830s in the US, there was not enough affordable housing for families moving from rural farms to cities, so many lived on the streets (Fischer 2011). Mills, mines, and dock work offered employment but low job security that fluctuated with the seasons and subsequent business cycles (Carlson 2012). Unfortunately, local governments did little to alleviate homelessness. Rather than show concern for the well-being of homeless people, the authorities treated them as a public nuisance. Around this time, local governments created the first pan-handling ordinances and used jails as shelters (Fischer 2011). In contrast, local charities built tramp rooms, tiny houses that had little more than mattresses, blankets, and a wood stove, in order to shelter train hopping migrant workers. Small towns typically had them located near the railroad tracks (Sweeney 1970). In New York, there were 25,000 of these rooms or facilities created and used within a six-month period in 1853 (Carlson 2012). Poor safety conditions in factories caused a rise of homeless youth in the 1850s due to their parents becoming disabled or dying from difficult and dangerous jobs (Fischer 2011).

Figure 9: Tramp House in Rockland, MA (Source: Boston Globe)

While the Civil War itself decreased homelessness, its aftermath created the first cases of veteran homelessness due to what is now known as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Veterans could now survive amputations and other previously deadly war-induced medical conditions with morphine and heroin; however, these drugs caused the unintended consequence of homelessness due to drug addiction. Veterans were also the first people arrested after criminalization of drugs (Fischer 2011).

Figure 10: Civil War Veterans (Source: Voices Compassion Education)

Two severe economic downturns after the Civil War, the "Long Depression", which began with the Panic of 1873 and ended around 1879; and the Panic of 1893, caused high unemployment rates and increased the number of people living in squalor on the streets. The Panic of 1893 started when a large funder of railroads (Jay Cooke & Co.) went bankrupt, which caused a chain effect of tens of thousands of businesses closing across the country (Khramov 2013). In this period, the "tramp" stereotype emerged in New York City as a man who pretended to look for work but only wanted to drink and steal (Crain 2015). While the term "hobo" emerged to describe many homeless people hopping trains in order to find work elsewhere. A "bum" was someone who didn't migrate or look for work and was considered the lowest type of homeless person (Fischer 2011).

These economic downturns also exacerbated pre-existing racial tension and discriminating practices by whites against freed slaves due to the lack of available employment opportunities. Since there weren't enough jobs, whites were hired over blacks, which deepened racial discrimination. Freed slaves from the south were not given the same opportunities to homesteads and employment as whites, causing a lack of property inheritance in these groups that can still be felt today. In an unprecedented and revolutionary move, General Sherman tried to legally provide reparations to freed slaves in Special Field Order No. 15 in January 1865, promising them about 400,000 acres of land from South Carolina to Florida. This idea was proposed by 20 black ministers in Savannah, Georgia, whom Sherman and Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, met with four days prior to the order. Each family would receive no more than 40 acres of this land, taken from former plantation owners. Later, an agreement was made for the army to provide each family a mule. Unfortunately, the Johnson administration cancelled the order in fall 1865 with only about 3,500 of the 3.7 million freed slaves (less than 1%) receiving 10,000 of the 400,000 acres of land (2.5%) (Gates 2013). This lack of reparations, in addition to Jim Crow laws and segregation in all aspects of life, including jobs, kept African Americans from being homeowners and has contributed to homelessness.

The Great Depression greatly increased homelessness due to a 25% unemployment rate. Not only were there issues finding jobs in cities, but the Dust Bowl caused widespread droughts and unfarmable land in the rural Midwest. Like the Joad family in John Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath, families travelled to east and west coast cities in search of work, staying in shantytown encampments known as "Hoovervilles", named after President Herbert Hoover, who was blamed for the Depression. The Roosevelt administration created job opportunities through the New Deal, with some

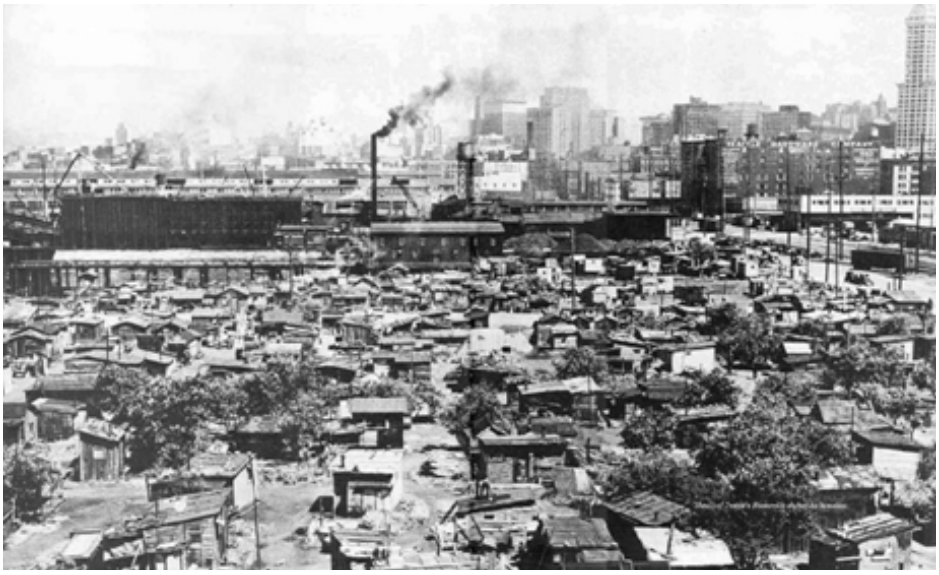

Figure 11: Hooverville in Seattle (Source: University of Washington)

Figure 12: Protest Against Ronald Reagan (Source: Not My Empire)

being targeted specifically for people experiencing homelessness. While conditions remained bleak during the 1930s, World War II and the advent of the military draft caused a boom in 24-hour defense employment domestically and abroad. While there were housing shortages, homelessness itself decreased due to workers from different shifts boarding together and sharing beds.

While the Reagan administration's massive cutback of funding to community and housing programs is often identified as a primary catalyst of the contemporary era of urban homelessness, the period actually began some time earlier. In the 1960's and 1970's, psychiatrists encouraged policies that closed state mental hospitals because many patients could now be treated with new medications from community health centers. While former patients initially could rely on receiving treatments from these centers at first, funding for them from the federal government lasted less than five years. Without federal support, states could not fund these centers which were vital to the health of their patients. Many discharged patients were not prepared for life without fulltime supervision and could not effectively take care of themselves. Drugs alone could not effectively treat mental health issues, which caused many former state hospital patients to become homeless (Lyons 1984).

While the Reagan administration didn't start the contemporary homelessness problem, it drastically contributed to it by passing legislation that made it worse. The administration passed a law that that ended involuntary hospitalization yet discarded a proposed law that would have resumed funding for community health centers, releasing people without giving them access to the care they need to function normally in society (Roberts 2013). Congress also decreased funding to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for low income housing, meaning that cities could not afford to maintain or expand their public housing for low income individuals and families. These decisions in the 1980s contributed to the rationale for a change in policy that ultimately led to the demolition of public housing in the 1990s, leaving some former residents homeless (Griffin 2015).

In the past ten years in the United States, homelessness dramatically increased but then subsequently decreased due to administrative changes between the Bush and Obama administrations in housing and community development policies. Homelessness grew nationwide at the beginning of the Great Recession in 2007-2008 due to people losing their jobs and therefore their homes with the sub-prime mortgage crisis. Unfortunately, there was little federal funding from HUD to address the crisis during the Bush administration,

and with less affordable housing, homelessness increased. Fortunately, nationwide homelessness has decreased from 2009-2016, likely due to new federal policies enacted in the Obama administration such as the Affordable Care Act and Opening Doors. The Affordable Care Act expanded Medicaid eligibility to everyone who is 133 percent below the federal poverty level, which greatly increases health care coverage and access for the homeless. Medical providers also receive funding increases from Medicaid, which allows them to improve treatment and coordination to homeless patients (DiPietro 2014). Opening Doors is the federal strategic plan that lays out concrete goals and priorities for treating homelessness. In this plan the administration set forth Housing First initiatives, which are policies that make housing the first priority for people experiencing homelessness, no matter their situation, and then makes social services the second priority to help people rebuild their lives. One such initiative is the 100,000 Homes Campaign, which is a national movement to help 100,000 Americans who are homeless or in danger of becoming homeless find permanent housing. Fortunately, these programs have been working: "between 2010 and [2014], the number of Americans experiencing homelessness has dropped from 109,812 to 92,593" (Baltimore City 2014). Unfortunately, the Trump administration does not see the value in these programs. President Trump's March 2017 budget proposal for fiscal year 2018 decreases HUD funding by 13% and eliminates the US Interagency Council on Homelessness. If Congress approves this part of the budget, more people will experience homelessness due to a lack of funding for community services.

Chapter 3: Contemporary Homelessness in Baltimore City and the Baltimore Region

Baltimore has struggled to deal with homelessness since the 1980s, with the major reason being cuts in federal funding for low-income housing. While HUD would provide 80% of the funding for public housing maintenance, Baltimore City did not have the budget to contribute the remaining 20%. Because of this, public housing could not be maintained, and many of these housing complexes were eventually razed. The number of public housing units decreased 42% from 16,525 in 1992 to 9,625 in 2007. While many of the buildings razed were seen as "obsolete, unsafe, and overrun by drug dealers", there was no federal requirement to replace the housing that was demolished. The number of family units was decreased by 52 percent, making it harder for families to acquire needed housing (Jacobson 2007).

However, despite the lack of federal funding, each mayoral administration from the 1980s to the mid-2000s tried to reduce the homeless population, mostly by adding to the city's affordable housing stock. Mayor William Donald Schaefer had a "dollar house" program where the city sold homes for a dollar with the agreement that the owner would renovate and live in the house for a period of time. He also invested heavily in Health Care for the Homeless by ensuring that the group received an annual state grant (Baltimore Sun Staff 2011). In the early 1990s, Mayor Kurt Schmoke partnered with community groups and developer James Rouse to renovate the Sandtown-Winchester neighborhood and build new affordable housing. One thousand houses were renovated and 200 new houses were constructed. The new houses cost $87,000 each to build but were sold for $37,000 each. Unfortunately, the housing wasn't enough to revitalize the neighborhood. Mayor Martin O'Malley focused on adding affordable housing to East Baltimore near Johns Hopkins Hospital, which is still in progress today as the East Baltimore Development Initiative (Rosenwald 2015).

Sheila Dixon was the most innovative of the recent mayors because she created "The Journey Home: Baltimore City's 10-year Plan to End Homelessness" in 2008. The plan includes four goals to make homelessness "rare and brief": increasing affordable housing supply, increasing health care access, ensuring employment/income opportunities, and fully implementing emergency and preventative services. During her administration, Baltimore City repurposed some of its transitional housing stock (1,509 beds) to permanent supportive housing. While the plan included 500 new Housing First units and an expansion of the Section 8 voucher program for 1,350 non-elderly people with disabilities, this did not make up for the thousands of public housing units that were demolished over the previous two decades (Lane 2008). Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake continued The Journey Home program to end homelessness in Baltimore. In 2014, she joined the "Home for Good" campaign to house 1,085 people experiencing homelessness in the city. This was part of the national 100,000 Homes Campaign to house 100,000 people nationwide as part of "Housing First."

During Rawlings-Blake's administration, Baltimore City worked to expand partnerships between workforce development programs and homeless services in order to help people experiencing homelessness search for jobs, practice interviews, and obtain employment (The Journey Home 2015). One recent example is the Baltimore Bike Share, which is currently maintained by ten (previously) homeless veterans who were hired through the Baltimore based veteran firm Corps Logistics. Employment for veterans in the firm will grow as Baltimore's system expands and new bike shares are implemented in Richmond and Norfolk, Virginia (Campbell 2016). Baltimore City officials advocated to increase the state minimum wage to at least $10.10 an hour to help all residents earn a livable wage (which "is the hourly rate an individual must earn to afford basic needs, like food and

housing") (The Journey Home 2015, 5). Livable wages would decrease homelessness by providing enough income to pay necessities.

Mayor Catherine Pugh took office in December 2016. In her transition plan, she noted, like Dixon and Rawlings-Blake before her, her desire to make homelessness rare and brief. She also wants to "provide "Authorized Encampments" as a means of providing safe housing alternatives as well as health and social services for homeless residents" (City of Baltimore 2017). The mayor created a new Task Force on Homelessness in April 2017 to help address short and long term issues, including how to handle encampments (Shen 2017b). During her campaign, she advocated for a minimum wage increase in Baltimore; unfortunately, after the Baltimore City Council passed a bill that would have raised the minimum wage to $15 an hour by 2022, she vetoed it, citing concerns over a $130 million school deficit and fear of businesses moving out of the city or laying off people (Broadwater 2017).

Treatment of Encampments in Baltimore City

Baltimore City does not currently have a policy for unsheltered homeless encampments. In December 2016 at the beginning the Pugh administration, city officials attempted to disband the MLK encampment. Yet, Pugh insisted that the camps should remain until housing could be obtained for all of the encampment's residents. Baltimore City attempted to dismantle the camp once again in January 2017 before the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Parade, but plans fell through. Ultimately, Baltimore City closed the MLK encampment on March 3, 2017 and moved eight of the ten occupants to a hotel (Shen 2017d). Advocates criticized the move because not only did it seem rushed, but there wasn't full engagement of the service provider community prior to its closure (Shen 2017c). While Mayor Pugh says that she is "working on a plan to address homelessness", the plan had not been revealed to the residents. A spokesperson for the Mayor, Anthony McCarthy, only stated that "each of the individuals has received a commitment for a voucher program", as well as case management (Shen 2017d).

As of March 2017, Baltimore City was drafting an interagency encampment response guide, which is subject to the city council approval. The guide, which can be found in the Appendix, details principles for effective encampment response, reporting of encampments, outreach process, emergency interventions, planned interventions, storage policy, signage, media, and agency responsibilities. The city defines an encampment as "one or more persons claiming space for temporary accommodation without authority or permission to occupy the space." Baltimore City acknowledges that encampments "are not suitable places for people to live" and that the most effective responses are proactive: increasing the supply of permanent housing, promoting Housing First, and "creating a coordinated access system that prioritizes housing for the most vulnerable people experiencing homelessness" (Baltimore City 2017, 2).

In the drafted encampment policy, Baltimore City will interact with the residents of an encampment to help them keep the area clean and safe, and provide other services while attempting to find housing encampment residents before dismantling it. Unless the site needs to be closed due to a health or safety emergency, Baltimore City will ideally give outreach workers and residents 14 days verbal and signed notice of a closure, and provide each resident either short-term or permanent housing. Baltimore City also has a plan for storing residents' items at the Department of Public Works facility if they are leaving the encampment for short-term housing and for cleaning the site once all of the campers have been moved. Coordination for these efforts involves 13 different city agencies (Baltimore City 2017).

Treatment of Encampments in Nearby Counties

As of 2016, there are approximately 1,800 people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in 217 encampments across the state of Maryland. However, this number underrepresents the full extent of unsheltered homelessness due to people not being counted that live in bandos or motor vehicles. Even still, the best indicator for the number of

people experiencing homelessness in Maryland is the total number of homeless clients served, which was 29,670 in fiscal year 2016. This is significantly higher than the 1,800 unsheltered homeless population and 7,352 sheltered homeless population. The majority of homeless people in Maryland live in Baltimore City (39%) and Baltimore County (12%).

Other counties in the Greater Baltimore metropolitan area have also struggled in developing humane policies concerning homeless encampments. There is a tension between treating the unsheltered homeless as a police problem and treating them more humanely through support services and housing placements. Like Baltimore City, these counties have goals to increase their rapid rehousing and permanent supportive housing.

Baltimore County

Like Baltimore City, Baltimore County does not have a published formal policy in dealing with encampments. It treats such places as a zoning/code violation. In Dundalk, eastern Baltimore County, Patapsco United Methodist Church faced a fine of $12,000 in December 2016 for "illegal use of the property as housing units" because they had an unwritten practice of allowing homeless people to sleep on the church grounds. Anywhere from 2-12 people slept in tents or under tarps each night on the church property. Unfortunately, neighbors complained that the church was "harboring vagrants" and that people were "urinating and defecating on the property." The Reverend Katie Grover protested the charge, saying that "she's merely carrying out her duty to care for 'the last, the least and the lost,' as Jesus commanded" (Pitts 2016). Fortunately, Baltimore County worked out an agreement with the church that they wouldn't have to pay the fine as long as they agreed to educate their visitors about local programs and services (Wood 2016). They are satisfied with the resolution between them, the church, people experiencing homelessness, and nearby neighbors because they wanted to find a compassionate answer for all involved parties.

Anne Arundel County

Unfortunately, homeless encampments do not have a good history in Anne Arundel County (south of Baltimore City). The largest encampment, located behind the Cromwell Field Shopping Center in Glen Burnie, has been the site of two homicides in 2012 and 2014. A local good samaritan in Linthicum took in two people experiencing homelessness at a camp along a BWI Trail annex and she ended up having to get a court order to evict them after a dispute broke out in October 2014 (Bottalico 2014). At another encampment near Maryland Route 10 at Baltimore-Annapolis Boulevard, four people were hospitalized after overdoses of synthetic marijuana known as "Scooby Snax Spice" in May 2015 (WBAL TV 11 2015). After each crime, the sites were cleared, but they quickly repopulate.

As a temporary solution in Winter 2016-2017, three area churches opened their doors to more than 100 unsheltered residents because they wanted to reduce the risk of campers getting hypothermia and freezing to death. They partnered with Arundel House of Hope, which is a non-profit dedicated to providing services to people experiencing homelessness during the day (Rydell 2016).

Figure 13: Scooby Snax (Source: Anne Arundel County Police Department)

Harford County

Harford County, which is located east of Baltimore County, also ran a winter partnership in 2016-17 between Harford County Hope for the Homeless Alliance, Harford Community Action Agency (HCAA), and 15 churches who each took turns rotating the shelter between them. During the 13 weeks, 52 people stayed at the shelter. Of those 52 people, "14 people got jobs, four went to rehab, two were reunited with families out of state, three went into the Welcome One Emergency Shelter (the only year round emergency shelter in Harford County), 10 moved in with family and friends, nine were housed through Upper Bay and Answered Prayers ministry, three are in the new rapid rehousing program, and seven were able to find other kinds of housing" (Sullivan 2017). HCAA worked with each person and approved them to use the rotating emergency shelter and then helped the people using the emergency shelter gain housing and other needed services. In January 2017, HCAA worked with United Way to create an event called Project Homeless Connect, a day long workshop where people could access over 50 different types of supportive services.

While Harford County's homeless population is much smaller than other nearby counties, in January 2017, 152 people were staying in shelters and 37 people were living unsheltered. The county is still struggling to help their unsheltered population. Only 12 of the 37 people were identified during the annual point-in-time count; the other 25 attended the Project Homeless Connect event (Anderson 2017). The City of Aberdeen has the largest encampment in the county along Rogers Street, and city officials are trying to find compassionate ways to deal with their residents experiencing homelessness. Aberdeen Police chief Henry Trabert reminded residents in November 2016 that it isn't a crime to be homeless. "What is criminal is that in this, or in any other country, people can't be promised (unless, perhaps, they're in prison) that they will have a roof over their head and three square meals a day." He hopes to see better collaboration and community outreach between the county Department of Housing and Community Services and city officials (including Phyllis Grover, the city's Director of Planning and Community Development), other social service agencies, businesses, non-profits, and churches (Editorial from The Aegis 2016). Aberdeen's strategy is to work with the residents to develop a plan and solution for where the residents will move instead of just pushing them off the site. Police are checking on the residents daily – not because they want to catch them doing a crime, but because they want to make sure that they survive the cold.

Chapter 4: Innovative Approaches to the Unsheltered Homeless in Other US Cities

Nationwide, most cities and states are taking a Housing First approach and increasing permanent supportive housing and rapid rehousing programs. What follows is a summary of some of the most innovative, creative Housing First programs in dealing with unsheltered homelessness in US Cities.

Formalized Tent Cities and Tiny House Villages

One trend that has gained some traction, especially along the West Coast, is the concept of formalized "tent cities." Compared to an informal encampment, a formalized tent city is a cluster of tiny, temporary dwelling spaces that are grouped with shared amenities, such as restrooms, a kitchen, laundry area, and common gathering area with tables and benches. The tent city is run as a non-profit by a group of stakeholders, which includes residents of the tent city as well as local community neighbors. Case workers are available to help residents transition into independent living.

There are four different types of tent city communities: rest area, sanctuary camp, transitional village, and affordable village. The rest area is the least formal and most temporary arrangement by simply providing a safe space for people to spend the night. Sanctuary camps are self-governed tent cities with formalized community rules and agreements. Residents must also contribute back to the camp through a small monetary fee as well as working on the site in the community garden, as security, etc. Transitional villages build upon sanctuary camps with the construction of movable wooden dwellings on the site. An affordable village is intended to create a long-term community in a micro-house setting, with the houses having independent facilities. A tent city can start as an informal settlement and progress into a more formalized community, with the different community types functioning as "levels" (Heben 2014).

A rest area provides a place for people experiencing unsheltered homelessness to stay the night so that they can get a full night of sleep without worrying about whether or not they will be evicted from their sleeping spot. Generally, these encampments are started by a church or other existing non-profit organization to provide compassion and safety for the homeless. They are set up in a parking lot with a non-permanent enclosure to keep the area contained and have security staff on hand. An example of a rest area is Rivercity in Aberdeen, Washington, which was hosted by Amazing Grace Lutheran Church in their parking lot (Heben 2014).

Figure 14: Rest Area in Aberdeen, WA (Source: Rivercity Camp)

A sanctuary camp is a self-governed camp that provides a more formalized solution to the unsheltered homelessness problem. Residents must follow the community rules and agreements in order to stay in the camp. They also must contribute to the operation to the camp – this could include a small monetary fee, working the front desk, working as security, or working in the community garden. Support services are available to help people transition into more permanent housing. Case workers are usually available to help provide access to other community resources for the residents. An example of a sanctuary camp is the Nickelville camp in Seattle, Washington (Heben 2014).

Figure 15: Nicklesville Sanctuary Camp in Seattle, WA (Source: Joe Mabel)

A transitional village is a sanctuary camp with constructed, movable wooden dwellings on the site. These dwellings can either be built as a volunteer effort by the camp and local community, or they can be prefabricated (such as trailers) or contracted to a builder. Opportunity Village in Eugene, Oregon was constructed as a volunteer community effort (Heben 2014).

An affordable village is intended to create a long-term community in a micro-house setting. While there are still shared facilities, there is increased privacy, with the housing containing kitchenettes and basic plumbing. The concept is similar to co-housing or condominiums, but at a decreased cost. Occupy Madison Village in Madison, Wisconsin started as a tent city during the Occupy Wall Street movement and evolved into an affordable village (Heben 2014).

There are public benefits for setting up tent cities as well. The cost per person in a tent city is significantly lower than costs in other types of houses, which is a benefit for taxpayers as well as the people receiving the services. In Oregon in 2007, it costed $4.28 per day per person in a tent city, compared to $12.59 in a warming center and $20.92

Figure 16: Opportunity Village in Eugene, OR (Source: SWOREGONARCHITECT)

Figure 17: Occupy Madison Village in Madison, WI (Source: OM Village)

in an emergency shelter (Heben 2014). In Dallas, the average unsheltered homeless person costs the county about $40,000 per year through emergency health care as well as prison costs for trespassing. If the unsheltered homeless had a place to stay in a tent city or transitional village, then they can access needed social services sooner at an estimated annual cost of $13,000 (Froelich 2015).

Innovative and Inexpensive Permanent Houses and Emergency, Temporary Shelters

While tent cities and transitional villages provide a short-term solution to homelessness, the long term solution is to increase supply of affordable houses and apartment units for all city residents. There are businesses and non-profits creating and building modern and affordable housing units for populations at risk for homelessness.

Tiny houses constructed on trailers or permanent foundations are one solution for unsheltered homelessness Tumbleweed Tiny House Company specializes in recreational vehicles (RVs) that look like traditional houses and can be lived in full time. It produces four models of RVs ranging in size from 177 to 298 square feet, which can be purchased as a shell or as a completed, fully functional RV. Tumbleweed also has cottage blueprints for sale for tiny houses on permanent foundations, which range in size from 261 to 884 square feet in size (Tumbleweed Tiny House Company 2017). Another company, called Wiki House, provides open source housing models and plans so that anyone can build a "low-cost, low-energy, high performance" home. Their Microhouse model can be self-assembled and costs about $48,000-$58,000 to produce (Wiki House 2017). Building smaller affordable houses is important so that people can live comfortably, especially if they are on a fixed income, without spending the majority of their income on housing.

Making homes out of recycled materials, such as shipping containers, plastic bottles, and materials from traditional, deconstructed houses are a new idea to help create inexpensive permanent dwellings. Homes of Hope is a non-profit in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware that has a mission for using old shipping containers to create inexpensive, sustainable housing. The organization completed their first home in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic in 2016 and is working on a model home in Rehoboth Beach in order to improve and advance building techniques for future homes (Homes of Hope 2017). A German company, Ecotec Environmental Solutions, is training people in Nigeria how to build homes out of plastic bottles. Ecotec notes

that a two-bedroom house with a bathroom, kitchen, and living room requires 14,000 plastic bottles in its construction. Such building strategies would capitalize upon 47 billion plastic bottles are discarded annually in the United States alone (McNair 2015). Salvaged materials such as reclaimed lumber, doors, windows, flooring, insulation, and corrugated-metal roofing can also be used to create new tiny houses, leaving wiring and plumbing as the only major costs for a project (Architectural Digest 2016).

Figure 18: Tumbleweed Tiny House (Source: Tumbleweed Tiny House Company)

Figure 19: Wikihouse (Source: Wikihouse Foundation)

Figure 20: Home of Hope under construction in Rehoboth Beach, DE (Source: Homes of Hope)

Figure 21: House made from plastic bottles (Source: Aminu Abubakar)

Figure 22: Inside of Ikea Shelter (Source: Beazley Designs of the Year 2016)

Even in cases of emergencies, there are new innovations for providing temporary, basic shelter when there is a housing shortage. Ikea, in cooperation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, has created a flat-pack, 188 square foot refugee shelter called Better Shelter that houses up to five people and only costs only $1,000 per unit. It can be set up in four hours with no tools required. The roofs and walls are made of plastic that is designed to last for three years, with solar panels built into metallic fabric roofing that deflects heat during the day yet retains it at night (Kohlstedt 2013). The shelter was named the 2016 Beazley Design of the Year and was presented the award in January 2017 by the Design Museum of London. Over 16,000 units have been shipped around the world and are being used in Djibouti, Greece, Iraq, and Niger (Alleyne 2017).

Innovative Work Programs

While Baltimore is no stranger to workforce development programs that help people experiencing homelessness gain employment, Albuquerque, New Mexico's "There's a Better Way" program has found a new way to connect the homeless to jobs: bring the jobs to them. Republican Mayor Richard Berry developed the idea in 2015 after talking to panhandlers and realizing that they didn't actually didn't want to beg for money and would be eager to work if they had access to a job. The city partnered with a non-profit, which drives a van around the city each morning and hires people for the day to help beautify the city. The day jobs pay $9 an hour and include lunch. Workers are not only connected with supportive services, but also permanent employment through the program. Amazingly, "In less than a year since its start, the program has given out 932 jobs clearing 69,601 pounds of litter and weeds from 196 city blocks. And more than 100 people have been connected to permanent employment" (Itkowitz 2016). Since Albuquerque launched their program, Chicago has started its own program, "A Day for Change," in October 2016, where people experiencing homelessness can earn up to $55 a day, "$600 annually, and will be eligible to receive meals, transportation, behavioral health services, job preparedness training, healthcare screenings and interim housing." Five other major cities – Anchorage, Atlanta, Dallas, Honolulu, and Seattle – are currently in the process of piloting their own programs based on Albuquerque's program (Nathanson 2016).

Figure 23: There's a Better Way workers in Albuquerque (Source: City of Albuquerque Mayor's Office)

Chapter 5: Baltimore's MLK Encampment: An Ethnographic Perspective

While homelessness in Baltimore and across the US has been studied, measured and analyzed, few accounts provide an intimate, street-level perspective of those living unsheltered on the streets of American Cities. This study chronicles the lives of a select group of unsheltered people and attempts to document their experiences and perspectives in the hopes of informing urban planning practices on homelessness and reforming policies that emphasize the public space over the people living in it. It begins to develop more humane and effective practices that accepts the presence of homeless people in the public spaces of American cities and provides them with the maximum opportunities for comfort, health, safety and respect while also helping them obtain permanent housing and jobs.

I spent a considerable amount of time at the MLK encampment from Spring 2016 until its closure by Baltimore City on March 3, 2017. My time at the encampment began informally through a friendship with one of the residents, Cricket, whom I had met panhandling along MLK Boulevard I have spent the most time with her as well as her son Drew and her husband Steve. Over months of visits, I also became acquainted with the other residents of the encampment and learned their backstories, way of life at the encampment, interactions with the public, goals and dreams, thoughts on the end of the encampment, and ideas on how to help solve unsheltered homelessness in Baltimore. I recorded the experiences of ten residents by the names they wanted used in the report: Cricket, Steve, Drew, Turkey Neck, James, Tyler, Angel, Gia, and Gene. By no means does this fully encompass all of the people who moved in and out of the encampment during the year – these are the residents who directly shared their experiences with me. I did not include two long-term residents, B and C, because I did not feel that I had adequate first hand experiences from them (they moved from the encampment in December 2016). I chose not to include unsheltered homeless people that panhandled near the site but did not live there. I did not give any compensation in exchange for any data. My husband Mike Pruett accompanied me on about half of the visits. One challenge of this study is that some residents were more open and talkative than others – particularly Cricket and Steve – so the amount of content I have per person varies. I ensured to the best of my ability that stories and quotes were recorded as accurately as possible.

Figure 24: HOT Officer Speaking with Steve, Cricket, and Drew (Source: WMAR TV)

The Residents

While the number of residents at the encampment ebbed and flowed, there were several people who remained constant over the course of my months of visits: Cricket, Steve, Drew, Turkey Neck, and James. Some of the other residents arrived at the camp much later in my visits: Tony, Tyler, Angel, Gia, and Gene. Their reasons for experiencing homelessness are just as varied as their personalities but they generally revolve around two different themes: bad circumstances (in the words of Cricket, "a series of unfortunate events") and substance addiction.

Figure 25: Gene

Cricket's "series of unfortunate events" began when she lost 64% of her 401K retirement savings during the economic recession and was then diagnosed with esophageal cancer. Her family was living in Richmond, Virginia at the time, and she began treatment there, but they came to Baltimore so that she could get treatment at Johns Hopkins Hospital. They stayed at the Holiday Inn on Russell Street for a while but then decided to get an apartment here once they realized they would be staying for a while. Their string of bad luck began when their car broke down and they had to spend money on repairs. Then they got evicted from their apartment because they were renting it from someone who was not authorized to sublease it. They moved to another apartment with another landlord who turned out to be shady. The car broke down again and they got ripped off when paying for repairs. At this point they had completely run out of money, but there was hope that Steve could get a job transfer to Baltimore through his company. Unfortunately, this position did not materialize and the family was beset with even more financial stress when Steve started to have kidney issues. Without income, they had no place to stay. While Cricket has family in Mississippi, her family is older and she and Steve don't want to burden them, so they chose to remain in Baltimore. Upon learning that his parents were homeless, Cricket's 22-year-old son Drew left his father and stepmother's house in Virginia Beach and moved to Baltimore to help take care of them. He was worried about them living outside alone due to their health issues.

Figure 26: Drew in front of tent, March 3, 2017

Figure 27: Steve (Source: The Believe in Me Project)

Figure 28: James sitting in front of his tent filling out paperwork (Source: Fern Shen/Baltimore Brew)

At first, the family slept near the loading dock area behind the Pandora building (250 West Pratt Street) to be protected from the rain. The building security looked after them and woke them up before the employees arrived. Unfortunately, more unsheltered homeless people started showing up and were disrespectful to security, so they were all asked to leave. They then moved into a "bando", which is a nickname for an abandoned house, but they weren't comfortable there because it was only habitable on the third floor and was also home to raccoons. They then slept outside under the US 40 overpasses on the east side of MLK, where some passersby noticed them and gave them a tent. Baltimore City officials eventually asked them to move to the patch of land next to the ramp from US 40 to Mulberry Street.

Tony and James also ended up at the MLK encampment due to some unfortunate events. Tony was working as a plumber in Baltimore. He had a budget to make sure that he could pay for everything, and he did for a while. Even though Tony was in a union, he told me that he was laid off because he was "low on the totem pole." He received unemployment for a while, so he was still able to pay rent, car insurance, and his phone bill. Then Tony "lost his unemployment" (he did not disclose the reason), which lead to him being homeless, carless, and phoneless. He knew about the encampment because he used to give money and cigarettes to various campers, so when he became homeless he decided to get advice from them. Cricket, Steve, and Drew decided that he should stay with them in their tent, so he did. James lost his house in a fire. Without insurance, he literally lost everything except his spirit – he "kept going and didn't give up." The encampment has been the only place where he has lived since becoming homeless about three years ago. He's "just sticking it out on his own" because he can't work due to having a spinal injury. Turkey Neck, Tyler, and Angel openly told me that the main reason that they are experiencing homelessness is due to substance abuse. Turkey Neck is the most open about it. Leaning back into his tent, he states simply that "if I didn't smoke crack I wouldn't be homeless. The money I spend on drugs I could buy a house in a week." While other campers, including Drew, claim Turkey Neck is "eclectic and tells wild stories," I do not doubt that at the very least he could afford $500 per month in rent for a basic efficiency in Baltimore. Tyler has been homeless for five years and admits that his heroin addiction led him to homelessness. Howev-

er, he is trying to stay clean and currently goes to a methadone clinic at Maryland Avenue and 21st Street in the Old Goucher neighborhood, north of downtown. Angel has been homeless for six years and has been with Tyler for four of those years. In addition to living at the encampment, they lived together "under the bridge on Franklin." Angel, who is from New England and previously lived in Florida, ended up getting stranded here and stayed.

While Gia is also dealing with substance abuse, it was not the direct cause of her living unsheltered. Gia's story of homelessness is grimmer: she is living at the encampment because her boyfriend was arrested for abusing her. She lived in an apartment at Edmondson Avenue and Monroe Avenue with him until "he committed a physical altercation and broke my face." Gia went to the hospital because she was fading in and out of consciousness. She tried to say that she was beaten by a robber, but the nurse didn't believe her story, so she had to admit to the hospital staff that her boyfriend did it. Gia didn't want to tell them that he hurt her because she loves him and says "he's a good man – he just gets angry sometimes." The authorities posted a warrant for his arrest and he was taken into custody when he visited his parole officer on February 10, 2017. In the meantime, Gia has been staying with Turkey Neck on and off for the past month at the encampment. She hopes that her homelessness will be temporary – because she refused to press charges against her boyfriend, she believes that he will be released soon so that she can move back in with him.

While substance abuse is not the only reason people experience homelessness (and is not the case for half of the residents at the MLK encampment), the campers generally believe that drugs and alcohol are primary factors.. According to Steve, "it's not really a misconception that some people spend [money they earned panhandling] on drugs, but not everyone wants to be here and on drugs." Tony agrees that "the main thing is alcoholism and addiction" and that "unfortunately for some it is a choice – drugs versus family." Other than Turkey Neck, who will openly admit that he chooses drugs over housing, and Gene, who has chosen to live in the encampment "the way he wants" instead of living with his mom, the other residents would rather live in a place of their own. These are specifically in the words of the residents, but I wonder - can a person truly "choose" drugs over family if an addiction isn't truly a choice? Unfortunately, this is a topic that goes beyond the boundaries of this paper.

Figure 29: Turkey Neck (Source: The Believe in Me Project)

For most of the residents, the encampment provides far from ideal living quarters, yet they consider it to be home. As Cricket repeatedly stated, "we are houseless not homeless!" To Cricket and Steve, home is being with family. "It may suck but it's home." To James, home is "you - yours, my – mine own place." For James and Tony, this is the only place they have lived since they've been homeless. For Turkey Neck, "home is where you lay your head… somewhere comfortable and safe…and I'm comfortable and safe here."

Figure 30: The MLK Encampment in Fall 2016

Shelter

Turkey Neck's stay at the MLK encampment location precedes the encampment itself. He has slept at this spot for six to seven years – the first half of his time in the open air under the bridge, and the second half, inside a tent. He was here when the encampment under the bridge was dismantled in June 2015, and he and James were the only people from that group to return. Not long after, Cricket and Steve, and then Drew joined them; since then, the population here has fluctuated up and down from four people at its lowest, to 15 people at its highest. James wasn't sure how long he had lived here – "some years" – but he was living "around the corner under the bridge until the city came down and told us they were putting up a fence with only a few days' notice."

The number of tents on the site does not necessarily reflect how many people are there because some tents are used exclusively for storage. The only people who sleep alone are Gene and James. The configuration of the site changed often when Baltimore City DPW made the residents dismantle and reset the camp during Tuesday and Friday cleanings.

Tents generally did not last long in the encampment. As Cricket explained to me, "tents were made for recreational camping, not full time camping." Her family went through six tents in the course of the 1.5 years that they've been at the encampment. They did not have to purchase any of them – they were all given to them by generous passersby. They would keep a tent until a new one was given to them, and then either give their old tent to another camper or use it for storage. Unfortunately, the weather was not the only thing that destroyed tents in the encampment. Local residents have occasionally vandalized their tents and possessions. Residents of the nearby Lexington Terrace apartment buildings threw firecrackers at Cricket's tent once in October 2015, while Angel's tent was thrown away by someone in January 2017. Overuse destroyed the main zipper on James' tent this past winter, so he resorted to us-

ing blankets over the front of the tent and burned Shabbat candles inside for additional warmth. For the last five months of the encampment, Cricket's tent was covered in stripes of silver duct tape on one side to try and hold it together over the firecracker strike points.

Cricket's family unofficially became the leaders of the encampment. I suspect much of that has to do with her charm, friendliness, and sobriety, but she plainly believed that it was because they had the "palace" of tents. Not only did they have the largest main tent, but they also had at any given time one to two auxiliary storage tents. (A third tent was used for a while as a "bait" tent with rotten food for the rats.) When people dropped off food and other goods, they generally did so in front of her tent, and the other residents knew to come and take what they wanted and needed from the pile.

All of the residents unanimously agreed that they would much rather live in their encampment than stay in a shelter. Gia says that shelters are dirty and unsafe; she also doesn't like the strict curfew and rules. James likes that he can move more freely outside and that the residents look out for each other. "I don't know if you can trust people in a shelter - so many different people and different personalities." While Tony has never stayed in a shelter, he has heard plenty of bad stories – "people get jumped, robbed, and stabbed. Everything you own is on the floor and you have to sleep in cots."

There are negatives to living outside, though. The area surrounding the MLK encampment has safety issues of its own. Tyler didn't elaborate but stated that he would not consider the area safe because he once got stabbed once between the encampment and downtown. Steve would not live out here by himself, but he feels a bit safer with the camp being there. "It's not the best area – too much stuff happens, like people getting robbed and beat up." He told me that on Valentine's Day "the guy selling flowers – roses – got robbed at gunpoint in the middle of the day. He lost hundreds of dollars."

Figure 31: Side view of encampment

Figure 32: James' tent with a blanket over the broken front door

The noise is another negative factor – traffic and sirens at all hours. There is never a true sense of quietness at the encampment.

The residents in the encampment consider themselves to be very tightknit because they have grown comfortable and dependent upon one another. While it is a kinship of necessity, they enjoy being able to help each other. They also know of other people experiencing homelessness that live in bandos nearby. Cricket and Steve agree that the residents act as a "community watch" within themselves and watch out for "bad people and bad drugs." One person that they chased away was a man who used to walk around the site with his pants down and his panhandled earnings wrapped around his penis. Once the DPW started coming to the site on a regular basis, pretty much all of the bad people scattered.

Interaction with the public

The residents of the MLK encampment generally interact with the public in a few ways: visits from Baltimore City and non-profit caseworkers; visits from generous passersby who give money, goods, and services to them curbside either at the encampment or along MLK Blvd; purchases of goods and services from employees of local establishments as well as drug dealers. The residents agree that the treatment they receive from the public is more good than bad.

Employees from Baltimore City come from various agencies, including the Baltimore City Police Department Homeless Outreach Team (HOT), Downtown Partnership of Baltimore (DPD), the Mayor's Office of Human Services (MOHS), and the Department of Public Works (DPW). The HOT was formed in September 2016 to help build relationships with the residents. While the residents like the HOT officers, there is also some hesitation to trust them because they are part of the police force. Interactions with them, as well as the DPB and MOHS, are unpredictable. It's hard for the residents to stay in communication with them because they have no phones or limited free minutes on them, so the city employees have to take a chance and hope the residents are there when they visit. (Stable phone usage, especially smartphones, would allow residents to communicate much easier with officials.) The DPW came every Tuesday and Friday during the summer to help keep the site clean. While effective, Steve claimed that this only lasted "about a month or two because they wouldn't

come in the rain, and it rained a lot." The residents liked one DPW worker in particular, Mrs. Kim, but Steve told me that she was moved to another region of the city because "she was getting too close to us." (From an outside perspective, I find her move incredibly unfortunate because she provided a needed friendship to the residents.) Generally, the residents find all of the city employees that they've communicated with "good and decent." As long as communication stays open and clear between them and the employees, things work well.

Most of the residents are also working with non-profit organizations, including case workers from Health Care for the Homeless (HCH), psychiatrists from Behavioral Health System Baltimore (BHSB), and attorneys from Homeless Persons Representation Project, Inc. (HPRP). Sometimes the residents visit HCH, while other times HCH workers visit them at the encampment. Either way can be tricky; arranging for a ride across town, whether by bus or by hack (underground taxi) takes time and money. Visits from HCH workers could interfere with prime panhandling hours. In order to visit BHSB once a week, the residents walk the hefty distance of two miles round trip. While Cricket does not normally use a wheelchair, Steve pushes Cricket in one for the distance there and back because the walk is too hard on her swollen legs. James gets there and back slowly with assistance from his cane. As for the HPRP, the attorneys came to the encampment for each visit, knowing that the schlep to and from their downtown office could be challenging for the residents.

The residents have also received visits from Be More Caring and Housing Our Neighbors, two community non-profit groups which focus on helping people experiencing homelessness on a grassroots level. Be More Caring visited on various Tuesday evenings, providing essentials to the campers like clothing and snack foods. Housing Our Neighbors, a nonprofit that wants to empower people experiencing homelessness, came out to protest the potential closure of the encampment in December 2016 and the actual closing in March 2017. These community advocate groups are important because they have the potential to bridge the gap between people experiencing homelessness and the advocates that have the professional and political means to change planning and policy.

The encampment residents interact with the public-at-large through panhandling. This often derided and sometimes publicly feared activity is the act of approaching people and asking them for money. The residents hate panhandling because it is dangerous and humiliating, but do it because it is the only way they can make money According to Cricket, "some people are nice, but others are very rude." Cricket, who is quite religious, expressed her

Figure 33: HOT worker talking to James (Source: WMAR TV)

Figure 34: Posted Sign Detailing DPW Cleaning Hours

dismay as a Christian seeing other Christians treat her horribly. "Sunday morning churchgoers are the worst. One church lady split on me. A deacon had a sign in his windshield that said Jesus couldn't help everybody. They assume you aren't Christian and are a drug addict, yet Jesus was homeless. You can be homeless and Christian."

While panhandling, motorists and pedestrians have thrown all variety of items at her some edible but many less so, including trash, rotten food, water bottles, money and freshly made brown bag lunches. She stated that she receives the most from people who are "just a step above us. Affluent people rarely give." Turkey Neck had a different insight on presumably affluent people in late model cars. – "The people in nice cars don't have money, just credit and debt. They are broke," she claimed. Appearances can be deceiving. Steve doesn't blame people for being mean because before he became homeless he wasn't so friendly to people experiencing homelessness. "I feel kind of guilty now…I don't blame the ones who aren't nice to us – they don't know."

The residents "work the lane" at different times of day to avoid competing with each other. Cricket, Steve, and Drew generally work during rush hours; Tony works before and after rush hours; James works in the evening. Turkey Neck works whatever hours he feels like doing. The actual dollar amount of money they make varies widely each day. Most residents didn't want to tell me how much they make because they didn't want anyone cutting into their only income. Cricket did disclose that on average the three of them combined make about $40 on a given weekday. Unless they are desperate for money, they generally don't bother working weekends because they made almost none. One Sunday morning, Cricket showed me her entire morning's earnings in a handful of change that totaled to less than a dollar. In addition to money, some people will give them food (especially granola bars), which the residents have to eat cautiously. Tony explained to me that sometimes people give the residents expired and old food ("their leftovers that they don't want"), so they have to be careful because they've gotten sick from donated food in the past. Tony tries not to be mad at people who give inedible food because he believes their hearts are in the right place. They also give canned goods not realizing that the residents have no way to open and cook them.

Occasionally people come to the site itself and bring food. Generally, the residents receive the most food on the weekends during the summer, often in the form of leftover catering trays of food from people hosting parties. They also receive a lot of food right before Christmas due to people being in the holiday spirit. Yet even generous donors do not fully embrace the residents and are often fearful of them and their encampment.. As Cricket describes it, "the public sometimes treats us like animals at the zoo – like we are "other"." As I spent time at the encampment, I watched this happen countless times. People would pull up, roll down the window, and have the residents get the food out of the back of the car. In another instance, a church group parked across the street and created a prayer circle without engaging the residents. On the other hand, when people have no fear, they sometimes make a spectacle out of their visit by videoing themselves giving the residents food and goods so that they can upload it and look good to their friends. Out of respect for the residents, I

took very few photos of them because I wanted to treat them like real people.

In Summer 2016, I observed a peculiar situation with the residents and the public occurred when a large youth group from a church in the Cherry Hill neighborhood in South Baltimore visited the encampment. The group parked at the Rite Aid across the street and walked over to us. The youth started skittishly handing out bags full of water bottles, granola bars, and potato chips, as if we were lepers. I was assumed to also be homeless even though I was relatively clean and wearing plain clothes. The leaders asked us what we knew about Jesus, so Cricket responded to their proselytizing with her own preaching. She explained her life story and how her faith gave her hope that life will get better. The group was pleasantly surprised because they came expecting to confirm their negative stereotypes about homeless people. The youth group leader was overwhelmed. We came here to talk to you but you ended up teaching us!" she remarked. This interaction is so important because not only did it give a resident a chance to tell her story, but the visitors left with a new awareness of what the residents experience being homeless, breaking down the "zoo animal" perception. As Cricket affirms, "we aren't stupid. We are real people, too."

Figure 35: Protestor at MLK Encampment Closure, March 3, 2017

The residents also interact with employees of local establishments, most notably the Rite Aid across the street from the encampment. They spend much of their panhandling money at this discount drug store because it is like a general store and has a wide variety of products. Cricket considers it "a saving grace" because it is very close, the employees are very kind to them (they are paying customers, after all) and they allow them to use the bathroom there when the store is open, from 8 am to 10 pm each day. They've gotten to know all of the Rite Aid employees and were even able to get a preferred customer card from them so that they would get 20% discounts on every regular priced purchase. While the Rite Aid had most of the products that they wanted to purchase, occasionally they would shop elsewhere. James would walk to a convenience store in the Harlem neighborhood (about a mile walk) in order to purchase the Shabbat candles that he used to keep warm.

Figure 36: Protest Sign on MLK Encampment Closure Day, March 3, 2017

Figure 37: Drew Walking the Lane

Figure 38: Cricket holding her sign and money cup in the lane

Health and Wellness

Living outside is not a walk in the park. The residents have daily struggles, including keeping warm in winter and cool in summer, having hot food to eat, hygiene, making enough money panhandling, and staying in good health. In the winter, Steve enjoys how warm and cozy the tent becomes when three to four people are sleeping in it. However James, who sleeps in a tent alone, struggles to keep warm. In the summer, a tent becomes a hotbox and unbearable to sleep in at night. The downside to sleeping outside, however, is the mosquitoes. Turkey Neck generally slept outside all summer, but Cricket could not sleep outside because mosquito bites caused her legs to swell. The residents are generally given enough food to make three square meals a day, but the food is generally cold. Very rarely do they get hot food – even leftovers are delivered cold or lukewarm. While they were appreciative of all donations, they grew tired of eating cold cuts, granola bars and other frequently given foods. Interestingly, they are often given way too much food. There were times when I was given food to take home from the encampment because the residents had no way to store it. They have coolers, but they mostly use them for sodas and water since they do not consistently have ice. Ironically, the residents sometimes accepted food donations above and beyond what they needed or desired because they feared that donators might get upset and judge them as ungrateful. The same issue happens with clothing – people dropped off boxes of clothes to the encampment instead of a thrift store or Goodwill, but there was no way for the residents to move the extra clothing away from the site, so it ultimately gets thrown away.

Without access to a shower, the residents struggle to look and feel presentable. They do their best to wash their faces and hands in the Rite Aid bathroom sink, but miss the convenience of a full bathroom. Gia explained to me the horror of living outside and having a monthly cycle – there's no 24-hour access to a toilet and no easy way to wash oneself. She uses baby wipes and hand sanitizer to get by. Having the Rite Aid nearby is much better than nothing, though. Prior to the Rite Aid reopening (it was closed for several months due to the April 2015 uprising), the residents would have to walk to either the Exxon gas station or McDonalds a few blocks away in order to use restroom facilities. If the weather is bad or people are not feeling particularly generous, then they have less money to

Figure 39: Rite Aid at corner of MLK and West Saratoga

work with to purchase necessities like toiletries, sunscreen, and skin care products. During the summer, they also faced competition from people who were not homeless coming out to the intersection and selling bottles of water and soda. Passers-by were more likely to purchase the soda and water from the people who were not homeless than just give money to the people who were.

Living outside, the residents also experienced an increased likelihood of illness and exacerbation of chronic health problems. Cricket dealt with swollen legs all summer and fall because of mosquito bites. If she had a proper place to live, she would not spend much time outside and therefore would not have dozens of bites all over her body. Gia has psoriasis, and without a proper way to wash her face and body, her skin stayed in poor condition and was prone to breakouts. James has chronic back issues, and without a proper bed, his back pain was much worse. Most of the residents slept on old and worn out abandoned mattresses in their tents, which made back muscular-skeletal ailments all the worse. Having no light at night other than flashlights makes it harder for the residents to care for these conditions.

Fortunately, the residents did receive some health care. The Affordable Care Act has helped them gain health care for preexisting conditions and other chronic illnesses that insurance companies would have previously refused to cover. Medicaid expansions have increased coverage up to 133% of the federal poverty level, increasing the access to health care to almost 20 million people nationwide, including most of Baltimore's homeless population (United States Interagency Council on Homelessness 2015, 7). With case management through Health Care for the Homeless, the residents have access to services including primary medical, convalescent, dental, psychiatric, behavioral health, and addiction care. This helps keep the residents from using the emergency room for non-emergency services. In November 2016, when Cricket had to go to the hospital for edema in her legs, Health Care for the Homeless provided convalescent care for a short period before she returned to the encampment. The Baltimore officials are looking for ways to integrate Medicaid with care and case management in permanent supportive housing.

Figure 40: Shoes available for the taking under a tree (Source: Fern Shen/Baltimore Brew)

Drug addiction is a serious barrier to housing for some of the residents living at the encampment because it becomes a priority over everything else. Even with access to addiction services, the stress of living unsheltered makes it easier for residents to relapse. The reality, as Gia states, is that "you cannot outrun the streets because they run too far." Gia and Turkey Neck explained to me how the dealers will give out "samples" at the end of the month in the hopes that they can attract more customers after the disability checks are released on the first of the month. While drug dealing is very common in this area, they still need to "hang low" and "not cause a scene like a crazy man" when meeting with dealers and purchasing drugs from them. As I spent time with Turkey Neck and Gia, I frequently noticed used needles on the ground surrounding their tent. Turkey Neck saw his interactions with dealers as his way to "support the local economy."

Everyday pleasures

While much of everyday life revolves around walking the lane and surviving through each day, the residents are still people and still do their best to socialize and have some bit of fun. James likes to walk around for entertainment and often buys his own food so that he can have what he wants. Turkey Neck enjoys buying and reading books. Cricket, Steve, Drew, and Tony listen to the radio every night – their favorite program is Coast-to-Coast AM (currently hosted by George Noory, host emeritus Art Bell). They also enjoy telling each other jokes. They try their best to be silly and keep a lighthearted attitude. They miss having a pet, so they created a pet jacket named Smalgum and gave him an elaborate story. He is "from Smalgumania, is 248 years old, 14 inches high, overly bulbous, and has big toes. He used to live with Abraham Lincoln and Mary Todd Lincoln. His favorite thing to say is "I'm addicted to chocolate chip cookies!" and he "gets upset if he doesn't get any!" Angel has two stuffed puppies that she keeps with her in her tent – one is a blue puppy from her niece and the other, a white puppy, was an anniversary gift from Tyler. In the absence of family members and pets, they still keep imaginary pets for comfort and fun.

Nature also becomes entertainment at the encampment. In summer 2016, there was a small grey female feral cat that hung around the site. She had kittens, so the residents named her "Mama." They would leave food out for her, and she would come relatively close to the campers, especially Drew. Also late in August, cicadas appeared all over the site, making cocoons on the tops and sides of the tents as well as the bark of trees. One day, Drew and I stood under a tree and watched each one slowly shake in their cocoon, break the casing, and slowly hatch out into the world. They would crawl for a bit on the tree bark before taking flight.

Figure 41: Turkey Neck lounging and reading a book (Source: Baltimore Sun)

Figure 42: Cicada hatching, August 30, 2016

The End of the Encampment and Brighter Futures

The beginning of the end of the encampment happened in December 2016, when the city (under the new mayoral administration) first proposed closing the encampment. There was talk of getting the residents into permanent housing, but no solid plan. Advocates from HON and other organizations protested the move about a week before Christmas outside of the encampment. The city did not conduct any further action until mid-January, when the residents were once again told that they would be moving. Yet a week came and went with no further action. On Friday, February 24th, the residents were told that they would be moved to a hotel the following Friday, March 3rd. The residents were not sure what to think – this was the third time that the city said that they would be moved. As the days went by, city workers and case managers came to visit the site, as did attorneys from HPRP, who wanted to make sure the residents had fair representation. By Wednesday, all of the residents realized that the city was serious about this move due to all of the official visits, paperwork, and distribution of duffle bags for each resident.

There was relief but also anxiety and worry about the move and what would happen next. The city only told the residents that they are moving to a hotel, and offered no plan for long term or permanent housing. James was glad that they had more notice this time around because, they now had "squatters' rights", he explained. This meant that the city had to provide notice when closing encampments instead of just showing up with bulldozers. While I could not find an official city policy stating this, I suspect the "squatter's rights" he referenced is legal representation from an HPRP attorney.

No one was really sure why the encampment was being closed or when exactly on March 3rd it was happening. Drew believed that it was due to a health code violation; however, they had been keeping the site clean to keep rats away. Other residents believed that it was because the neighbors at Lexington Terrace had complained to the city because they thought the encampment was a nuisance. James was told by a city official that the hotel where they would be going desired a strictly enforced "do's and don'ts" like no visitors and a curfew, but later the hotel relaxed the curfew and visitors rules. Every resident was convinced that the city was coming at a different time on Friday – 8 am? 11 am? 10 am-2 pm?

Figure 43: The day before the encampment closure, March 2, 2017

Figure 44: Angel cleans out her tent while DPW throws her unwanted belongings away, March 3, 2017

James, Steve, and the other residents feared that the city would not keep to their word on getting them affordable housing. The encampment's HPRP attorney tried to get a written agreement on the next steps, but they were unable to get an agreement. They also feared that the city would suddenly stop paying for them to stay in a hotel and that they would be back on the street again but with no place to go and no tent to sleep in. Cricket was very upset because she was being evicted and losing her home again. While they would have a hotel room, it isn't the same as having their own place. Tyler and Angel were also depressed and upset about losing their home.

Two of the ten residents were not going to be placed in the hotel – Tony and Gia – because they did not meet the city's requirement of working with their assigned case manager. This means that they would be completely displaced once the city closed the encampment. Tony had a place to go – his sister's house in Bel Air, Harford County, but he could not stay with her until Sunday the 5th since she was out of town. This put him in a two day bind where he would not have any shelter. Gia was incredibly upset that she could not go to the hotel because she had no other place to go. As of Friday morning of March 3rd, she still had no idea where she was going to sleep that night.

The residents who were being moved to the hotel were staying as positive as they could be. Steve hoped that the move would signal a new beginning for his family. Angel and Tyler had previously been moved to a hotel for three months, but Angel told me that since "we really didn't do what the case manager wanted us to do" they ended up back on the street. This time, though, Angel really wanted to try and do what she and Tyler needed to do in order to get housing. Even Turkey Neck, who constantly boasted of his choice to live outside, felt that going to the hotel would be a good thing. "I need

to get away from here and take care of myself. I've never gotten this low. Going to the hotel will help me make changes. I have a hard time with people telling me what to do, but I need to make changes. I'm getting old. I'm just me I like peace and quiet," he explained.

All of the residents hope that the encampment closure is the next step towards living a better life. In the immediate future, the residents are excited to have a bed, shower, and TV. In the words of Steve, "just a shower would be so nice." James wants a place of his own, particularly a house. Angel hopes to have her own place where she can live for years. Tony believes that once he has an address and connections in Harford County that he will be able to get back on his feet. His plumbing tools are currently at his grandmother's house and he hopes to be able to get them back from her soon. He hopes that he can get a job doing service work instead of new construction because it is more stable. He likes doing side work and eventually wants to start his own small plumbing business of about 4-10 people. Cricket hopes that she can finally get approved for disability. She would like to spend her time being an advocate for people experiencing homelessness because she wants people to know what they went through as well as the miracles they received from God while being homeless.

I asked the residents for their ideas on how they would help solve unsheltered homelessness in Baltimore because they have lived it and know what could work based on their direct experiences. The residents almost unanimously believe that the key to ending homelessness is to have more available housing so that they have a place to call their own and want there to be stronger housing first initiatives. James and Cricket specifically mentioned that a key part of this should be to have people experiencing homelessness help repair some of the 17,000 vacant homes around Baltimore City. Tony would like to see more programs that directly connect people experiencing homelessness to jobs as well as a place where they can shower, shave, and prepare for a job interview. He appreciates the city's workforce development programs that help with preparing resumes and practicing interviews, but would like to have a physical place to get cleaned up before an interview. Cricket, Steve, Drew as well

Figure 45: DPW cleaned the site after all of the tents were removed, March 3, 2017

as Tyler and Angel would like to see housing facilities for the homeless that can accommodate family structures other than nuclear families and single parent families. Cricket also believes that rather than putting a fence to keep them from having an encampment, the city should instead encourage formal encampments on selected vacant lots where the residents would have access to water and electricity. The encampment could also provide jobs for some of the residents, including maintenance and security. As I previously noted, these ideas are consistent with progressive practices now occurring in several American cities, including Aberdeen, Washington; Albuquerque, New Mexico; Eugene, Oregon; Madison, Wisconsin; Olympia, Washington; Seattle, Washington. The next chapter will offer recommendations about how some of these programs could be implemented in Baltimore.

Figure 46: DPW gets ready to depart from the site, March 3, 2017

Figure 47: The empty site of the former MLK encampment, March 3, 2017

Chapter 6: Social and Empathetic Community Development

Home being a place where one can be with family certainly explains why half of the residents (Cricket, Steve, Drew, Tyler, and Angel) would rather live outside than in a shelter divided by gender or transitional housing divided by issue. Currently, there are no programs for the homeless in Baltimore City, that enable members of families that aren't nuclear or single parent with children under age 18 to live together. While transitional housing options exist for families, they are for single men, single women, and mothers with young children. There are no housing options available for a mother, stepfather, and adult son like Cricket, Steve, and Drew. Tyler and Angel do not want to be split up in two different shelters, which would be the only option for a boyfriend/girlfriend relationship. They believe it is safer being together versus apart. Similarly, Gia, who lives with Turkey Neck, prefers living with a man for safety instead of being in a "dirty" shelter with women. As an encampment, they've become their own extended family of sorts – they look out for each other, share with each other the things that generous people give them, and they stick together. Nontraditional families are what made this encampment the ideal shelter for them.

The MLK encampment is a community in its simplest form – not only a place where unsheltered homeless people reside, but a place where the residents have come together to share in the mutual goal of survival. While the community formed out of necessity, it is welcomed and cherished by its residents because coming together increases their physical comfort and emotional companionship. It is organic in its formation and completely unplanned. By creating a "home" and "family" among each other, the residents are fulfilling the basic need of informal socialization. While there are some outside public interactions, it is through a one-way avenue of people providing goods or services to the residents or a two-way avenue of the residents purchasing goods or services from others. Rarely is there a chance for residents to informally reciprocate on a friendship level.

It turned out that my visits to the site also encouraged socialization and entertainment because I was considered a friend coming over to spend time and have fun with the residents. Turkey Neck told me that "people stopping to talk to me is meaningful because most people don't." All people have emotional and social needs in addition to physical needs, and my simple visits helped fill that need. It helped all of the residents, especially Cricket, Steve, and Drew feel "normal" because I cared about them and their needs and I took a sincere interest in their lives and wellbeing. I became their friend. Our conversations could have happened anywhere because they didn't revolve around their homelessness. I made them feel like real people and not "other." I listened to their thoughts and ideas and didn't stereotype them by preconceived notions. In the same way it upset Cricket that people judged her faith based on her homelessness, it also upset her that people assumed she was uneducated. She has a bachelor's degree and used to work for the federal government. I also helped fulfill the residents' intellectual needs by having conversations about all sorts of topics, from history to astronomy to sociology. One day, Tony and I talked about his favorite TV shows (Shameless, Power, 30 Rock, Big Bang Theory, New Girl, Family Guy) and how he missed having a TV and DVD player to watch movies. A simple conversation about pop culture really boosted his mood. On one site visit where my husband accompanied me, we found out that Drew was a huge fan of classic rock, especially Pink Floyd. Mike decided to give Drew some older progressive rock magazine issues he no longer wanted at our next visit, and Drew was ecstatic – for the rest of the evening he was reading them from cover to cover with a huge grin on his face. Something that seemed as simple and non-incidental as some old magazines was a huge gift to Drew. It was at this moment that I realized how important and forgotten emotional and intellectual needs are for people experiencing homelessness.

As planners and community members, informally reaching out and giving our time to residents

experiencing homelessness may be one of the most uncomplicated yet most beneficial ways to positively impact local community development. It helps create meaningful connections amongst neighbors but doesn't require funding or special programming or the right political environment to create. Just a conversation helps residents of encampments realize that community members care about them on a personal level. Simple actions like this help increase empathy and end ignorance about chronic unsheltered homelessness in the local community.

My own involvement with the residents of the encampment began with a simple conversation with Cricket as she was walking the lane, and grew after a simple visit to the encampment one evening. Cricket and Drew were so pleasantly surprised by my visit that they immediately went into hospitality mode – they offered me the best camping chair they had as a seat and profusely apologized that they had nothing to feed me except potato chips and bottled water. I felt guilty that I had nothing to give monetarily or physically (such as food and clothes). Turkey Neck was initially suspicious of my visit because he was shocked that someone would want to visit them. Yet, they didn't want me to leave at the end of the night because "I was the highlight of their day", causing me to now be the one in shock. I may not have given them money or things, but I subconsciously gave them back a piece of their humanity.

My unique role in being a friend and an advocate became most evident in the days leading up to the encampment closure when case managers, professional advocates, and city workers noticed that I didn't live at the encampment yet seemed at home there and was trusted by the residents. They knew I had been around, but this was the first time they saw my interactions with the campers and how I was able to bridge the gap between the personal and professional. While most of the professionals kept a safe distance from the residents, I was invited by them to help pack their things and listen to their concerns, which never would have happened had I not known them on a personal level. One resident in particular became despondent that morning, and I was the one who found them lying a distance away in the grass, upset and in denial that this was really happening. I listened to this person as they lamented their fears and then gently walked them back to the site. I assured them that another camper and I were there to help them pack their things and that everything would be all right. I drove half of the residents from the encampment to the hotel as opposed to them riding there in a van with workers from DPW. The city officials and advocates were relieved that I was able to give them rides because it meant that they were in the care of someone familiar to them. Indeed, while they kept their composure in front of the professionals, they could be themselves around me and confide their worries to me in the privacy of my car. At the culmination of a year of interactions for this project, I was able to give them another piece of needed humanity that day: emotional comfort, something that cannot be forgotten on the same day that these same residents were going to experience the physical comfort of a bed, shower, and electricity for the first time in months or years.

Chapter 7: Recommendations for Dealing with Unsheltered Homelessness in Baltimore

Like many US cities still struggling from decades of decline and disinvestment, Baltimore has only limited resources that it can to direct towards its homeless residents, both sheltered and unsheltered. And the city's well documented problems with crime and public safety, particularly after the Freddy Grey riots, make dealing with unsheltered homelessness in particular with its long association with a breakdown of public order, a particularly vexing problem (Rector 2016). However, Baltimore has an obligation to treat all of its citizens humanely and develop sensible and compassionate policies for dealing with unsheltered homelessness and existing encampments. These communication and public health policies should recognize the legitimacy of its unsheltered residents and not only support their right to live in public space with dignity, but also build upon existing programs that help these residents find permanent housing. First, Baltimore City's various agencies that deal with homelessness issues need to coordinate better between each other and with encampment residents. Second, DPW needs to help maintain the health of the people and the public space through long-term, regular sanitation pick-up. Third, Baltimore City officials should work with local businesses and social service providers in order to make access to bathrooms, shower facilities, laundry services, and electrical outlets available at or near encampments. These policies can help make the daily needs and lives of these people a little healthier, safer, and more joyful. In addition to creating and implementing new policies, Baltimore City should also look at supportive housing solutions that range from temporary to permanent, which can be used to make existing and future encampments across the city more livable.

Treating and Supporting the Unsheltered and their Encampments

Baltimore City's various departments that are involved specifically with encampments need to communicate better with each other in order to better coordinate and streamline outreach and the delivery of public services to these sites. As of April 2017, the city departments do not have a single, unified front when interacting with the unsheltered homeless. To remedy this, Mayor Pugh should form a permanent city interagency council on homelessness comprised of members from human services, social services, DPW, HOT, behavioral health, transportation, housing, emergency management, and other relevant departments. It is important for this group to be permanent and to meet on a regular basis to ensure continued communication between the agencies. This group would complement The Journey Home/Continuum of Care Board because it would deal specifically with unsheltered homelessness.

Currently, there are officials from these departments that are working on a draft interagency encampment response policy guide, which I received at a HON meeting in March 2017. The present officials now serving in the group can make up the permanent membership, which will be important for not only finalizing the new policy guide, but also for implementing it and making adjustments to it when necessary. As long as the city follows the official written vision and policies that are proposed in the new guide, communication will increase with its unsheltered population.

Having a plan in place for dealing with encampments will help determine when it makes sense for the city to close an encampment and how to handle such a closure. When the MLK encampment was slated to be closed on March 3, 2017, none of the residents had a solid idea what was happening and when. The residents only realized that the city was moving them "for real" when case managers and other homeless advocates started appearing at the site in the days leading up to the scheduled move. Word of mouth was not enough for people who were ultimately about to lose their homes for at least the second time. The draft interagency encampment response policy guide lays out a plan for dismantling encampments that will

help increase communication by assigning different agencies with specific tasks. In the plan, the Mayor's Office of Human Services "will inform outreach workers of intervention at least 14 days in advance when possible. Outreach workers will share the message verbally with campers." This will help outreach workers and campers have some advanced notice so that they can proactively plan for the move rather than just react to the news. "DOT will post notice of the planned intervention with at least 72 hours advanced notice when the situation permits," which will ensure that all campers definitely know that the scheduled move is still taking place. Importantly, human services "will coordinate outreach workers to ensure every camper will be offered a permanent housing plan" and if this cannot be accomplished in time, then encampment residents will be offered short-term options (Baltimore City 2017). Ideally, these plans will be communicated in writing, which will hold Baltimore City more accountable to outreach workers and campers.

To complement the above programmatic and policy recommendations, I also suggest that Behavioral Health System Baltimore (BHSB) be present on closure day to provide additional logistical and emotional support for residents being relocated. Having familiar mental health professionals on the MLK encampment site would have helped residents cope better with the move as it unfolded. While the BCPD was located near the site (in the Rite Aid/Cigna parking lot) and are trained in mental health best practices through the BEST program, it would have been beneficial to have experts in mental health issues present so that the police could focus on keeping the site secure.

Baltimore City can improve encampment site conditions and campers' lives through public health policies that help them maintain cleanliness. City officials can continuously help unsheltered campers by offering trash cans and donation bins as well as hosting long-term, regular clean-up efforts at encampment sites. Not only do the residents have trash, but they are also given boxes of donated food, clothing, and other goods that they cannot use yet have no way to remove from the site. The DPW can help by giving the encampment large, outdoor trash cans so that they have a place to dispose of waste. They can work with a local non-profit that currently accepts donations, such as St. Vincent de Paul, to provide large bins on encampment sites so residents can re-gift items that they do not need but are in good working condition.

Equally as important as keeping the site clean, residents need a way to properly maintain their own hygiene. Fortunately, the residents of the MLK encampment had Rite Aid directly across the street, but this only provided toilets that could be used for 14 hours per day. Baltimore City officials could facilitate all-day access to toilets through agreements with owners of 24 hour facilities like hotels, gas stations, and supermarkets. While unsheltered residents had some access to toilets, they had absolutely no place to shower or do laundry. Baltimore City could work with a gym (like the Planet Fitness downtown) to provide them with memberships so that they have a regular place to shower and workout. The city should work with a laundromat like Laundry City on Moravia Road that has a free customer pick-up shuttle and coinless laundry cards that the unsheltered homeless can use to wash their clothes.

In addition to cleanliness, residents need a regular way to communicate with city officials, case managers, and other social service workers. Without access to a source of electricity, the unsheltered homeless have trouble keeping their cell phones charged, also making them hard to reach. Baltimore City can help alleviate this issue by providing a safe place for them to charge their phones, whether in a city office building downtown or someplace outside with some weather protection like a parking garage. Having regular spaces in city offices would also make it easier for both parties to stay in regular communication with each other since they would cross paths often.

Improving Temporary and Permanent Supportive Housing for the Unsheltered

In addition to creating and implementing new policies for the unsheltered homeless population

and existing encampments, Baltimore City should also physically improve temporary and permanent housing options for this population. Residents in existing encampments could be given Ikea shelters because they can last up to three years and have more stability than a recreational tent which lasts only a few months. Adding and maintaining portable toilets and portable camping showers at encampments will increase the sanitation of the residents and keep them from traveling to have to use bathroom facilities. Setting up a picnic table would also give the residents a common area on the site where they have space to eat, socialize, and host social service workers and advocates. Authorizing specific locations as safe places to camp, whether on public property or on the property of existing non-profit organizations, would make it easier for the unsheltered to have a small amount of personal autonomy and independence in their lives. Creating stable safe places where the unsheltered can live without fear of eviction would also make it easier for social service workers and case managers to find and keep in contact with these residents and assist them in obtaining more permanent housing. If Baltimore City considers the existing encampment sites less than ideal, any recently vacated land would serve as a good staging ground for new camps provided that it is near public transportation, social services and commercial businesses.

Baltimore City should expand work with non-profits and local contractors to encourage and plan permanent supportive housing for non-traditional families. One way the city could do this is by expanding their partnership with the People's Homesteading Group, whose current focus is on revitalizing vacant housing in the Barclay-Midway Neighborhood in Baltimore, to help train and employ unsheltered residents. The People's Homesteading Group, Inc. was founded in 1983 by 11 Baltimore families that had a vision that anyone can learn how to completely renovate a vacant rowhome, thus providing an avenue for low-cost homeownership for low-income families. They teamed up with contractors, philanthropies, and Baltimore City government to rehab 95 rowhomes by 1999. In the early 2000s, they began the Anchors of Hope project, which focused on community development in the Barclay-Midway neighborhood. This process became more formalized with community workshops and charrettes, hiring of skilled contractors, construction subsidies, and the beginning of new job programs to train local residents how to remove lead and deconstruct houses.

Rather than renovate current vacant houses, another idea would be to take a patch of vacant land and create a new neighborhood of tiny affordable houses, using an easy-to-construct template such as the Wikihouse model, so that newly reclaimed land from the demolition of rowhomes can be transformed into a new community. The Wikihouse foundation is currently looking to pilot housing projects around the world – everything from a single tiny studio to entire neighborhoods. Baltimore would be a good candidate for such a project because it has a shortage of affordable housing that is habitable and vacant infill lots are available near the city center. If Baltimore were to seriously consider such a development, the city can connect with the Wikihouse foundation to provide needed support to make it happen.

In order to consider projects like a rest area and a tiny affordable house community, some urban housing policies would at the very least need to be temporarily suspended. Currently, it is illegal to live in a travel-trailer in Baltimore City, so relaxing this requirement would allow for residents to build and live in tiny houses on RVs. Small homes on permanent foundations are allowed as long as they are a minimum width of 16 feet and include at least one room with a minimum of 120 square feet, a kitchen (which can be in the 120 square foot room), and a bathroom (Smith Hopkins 2013). Carriage houses can only be converted to residences if they have at least 750 square feet in area (Small Streets 2012). Temporarily relaxing minimum square footages and per-unit kitchen and bathroom requirements will allow Baltimore City officials to provide Ikea shelters to people living outside so that they can temporarily have better shelter than a tent or highway overpass. Relaxing these rules will also encourage the construction

of tiny houses of various types, whether as stand-alone units, accessory dwelling units, or affordable villages.

Baltimore City can work with existing non-profit organizations through the Journey Home/Continuum of Care Board to create a strategic plan for how it will administer and fund rest areas and tiny affordable housing communities. A new tent city non-profit can be formed or such communities can be managed by an existing organization. Self-governance is a key component of the tent city model. While the non-profit organization oversees the site, day-to-day decisions would be made by the community, which include everything from allocation of resources to disciplining or evicting members who break the rules. Democratic administrative practices would provide residents with a compelling interest in seeing the community succeed (Wilson 2015).

City, state, and private donors can invest in the projects, although it may be easiest to raise funds through a grassroots campaign. At Opportunity Village in Eugene, Oregon, the first house was built on a trailer with recycled materials and parked at various city events so that visitors could take a tour and donate funding (Heben 2014). In Nashville, Tennessee, Pastor Jeff Obefemi Carr of Green Street Church built a tiny house for $7,000 and lived in it for two months in order to raise money to build more of them for an encampment on the church property. He raised $66,967 dollars from private donations, enough to build six more houses (Semuels 2015). The tent city non-profit can solicit funding for the encampment community by creating sponsorship opportunities with local and national companies. The non-profit would create a marketing strategy for the project, research prospective sponsors that have similar corporate goals and values, create a sponsorship request email, and get in contact with their marketing managers with opportunities for branding and advertisement (Boyer 2015). The initial budget can be anywhere from $56,000 to $3 million dollars, depending on the types of structures used and/or constructed and the amount of grassroots involvement. The funding will be used to pay for case workers, sanitation, insurance, maintenance, moving expenses, propane, and other costs (Heben 2014). For example, Opportunity Village in Eugene, OR, used private donations to cover about $98,000 of the $114,000 in labor and materials to start the project. Their operating costs are about $1,800 per month (Square One Villages 2015). The cost of the housing units can also vary, depending on whether they are built by volunteers or contractors. Volunteer dwellings cost on average about $12,000 per unit while contractor units (like the ones built in Quixote Village in Olympia, Washington) cost $87,000 per unit. The price difference is due to labor costs as well as the cost of construction materials. Some communities, such as Opportunity Village, have saved costs on housing due to using completely salvaged and recycled materials for the structures (Heben 2014).

The tent city non-profit would need to not only stay in close contact with the Journey Home/Continuum of Care Board, but also meet regularly with community leaders and host meetings for the public because gaining local support for the project will be challenging due to existing homelessness stereotypes. These meetings can be opportunities to increase public awareness about the true nature of unsheltered homelessness and why such projects would be beneficial for all city residents.

Beyond Physical Necessities: Emotional Needs

While the physical needs of unsheltered residents need to be addressed, their emotional needs cannot be forgotten. It is seemingly easier to deal with physical needs because there is a tangible outcome from the time, resources, and money spent on projects. Planners can help fulfill these needs through scheduled and unintentional interactions with the unsheltered homeless.

Urban professionals can encourage social community development through planned, art-based, interactive workshops that bring together the public and unsheltered homeless populations. The Place It! Planning practice (based in California) has lead interactive workshops across the US for vulnerable populations to share their stories and

Figure 48: Quixote Village, Washington (Source: For Sale Tiny Homes)

visions of their ideal city through art, particularly through sculptures built out of blocks and various types of materials (Rojas 2014). In the short term, Baltimore City should consider bringing Place It! to the east coast to run some workshops that give the unsheltered homeless a venue to create art and share their experiences with sheltered residents. Place It! planners can teach urban professionals in Baltimore how to facilitate interactive workshops for the long-term future.

Planners should also connect with grassroots organizations like HON or Bmore Caring and encourage representatives of these social service not-for-profits to visit with people experiencing homelessness on a semi-regular basis and follow up with them quarterly on their experiences. Empowering these groups to spend time with the residents will help organically build relationships, boost emotional health, and bring informal social activities into the lives of unsheltered homeless people. Ongoing, intimate social relationships happen best through informal interactions, which aren't always achievable between city officials and career advocates working to end homelessness and the unsheltered because of the nature of their professional-client relationship. Therefore, planners need to make room for and embrace the unplanned when it comes to fostering the emotional needs of the unsheltered population.

On a personal level, planners are citizens and residents, too, and should informally get to know their unsheltered constituents, costing only time. If planners spend a few minutes listening to the unsheltered homeless person who lives less than a few blocks away from the city planning office, they could truly brighten the person's day by making them feel human. My interactions with the residents of the MLK encampment began when I started a conversation with one of them.

Every development project ultimately affects the unsheltered as residents, too, so planners should keep them in mind and advocate for them

as voiceless stakeholders in the meeting room if a project seeking approval benefits or disadvantages them. When I worked as an intern for the Maryland Transit Administration, I brought up how important it was to spend a longer period of time conducting outreach at Lexington Market because this would be the best chance to gather feedback from the large number of homeless and low-income people who loiter around the station. As a result of my comment, the team decided to spend two and a half hours at Lexington Market instead of the typical one and a half to two hours spent at other events held at transfer hubs. This small change allowed for more homeless people's voices to be heard about changes to the bus system.

Starting in June 2017, in my free time I will continue researching compassionate planning solutions for Baltimore's unsheltered homelessness and build upon the ongoing dialogue with the residents of the now dismantled MLK encampment. This research will be useful for evaluating the performance of Baltimore City and social service providers in their ongoing work with the former residents of the MLK encampment. I will also study other encampments within and beyond Baltimore City to find patterns, solidify themes, and expand solutions for ending unsheltered homelessness. I plan to explore further how cities have used accessory dwelling units and tiny houses as long term solutions for combating homelessness. I'm also interested in seeing how faith-based organizations have partnered with city governments to provide rest areas and tiny houses because such a partnership could be the foundation for forming a local tent city non-profit in Baltimore. I will also look closer at innovative job programs like Albuquerque's "There's a Better Way" and map out how a similar program would work in Baltimore. While this specific project has concluded, I will continue learning, researching, and studying compassionate planning for unsheltered homelessness and will go on to publish work in the subject.

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APPENDIX

Interagency Emcampment Response Guide

Baltimore City

Interagency Encampment Response Guide

Introduction

The Interagency Encampment Response Guide recognizes that encampments exist due to the lack of suitable alternative housing, and encampments are not suitable places for people to live.

Purpose

The purpose of this Guide is to coordinate the City's response to encampments to minimize the level of harm caused to people living in them and ensure efforts are made to connect people to housing, health care, and support services.

Principles for Effective Encampment Response

The following principles align with our community's long-term vision to make homelessness in Baltimore City rare and brief. Only when we develop a crisis response system that has an adequate supply of affordable housing, better access to comprehensive health care, sufficient incomes to afford housing and basic needs, and a strong safety net, will we eliminate homeless encampments.

1. **Increase the supply of permanent housing:** The ability to reduce and/or eliminate homeless encampments depends on Baltimore's ability to increase the supply of housing that is in safe neighborhoods and is affordable for people with the lowest incomes. New investments, such as capital costs to build new affordable housing and permanent supportive housing units and operational costs to maintain these units are necessary.

2. **Promote the Housing First approach:** There is a strong body of evidence that shows Housing first is an effective method for ending homelessness and the most effective intervention for addressing chronic homelessness. The Housing First approach offers individuals and families immediate access to permanent housing and combines housing with wrap-around supportive services. Housing First permanent supportive housing (PSH) models are typically designed to serve persons with complex service needs, such as serious mental illness, substance use, and/or chronic health conditions. Broader application of this approach will increase access to housing for some of the most vulnerable people experiencing homelessness.

3. **Create a coordinated access system that prioritizes housing for the most vulnerable people experiencing homelessness:** Coordinated Access system will streamline access to housing interventions across the homeless services system and prioritize permanent

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supportive housing for the most vulnerable people. It will also ensure that people are getting the right intervention to meet their needs.

Definition of Encampment

An **encampment** is defined here as one or more persons claiming space for temporary accommodation without authority or permission to occupy the space.

Agencies Involved

Baltimore City Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)
Baltimore City Department of Public Works (DPW)
Baltimore City Department of Social Services, Adult Protective Services (BCDSS-APS)
Baltimore City Department of Social Services, Child Protective Services (BCDSS-CPS)
Baltimore City Department of Transportation (DOT)
Baltimore City Fire Department (BCFD)
Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD)
Baltimore City Health Department, Division of Animal Control
Baltimore City Mayor's Office of Communications and Policy (MOCP)
Baltimore City Mayor's Office of Emergency Management (MOEM)
Baltimore City Mayor's Office of Human Services – Homeless Services Program (MOHS-HSP)
Baltimore City Police Department (BCPD)
Behavioral Health System Baltimore (BHSB)

Reporting of Encampments

If an **emergency** is reported (e.g. someone appears unconscious) the request will be directed to 911.

Any constituent or city employee who encounters an encampment can report the location of the encampment to 311, at which point the following triage will occur:

- If non-emergency **criminal activity** is reported, the request will be directed to police as a non-emergency 311 report.
- If **non-emergency fire, animal or health hazards** are reported, the request will be directed to BCFD, Animal Control, or BCHD as appropriate.
- If abuse or neglect of a vulnerable minor or vulnerable adult is reported, the request will be re-directed to **Child Protective Services (CPS)** or **Adult Protective Services (APS).**
- All other encampment reports will prompt a **homeless outreach request** to the MOHS-HSP and BHSB for referral to a homeless outreach team. Homeless outreach teams are based at community service providers in Baltimore. In the above situations where MOHS-HSP is not the primary agency to receive the request, the primary agency will inform MOHS-HSP if follow-up homeless outreach is needed. If the encampment is in a **building1 or structure2**

or on private property, outreach workers will attempt to engage people from outside the property. If a building or structure appears unsafe, outreach workers will report it to DHCD via 311.

Encampments on Property Not Owned by the City

The City has no right to act on private property. Regarding sidewalks in front of private property, the owner has a duty to clean, sweep and maintain the sidewalks (Building, Fire, and Related Codes of Baltimore City, International Property Maintenance Code, Section 306.1). If, after notice, the homeowner does nothing, the City may clear the area using the same procedures followed on City-owned property (described elsewhere in this document).

Encampments on state and federal grounds should be referred to the appropriate state or federal agency for possible joint action.

Outreach Process

If the encampment is already assigned to outreach teams, this will be noted in the 311 Customer Service Request (CSR) system and the Service Request (SR) will be closed. The assigned outreach team will continue to provide outreach to that area. If the encampment is not already assigned to an outreach team, the MOHS-HSP and BHSB will request outreach workers from partner agencies to visit the site within 14 days. If outreach workers are unable to locate an encampment, or individuals do not appear to be experiencing homelessness, the request will be closed.

If the outreach workers find persons experiencing homelessness at the site they will attempt to engage them and support them in connecting with housing and services, using the Housing First approach. Housing First is an approach in which housing is offered to people experiencing homelessness without preconditions (such as sobriety, mental health treatment, or a minimum income threshold) or service participation requirements and in which rapid placement and stabilization in permanent housing are primary goals.

If a client living at an encampment has not finalized their housing placement by the time of the scheduled encampment intervention, efforts will still be made to find short-term housing options, Outreach workers will take into consideration client preferences and the presence of pets or companion animals in considering short-term and long-term housing options, but accommodation of all preferences and pets may be limited by the housing resources available. If a client refuses short-term options and chooses to continue sleeping outdoors, outreach workers will continue to work with the client on a long-term housing placement. The MOHS-HSP and BHSB will monitor outreach status updates until an individual cannot be located or moves into housing. If outreach workers encounter safety hazards at the site, they will report these to 311 or 911, depending on the urgency of the issue.

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1 Baltimore City Building, Fire and Related Codes define building as "Any structure used or intended for supporting or sheltering any use or occupancy."
2 Baltimore City Building, Fire and Related Codes define structure as "That which is built or constructed."

Identification and Reporting of Encampment-Related Complaints and Risks

The primary agency called to respond to the encampment site will assess any **health or safety risks** within that agency's scope of expertise, take immediate action to mitigate risks if necessary, and document each risk observed and any actions taken. If any agency observes any health or safety risks, regardless of whether the hazard(s) are imminent, the risks must be documented and submitted to MOEM (which is charged with monitoring information on encampment-related risks) and MOHS (in case the information is pertinent to outreach efforts) via the Baltimore City Interagency Report of Encampment-Related Risks (See Appendix).

Emergency Interventions

Examples of actions that might be taken immediately to mitigate imminent threats to health and safety include but are not limited to: removal of abused or neglected animals by Animal Control, abused and neglected minors, or vulnerable adults by CPS, or APS; confiscation of materials that present an immediate fire hazard; emergency petition of a person who poses an imminent threat to themselves or others; and removal of unattended belongings from public areas for security reasons. When these actions are taken, the responding agency must report them to MOEM and MOHS via the Baltimore City Interagency Report of Encampment-Related Risks (See Appendix).

Planned Interventions

MOHS will facilitate a quarterly interagency meeting on encampments. The agencies stated below will assign a liaison to attend each meeting and report the following:

1) **MOHS-HSP** will document and report on homeless outreach efforts in the area and MOHS-HSP resources that might be available to persons who might be displaced.
2) **BCFD** will document and report on any fire hazards in the area.
3) **BCPD** will document and report on risks related to criminal activity in the area.
4) **BCHD** will document and report on communicable diseases or other hazards to human health.
5) **MOHS** may include **CPS, APS, or Animal Control** if any of these agencies have assessed and documented risks in the encampment area.
6) **DHCD** will document and report on risks related to unsafe living structures, as well as any DHCD resources that might be available to persons who might be displaced.
7) **DPW** will document and report on the status of any clean-up efforts in the area.
8) **DOT** will document and report on any infrastructure issues or potential changes that are planned for the area.
9) The **Legal Department** will advise on documentation received and options considered.

After consideration of the hazards involved and the prior efforts to mitigate, MOHS will draft a set of potential intervention options including the following considerations: (1) health and

safety hazards, (2) outreach and housing plans, (3) encampment interference with public use of property, (4) feasibility and logistics of securing the area, and (5) logistics of cleaning the area. The options will be forwarded to Senior Staff for an executive decision. If there is only one clear option for intervention, and all agencies present at the meeting agree to this option, a plan of action will be expedited and Senior Staff will be informed.

Once a decision is made, a plan of action, including a timeline and assignment of agency responsibilities, shall be developed. Participating agencies must forward their plans to MOHS for inclusion in the plan.

The timeline in the plan will be sensitive to the need to assess short-term and long-term housing options for persons in the affected area. Examples of planned interventions, such as debris removal, scheduled clean-ups, and dismantling an encampment, are described below. The Mayor will be notified of a decision to dismantle an encampment before action is taken.

If any action is taken, MOEM is responsible for photographing and creating a summary of actions taken. MOHS is responsible for documenting outreach efforts, including but not limited to education on how to safeguard personal belongings, offers of shelter, offers of long-term housing plans, and supportive services.

Planned Interventions, Example 1: Debris Removal

Debris removal typically occurs at a scheduled time after it appears that persons have vacated an area. The Mayor's Office will work with MOHS-HSP and the Legal Department to create signage that will explain the specific location and date of the clean-up and include information about the logistics of retrieving those items. DOT will post signs giving at least 72 hours' notice unless public health or safety requires immediate action. On the scheduled clean-up date, DPW will take all reasonable efforts to remove and discard only those items that present a health or safety issue, or appear to be abandoned. DPW shall take reasonable efforts to store personal items such as identification cards and medical information.

MOHS-HSP will inform outreach workers of the impending action so they can advise persons experiencing homelessness, if any are known to frequent the area. Outreach workers will advise persons to remove personal belongings and also how to label and store such items so as to make it clear that the property has not been abandoned. In accordance with the storage policy described below, property shall be stored for a period of 90 days. If any persons experiencing homelessness are expected to be on-site, outreach workers can be available to assist them.

Planned Interventions, Example 2: Ongoing Scheduled Clean-ups

When a site is assigned to an ongoing clean-up schedule, the Mayor's Office will work with MOHS-HSP and the Legal Department to draft approved signage that will state the regular clean-up days. MOHS-HSP will inform outreach workers of the impending action so they can advise homeless persons before the schedule takes effect.

DOT will create the signs and post them no less than 72 hours in advance of the first clean-up. The same protocol as set forth in Example 1 shall be followed concerning cleanup and storage.

Planned Interventions, Example 3: Dismantling an Encampment

In the case of a scheduled dismantling of an encampment by the interagency committee, the following agencies shall:

1) **MOHS** will circulate the action plan prior to the dismantling to ensure all involved agencies understand their role and responsibilities before the planned intervention.
2) **MOEM** will coordinate agencies on the day of the event and photograph and document the encampment site and dismantling action.
3) **MOHS-HSP and the Legal Department** to draft approved signage and DOT will post notice of the planned intervention with at least 72 hours advance notice when the situation permits.
4) **MOHS-HSP** will inform outreach workers of intervention date at least 14 days in advance when possible. Outreach workers will share the message verbally with campers who may be unable to read or may not have paid attention to the posted signs.
5) **MOHS-HSP** will coordinate outreach workers to ensure every camper will be offered a **permanent housing plan**. If eligible and resources are available, the camper shall be offered permanent supportive housing. Otherwise, the camper will be offered a placement determined most appropriate to their needs and available resources. If it is determined that permanent housing will not be available by the scheduled intervention date, outreach workers will offer **short-term placement options.**
6) **MOHS-HSP** will document the availability of short-term placements (typically shelter beds), the offer of a short-term placement to every camper who engages with an outreach worker, and the outcome of such offers. Campers are free to decline short-term placement options and will continue to be offered outreach assistance.
7) **MOHS-HSP** and outreach workers will provide written and oral information to campers about how to retrieve items stored with DPW will be provided to campers.
8) **DOT** will create a perimeter around the area using bike racks.
9) **BCPD** will ensure officers are present on-site and in plain clothes to minimize escalation of conflict. Visible police presence should be kept to a minimum unless a stronger presence is needed to ensure safety.

a. Uniformed officers should be located a few blocks away in case they need to be called in quickly.

b. All BCPD officers are trained in mental health best practices through the BEST program.

c. BCPD officers should enforce the perimeter created by DOT in order to protect the privacy of persons receiving behavioral health services. The only persons authorized to enter the encampment area are the people who have belongings in the area and authorized outreach workers from behavioral health agencies.

d. If people obstruct the clean-up or refuse to leave, police will intervene to ensure people are required to move in as peaceful a manner as possible.

10) **DPW** will provide storage bags or bins, labels, and a 90-day storage facility; transport storage items to the storage facility; and clear trash and debris after storage items have been removed according to the storage policy outlined below.

11) **DOT** will begin the process of securing the site as soon as the area is sufficiently clear.

Storage Policy

Storage will be offered to anyone who is present at a clean-up site. DPW will supply plastic bags, zip ties, markers, and labels. Persons who wish to store items must pack and label their items and present them to DPW workers.

If the owner is not present, DPW workers, and/or outreach workers (if present), will store items that **(1) are labeled with the owner's information and (2) meet the safety criteria listed below.**

DPW can only store items if this can be done safely. The following limitations apply:

(1) Liquid or perishable items cannot be stored.

(2) Weapons or illegal items cannot be stored.

(3) Items containing insects or animals cannot be stored.

(4) Excessively soiled items, items contaminated by human or animal waste, and items located among refuse or garbage cannot be stored.

(5) Bags or containers cannot be safely searched and cannot be stored if they outwardly appear to contain items that cannot be stored (e.g. a leaking bag or bag covered with insects).

(6) Tents, structures, or other items requiring disassembly cannot be stored.

(7) Any item within a tent or structure that cannot be safely retrieved by a DPW worker standing outside of the tent or structure cannot be stored (example: a bag or bed roll inside a tent).

(8) Any bulk item (e.g. furniture) that does not fit onto a standard DPW vehicle cannot be stored.

Stored items will be transported to the DPW facility at 701 W. Reedbird Avenue. Items can be reclaimed Monday through Saturday between 6 a.m. and 4 p.m. Unclaimed items will be

discarded after 90 days. Claimants do not need to show any form of identification. Items will be released to anyone who can describe the item and location from where it was removed.

The MOHS-HSP will create an informational document on how to access the DPW storage facility (see "Handout" below), and will coordinate outreach workers to help spread this information. DPW will also carry this written document to share with constituents who have questions about this policy. Outreach workers can assist persons with disabilities who need transportation to the facility.

In some cases, items that appear to be belongings can be relocated to the perimeter of the cleared area. When possible, this will be stated with the advance notice of the clean-up. If unattended items are determined by the Police Department or a security officer to be a security risk, they will be removed and stored or discarded in accordance with the Police Department or security agency's protocol.

Signage

The following template language has been approved for use in signage related to encampments;

(1) Temporary notice of scheduled clean-up (placard):

Notice
Posted: [MM/DD/YY]
No trespassing or storage of belongings is permitted in this area. This area will be cleaned on [MM/DD/YYYY]. All items must be removed from the area at that time. Abandoned property remaining in the area will be discarded. Unsoiled items appearing to be personal belongings that can safely be stored will be transported to 700 W. Reedbird Avenue and stored for 90 days. Items can be reclaimed Monday through Friday between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. Unclaimed items will be discarded after 90 days.

(2) Permanent notice after clean-up (permanent sign):

No trespassing or storage of items is permitted in this area. Items located in this area are subject to removal at any time.

(3) Permanent notice of on-going clean-ups (permanent sign):

This area is cleaned on [weekday(s) and time(s)]. All items must be removed from the area at that time. Abandoned property remaining in the area will be discarded. Unsoiled items appearing to be personal belongings that can safely be stored will be transported to 700 W. Reedbird Avenue and stored for 90 days. Items can be reclaimed Monday through Friday between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. Unclaimed items will be discarded after 90 days.

(4) Public information (flyer) about storage

When Baltimore City workers conduct clean-ups, they make all reasonable efforts to identify and store personal belongings. If your personal belongings are missing from a public area, they may have been stored by the Department of Public Works.

The following items are more likely to have been identified as personal belongings and stored:

- *Items labeled with the owner's information*
- *Items appearing to have monetary or personal value*
- *Items in close proximity to a place where it appears someone has been recently sleeping (as indicated by tents, structures, a bedroll, etc.)*
- *Items that appear to have been "stashed" in a place out of public view for safekeeping*

The following limitations apply:

- *Liquid or perishable items cannot be stored.*
- *Weapons or illegal items cannot be stored.*
- *Items containing insects or animals cannot be stored.*
- *Excessively soiled items, items contaminated by human or animal waste, and items located among refuse or garbage cannot be stored.*
- *Bags or containers cannot be safely searched and cannot be stored if they outwardly appear to contain items that cannot be stored (e.g. a leaking bag or bag covered with insects).*
- *Tents, structures, or other items requiring disassembly cannot be stored.*
- *Any item within a tent or structure that cannot be safely retrieved from without cannot be stored.*
- *Any bulk item (e.g. furniture) that does not fit onto a standard DPW transport vehicle cannot be stored.*

Items can be reclaimed at 700 W. Reedbird Ave. Monday through Friday between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. Unclaimed items will be discarded after 90 days. Items will be released to anyone who can describe the item and the location where it was removed.

- *If you are experiencing homelessness and cannot get to the facility to retrieve your belongings, please call 311 and request homeless outreach.*

Media

In an effort to minimize disruption to the lives of persons experiencing homelessness, the City will not issue a press release when an intervention is planned. If the City becomes aware that an encampment intervention will get media attention, the Mayor's Office of Communications and Policy will respond to inquiries and provide information to the public.

Agency Responsibilities

- Housing (DHCD)
  - Respond to 311 and interagency requests to assess encampments for risks related to unsafe structures or housing code violations.
  - If an encampment is observed, request homeless outreach through 311.
  - If encampment-related hazards or risks are observed, report to MOHS using the Interagency Report of Encampment-Related Risks.
  - If requested, attend interagency meetings on encampments to discuss DHCD-related hazards and options for securing the site or changing the built environment.

- Public Works (DPW)
  - Respond to 311 and interagency requests to clean-up encampment sites based upon the protocols described in this guide.
  - If an encampment is observed, request homeless outreach through 311.
  - If, during the course of a routine clean-up, a homeless encampment is observed, delay clean-up and inform MOHS.
  - If encampment-related hazards or risks are observed, report to MOHS using the Interagency Report of Encampment-Related Risks.
  - Provide 90-day storage for items that appear to be personal belongings, as described in this guide.
  - Provide storage bins or bags, markers, and labels to persons that wish to store their belongings.

- Adult Protective Services (BCDSS-APS)
  - Respond to reports of abused or neglected adults in encampments.
  - If a vulnerable adult is located in an encampment, report this to MOHS using the Interagency Report of Encampment-Related Risks.

- Child Protective Services (BCDSS-CPS)
  - Respond to reports of abused or neglected children in encampments.
  - If a vulnerable child is located in an encampment, report this to MOHS using the Interagency Report of Encampment-Related Risks.

- Transportation (DOT)
  - Respond to 311 and interagency requests to assess encampments for transportation-related risks.
  - If an encampment is observed, request homeless outreach through 311.
  - If encampment-related hazards or risks are observed, report to MOHS using the Interagency Report of Encampment-Related Risks.
  - If requested, attend interagency meetings on encampments to discuss transportation-related hazards and options for securing the site or changing the built environment.
  - When an intervention is scheduled, post signs giving at least 72 hours' notice.

- Fire (BCFD)
  - Respond to 311 and interagency requests to assess encampments for fire-related risks.
  - If an encampment is observed, request homeless outreach through 311.
  - If encampment-related hazards or risks are observed, report to MOHS using the Interagency Report of Encampment-Related Risks.
  - If requested, attend interagency meetings on encampments to discuss BCFD-related hazards.

- Health (BCHD)
  - Respond to 311 and interagency requests to assess encampments for risks to human health.
  - If an encampment is observed, request homeless outreach through 311.
  - If encampment-related hazards or risks are observed, report to MOHS using the Interagency Report of Encampment-Related Risks.
  - If requested, attend interagency meetings on encampments to discuss BCHD-related hazards.

- Animal Control
  - Respond to reports of abused or neglected animals in encampments.
  - If an abused or neglected animal is located in an encampment, report this to MOEM and MOHS using the Interagency Report of Encampment-Related Risks.

- Emergency Management (MOEM)
  - If an encampment is observed, request homeless outreach through 311.
  - If encampment-related hazards or risks are observed, complete the Interagency Report of Encampment-Related Risks.
  - During intervention, coordinate all agencies present, take photographs, and document actions taken.
  - After intervention, compile photographs and documented actions into an after action report.

- Mayor's Office of Human Services-Homeless Services Program (MOHS-HSP)
  - Co-coordinate (with BHSB) partner outreach teams' response to 311 and interagency requests for homeless outreach.
  - Monitor reports of encampment-related risks submitted by other agencies.
  - Facilitate quarterly interagency meetings on encampments.
  - Coordinate with other agencies to develop an intervention plan for the encampment that minimizes risk of harm to people living there.
  - During the intervention, coordinate outreach teams' to ensure offers of long-term and short-term housing are documented.
  - During the intervention, ensure that campers are provided information on how to retrieve their items.

- Police (BCPD)
  - Respond to 911, 311, and interagency requests to assess encampments for risks related to public safety.
  - If an encampment is observed, request homeless outreach through 311.
  - If encampment-related hazards or risks are observed, report to MOHS using the Interagency Report of Encampment-Related Risks.
  - If requested, attend interagency meetings on encampments to discuss BCPD-related hazards.

- Behavioral Health (BHSB)
  - Co-coordinate (with MOHS-HSP) partner outreach teams' response to 311 and interagency requests for homeless outreach.
  - If encampment-related hazards or risks are observed by outreach teams, complete the Interagency Report of Encampment-Related Risks.
  - Attend interagency meetings on encampments to discuss minimizing harm to encampment occupants and hazards reported by outreach workers.

Appendix

Baltimore City Interagency Report of Encampment-Related Risks

In addition to reporting risks to 311 for agencies to respond, please complete this form so that the Mayor's Office of Emergency Management (MOEM) can keep track of cumulative issues that occur in an area.

* Required

1. Your agency *
   Mark only one oval.
   - ◯ Emergency Management (MOEM)
   - ◯ Homeless Services (MOHS)
   - ◯ Public Works (DPW)
   - ◯ Police (BCPD)
   - ◯ Fire (BCFD)
   - ◯ Transportation (DOT)
   - ◯ Housing (DHCD)
   - ◯ Child Protective Services (DSS-CPS)
   - ◯ Adult Protective Services (DSS-APS)
   - ◯ Health (BCHD)
   - ◯ Animal Control (BCHD - Animal Control)

2. Your name *

   _____

3. Your e-mail *

   _____

4. Your contact number *

   _____

5. Address, closest intersection, or closest landmark to the encampment site *

   _____

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6. **Approximate number of people observed there ***

_____

7. **If needed, please provide further description of the encampment location.**
For example: under the overpass, in back loading dock area of building, etc.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

8. **Please describe the risks or hazards you observed. Please include the dates you observed them, and cite any supporting documentation you have on file. ***
For example: Neglected animal, observed 2/2/12, Report on file. Mentally ill individual threatened others with blade, 2/2/12, Emergency Petition on file.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

9. **Did you take immediate action to mitigate those hazards? ***
Mark only one oval.

◯ Yes
◯ No

10. **If yes to above, please describe any actions taken. Please include the date(s) action(s) were taken, and cite any supporting documentation you have on file. Reminder: If your agency is required to maintain client confidentiality, do not disclose any protected personal information.**
For example: Issued warning RE: Propane grill, 2/2/12, warning on file. Filed emergency petition and accompanied mentally ill individual to Mercy hospital, 2/2/12, EP on file.

_____

_____

_____

_____