

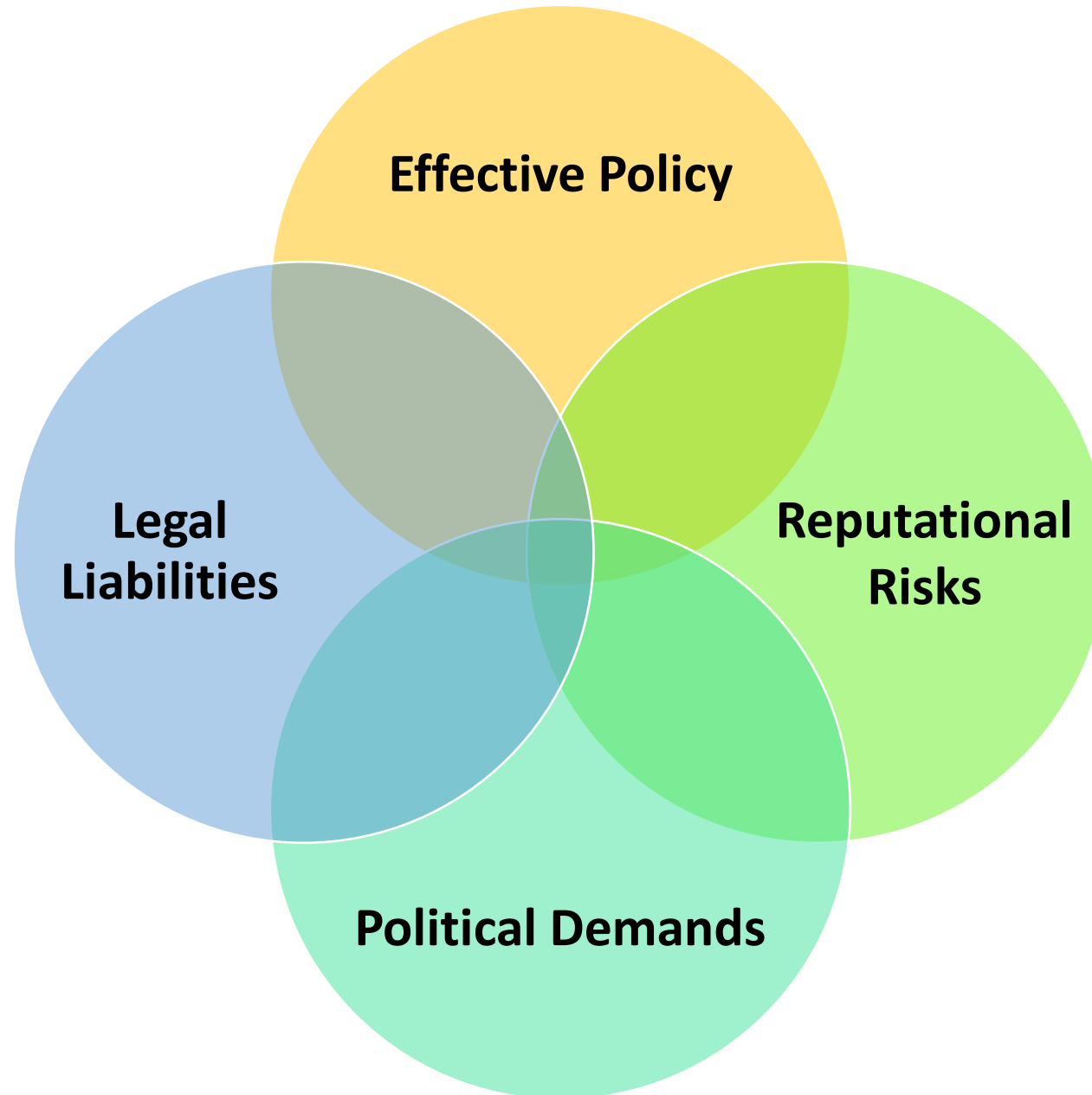
Encampment Decommissioning Through Housing

Houston's collaborative, holistic, and effective encampment response strategy.

The Way Home



Complexity of Responding to Homelessness



“The Spectrum”



Overview – Houston's Homeless Response System



Encampment Decommissioning Through Housing Strategy

Why Housing Works

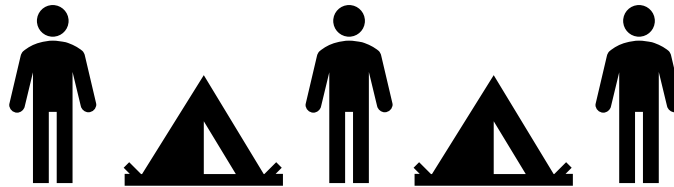
Tickets

Arrest

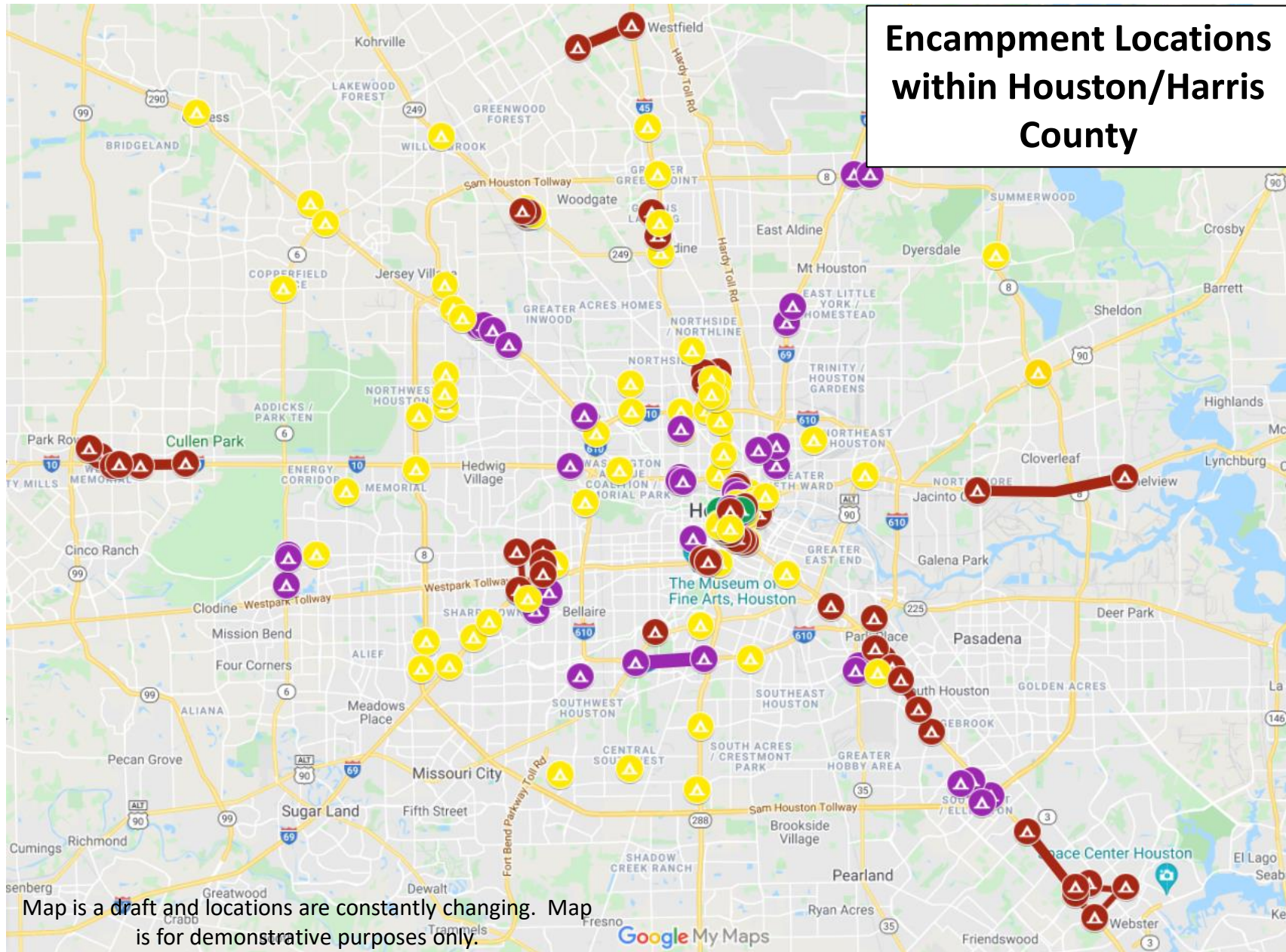


Shelter

Sweeps



Encampment Locations



COVID funds help speed housing effort for homeless

By R.A. Schuetz
STAFF WRITER

At the southern corner of downtown, underneath the tangle of freeways where I-45 meets I-69, Monday night was filled with quiet anticipation. Housing was coming.

In the encampment called home by roughly three dozen, Steven Dennis couldn't sleep. Regina Tut talked of her excitement. A man named Angel wondered if he could finally start anew.

And as the morning

broke, balmy and clear, there they were: Staff from a collection of groups working to serve the homeless were raising a white canopy a few yards from the double row of tents sheltered beneath I-45. Housing navigators and case managers setting up at tables and folding chairs underneath. A van from Metro that would drive people to a converted hotel, where they'd live until connected with permanent housing, pulling up at the side of the block.

Since more than \$65 million in COVID-related fund-



Marie D. De Jesús / Staff photographer

A man gathers his belongings from an encampment under I-45 before getting transported to new housing.

ing has poured into Houston and Harris County's coffers, they have worked in tandem with a number of partners to ramp up the housing units available to move people out of homelessness. As they've done so, they've picked up the pace at which homeless encampments are being "decommissioned" — the group's term for offering the residents of a camp permanent housing, then clearing the site, usually with fencing, to prevent the camp from reforming. The process provides a way out

of chronic homelessness to the many who choose housing and the services that go with it, a dislocation to the smaller group who do not.

The ultimate success of Houston's encampment strategy could have rippling effects across the country. Cities including Austin and Dallas are seeking to emulate Houston's program, said Marc Eichenbaum, special assistant to the mayor for homeless initiatives; others, including Denver and Spokane, Wash., are watching closely.

Homeless continues on A13

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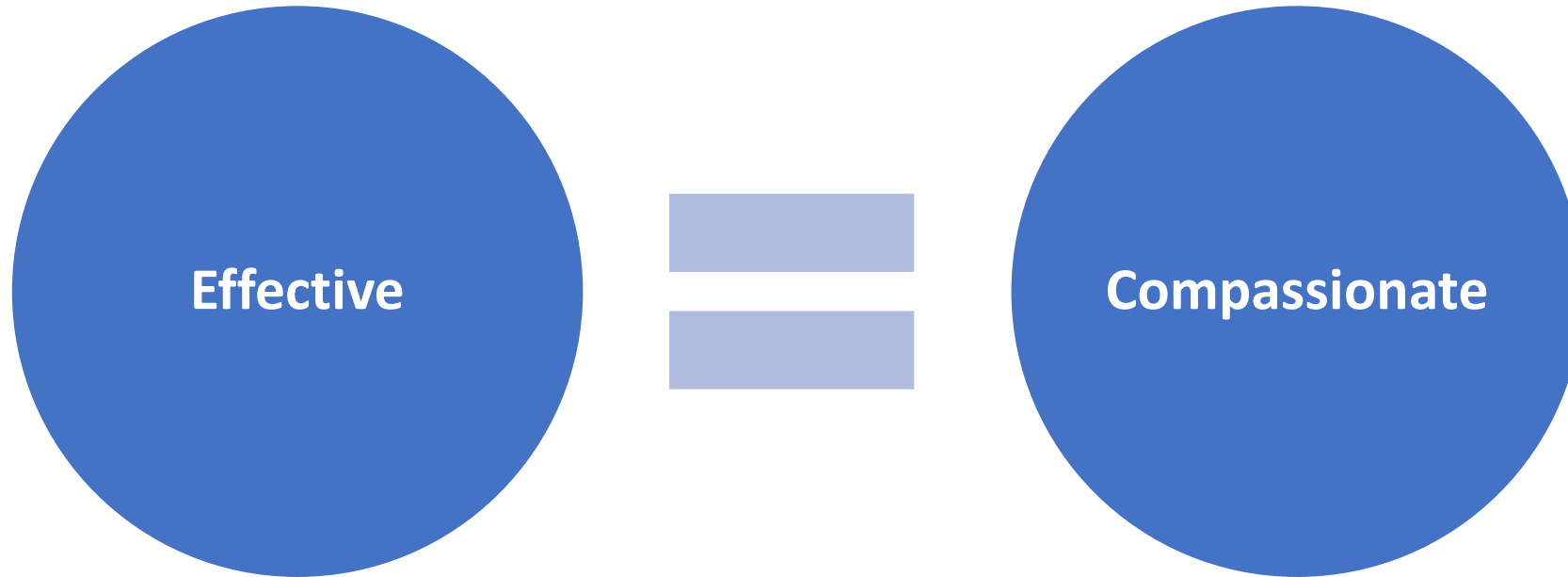
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Encampment Strategy

What is the right balance?



Prioritized Encampments

Prioritization Factors (partial list)

1. Location Characteristics

- # of people
- Geographic size
- Length of Existence

2. Vulnerability of Population (perceived)

- Elderly &/or infants/children
- Physical & behavioral health issues
- EMS calls
- Physical violence among encampment inhabitants

3. Environmental Health

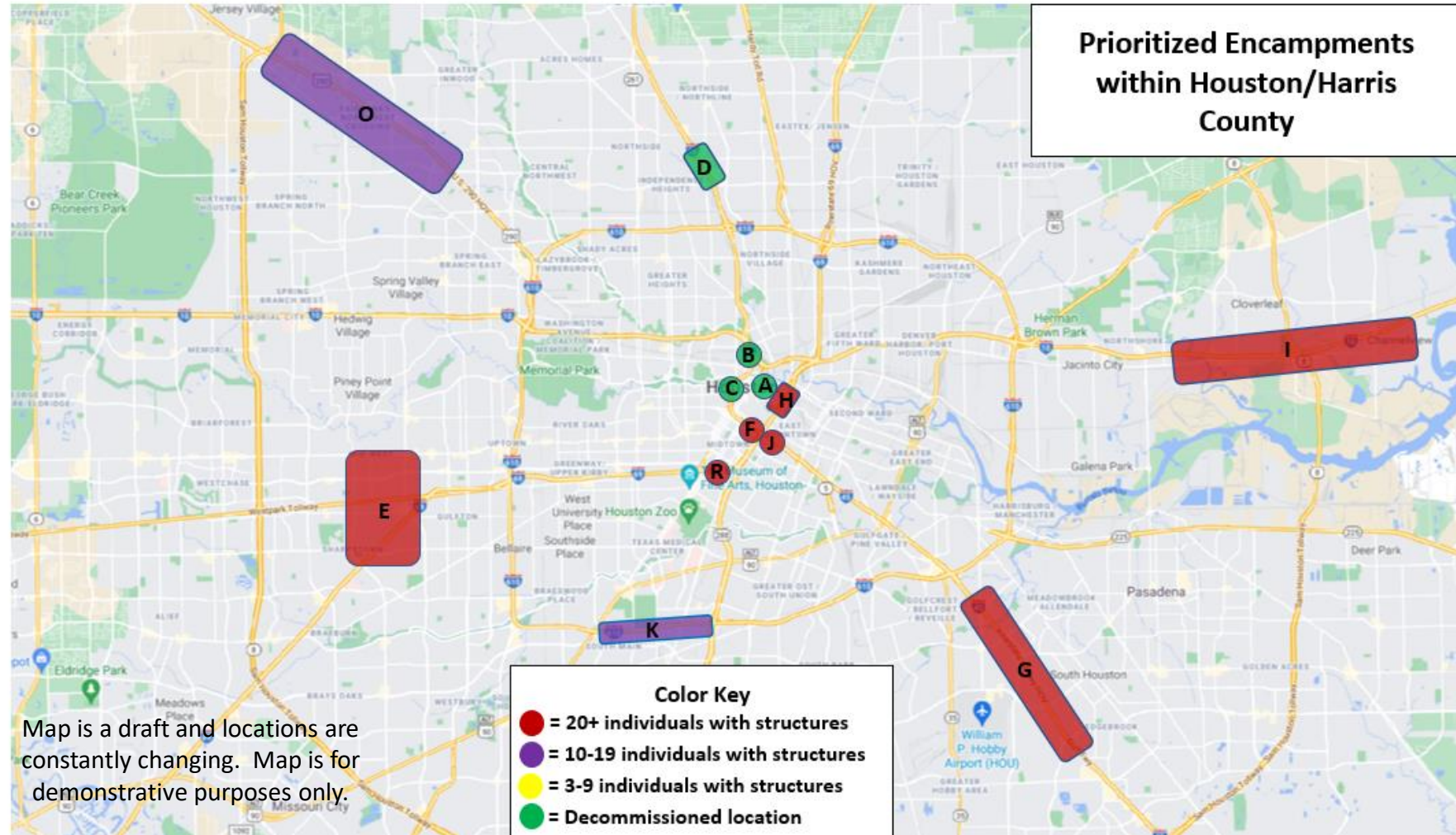
- Vermin
- Hazardous materials
- Biowaste

4. Community Safety

- Near heavy traffic, areas prone to flooding, etc.
- Open fires
- Hazardous site access

5. Solid Waste

- Excessive garbage/trash

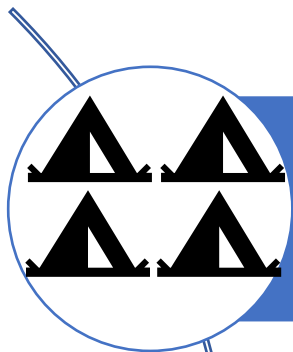


Dedicated Housing Outreach Teams

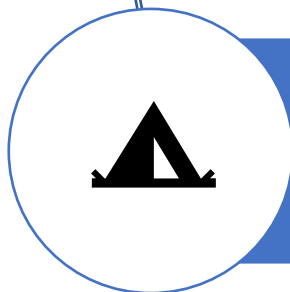
Outreach

3 Specialized
Housing

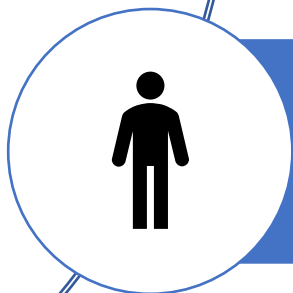
Outreach/Navigation
Divisions



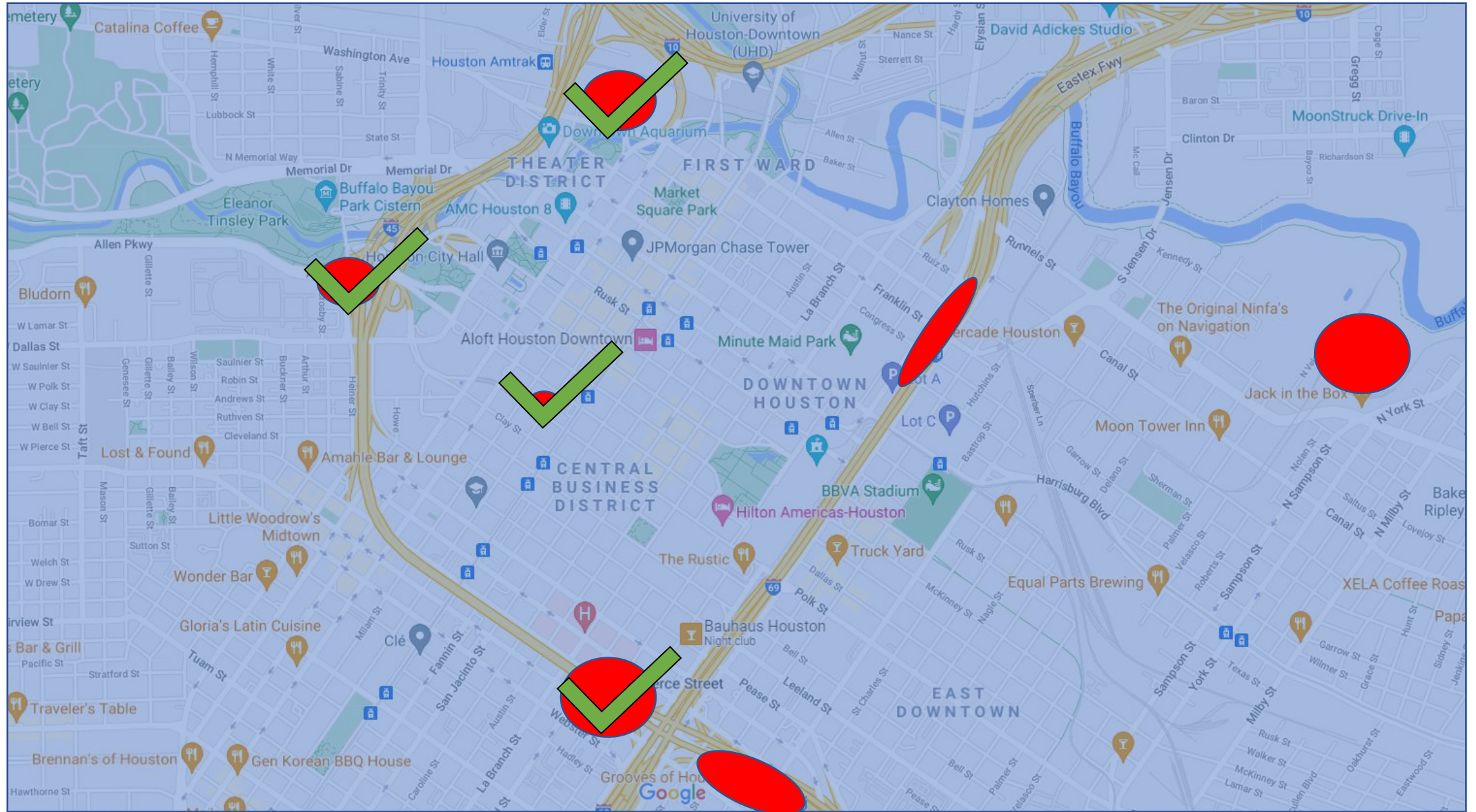
Large Encampment Team(s)



Small/Med. Encampment Team(s)

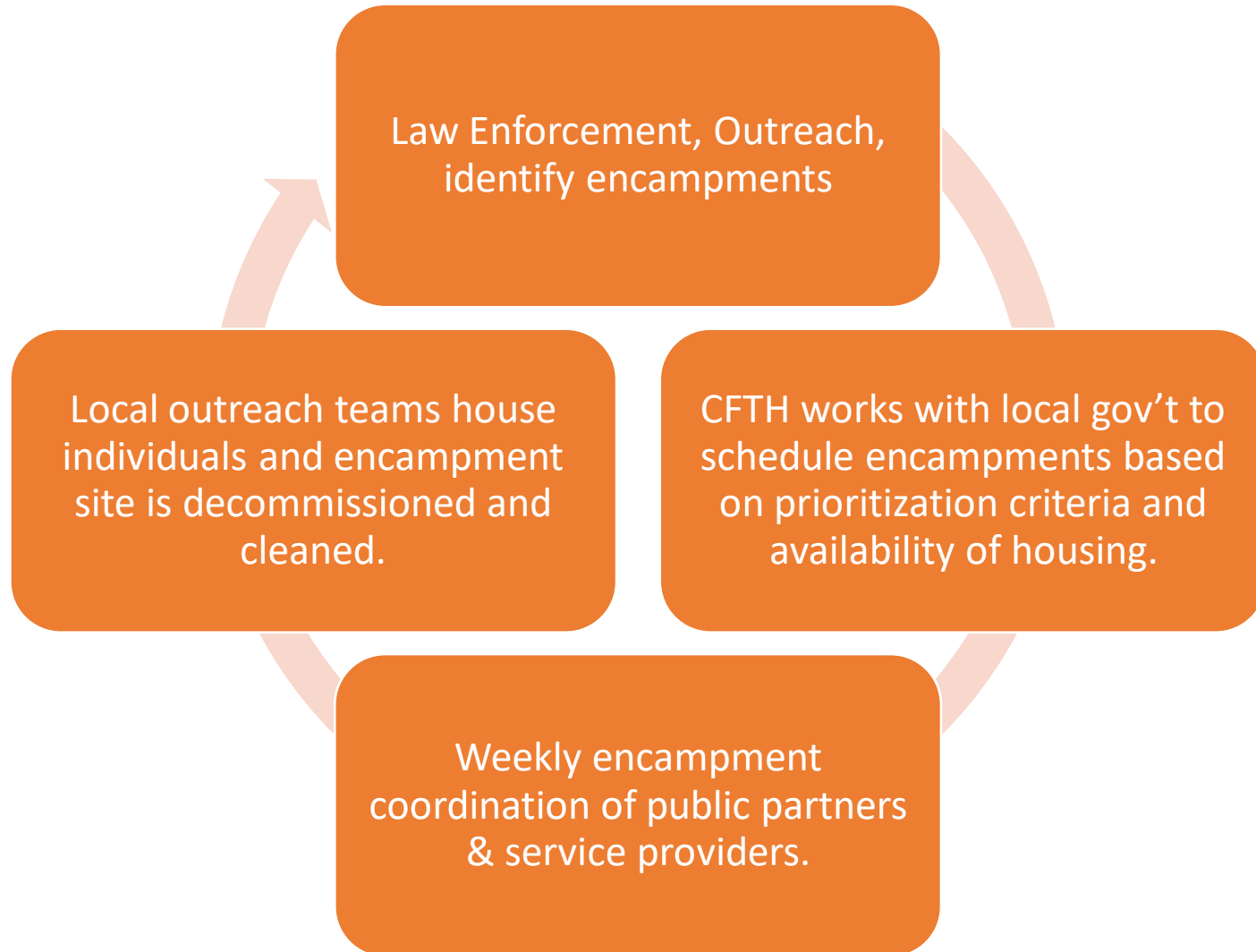


Scattered Individuals
(Pre-existing Teams)



For demonstrative purposes only.

Coordinated Encampment Response



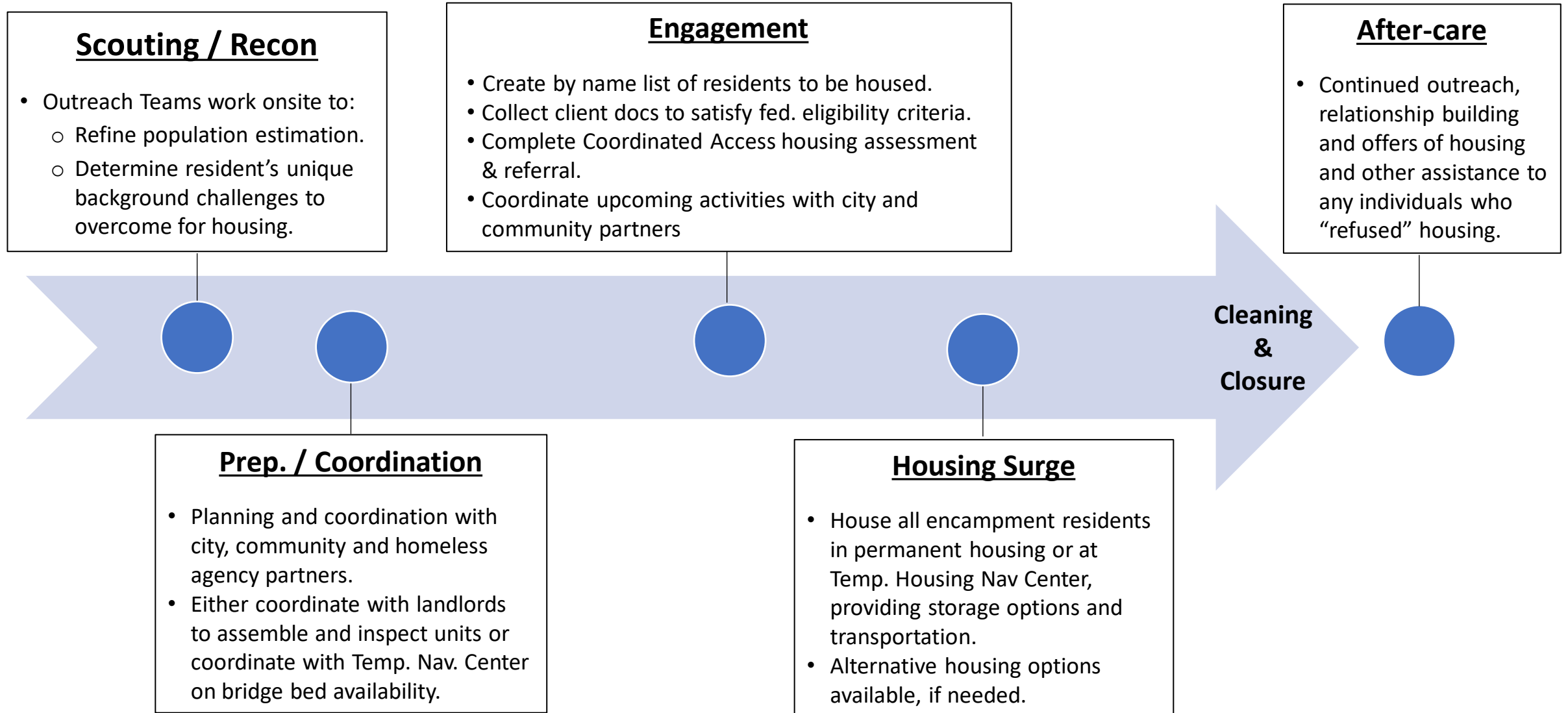
Coordinated Encampment Response

Tammy Kohr, Eugene Stroman, and Janelle Gibbs, on behalf of themselves and all others similarly situated, and Robert Colton v. City of Houston, C.A. No. 4:17-cv-01473, in the United States District Court for the Southern District of Texas, Houston Division

- Challenged ordinances:
 - Encampment ordinance;
 - Aggressive panhandling ordinance;
 - Impeding use of roadway/blocking sidewalk/exit to building ordinance.
- **Fourth, Fourteenth and Eighth Amendment challenges** on enforcement of the prohibition on unauthorized use of materials as a tent or other temporary structure for living accommodation purposes or human habitation; (b) search or seizure of private property on the sole basis that it does not fit in a container three feet high, three feet wide, and three feet deep, and (c) impeding the use of a roadway.

Dismissed on September 8, 2020

Decommissioning – Housing Timeline



Texas Code Provisions

Law enforcement supports coordinated strategy

Texas Transportation Code §552.002 and §552.005 sets out rules for pedestrians crossing at crosswalks.

Texas Transportation Code §552.006 prohibits a person from walking in the roadway if an adjacent sidewalk is provided and is accessible by the person.

Texas Health and Safety Code §365.012 prohibits littering and illegal dumping.

Texas Business and Commerce Code §17.31(f)(3) prohibits possession of a shopping cart outside the parking lot of the retailer without written permission of the owner or retailer.

Texas Penal Code §48.05(b) prohibits camping in a public place without effective consent of the officer or agency having the legal duty or authority to manage the public place.

Texas Government Code §2306.1121-24 requires Texas HCA approval of plan for a property used to camp.

Texas Administrative Code §2306.1122 provides rules for a property used by homeless to camp.

Notice

- English & Spanish
- Goes beyond Legalese
- Gov't Distribution
- Documented Distribution
- Written & Verbal



WARNING Encampment Violation

Over the past week, outreach teams have offered you immediate, low-barrier housing options that will lead to placement into a permanent housing. Such housing is available to you at little-to-no cost. As always, substance abuse, mental health and employment assistance resources are available by working with Outreach as well.

Time is running out, and we encourage you to work with outreach teams TODAY on placement into a permanent housing unit of your own.

If you do not want housing, you must **leave the block/area by 10am this Thursday, March 9th**, so that the area may be cleaned. To help ensure your safety during the cleaning, **you must leave this block** and take your belongings with you. If you like, the City will store your items for free for up to 60 days. The City cannot store large items (like mattresses or chairs) or any item that could transmit disease. In addition to housing, Outreach Teams will be onsite providing storage bags and assistance. Items left behind will be abandoned property, which the City will throw away.

If you return to encamp at this location beyond **10am on Thursday, March 9th**, you run the risk of violating a law that makes it illegal to encamp in a public place in Houston without permission from the City.

"Encampment" means any of the following:

- Setting up a tent or other structure.
- Using a grill, stove, or heater.
- **Keeping too much property.** (By law, property that would not fit in a container 3 feet high, 3 feet wide, and 3 feet deep is too much and is illegal. Most medical equipment is not subject to city law. Examples include oxygen tanks and wheelchairs for people who can't walk.)
- Residing on public property using a tent, sleeping bag, bedroll, blanket, or similar items to protect you from the weather without the consent of the agency managing the public property.

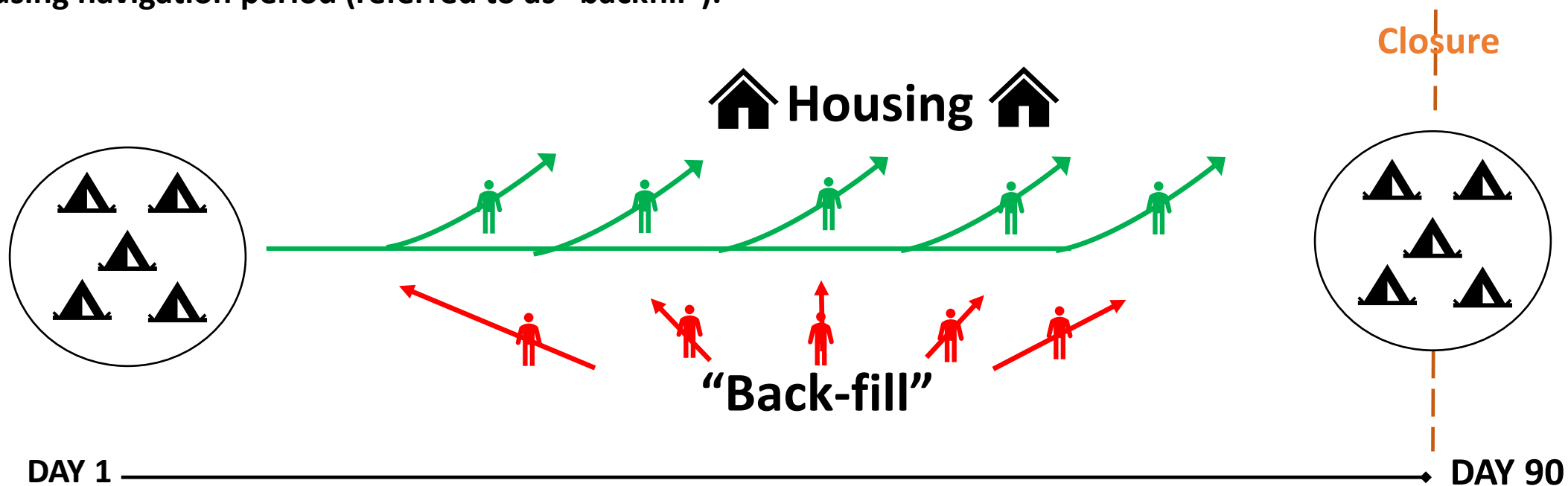
If you do not stop encamping in a public place, a police officer may:

- Give you a ticket. The ticket may result in a court order that you must pay a fine of up to \$500.
- Arrest you and take you to jail. If you are arrested, the City will not protect any property you leave behind from damage or theft but may tag your property into the Property Room and release it to you upon your release from custody.

Once again, the City wants to help you. We want to house you. Outreach Teams will be back several times today & tomorrow morning. **Please work with Outreach teams to be placed into low-barrier, temporary housing and onto the path to permanent housing.**

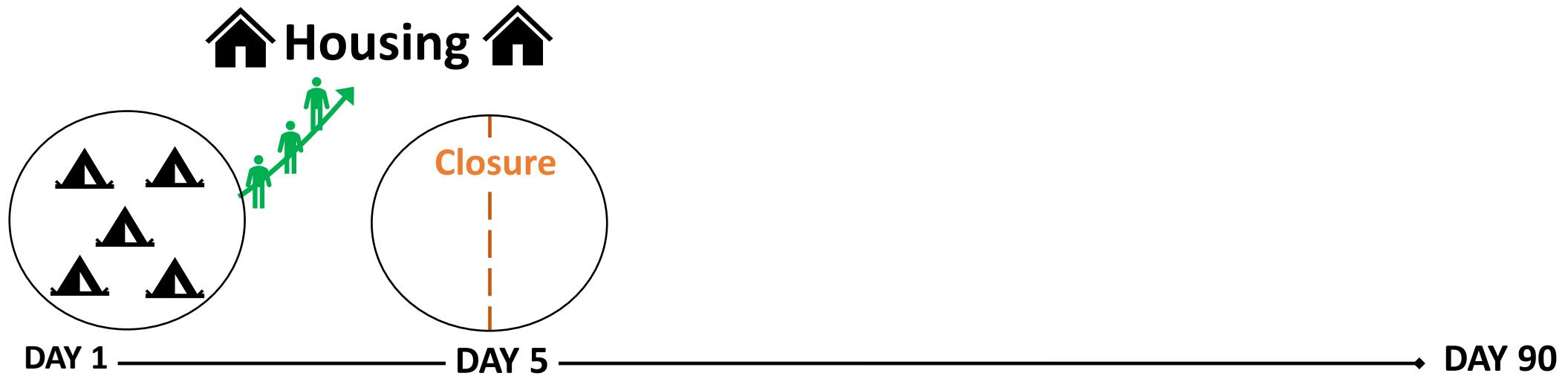
Initial Encampment Strategy

Two (60+ person) encampments, in 2018 & 2020, were holistically decommissioned through housing. In each instance, it took months to offer and house the encampment residents. Although most of the original residents were housed, the encampments continued to exist due to new persons moving into the site during the housing navigation period (referred to as “backfill”).

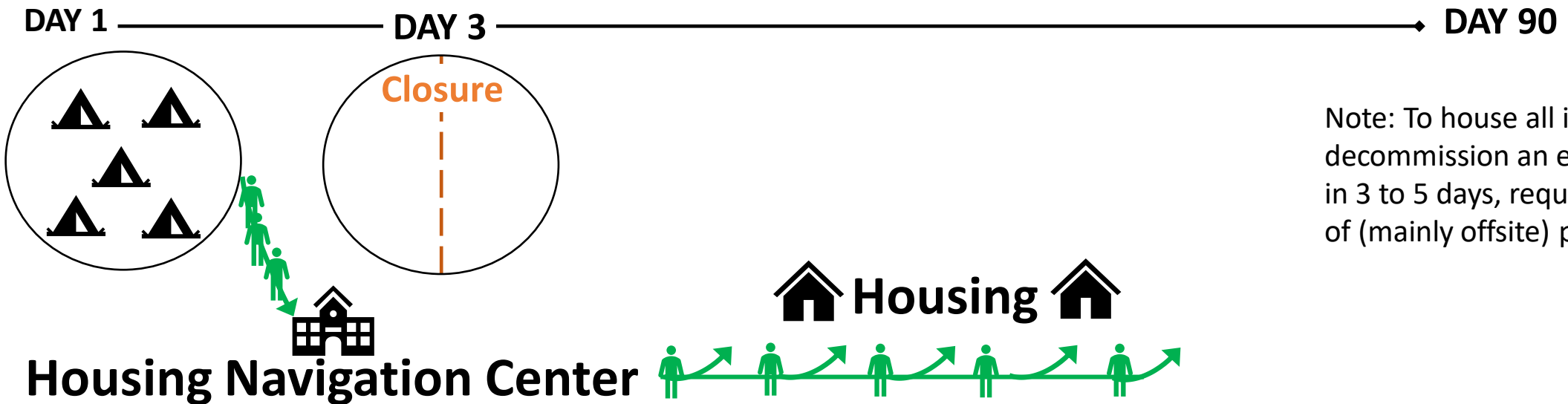


New "Surge" Strategy Plans (based upon availability of housing)

Plan A



Plan B

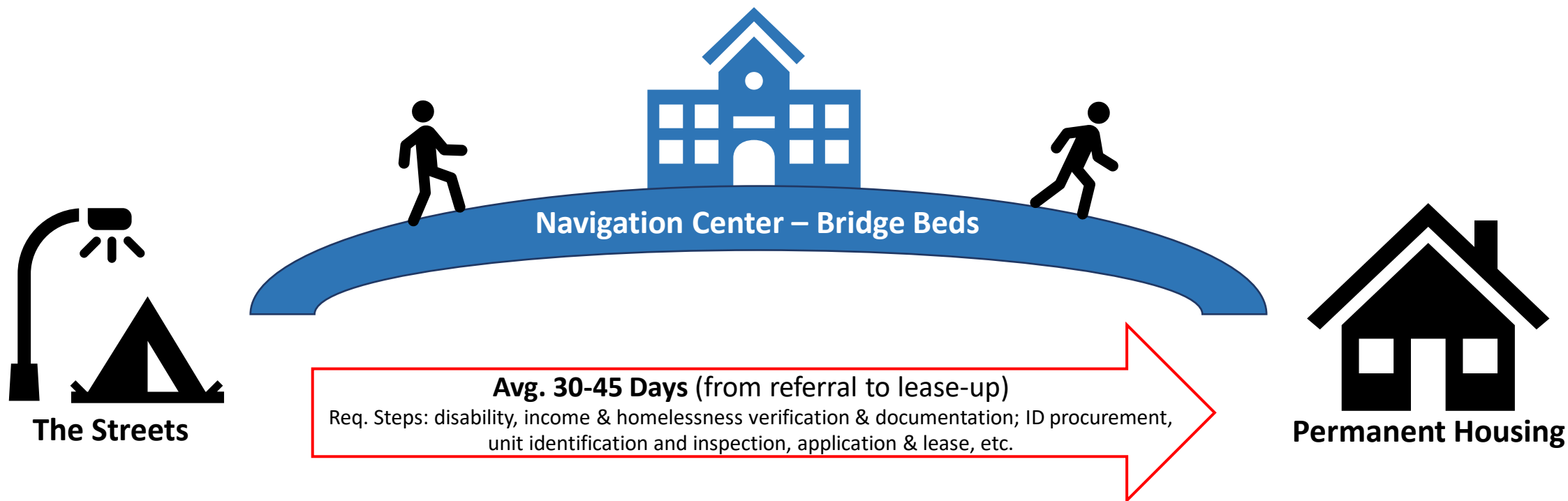


Note: To house all inhabitants and decommission an encampment in 3 to 5 days, requires 4-8 weeks of (mainly offsite) prep work.

Jensen Housing Navigation Center

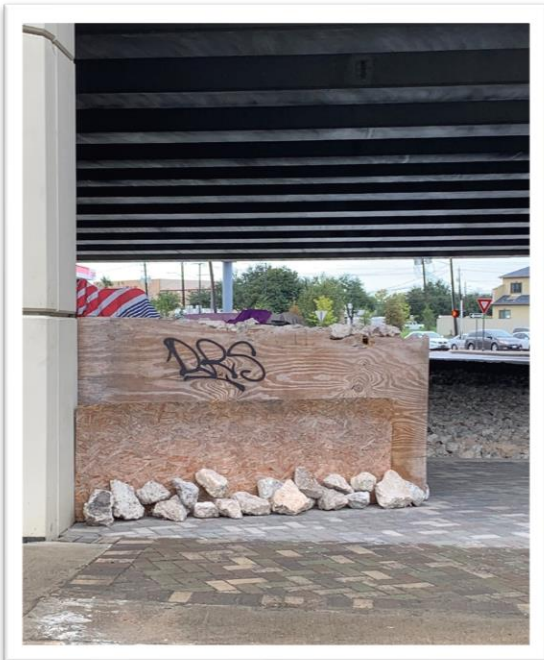


Navigation Center & The Housing Process



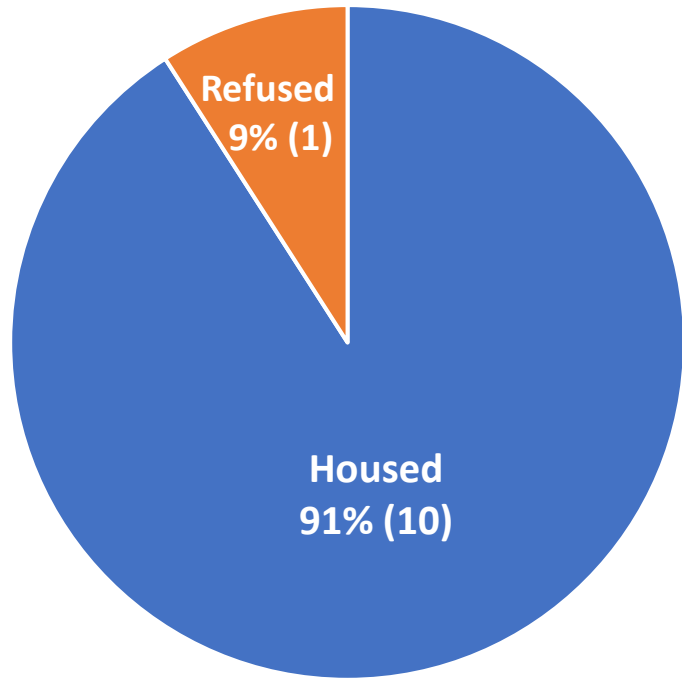
- After a housing assessment, placement into permanent housing is not immediate. The Housing Navigation Center provides Bridge Beds, where clients will stay during the housing process, “bridging” the time from housing assessment to placement into permanent housing throughout the region (apartment units with supportive services).
- The Housing Navigation Center is a temporary “pit stop” on the road to being housed, designed to assist and expedite the housing process by providing a safe, stable, and consistent location for case managers to work with clients on their housing.
- The Center’s Goals:
 - Increase the number of clients placed into permanent housing by the CHHP.
 - Reduce the amount of time it takes the CHHP to place a client into permanent housing.
- Clients can stay until permanent housing placement (no time limits).
- A temporary facility (utilizing a motel) is currently operating, with specialized facility currently under construction.

Housing Navigation Center



Homeless for decades, Joe Luiz (a disabled veteran) most recently lived in several structures under 290 at 34th St. Within days, Joe was stability housed at the Temp. Navigation Center and is currently working with case managers on his placement into Permanent housing.





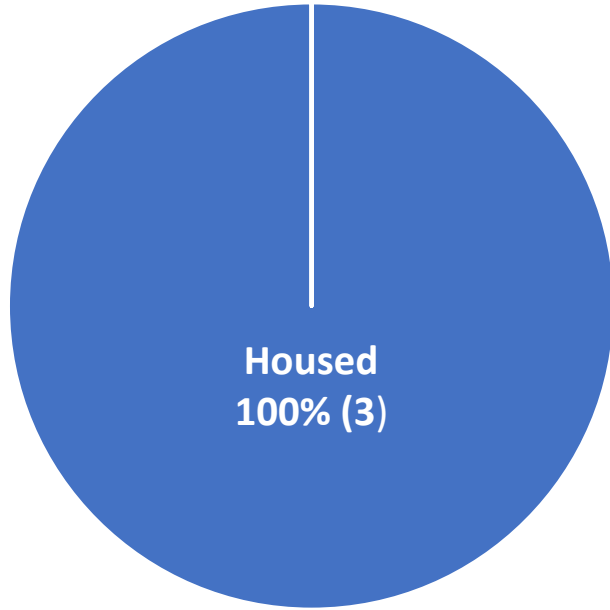
Housed

- Signed a lease and moved into unit with supportive services.

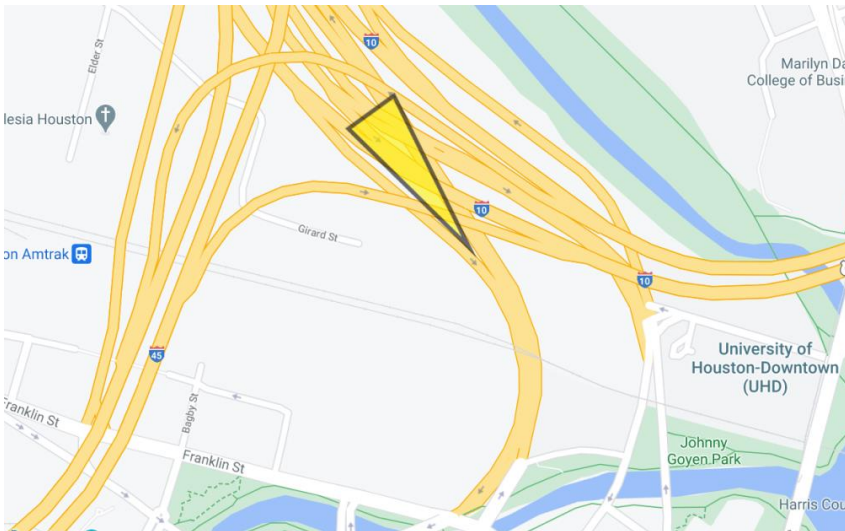
Refused

The Triangle Encampment

3 Individuals & 4 Tents



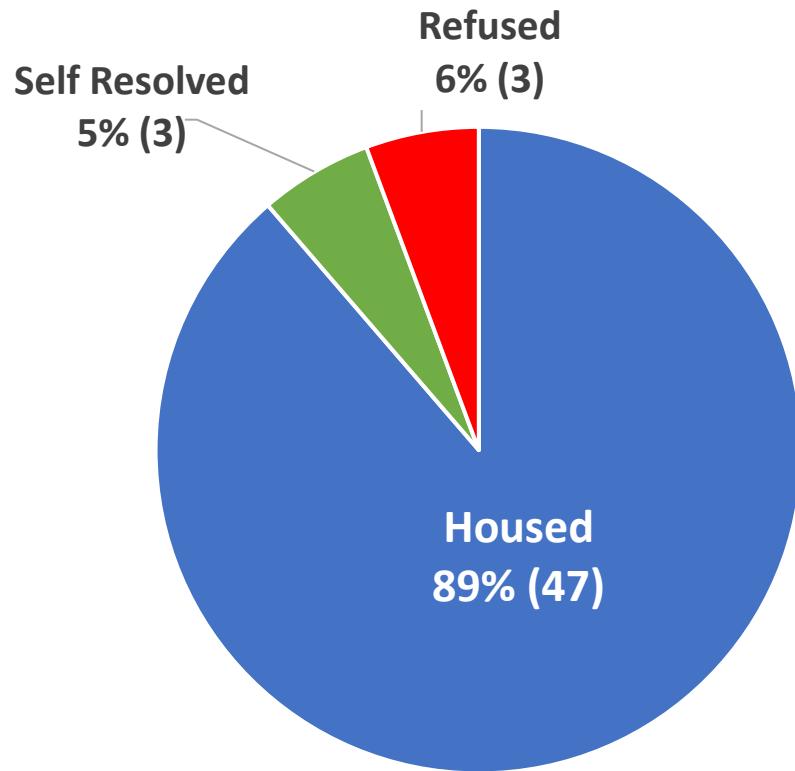
BEFORE



AFTER

Allen Parkway Encampment

53 Individuals & Tents



Housed

- Signed a lease and moved into unit.

Self Resolved

- Expressed interest in housing at initial assessment but were able leave area and/or obtain housing on their own without assistance.

Refused

- Clearly stated do not want housing and will refuse to leave the street.
- Outreach is committed to continuing to work with them.

Housing Navigation Stations



Transportation to Housing



Outreach w/ Client



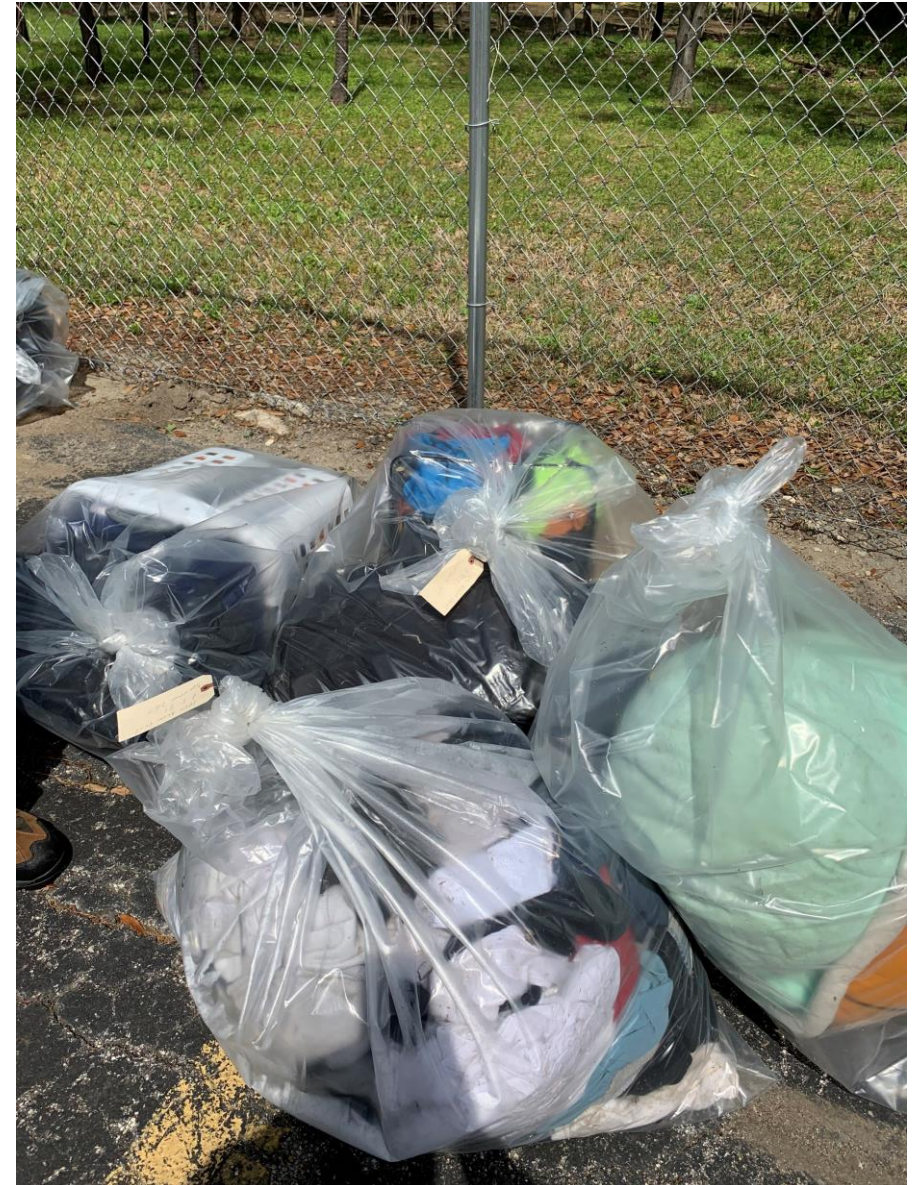
Cleaning after clients moved into housing



Outreach worked with clients to organize & identify items to be transported to his/her new housing unit (black bags), storage (clear bags), or trash (see circled tag on tent).



Items bagged & ready for transportation to (voluntary) storage.



Encampment Decommissioning



Encampment Decommissioning



Encampment Response through Housing

A 'Herculean' Team Effort

Made Possible by the Following Public & Private Partners

- Coalition for the Homeless
- SEARCH
- Salvation Army
- Baker Ripley
- Star of Hope
- Harris Center
- The Beacon
- Magnificat House
- Avenue 360
- Career & Recovery
- Hope Haven
- METRO
- Downtown Management District
- Uptown Management District
- Houston Historical Society
- HPD – HOT Team & DRT
- COH – Mayor's Office
- COH – Housing & Community Development Dept.
- COH – Public Works Dept.
- COH – Health Dept.
- COH – Legal Dept.
- Texas Department of Transportation

Funded by the City of Houston & Harris County through the Community COVID-19 Homeless Housing Program.

Encampment Response through Housing

Lessons Learned

- **Key = Preventing Displacement**
- **No two encampments are alike**
- **Not a question of “if,” but when...**

- **Additional important tools:**
 - **Wellness & Housing Center**
 - **Housing Navigation Center**
 - **Integrated Mental Health Teams to assist**

Decommissioned Encampments & Results (as of 5/26/23)

Encampments Decommissioned

96

Individuals Engaged

548

Individuals Housed

491 (90%)

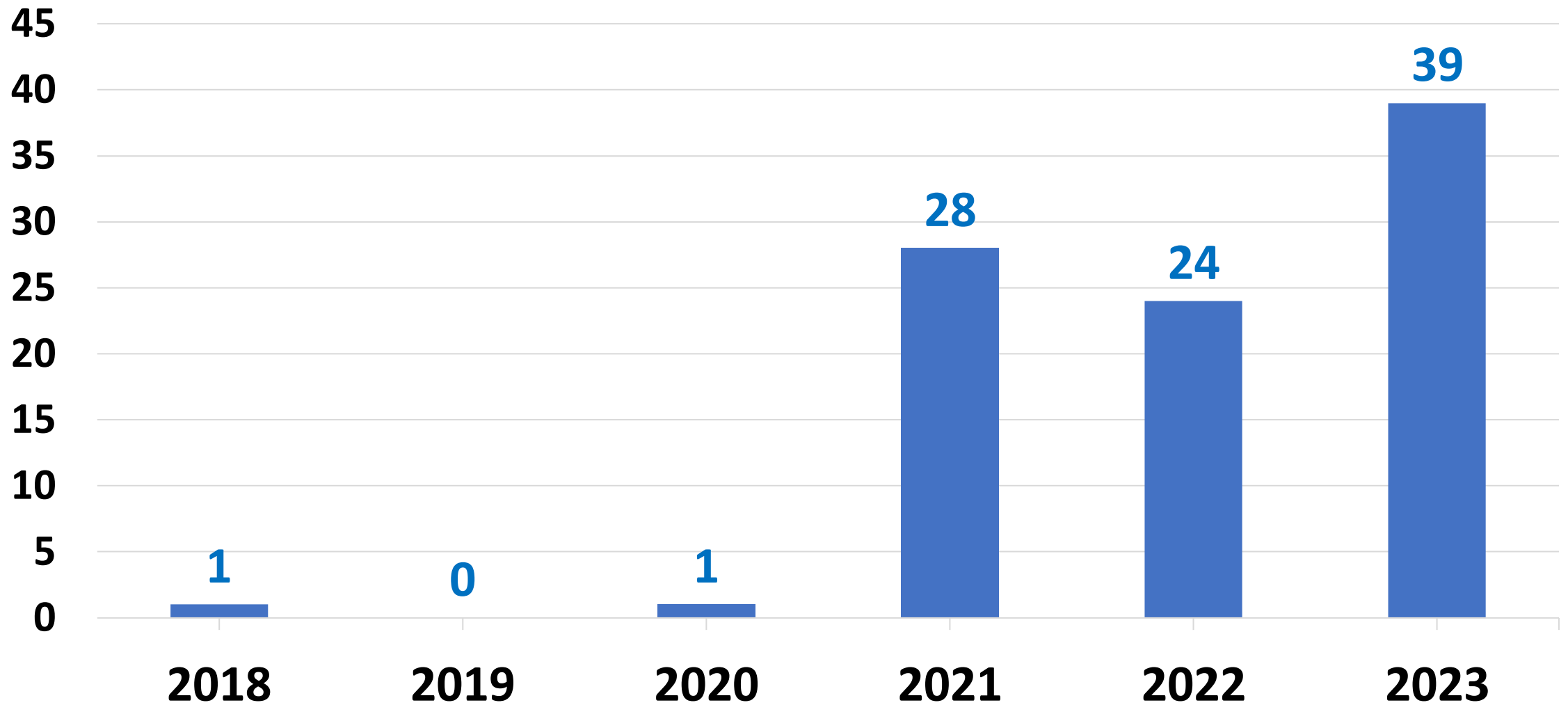
Indiv. Housed by System*

399 (81%)

Location	Number of Encampments	Number of Inhabitants	Refused	Self-Resolved	"Housed" by System	Total Housed (System + Self)
500 Fannin	1	11	1	0	10	10
Triangle	1	3	0	0	3	3
Allen Parkway / 45N	2	53	3	4	46	50
45 N / Crosstimbers	2	28	1	1	26	27
59 SW / Fountainview + Westpark	2	11	7	0	4	4
Louisiana / Pierce (Fed Building)	1	8	2	1	5	6
Hollister/Tidwell	1	10	0	2	8	10
US90 / S Post Oak	1	2	1	0	1	1
610-Heights	1	10	1	1	8	9
i10 W / Silber	1	2	2	0	0	0
i10 W - San Felipe / Blalock	2	3	1	1	1	2
290 corridor - part 1	5	17	2	1	14	15
290 corridor - part 2	4	21	3	1	17	18
Hamilton / "Hilltop"	1	35	5	8	22	30
45 South part 1	3	22	0	3	19	22
45 South part 2	5	17	0	1	16	17
610 / Post Oak	1	2	0	2	0	2
45 North- Tidwell to Beltway 8	3	20	2	6	12	18
610 NW	4	11	2	0	9	9
610 W / Uptown	4	12	2	3	7	10
i10 E - 59 to Uvalde	1	1	0	0	1	1
610 SW / Beechnut	1	3	0	0	3	3
i10 W / Houston Ave	1	2	0	1	1	2
45 N Central	3	6	0	0	6	6
288 Central / Section H	2	1	0	0	1	1
Spur / Richmond	2	14	1	0	13	13
610 E / Fulton	1	4	0	2	2	4
Spur / West Alabama	1	14	0	2	12	14
i59 N - Texas to Runnels (Chartres)	2	57	3	9	45	54
i45 S - Chartres to Emancipation	4	50	2	16	32	48
i45 S - Emancipation to 610	7	16	2	7	7	14
Beltway 8 and i10 E	3	6	0	4	2	6
Timmons & West Alabama	1	1	0	0	1	1
i45 S - Beltway 8 to Clear Creek	2	5	0	2	3	5
249 - Beltway 8 to 99	5	4	0	1	3	4
Beltway 8- Westpark to 288	1	6	2	0	4	4
610 South- Alameda to Stella Link	7	26	4	6	16	22
I-10 & Heights - 610 NW	3	13	2	3	8	11
610 East- i10 E to 45 S	1	4	0	0	4	4
59 North: 610 to Beltway 8	3	17	6	4	7	11
	96	548	57	92	399	491

*in permanent housing or at Temp. Nav. Center awaiting permanent housing placement.

Encampments Decommissioned through Housing

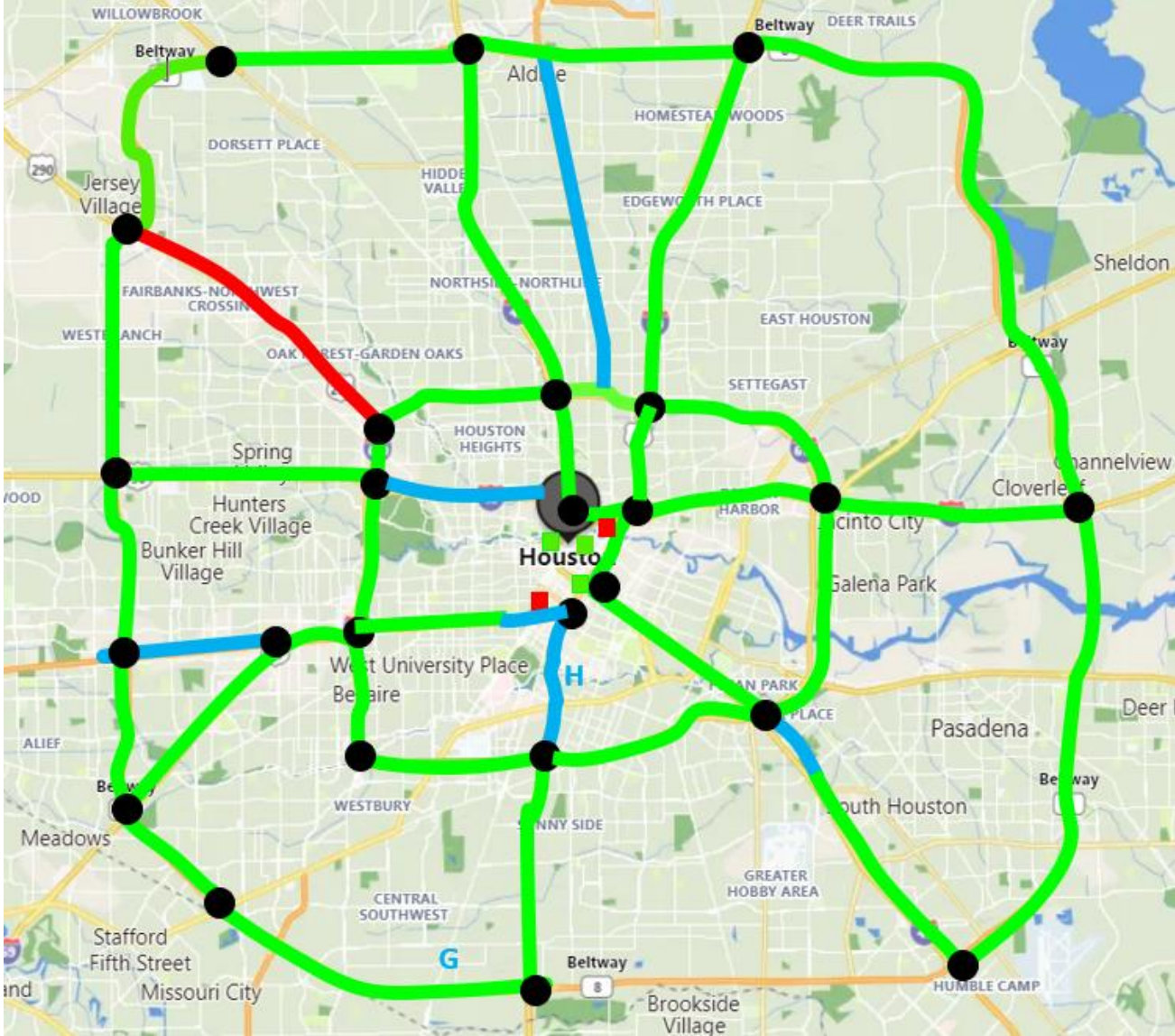


Encampment Decommissioning-Housing Strategy

Phase 1 – Street level tents/structures at major intersections and highways.

Key

- Green line = Decommissioned through housing and/or no encampments.
- Blue line = Decommissioning almost complete
- Purple line = Planned decommission w/n a month
- Red line = Substantial structures.



Encampment Decommissioning-Housing Strategy

Integration with the Homeless Housing System

Law Enforcement Supportive

Debris Removal Assistance

What is success?

Essential Role of the Legal Department

Legality vs. Effectiveness

Long-term Results

≠ Carbon Copying

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The Way Home

