



August 19, 2013

The Honorable Cynthia Ming-mei Lee
Presiding Judge
Superior Court of California, County of San Francisco
400 McAllister Street
San Francisco, CA 94102

Dear Judge Lee:

The following is in response to the 2012-2013 Civil Grand Jury report, "*Golden Gate Park's Homeless Population: Are San Francisco's Policies Serving Us Well?*"

Golden Gate Park is the crown jewel of the San Francisco's park system. An estimated 13 million people enjoy the fifth most visited urban park in the United States. In one day, a visitor could enjoy a museum, participate in a recreational activity, or simply meander through open space.

Sadly, homeless encampments continue to exist in the park. San Francisco has aggressively worked on this issue over the past decade. The City has made a concerted effort to assist those without a home, not just in the park but elsewhere, find permanent housing. In 2006, the estimated count of park dwellers was 200. Just five years later, the count had dropped to 50 dwellers with seasonal variations. Despite this recent successful trend, current estimates reveal that this population decline has plateaued.

In response, DPH's Engagement Specialist Team (EST), the outreach arm of the San Francisco Homeless Outreach Team (SFHOT), is dedicating at least one outreach worker to serve the Golden Gate Park population on an ongoing, as-needed, and until needed basis. To assist with this additional focus, City agencies will rely on the existing Coordinated Case Management Services System (CCMS), an electronic charting, reporting, and communication tool that routinely pulls client histories from twenty databases (e.g., citations, psychiatric emergency, shelter) from five City departments and integrates them into one electronic medical record to provide critical information to teams working with high-need clients.

Finally, proposed legislation is pending at the Board of Supervisors that would standardize park closure hours throughout the entire Recreation and Park Department (Rec Park) system. If adopted, a clear closing time would be established for Golden Gate Park.

In response, I have carefully considered the findings and recommendations of the Civil Grand Jury, as well as the response of DPH, SFPD, and Rec Park.

The Mayor's Office response to the Civil Grand Jury's findings is as follows:

Finding 1. City agencies lack specific data on the characteristics of GGP dwellers, which prevents accurate profiling of individual problems and needs.

Response: *Agree in part, disagree in part.* City agencies understand the general characteristics of park dwellers. On the whole, young, transient homeless are closer to the panhandle. Older, often military veteran, chronic homeless are on the west side of the park. In addition, through the CCMS system, cross-departmental encounter data is available on many high-risk homeless individuals, including park dwellers, though additional information would be useful in planning for outreach, programs, and services. To accurately profile the population, the San Francisco Police Department (SFPD) could provide SFHOT with additional, specific information on individuals encountered during outreach.

Finding 2. With better information about Golden Gate Park dwellers, their histories, and their needs, the City would be better able to move these individuals out of the Park, into a more stable situation.

Response: *Agree.* Additional information on park dwellers would be helpful. The dedicated EST worker will assist with this by performing the initial outreach, engagement and assessment of homeless individuals in Golden Gate Park. The information collected will be shared with the larger SFHOT so that the individual's record is updated in CCMS and a support services response, including a further evaluation of the need for case management, can then be tailored to individual park dwellers.

Finding 3. Because the City does not track individual park dwellers and their interactions with social services, it is difficult to determine the efficiency and success of outreach efforts in reducing the park population.

Response: *Agree in part, disagree in part.* While individual park dwellers are not specifically tracked, to the extent they are high-utilizers of multiple City services, information on their service utilization is documented in CCMS. The Golden Gate Park population has fallen over the last decade due to concerted outreach efforts. While there are still homeless encampments in Golden Gate Park, this overall trend should be considered a success.

Finding 7. Shopping carts facilitate moving personal items into the Park and setting up encampments.

Response: *Agree.* As stated in the Rec Park response, SFPD has a standing order regarding shopping carts which is enforced in all City parks. In addition, Park Patrol removes all abandoned property, including shopping carts, from park premises.

The Mayor's Office response to the Civil Grand Jury's recommendations is as follows:

Recommendation 1: The City should formalize a system to gather information on the characteristics of Golden Gate Park dwellers and why they live in the Park.

Response: *Recommendation already implemented.* CCMS is a web-based database designed to function as an electronic charting, reporting, and communication tool for City teams working with homeless clients served across multiple systems of care. CCMS currently has data imputed from DPH, Fire, Jail Health Services, Direct Access to Housing, and the Engagement Specialist Team. This system is used to gather information on the homeless population as a whole and can be used to enter specific information on individuals in Golden Gate Park. Aggregate information, such as profiles of the population, can be developed through CCMS.

Recommendation 2: Information about Golden Gate Park dwellers should be used to tailor support services to specific populations, whose age and circumstances affect their needs and acceptance of services.

Response: *Recommendation will be implemented in the future.* With the additional information gleaned from dedicated outreach, support services could then be tailored to individual dwellers in the park.

Recommendation 3: The City should establish a system to track its outreach efforts among park dwellers and use the information to evaluate effectiveness in reducing the number of park dwellers.

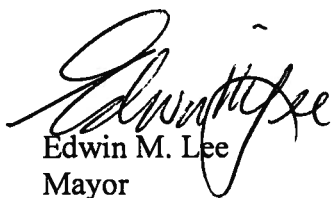
Response: *Recommendation will not be implemented.* Instead of establishing a new system to track outreach, CCMS will continue to be used to monitor service utilization by high-risk individuals accessing multiple City services. The information collected will be shared with the larger SFHOT so that the individual's record is updated in CCMS and a support services response, including a further evaluation of the need for case management, can then be tailored to individual park dwellers and tracked over time.

Recommendation 7: The San Francisco Park Code should ban shopping carts in Golden Gate Park in order to discourage living in the Park and to reduce litter.

Response: *Recommendation will not be implemented.* Current policy already does not allow shopping carts in the park. Amending the park code is unnecessary; SFPD has a standing order regarding shopping carts which is enforced in all City parks. In addition, Park Patrol removes all abandoned property, including shopping carts, from park premises.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this Civil Grand Jury report.

Sincerely,


Edwin M. Lee
Mayor