



## **PUBLIC SAFETY CITIZEN TASK FORCE**

### **October 16, 2013 Meeting Staff Report**

#### **Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Public Safety Citizen Task Force (PSTF) consider, deliberate on, and modify, as needed, the following initial draft of public safety-enhancing recommendations.

#### **Discussion**

##### **Purpose of the Draft Document**

The recommendations were assembled to reflect the general consensus of the public, expert panelists, and individual PSTF members who have participated in the process and offered recommendations. Given that the PSTF has yet to deliberate on recommendations as a body, the draft document is intended to be a starting place to spark discussion and build towards consensus.

##### **Our Community's Public Safety Challenges and Opportunities**

As evidenced by the data and testimony collected during the last five months of study, Santa Cruz faces diverse public safety challenges. These issues will be described in great detail in the final report to City Council, drawing on evidence collected throughout the proceedings and relevant case studies. For the purpose of this staff report, a short summary will be presented to give readers context for the attached draft recommendations.

Crime, substance abuse, homelessness<sup>1</sup>, and an ineffective criminal justice system seem to be the four biggest factors contributing to the breakdown of community cohesion in Santa Cruz. While crime rates have steadily decreased in Santa Cruz County over the last 18 years, the City of Santa Cruz has not followed that trend, with property crime rates increasing since 2009. Santa Cruz residents are feeling the effect of disproportionately high levels of crime and disorder in public spaces. Many in the community have expressed a strong desire for change that would lead to improved security and quality of life.

Saturated property crime, substance abuse, and disorder tied to public nuisance crimes and anti-social behavior, coupled with media attention around isolated violent crime and public health concerns (hypodermic needles), has created fear of crime in Santa Cruz. Fear of crime has a corrosive effect on the individual and community, negatively impacting all aspects of quality of life. In Santa Cruz, both tangible crime and fear of crime have changed how community members and

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<sup>1</sup> When referring to homelessness, it is important to make a distinction between homeless individuals that exhibit disruptive and criminal behaviors and those who do not. While the sheer number of homeless in Santa Cruz adversely impacts the community (as described later in this report), PSTF study was focused primarily on the unsheltered or transient individuals who live criminal lifestyles, exhibit anti-social behaviors and abuse social service provisions. Recommendations focused on decreasing homelessness in Santa Cruz are primarily focused on this segment of the homeless population.

visitors interact with each other and their environment, fraying the fabric of our neighborhoods, communal spaces and business districts.

Tangible crime and fear of crime impact City operations in both obvious and unexpected ways. The prevention and enforcement of crime, particularly nuisance-type crime, is an incredible resource drain on the City. Fear of crime impacts revenue generation in our business districts and communal use of our public spaces, in turn requiring more law enforcement and City expenditures to promote pro-social engagement.

While homelessness was not studied directly during the proceedings, it has been noted that the disproportionately high concentration of unsheltered people living in Santa Cruz County adversely affects our community. Community residents, business owners, visitors, community service workers, public safety officers and homeless individuals feel these impacts on a daily basis. While the PSTF is not mandated or capable of solving homelessness in Santa Cruz, a comprehensive understanding of the issue is essential as homelessness and public safety appear to be deeply intertwined. This would be a very important step in developing appropriate public safety policy recommendations.

As noted in "Understanding How Homelessness Affects Us All," a publication produced by the Renfrew Collingwood Steering Committee in Vancouver, Canada, communities are affected by homelessness in a number of ways:

1. **The moral dimension.** We are all morally affected by homelessness as we share space with fellow citizens living in substandard conditions that affect physical health, mental health and spirit.
2. **Social cohesion.** Evidence is growing that societies in which large inequities exist in the distribution of income and resources are unhealthy for all members. Large-scale inequity is associated with the breakdown of social cohesion that leads to increased fear and uncertainty for everyone. (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2006)
3. **Social inclusion.** Growing homelessness creates divisions within the community as an "us vs. them" mentality develops. If a family is left homeless due to a flood, fire or other sudden tragedy, communities will often rally around to provide aid. In those same communities, individuals living on the streets because of tragedies that are less immediate, but no less severe, often suffer from shame, stigma and isolation.
4. **Social harmony.** Conflicts over the use of public and community spaces increase when there are large numbers of people without access to their own "private" space. These conflicts can bring to the surface deep-rooted issues linked to negative perceptions about members of society who are poor, vulnerable or marginalized.

In addition to this theoretical disruption of community cohesion and harmony, homelessness in Santa Cruz has had material repercussions on our living environment. Illegal camping, human waste, illegal dumping and disruptive behaviors, oftentimes symptoms of substance abuse and mental illness, are not only a public health concern but exacerbate fear of crime. A commonly-held perception that homelessness is uniquely tied to crime and substance abuse further marginalizes that segment of the community.

#### Vision and Goal of the PSTF Policy Recommendations

The vision and goal of the PSTF is to develop recommendations to assist the City in reducing crime, substance abuse, fear of crime, and homelessness in our community. This can be achieved only with the commitment and collaboration of the City's residents and regional partners, in both the private

and public sectors, and a comprehensive approach that includes best-practices models and innovative ideas.

### Methodology Used to Assemble Recommendations

With the PSTF vision and goals in mind, the draft recommendations were assembled using the following assumptions.

First, crime reduction is most effective and sustainable with a balanced approach of prevention, strategic enforcement and targeted services with accountability. Second, the reduction of homelessness in our community is dependent upon striking a balance between providing housing to the most vulnerable homeless individuals and enacting systemic social service reform countywide. A careful balance of both approaches will ensure our most vulnerable population is provided for, while creating effective accountability measures to thwart abuse of services. Finally, recommendations should be collaborative in nature, with the City, County, non-profits and neighborhoods all taking their fair share of the burden to enact positive change.

It is expected that these three tools, used in concert, will be successful in improving quality of life and our sense of safety in Santa Cruz.



## **PUBLIC SAFETY CITIZEN TASK FORCE**

### **First Draft Policy Recommendations**

Policy recommendations consist of a four-prong approach: prevention/education/connection, strategic enforcement with accountability, collaborative oversight, and alternative funding.

#### **Prevention/Education/Connection**

##### **Prevention**

While more long-range in nature, preventative programs are essential to reduce crime and victimization in a sustainable fashion. The PSTF recommends policy changes to be heavily weighted towards prevention initiatives, with the City, County, schools, neighborhoods and our non-profit service partners playing an integral role in funding, implementation and management.

Prevention initiatives should include the following priorities (in no particular order):

1. Enhancement of drug treatment funding
2. Expansion of youth programming
3. Truancy enforcement
4. Environmental design and reprogramming of spaces
5. Rebranding

Treatment of drug addiction is underfunded in Santa Cruz County. Drug addiction and insufficient funding to treat addiction are universal problems experienced throughout California communities and the nation. Given that treatment lowers the rate of criminal recidivism, the Task Force believes that investment in (and greater collaboration between) existing treatment programs is essential.

The Task Force believes that an investment in our youth is paramount to reducing future crime. Children that stay in school and are active under adult supervision after school are far less likely to try drugs and/or alcohol, develop addiction, join gangs, and engage in criminal activity as young adults. The Task Force recommends a partnership program, administered by the City, County, School Districts and non-profits to enhance youth programming and truancy enforcement.

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) and reprogramming of spaces are data-driven crime prevention programs. CPTED reduces criminal opportunity through design of space (lighting, visibility, cover reduction, etc.) while reprogramming is intended to create pro-social activities. With the vast majority of criminal and nuisance behaviors taking place along the San Lorenzo River corridor and in Harvey West Park, the Task Force recommends proactive implementation of both strategies to combat crime in those areas.

Santa Cruz has a storied history of openness, compassion and tolerance for a wide variety of lifestyles, including those consisting of regular drug abuse and reliance upon community goodwill and social services. Our community celebrates and takes pride in this appreciation for differences. However, a large segment of the community believes that this tolerance has a negative side effect. They believe our community has for far too long tolerated criminal behavior associated with these alternative lifestyles. There is a limit to what we should accept and tolerate and that limit has been breached.

The Task Force believes Santa Cruz should no longer tolerate subsidizing individuals who routinely victimize the community and recommends undertaking a rebranding campaign to combat the perception that Santa Cruz is an easy place to commit crimes without consequence. Important messaging should include zero tolerance for illicit drug use, drug-related criminal activity, underage substance abuse, and abuse of local social service provisions by individuals victimizing our community.

### Education

According to the 2012 Santa Cruz County Community Assessment Project (United Way sponsored), 15 percent of 11th-graders in the County self-reported tobacco use within the last 30 days. 40 percent reported use of alcohol and 30 percent reported use of marijuana. According to the report, marijuana, cocaine and methamphetamine use has increased over the last decade among our County's youth.

Drawing upon an "exposure opportunity" concept, sequential use of tobacco, alcohol, marijuana and cocaine is proven to increase the likelihood of later illegal drug involvement. Because Santa Cruz has an extremely high rate of substance-related criminal activity, and a dearth of early education on substance abuse and addiction, the Task Force recommends an educational campaign to inform parents and youth on the dangers of early substance abuse.

In addition, the Task Force recommends community-wide education on mental health, gang desistence and prevention, and other related topics of interest.

### Connection

Neighborhood cohesion is an effective deterrent of illegal behavior. Studies show that voluntary action by neighborhoods can play an integral role in maintaining order in a cost-effective and legal manner. But studies also show that neighborhood organizations are not self-initiating, even in the face of threatening crime problems. Opportunities for action must be made available to neighborhood organizations through funding, collaboration and management assistance.

With that in mind, the Task Force recommends proactive support of neighborhood organizations by the City and County. Of particular importance is the need for stronger engagement with marginalized and under-represented communities in Santa Cruz.



**Table 1: Prevention/Education/Connection**

| Solution/ Category  | Intended Impact | Supporting data/logic | Time Scale | Unintended Impacts | Metrics | \$ Cost | \$ Source | Public Message |
|---|-----------------|-----------------------|------------|--------------------|---------|---------|-----------|----------------|
| SC County Office of Education to reform truancy policies and enforcement processes  |                 |                       |            |                    |         |         |           |                |
| <b>Environmental Design/ Reprogramming of Spaces</b>  |                 |                       |            |                    |         |         |           |                |
| Outside review of environmental design in public and greenbelt areas for safety   |                 |                       |            |                    |         |         |           |                |
| City-wide lighting improvement project: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add/replace with solar options</li> <li>• Additional lighting along the levee</li> <li>• Work with community and neighborhood groups to facilitate their needs for improved street lighting</li> <li>• Work with business owners to improve alley and outdoor security lighting (rebates)</li> </ul> |                 |                       |            |                    |         |         |           |                |
| Create a vibrant transit hub downtown: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build public safety improvements into new transit center design and planning</li> </ul>   |                 |                       |            |                    |         |         |           |                |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add a free bike check/locker area to downtown transit center</li> </ul>  |                 |                       |            |                    |         |         |           |                |
| <p>Improve park and community space for more positive use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Santa Cruz alley project – better use of downtown alley space as a walking transit corridor. Create vibrant and active alleys downtown.</li> <li>• San Lorenzo Park community garden pilot program – create a pilot program for SLP that could expand to other neighborhood parks (create neighborhood community gardens in city parks)</li> <li>• More city supported “nightwalks” and sponsored events</li> <li>• Commercial licensing use and permits for the levee for food trucks and carts – better commercial and non-commercial use of the</li> </ul> |                 |                       |            |                    |         |         |           |                |

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| levee to help “re-brand” downtown. Revenue could support levee upgrades and improved security measures. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Better financial support and resources for groups that clean public spaces.</li> </ul>   |                 |                       |            |                    |         |         |           |                |
| Establish an "Ocean St. Enterprise Zone" with the goal to revitalize the entire length of Ocean St by examining development potential and capitalizing on the tourist industry. Portion of the revenues generated by development in the zone to fund housing, social, mental, and treatment services. |                 |                       |            |                    |         |         |           |                |
| Adopt the recommendations listed in the 9/25/13 PSTF Staff report on the San Lorenzo Waterway regarding CPTED.  |                 |                       |            |                    |         |         |           |                |
| Initiate a “weed and seed” program for the City’s most blighted areas.  |                 |                       |            |                    |         |         |           |                |
| <b>Rebranding</b>   |                 |                       |            |                    |         |         |           |                |
| <b>Santa Cruz is Anti-Drug</b>  |                 |                       |            |                    |         |         |           |                |
| City of Santa Cruz takes an official position on illicit drug use, and asks UCSC to do  |                 |                       |            |                    |         |         |           |                |









## **Strategic Enforcement with Accountability**

The mission of the Santa Cruz Police Department (SCPD) is to provide protection and services to our community. With a \$23 million annual budget and 94 budgeted sworn officers serving a population of 62,000, the force runs a lean operation. As a destination spot for summer tourists, UCSC students, and transients, and as an entertainment hub for Santa Cruz County and beyond, the SCPD is often stretched extremely thin.

SCPD currently has 6 vacant officer positions, with several officers out on work related and non-work related injuries, and several other individuals in the training process. In total, SCPD are at 75 percent of sworn strength in the field. Currently there are no gaps in service or coverage, however, this shortage puts a significant strain on those officers serving the community. While there are a number of factors contributing to officer attrition (the recent tragedy, long-term disability, retirement, etc.), SCPD has historically had difficulty maintaining a fully-staffed force. With current staffing levels, it becomes difficult to effectively balance department priorities: crime prevention, investigations, community programming, etc.

Public nuisance/quality of life crimes and repeat offenders put a heavy strain on SCPD resources. Calls for service are at an all-time high and individuals that self-report as homeless account for significant portion of the total number of arrests and citations. Repeat offenders, typically about 100 individuals per year, are responsible for a staggering number of arrests. Over 50 percent of repeat offender arrests are related to drugs or alcohol.

SCPD's record volume of repeat offender arrests and municipal code violations is a symptom of a failing criminal justice system for low-level crimes in Santa Cruz County. Lack of jail space, treatment options, probation capacity, and the Superior Court's apparent indifference has created an endless cycle of recidivism among low-level criminals.

The PSTF believes that a strategic intervention is required to improve community conditions around addiction-related crime and public nuisance behaviors in our neighborhoods, open spaces, parks, and business districts. Therefore, the Task Force recommends three priorities: strategic police enforcement, offender assistance with accountability/recidivism reduction, and criminal justice system accountability.

### **Strategic Enforcement**

Several critical SCPD priorities have been identified by the PSTF. The PSTF recommends the City take immediate measures to staff the SCPD at budgeted levels. The PSTF recommends moving to a targeted policing model, with a strategy that emphasizes enforcement of nuisance crimes in natural, city entry and focal point areas; "broken window" policing; vigorous enforcement of bike license laws; and property seizure law enforcement of repeat drug offenders, those ignoring citations, or violating parole.

The PSTF recommends a program focused on repeat offenders. SCPD should work with the Santa Cruz County Health Services Agency, Sheriff's Office and service providers to target repeat offenders who exhibit the most problematic behaviors in the City. The City and County should create a multi-disciplinary team to work on the most serious cases, following the MOST Team model.

In addition, the PSTF recommends implementing new crime-reporting mechanisms via text, mobile applications and web platforms.

### Offender Assistance with Accountability/Recidivism Reduction

In addition to funding the Serial Inebriate Program (SIP), the Task Force recommends a specialty court model for substance abusers, the mentally ill and homeless offenders. This recommendation might take the form of distinct courts for the major categories of offense, or as a Community Court, which would adjudicate all community-driven priorities.

The specialty court is a proven model in halting the revolving door of recidivism by linking offenders to treatment and rigorous judicial monitoring. Specialty courts are highly collaborative, bringing together the criminal justice system and service providers to enforce court-ordered sanctions. The Task Force believes that the specialty court model would provide offenders with the right balance of treatment assistance with accountability. The Task Force further recommends the creation of a coerced drug treatment center at the Rountree facility.

### Criminal Justice System Accountability

The PSTF believes that the Criminal Justice System should be held accountable for under-serving the community as it relates to low-level crimes and drug offenses. Improved accountability should be in the form of increased transparency, consistent adjudication of the City's municipal code violations, implementation of a specialty court model, and Probation reform.

In addition, the PSTF recommends a Community Prosecutor model be implemented for the County. Community Prosecution calls upon the community to establish justice priorities and builds collaboration between neighborhoods and the criminal justice system. The Community Prosecutor should work in concert with the specialty court programs (or Community Court).









**Table 2: Strategic Enforcement with Accountability**

| Solution/ Category   | Intended Impact | Supporting data/logic | Time Scale | Unintended Impacts | Metrics | \$ Cost | \$ Source | Public Message |
|--|-----------------|-----------------------|------------|--------------------|---------|---------|-----------|----------------|
| City creates a Task Force for Justice that is public and takes on the goal of insuring real management of code violations and violators so that there are criminal justice-driven consequences for violations. Would include citizens, law enforcement, corrections, probation and courts                |                 |                       |            |                    |         |         |           |                |
| County court protocols and procedures – Better cooperation and mutual understanding between DA and county judges dealing with AB109, quality of life recidivism in the courts, infractions vs. misdemeanors, dealing with failure to appears, dealing with ROR (Released On Recognizance) vs. bail, etc. |                 |                       |            |                    |         |         |           |                |

## **Collaborative Oversight and Alternative Funding**

The PSTF believes that its own process should be the first step in building a county-wide strategic plan for public safety. At the very least, the PSTF recommends the creation of a Public Safety Commission for the City of Santa Cruz. Commission should include a City Council member, a County Supervisor, a representative from the City's Public Works and Park and Recreation Departments, a SCCS Trustee, a representative of the County Court system, and an at-large member of the community appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the City Council. The group would serve as a diversified, multi-organizational leadership Commission, providing the City Council with guidance on public safety issues on a regular basis.

The PSTF recommends the City Council and County consider an alternative funding mechanism to fund any programs identified herein that are outside of the City and County's regular budget. The alternative funding mechanism could include a tax measure, Social Impact Bonds, or a Pay for Success program.



