



## PUBLIC SAFETY CITIZEN TASK FORCE

### Highest Priority Policy Recommendations

Public safety highest priority policy recommendations consist of a four-pronged approach: prevention, strategic enforcement with accountability, collaborative oversight, and appropriate funding.

#### **Prevention**

While more long-range in nature, preventative programs are essential to reduce crime and victimization in a sustainable fashion. The Task Force 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:

1. Environmental design and protection of high crime areas and open spaces
2. Enhancement of drug and alcohol treatment funding
3. Expansion of pro-social youth programs

#### **Environmental Design and Protection of High Crime Areas and Open Spaces**

#### **Task Force Findings**

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) and reactivation of spaces are data-driven crime prevention programs. With proven efficacy in many cities, CPTED reduces criminal opportunity through landscape and architectural design of space (lighting, visibility, cover reduction, etc.) while reactivation is intended to create pro-social activities in public locations. Environmental design and pro-social activities are lacking in our greenbelt and commercial areas, particularly along the San Lorenzo River corridor, on Pacific Avenue, and in Harvey West.

The County's Syringe Services Program is effective in lowering the transmission of blood borne diseases such as HIV and Hepatitis C for intravenous drug uses. However, the Task Force finds that the County has not properly accounted for and mitigated the unintended consequences of locating a Syringe Exchange within a residential neighborhood and geographical constraints of Santa Cruz. There should be no occurrence of spent hypodermic syringes being found in the City's open spaces, parks, neighborhoods, beaches and business districts. Until this public health crisis is rectified, the Task Force finds that the County Board of Supervisors should consider the management of SSP as a top priority.

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Recommendations

The Task Force recommends a comprehensive environmental design and programming study of the City’s most crime-ridden public and commercial areas. The study’s implementation plan should be phased to target the community’s highest areas of safety concern. While the study is underway, the City should immediately improve lighting on the San Lorenzo River Levee and Park and the Harvey West area to discourage illegal behavior and reinvigorate those public spaces.

With regard to the County’s Syringe Exchange Program, the Task Force recommends that City staff and the City Council work with the County Health Services Agency and 3<sup>rd</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> District Supervisor Office to ensure the public safety efficacy (harm reduction of users and community affected by discarded syringes) of the County’s Syringe Services Program. The following measures are considered the highest priority by the Task Force.

- Implore the County Board of Supervisors to address the community-wide impacts of SSP on the work plan/agenda.
- Ensure best practices are in place for SSP to mitigate impacts to the City’s public spaces and neighborhoods.
  - Relocate SSP to County-owned non-residential property.
  - Implement a syringe identification tagging program (e.g. color coding or serial number)
  - Exchange to be on a true one for one basis with an actual physical count of syringes being exchanged. No estimations should be allowed.
  - Account for both syringes being distributed and returned. Account for syringes without identification tagging separately.
- City should prevent additional syringe exchanges programs from operating or opening within the City limits.

Enhancement of Drug and Alcohol Treatment Funding

Findings

Given that addiction treatment lowers the rate of criminal recidivism, the Task Force finds that investment in (and greater collaboration between) proven effective treatment programs is essential. Treatment of drug addiction is underfunded in Santa Cruz County.

Recommendation

The Task Force therefore recommends that City Council and staff work with the County Board of Supervisors and the County Health Services Agency staff on the County Strategic Plan for Alcohol and Drug Treatment and Intervention to insure that proven, evidence-based interventions and treatment programs that address specific City needs, are included in the Strategic Plan and adequately funded.

Needs specific to the City noted by the Task Force include the following.

- Reduce public anti-social behaviors caused by serial inebriates and drug users.

- 95       •       Reduce both violent and non-violent crime caused by addiction to opiates and other drugs.  
96 With these measures, the Task Force believes that the County's Strategic Plan will further help to  
97 delineate the problems and their interventions and treatment that contribute to unsafe environments  
98 locally.

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100 Expansion of Pro-Social Youth Programs

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102 Findings

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104 The Task Force finds that an investment in our youth is part of an effective strategy to reduce future  
105 crime. Children that stay in school and are active under adult supervision during after-school hours  
106 are far less likely to try drugs and/or alcohol, develop addiction, join gangs, and engage in criminal  
107 activity as young adults.

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109 Recommendation

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111 The Task Force recommends to leverage existing programs and, if necessary, consider creating new  
112 programs to provide pro-social activities, focusing on the 3-9 pm period, that serve both at-risk and  
113 pre-at risk youth. These programs should include activities that appeal to particular cultures and  
114 subcultures (e.g. baile folklorica and skate boarding) as well as programs that bring different cultures  
115 and subcultures together (such as little league and soccer). These programs should be both attractive  
116 to a wide variety of youth and focus on minimizing barriers to participation such as costs,  
117 accessibility, complex sign ups/initiation processes, location of programs, hours and duration of  
118 programs.

- 119       •       City should create mechanism to inform community residents, businesses and non-profits on  
120 how to provide scholarships for Youth Programming initiatives.
- 121       •       Park and Recreation (P&R) to develop an outreach strategy that targets underserved youth in  
122 our community with the goal being to involve them in more P&R programs. The outreach  
123 should be both in English and Spanish.
- 124       •       Ensure that the long range plan for P&R includes appropriate facilities for demographic trends  
125 and to increase participation rates.

126 Youth Programming recommendations should include information published by the Criminal Justice  
127 Council Report on Youth Violence.

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129 Strategic Enforcement with Accountability

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131 Findings

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

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139 SCPD currently has 6 vacant officer positions, with several officers out on work related and non-  
140 work related injuries, and several other individuals in the training process. In total, SCPD are at 75

141 percent of sworn strength in the field. Currently there are no gaps in service or coverage, however,  
142 this shortage puts a significant strain on those officers serving the community. While there are a  
143 number of factors contributing to officer attrition (the recent tragedy, long-term disability,  
144 retirement, etc.), SCPD historically has had difficulty maintaining a fully-staffed force. With current  
145 staffing levels, it becomes difficult to effectively balance department priorities: crime prevention,  
146 investigations, community programming, etc.

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

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

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159 Santa Cruz is burdened with a high number of high-risk alcohol outlets and residential indoor and  
160 outdoor marijuana grow operations for medical and recreational purposes. High-risk alcohol outlets  
161 contribute to alcohol-fueled violence and crime. Growing, cultivation and processing of marijuana in  
162 residential neighborhoods is serious public health concern, code enforcement issue, and draws  
163 criminal activity.

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

## 170 171 Recommendations

### 172 173 Strategic Police Enforcement

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175 Several critical SCPD priorities have been identified by the Task Force. The Task Force  
176 recommends the City, with the highest priority and utmost urgency, fill existing and budgeted SCPD  
177 vacancies and, further, to increase the SCPD police force to national averages. The Task Force  
178 recommends moving to a targeted policing model, with a strategy that emphasizes enforcement of  
179 nuisance crimes in natural, city entry and focal point areas (i.e. a "broken window" policing model).

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181 In addition, to enhance the City's enforcement of repeat municipal code offenders, the City Council  
182 should designate existing infractions as misdemeanors in the municipal code for current infractions  
183 such as deposit of public waste, multiple offenses for illegal camping, and other offences that the  
184 City Council designates to curb quality of life crimes in the City. This would include a request to the  
185 County to fund a municipal code prosecutor as well as designating the revenue from current  
186 infraction penalties to fund the increased court costs.

### 187 188 Strategic Code Enforcement

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190 The PSTF recommends two priorities for enhanced code enforcement.

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- 192 • City Council to work with Code Enforcement to reduce and reform high-risk alcohol outlets.
- 193 • Rewrite the municipal code 6.90.040 to prohibit the cultivation of marijuana for medical
- 194 purposes in residential properties in Santa Cruz City. Marijuana should be subject to the
- 195 same zoning regulations as other agriculture.

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### 197 Offender Assistance with Accountability/Recidivism Reduction

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199 The Task Force recommends a specialty court model for substance abusers, mentally ill and/or  
200 homeless offenders. The specialty court is a proven model in halting the revolving door of  
201 recidivism by linking offenders to treatment and rigorous judicial monitoring. Specialty courts are  
202 highly collaborative, bringing together the criminal justice system and service providers to enforce  
203 court-ordered sanctions. The Task Force finds that the specialty court model would provide  
204 offenders with the right balance of treatment assistance with accountability.

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206 The Task Force recommends the City to collaborate in developing a strategic multi-disciplinary team  
207 (enforcement, criminal justice, drug treatment, social service providers) to identify individuals  
208 repeatedly exhibiting behaviors and crimes harmful to the community (i.e., the “top offenders” as  
209 identified by SCPD). Strategic team will develop an intervention and accountability plan on a case  
210 by case basis for each offender in order to reduce criminal behavior and harm to the community.

211 The overall goal of the team would be reduce recidivism and crime in the City. The strategic team  
212 would work with SCPD on identifying those that are generating the most calls for services, arrests,  
213 and municipal code infraction citations.

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215 Additionally, after implementation of the photo identification system and gate at the HSC campus,  
216 City should work with HSC campus managers to minimize unintended negative impacts of homeless  
217 services to Santa Cruz community, while maximizing program effectiveness. Agencies located at  
218 Coral Street will cooperate with SCPD in recommendations to modify or eliminate services to  
219 persons identified as chronic offenders who threaten public safety.

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221 The purpose of this recommendation is to improve accountability to those that continually break the  
222 law and have repeat municipal code violations.

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### 224 Criminal Justice System Accountability

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

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231 The Task Force recommends following measures be implemented by the Santa Cruz County  
232 Superior Court.

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- 234 • Court to issue a misdemeanor warrant after three failures to appear in a six month period.
- 235 This automatic warrant issuance will eliminate the need for the City Attorney to prosecute
- 236 repeat municipal code infraction offenders who fail to appear.

- The Presiding Judge should appear before the Santa Cruz City Council twice a year to share what the Court is doing to address high repeat offender rates in the City of Santa Cruz and receive input from the City Council and City Attorney.

### **Collaborative Oversight and Appropriate Funding**

Within three months of accepting the Task Force report, the City should notify in writing, each department, agency, and organization outside of their jurisdiction of Task Force recommendations that impact their operations and ask that they respond in writing as to how they will begin to work towards achieving the objectives in the relative recommendations.

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 City should consider various options to fund many of these new recommendations, including but not limited to a city alcohol tax with proceeds going directly to fund public safety programs, a city or county sales tax dedicated to funding public safety programs, as well as innovative private funding and federal grant opportunities such as “Pay For Success” programs and Social Impact Bonds. The city should re-evaluate Measure E funding for specific use of clean-up programs on the San Lorenzo Riverway. The city should also consider using municipal code violation revenue to specifically fund a specialty or community court to deal with recidivist violations. The city should also tie the distribution of Community Development Block Grants as it relates to public safety to results based programs and require measurable deliverables.

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