Visiting the Auditor's Office at City Hall
The business hours for the Auditor's Office are Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The office is open to visitors Tuesday through Thursday in City Hall. View our division webpages for more information about how to connect with us in-person or remotely.

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Cleanups of Homeless Camps: Improvements made to property handling

(News Article)

This is a one-year follow-up to our 2019 report, "Cleanups of Homeless Camps: Improved Communications and Data Needed."

Published: June 2, 2020 9:00 am

The City's Homelessness/Urban Camping Impact Reduction Program addressed some of the recommendations to improve its response to people living in tents and makeshift shelters on City property. The program takes complaints, assesses campsites, and removes trash, but some cleanups displace people from their belongings. Our 2019 audit found that this program has had some success, but needed to improve public information, data collection and analysis, and internal policies.

In the year since our audit, the program has improved how it takes care of people's property and began building a web application to better manage and track its work. The program also changed its services in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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2019 Recommendation

The Homelessness/Urban Camping Impact Reduction program should improve communication to people experiencing homelessness about when crews will most likely clear the camp and improve the durability of the notices.

2020 Auditor's Status Update: Recommendation resolved

In addition to posting notices, crews go to cleanup locations one day ahead to tell people of the upcoming cleanup. Crews also give people at least one hour to pack their belongings.

2019 Recommendation

The program should ensure that contractors have a common understanding of what the City considers personal property.

2020 Auditor's Status Update: Recommendation resolved

Crews changed their processes: Crews pack property in clear plastic bags and warehouse staff photograph and inventory property. Crews receive on-going training. The program website describes what property will be stored and what will be discarded.

2019 Recommendation

The program should ensure that contractors improve storage policies and procedures, including extra safeguards for sensitive property.

2020 Auditor's Status Update: Recommendation resolved

The program uses a larger warehouse and has eased access for people picking up their property. Sensitive property, such as identification cards, are now stored indefinitely in a secure room.

2019 Recommendation

The program should clarify the assessment risk factors and scoring, identify what risk factors require photographic documentation, and establish a common understanding of the criteria among the crews who carry out the assessments.

2020 Auditor's Status Update: Recommendation resolved

The program said it improved the consistency of assessments and put quality controls in place. Photos are required of all materials and debris at campsites.

Recommendation Status: In Process

2019 Recommendation

The program should give people filing a complaint status updates.

2020 Auditor's Status Update: Recommendation in process

The program is working with the Bureau of Technology Services to build a web application that will give status updates to people filing complaints. The program still provides weekly summary reports to the public and responds to individual phone calls.

Recommendation Status: In Process

2019 Recommendation

The program should establish data systems and procedures that improve data quality and reduce manual processes, such as by assigning unique identification numbers to assessments and automating the workflow.

2020 Auditor's Status Update: Recommendation in process

Crews began using an internal web application in July 2019 that automated many manual processes, improved quality controls, and identifies reports about the same campsite.

Recommendation Status: In Process

2019 Recommendation

The program should use data to analyze and improve the effectiveness, efficiency, and timeliness of cleanups.

2020 Auditor's Status Update: Recommendation in process

Once the web application is fully functioning, the program will be able to track data from beginning to end of their process. The program reported anecdotal improvements already.

Visit our website to view the [original 2019 audit report](#).