The Los Angeles Encampment Churn Map

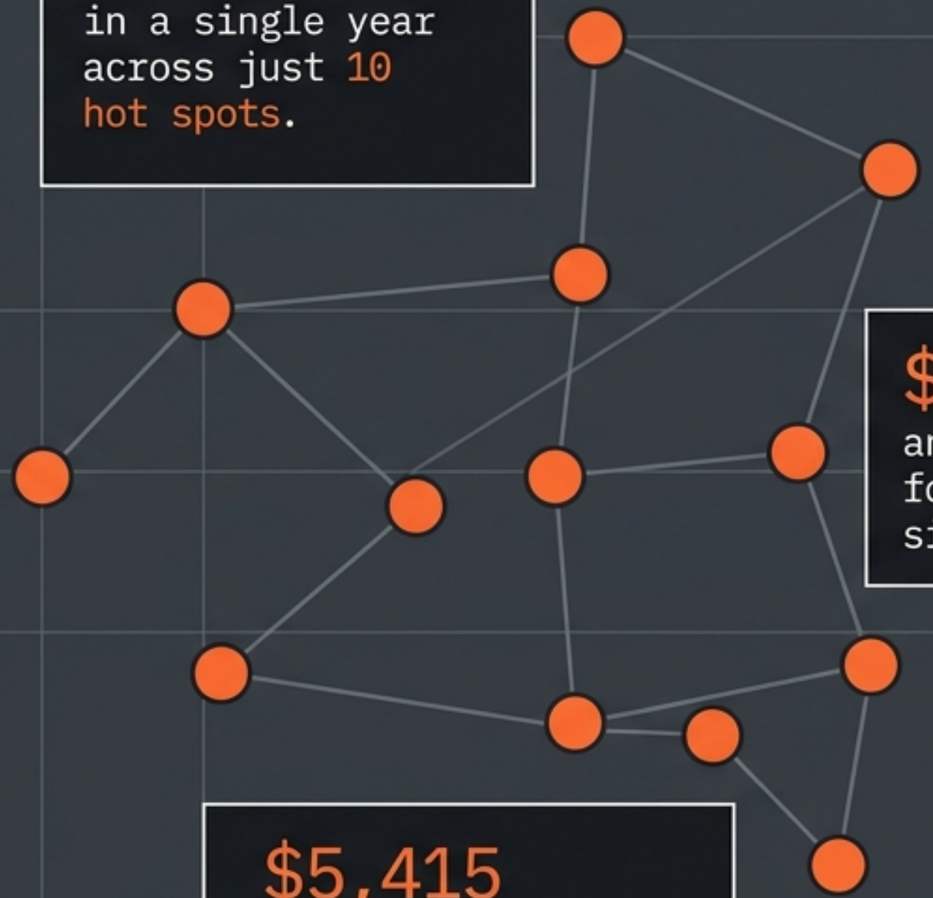
Policy Study — City of Los Angeles — 2026

The operations are real, but the locations recur. A data-driven mandate for program redesign.

$30 MILLION

The City of LA spends roughly $30M per year on sanitation-led encampment operations (LASAN CARE+ and HEAT).

445 cleanups in a single year across just 10 hot spots.

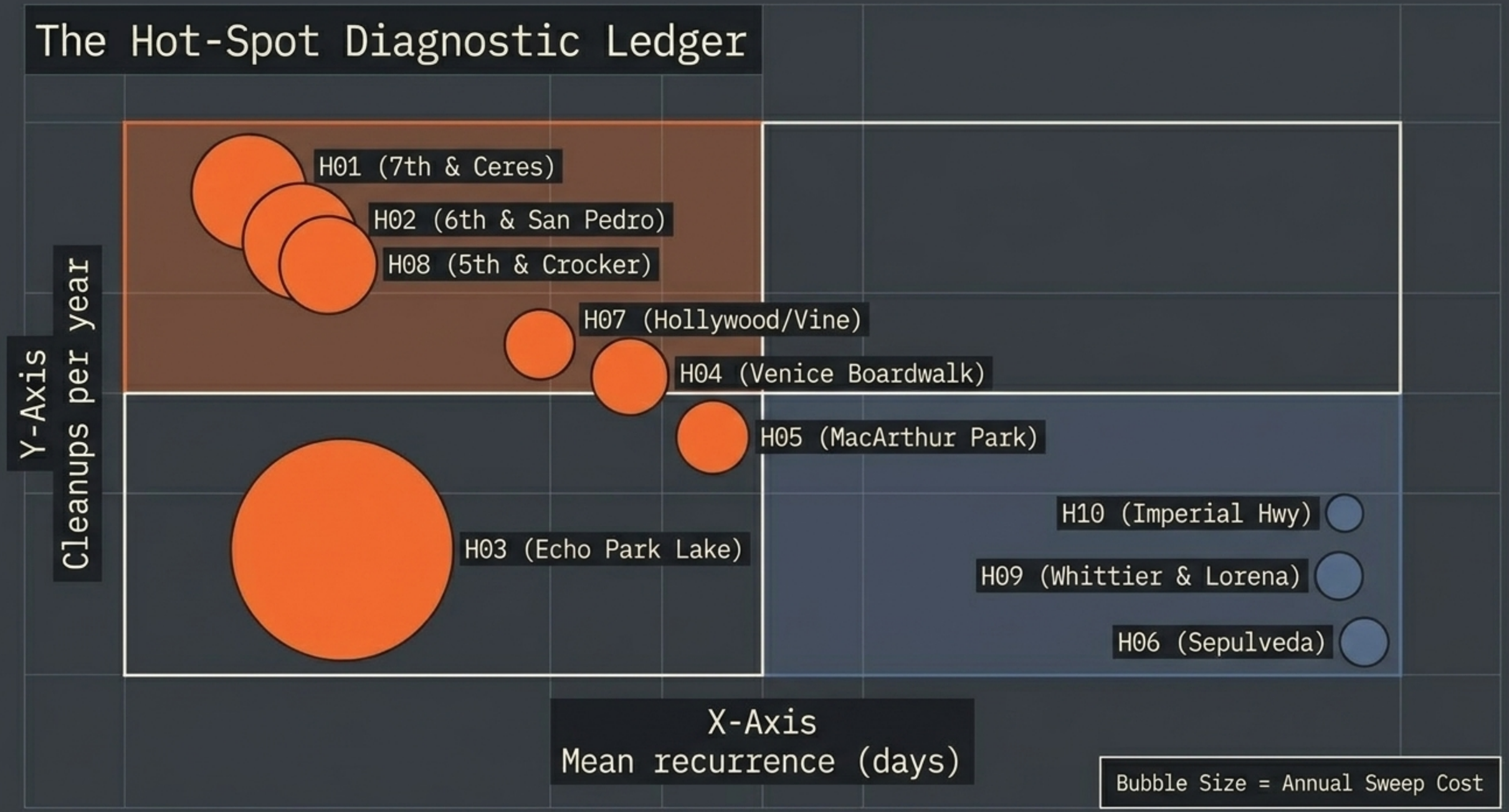


$3.72M annual cost for these ten sites alone.

$5,415 per affected person, per year, at these hot spots.

The Anatomy of Churn: Success in Procedure, Failure in System

- The sanitation operations technically succeed in clearing the space procedurally, but fail systemically because they produce no durable change in location, occupants, or cocupants, or condition.
- The $5,415 cost repeats continuously on this cycle.


The Hot-Spot Diagnostic Ledger
Y-Axis
Cleanups per year
H01 (7th & Ceres)
H02 (6th & San Pedro)
H08 (5th & Crocker)
H07 (Hollywood/Vine)
H04 (Venice Boardwalk)
H05 (MacArthur Park)
H10 (Imperial Hwy)
H03 (Echo Park Lake)
H09 (Whittier & Lorena)
H06 (Sepulveda)
X-Axis
Mean recurrence (days)
Bubble Size = Annual Sweep Cost

High-Frequency Catalysts: The Logic of Return

H01 - 7th & Ceres (Skid Row)

84 cleanups | 11-day recurrence | $16,105/person/yr.

Highest-frequency site. Re-occupies within two weeks of every operation.

H02 - 6th & San Pedro

71 cleanups | 13-day recurrence | $15,750/person/yr.

Driven by gravity. Adjacent to two major service providers; populations return because the survival resources are stationary.

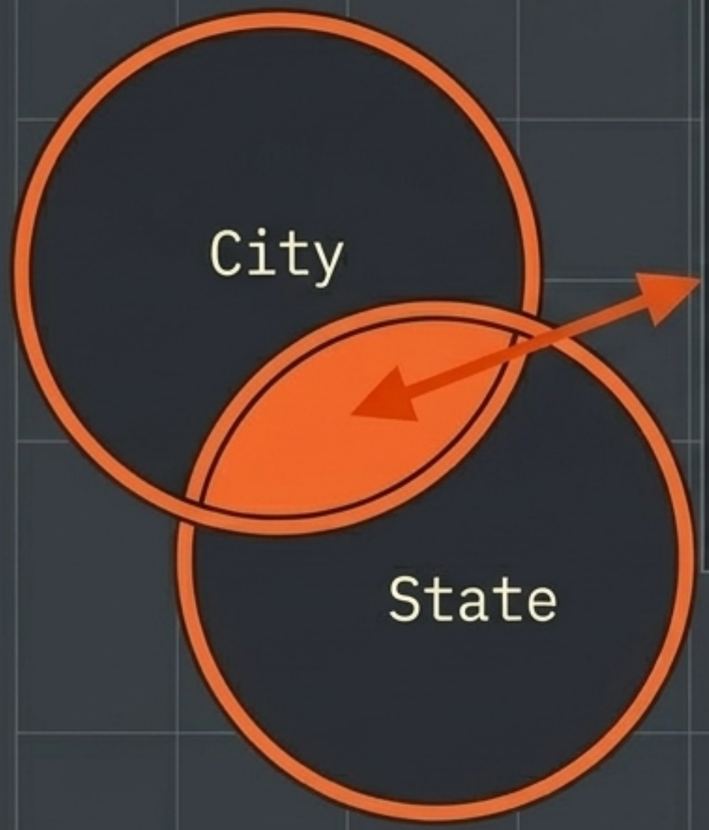
H07 - Hollywood / Vine Plaza

47 cleanups | 20-day recurrence | $6,714/person/yr.

Driven by enforcement. Local Business Improvement District (BID) co-funds cleanup; recurrence maps perfectly to BID complaint cycles.

Jurisdictional Distortions & Spillover Effects

Jurisdictional Anomaly



H06 (405 / Sepulveda Underpass)

29 cleanups | 31-day recurrence.

Anomaly: Caltrans-LA joint jurisdiction. The recurrence pattern rigidly follows the state's every-30-day notice requirement rather than organic movement.

Geographic Spillover

H05 (MacArthur Park West)

38 cleanups | 22-day recurrence.

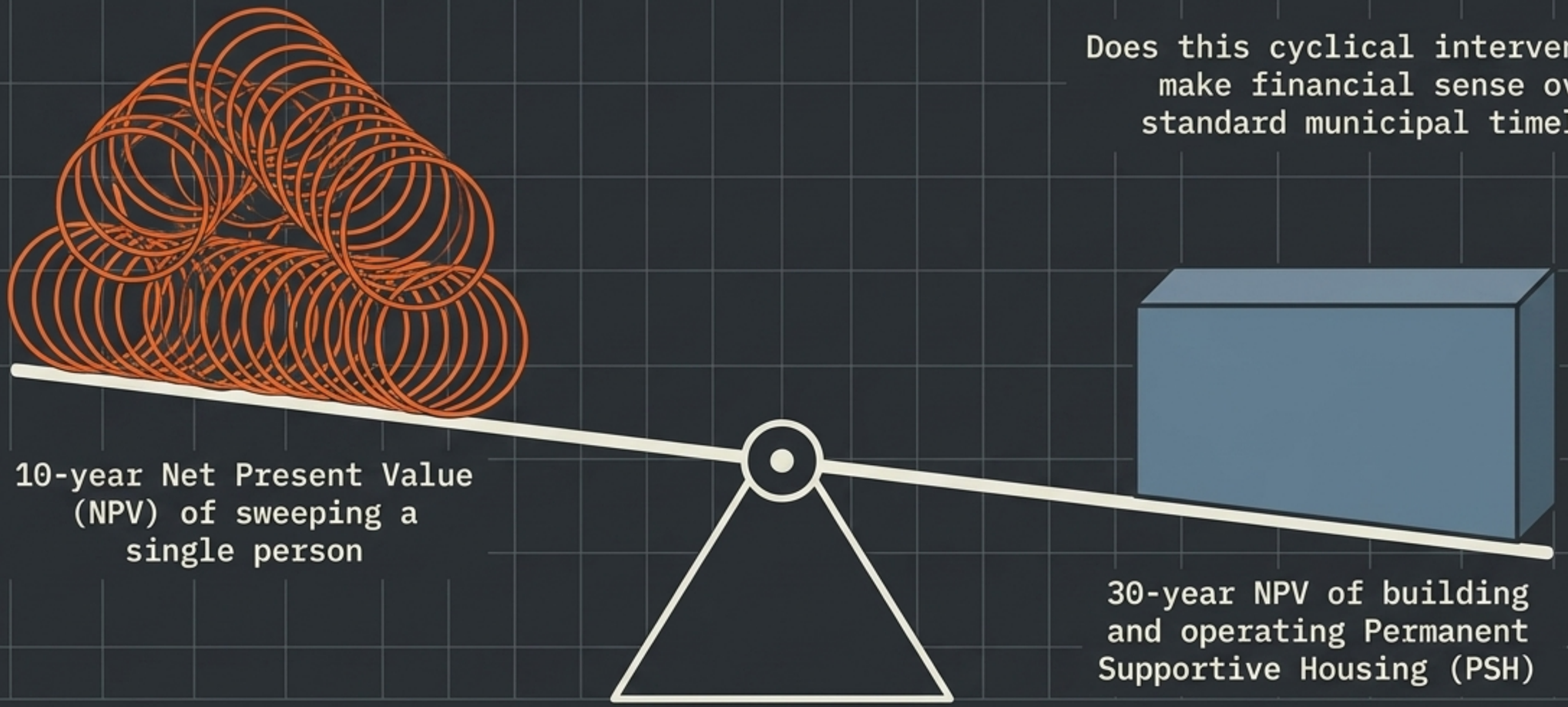
Anomaly: Encampment cleanup followed by hard fencing simply produced a physical spillover effect into adjacent, unprotected blocks.

H04 (Venice Boardwalk)

Anomaly: Recurrence data was artificially dampened by concentrated Roadmap to Housing placements between 2022-2024.

The Pivot: Evaluating Long-Term Capital Cost

Does this cyclical intervention make financial sense over a standard municipal timeline?



10-year Net Present Value (NPV) of sweeping a single person

30-year NPV of building and operating Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)

Assertion: A 10-year sweep is not cheaper than housing the person.

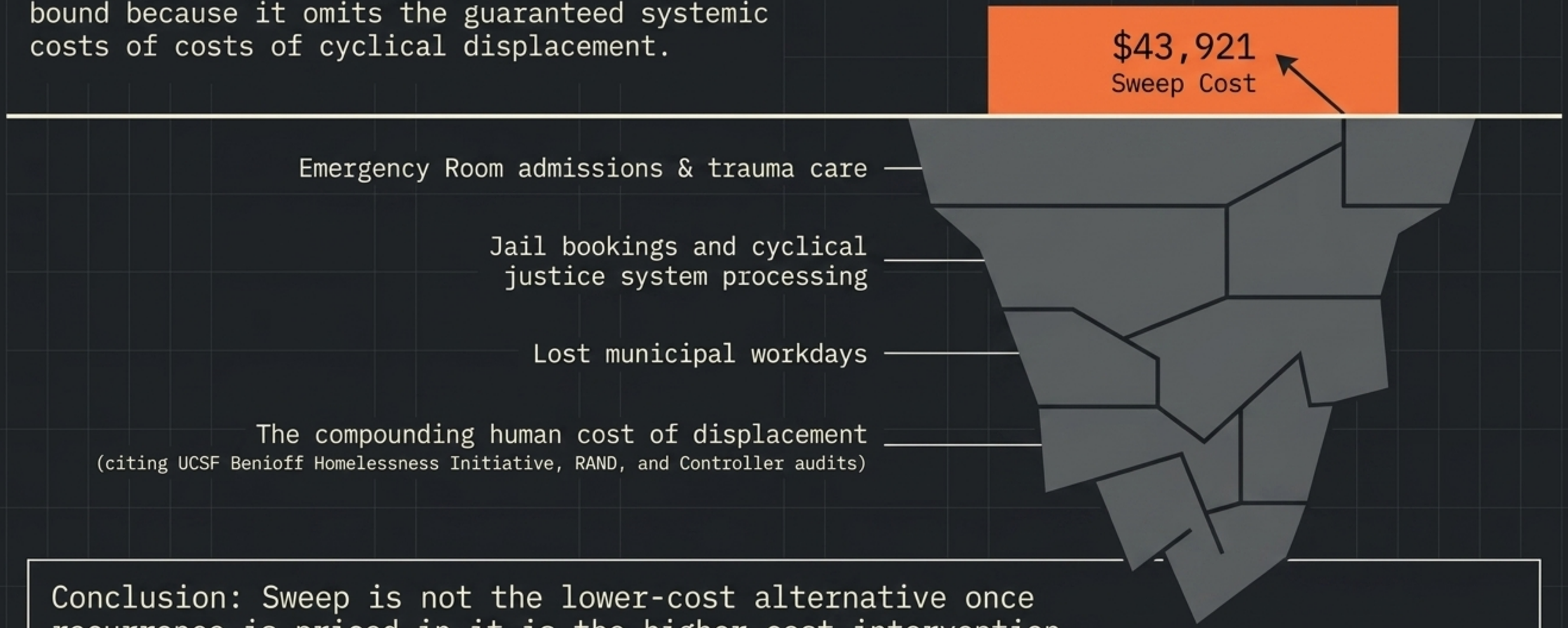
The NPV Boundary Analysis (Same Person, Two Trajectories)

Sweep Program (10-Yr)	PSH Program (30-Yr)
$43,921 NPV per affected person at observed hot-spot rates.	**$982,301** NPV per unit.
Boundary Type: Strict Lower Bound.	**Boundary Type:** Strict Upper Bound (includes one-time construction capital + 30 full years of operations).
End Status: Person remains unhoused.	**End Status:** Person is housed.

The Delta: $938,380 policy difference between 30 years of stable housing and 10 years of sweeping the exact same person. (Discount rate: 4.0%).

The Honest Reading: Pricing in the Invisible

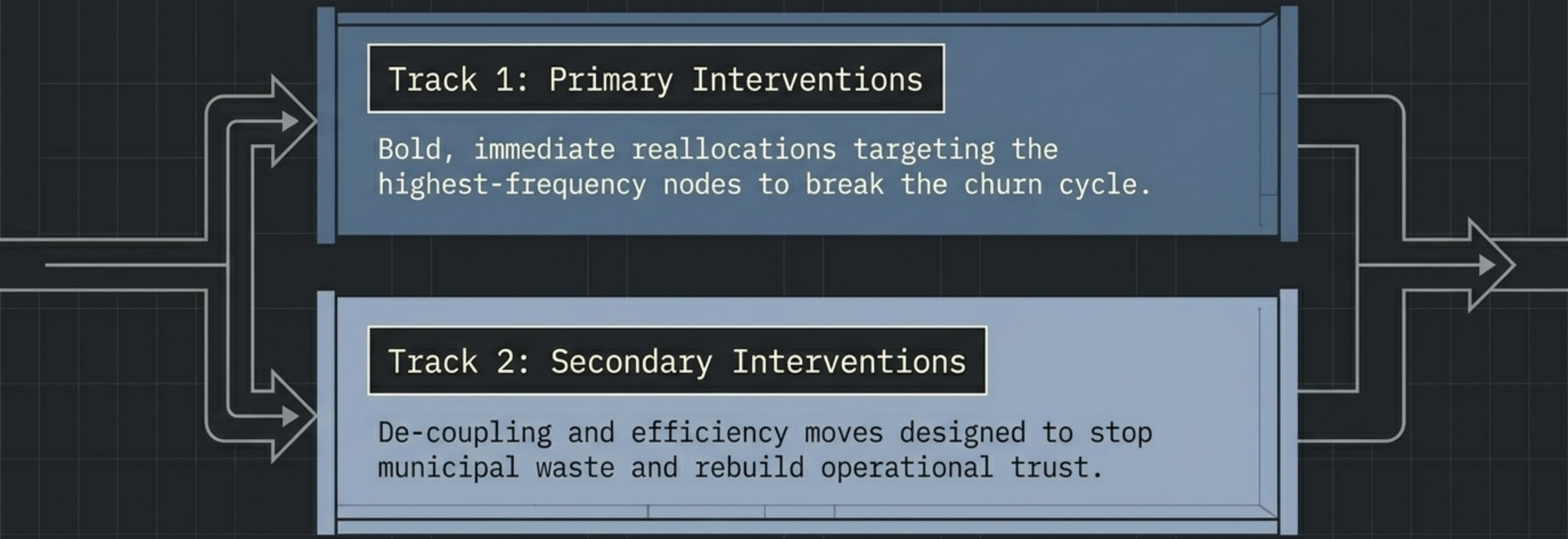
The 10-year sweep NPV is an artificial lower bound because it omits the guaranteed systemic costs of costs of cyclical displacement.



Conclusion: Sweep is not the lower-cost alternative once recurrence is priced in—it is the higher-cost intervention.

Pareto-Style Corrections: The $30M Program Redesign

The Mandate: Improve operational outcomes and reduce unhoused morbidity at the exact same $30M cost basis. No new budget required.



Primary Corrections: Reallocation & Transparency

01 Reroute Top-Decile Locations First

Action: Target the hot spots with <30 day recurrence (8 of the 10 studied sites).

Rationale: The marginal sweep here produces zero durable change. Stop the sanitation cycle; place these specific populations into PSH first to permanently break the local loop.

03 Publish a Chronic-Site Ledger

Action: City Controller requests LASAN to publish a monthly record of locations ranked by cleanup frequency.

Rationale: The lowest-friction transparency move available. Requires no legislative change and forces systemic accountability.

Secondary Corrections: Efficiency & De-Coupling

02 Stop Double-Paying at Overlap Zones

Action: Eliminate the duplicated work at joint-jurisdiction sites (e.g., H06 Sepulveda).

Rationale: Caltrans and LASAN currently operate on offset schedules, resulting in an estimated 35% duplication of labor and budget at the exact same overlaps.

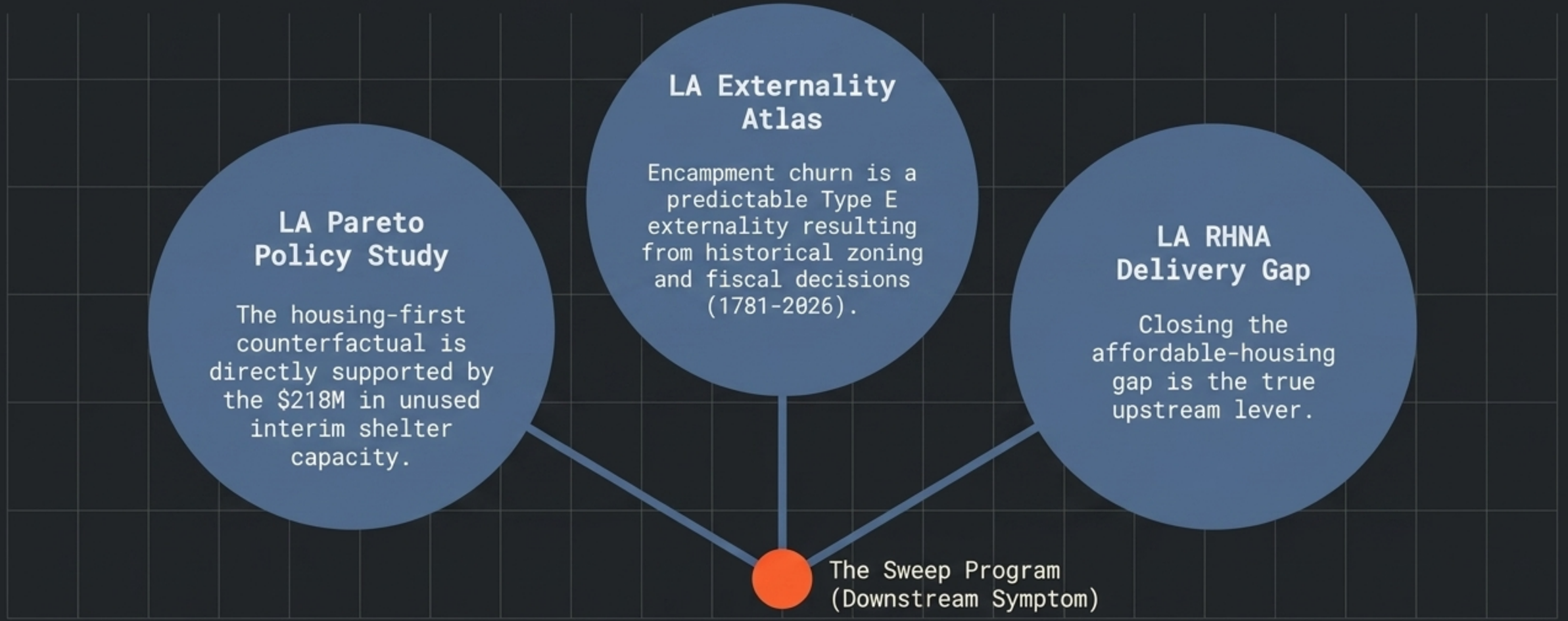
04 Separate Sanitation from Service Contact

Action: Unbundle the sweep operations from homeless outreach.

Rationale: Bundling erodes both functions. Service contact succeeds best when it is non-adversarial; sanitation succeeds best when it is purely procedural. The current bundle fails at both.

The Macro View: Connecting the Upstream Levers

Context: The encampment churn is a predictable downstream symptom of larger, upstream policy ecosystems.



Final Takeaway: Overcoming Institutional Sclerosis requires trusting the NPV data: we must stop funding the symptom and start funding the cure.