HOUSTON POLICE DEPARTMENT
VICE DIVISION

Sgt. Mike Hill (Retired)
Crime Intelligence Analyst Michael Bruce
A Problem Oriented Policing Approach to Illegal Massage Establishments
### Houston-area diversity

Racial/ethnic demographic breakdown for local cities and suburbs, listed in order of population size:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Anglo</th>
<th>Latino</th>
<th>African American</th>
<th>Asian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Houston</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pasadena</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Woodlands</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearland</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>League City</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar Land</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baytown</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missouri City</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atascocita</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conroe</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galveston</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Houston is an international city, where roughly 30% of the population in Houston was not born in the U.S.
- Nearly every major language is represented in Houston, sometimes making communication with the police difficult.
- Some people from other cultures have different expectations of social norms and laws.
- A recent survey indicated up to 145 languages in use in Houston.

Sources: Kinder institute for Urban Research; Hobby Center for the Study of Texas
Houston is THE BEST!

- https://www.combinedarms.us/houston/
BUT…

We are also one of the best in the nation at something else:

**Houston called major hub for human trafficking**

Houston major hub for human trafficking
Large ring kept up to 120 women in virtual slavery

By [Susan Carroll](mailto:susan.carroll@chron.com) Published 5:30 am, Sunday, October 28, 2007

**Houston-area police bust dozens for prostitution during week of Super Bowl 51**

By [Fernando Ramirez](mailto:fernando.ramirez@chron.com), Chron.com / Houston Chronicle Updated 10:21 pm, Wednesday, February 8, 2017
WAIT... WHAT IS HUMAN TRAFFICKING?

**ACT**
- Recruitment
- Transportation
- Transfer
- Harbour
- Receipt of Persons

**MEANS**
- Threat / use of force
- Coercion
- Abduction
- Fraud
- Deception
- Abuse of power or vulnerability
- Giving payments or benefits

**PURPOSE**
- Exploitation including:
  - Prostitution of others
  - Sexual exploitation
  - Forced Labour
  - Slavery or similar practices
  - Removal of organs
  - Other types of exploitation

\[\text{HUMAN TRAFFICKING}\]
IS HOUSTON REALLY A HUB FOR HUMAN TRAFFICKING?

Image 1: Wikisexguide.com – Sex Tourism and Houston

Sex and Prostitution in Houston

Houston has quite a big street prostitution scene, there are also lots of escorts advertising online so you have good variety to choose what you want. If Houston is not enough for you, just rent a car and drive to San Antonio or Dallas.

There are lots of street hookers that can be found in Houston. There are certain places where these hookers wait for clients to pick them up.

Apart from these street hookers there are escort agencies, and independent sex workers who post their ads online. You can get their phone numbers from websites like BackPage and Craigslist.

You can also try massage parlours for getting steamy sex. These massage parlours are the safest way in terms of law.

Red Light Districts

There is no Red-light district in Houston like the ones in Frankfurt and Amsterdam, but Bissonnet and Beltway 8, US 59S (Southwest Freeway at Hillcroft). Montrose are worth to visit.

Apart from dedicated Red light areas, you can find hotels where manager can arrange hookers for you. There are apartments and erotic massage parlours where you can get some action for $50-$100.

Prostitutes and Sex Workers

You can find prostitutes from the streets and internet.
HPD VICE DIVISION
LEGAL MANDATE

- Identify locations that belong under the purview of the State Occupation Code and municipal ordinances concerning licensed massage establishments.

- Conduct regulatory inspections of the locations and take action on observed violation of the laws concerning the operations of such locations.

- Conduct undercover investigations to identify and arrest those individuals working at the locations who are engaged in criminal activity (prostitution, human trafficking, etc.).
**Purpose:** Reducing human trafficking through commercial sex demand reduction strategies.

**HCSO & HPD Combined – Conducted Over 70 operations (Street, Hotels/Motels, & Illegal Commercial Sex Focused Businesses)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sex Buyer</th>
<th>Sex Seller</th>
<th>Drugs</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HCSO CHARGES</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL ARRESTS:</td>
<td>144</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL CHARGES:</td>
<td>152</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Trafficker</th>
<th>Sex Buyer</th>
<th>Sex Seller</th>
<th>Drugs</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HPD CHARGES</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL ARRESTS:</td>
<td>249</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL CHARGES:</td>
<td>268</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A brush with police encourages this patron to swear off IMBs as the location is raided.

However, a little more than 30 hours later, the spa is open and actively advertising again.
Lets look at what we’re really doing.

• If you get an infection, do you treat the symptoms…..

Or do you cure it?
WHO IS TRAFFICKING?

- HUMAN TRAFFICKING IS A CRIME MOTIVATED BY PROFIT
- ANYONE CAN BE A VICTIM OF TRAFFICKING
- ANYONE INTERESTED IN MAKING A PROFIT CAN BE A TRAFFICKER
- 77.8% OF TRAFFICKING CASES REPORTED TO THE NATIONAL TRAFFICKING HOTLINE WERE SEX-RELATED

**ANALYSIS**

**BUYER**

Fuels the market with their money

**TRAFFICKER/PIMP**

Exploits victims to earn revenue from buyers

**VICTIM**

Includes both girls and boys who are bought and sold for profit
THE WHY:
MONEY TALKS

“This year, the UN is putting the spotlight on human trafficking and modern slavery – a fundamental right and freedom denied.

Today, about 21 million women, men and children are forced to work under inhuman conditions on farms, in sweatshops, on board fishing vessels, in the sex industry or in private homes. Their sweat generates US$ 150 billion in illegal profits annually.”  

- International Labor Organization, 2015

$31.6 billion in profit in the US.
- Belser, ILO, 2005

* Note, per Forbes, the top 25 oil companies worldwide only made $81 billion profit in 2016.
HARD TO BELIEVE?

• Typically, the average spa customer pays a $60 entrance fee to the house, and can ‘tip’ their provider up to $100 for a given sex act. The provider may or may not be allowed to keep some of the ‘tip’.

• Trafficked women often live where they work. On average, they see 8-10 men a day.

• In one recent case, a man was running a prostitution ring with 7 IMBs, each with 3 providers per location on any given day.

• Basic math tells us that $160 \times 10 \times 3 \times 7 = $33,600 per day, or up to $12,096,000 in revenue in a year.
Crimes linked to illegal massage businesses:

- Human Trafficking/Prostitution Activity
- Narcotics Related Offenses
- Sexual Assault
- Assault-Aggravated Assaults (DW)
- Robbery-Aggravated Robbery (DW)
- Murder
LACK OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Upon hearing of prostitution arrests, the public responds with:

- “…Harris County must not have any real crime going on…”

- [Law Enforcement should]
  “…go after the crimes in which there are actual victims…”

- “…a waste of time.”

Courtesy of Houston Chronicle web comments section
Relevant law enforcement theory #1

The Iron Law of Troublesome Places*

- Frequency of troublesome events
- A few have a most of the crime
- Some have a modest amount of crime
- Most places have little or no crime

Facilities known to follow this law**
- Apartment complexes
- Gas stations
- Banks
- Health care facilities
- Bars, pubs, and clubs
- Hotels and motels
- Bus stop shelters
- Parking lots
- Businesses (various)
- Places of worship
- Coffee shops
- Schools
- Construction sites
- Sports facilities
- Convenience stores
- Telephone booths
- Fast food restaurants
- Young offender facilities

* Figure from Wilcox and Eck 2011. The Criminology of the Unpopular. Criminology and Public Policy
** All from Eck, Clarke and Guerette, 2008, except coffee shops and places of worship (Duro, 2010).
Relevant Law Enforcement Theory #2:

Place Managers Control Other Sides of Triangles
Relevant Law Enforcement Theory #3:

More Concentrated Among Owners than Crime Among Apt. Buildings

1,384 owners had 4,615 crimes at their apartment buildings

The worst 10% of owners had 47.43% of crime

64.09% of owners had no crime
“Miyun Modeling Studio”: An Illicit Massage Business

Identifying IMB Locations

What is an IMB (ILIICIT MASSAGE BUSINESS)?

- Any place that offers or advertises MASSAGE
- Has one or more “therapists” available
- Is not in compliance with health law –OR- offers sex act for money transactions to patrons

[Image: IMB Store Front]
Identifying possible IMBs

- Internal Records
- External records
- Eyewitness reports
- Initial lists indicated 240+ possible IMBs in Houston
HPD Vice officers on the job: 47. Spoken languages: >10
GOAL:
Increasing effectiveness of HPD Vice Division’s enforcement of existing laws.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

IDENTIFICATION OF POSSIBLE IMBs

# OF IMBs SUBMITTED FOR CIVIL ACTION

# OF IMB CLOSURES

# OF REGULATORY INVESTIGATIONS

# OF CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS

# OF ARRESTS MADE
Manpower: Community Involvement

Prostitution Diversion Program
Protocols and Procedures

Made Possible through a Partnership between:
Manpower: Victims Assistance Groups

- YMCA
- Rescue Houston
- Free The Captives
- Elijah Rising
- The Landing
- Freedom Church Alliance
- Redeemed Ministries
- Project Girls CIS
Manpower: Community Partners
Management Districts

[Logos for Greater Southeast District, Spring Branch District, and Brays Oaks Management District]
Manpower: Partnering with Inspections Officers

Illicit Massage Establishment Inspections

1. Command Approval
2. DRT Refresher Training
3. Inspections

Enforcement & Compliance

- Engage City Council
- Engage the Press
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rule Number</th>
<th>Rule Reference</th>
<th>Compliance</th>
<th>Present but Deficient</th>
<th>Deficient</th>
<th>Not Applicable</th>
<th>Recurrent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.)</td>
<td>Rule: 25 TAC §140.361(d)</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>PD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Current establishment license prominently displayed?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.)</td>
<td>Rule: 25 TAC §140.303(p)</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>PD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Complaint information available to public?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.)</td>
<td>Rule: 25 TAC §140.307(b)</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>PD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Massage therapists licensed/licenses prominently displayed?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.)</td>
<td>Rule: 25 TAC §140.304</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>PD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>R</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Initial Consultation Document?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.)</td>
<td>Rule: 25 TAC §140.303(f)</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>PD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>R</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Written consent for clients under the age of 17?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.)</td>
<td>Rule: 25 TAC §140.361 (i)</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>PD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maintains employee/client records for 2 years?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.)</td>
<td>Rule: 25 TAC §140.365</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>PD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Has establishment ownership/mgmt. or location changed?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lease document on site?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.)</td>
<td>Rule: 25 TAC §140.360 (c) (9)</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>PD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meets state and local requirements for fire code?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.)</td>
<td>Rule: 25 TAC §140.360 (c) (8)</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>PD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Establishment floor plan on site?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.)</td>
<td>Rule: 25 TAC §140.361 (c)</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>PD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Residential/sleeping quarters separated?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.)</td>
<td>Rule: 25 TAC §140.362</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>PD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meets state and local sanitary/health codes?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.)</td>
<td>Rule: 25 TAC §140.306</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>PD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Advertising in compliance?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.)</td>
<td>Rule: 25 TAC §140.361(h)</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>PD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Partnering with Inspections Officers: Training in things to look for

- Signs of Physical Abuse
- Appears fearful, anxious, tense, submissive, or nervous
- Signs of emotional anxiety or dependence on trafficker
- Lack apparent freedom of movement
- Lack of Knowledge of where he or she is
- Treated in a demeaning or aggressive manner
- Noticeably watched, followed by others
Partnering with Inspections Officers: Typical Living Quarters Inside IMB
Partnering with Inspections Officers: Facilitating Outreach

IV. City’s Anti-Trafficking Strategic Plan – Associated Images – Outreach Cards

- Interview possible human trafficking subjects and give pamphlets that are available in several languages, once identified call in task force personnel
UNDERCOVER OPERATIONS

TARGETED UNDERCOVER OPERATIONS BASED ON PRIOR HISTORIES AND INSPECTIONS RESULTS ALLOWING FOR BURDEN OF PROOF FOR CIVIL ACTIONS TO BE MET SOONER
FILING CIVIL ACTIONS:
Chapter 125s: Nuisance businesses
Crimes Eligible for inclusion in a 125 Filing

(1) discharge of a firearm in a public place
(2) reckless discharge of a firearm
(3) engaging in organized criminal activity as a member of a combination
(4) delivery, possession, manufacture, or use of a controlled substance
(5) gambling, gambling promotion, or communicating gambling information
(6) prostitution, promotion of prostitution, or aggravated promotion of prostitution
(7) compelling prostitution
(8) commercial manufacture, commercial distribution, or commercial exhibition of obscene material
(9) aggravated assault
(10) sexual assault
(11) aggravated sexual assault
Crimes Eligible for inclusion in a 125 Filing

(12) robbery
(13) aggravated robbery
(14) unlawfully carrying a weapon
(15) murder
(16) capital murder
(17) continuous sexual abuse of young child or children
(18) massage therapy or other massage services in violation
(19) employing a minor at a sexually oriented business
(20) trafficking of persons
(21) sexual conduct or performance by a child
(22) employment harmful to a child
A successful filing will result in the issuing of a temporary restraining order or permanent injunction similar to the document on the right.

**Response**

**The End Goal**

**Caution**

**Cause No. 2016-46478**

**In the District Court of Harris County, Texas**

**Filed**

AUG 2 2016

**Defendants**

**Partial Agreed Order Granting Temporary Injunction**

Came on for a hearing, August 22, 2016, the application of Plaintiff, the State of Texas, for a Temporary Injunction pursuant to Chapter 125 of the Texas Civil Practices & Remedies Code (Chapter 12.5) against Defendants “A” Spa and New Haven Spa located at 8320 Gulf Hwy, the Real Property known as 8320 Gulf Freeway, Houston, Texas, In Rem; Karl Todd Erickson,
Several Harris County spas accused of being involved in prostitution shut down

By William Axford, Chron.com / Houston Chronicle  Updated 8:52 pm, Wednesday, August 24, 2016

## Locations of interest tracking numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Locations of Interest Tracking Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of locations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total # of Locations being tracked</strong> (for purposes of 125s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of locations identified as spa/possible IMB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of locations submitted for filing (both CAO and COH)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3: Regulatory visits to massage parlors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>October 10th, 2016</th>
<th>November 8th, 2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Locations Visited</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citations Issued</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Numbers are Cumulative

Agency: Houston Police Department, Differential Response Team
Possible IMB Tracking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total # of undercover operations at unique locations</th>
<th>Expressed as a % of Total locations tracked</th>
<th>Expressed as a % of possible IMB locations tracked</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>12.55%</td>
<td>23.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>8.16%</td>
<td>15.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014 (Est.)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.30%</td>
<td>4.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number Served</td>
<td>Number Declined Services</td>
<td>Number Appeared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
IMBs facing 125 charges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4: IMBs facing Nuisance Business Civil Actions</th>
<th># of locations</th>
<th>Closures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Submitted (by vice)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filed</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resulting In:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary Restraining Orders</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary Injunctions</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent Injunctions</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Displacement or lack thereof

Graph 2: Density of Massage Establishments Advertised Online

- **Sum of Open**
- **Sum of Closed**

**Key Points**
- Efforts by HPD Vice and DRT that leveraged the revised ordinance coincided with a 13% decrease in open locations and a 38% increase in closures.

- **December 2nd, 2015**
  - City Council Amends Massage Establishment Ordinance

- **August 2016**
  - Beginning of Palm Card Distribution by Vice, DRT

- **October 2016**
  - DRT Update 1: 155 Visited, 91 Citations Issued

- **February to April 2016**
  - Led Four Trainings for Total of 174 DRT Officers

- **February 2017**
  - DRT Update 3: 185 Visited, 385 Citations Issued

- **November 2016**
  - DRT Update 2: 111 Visited, 147 Citations Issued

- **April 2017**
  - DRT Update 4: 220 Visited, 603 Citations Issued
Questions?

Sergeant Mike Hill (Retired)
Criminal Intelligence Analyst Michael Bruce

Houston (Texas) Police Department
(713) 308-8651 (BRUCE)
Michael.Bruce@houstonpolice.org