

July 1, 2005

Santa Monica, CA

INFORMATION ITEM

To: Mayor and City Council
From: City Staff
Subject: Status of Projects Relating to Homelessness

Introduction

This report provides the status of a number of projects relating to the objective to reduce the impact of homelessness on the Santa Monica community.

Background

In February, the City Council directed that a common (interdepartmental) objective be added to the City's work plan to address the expressed concerns of the public, housed and un-housed, about homelessness in Santa Monica and its impact on the community. Staff developed a responsive work plan and the Council provided additional direction in following months. Several important new initiatives are under way and efforts such as expansion of the pilot chronic homeless program begun last year have progressed. The results of a January 2005 "homeless count" were released recently – estimating 90,000 homeless people in LA County with approximately 35,000 of those being "chronic homeless" (severely disabled and homeless for more time). The breakdown for SM is expected in July.

Discussion

Briefly, highlights of recent activity include the following:

1. Sobering (CLARE/Jail Linkage): Beginning July 7th, the CLARE Foundation will assign staff at the SM Jail to attempt to link people to services rather than releasing them back out onto the streets. This effort will be piloted to determine if the “revolving door” of mostly chronic inebriates going from the streets to jail and back to the streets can be slowed. The concept was discussed with Paul Freese of Public Counsel and SOS staff who endorsed this approach.
2. VA: At the direction of the Council on June 14th, staff is working closely with the Veterans Administration and VA-based service providers to develop a “concept plan” for supportive housing on the Westwood VA property.
3. Budget: Upon adoption of the budget last week, Council authorized new HLP officers, park rangers, Human Services staff, resources to expand the chronic homeless pilot project and funding for an independent evaluation of the City-funded non profit programs, all to augment efforts to more effectively and strategically address homelessness in SM.
4. Leadership: The City Manager’s Office is defining the status and work of an individual of stature to provide local and regional focus on the issue. Input has been solicited from the Westside COG (Council of Governments), the County and other partners. (See attached draft request for qualifications.)
5. National Alliance to End Homelessness Conference: An interdepartmental team of City staff from Police, Fire, City Manager’s Office, and CCS/Human Services will attend this national conference. A “focus group” discussion with representatives from other cities that are desirable/tourist “destinations”, all dealing with homelessness issues, will follow with the encouragement of Phillip F. Mangano, Executive Director of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness.
6. Mental Health/Drug Courts: Human Services and City Attorney staff attended an informative session with judicial leaders from Ohio, Florida and San Jose – all of whom are doing innovative work using the “power of the judge/courts” to encourage and direct people to get needed mental health and other treatment rather than cycling through streets, prisons, hospitals and back. This session points out that there are best practice models that could be adapted in Los Angeles. A follow up session is to be convened by the Director of the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health and the Los Angeles County Sheriff.

7. The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors allocated substantial new resources to homeless services, including year round emergency shelter, and directed the Chief Administrative Officer to work with other cities on new governance and coordinative structures. The City Manger will meet with the CAO shortly to provide Santa Monica's perspective and to share information and experience which may assist that effort.

Staff will provide periodic reports to Council and will seek direction at key junctures.

Attachment: Draft RFQ for Homeless Leadership

City of Santa Monica

Request for Qualifications: Leadership on Homeless Initiatives

Homelessness is a defining challenge of our era. Issues related to homelessness are being addressed by metropolitan areas across the nation with varying degrees of success. The experience of New York, Philadelphia, Atlanta and San Francisco demonstrates that real progress requires significant will and charismatic leadership, supported by systematic alignment and coordination of resources and programs across jurisdictional lines.

A recent special census determined that there are some 91,000 homeless persons in Los Angeles County, including nearly 35,000 characterized as chronically homeless. Despite interest on the part of some key governmental officials and significant commitment on the part of social service providers and the faith community, great variance exists in the level of resources and attention dedicated to the problem by the many individual governmental jurisdictions within the county. There is no strong and sustained regional leadership on the issue.

What is required are the services of an individual of stature who can access and coalesce elected and appointed governmental officials, the business and philanthropic communities and non-governmental organizations to advance initiatives that truly ameliorate the impact of homelessness locally, sub-regionally and regionally.

Absent a viable regional entity positioned to engage such an individual, the City of Santa Monica is prepared to do so. The City has long provided a continuum of care for the homeless, adjusting strategies and the configuration of services over the years to link emergency assistance to participation in programs that can stabilize and house clients. To introduce or expand successful models, a knowledgeable and well-networked staff is in place and additional resources are authorized. The community supports regional action.

An initial eighteen month engagement is contemplated. The individual engaged would participate in current governance/coordinative forums such as LAHSA and Bring LA Home and assist decision makers in conceptualizing effective structures for achieving the essential regional will and commitments. The City also seeks substantial progress on its own multi-year work plan (see attachment) in which staff familiar with best practices is already engaged. Those tasks that would benefit significantly from the skills of the leader sought for this engagement include the following:

- Obtain the necessary federal, state and regional resources for housing and social services necessary to extend Santa Monica's Chronic Homeless Pilot Program that targets service resistant individuals who have been in the community for a number of years.
- Develop regional consensus on, and implementation of, best practices to reduce chronic public inebriation and provide alternative sentencing models.
- Achieve firm commitments for additional year-round emergency shelters and permanent supportive housing on the Veterans Administration property in West Los Angeles and other locations as necessary to accommodate the regional burden.
- Achieve changes in federal, state and regional laws, regulations, programs and systems to more equitably share the challenge of ending homelessness, creating Federal/State funding incentives and sanctions for communities to ensure equity region-wide.
- Achieve changes in state law governing mandatory psychiatric assessment and treatment for the gravely disabled homeless.

Santa Monica's City Manager will oversee the engagement initially, ensuring that knowledgeable staff of all City departments are appropriately committed and aligned to achieve the desired outcomes and to assist the individual engaged.

Top management staff of the cities of Beverly Hills, West Hollywood and Culver City will provide advice and support on sub-regional initiatives. Given the recent renewed interest and focus on homelessness by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors,

every effort will be made to associate this new position with broader efforts in greater Los Angeles to end chronic homelessness.

Funds in the amount of \$200,000 have been allocated by the City of Santa Monica to support the engagement for the initial twelve months, with the subsequent six months to be included in the Fiscal Year 2006/07 budget. Extension of the assignment beyond eighteen months will be by mutual agreement.

Interested individuals are invited to submit qualifications by August 12, 2005 and should be addressed to:

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By submitting a response to this RFQ, individual seeking the engagement waives all rights to protest or seek any legal remedies whatsoever regarding any aspect of this Request for Qualifications and the proposal process. The City reserves the right to select any number of qualified finalists. In addition, the City reserves the right to issue written notice to all individuals seeking the engagement of any changes in the submission schedule. Acceptance of any proposal submitted pursuant to this RFQ shall not constitute any implied intent to enter into a contract for consulting services. The City reserves the right to reject any and all proposals. The City also reserves the right to negotiate the specific requirements and fee using the selected proposal as a basis. This Request for Qualifications does not commit the City of Santa Monica to pay any costs incurred in the preparation of a response to contract for services. All responses to this Request for Qualifications become the property of the City of Santa Monica.

City of Santa Monica Work Plan
FY 2005/06 and 2006/07

Address the impacts of homelessness on the community.

It is estimated that 1000 or more homeless individuals are in Santa Monica on any given day. The circumstances endured by the homeless and their impact on City residents, visitors and businesses are a principal source of concern and frustration for the community. A network of social services, supportive housing, model program design and substantial City funding have changed the circumstances of individual homeless persons for the better, but the magnitude of the problem persists and is regional in nature.

- Appoint a person with the stature, focus and skills to achieve substantial progress in ending chronic homelessness.
- Extend the Chronic Homeless Pilot Program to serve additional service resistant individuals who have been in the community for a number of years; target existing resources, services and housing priorities to this population to achieve success.
- Develop strategies to reduce chronic public inebriation including a sobering center; stationing outreach staff at the Santa Monica jail; involving hospitals in advocacy and funding; and advocating for ending the early release of alcohol offenders from LA County jail. Determine the feasibility for Santa Monica of alternative sentencing and other community-based models.
- Engage Bring LA Home, the Westside Cities COG, federal and state representatives to achieve year-round homeless shelters and housing on the Veterans Administration property in West Los Angeles and other Westside locations as necessary to accommodate the regional burden.
- Conduct a system-wide evaluation and re-structure program elements as necessary of Santa Monica's continuum of care to address chronic homelessness in the community.
- Create a new homeless unit within CCS with the addition of 2 new positions to enhance strategic focus and secure substantial progress on the workplan.
- Enhance enforcement of quality of life ordinances through the addition of 2 HELP Officers and 2 Park Rangers.
- Advocate for changes in federal, state and regional laws, regulations, programs and systems to more equitably share the challenge of ending homelessness.

- Develop regional supportive housing options for chronic homeless people.
- Reassess local ordinances and regulations to determine if revisions would assist in addressing homelessness and its impacts.
- Assess models in other communities for enforcing quality of life violations
- Link food providers with indoor service facilities.
- Advocate for creation of Federal/State funding incentives and sanctions for communities to encourage shouldering a fair share of the burden of ending homelessness.
- Advocate for change in state law governing mandatory psychiatric assessment and treatment for the gravely disabled homeless.
- Work with the Department of Mental Health and neighboring jurisdictions to locate a psychiatric urgent care facility on the Westside.
- Conduct community education to inform residents of the City's efforts and progress towards ending homelessness in Santa Monica.

Draft