

September 13, 2005

Santa Monica, CA

## INFORMATION ITEM

TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: City Staff

SUBJECT: Update on Current City Efforts to Address Homelessness in Santa Monica

### Introduction

The following report summarizes the progress of efforts currently underway related to the community objective to reduce the impact of homelessness in Santa Monica. This summary includes those short and long term projects which were initiated or substantively advanced since the last update to the Council on July 26, 2005.

### Discussion

A community priority to address the impacts of homelessness in Santa Monica was adopted by Council at its February 8, 2005 City Council meeting and further refined as a top priority in the City's FY 2005-06 budget adopted in June, 2005. Current work efforts include the following:

**Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Grant:** The City of Santa Monica was recently selected as one of 11 communities nationwide to receive a federal grant to help combat long-term homelessness among individuals who are living on the streets and who are addicted to alcohol. The City will receive over \$940,000 for rental subsidies and other costs over two years to provide permanent housing with supportive services to house 30 persons who are chronically homeless and addicted to alcohol, working with CLARE Foundation, OPCC, New Directions, St. Joseph's Center, Step Up on Second, Venice Family Clinic, LA County Department of Mental Health, local hospitals and others. (HUD originally announced a grant award of \$717,000, but just recently approved the City's full request)

**Best Practice Research:** Evidence from national research demonstrates “Housing First” to be a successful and cost effective approach to getting chronically homeless people off of the streets. This model has been successfully replicated by several cities including New York, Chicago, Philadelphia and San Francisco. This approach involves immediately housing homeless people and providing them with intensive supportive services. Housing is provided regardless of an individual’s progress toward case management goals. Staff is contemplating how best to realize the benefits of this model in Santa Monica.

**10<sup>th</sup> Annual Celebrating Success Breakfast:** On Friday, September 23, 2005, the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Celebrating Success Breakfast, sponsored by the Westside Shelter and Hunger Coalition (WSHC), will be held at Bergamot Station in Santa Monica from 7:30-9:30 a.m. to honor the achievements of homeless individuals in the community who have moved toward self-sufficiency and healthy lives. The efforts of the City of Santa Monica in addressing homelessness will also be acknowledged.

**Chronic Homelessness Project:** This City project, launched in June 2004 to effectively target housing and services to those most difficult to reach and service resistant homeless people who have been on Santa Monica’s streets for an extended period of time, has entered its second year. To date, 25 people have been enrolled in this pilot project, 13 are off of the streets - 10 in permanent housing, 3 in temporary housing looking for a permanent unit - 1 is homeless but ready to enter housing and looking for a unit, 8 are homeless and in the process of engagement, 2 are in jail or in the hospital and one has passed away. A review of the demographic characteristics of the 25 participants to date reveals the following:

- 13 were male, 12 were female;
- 5 were veterans;
- the average age is 55.7 years, 2 are over 70 years of age;
- the total time homeless is 307 years, the average time homeless is 12 years.

**Serial Inebriate Outreach Program:** CLARE Foundation staff is conducting jail outreach and voluntary substance abuse counseling at the Santa Monica Jail to serial inebriates. The program began in early July 2005 and as of September 6, 2005 CLARE staff has interviewed 29 persons. Of these, 6 enrolled into CLARE services, where two currently remain. One has been at CLARE for over 30 days. Of the 4 no longer at CLARE, 3 are on the streets and one was placed into another recovery program.

**Comprehensive System and Program Evaluation:** City staff will be conducting a comprehensive, quantitative and qualitative evaluation of homeless service delivery in Santa Monica to bolster existing strengths, fill gaps, improve coordination and leverage resources. New and innovative approaches to serving the chronically homeless will also be a focus. In August, City staff met with homeless service providers to solicit input on the evaluator’s scope of work. A Request for Qualifications for an evaluator will be released in September 2005 and a final report by the summer of 2006. Existing services providers will be informed and involved throughout the process. Because this evaluation will be important for informing future funding decisions, and evaluations of other grantee programs are occurring along a similar schedule, staff will be requesting

that Council extend the City's grant funding cycle for local non-profit organizations by one year, through June 30, 2007.

**Veterans Administration:** In June 2005, Council directed staff to work expeditiously with homeless agencies currently providing service at the West Los Angeles Veteran's Administration and with the Westside COG cities to develop a proposed concept plan for housing homeless veterans on the campus of the VA in West Los Angeles. Since then, a coalition of providers, VA staff and City of Santa Monica representatives have developed a proposal for long-term therapeutic supportive housing for chronically homeless veterans and homeless veterans with special needs which will be submitted to the Veteran's Administration CARES (Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services) process. The CARES process is designed to establish broad land use priorities for the West Los Angeles VA campus.

The West Los Angeles CARES Local Advisory Panel will be hearing public testimony regarding land use proposals for the West Los Angeles VA campus on September 22, 2005. Members of the coalition and representatives from the Westside cities are expected to testify in support of the proposal. The results of the local public participation process will be forwarded to the Secretary of Veteran's Affairs in Washington, D.C., who is expected to make final decisions in early 2006.

**Destination Cities Focus Group:** The Federal Interagency Council on Homelessness (ICH) will be hosting a 1-day focus group of destination cities (cities who have attractions that draw tourists) on September 27, 2005 in Long Beach -- an idea generated by ICH at an earlier conference this year. Key issues include strategies for addressing the attraction of homeless people to locations with tourist amenities; panhandling in prime pedestrian tourist areas; and exacerbation in resort/destination cities of commonly faced challenges such as high housing costs, the rise of low-wage service sector jobs, and resistance of surrounding cities to share regional responsibility for homelessness. City staff including representatives from the Police Department, Community and Cultural Services and the City Attorney's and City Manager's Offices are scheduled to attend.

**SAMOSHEL/SHWASHLOCK Transition:** At the request of The Salvation Army to terminate its responsibility for the operation of SAMOSHEL and SHWASHLOCK, the contract was transferred to OPCC on September 1, 2005. This transfer of responsibility was warranted because of the planned relocation of OPCC's Access Center to a parcel adjacent to SAMOSHEL/SHWASHLOCK. Minor operational improvements will be implemented, based on an evaluation conducted by OPCC prior to the transition. The number of beds will remain the same - although the number of emergency beds will increase from 10 to 20 (with a decrease of transitional beds from 100 to 90), and the length of stay in those emergency beds has been increased from 3 to 14 days. This change will make these emergency SAMOSHEL beds more accessible as stabilization beds for the Chronic Homeless Project and other efforts aimed at moving the chronically homeless off the streets.

