

February 13, 2006

Santa Monica, CA

## **INFORMATION ITEM**

TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: City Staff

SUBJECT: Report on Senator Cedillo Los Angeles Delegation Trip to New York City on Times Square Homeless Efforts

### Introduction

On January 26 and 27, 2006 a Los Angeles delegation invited by State Senator Gilbert Cedillo (including Ed Edelman, Councilmember Richard Bloom and Kathryn Vernez,) began a review of New York City's efforts to address the impacts of homelessness in Times Square, as a possible model for Skid Row in downtown Los Angeles and to learn about strategies and tools appropriate for dealing with homelessness throughout Los Angeles County. The ongoing LA Times articles about the homeless, the efforts underlying Bring LA Home planning, and the regional nature of the homeless problem in Los Angeles have stimulated renewed research and interest in developing effective strategies. New York City and State have pooled resources, most recently committing \$1 billion to develop 9,000 new units of supportive housing for the homeless throughout the City. The following provides highlights from the New York site visits, a preliminary list of lessons learned, and an initial assessment of implications for Los Angeles County. Many of the lessons learned confirm the current thinking about solutions to homelessness in the Los Angeles region, and in Santa Monica, and application of those

initiatives in Los Angeles are contemplated or are occurring, with varying degrees of success.

#### New York City Meetings/Site visits

A series of meetings held over two days focused on innovations in criminal justice, business involvement and investment in homeless efforts, and the housing and services mix that have been successful in New York City's Times Square.

George Kelling, consultant to the New York City Police Department (NYPD) briefed the delegation on moving the homeless out of Grand Central station and subway tunnels by enforcing the rules and regulations of public places and by offering the homeless advance notice, education, shelters and services. He provided an overview of his book "Fixing Broken Windows: Restoring Order and Reducing Crime in Our Communities" that posits that disorder left unattended escalates into serious crime. His work with the New York Police in Times Square focused on ways to get the "beat cop" involved in outreach to the homeless in a humane way prior to arrest and then to enforce for quality-of-life crimes as a gateway to social services. Fifty officers, backed up by homeless services staff, were assigned to Times Square with enhanced training and guidelines to move people from streets to services. Posters delineated the rules of behavior prior to any removal effort. Fair and consistent enforcement occurred for illegal behavior, but was coupled with linkages to social services for the homeless suffering from economic destitution or/and mental illness.

### Mid Town Community Court

The Mid Town Community Court, the nation's first community court, was founded upon recommendation by the Center for Court Innovation, the independent research and development arm of the New York State court system to focus on Times Square and its immediate vicinity. It was launched in 1993 to deal with quality-of-life offenses by sentencing individuals to perform meaningful community service as opposed to the typical few days of jail time served or nothing at all. The court works in partnership with the local community, businesses and social service providers to organize community service projects, and provide on-site social services, including drug treatment, mental health counseling and job training for qualified offenders. It has proven to be a way to allow the local community, a community judge, law enforcement and service providers to construct a more effective gateway to services in the Times Square area.

The delegation observed the Mid Town Community Court in session and had the opportunity to speak with Judge Richard Weinberg, the D.A., the Times Square Police Commander and social services providers. The court addresses an individual's specific problems such as public drunkenness, mental illness and prostitution and other quality-of-life crimes by referral to appropriate social and medical services as well as by requiring community service. A resource coordinator makes recommendations to the judge to fit the needs of the individual defendant. All components of the court work together (D.A., Legal Aid, social service providers, mental health workers and Judge). Twelve years after the Court opened, an independent evaluation found that: arraignment time was reduced from 30 hours to 18 hours; use of community services

and social services was doubled; jail time was used less often, but with longer sentences; community service compliance rates were at 75%.

### Times Square Alliance

Times Square Alliance, the Business Improvement District (BID), played a key role in the revival of Times Square. Financed by \$6 million in property assessments, the Alliance operates street cleaning, provides security and provides counseling for homeless people. It participates in the biannual survey of the homeless in the area. The delegation had the opportunity to discuss the BID's services and look at information it provides to businesses to call for assistance with the homeless. The BID underscored the role of the New York Times, situated in the area, in creating accountability for outcomes as well as raising public awareness of both problems and successes which broadened the constituency for action.

### Vera Institute of Justice: Project Renewal

Representatives of the Vera Institute of Justice spoke to the delegation at the Project Renewal housing site. Vera is a non-profit agency that works with community partners to develop effective solutions to justice and social problems. It pioneered Project Renewal, the leading provider of housing and treatment for more than 20,000 mentally ill and homeless people in New York each year. Project Renewal provides a full service model for homeless people to move from the streets to independent living. A mobile psychiatric and medical outreach team performs outreach and connects the homeless to social services and a range of residential programs. The delegation visited the

Clinton residence in Times Square that has 57 units and provides round-the-clock support services, case management and employment assistance. Seventy-five percent of residents are employed either part-time or full-time. Since 1997, 65% of residents have moved on to independent housing. Cost savings are significant for housing the mentally ill in this program compared to hospitals and jails. Annual estimates range from \$50,000 to \$55,000 for hospitals and jails compared with \$30,000 to \$35,000 for programs such as Project Renewal.

### Common Ground

Common Ground provided the delegation with a description of how it saved a historic hotel for use as an SRO creating 652 homeless housing units with wrap around services. Rosanne Haggerty, Executive Director, walked the delegation through the preservation process for the historic building, renovation through creative financing from public and private sources and partnering with social service providers. Haggerty also talked about other models underway in the City designed to prevent youth released from foster care from becoming homeless. In New York, about 20% of homeless adults have a history of foster care.

### Separate City Department on Homeless Service

A separate City Department of Homeless services was created in 1993 to work with nonprofit partners for the provision of safe shelter, outreach, services and transition to permanent housing for homeless individuals and families. The department has a budget

of \$742 million with over 2,000 employees. \$55 million is spent on central administration with \$248 million spent on adult programs and \$405 million on family programs.

Mayor Bloomberg has expanded homeless efforts by appointing a Deputy Mayor for Human Services who oversees the Departments of the Homeless Services, Mental Health, Human Resources, Children's Services, Aging, Health and Hospitals Corporation, Corrections, Probation, Juvenile Justice, Health Insurance, and HIV Health and Human Services Planning Council.

New York/New York III, a landmark agreement signed November 2005 between the City of New York and the State provides \$1 billion to finance and develop 9,000 new units of supportive housing for the chronically homeless in New York City . An unprecedented collection of State and City agencies brought this agreement to fruition and built on two previous agreements (New York/New York I and II signed in 1990 and 1999 respectively) which produced 5,300 units of supportive housing for persons with mental illness and some history of homelessness.

#### Interagency Coordination is Client Focused

The New York City Department of Corrections described the Rikers Island Discharge Enhancement (RIDE) program that links prisoners to be released from jail with re-entry services to secure jobs, housing and social services upon release. Although the program is in its infancy and focuses on "frequent users", i.e., repeat offenders, currently 8% of the jail population to be released have discharge plans and are

monitored. For housing, the Department of Corrections works with the New York Housing Authority that provides Section 8 vouchers. In addition, the JEHT Foundation awarded \$650,000 to support “frequent users” in apartments with supportive services. Department of Corrections works with relevant City departments and Federal agencies to ensure continuation of benefits or eligibility for benefits (SSI, Social Security, food stamps, welfare) for offenders upon release from jail. The Corrections Deputy Commission said that having departments of corrections, homeless services and human resources at the table together creates a safety net for the homeless who often cycle through both the Criminal Justice and homeless services systems.

### Lessons Learned

- **Civic and Political Leadership: Have the right people at the table with the resources and authority to act.** NYC’s Times Square effort burgeoned with City government, business, law enforcement and the non-profit community fully engaged in finding solutions. The New York/New York agreements between the City and State set the gold standard for ending chronic homelessness.
- **Engender political will by bringing the stakeholders together.** The business community, hotels, residents, community groups and providers came together to create simple tools like a business/service outreach card that designates key phone numbers to get people help. It is an “eyes on the streets” approach to extend the usual outreach. The New York Times was an integral part of the effort.
- **Role of the Police: Get the beat cop involved.** NYC began to focus on illegal behavior, and quality-of-life crimes as indicators for help. Officers were trained in understanding the needs of the homeless and ways to address them, while enforcing behavior codes.
- **Role of Community Court: The Community Court became the glue for all the systems to work together in Times Square.** The court became the “gateway to social services.” For example, an alternative sentence of the court was for an individual to fill out a housing application, or attend job training and counseling.

- **Housing Availability:** SRO's and Section 8 vouchers were available. The projects we visited were highly structured and provided wrap around services. The City and State stepped up to create new housing and shifted the emphasis away from expensive shelters to invest in more cost-effective supportive housing solutions.
- **Role of Discharge Planning was Key to housing, jobs and social services.** This is true from the Community Court or from jail. In fact Rikers Island has a discharge policy of getting people jobs and connected to services upon release.
- **Research organizations played a big role in stimulating innovation and quantifying successes.** Private foundations provided early seed money for the homeless initiatives. Plans were developed based upon data and objective research.
- **Integrated services that work:** Providers offer assertive case management services linked to permanent housing. This model of service delivery provides wrap-around services, often during non-traditional hours and in non-traditional settings (e.g., in clients' units) to do "whatever it takes" to get people into housing and keep them there. This includes new ways of working across systems to ensure that clients get what they need, when they need it.

### Application to Los Angeles County

Senator Cedillos has requested that the delegation define strategies applicable to Los Angeles's problems. He has prepared a number of bills that would:

- Prohibit "dumping" of homeless people in downtown L.A. or any area by prohibiting arresting agencies from transporting people in need of drug treatment, mental illness and/or homeless support services outside of their jurisdiction, unless the agency has identified an available bed in a treatment facility;
- Require L.A. County Sheriff's Department to release an inmate back to the Sheriff's substation or detention facility closest to the point of arrest or to the residence of the inmate;
- Establish a fair share zoning law that requires cities and counties to identify sites in the housing element of their general plans where emergency homeless shelters and residential service providers are allowed to locate without the ability of the local governing body to change the plan once it is adopted;
- Enhance penalties for any person on parole or probation for selling or using drugs coming within 1,000 yards of drug and alcohol treatment facilities

In addition, the Senator is interested in developing a local Community Court on Skid Row. Staff will analyze these legislative proposals and present them to Santa Monica Council for consideration, understanding that any regional distribution, “dumping” or fair share initiatives must also acknowledge the need for additional treatment facilities, services and housing for this population.

Regarding applicability to Los Angeles County, many of the New York initiatives are being implemented, to varying degrees of success, in the Los Angeles region (and in Santa Monica). These areas will need further exploration as well as leadership and resources to ensure successful outcomes:

- **Civic and Political Leadership/Bring Stakeholders together:** Currently, regional stakeholders are identifying the most effective means of creating an accountable regional governance structure for regional homeless initiatives, coupled with an administrative organization that can effectively site and implement the provision of homeless services programs countrywide. The County Chief Administrative Office with the City of Los Angeles is evaluating governance structures for the Los Angeles Homeless Services Agency (LAHSA), to which Santa Monica has given extensive comment. The issue has also been discussed at Bring Los Angeles Home! and is the first step in implementing the plan.
- **Housing Availability:** The Mayor of Los Angeles announced \$50 million for supportive housing and a \$1 billion bond for affordable housing. Bring Los Angeles Home!, the 10 year planning effort conducted by LAHSA to end homelessness is considering significant target units and will be proposing funding vehicles in the plan, which will be released in March. Councilmember Bloom is on the Executive Committee of that effort. In Santa Monica, 101 more units of supportive housing will be built at Cloverfield and Step Up on Fifth projects. Rental subsidies for 30 units of supportive housing have been funded through the Housing for Homeless Persons Addicted to Alcohol Grant awarded to the City of Santa Monica by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in September, 2005.
- **Discharge planning from community institutions, hospitals and jails:** In the Los Angeles County jail system, the Community Transition Unit (CTU) performs voluntary discharge planning services for inmates throughout the system. Some

health care institutions employ social workers to also assist in discharge planning. Their success, however, is limited because of the lack of appropriate services and housing, especially substance abuse and mental health beds, and permanent supporting housing, to which to refer patients, and the “voluntary” nature of the discharge referrals. The initial success of Santa Monica’s Serial Inebriate Outreach Program, which places CLARE Foundation staff at the Santa Monica jail, is a local indicator of the potential of such discharge planning initiatives, even when voluntary.

- **Role of Community Court:** Establish a community court in Santa Monica and elsewhere throughout the county where high concentration of homeless exist. Improve provision of mental health services and urgent care facilities in communities.
- **Role of Police:** One of the successes of Santa Monica’s Chronic Homeless Program has been the better integration of and coordination between first responders such as the HLP Team and paramedics with homeless services providers. This increased coordination has lead to better service delivery to homeless clients, better communication between stakeholders, and the coordination of outreach and enforcement approaches to open space issues.
- **Engage research institutions and foundations in innovation and analysis:** The City of Santa Monica is in the process of engaging a consultant to do an evaluation of the current continuum of care, and to make recommendations to improve effectiveness of the local system. This includes the identification of innovate, best-practice approaches into the current system, and strategies for more effective advocacy and integration with regional systems of service. In addition, the scope of work includes identifying funding sources, including private foundations, which can provide support for innovative approaches.
- **Integrated services that work:** Santa Monica’s Chronic Homeless Program employs a team approach to effectively serve chronically homeless persons. This team approach improved the coordination of service providers and first responders locally, as well as across regional systems of care. The intense focus of resources on a targeted group of chronically homeless individuals and a “whatever it takes” attitude has lead to the transition of 31 chronically homeless persons into permanent or transitional housing since July, 2004.

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