

Report and Recommendations of the
Ad Hoc Committee on
Homelessness and Vehicular Occupation
to the
Venice Neighborhood Council

May 8, 2009

Co-Chairs: Carolyn Rios and Mark Ryavec

Members: Mariana Aguilar, Susan Beckman, Steve Freedman, Marie Hammond, Giovanna Imbesi, Michael King, John Meehan, Stewart Oscars and Terry Simons

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OVERVIEW

The Ad Hoc Committee was established by the VNC in the summer of 2008 and held its first meeting on September 18th. It has met regularly, with meetings generally twice a month. It met under the public notification requirements of California's Public Meeting Law, the Ralph M. Brown Act.

As directed by its mission statement (please see the appendix), the Committee received presentations from various service providers, government officials, agency directors and staff members and the public.

The vast majority of the experts and officials who appeared before the Committee pointed to the effectiveness of the "Housing First" model which provides housing to homeless individuals in conjunction with services and assertive case management. This model has proved to be more successful in moving homeless individuals to housing, and in keeping them housed, than traditional drop-in day centers and temporary shelters.

The Committee previously submitted an Interim Report with recommendations that the VNC and City support the St. Joseph Center's Chronic Homeless Intervention Program, which follows the "Housing First" model. A copy of that report is included in the appendix.

The Committee subsequently considered and adopted the following recommendation to compliment the St. Joseph's Chronic Homeless Intervention Program:

The Committee understands that the City of Santa Monica has established a team of police officers with primary responsibility for outreach to the homeless and for liaison with local social services providers. The team of officers works closely with service providers there and these joint efforts have resulted in placement of chronic homeless individuals in housing and a resultant decline in police, paramedic and hospital costs related to this population.

It appears to the Committee that the establishment of such a team in Venice and CD 11 would be appropriate and would compliment St. Joseph's new chronic homeless intervention program, which was earlier endorsed by both this Committee and the VNC.

Thus, the Committee recommends that the VNC request the LAPD to develop a team of officers with special training and primary responsibility for outreach to, and liaison with, the homeless in Venice and CD 11 and local social services providers.

The Committee also makes the following recommendation to establish a CD 11-Wide Homelessness Task Force.

To assure that homelessness on the Westside is addressed as the regional issue that it is, that Councilman of the District establish a CD 11-wide Homeless Task Force with two representatives of each neighborhood council and also representatives of residents associations to meet monthly with the Council Office, the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, representatives of adjoining cities, service providers, representatives of appropriate county supervisors and county departments (County Mental Health, etc.), LA Housing Department, LAPD, LA City Attorney, etc., with the purpose of coordinating homeless services, educating the public about the solutions to homelessness, supporting increased private and public funding for services and housing for the homeless and reaching consensus on the siting of transition and supportive affordable housing for the homeless.

The Committee notes that under the By-Laws of the VNC, the duration of an Ad Hoc Committee is one year. In this regard the Committee adopted the following motion to continue the efforts of the Committee beyond its report-out date.

To continue the dialogue begun by this Committee with various agencies and officials, to advance the recommendations made by this Committee (or which will be made by this Committee), and to maintain a focus on the needs of the homeless in our community, that it is the sense of this Ad Hoc Committee that it continue to meet until its one-year renewal date on September 18, 2009, on the subject of Homelessness, and the related issues of development of affordable housing in and around Venice, on a once per month basis or as determined by its chair(s), and that it act as the VNC's interlocutor with homeless serving agencies, both public and private, City agencies such as the LAPD and City Attorney and LAHD, County representatives, and LAHSA. The committee shall also hold meetings with various agencies to gauge progress in assisting Venice's homeless population gain access to services and housing.

In the following pages the Committee presents its recommendations regarding two subjects which are at the core of its mission. The first is a proposal for a pilot vehicle-to-housing transition program, modeled in part on similar programs in Eugene, Oregon, and Santa Barbara, California, to assist indigent (by which we mean poor, without financial means and/or under-employed) vehicle dwellers transition to housing and obtain services they may require. The second proposal is for a series of steps the VNC, the Councilperson of the District and the City should consider to provide more affordable housing on the Westside, especially permanent, supportive housing to house chronic homeless individuals.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Committee,

Carolyn Rios and Mark Ryavec

Co-Chairs

Recommendation for a Pilot Vehicle-to-Housing Transition Program

The Committee has examined the experiences of other communities which have established programs and sites to offer those living in vehicles with the opportunity to park overnight off-street while receiving various services to assist them transition to affordable housing.

From these reviews, from discussions with program operators in Santa Barbara, CA and Eugene, OR, and study of Venice's and CD 11's specific conditions and layout, the Committee recommends that the City of Los Angeles establish a program, funded by the City, County and possibly private charitable sources, and operated by a non-profit social service provider, to provide off-street sites and services to assist vehicular dwellers, on a voluntary basis, find affordable housing.

The program would have the following outline:

1. The City would adopt conditional use permit language (recommended language below) to allow the permitting of public or private lots as transition sites per the proposed attached language. The sites would be at least 300 feet from inhabited residences, exempted from LAMC 85.02, no more than three vehicles would allowed on a site at one time, and participants would be restricted to three month stays and must be of very low income status. (Examples of possible sites are below.) Other provisions are contained in the attached proposed permit language to protect the neighborhoods in which the sites are located.
2. The City would develop and release a request for proposals for non-profit social service agencies to submit proposals to operate a vehicle-to-housing transition program (the service provider). The service provider would recruit vehicle dwellers to participate in the program, provide services required by the participants to facilitate placement in affordable housing, and supervise the sites and assure they are operated in a safe and healthy manner.
3. The service provider would be delegated by the City as the "first responder" in the event the City (DOT, Council Office or LAPD) is notified that someone is living in a vehicle on City streets in violation of LAMC 85.02 (ban on using vehicles as living quarters on public streets or parking lots) and/or 80.73.2 (ban on stays of more than 72 hours). The service provider will notify the vehicle dweller that living in vehicles is prohibited by City ordinance and that they will be cited for violation of 85.02 and/or 80.73.2. The service provider shall offer them overnight accommodations on a permitted parking lot, subject to availability, if they are judged to be very low income, agree to program guidelines and to participate in the transition program to place them in affordable housing. If they are not very low income and/or have no interest in finding housing, the service provider will direct them to permitted camping locations in the County of Los Angeles. If they fail to move their vehicles they will be subject to citation by the police and/or DOT.
4. The program would have the following guidelines:

Eligibility

- a. Anyone, individuals or families, living in a motor vehicle (car/truck/van/recreational vehicle) which can be moved to and from the site by its own power, and who is judged to be very low income by a standard set by the Los Angeles Housing Department, is eligible.
- b. Only those who have been accepted into the transition program by the service provider may stay on the permitted lot(s) overnight. All others will be cited for trespassing, and towed away if necessary.
- c. Participant(s) must sign a contract with the service provider agreeing to relocate to permanent housing, if such housing is affordable to the participant and located within 10 miles of the transition site.
- d. Anyone under age eighteen must be accompanied by and supervised by an adult.
- e. The vehicle must have current a California license and insurance.
- f. Dogs and other pets are forbidden (other than an assistance dog, such as a Seeing Eye dog).

Hours and Length of Stay

- a. Vehicles are allowed on the sites overnight only (hours may differ as the lots may have other uses in the early evening or early morning).
- b. Individuals and their vehicles are allowed to use the site overnight for a period of three months provided they abide by all program rules.

Support Services/Clean Up

- a. Portable toilet(s) and trash bags will be provided by the service provided on-site. Overnight sleepers must use the portable toilet(s) provided or the sanitation system installed on their vehicle. The service provider will also make available shower facilities within a reasonable driving distance of the site.
- b. Participants must dispose of human waste which accumulates in their vehicle's tank at proper disposal sites.
- c. Participants are responsible for keeping their space clean and helping to keep the entire site clean.

Behavior

- a. No violent or aggressive behavior, physical or verbal abuse, vandalism, panhandling, gambling or offensive behavior is allowed.
- b. No use or brandishing of weapons or carrying of firearms on the site.
- c. No consumption of alcohol or illegal drugs or open containers of alcoholic beverages allowed on-site.
- d. No loud noises or music.
- e. Disputes between participants to be immediately brought to the attention of the service provider for resolution.
- f. No children to be left unattended in a vehicle or on the site.

Sites

- a. Vehicles are allowed only in prescribed locations on the site.
- b. Vehicles and possessions are to be kept within the boundary lines of individual spaces.
- c. No tents or temporary structures are to be erected on the site.
- d. No cooking devices or open fires allowed on site other than those originally installed by manufacturers in vehicles.
- f. No pets permitted on site.
- g. Any vehicle left unattended for 48 hours will considered abandoned and the process will be started to have it towed away.
- h. Program participants are responsible for their guests abiding by program rules. Guests must leave the site by 9 PM.
- i. Violation of any of these rules can lead to termination from the program and loss of the right to use the site for overnight parking.
- J. As multiple sites are developed, there should be separate sites for single individuals, women, and families.

Recommended Conditional Use Permit

SEC. 12.24. CONDITIONAL USE PERMITS AND OTHER SIMILAR QUASI-JUDICIAL APPROVALS.

W. Authority of the Zoning Administrator for Conditional Uses/Initial Decision.

The following uses and activities may be permitted in any zone, unless restricted to certain zones or locations, if approved by the Zoning Administrator as the initial decision-maker or the Area Planning Commission as the appellate body. The procedures for reviewing applications for these uses shall be those in Subsections B. through Q. in addition to those set out below.

() Transitional Vehicular Residency on Parking Lots. Notwithstanding Los Angeles Municipal Code Section 85.02, the use of public parking lots and/or privately-held parking lots overnight as transition sites, with funded services providing for transition to affordable housing, for individuals living in their vehicles, limited to three (3) vehicles or less, with stays of less than three months per year, where the vehicles will be parked at least 300 feet from any inhabited dwelling(s) located on an adjoining or nearby parcel, and the vehicle owner(s)/occupants are determined to be very low income as determined by the transition service provider or the Los Angeles Housing Department, in the CR, C1, C1.5, C2, C4, C5, CM, MR1, MR2, M1, M2, M3, P, and PF Zones, provided that:

(a) **Findings.** In addition to the findings otherwise required by this section, the Zoning Administrator shall make all of the following findings:

(1) that the parking lot meets all the requirements of the Los Angeles Municipal Code for lighting, landscaping, filtration of surface water runoff, and walls blocking view from residential areas into lot;

(2) that the proposed use will not detrimentally affect nearby residentially and/or commercially zoned communities in the area of the City involved, after giving consideration to the distance of the proposed use from residential buildings, churches, schools, hospitals, public playgrounds and parks, and other similar uses (this does not prohibit a church parking lot from being permitted as a transition site under this section);

(4) that the service provider retained by the City to operate the transition service agrees to provide overnight:

- (a) toilet facilities on-site and access to a shower to the occupants of the vehicles parking on the parking lot;
- (b) sanitary disposal of any human waste and/or trash which may be generated by the inhabitants of the subject vehicles;
- (c) emergency telephone number, which is answered by a person and not voice mail, prominently displayed on-site for overnight response;
- (d) that no guests or visitors are allowed after 9 PM.

and agrees to prohibit amplified music, use of electric generators and the sale or use of illicit drugs and alcohol on-site.

Parking Lots in CD11 for Possible Use as Transition Sites

Location	Notes
Venice	
Ross Dress for Less	Large lot behind store. Potentially could be leased by the City for overnight use.
Del Rey, between Washington and Maxella	Much commercial space with large parking lots on east side of Del Rey. Isolated from residential and retail commercial properties.
Marina	
Fiji Way west of Lincoln	County lots on state property across from Fisherman’s Village. Limited stay low income RV lots. Sheriff across the street.
Playa del Rey	
East of Vista del Mar on Airport land	Where houses have been removed, there are streets and underground services in place. Convert to pads. Could place this adjacent to Hyperion plant near existing RV campgrounds.
West of Vista del Mar,	This is the location of the Robin

Dockweiler Beach Parking Lot #3 at tower #49	Richards/Theresa Skinner proposal. Services in place.
Westchester Parkway	
Buffer zone between Westchester Parkway and Lincoln Blvd	Airport land with removed housing has existing streets and underground services in place.
East of Airport	
Off 96 th Street	Land with city purchased vacant housing and parking lots adjacent.
Jenny and Manchester	Northeast corner lot.
Arbor Vita and Bellanca	Southeast corner lot.
Arbor Vita and 93 rd Street	Much housing taken out of use by city. Potential parking with services.
Westchester	
Westchester at Lincoln Blvd	Park has lots as does the land adjacent to the municipal buildings. Services available.
Playa Vista	
East of Lincoln beyond present development	Large amount of flat vacant land in preparation for succeeding phases. May be vacant for years.
Marina Freeway	
Along Culver Blvd and between the 91 Freeway	State property unused, screened. RV storage lot exists near Lincoln.
Centinela and Rose	
East side of Centinela	Ocean View Farms Park. Big, isolated lot with bathrooms nearby.
Sawtelle south of Exposition	
405 adjacent	Lot on east side of Sawtelle below 405.
Exposition east of Sawtelle	
South side of Exposition between Sawtelle and Sepulveda	Post Office has a large lot. West Los Angeles City Building had a huge parking lot. Possible night use.
Heading north on Sepulveda from Exposition	
Between Ohio and	On west side of Sepulveda there is a Salvation

Wilshire	Army Center with lot, State property alongside the roadway. On east side is a Park. Area has good bus transit connections.
North of Wilshire	At Constitution, west side of Sepulveda at Robinson Stadium: big parking lot. Getty feeder lot. UCLA Mobile Clinics are parked there; isolated with restrooms nearby. VA adjacent for services.
Veterans Administration	
West of 405	Many lots, much service, security.
Federal south of Wilshire	
On east side of Federal	US Army Reserve Center and National Guard lots. Large parking area available for night use.
Corinth and Iowa Area	
Two situations stand out in this area	The City building in which Councilman Bill Rosendahl has an office has much parking including a section that is walled off from view and adjacent to the building making it almost private. The Felicia Mahood Senior Center has a lot behind it. Much potential here.
Pacific Palisades	
Above Sunset on Temescal Canyon Road	Park with lots and services.
Above Sunset on Los Liones Dr	Near the trailhead there are several parking lots available for night parking.

Recommendations to Promote Affordable Housing

The provision of new affordable housing in Venice has been a contentious issue for many years, with claims that the community must provide additional low-income, transitional and permanent supportive housing for the many homeless individuals who dwell on our streets, alleys and parks, with counter claims that Venice already carries more than its fair share of the burden and that proposed solutions, such as the conversion of City parking lots to affordable housing, would hamper the community's ability to address its chronic parking shortage and place these facilities too close to residences for comfort.

As directed by its mission statement, the Committee met with a wide range of experts, service providers and government officials familiar with these issues (a full list is provided in the Appendix).

One of the most significant facts to emerge is that Venice is, indeed, host to the largest concentration of affordable housing in Council District (CD) 11. Venice proper has 23.3% of all affordable units in CD 11 while its population is only 13.5% of CD 11.*

This does not suggest more affordable housing is not needed in Venice or throughout CD 11, or indeed, the City, County and Nation. The Los Angeles Housing Services Authority (LAHSA) reports that in 2007 the City of Los Angeles had 40,144 and the County of Los Angeles had over 68,000 homeless individuals on any given night. St. Joseph Center reports that the 2007 Homeless Count conducted by LAHSA found about 1,000 homeless in our community.

Further, the Venice Community Housing Corporation reports that it has not built a new project in Venice since 1998, and the Los Angeles Housing Department reports that no new projects are funded or under construction anywhere in CD 11, largely due to the high cost of land on the Westside.

After many hours of meetings with the various experts, the Committee has learned the most effective approach to serving the homeless is the "Housing First" model, now employed in New York City, Project 50 in Downtown Los Angeles, Santa Monica and elsewhere in the Nation. This model focuses on that segment of the homeless population which is most at risk of dying on the street, providing housing first, with various services and support to follow. Thus, the most pressing need in Venice and CD 11 is for permanent supportive housing for these individuals. This is the group which is addressed by St. Joseph's chronic homeless intervention program, which the Committee has recommended for implementation.

*Without including the 179 affordable units in new developments in Marina Pointe, there are 489 affordable units in the Venice zip code of 90291. The total in CD 11 is 2102. (Source: Los Angeles Housing Department.) The total population of CD 11 is: 280,500 ±; the population of Venice is: 38,000 ±. Adding in the units in the Marina Pointe area, Venice has

more than twice as many affordable units as its percentage of CD 11's population.

While that program plans to house these most at-risk individuals with the use of supplementary Section 8 vouchers (i.e., those in addition to the vouchers it currently receives) utilizing a “scattered site” model, the better solution is the development of permanent supportive housing locally by purchase or master lease of existing housing, adaptive reuse of existing structures or construction of new housing. This would allow supportive service providers to office on-site and assist several or many clients at the same location.

While this permanent supportive housing does not have to be located in Venice proper, it would be more effective if it is located on the Westside. Service providers have found it difficult to entice the chronically homeless - those most at risk - to locations far removed from where they have been homeless for many years.

This has led the Committee to recommend that the City accept that it must factor in the high cost of land and provide greater subsidies for areas of the City with high land costs where there are significant concentrations of homeless individuals, such as Venice, to allow the purchase of sites in, or adjacent to, these areas.

On the other hand, the Committee recognizes that beach-adjacent sites are less financially-feasible in most instances and that in-land sites within several miles of the beach, or indeed several miles in-land from Venice, could more effectively meet these needs. This conclusion is based on the experiences of the Ocean Park Community Center, which has developed permanent supportive housing in-land of Santa Monica, some as far east as La Brea Boulevard, and successfully placed homeless individuals from Santa Monica’s homeless population in these units.

As stated above, to be able to acquire or develop affordable housing in Venice, there are only two alternatives: either the City must fund Westside projects at a higher cost per unit, or, the City must allow more units to be built per acre to amortize the cost of the land.

With little funding available, it appears the best way to create more affordable housing now is through limited instances of either creative zoning ordinances and/or variances to allow more units per acre. This would require exemptions from the Venice Specific Plan (VSP) and City code for just these projects.

Thus, only for the purpose of construction or adaptive reuse to create permanent supportive housing or transitional housing for chronic homeless individuals, the Committee supports zoning exemptions to increase the number of units per acre (while maintaining height limits) beyond City code and the Venice Specific Plan, if the units created are vested in perpetuity as very low income by the project developer, whether publicly or privately developed, and located in commercial or manufacturing zones only. In one scenario, this could result in smaller 400 sq. ft. units such as those recently developed in Santa Monica on Olympic Boulevard.

The Committee also recommends that the VNC establish a Committee on Affordable Housing to promote the development of affordable housing. The Committee recommends that the new Affordable Housing Committee provide a public forum to discuss and develop policy and that it consider the following incentives:

- voluntary inclusionary zoning to allow an additional small affordable unit(s) (400 to 600 sq. ft.) per lot where lot size is adequate (i.e., those which now are allowed two or more units by right).
- selective re-zoning along major thorough-fares to allow owners the ability to build more and smaller units per acre.
- Historical Preservation variances that create incentives to retain existing non-conforming affordable housing stock. (However, the Committee does not support the legalization of garage conversions unless code-required parking is provided.)

The City should also consider allowing the reduction - but not elimination - of required care-provider staff parking and occupant parking for facilities which house the previously homeless, including Single Room Occupancy (SRO) projects, and very low to low income projects. For example, instead of the current requirement of one parking space per unit in an SRO project, the City might only require .5 spaces per unit, recognizing that individuals at this income level frequently do not have automobiles.

Specifically, the Committee would support creating a new Single Room Occupancy project in Venice to house the most critically at risk homeless as soon as possible. This suggests either master leasing or purchasing an existing structure as opposed to new development.

To this end, the Committee has looked at several sites and recommends the sites below as examples of appropriate sites which should be given further consideration by the VNC, the Council Office, and LAHD:

585 E. Venice Boulevard (former Samy's Camera), Zoning: M1-1

4096 South Glencoe, Zoning: CM-2D (storage use)

4230 S. Del Rey Avenue, Zoning: CM-2D (storage use)

These sites already have existing structures that we are told are adaptable to housing by installing partitions and plumbing inside the buildings.

The 18,000 sq. ft. Samy's Camera building could be subdivided to create approximately 20 to 60 units of permanent supportive housing (a zone change would be required from M to C or R). The 24,400 sq. ft. Glencoe structure would accommodate approximately 30 to 70 units and the site on Del Rey would provide 16 to 50 units. The number of units will be limited by the parking which is ultimately required by City code and Venice Specific Plan. In this regard, a new affordable housing committee might consider a relaxation in the required parking for these projects, but not the elimination of these requirements.

While we were impressed by a transitional housing facility in Santa Monica operated by the Ocean Park Community Center which is situated in a multifamily residential neighborhood, we nonetheless believe that the residents of Venice (and other areas) are best served when residential neighborhoods are protected by the siting of new homeless-serving facilities in commercial or manufacturing areas. Since Venice and nearby areas such as Del Rey still have commercial and commercial/manufacturing zoned areas, we encourage the City to focus on acquiring property in these areas now while real estate prices are relatively depressed.

The Committee does not favor the use of existing City parking lots in Venice for new affordable housing due the need for these lots to eventually be re-developed to provide more parking to address Venice's chronic parking shortage.

APPENDIX

Mission Statement

Motion: to create a single **Homelessness/Vehicular Occupation Ad Hoc Committee** ("Committee") composed of twelve (12) voting members including two (2) co-chairs appointed by the President, and two (2) Board Members and eight (8) stakeholders selected by the co-chairs. The Board recommends that the eight (8) stakeholders be selected to form a balance of the points of view of relevant Venice interests. Non-voting Committee members shall be representatives from Supervisor Yaroslavsky's Office, Supervisor Knabe's Office, Supervisor Burke's Office, Councilman Rosendahl's Office, LAPD, DOT, and the Los Angeles City Housing Department (and possibly DPSS and Mental Health) as deemed appropriate and helpful by the Committee.

Mission Statement of the Committee shall be: The incidence of homelessness in Venice is a troubling aspect of life in Venice which calls out for action by citizens and government alike. To attempt to address this, the VNC Ad Hoc Committee on Homelessness is formed and charged with identifying local and regional solutions and actions to assist those who are indigent and thus unable to afford housing. In pursuing its mission, the Committee shall engage in a dialogue with County and City officials, including the County Supervisors of the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Districts, the Council Office for the 11th District, LAPD, DOT, the Los Angeles Housing Department, social service agencies which provide services to the homeless, religious and charitable organizations, and any other agencies which it deems potential partners in addressing these issues. Further, the Committee shall actively seek the involvement of all stakeholders in Venice including but not limited to residents, resident and neighborhood associations, service providers, homeless advocates and the homeless themselves, and businesses and property owners. Furthermore, The VNC declares that use of City streets is inappropriate for overnight occupation of vehicles of any kind due to safety, noise, crime and sanitation concerns for both residents in permanent housing as well as those living in vehicles. The mission of the Committee is to end vehicular living on city streets while also identifying suitable and affordable regional alternatives for those who are indigent or without adequate income to afford a traditional residence. In this effort, the Committee is charged to investigate, among other solutions, shelter housing and affordable housing within Venice, the 11th Council District and citywide, the use of private property, under conditional use permits, in the City or County of Los Angeles, for small numbers of vehicles used temporarily over-night as sleeping quarters by indigent persons, and the increase in controlled and licensed (and possibly subsidized) recreational vehicle parks or areas, whether on private

or public property, where over-night use would be permitted. The committee will complete its work and report back to the VNC Board within 6 months.

**Homelessness Experts, Social Service Providers, and Government
Officials Who Presented to the
Venice Neighborhood Council's Ad Hoc Committee on
Homelessness/Vehicular Occupation**

Dede Audet, former President of the VNC and initiator of the Motion that resulted in the earlier Homelessness and Vehicular Living Task Forces

Flora Gil Krisiloff, Senior Deputy, Los Angeles County Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky

Steven Napolitano, Field Deputy, and Nicholas Ippolito, Social Services Deputy, Office of Los Angeles County Supervisor Don Knabe

Sylvia Romero, Homeless Coordinator, County Department of Public Social Services

Arturo Pina, Venice Field Deputy, Los Angeles City Councilmember Bill Rosendahl, CD11

Jeanette Rowe, Field Director, Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority

Dennis Hathaway, former chair, VNC Vehicular Living Task Force

Dr. Karen J. Williams, Ph. D., District Chief, SA 5-Department of Mental Health

Andrew Perry, County Department of Mental Health

Sean Spears, Los Angeles Housing Department, Director of Major Products

John Maceri, Executive Director, Ocean Park Community Center

Steve Clare, Director, Venice Community Housing Corporation, former chair, Homelessness Task Force

Officer Robin Richards, Senior Lead Officer, Los Angeles Police Department

Gary Blasi, Homeless Advocate, Professor, University of California Los Angeles

Rachel Feldstein, Associate Director of New Directions, on the work of the Westside Shelter and Hunger Coalition

Va Lecia Adams, Executive Director; Judy Alexander, Associate Director; Julie DeRose, Continuum Director, St. Joseph Center

Rebecca Isaacs, Executive Director, Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority

Terry Simons, Director of Housing Services, Venice Community Housing Corporation

Ad Hoc Committee Recommendations in Support of
St. Joseph Center's Chronic Homeless Intervention Program
(Previously Submitted to and Adopted by the VNC)

Homelessness experts have advised the VNC Ad Hoc Committee on Homelessness and Vehicular Occupation that one of the first steps in providing services to homeless individuals is an in-depth assessment of their background, and medical and mental health status, to develop a comprehensive "social service registry" which identifies, by ranking, the risk that these individuals might die on the street. This is the model which has been followed successfully with Project 50 in Downtown Los Angeles and by Santa Monica's homeless serving providers; each has developed a service registry of at-risk individuals.

Thus the Committee supports the proposal (attached) of St. Joseph Center to develop such a service registry of the most at-risk individuals living on the streets in Venice, to assist these individuals secure housing, and to provide needed services to this population.

In this regard, we ask that the VNC send letters to the members of the County Board of Supervisors, the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, City Councilman Bill Rosendahl, and Councilwoman Jan Perry (Chair, City Council's Ad Hoc Committee on the Homeless), supporting the funding of St. Joseph's proposal.

Further, we are advised that the most critical resource government can provide to these individuals is immediate housing, preferably with supportive services to address mental health, medical, addiction, income and employment issues. Again, this is the "housing first" model which has been successfully employed to move chronically homeless individuals from the streets to housing in Downtown L. A., Santa Monica, and elsewhere in the Nation. To this end, this Committee asks that the VNC formally request that the Los Angeles City Housing Authority (HACLA) allot an additional 40 homeless Section 8 vouchers, above and beyond the current annual allotment of 50 homeless vouchers, to St. Joseph Center to be specifically applied to house those individuals identified by the service registry project/chronic homeless intervention project.

Further, this Committee recommends that the VNC recommend to HACLA that it make a formal request to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to raise the Fair Market Rent level in Venice and on the Westside, as has been done for Santa Monica. This would set the Section 8 voucher levels in line with the higher rents found in Venice and on the Westside and lessen the difficulty St. Joseph's experiences in finding apartment owners who will accept Section 8 vouchers.

The Committee also asks that the VNC coordinate the drafting of the requested letters with the Co-Chairs of this Committee.

Finally, the Committee recommends that St. Joseph Center be requested to provide every six months to the VNC, or an appropriate committee of the VNC, up-dates on the progress of the social service registry project/chronic homeless intervention project and its success at transitioning vulnerable homeless individuals to housing and services.

Project Description

St. Joseph Center's Chronic Homeless Intervention Project

St. Joseph Center is requesting support from the County of Los Angeles to develop a Service Registry and Index of Vulnerability for high-risk, chronically homeless individuals residing in Venice. We will then provide an assertive, intervention-focused case management program that, during Years 1 and 2 of the project, will result in permanent housing placement and maintenance of permanent supportive housing for 40 individuals that the Registry has identified as most likely to die on the street. Requested funding will support project implementation for the first two years of the project and will be leveraged by services funded by the City of Los Angeles, the Department of Housing and Urban Development and private foundations. St. Joseph Center will conduct ongoing fundraising to support continued program implementation in Year 3 and beyond.

Overview

St. Joseph Center will lead a community wide effort to create a Service Registry for high-risk, chronically homeless individuals residing in Venice. The project will provide outreach, assertive case management and integrated supportive services that will result in access to and maintenance of permanent supportive housing. The Service Registry process will be based on the model developed by Common Ground Community in New York and currently implemented by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors through Project 50 on Skid Row and the Chronic Homeless Project in the City of Santa Monica. Those identified as most vulnerable will receive outreach and assertive case management by a multi-disciplinary team staffed by psychiatrist, a medical professional (MD or LNP), a mental health specialist (MSW or MFT), a case manager, and a housing specialist. Venice Family Clinic and Edelman Mental Health Center will work collaboratively with St. Joseph Center to provide participants with primary and mental health care. The 3rd District Supervisor's Office, the 11th District Council Office, the Neighborhood Prosecutor's Office, Los

Angeles Police Department's Pacific Division and the Los Angeles Fire Department's Emergency Medical staff will be collaborating in the implementation of this project

Need

The number of homeless people living in Venice is increasing and anecdotal information gained by Homeless Service Center and Outreach staff indicates that many are chronically homeless, mentally ill or disabled by substance abuse. The 2007 homeless count conducted by the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority indicated that, unlike Santa Monica where homeless numbers have decreased, the number of homeless individuals in Venice has continued to increase. A single night count identified 962 homeless individuals in Venice's 90291 zip code. As a ratio of homeless to housed residents, it is the highest in Los Angeles County: 1 homeless person for every 32 housed residents.

St. Joseph's Demonstrated Success

Addressing the specific economic, social and psychological obstacles that contribute to an individual's chronic homelessness requires innovative and focused interventions that address multiple issues. And as St. Joseph Center has demonstrated through its participation in Santa Monica's Service Registry/Chronic Homeless Program, St. Joseph's Venice Service Registry will provide innovative, focused interventions that move chronically homeless persons off the streets and into stable housing.

Last year alone, St. Joseph Center served over 2300 homeless individuals and family members, including 616 who identified as chronically homeless. Through its participation in Santa Monica's Service Registry/Chronic Homeless Program, St. Joseph Center has placed 19 chronically homeless individuals in permanent housing. This includes chronic inebriates and mentally ill individuals who had been living on Santa Monica's streets for an average of nine years, and represents 37% of the total placed through the City-wide program.

Service Registry Development

Following the methodologies used by Common Ground's "Street to Home" Initiative, which has reduced street homelessness in New York's Times Square by 87%, St. Joseph

Center will create a Venice Service Registry which will identify the most chronic and vulnerable homeless persons living in Venice. Towards this end, St. Joseph Center will collaborate with New York's Common Ground, local service providers, and trained volunteers to survey homeless persons living on the streets, parks, and beach in Venice.

The Venice initiative will be based on training provided to St. Joseph Center staff by Common Ground technical advisors in January, 2009. On the night of the survey, teams made up of staff from St. Joseph Center, other Westside homeless services agencies, LA County DMH, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and Los Angeles Services Authority (LAHSA) will then conduct a census, focusing their efforts on the geographic areas identified by the St. Joseph Center's outreach teams and case management staff and LAPD's Pacific Division as the locations where long-term homeless people sleep. The same teams will conduct a survey of individuals they encounter outdoors from 3 a.m. to 5 a.m. Police will provide security during the survey activities.

The survey methodology was developed by Dr. Jim O'Connell of Boston's Healthcare for the Homeless. The survey data will produce a Vulnerability Score for surveyed individuals that weighs several variables, including length of homelessness and physical and mental health status, to predict an individual's likelihood of dying on the streets unless permanently housed. The Vulnerability Score will provide an objective measure to prioritize the future efforts of St. Joseph Center's Venice Chronic Homeless Intervention Project. St. Joseph Center will, in rank order of the Vulnerability Index, begin assertive outreach to the most vulnerable people.

Program Goal

The goal of the proposed Venice Service Registry/Chronic Homeless Program is to help those persons identified on the Service Registry to secure and maintain permanent housing through the provision of comprehensive case management, integrated supportive services and rental subsidies. In this 2 Year project, we will enroll and serve 40 chronically homeless highly vulnerable individuals. Twenty-five individuals will be housed in Year 1 and 15 individuals will be housed in Year 2. All participants will receive intensive services before and after housing placement. We anticipate that at minimum, 85% of those housed will maintain housing for 12 months following placement.

The project will result in a *decline in the number of visibly homeless individuals in Venice* within the first two year's of implementation. In New York's Time Square, a similar project conducted by Common Ground reduced visible homelessness by engaging "anchors" in services. Once individuals who were critical to the maintenance of homeless culture in the area were housed, the presence of other homeless individuals in the area was reduced.

As has already been demonstrated by Project 50, we anticipate that this project will also result in *cost savings* to the City and County of Los Angeles for *avoided emergency medical care, public safety and incarceration/court costs*. Overall, the successful implementation of the project will *enhance the quality of life* both for program participants and for the Venice and Westside community at large.

Assertive Case Management and Permanent Housing Placement

Assertive case management is approach based on best practices that focuses a multi-disciplinary team on the needs of a specified number of highly vulnerable individuals. It utilizes a low client to case manager ratio (typically 1:10) Services are typically field based and home visits are standard following housing placement. This approach utilizes clinical interventions that effectively reduce barriers to service utilization allowing participants to stabilize and access permanent housing as soon as possible.

Assertive case management is based on a *harm reduction* philosophy and follows a *housing first* model. Therefore, when appropriate, St. Joseph's team will attempt to move persons directly from the streets and place them into permanent supportive housing. Psychiatric or substance abuse treatment will not necessarily be a perquisite to housing. When permanent housing is not immediately available, St. Joseph Center will help homeless persons access interim housing and then ultimately secure permanent housing.

Integrated Services

With client consent and signed release, we will develop integrated client treatment plans that facilitate coordination of care among various providers. The multi-disciplinary team providing the integrated supportive services in this project will consist of a project director (LMFT), a clinical case manager (MSW or MFT), a case manager with experience and training in substance abuse treatment and

a case manager/housing specialist. The team will be supported by a psychiatrist who will provide treatment on the street, in homes and shelters or at St. Joseph Center's Homeless Service Center. Medical field services will be provided by a physician or licensed nurse practitioner from Venice Family Clinic (VFC) who will see patients in the field, at SJC's Homeless Service Center or at VFC's Homeless Clinic.

- **Outreach:** Will involve coordination of services between LAPD Pacific Division, LA City Attorney's Office Neighborhood Prosecutor's Office, Venice Family Clinic and LA County Department of Mental Health through Edelman Mental Health Center.
- **Screening and assessment :** will be provided by a multi-disciplinary team
- **Mental health treatment assessment:** The ACM team includes clinicians skilled in assessing and working with mentally ill and dually diagnosed individuals.
- **Response to mental health crisis:** SJC's ACM will respond to mental health crisis/emergencies as necessary 24 hours/7 days per week if individuals deemed to be endangering self or others.
- **Substance abuse interventions:** A case manager in the field will facilitate linkages to residential and outpatient services. Referral agencies will include Didi Hirsh Community Mental Health Services, Tarzana Treatment Center, Miracles; a program of Exodus and CLARE
- **Integrated treatment:** client expectations are integrated into case management and clinical decisions; integrated treatment requires the identification and treatment of co-occurring disorders.
- **Individualized case management**
- **Barrier removal strategies:** SJC will sometimes help clients secure treatment *before* they feel ready and/or seek interventions that may not be voluntary. SJC does not accept clients as "service-resistant" but rather continues to identify/provide alternative services that might result in stability. Such strategies may include conservatorship and placement into board and care facilities.
- **Emergency services:** SJC will provide showers, laundry, mail/phone and daily meals at Bread and Roses.
- **Coordinated case management/interventions:** to the extent possible, the case manager is responsible for coordinating the various interventions and service delivery is on-site.
- **Permanent housing placement:** SJC's housing specialist will identify housing resources and will help clients to lease up in permanent housing or service-enriched permanent housing as quickly as possible.
- **Transportation supports.** SJC will provide bus tokens and passes taxi vouchers or will directly transport. The PET team and paramedics may also be called on for transport.

- **Independent living skills:** will be provided by case managers on a one-on-one basis. If linked to money management at St. Joseph Center's Monetary Advisory Program (MAP) or Veterans Representative Payee Program (VRPP), additional budgeting and other ILS coaching will be provided by those programs.
- **Benefits education, advocacy, and enrollment:** SJC's case managers will provide enrollment assistance and advocacy to secure appropriate entitlements.
- **Money management:** Case managers will enroll clients in SJC's Monetary Advisory Program or Veteran's Representative Payee Program if indicated.
- **Post placement/retention services (supportive housing):** Case managers conduct home visits with on a weekly basis, or more, if needed and will connect clients with Independent In-Home Supportive Services (IIHS) if appropriate.
- **Eviction prevention:** Eviction prevention support will be incorporated in all case management activities and will be supported by linkage to money management.
- **Community reintegration:** Case management activities will be the primary means of promoting community reintegration by encouraging healthy activities such as volunteering, social support groups and, when appropriate vocational development and employment. SJC offers two social skills groups for clients on a weekly basis; an AA group and an anger management group.

Scattered Site Housing

Because project based housing is limited on the Westside, this project will primarily utilize scattered site housing subsidized by Shelter Plus Care or Homeless Section 8 vouchers accessed through the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles. St. Joseph Center was assigned 15 new Shelter Plus Care vouchers, by HACLA (through agency reallocation) in Fall 2008 and was recently awarded 20 new Shelter Plus Care vouchers through the HUD 2008 SuperNOFA. In addition to these 35 Shelter Plus Care vouchers, SJC anticipates an award of approximately 50 Homeless Section 8 vouchers under an application submitted to HACLA in August 2008. We also anticipate that Venice Community Housing Corporation will participate by providing sponsor based units. Because some participants may require housing through a Board and Care or skilled nursing facility, they may not need to utilize housing vouchers.

Access to Services

The proposed program will be based at SJC's Homeless Service Center, located at 404 Lincoln Blvd. in Venice. Operating hours for the Venice Chronic Homeless Project's Assertive Case Management team will be Monday, Tuesday and Thursday, 7:30AM-4:30PM; Wednesday, 7:30 to noon and Friday, 7:30AM-3:30PM. with specific targeted intentions, early evening hours. The team will also be "on-call", 24/7, to respond to psychiatric emergencies, where harm to self or others is an issue, by phone or, when required, in person.

Staff at HSC are bi-lingual and can support team members needing interpretation. The team as well as HSC staff includes licensed clinicians and persons in recovery.

The Homeless Service Center is physically/ADA accessible. Staff use California Relay Services to assist persons who are hearing impaired to communicate by telephone. If clients are visually impaired, staff accommodate clients by reading documents to them or adapting documents to large print to ensure clients can read written communications from the agency such as consents for sharing information, case management agreements, etc.

To maximize access to services and resources in a timely manner, ACM members will carry cell phones and a Blackberry so they can call and email other service providers while they are engaged with a client or when a specific situation demands immediate attention. ACM members will physically provide interventions wherever they can (i.e., in a parking lot, alley, or emergency room), so as not to lose clients who have difficulty remembering appointments, navigating the mental health system, or taking a bus to an appointment, etc.

Minority Report
VNC AdHoc Committee on Homeless and Vehicular Living
Carolyn Rios
Co-Chair

As Co-Chair of the VNC AdHoc Committee on Homeless and Vehicular Living, I am submitting a minority report. On the whole the committee worked very hard, was well-organized, and there was a reasonable effort at compromise by most people. Mark Ryavac is to be especially commended for his ability to do extra research, his success at getting experts and authorities to educate us, and his willingness to do the yeoman's work of writing the reports.

There are a few areas to which I strongly object. The Recommendation for a Pilot Vehicle-to-Housing Transition Program has some extreme restrictions, limiting the usefulness of this program. The restriction that RV Sites be 300 feet from residences, plus only accommodate 3 vehicles means that there would only be 6, yes, only SIX, legal sites in Venice. This is no solution.

A well-run permitted monitored RV program does not need this kind of distance. If my neighbors are noisy, I call the police, if they are dealing drugs etc. We will know exactly who is parking where, and permits can be instantly revoked. There will be no noise, no drunkenness, no human feces. We can expect only people who are willing to be good neighbors and comply with expected behaviors of any neighbor. A well-run overnight parking permit does not need to distance itself from playgrounds or churches that are totally unused at those hours.

If the Program is run by a social service agency with a well-monitored program there is no need for strict distance limitations. A well-monitored program means there are specific permits given to specific people who are registered and working with the social service agency. A well-monitored program has toilets provided on site and daily cleanup. A well-monitored program means there will not be noise or drunkenness or public health concerns. A well-monitored program will work with the Police. A well-monitored program has a 24 hours "first Responder" on call. Complaints will be dealt with immediately. A well-monitored program will use renewable permits. Professionals will decide how the resident is advancing. Some residents might need 6 - 9 months.

I recommend rescinding some of these restrictions from the RV Parking Sites Program.

I also recommend that the VNC advocate for a locker program somewhere in Venice to help stabilize some homeless so that they can get to health appointments, job interviews, and legal dates without worrying about their 'stuff' This is a first step in restoring dignity and hopefully bring people into the system and further help

I further recommend that this committee's work is done with its report. The issues involving affordable housing are best dealt with by a new committee. Various members of the AdHoc Homeless committee are quite knowledgeable and should be appointed to the new committee. I also highly recommend the format that was used on the homeless Committee. That is bringing experts in on low cost housing that would present both pro and con of various policies. This committee should operate in an educational Town Hall Forum with the idea of educating both the committee and the community on the issues, and forming community policy decisions.