

Tackling Homelessness in Los Angeles

By Laura Gonzalez - April 19, 2016



Homeless tents line east Fifth Street in Downtown LA after a freezing night that hit temperatures as low as 45 degrees.

Twenty-four hour beach bathrooms, free storage facilities, and development of supportive housing on city land is Los Angeles' newest attempt at combating the rapidly growing homeless population.

The nearly-\$2-billion plan to alleviate the city's homelessness crisis is still in its early stages, however one corner of the city is getting started on tackling the issues.

A set of proposals from Venice outlined by city council member Mike Bonin are one of the first concrete plans introduced to curb or possibly end homelessness altogether.

The four step plan includes:

Developing the city-owned parking lot at Pacific-Dell, as housing for homeless people and public parking.

Reopening the vacant Westminster Senior Center for homeless storage, bathroom access and office space for a case manager to connect people to housing and other services.

Providing 24-hour access to restrooms at Venice Beach, possibly introducing portable restrooms.

Lastly, creating treatment programs to help the homeless population suffering from substance abuse and developing facilities for shared public housing.

While many applaud the councilman and his efforts other community members question some of the plans.

One of Bonin's critics, Mark Ryavec, president of Venice Stakeholders Association is one of many who fear these plans may attract more homeless people to Venice thus causing an unsafe environment for residents.

One plan Ryavec particularly opposes is turning the Westminster Senior Center into storage.

"That area has been a crime generator for years because of the homeless people camping there. The cops in the last year or so have cleared it and really gotten the crime there under control," said Ryavec.

Instead Ryavec proposed moving the storage facility to an abandoned warehouse in an industrial zone keeping the homeless population away from residents.

He is also opposed to the 24 hour restrooms stating it would break the overnight curfew worsening crime by the boardwalk.

Venice's homeless population has always been at the center of debates and these new proposals are stirring the pot once again.

