

The Homelessness Crisis in Santa Ana is a Shared Responsibility and it's Time for Bold & Thoughtful Action

Introduction

Approximately one year ago in September 2016, the City of Santa Ana declared its homelessness problem a public health crisis and developed a plan to address the crisis. The plan focused on the Civic Center area. While some progress has been made, the crisis continues. The City desperately needs a comprehensive citywide plan and we need to take bold and thoughtful actions now to prevent the crisis from growing and mitigate the social and financial liabilities that will result from lack of action.

Below are some general goals and specific actions that are ready for consideration and implementation. This is a living document that is a collection of ideas from Santa Ana residents, business owners and community leaders. Your additional suggestions are welcome!

CO-EQUAL GOALS

The City of Santa Ana is compassionate and focused on helping solve the homelessness crisis. Two overarching goals are important to the City and deserve our immediate attention:

1. Help homeless residents address their housing, employment, mental health, drug treatment and other basic needs.
2. Ensure the safety of all residents, workers and visitors in Santa Ana.

HOUSING FIRST - SPECIFIC ACTIONS

1. Continue to entitle and approve the 1,500+ affordable housing units (including many dedicated units for homeless veterans, women and families) that are currently in the City's development process.
2. Request that the County of Orange replace the location of the temporary Courtyard facility to another permanent location in Santa Ana. The County's Bridges at Kraemer Place in Anaheim is a model facility for a future Santa Ana facility. The City should oppose the renewal of the Courtyard facility use beyond 2018.
3. Prioritize the use of shelters and services funded by City of Santa Ana for Santa Ana homeless residents.

4. Support County's effort to develop large homeless shelter (500+ beds) on its 100 acres of vacant land in Irvine. The federal government is providing the land to the County for institutional uses and there is plenty of land for inclusion of a large homeless shelter as part of the development. They could also immediately open a large temporary tent shelter there or repurpose one of their warehouses as a temporary shelter.
5. Support Senator John Moorlach's proposal and work with the State Legislature and City of Costa Mesa to transform part of the state Fairview Developmental Center (after its closure) in Costa Mesa into a mental health treatment and housing facility.

NEW RULES FOR OUR PARTNERS - SPECIFIC ACTIONS

6. Pass City ordinance to make it unlawful for other cities and hospitals to drop off their homeless in Santa Ana unless it's with the approval of the receiving agency or shelter.
7. Continue to allow needle exchange program in Santa Ana, but only if the program provider also makes that program available in at other cities in Orange County, including in south and north Orange County. Better regulate location of program and way to receive needles.
8. Continue to allow naloxone (aka narcan) kits to be distributed in Santa Ana, but only if the program provider also make that program available in other cities in Orange County, including in south and north Orange County. Better regulate location of program and way to receive kits.
9. Request that the County and cities equally distribute their 5150 detentions (involuntarily detentions for a 72-hour psychiatric hospitalization when individuals evaluated to be a danger to others, or to himself or herself, or gravely disabled) equally between central/north/south facilities and encourage detentions to be closest to their home city.

CITY COORDINATION & LEADERSHIP - SPECIFIC ACTIONS

10. Assign a City staff member to be the point person for implementation of this action plan.
11. Establish a hotline number that is dedicated to homelessness services and concerns.

SAFETY AND PUBLIC HEALTH ENFORCEMENT - SPECIFIC ACTIONS

12. Assign additional police officers and staff liaisons to the Homeless Evaluation Assessment Response Team (HEART) Program.
13. Update the City's restrictions on aggressive panhandling to mirror those in the City of Sacramento, especially within 35 feet from roadways and intersections, ATMs and banks, gas stations and transit stops.

14. Enforce laws against drug use, drug sales, physical assaults, sexual acts, and other criminal actions in public spaces and rights of way, with enhanced enforcement in areas within 500 feet of schools, libraries, and public facilities and offices that are frequently used.
15. Immediately red tag and remove temporary structures, with proper notification and handling, that are unsafe for users or people walking in the vicinity.
16. Allow repair of one bike at a time only in public right away. Repairs of multiple bikes needs to be done in commercial, permitted property.
17. Only allow groups to provide meals to the homeless in the Civic Center or elsewhere in the City if they are associated with a licensed in-door shelter, and if the group has a permit from the County or City.
18. Re-classify the entire Civic Center area as park so that open and close times can be established and properly enforced.
19. Pass a City ordinance making it unlawful for individuals to loiter or panhandle in public spaces and public rights of way from 10 p.m. to 9 a.m.

SEEK ADDITIONAL FUNDING - SPECIFIC ACTIONS

20. Request amendment to MOU between Sheriff and cities, including Santa Ana, regarding joint enforcement of Santa Ana River and flood control properties to allow for reimbursement of law enforcement and legal costs associated with implementation the MOU.
21. Seek county, state, and federal resources to fund affordable housing projects and services for homeless residents.