Information Item

Date: May 8, 2017

To: Mayor and City Council

From: Karen Ginsberg, Director of Community and Cultural Services

Subject: Local Homeless Efforts in a Regional Context

Introduction

Santa Monica's long running local investment in permanent solutions to address homelessness has produced a sophisticated, collaborative approach effective in transitioning highly vulnerable individuals off the streets and into housing. Unfortunately, the scale of the regional homeless crisis has pushed Santa Monica's homeless service system beyond its tipping point, contributing to increases in street homelessness. What used to be an issue for a few isolated communities is now so ubiquitous that the public has responded with unprecedented support for new sources of revenue specifically for homeless services and affordable housing, including Measure GS and GSH locally and Measure H and Proposition HHH for LA County and City respectively. The regional homeless service system, which includes coordinated outreach, County mental health and health services, homeless prevention and rapid re-housing programs, family reunification, shelter and permanent housing, and employment opportunities is poised to evolve quickly. While investments will be necessary to increase capacity across the region, locally, new investments should align with Santa Monica's established policies in order to serve this community's needs and to mitigate negative local impacts.

The City's homeless policies, like its service system, have evolved over many years to be a reflection of the priorities and needs of this community. Locally, the City should continue to support long-standing policies and investments and look for opportunities to leverage regional funds to support current strategies that are proving to be effective

such as street-based clinical services, new technology solutions for improved information sharing, more affordable housing and support to low-income residents at-risk of homelessness. In addition, the City should continue to advocate for policymakers to look to the future and fund the long-term housing and clinical services, which are often provided by the County, and are needed to sustain substantial progress towards reducing homelessness. LA County is at an inflection point – the decisions made today both locally and regionally on policy and implementation of new programs will decide if the curve of homelessness continues to climb or whether strategic investments and collaborative efforts can turn the tide.

On May 9, 2017, Council will receive a City Manager's Update on the results of the 2017 Santa Monica Homeless Count. Later this fall, Council will receive a full review of the City's coordinated homeless strategies.

Background

Santa Monica's homeless service system has evolved significantly over 40 years and is nationally recognized as an innovative model that addresses the complex issues that contribute to long and repeated episodes of homelessness. The City's significant investments prioritize solutions that further the best practices of housing first, harm reduction and assertive case management. Research has proven these strategies as the most client-centered ways to deliver services and produce better outcomes[1].

Despite a comprehensive system that included services and treatment from outreach on the streets to permanent housing, for many years there remained a sub-population of long-term entrenched homeless residents. These individuals had multiple conditions that made navigating the system difficult. The traditional first-come, first-served model of services – which best served high-functioning individuals who were able to keep

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[1] Tsemberis, S, Gulcur, L and Nakae, M (2004, April) HOUSING FIRST, CONSUMER CHOICE, AND HARM REDUCTION FOR HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS WITH DUAL DIAGNOSIS. Retrieved May 2, 2017 from www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1448313/

appointments, follow rules and self-regulate their behavior – was leaving these high-need individuals on the streets.

In 2004, the City took its first steps towards changing from a first-come, first-served model to one that prioritizes resources for those specific, highly vulnerable individuals who generate the most calls to first responders, cycle through local emergency rooms and are most likely to die on the streets. In consultation with local businesses and first responders,, the City created the Chronic Homeless Project (CHP). It identified an initial group of 25 individuals around whom an interdepartmental team representing Community and Cultural Services (CCS), Santa Monica Police Department (SMPD), Santa Monica Fire Department (SMFD), the City Attorney's Office (CAO) and Housing and Economic Development (HED) alongside nonprofit service agencies partnered to coordinate efforts to engage and house. The CHP team took "*a whatever it takes approach"* to remove barriers to housing and treatment and the lessons learned remain foundational to the City's coordinated efforts today.

In 2005, as part of a federal mandate, LA County conducted its first "point in time" homeless count, which estimated 88,345 people were homeless in LA County during the last week of January. There was an estimated 6,860 in Service Planning Area 5 (SPA 5). A portion of Santa Monica was included in the count, but the statistical model used to extrapolate that count did not provide a viable estimate of numbers at a community level. Locally, in 2005, the City created a dedicated Homeless Unit within Community and Cultural Services to manage City grants to homeless service providers, align policy and funding, and coordinate services.

In 2006, to further increase the impact and effectiveness of Santa Monica's homeless service system, the City contracted with The Urban Institute to evaluate the City's homeless system of care. The Urban Institute studied the City's per capita share of the homeless population, geographic size, and local bed inventory, and recommended the City scale its efforts to a smaller, more targeted capacity that reflected the local need. Recognizing the need to continue to provide a housing option for people who are newly

arrived in Santa Monica, the City launched Project Homecoming, a family reunification program that to date has housed over 1,900 homeless individuals with family and friends at a cost of about $226 per person. Also in 2006, the City created a new three-person Assertive Case Management Team dedicated to continuing the CHP project, and the Santa Monica Housing Authority received federal funding for 63 new permanent housing voucher subsidies, for a total of 198 homeless housing vouchers.

In 2007, LA County conducted a second "point in time" count, and estimated 73,702 people were homeless during the last week in January. The report also estimated that 141,737 people experience homelessness at some point throughout the year. SPA 5 estimates placed 6,703 individuals homeless on a single night. However, the 2007 Count utilized a different methodology, making it incomparable to the 2005 results.

Also in 2007, the City, in partnership with LA County Superior Court, launched the Homeless Community Court to promote engagement in case management, treatment services and housing as an alternative to jail time for chronically homeless individuals connected with CHP. Since 2007, over 111 homeless court graduates have moved into permanent housing.

In 2008, the City reinforced its commitment to serving the most vulnerable homeless individuals by implementing the by-name Service Registry. Using a standard assessment tool that provided a numerical vulnerability score, City staff and community partners interviewed hundreds of homeless individuals over three nights in and around the downtown area. The Service Registry currently consists of 372 individuals, 324 of whom are off the streets in interim or permanent housing. Also in 2008, Council adopted the Action Plan to Address Homelessness, which formally established a Santa Monica Priority Population criteria for City-funded homeless programs and the concept of "fair share" which continue to guide City resources and policy today. To continue to house vulnerable chronically homeless individuals, the Santa Monica Housing Authority was awarded federal funds for an additional 15 homeless housing vouchers.

In 2009, the City of Santa Monica conducted its own homeless count, in conjunction with LA County. Rather than a statistical sampling of census tracts, the City conducted a full City-wide visual count. This methodology provides the basis for annual local counts, allowing for comparisons across time. In 2009, a baseline of 915 homeless individuals were identified, with 480 unsheltered and 435 indoors in shelters, local hospitals, or the City's jail on a single night in January. LA County estimated 48,053 homeless individuals, attributing the reduction from 2007 to the roll-out of the County's $100 million Homeless Prevention Initiative (which provided seed funding for Santa Monica's Homeless Community Court), as well as a shift to a permanent housing-focused model. The City has conducted annual counts, rather than the federally mandated bi-annual counts, since 2009, and LA County has followed suit since 2016. Continuing a permanent housing focus, the Santa Monica Housing Authority was awarded federal funds for an additional 25 homeless housing vouchers, for a total of $3.26 million annually in federal homeless Continuum of Care funding for permanent supportive housing supporting over 230 households.

In 2010, the regional shifts to Housing First and increased federal allocations of housing subsidies combined with the local increased coordination of the Service Registry and the implementation of the Action Plan contributed to a significant reduction in the annual Santa Monica point-in-time count. That year, 742 individuals were counted, a 19% reduction.

Between 2010 and 2016, the City's strategic, collaborative approach and emphasis on prioritization of the most vulnerable, long-term homeless individuals kept the local homeless count relatively stable overall, with street homelessness beginning to increase in 2015 and 2016. During this same period, LA County's homeless count increased from a low of 39,461 in 2011 to over 46,874 in 2016. This year's local results, which will be presented to the Council on May 9th, show a significant change in the Santa Monica

homeless community. The data supports anecdotal experiences and underscores that the regional homeless crisis is causing acute impacts in Santa Monica.

While the City has evolved its approach to align with the Urban Institute recommendations and has become more efficient, the City's infrastructure still bears a heavy responsibility to the broader needs of the Westside community and LA County. The County's overreliance on existing infrastructure places stress upon local service systems. In order to mitigate the stress caused by County policies, the City's work includes advocating for the County to distribute access to services across the region rather than relying on communities like Santa Monica that are already providing shelter beds and other facilities. For example, the County's Winter Shelter model does not allow participant walk-ins and only provides a limited number of bus pick-up and drop-off locations from which to access the shelters. This anchors winter shelter users in host communities that have few, if any, daytime services. Santa Monica was a designated regional pick-up site for the County's 2007-08 Winter Shelter bus to the West LA Armory. Data collected from surveys of Winter Shelter bus users indicated that people waiting daily for the bus were not originally homeless in Santa Monica. Using this data, coupled with the City's significant year-round shelter bed capacity (293), the City successfully advocated for the County to operate pick-ups at other regional sites that were otherwise unserved by any shelter infrastructure. In parallel with pushing external partners to increase access to services, the City routinely looks internally at existing programs to ensure their relevance and service to the City's goal of reducing the local impacts of homelessness. In 2008, the City decided to close the showers operating at the pier and redirected patrons to the local SWASHLOCK program, operated by OPCC/The People Concern.[2] SWASHLOCK ensures homeless individuals have access to hygiene services that are provided in a holistic, housing-focused environment.

After scaling the Santa Monica homeless service infrastructure and reallocating resources towards intensive services and permanent affordable housing, the City recorded a baseline census of 915 homeless people during the 2009 point-in-time

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[2] https://www.smgov.net/departments/Council/agendas/2008/20080226/s2008022608-A.htm

count. While the City's coordinated and targeted efforts produced early reductions in count totals (results)3, progress has slowed in recent years. These increases are likely due to the size of the region-wide homeless population, which exceeded 46,000 people in 2016, 75% of whom are literally on the streets, in parks and public spaces (results).4 Santa Monica's 2017 count results will be presented to Council on May 9th and County results are expected later this spring.

The service needs of the vulnerable street homeless population are overwhelming regional capacity and influencing a shift in the profile of the Santa Monica homeless population to more transient individuals who are new to the city, though most have a long history of homelessness in other communities. Santa Monica, like the rest of the county, is feeling pressure from regional street homelessness at unprecedented levels. In response to widespread and visible street homelessness, LA City and County adopted aggressive strategies to address the needs of the County's homeless population. Voters across the county approved legislation in City of Santa Monica (November '16), LA City (November '16) and County (March '17) to create new funding sources for housing (Santa Monica, LA) and services (County) to address the regional barriers causing, and prolonging, homelessness.

Discussion

As one of 88 cities in a county with the largest street homeless population in the nation, the persistent regional homeless crisis affects Santa Monica. At the regional level, homeless service programs successfully rehouse people, but the rate of placement is dwarfed by the estimated 13,000 people on public benefits in LA County who fall into homelessness on a monthly basis.5 Relative to the scale and scope of needs of this population, the supply of homeless services and housing resources is inadequate, resulting in higher incidences of street homelessness region-wide since 2013.

3www.smgov.net/uploadedFiles/Portals/Homelessness/About_Homelessness/homeless_count_summary _2016.pdf
4 https://documents.lahsa.org/Planning/homelesscount/2016/factsheet/2016-HC-Results.pdf
5 Flaming, D., & Burns, P. (2015, August 25). ALL ALONE ANTECEDENTS OF CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS. Retrieved April 12, 2017, from https://economicrt.org/publication/all-alone/

Recognizing that local efforts alone could not adequately address the impacts of homelessness, the City is re-emphasizing regional partnerships. In August, 2015, City Council established *taking a leadership role in regional efforts to address homelessness* as one of the City's top five strategic priorities. The Council instructed staff to do more on a regional level, especially by engaging with LA City and County partners to address these local impacts. Based on this directive, the City is leveraging its expertise and local resources to support regional partners to build housing and service capacity in the Westside region (outside of Santa Monica), while continuing to pilot innovative new strategies within Santa Monica. Additionally, the City is sustaining and expanding investment in housing retention services to prevent existing Santa Monica residents from becoming homeless.

Since 2015, the City has activated its leadership strategy by sharing successful local homeless service models with regional partners for replication, while securing new regional partnerships to expand services and housing choices for Westside consumers. The following projects illustrate the City's efforts:

- Sharing the Police Department's Homeless Liaison Program model with LA County Sheriff's Department as they created new first responder homeless training modules;
- Successfully advocating that the Westside Cities Council of Governments add addressing homelessness to its work plan;
- Re-establishing a Westside Cities Council of Governments Homelessness Work Group;
- Securing County matching funds to expand local Rapid Rehousing activities;
- Endorsing Venice Community Housing Corporation's proposal to LA City Council to lead a permanent affordable housing development in Venice;
- Representing the Westside Cities Council of Governments on the newly formed LA Homeless Services Authority Regional Homeless Advisory Council;

- Identification of homeless individuals who originated outside of Santa Monica by Human Services Division staff and coordinating their connection to new County-funded homeless outreach teams.

As mentioned previously, Santa Monica's sustained investments in homeless services have fostered a dynamic, comprehensive service system that provides an array of emergency services, case management, treatment, and housing options. While the City has invested land, capital funding, operational support and significant political will to develop and maintain this infrastructure, the lack of comparable services on the Westside makes Santa Monica the "go to" community for County offices and community groups seeking to expand services. For example, in the past year, two regional programs opened in Santa Monica to serve homeless individuals originating from outside the community:

(1) The Bruin Shelter, hosted at Mt. Olive Lutheran Church is a nine-bed shelter for UCLA and Santa Monica College students who lack housing. The County Supervisor's Office, in response to Council's call for matching contributions, is providing Mt. Olive with funding to pay required permitting fees to make the building compliant with shelter operator requirements.

(2) The County has contracted with a local board and care facility, The Manor, to temporarily house vulnerable Venice homeless residents identified by the County outreach team.

While seemingly beneficial, these projects use local service infrastructure and do not reduce the impacts of homelessness in Santa Monica or serve our local priority population. It also enables neighboring institutions and cities to avoid accountability by not creating homelessness solutions within their own communities.

As Los Angeles City and Los Angeles County implement their coordinated strategies and bring new programs and resources online to address homelessness across the region, Santa Monica should support those programs that align with established policies and service strategies and enhance the City's efforts to address the impacts of

homelessness in this community. In order to do this, Santa Monica is designing and testing coordinated strategies to address increasing regional street homelessness that could be expanded or sustained with regional funding, including:

- The Homeless Multidisciplinary Street Team, serving the top 25 highest users of first responder services. RAND is evaluating the efficacy, outcomes, costs and cost avoidance benefits of this model. The program launched with City one-time funds expiring in December 2017. The City has applied for County funds to continue the program; however there may be a need for additional resources if the County is unable to commit to full funding;

- Developing policies for data governance to facilitate data sharing between first responders and social services;

- Testing a range of data-informed coordinated joint outreach approaches by first responders and homeless outreach workers to specific areas in the City;

- Developing a field-based real-time software solution to enable first responders to provide continuity of care. Dedicated funding for this project has not been identified, although initial development work is being done through an in-kind partnership;

- Developing a communications strategy to educate residents, business and visitors about homelessness, stimulate behavior change and activate partnerships. The City has contracted with GOOD to design and implement a comprehensive community education campaign. In addition, staff will be convening a broad group of stakeholders to identify areas for new partnerships, resource development and system improvements.

The City's new approaches align with outcomes associated with *Community, Place* and *Economic Opportunity*. With appropriate resource allocations, these programs, policies, and technologies have the potential, once scaled and implemented, to make a measurable difference locally and beyond.

In addition to this new programming to address impacts of homelessness, supporting low income residents vulnerable to losing their housing is critical both locally and

regionally to stop the homeless population from continuing to grow. The City has a variety of housing retention programming across multiple departments including flexible funding for eviction prevention, housing rights education and protection through the City Attorney's Office, tenant harassment and eviction defense through funding to Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles, and the Senior Housing Taskforce to prevent low-income seniors from eviction and homelessness. These programs will continue to be our first-line of defense in preventing Santa Monica residents from becoming homeless.

Next Steps

On May 9, 2017, Council will receive a City Manager's Update on the results of the 2017 Santa Monica Homeless Count. Later this fall, Council will receive a full review of the City's coordinated homeless strategies, including outcomes from the homeless multi-disciplinary street team and Senior Taskforce, cost estimates to scale up solutions to meet new demands, and updates on regional strategy implementation and funding priorities for LA County Measure H.

Summary

The City recognizes that our local efforts alone cannot solve the region's homeless crisis. The City's strategic priority to take a leadership role in regional issues balances the need to continue to support existing policies and develop congruent local solutions while thoughtfully expanding partnerships with LA City and County entities. In the past year, the City has significantly evolved its strategic approach to homelessness by enhancing the use of data to design targeted programs, continuing to focus on the most vulnerable with innovative, street-based engagement and services, and working to ensure that new regional resources and programs introduced in Santa Monica are coordinated with local efforts. As resources become available through LA City and LA County's renewed commitment to addressing homelessness, the City will promote its best-practice models and encourage neighboring communities to replicate these models to serve their local homeless populations and low-income residents. In order for Santa Monica to improve the quality of life for all residents, the City must evaluate proposed solutions and support those that address existing local needs, get people into

appropriate housing with services, and reduce impacts on the city as a whole. The City will actively advocate with other Westside entities to ensure that new regional resources benefit the Westside and include investment in long-term permanent solutions to address and prevent homelessness.

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