

EI Monte Community Input Session

April 4, 2018 | 6:30PM

Jack Crippen Senior Center

~40+ attendees, including City staff and LeSar

Why are people homeless?

Audience responses:

- Many reasons – economy, mental health, traveling, etc. – solutions should be all-encompassing
- Life happens – medical condition, lose job, cannot afford basic necessities
- Access to resources, don't have medicine for psychological issues
- Housing is too expensive
- Pay/wages isn't there either – minimum wage can't pay rent
- Once person becomes homeless – hard to get them to get off street – circle of friends, etc. – trauma
- Poor retirement planning, estate planning, more women on the street than before, domestic violence, divorce, low job skills
- Officer – it's a cycle – homeless outreach details – Orange County 400 contacted, 259 refused help
 - Substance abuse – need for healthcare – placement homes have rules – hard to break cycle when it's difficult to stay in a structure
- Hard to ask for help for some people – having network, but not asking for assistance
- Systematic – out of incarceration, military – re-entry populations don't have structure to reintegrate
- Young adults coming out of foster care system – working part time, don't have family, cannot make market rate rent
- Mental Illness – tied into substance abuse – they feed each other

What are roadblocks to solving homelessness?

Audience responses:

- Public's perception – need to look at them like lost and need help, don't ignore them on the street
- They are part of the community no matter what – need the resources, hear them
- Whittier – homeless consortium – make contact and relationships – was previously homeless and had a job – their stories are powerful – community needs to reach out and gain their trust

- Working with residents of El Monte – have program in Whittier – after 60 days, that program can't help him anymore, back on the street – time limited programs of rehab – what is the next step? Throwing them back on the street is an issue we're having
 - How to help folks they see, what are resources? Give them access
- More about misperception – tax payers are spending too much money, or that it would cost too much – it would actually save us money to bring them into housing
- Lack of space to build new housing/affordable housing – NIMBY mentality of nobody wanting affordable or below market housing in their neighborhood
- PD gets calls all the time – why don't the police do something about them – they are people, they aren't stray dogs, and it's not against the law to be homeless
 - See a lot of substance abuse – that's a huge issue that needs to be taken care of
 - Some people choose, some are caught up, but have to deal with it, not ignore it
 - 8 out of 10 people they see tomorrow are addicted
- Lack of proper supportive services – housing, PSH that tends to work more – embedded in building – when they have to be referred out, tend to not accept as many services – centralizing services
 - DV, individuals, unique needs for unique populations
- SPA3 and SPA7 – most folks do not have skill set in place to make decisions to get help/resources/assistance – often times it's because of mental health/substance abuse
- People think only certain populations are acceptable to help – who is deserving? That's a major roadblock

Challenges/concerns related to homelessness.

Audience responses:

- It continues to be a lengthy process to get people assessed and/or housed
- This is due to a lack of housing units, long waitlists, or the level of need and subsequent process for placement in housing based on an assessment
- More needs to be done to assist homeless families, at-risk families in unstable housing, and subsequent adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)/trauma
- There is a lack of year-round shelter beds/interim housing
- No churches in the City of El Monte participate in the winter shelter
- A year-round, rotating shelter has generally always been knocked down as a solution
- Regional coordination could be stronger
- It is challenging to get chronically homeless individuals to accept services
- There is a lack of understanding of what residents can do to help – no information about what the resources are, who they can call
- Family Solutions Centers (FSC) are over capacity
- Lack of financial planning knowledge puts families and individuals at risk; also need workforce training
- Homeless individuals in public spaces can create safety issues – crime, substance abuse, public health, property damage, loitering, sleeping on private property

- Individuals who are homeless who spend time around Valley Mall or other commercial areas sometimes hurt business or make customers uncomfortable
- There are some individuals who sleep in or take over vacant buildings in the city
- Some laws haven't caught up with certain needs of populations e.g. those that have mental health issues and are at-risk of harming themselves or others, AB 1971
- There is concern over the patrolling of Peck Park, which is a County property patrolled by LASD versus the rest of El Monte which is patrolled by El Monte PD
- "NIMBYism" (Not In My Backyard) is a barrier to addressing homelessness
- There should be more done to broaden the "face" of homelessness – understanding the vast backgrounds and needs of individuals
- Residents should see people experiencing homelessness as neighbors
- The issue of homelessness has been constantly shifted around – as an issue as well as the physical movement of people out of a neighborhood or city and into another

Potential strategies to address homelessness in the city and regionally

Audience responses:

- Look at a variety of housing strategies: affordable housing (inclusionary housing), supportive housing, housing near transit, transitional housing – programs with accountability, tiny homes
- Explore interest of nonprofit and private sector partners who want to develop all types of affordable housing
- Increase the number of motel vouchers, work with the school district to reach families in need, and engage local landlords to accept those vouchers
- Expand rental assistance – short and long term based on the appropriate solution for the individual or family, rapid re-housing
- Have the City fund a dedicated housing navigator/case manager (Alhambra as a model)
- Explore prevention strategies: Rent control, legal assistance, rental assistance
- Allocate more money to Emergency Resources Association (ERA)
- Increase funding for PD to carry out outreach with a mental health worker/social worker
- Provide school in-reach for students and their families and coordinate services around housing, jobs, childcare, etc.
- Explore ways to increase people's access to healthcare
- Follow SPA 1/Solis model for mobile shower and bathroom station – have service providers available at pop-up site
- Provide more access to workforce training – technical skills, life/soft skills training
- Have case managers, mentors, or peer-to-peer advocates help formerly homeless individuals or formerly incarcerated homeless individuals reintegrate into society
- Figure out ways to remove barriers to services, e.g. making it easier to obtain identification, an address, etc.
- Consider safe parking lot program/emergency service access point located at a large parking lot (Walmart, churches, etc.) that would provide a safe place for people living on the street or in their cars overnight as well as connections to services

- Improve the efficiency and ease of Coordinated Entry System – fill in gaps in the process of assessment and housing
- Address legal loopholes to get individuals help for substance abuse, e.g. mandated drug rehabilitation as part of sentencing
- Provide regular public meetings on homelessness, send notices through utilities or other mail
- Increase collaboration with the County, SGV & subregion, LAHSA, other service providers