



CITY OF BELLFLOWER

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March 29, 2004

Mitchell Netburn, Executive Director
Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority
548 South Spring Street, Suite 400
Los Angeles, CA 90013

Re: Response to Homelessness Survey

Dear Mr. Netburn:

Following are my brief responses to seven questions you are posing to area City representatives regarding the issue of homelessness:

- 1) **How many and what percent of your department's/city's annual client load are homeless individuals and families?** The 2003 State of California Finance Department estimate for the City of Bellflower population is 76,428. The estimated number of homeless individuals and families residing within our borders for any length of time during the year is 50 and 25 respectively. The "individuals" estimate is based on Sheriff's contacts in the field. The "families" estimate comes from a recent Bellflower Unified School District survey. This total represents approximately 0.2% of the entire population for the City of Bellflower.
- 2) **What procedure does your department/city use to identify homeless people?** The homeless individuals that reside in Bellflower are readily recognizable by their choice of sleeping locations (e.g. Caltrans right of ways, riverbed campsites, abandoned commercial/residential properties, discreet outside locations on private property, etc. Complaints regarding their behavior and camping locations are received by the City approximately 15 times per week. Only approximately once per month, does a homeless individual seek out direct assistance in terms of housing or food through the City's Volunteer Center or other City sponsored program.
- 3) **How much do you estimate that your department/city spends each year on services related to homeless people.** Most of the social service provision to homeless individuals is managed through the City's Volunteer Center, at an estimated cost of \$4750 per year (actual and in-kind). Law enforcement expenses emanating from resident complaints total approximately 1835 hours per year, at a cost of \$165,150. This translates into approximately \$3300 per individual, which means numerous law enforcement contacts per individual per year.

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- (4) **What specific policies and practices produce the outcomes that your department/city currently achieves in preventing and eliminating homelessness?** Upholding State and local laws related to trespassing, public defecation, possession of stolen property, illegal camping, aggressive panhandling, possession of illegal drugs, etc. comprise a large portion of the overall effort. Partnering with numerous social service agencies and faith based organizations to provide food, employment, and shelter alternatives are a complimentary part of this same effort.
- (5) **What specific changes in resources, policies or practices on the part of your department/city would make it possible to reduce the number of homeless people in the community you serve?** More commitment of Sheriff's resources to conduct foot patrols of riverbed and other non-developable properties to conduct regular investigations of illegal activity. Greater emphasis placed on citing any individual who is in possession of a stolen shopping cart. Deepening the partnership between the City/Sheriff's Department and various social service and faith-based agencies to provide better living alternatives to those homeless individuals who desire to avail themselves of the opportunities presented.
- (6) **What specific changes in resources, policies or practices on the part of other jurisdictions would reduce the number of homeless people in the community you serve?** If CALTRANS took a more active role in policing their right-of-way properties along the freeway, there would be fewer readily available camping opportunities. These locations are difficult to access, and provide numerous havens for illegal and ongoing activity.
- (7) **What additional outcomes in preventing and eliminating homelessness could be achieved if specific policies and practices that you suggest in response to questions 5 and 6 were implemented?** Through arrest history, the City's homeless population has been linked to a substantial portion of the overall property crime and corresponding illegal drug usage (predominantly methamphetamine). While long-term development of more positive lifestyle alternatives and social service support are worthwhile pursuits, the Bellflower citizenry collectively and consistently calls for more immediate law enforcement action. The City is compelled to respond in kind, with the belief that a lower crime rate and a higher quality of life for law abiding residents is the result.

Hopefully, these brief responses to your questions will prove useful in the Bring LA Home project. Do not hesitate to contact me for further on this topic.

Sincerely,



Joel Hockman
Director of Public Safety