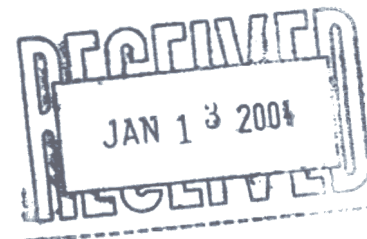




City of **DOWNEY**

Home to the Future

January 12, 2004



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

FROM: Stephen Garza, Lieutenant *SDG*
Downey Police Department

SUBJECT: Response To Questions Regarding Homeless Residents In Downey

1 How many and what percent of your organization's annual client load are homeless individuals and families?

There is no formal tracking procedure in place for calculating the percent of homeless our department encounters annually. However, our Code Enforcement Department estimates they encountered about 75 homeless people last year. Of these 75 homeless people, they estimate 25 are people they consistently come in to contact with.

2. What procedure does your organization use to identify homeless people?

We would normally come into contact with homeless persons either through normal patrol functions or by responding to citizen complaints. Once contacted, personnel identify the homeless through conversations with the individuals and through observations and evidence of encampment.

3. How much do you estimate that your organization spends each year on services related to homeless people?

Code Enforcement personnel estimate spending about 5 hours a month of proactive time related to homeless people. Additionally, they may spend another hour or so responding to citizen complaints. Any patrol activities related to homeless persons is in addition to the Code Enforcement figures. Based on these estimates, Code Enforcement alone spent at least 60 hours last year on homeless related activities. Also, since most investigations involve at least 2 Code Enforcement Officers and/or Police Officers, the number of hours spent on enforcement/investigative activities may often be calculated more accurately using the formula of Time (hours/min spent) X's Personnel (# of investigative personnel involved).

4. What specific policies and practices produce the outcomes that your organization currently achieves in preventing and eliminating homelessness?

Twice a month, Code Enforcement makes it a practice to visit the areas where homeless persons tend to congregate in our City such as the flood control channels (underneath overpasses), railroad properties, freeway underpasses, etc. We also coordinate our efforts with the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), the Los Angeles County Flood Control District, and the railroad entities having properties and jurisdiction within our City. We have a practice of taking action when appropriate and often use Downey Municipal Codes and trespassing laws for enforcement authority. Sworn patrol personnel are encouraged to enforce the same laws pertaining to homeless complaints and proactive enforcement.

5. What specific changes in resources, policies or practices on the part of your organization would make it possible to reduce the number of homeless people in the City of Downey?

More frequent checks of the areas visited by homeless and perhaps better training our personnel on the laws they have at their disposal regarding the homeless. Of course additional personnel to deal with the problem is helpful.

6. What specific changes in resources, policies or practices on the part of other organizations would reduce the number of homeless people in the City of Downey?

Probably one of the most significant impacts could be made if the efforts of Caltrans, the L.A. Flood Control Authority, and the railroad authorities were combined in some sort of a coordinated and consistent effort to spot check locations frequented by homeless and then taking enforcement action. Often what is a priority for us and the citizens of Downey, is not a priority for these other agencies whose property is within the City of Downey. Thus, delays in enforcement action exist and assistance from the other agencies is not always forthcoming.

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?

Currently, homeless people often return to locations that they have been forced to vacate. If the practices mentioned were implemented, we might see a drop in homeless within our City. However, simply moving these people out of one place without giving them resources to obtain shelter elsewhere, may simply mean that we are pushing our homeless problem to our surrounding neighbors/cities. The solution may need to look beyond simple enforcement actions and focus on available resources to help those who want the help to obtain shelter, work, etc.