



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

Dear Mr. Netburn:

I have received your request on behalf of *Bring LA Home!* to provide responses to questions regarding the homeless in South Pasadena. I will provide responses to the questions relative to the homeless problem in South Pasadena. However, you should know that I spent over 28 years with the Los Angeles Police Department, including several assignments where I had to deal with the homeless problem in Los Angeles. Therefore, my opinions are based on both the current situation in South Pasadena and the broader problem of homelessness in the greater Los Angeles area.

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

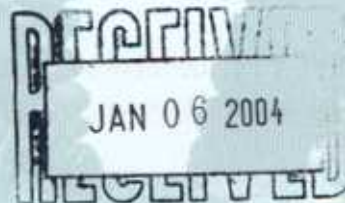
The City of South Pasadena has a population of 25,000. There are approximately 10 homeless living on the streets and other public areas at any given time. This number varies depending on the time of year and the amount of pressure being placed on the homeless in other jurisdictions. It is not possible to determine the percent of our workload that is created by the homeless population.

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

The majority of the police contacts are with the chronic homeless, many of whom are homeless by choice. They generally self-identify as being homeless, or it is apparent by the fact that they have set up temporary living arrangement in areas such as railroad right-of-ways, storefronts, and parks.

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

It is impossible to determine this amount. It is negligible since the service provided is conducted by on-duty law enforcement personnel.



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

We are unable to prevent or eliminate homelessness since it is not a crime to be homeless, and service providers in the area are limited and require voluntary participation. Law enforcement's job is made difficult by the reality that there are limited options available. If the homeless person has not committed a crime or wish to go into a shelter, there is little the police can do.

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 South Pasadena?*

While impractical for financial and political reasons, a city-sponsored shelter could be of assistance in providing an alternative. Realistically, the problem in South Pasadena is not significant enough to justify our own shelter. We currently transport those that are willing to one of two shelters in Pasadena. I am awaiting an opinion from our City Attorney to alleviate concerns of my officers that they and the city may be exposed to a lawsuit based on a case in another jurisdiction where a homeless person later denied that he requested to be transported to a shelter and subsequently filed a complaint and sued for kidnap. I have been unable to confirm or deny this occurred, but it has created a chilling effect on some officers.

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 South Pasadena?*

My experience has been that the homeless fall in one of three categories. Some are mentally ill, some suffer from alcohol and drug addictions, and some are homeless because of economic reasons. Obviously, an improved economy and the creation of jobs would have an impact of those that are homeless because of lack of work. Additional mental health funding that would provide additional beds, and changes that would make it easier for the involuntary commitment of mental patients would help that population. The decriminalization of 647(f) PC (Drunk) by way of the Sundance decision over 25 years ago eliminated a tool that was able to assist some of the traditional "skid row" alcoholics in drying out and cleaning up. This population has the most difficult challenge.

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?*

I don't understand the question, but I'll provide some additional comments. Dealing with the population that is homeless by choice is a huge problem. There are shelters with empty beds that have people sleeping on the sidewalk in front the shelter. The shelters and homeless advocates say there's a need for more facilities. I disagree. The real problem is getting people into the existing shelters. Society has got to get its head out of the sand. In Los Angeles, the policy makers are reluctant to aggressively address the problem. No one wants to address it as a criminal problem, so there's no teeth in trying to solve it. Certain portions of the city, specifically skid row, are unofficially designated as being suitable for the homeless. This means the businesses in those areas carry a tremendous burden that destroys businesses and property values. The rest of the city looks the other way and, understandably, doesn't want the problem in their neighborhoods. Law enforcement often deals with the problem by encouraging the homeless to move on. That's what often happens in cities like South Pasadena. A new homeless person shows up because the pressure is on elsewhere and they stay here until we get complaints. Then, if we're unable to convince them to go to a shelter, we explain they need to get off the sidewalk/out of the park/off the railroad right-of-way, and move on. This is done with no legal authority to force them to move, just encouragement. This exposes law enforcement to complaints and lawsuits. As often the case, law enforcement is expected to solve the problem with out the proper tools to do so. The end result is that some homeless people just get shuffled from neighborhood to neighborhood, or they end up in an area like LA's skid row where most people look the other way. And, the problem is never solved.

I wish you luck in your aggressive goal of eliminating homelessness within 10 years. If you come close to achieving this, you will have solved one of society's biggest problems.

If you or your staff have any questions, feel free to contact me at (626) 403-7272

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "D. Watson", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Daniel B. Watson
Chief of Police