



June 20, 2023

Honorable Mayor Richardson and Members of the Long Beach City Council  
Civic Center Plaza  
411 W. Ocean Blvd.  
Long Beach, CA 90802

RE: Agenda Item #33: Study Policy Options for Use of Public Spaces

Dear Mayor and Members of Long Beach City Council,

On behalf of the Bixby Knolls Business Improvement Association (BKBIA), please accept this correspondence and enter it into the public record for the City Council meeting scheduled for June 20 under Agenda Item #33, supporting the request to study policy options related to unlawful use of public spaces. We commend the efforts of the City Council in declaring a state of emergency around homelessness and centralizing resources to address the homelessness and housing crisis.

We are fully mindful that this issue is of a much larger societal one, with similar conversations taking place in other major cities across the country. We appreciate your efforts to address this on the local level. We also appreciate the 30-day request for the study so solutions can be sought immediately.

The BKBIA is in support of this study, as this is not a “criminalize the homeless” scenario. Rather, the need to address this issue has become a necessity from a health and safety perspective. For example, we have received increased reports from members of the public as well as our business members who have been affected by the increase of trash, human waste, and threats from those embedded in the encampments.

In addition, we have had an increase in incidents for our Clean Team staff to call LBPD and LBFD for individuals who appeared to be unconscious or unresponsive and have helped provide services as needed. There has also been an increase of reports of damage or vandalism, both public and private property, adjacent to encampments, i.e., tampering of fire hydrants, damaging power sources from businesses, and encampment fires dangerously close to housing, commercial properties, and oil pipelines.

With children walking to and from school or families attempting to enjoy their neighborhood as one would expect, there is a perception of danger along many business corridors, Bixby Knolls included. And as a matter of fact, there have been instances where individuals have been



identified living in encampments accosting or threatening individuals and business owners adjacent to those encampments. Please take into consideration limitations as to where encampments can exist, especially in low impact areas, and avoid such sensitive areas as schools, libraries, or other places where children may be present regularly.

And let's take one thing into consideration here--With the same amount of deference offered to those experiencing homelessness, a similar amount should be considered to those being negatively affected, whether a business owner or community member. With specific regard to businesses, please remember that a "business" is not a generic, faceless building of some type, but rather small businesses are also people, community members and families trying to earn a living. Ask the Navarro, Rogers, Nguyen, Brown, Van Fleet, Risse, Avila, and Henson families and they will discuss the frustration of having to add one more challenge to their daily operations in a now post-pandemic environment.

With regard to this proposed study, we hope you will take serious consideration for options and solutions for services, counseling, and rehabilitation for those suffering from substance addiction and/or mental illness in addition to prioritizing housing to address homelessness. There is now an urgency to further these conversations and find workable solutions.

Perhaps the council will recommend pursuing bold steps such as identifying potential properties as a location for Tiny Homes with infrastructure and access to the Multi Service Center and city services.

The BIDs consider themselves city partners and are here to help with the efforts in considering and creating policy solutions.

Thank you for your consideration and efforts to address this complicated issue. We are eager to read the results of the study.

Sincerely,  
Blair Cohn  
Executive Director