

How To Increase Homelessness!

The following are excerpts from the book, "**How To Increase Homelessness.**" Written by Joel Roberts, a homeless advocate committed to finding an answer. He is CEO of The PATH Partners (people assisting the homeless). He cares deeply for the homeless and understands the dynamics of homelessness.

"Grab a map of your community and place push-pins where the community services are located. The free health clinic is here and the homeless shelter is there, the mental health program is in that neighborhood and the employment training is over there. They are spread out all over the landscape, tossed about like a bunch of jacks on the floor with no connection other than bus lines.

We place services all over the community so that access for people on the lowest rung of the economic ladder is limited. Then we make them walk or travel on public transportation as they trek through neighborhoods in which they could only dream of living. We dangle much needed services in front of them, but then spread the services all over the community so they're difficult to access.

A director of a human service department in a California city once told me that he tried to experience this shuttle-bus system of providing services. So he jumped on a bus to travel throughout his city to see how long it took to access different service agencies. He said it was not only time consuming, it was confusing. If it's confusing for a well-paid, social service expert, imagine what it means for a scraping-the-bottom-of-the-barrel low-income person desperately hurting for services.

Thankfully, there is actually a perfectly good solution to this system of madness.

What is the trend for most customer-based institutions during this time of cutthroat business competition? It is providing better access to potential customers by building Super-Store centers, ala Wal-Mart and Best Buy, or construct mega malls where buyers can flock in droves with access to every consumer good they can dream of purchasing.

So why don't we do the same for people in need of social services? Ask all the service agencies in the community to locate their services in one place, so people without homes need only to travel to one location rather than all over the city.

Deny a person access to services (by spreading the services throughout a city) and a community increases homelessness. Provide every service that a person needs under one roof and the dream of ending homelessness becomes closer to reality."

By approving a mentally ill homeless facility on Burnett Street and Grand Avenue our City Council will increase the homeless population in the City of Long Beach. Access to the facility will require mentally ill homeless individuals to ride the bus over five miles across town and back again.

Eventually, the homeless will realize that it is easier to stay in the area of the MHA facility on Burnett Street. Alleys, parks, freeway underpasses will become their homes. (If one checks with the homeless count just taken in our city, they will see that there is a very small homeless population living on the eastside at the present time.)

Once the homeless population begins to grow in the Fifth District, churches and other well meaning organizations will begin to feed the needy. Thus, starting the cycle of expansion and attraction of a new homeless population.

City Council, please recind your vote of December 18, 2007. Creating more homelessness does not solve the homeless problem!

Other side of this page will show distance the proposed mentally ill homeless facility is from current homeless programs in City of Long Beach.

HOMELESS SERVICES RESOURCE DIRECTORY

Location of agencies within the City of Long Beach that provide services to the general homeless population

Listing available online at: http://www.longbeach.gov/health/organization/hss/homeless_services/default.asp



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| 1. Social Security Admin. 2005 Long Beach Blvd. | 5. Multi Service Center 1301 W. 12 th Street | 9. Christian Outreach 515 E. 3 rd Street | 13. LB Rescue Mission 1335 Pacific |
| 2. Long Beach Mental Health 1975 Long Beach Blvd | 6. Catholic Charities 123 E. 14 th Street | 10. Flossie Lewis 315 E. 6 th Street | 14. Lutheran Social Service 1611 Pine Ave |
| 3. Salvation Army Family Svcs. 2158 Pacific Ave. | 7. Villages at Cabrillo 2001 River Street | 11. Goodwill Industries 800 W. PCH | 15. Mental Health America 456 Elm Ave. |
| 4. LB Comp. Health Ctr. LACo 1333 Chestnut Ave. | 8. Project Achieve 1368 Oregon Ave. | 12. Men's 12 Step House 1005 E. 6 th Street | 16. Proposed MHA facility. 3666 Burnett Street |