



SOCIAL MODEL RECOVERY SYSTEMS, INC.

January 19, 2016

Homeless and Poverty Committee Members:  
Councilmember Marqueece Harris-Dawson, Co-Chair  
Councilmember Jose Huizar, Co-Chair

City of Los Angeles, Homeless and Poverty Committee  
200 N. Spring Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: City of Los Angeles Comprehensive Homeless Strategy Report

Honorable Committee Members,

United Coalition East Prevention Project (UCEPP), and Community Centered Emergency Room Project (CCERP), are the prevention arms of Social Model Recovery Systems, Inc. (SMRS), a human services organization serving both Los Angeles and Orange Counties. Our prevention programs target Skid Row and the community adjacent to LAC-USC County Medical Center, both of whom have large homeless concentrations. As a prevention organization housed in Skid Row for more than 20 years, we have observed a plethora of well-intentioned local government initiatives fail miserably, mainly due to a myopic outlook. We have developed a considerable amount of expertise by combining our prevention strategies with the lived experiences of valued Coalition members who are formerly homeless.

We support your effort to attain "functional zero" and provide feasible solutions through the provision of housing. While we commend the thoroughness of the report, we would also like to highlight the following areas of concern:

- The linkage between homelessness, mental illness and chemical dependency is clear, as is the connection between those conditions and incarceration. We believe Prevention/Diversion should have a role larger than mere shelter avoidance. We find it appalling that the least expensive Housing Strategy, (Strategy 7.5.1), Prevention/Diversion services (\$3,500 per household) are by far the least utilized housing option. Additionally, Strategy 7.7, documents the various program types for singles and families. Currently there are zero Prevention/Diversion beds in the system and a proposed total of 1,230 beds (600 singles and 630 families) in the future. We propose that housing prevention services and strategies be expanded beyond the current definition, so that that issues of co-occurring disorders, substance abuse, incarceration, institutionalization, and employability be included.
- Strategy 3B recommends the development of a city-wide protocol to address encampments and unsheltered homelessness. Although, we agree that there should

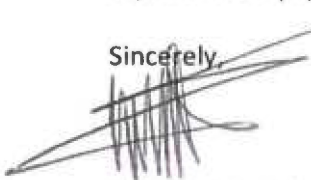
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be a coordinated approach, a reliance on Ordinances such as MC 56.11, has the effect of criminalizing the homeless, which further exacerbates problems. Acknowledging the value of community-based solutions in strengthening communities is imperative. Additionally, taking a deeper look at what factors contribute to making certain areas become "hot spots" will contextualize and inform the City's protocol.


- The Coordinated Entry System's most crucial limitation is the lack of immediate resources for the individual who is ready to accept services. Moreover, there is a possibility that those in need may have already explored this system and become disillusioned because it cannot accommodate them or their current circumstance.
- Zoning and land use needs must be resolved immediately and protections of existing structures and/or homeless shelters secured, especially in areas like Skid Row that have become targets of land use speculators or private developers.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input in this process. We are look forward to continuing our work together. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call.

Sincerely,



Zelenne L. Cardenas



KevinMichael Key

CC:

Councilmember Marqueece Harris-Dawson, Co-Chair  
Councilmember Jose Huizar, Co-Chair  
Councilmember Mike Bonin  
Councilmember Gilbert Cedillo  
Councilmember Curren D. Price, Jr.