



THE PUBLIC INTEREST LAW OFFICE OF THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY AND BEVERLY HILLS BAR ASSOCIATIONS
The Southern California Affiliate of The Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law

May 14, 2018

The Honorable Herb J. Wesson, Jr.
President, Los Angeles City Council
Councilmember, 10th District
200 N. Spring Street, Room 430
Los Angeles, CA 90012

RE: SUPPORT – TEMPORARY HOMELESS SHELTER IN KOREATOWN
682 S. VERMONT AVENUE – COUNCIL FILE NO. 18-0392

Dear Council President Wesson:

Public Counsel writes to indicate our support for the proposed temporary homeless shelter in Koreatown located at 682 S. Vermont Avenue (CF No. 18-0392) (“the Project”). Public Counsel is the nation’s largest *pro bono* public interest law firm. Our Community Development Project builds strong foundations for healthy, vibrant, economically stable communities by providing free legal services to community-based organizations, affordable housing developers and low-income entrepreneurs. Our Homelessness Prevention Law Project advocates on behalf of single adults, families, and youth who are experiencing homelessness or are at high risk of homelessness to secure and maintain shelter, housing, and public benefits.

With the passage of Proposition HHH in November 2016 with 77 percent of the vote, and the passage of Measure H in March 2017 with 69 percent of the vote, the public has given us a mandate to solve the homeless crisis in our City and County. Proposition HHH provides for \$1.2 billion dollars in construction funds for supportive housing and homeless facilities, a long term strategy to provide much needed housing. Measure H provides over \$355 million dollars a year in services to complement HHH, providing the much needed support and services that individuals experiencing homelessness need. We also need a short-term strategy throughout the City to get individuals off the street and into permanent housing and services. In order to address the short-term problems, the Mayor has announced \$20 million dollars to build emergency shelters throughout the City, with a minimum of 15 up and running by January 2019.

According to the most recent estimates, there are approximately 400 homeless individuals in Koreatown, one of the largest densities of homelessness in the City. Most publicly owned land in Koreatown are parks, libraries, and schools, and there are very few options to site a temporary shelter where it is desperately needed. The only available site in Koreatown owned and controlled by the City of Los Angeles is the DOT Parking lot at 682 S. Vermont Avenue. Koreatown needs this shelter, and other neighborhoods like Westwood, Hollywood, South Los Angeles, Mid-City, Studio City, Valley Village, North Hollywood, Van Nuys, and Chinatown are considering doing the same.

Advancing this project advances the goals of federal and state laws affecting the siting of emergency shelters. State Senate Bill (SB) 2, effective January 2008, amended State Housing Element Law and the Housing Accountability Act (HAA) to require local governments to take specific zoning actions to encourage the development of emergency shelters.¹ It also clarifies that under the HAA, a jurisdiction cannot deny applications for emergency shelter without making specific evidence-based findings.² These laws, along with other federal and state fair housing and anti-discrimination laws, work collectively to ensure jurisdictions advance inclusive land use and zoning policies that address housing needs for all – but particularly for people with lower incomes, special needs, seniors, persons with disabilities, veterans, and other target populations.

Every neighborhood and community needs to participate throughout the City if we are to achieve the mandates of Proposition HHH and Measure H. We applaud the City's efforts and urge the City to continue these efforts in communication and collaboration with local homeless services and affordable housing organizations to create the conditions for success.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shashi Hanuman', followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Shashi Hanuman
Directing Attorney, Community Development Project

¹ Sen. Bill No. 2, approved by Governor, Oct. 13, 2007 (2007-2008 Reg. Sess.).

² Cal. Gov. Code § 65589.5, subd. (d).