

Communication from Public

Name: Genevieve Belleveau

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Council File No: 20-0094

Comments for Public Posting: I am a constituent in CD13 and in support of the motion to keep the Echo Park bathrooms open 24hrs a day for the duration of this crisis; and well beyond. The health and public safety of unhoused constituents should be held with the same regard council member Mitch O'Farrell seems to holds his wealthy, elite constituents. This motion would be a small step in signaling he sees his unhoused constituents as valid citizens with basic human rights. This motion should be expanded to included well serviced hygiene stations at the park, as well as Mitch agreeing to meet with the Echo Park Lake residents to hear their concerns, when social distancing mandates have lifted. Yes to Item 20-0094 CD13

⚠️ Anyone can publish on Medium per our [Policies](#), but we don't fact-check every story. For more info about the coronavirus, see [cdc.gov](#).

Statement from the Unhoused Community of Echo Park Lake on Mitch O'Farrell's New Shelter Plans and Coronavirus



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On Friday, March 6, we learned that our Councilmember Mitch O'Farrell introduced a motion for the city to fund temporary emergency shelters in Echo Park, including a shelter at St Paul's Church which is across the street from where we currently stay at Echo Park Lake. LAHSA and LAPD have told us that we will be prioritized for this shelter, and that police enforcement at the park will increase if we do not enter this new shelter.

As we expressed in our open letter to Mitch O'Farrell in January, many of us have had very negative experiences at shelters, and getting permanent housing still remains our top objective and solution to our current status. We are continually working with outreach workers from various nonprofit organizations in order to move forward with our lives and back in society, and are disappointed that Mitch O'Farrell has so far decided to go forward with a shelter plan without our input, as we have requested for months now. So before getting into the details as to our various concerns over a shelter, we would like to remind people that we are just regular folks no different from you just trying to find the best way forward in order to better our lives and ultimately better our communities. The list of concerns we put forward are an indication of our level of seriousness in order to find a sustainable solution that is both fair and safe for our well being including our health and general safety.

Our top concern right now is Coronavirus. Below, we have attached three recent articles from the New York Times, Guardian UK, and LA Times that show not only the rise of Coronavirus cases in LA County (now up to 20) but how an open floor plan in shelters is both dangerous to the epidemic and the very opposite of what should be offered to the homeless, who have increased chances of getting Coronavirus.

Additionally, not having a program in place where there is some level of consistency as to the people in and out of shelters significantly increases chances of an outbreak. We appreciate Councilmembers Rodriguez and O'Farrell recently introducing a motion to quickly install more hand washing stations at homeless encampments in order to combat the spread of this virus, so we hope that Mitch O'Farrell will take our concerns seriously before moving rapidly towards a shelter plan without taking proper sanitary measures — which would create more problems than solutions.

We cannot in good conscience accept moving into a shelter with an open floor plan and sleeping in beds without knowing who slept in them the night before. We are taking the Coronavirus very seriously and we hope the city will too. At this moment, our tents feel

safest. If a shelter is to be provided, it should consist of private rooms with a max of one roommate.

The rest of our concerns are also very important, such as prioritizing unhoused seniors and disabled residents across the entire Echo Park neighborhood — not just Echo Park Lake. We believe that not only is it the humane thing to do, but that it will also allow for those people to have guaranteed bedding as they are the most in need.

Many of us are searching for employment until we find residency so having storage will greatly help — but also having a consistent place to go to without having to check out during the day. Checking in and out everyday not only raises health concerns as mentioned earlier but also prevents us from finding work. Our main objective is to get out of homelessness whether through getting a job, getting housing, or both. The six month to a year program, similar to the program currently in place at the Weingart on 6th & San Pedro, helps with that. These concerns are not just for the Echo Park residents nor aimed to be short term solutions, but long term solutions for not only our small community but for any future homeless in Echo Park.

We hope this statement will be read in good faith. Our main goal is to have common sense solutions that are fair without jeopardizing our safety, our health, or the health of the entire Echo Park community.

Please see our requests below. Also attached are recent articles written by major media outlets concerning the spread of Coronavirus, the dangers of shelters, and real solutions that should be implemented.

We, the unhoused community of Echo Park Lake, request the following for any proposed shelter in Echo Park:

- 1. To protect our health during this Coronavirus outbreak, we will not enter into any shelter with an open floor plan. We request separate rooms with no more than two people per room.**
- 2. No “check in, check out” policy. We request that this be a six month to one year program for each person (similar to the Weingart Center in Skid Row, for example) with caseworkers and plans in place for each person to eventually find employment and permanent housing.**

- 3. We request that this shelter prioritize its beds for the elderly and those with disability and health issues within the entire Echo Park neighborhood — not just the unhoused community at Echo Park Lake.
- 4. We request that pets be allowed.
- 5. We request adequate storage for personal belongings.
- 6. We request that entry into this shelter be voluntary.
- 7. We request that there be no increased criminalization efforts upon those who choose to not enter this shelter.

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Recent Articles on Coronavirus and Shelters:

<p>Coronavirus Outbreak Has America's Homeless at Risk of 'Disaster'</p> <p>Doctors say the country's more than half-million homeless people are at higher risk of catching and dying from the...</p> <p>www.nytimes.com</p>	
<p>'We're not prepared': coronavirus could devastate homeless communities</p> <p>The lack of a coordinated coronavirus strategy for homeless communities could be catastrophic for sick and older people...</p> <p>www.theguardian.com</p>	
<p>L.A. County, now with 20 coronavirus cases, has first from community spread. Here is what we know</p> <p>Los Angeles County announced its first coronavirus case of community spread, with the total number of cases rising to...</p> <p>www.latimes.com</p>	

This Is Why Homeless People Don't Go to Shelters

On a windy morning in January, a group of police and city workers closed a long-existing tent encampment beneath an...

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