



May 12, 2021

Re: The Venice Chamber of Commerce opposes council file 21-0350

To: Mayor Garcetti and Los Angeles City Council

The Venice Chamber of Commerce is strongly opposed to the use of all public beaches and parks for homeless housing. The use of shared, public recreational spaces are a benefit and resource for the entire community of Los Angeles. California beaches are a unique and valued place for residents and visitors from throughout the world. The county-owned parking lot at Will Rogers State Beach in Pacific palisades; the county-owned parking lot #3 at Dockweiler Beach in Playa del Rey; and the Mar Vista Park and Westchester Park are not suitable for homeless temporary housing. The California Coastal Commission has clearly stated that “protecting public access to the coast for all and recreational opportunities is a core mandate of the Coastal Act.”

The Venice Chamber of Commerce supports the Pacific Palisades Community Council Straw Poll Motion that “opposes the use of our beaches, parks and any open space dedicated for public recreational use in the City and/or County of Los Angeles, as well as facilities attendant to such spaces, to shelter or house homeless individuals (i.e., for “tiny homes” or “safe camping”), as proposed in the motion by Councilmember Bonin (Motion), including without limitation at the following locations specified in the Motion:

- the County-owned parking lot at Will Rogers State Beach, 17000-CA 1 in Pacific Palisades;
- the County-owned parking lot #3 at Dockweiler Beach, 11999 Vista del Mar in Playa del Rey;
- any portion of Westchester Park and/or Mar Vista Park, unless otherwise approved by clear public consensus.

We also unequivocally, do not support the use of any parking lots for the same purpose located in adjacent Venice Beach and our Boardwalk.

In addition, The Venice Chamber of Commerce supports the Brentwood Community Council Motion opposing Council File 21- 0350 unless amended to:

- Remove all public recreational space from the Motion, including deed restricted City parks;
- Instruct the CAO to include the results of Councilmember Raman's (Council File 21-0063) study of municipal property in the final recommendation report for this Motion;
- Request U.S. District Judge David O. Carter to direct that any homeless shelter opened in CD11 be restricted to homeless persons who were registered in the Coordinated Entry System as living within CD11 during the 2019 Annual Homeless Count or who can show a connection to CD11, such as birthplace, prior school, work, or home address, or receipt of any public benefits, or relatives currently living in CD11.

The Chamber recognizes the severity of the homeless crisis across LA City and County and the need for services and housing. The pandemic has worsened the situation for the homeless and requires immediate action.

The Chamber strongly supports use of the vacant West LA Civic Center for homeless shelters given its proximity to transportation and services in a safe environment. BHA supports the expansion of Project Roomkey combined with other alternatives. The City and County need to do more to identify government-owned land that is suitable for temporary housing and longer-term construction of low-income housing. We believe there may be opportunities for buying or leasing commercial properties as more employees work

Page 2 (continued)

from home as well as strip malls where businesses have permanently closed. Another opportunity for land purchase is along the Metro right-of-way and parking lots, some which are now being leased to car dealers for vehicle storage.

The City and County must work together to simplify access to services, aligning their laws related to homelessness to be uniform for easier implementation. For example, in the City you cannot camp overnight on City streets but in the County, it is allowed. The bifurcation of responsibilities with Prop H funds under the County and Prop HHH funds under the City call for coordinated oversight and decision making under one leader.

The Los Angeles Department of Public Health reports the #1 cause of death for people experiencing homelessness is drug overdose, and the Los Angeles Times reports 67% of those living in street encampments suffer from mental illness, substance abuse and other disabilities but there is no mandate to accept housing when offered. These are life threatening illnesses. Would you ask someone suffering a heart attack if they wanted treatment? No. You would take the necessary steps to save their lives. The same must be done with those living on the streets with these illnesses by increasing outreach and eliminating the red tape to get services to those who need it as soon as possible.

The City, County and State have failed their constituents, both housed and unhoused. Now is the time for all elected officials to review current laws covering this portion of the homeless population which have proven to be inadequate to humanely deal with this entrenched crisis and balance their medical needs and safety with that of the public. More money needs to be spent on outreach and mental health programs.

Respectfully submitted,
George Francisco
President
The Venice Chamber of Commerce