

MOTION

Los Angeles is in a State of Multiple Emergencies -- a public health pandemic, life-threatening temperatures and unhealthy air quality caused by the escalating climate catastrophe, and a worsening homelessness crisis. In a city of more than 4 million people, an emergency response that provides less than a half dozen cooling centers is woefully inadequate.

In the Resilient Los Angeles report, published in 2018, the City indicated a need to develop “a comprehensive cooling center program to establish additional location and programming goals that prioritize vulnerable populations, consider co-location with other services, ensure transit accessibility, incorporate sustainability goals, and encourage development of potential private-public partnerships.”

The need to do so is both urgent and greater than ever. The climate crisis is not decades away. It is here. Los Angeles has a need for centers for relief and for refuge not just from cold weather and from extreme heat, but from poor air quality.

Los Angeles' air quality averaged in the unhealthy range over the weekend of September 12-13, with concentrations of the harmful pollutant PM2.5 (fine inhalable particles with diameters that are generally 2.5 micrometers and smaller) well above 35.4 micrograms per cubic meter, the level at which the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency deems dangerous. The concentration as well as length of exposure to PM2.5 can have long-term health ramifications on those exposed; these health effects range from premature death from heart and lung disease, to triggering or exacerbating chronic disease such as asthma, heart attack, bronchitis and other respiratory problems. According to the County of Los Angeles Public Health Department, 1 in 10 children have been diagnosed with asthma. There is also an association between mothers' exposure to fine particles and birth defects. A recent scientific study also showed an increase in severity of influenza following wildfire pollution exposure. Southern California residents are already slightly more likely to get cancer than the national average of 4 in 10 people, according to the South Coast Air Quality Management District, who cite smog as increasing cancer risk.

While use of the City's cooling facilities may be low, the City should acknowledge that is likely due to poor outreach or access and not due to lack of need. The City can and must do more to protect vulnerable populations from the health effects of extreme heat and wildfire smoke.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the Emergency Management Department (EMD), in coordination with the Chief Legislative Analyst, City Administrative Officer, Department of Recreation & Parks, Department of General Services, Library Department, Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, and other agencies as appropriate, develop a plan for a significant increase -- at least one per Community Plan Area -- in the number of emergency relief and refuge centers.

I FURTHER MOVE that EMD, CLA, CAO identify resources and strategies to staff such facilities, including potential use of the Disaster Service Worker program, volunteers from organizations such as the Red Cross or graduates of the CERT program, and partnerships with community-based organizations, including but not limited to the successful mutual aid organizations that have been serving Angelenos during the pandemic.

SEP 15 2020

I FURTHER MOVE that EMD, the Information Technology Agency, and other agencies as appropriate, develop a plan for outreach for and promotion of such facilities, including but not limited to using the NIXLE or emergency alert systems, and asking social media platforms to geo-target messages or alerts about available resources during times of crisis.

PRESENTED BY: 
MIKE BONIN
Councilmember, 11th District

SECONDED BY: _____
PAUL KORETZ (verbal)
Councilmember, 5th District