

Communication from Public

Name:

Date Submitted: 09/09/2022 07:46 AM

Council File No: 20-0291

Comments for Public Posting: Los Angeles homeless population has jumped 4 percent, according to the yesterday's article from Bloomberg News. Now is not the time to end tenant protections. LA County Homeless Population Jumps 4% as Housing Costs Climb City of LA homeless population climbs 2% to almost 42,000 Homelessness is growing faster than the system can handle Published: September 8, 2022 at 1:11 PM PDT The number of people living on the streets of Los Angeles County has jumped to 69,000, fueled by high housing costs and inadequate services for the unsheltered. That's a 4% increase from the last count conducted in early 2020 before the Covid-19 pandemic, which found more than 66,400 unhoused residents of the second-largest US metro area. The city of LA's homeless population increased almost 2% to 41,980 from 41,200 previously. Sprawling, trash-strewn tent encampments have proliferated even after tax payers poured billions of dollars into new beds and supportive services. Homelessness has become a top political and quality of life issue that could help decide the LA mayoral election later this year. "The numbers are suggesting there's a flattening of the curve," Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority Acting Co-Executive Director Kristina Dixon said during a conference call. "However, people are still falling into homelessness faster than the system can move them out." LA officials backed away from clearing encampments during the pandemic because of concerns about spreading Covid-19, leading to mounting public frustration and pressure on politicians to take more action. The LA city council voted last month to ban homeless people from erecting tents within 500 feet of schools and day care centers, one of many initiatives opposed by homeless advocates concerned about short-term fixes and civil rights violations. High housing costs and relatively benign weather added to the number of homeless, many of whom suffer from mental illness or substance abuse. Los Angeles residents needed to earn three times the city's \$15 per hour minimum wage to afford average monthly asking rents of \$2,349, according to a May report by the California Housing Partnership. Pandemic programs such as eviction moratoriums are now being rolled back, which may lead to a resurgence of people losing affordable housing, said Molly Rysman, another acting co-executive director of LA Homeless Services Authority. "With

the economic support for state and federal government programs to address the effects of Covid-19 coming to an end, our residents and our rehousing system are at a very precarious moment,” she said. Soaring homelessness is one of the biggest issues in this year’s mayoral election, which pits Karen Bass, a Democratic Congresswoman and former community organizer, against Rick Caruso, a billionaire developer of malls and resorts making his first run for public office. Caruso has vowed to create 30,000 housing units in his first year in office, double Bass’s proposal. She argues Caruso’s plan is costly, unrealistic and fails to address the roots of the problem. City voters also decide on a ballot measure in November proposing a Megamansion tax to raise money for housing programs by adding a 4% transfer charge to property sales of \$5 million to \$10 million and 5.5% to transactions exceeding \$10 million. In 2016, LA city taxpayers approved Measure HHH, a \$1.2 billion bond measure to finance more than 10,000 units for the homeless. Almost six years later and with \$1 billion committed, 1,687 units were in service as of August, 4,639 were in development and 1,590 units were in pre-development, according to the Los Angeles Housing Department. County voters approved a sales tax increase in 2017 to raise \$3.5 billion over 10 years to pay for shelter for low-income residents while providing health and mental health assistance, employment training and other services for at-risk individuals. While LA City and County have both increased the number of beds since 2019, more than two-thirds of the homeless were “unsheltered,” meaning they were sleeping on sidewalks, tent encampments or inside motor vehicles, according to the latest count. “These results are disheartening,” County Supervisor Janice Hahn said in a statement. “They are frustrating to the many people across this county who have dedicated years of their lives to addressing this crisis and they are frustrating to the taxpayers who have invested hundreds of millions of dollars in solutions.” New York City’s homeless count was 50,287 as of January, according to figures released in June.