

MOTION

HOMELESSNESS AND POVERTY

The most recent Point-in-Time Count data from the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) indicate that nearly 6,500 people experiencing homelessness in the City are living in a total of about 4,000 recreational vehicles (RVs). That number, which has grown by 40% since 2018, represents 22% of the City's total unsheltered homeless population.

All too often, RVs used as dwellings on LA's streets are in grave disrepair, meaning that people living in them face unsanitary and sometimes dangerous conditions. Many residents of RVs also lack access to adequate hygiene facilities. A number of the individuals who live in RVs actually make substantial rent payments to the vehicle's owner, paying out hundreds of dollars each month for precarious and substandard housing. RVs have also posed challenges for the neighborhoods in which they are located related to the release of untreated effluent into streets or stormwater drains, increased risk of fires (especially from external generators), and other public safety concerns.

Since 2010, the City's primary response to vehicular homelessness—particularly in RVs—has been a reactive one, not one that focuses on resolving homelessness for inhabitants of RVs. The City has used LAMC 80.69.4, a law that allows the City to prohibit the parking of oversized vehicles (those over 84 inches high and 22 feet long) between 2 a.m. and 6 a.m. on specific streets. Through Council action, hundreds of streets have been added every year to the list of streets where oversized vehicle parking is prohibited. In addition to street-specific oversized vehicle bans, people who live in RVs on city streets must comply with rules that prohibit staying in one parking spot for more than 72 hours. Vehicles that violate this rule can be ticketed and towed. During the pandemic, the City paused ticketing and towing of vehicles with people living in them in accordance with CDC guidelines to allow people experiencing homelessness to shelter in place safely, but in April of this year, the City Council voted to resume parking enforcement for vehicles used as dwellings.

This enforcement-based approach to addressing RVs, however, has proven to be largely ineffective. Often, RV dwellers move their vehicles to other streets in response to a ticket or an oversized vehicle prohibition, meaning that these bans simply move people experiencing homelessness from one street to another. Additionally, the City's capacity to enforce the new rules around RV dwelling is extremely limited—and likely to remain so—because of the lack of vendors and tow yard space to tow and impound oversized vehicles. It is clear that the City needs to come up with a more effective and holistic response to vehicular homelessness.

One option to address vehicular homelessness in RVs is to provide designated sites as “safe parking” lots. Safe parking programs typically provide nighttime security and hygiene facilities, as well as some case management on site. However, there are currently very few safe parking sites within the City that are large enough to accommodate RVs. Furthermore, none of these sites operate 24 hours a day, which poses a particular challenge for people in RVs, who do not opt to use the sites because it is onerous or impossible to move their vehicles out of the lots during daytime hours due to the size and condition of the vehicles.

Another strategy is to offer housing options to residents of RVs. Indeed, the City Administrative Officer (CAO) recently proposed new outreach and engagement protocols to address Citywide vehicle dwelling (CF 21-0956-S1), which instructs that prior to towing a vehicle, housing or shelter referrals should be made to vehicle dwellers “if available.” However, the City simply does not have adequate numbers of shelter beds or interim housing sites to offer housing to every resident currently in an RV. It is likely that without adequate housing

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options to offer residents, strict enforcement of existing RV laws would result in more individuals encamped in tents and makeshift shelters on City sidewalks.

Effective housing navigation for people living in RVs will require specialized resources in order to successfully resolve homelessness for residents. Homeless service providers with experience working with residents of RVs report that incentives, such as small cash payments, can serve as useful tools to encourage residents moving into housing to relinquish their RVs when they move. Short-term storage options for RVs can also help residents overcome skepticism about moving into an interim housing site.

In the proposed 2022-23 California budget, Governor Newsom has earmarked \$300 million for Encampment Resolution Funding (ERF) grants. Local governments can apply for ERF grants to create projects that serve people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in encampments. In 2022, Council District 4 received an ERF grant of \$1,747,115 to rehouse individuals living unsheltered along a 19-mile stretch of the Los Angeles River. Eligible fund uses include street outreach and engagement, housing navigation, interim and permanent housing, capacity building, activities to ensure sustained outcomes for people served, and funding for the restoration of encampment sites. The likely expansion of this flexible funding stream presents a promising opportunity to secure funds to support a City-wide, comprehensive approach to addressing RV homelessness effectively.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the City Council direct the City Administrative Officer (CAO), with assistance from the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) and the Department of Transportation (LADOT), to report back within 60 days with a comprehensive City-wide rehousing strategy for people experiencing RV homelessness, in alignment with the City's Street Engagement Strategy and LAHSA's Best Practices for Addressing Street Encampments. The strategy should include the following components:

- Identifying and securing appropriate interim shelter and housing for people living in RVs across the City;
- Creation of incentives for voluntary relinquishment of RVs used as dwellings;
- Identifying and securing short-term storage lots for RVs after the owner or dweller moves into interim or permanent housing if the owner or dweller wishes to store the RV for a short time;
- Expanding Safe Parking programs, in collaboration with LAHSA, to include oversized/larger RVs in 24-hour Safe Parking programming;
- Demolishing RVs, after the owner or dweller moves into interim or permanent housing, with consent of the owner;
- Leveraging case management from sanitation outreach/City-funded generalist outreach teams for people living in RVs, with a focus on strategies for working with people living in RVs; and
- Necessary budgetary and staffing resources to implement the strategy.

I FURTHER MOVE that the City Council direct the City Administrative Officer (CAO) to report back within 60 days regarding the possibility of submitting an application on behalf of the City for an ERF grant to support the proposed City-wide rehousing strategy for people experiencing RV homelessness.

PRESENTED BY:


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SECONDED BY:



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