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Submitted in 195P Committee
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Item No.: 9
Deputy: Communication from the public

MEMORANDUM

To: Councilmember Jose Huizar
From: General Dogon, Community Organizer
CC: HOMELESSNESS AND POVERTY COMMITTEE
Date: September 13, 2018
Re: Emergency Public Health Recommendations for Skid Row

Introduction

Recently, at a town hall meeting on the \$20 million emergency fund for Skid Row you asked for input on how to spend the money. In response to your request, the Los Angeles Community Action Network (LA CAN) strongly recommends that the priority should be to upgrade the public health facilities on Skid Row. Towards that end, we are calling for a substantial investment to bring the hygiene system up to the standards of human decency.

A big increase in public health spending is long overdue in order for the city to meet its legal obligations as set forth under guidelines established by the United Nations, Human Rights Watch, the California Utilities Code (Sec. 739.8 [a]), California State Assembly (AB 685) and other local, state and international bodies.

Background

Due to decades of neglect, the public health infrastructure in Skid Row is a disgrace. Basic hygiene facilities are nearly nonexistent. Water insecurity is a fact of life for residents, who, besides drinking fountains lack access to hand washing stations, showers

and laundry equipment. Bathroom access in Skid Row is worse than in a Syrian refugee camp, according to a report that found only nine public toilets for more than 2,000 houseless people.

Despite 30 years of complaints and demands from the community for basic hygiene improvements, the City of Los Angeles has failed to address the public health inequality in Skid Row. This communication provides a foundation for establishing public health equity.

Recommendations

Addressing the essential hygiene needs of Skid Row residents must be a priority. For years, LA CAN and others have demanded equal access to hygiene equipment and clean water in Skid Row. The following is a minimum list of necessary items for your consideration and approval:

1. Mobile/stationary water fountains and restrooms
2. Mobile/stationary shower facilities
3. Mobile trash disposal pick-up and stationary trash cans
4. Mobile/stationary laundry stations
5. Cleaning supplies including brooms, trash bags and disinfectants

Conclusion

The city must act quickly on the aforementioned recommendations and issue policy guidelines to all agencies responsible for enacting public health equity. Officials must ensure ethical conduct in the decision-making process. Meaningful community participation is essential to enhance the legitimacy and effectiveness of planning and implementation, promote sustainable solutions and improve accountability.

LA CAN and underserved communities throughout Los Angeles stand ready to work with local, state and federal agencies to realize the human right to water and sanitation facilities. However, we also stand poised to fight should these agencies falter in their obligations.

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