

# Franklin Hollywood Hills

COMMUNITY COUNCIL

## The Vexing Truth

What you are about to read may be unsettling. Please know that writing this article has been the most grueling task that it has been my sad duty to perform. It is a cruelty to hold out hope for a happy ending where none exists—and you deserve the truth.

### Your Politicians Ignored You

In the spring issue of the Beachwood Voice, you were told about a permanent homeless housing project proposed for three large parcels on Gower just north of Hollywood Blvd. (1720-1726 N. Gower St.). It's possible that this new project will forever change the way we will view this part of our Hollywood community.

You were also given details of how your local elected officials left the community out of the process by ignoring the local neighborhood council (Hollywood United Neighborhood Council) as well as other community groups that represent this area. Instead, this project was railroaded through last summer in a few very quiet hearings with no one in opposition even in attendance.

Here is more of the vexing truth about this project.

### Target Population

If queried, the City will tell you that this project will serve primarily chronically homeless families—a fine sentiment that anyone would support. There is good reason to choose single mothers and their children as beneficiaries of the city's largesse. The City should create a whole floor of social services just for them—not open to the public. The City even seems to realize the danger that this vulnerable population faces every day on Skid Row based on a recent count of registered sex offenders residing there. However, having researched this particular project and other projects like it across the country, I see no indication that this needy population will be the major residents of this 60-unit project on Gower. (I am happy to send my massive sources to anyone via e-mail.)

### No Strings (or Logic) Attached

We also reported in the spring issue that the social services on the main floor were all voluntary—how the drug addicts and alcoholics need not commit to sobriety in order to get the key to their own apartment. Unbelievably, that's still the plan! We dare not examine the potential impacts to the community of having this target population mixed with our vulnerable children and families. That might make people call us NIMBYs (Not In My Back Yard). So instead, let's take a magnifier to the project itself:



A scene from under the Gower Street overpass just steps from the proposed Social Service drop-in center. Just as on Skid Row, clients of the center will not want to stray far from the services they need.

Sixty units with a mixture of tenants as stated above (moms, children, mentally ill, drug addicts, alcoholics, etc.) with supportive services on the main floor and the front door wide open with no strings attached for those on the street that would like to also “share” (i.e., compete for) those services.

Common sense tells you that you don't hold an AA meeting in the middle of a bar, just as you wouldn't let a pedophile into a day care center. So where is the sense in bringing together our City's most vulnerable and forcing them to commingle with our City's most predatory? This is the truth: The residents of this project will be exposed to and mingling with the homeless that will enter for services. Even their promised security cannot possibly prevent this close contact.

### Social Services Can't Screen Clients

The tenants that will live in this almost-free housing will have to be screened just as you and I would be if we were to apply for rental of any apartment in Los Angeles. We assume some kind of criteria will be used to eliminate the most undesirable tenants. *What NO ONE CAN KNOW is the background of the street people* (pedophiles, rapists, prostitutes, drug dealers, etc.) *that will be lining up to receive the walk-in social services. After all, NO ONE can be turned away.*

Even if the worst element of society rubs elbows with its potential victims, that doesn't necessarily mean that the crime will take place *within the facility*. This is not a lock-down and the residents are free to come and go as they wish. As seen in Skid Row, if you have a social service center, the homeless will usually encamp near it and with the

recent ruling of the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals, the homeless are free to sleep on the sidewalks of Los Angeles until the City can provide enough beds for them. If this “Social Service Center” is available to the homeless at large, Gower could be lined with homeless encampments. Formerly homeless women and children who feel safe and secure in their new apartments may become victims once they set foot outside the facility.

Meanwhile, the current neighbors cannot expect a safe environment, but if they voice their concern about their well-being or the safety of their own families, they are labeled NIMBYs—an epithet that is being recklessly thrown around by our own civic leaders, calculated to distract the public from the real issues. It's a damned shame when a neighborhood can't speak its mind and have the respect it deserves from its own elected officials.

### Social Services Leave Marks

How can anyone know in advance what impact a particular social service program will have? You can get a good idea by using history as the great barometer. When you see groups of street residents, vagrants, transients (call them what you choose) gathering day and night in the area of Hollywood and Gower and encamping nearby, *this is the impact of social services concentrated in your local neighborhood* (see the accompanying photo of the Gower underpass). These services have become a homeless magnet, but that's not the information being provided by the City in hearings prior to ground breaking. The pitch in those hearings is about how much good the project will do for the homeless and how they will get a leg up, a meal, some direction and the support and love that they are not getting from their families. But if the target population for this housing is “drug addicts and alcoholics” who “need not commit to sobriety” (as stated above), *how can it succeed?*

### An Unholy Alliance

Here's the update that you need to hear: The Council offices to which letters, phone calls, and emails were sent in outrage against this project from far and near simply ignored them—in

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### EDITORIAL COMMENTARY

## American Drifter: A Conditioned Response

Carried aloft and floating heavily on the cross current stirrings in the uplifted wakes of passing bodies, a swirling mixture of rotting urine and decaying garbage, mingled with the ever-present aromas of the #2 droppings of homeless denizens, ushers in a suffocating stink that thoroughly permeates the surrounding air. The hubris resulting from vagrancy is fast becoming a common occurrence.

Standing about seemingly with nothing to do, with runny noses and heads crowned with matted and sometimes tick-infested graying manes; with rotting teeth and sleep encrusted eyes that peer from around desolate corners searching for some ‘victim’ from whom a penny can be begged, disheveled and bedraggled, homeless people offer the proofs that aptly demonstrate the frailties of homeless service relief programming. The mere sight of these homeless vagabonds lends fodder to an argument and weight to the evidence that

homeless service relief policies — after 13 years of systematic development — contributes more to the degradation of thriving communities and less to workable solutions.

From appearing like hungry chickens scratching around in a locked chicken coop to acting like ravenous wolves tearing at each others' throats or simply looking like burnt out lamps with used up wicks neither habilitated nor rehabilitated, now, healthy communities are being asked — no, **required** to play their civic part and absorb into their midst people who have been spending their time pursuing dysfunctional lifestyles.

In the past — even the recent past — the main causes of neighborly complaints have usually concerned the color of a neighbor's newly painted house or the height of a neighbor's hedge or fence. Those types of complaints are now subject to change, for if communities continue to rely upon homeless services' punchless service delivery designs for remedy, and if the quality of the services

continue to overlook the need for strong habilitative and rehabilitative program designs, and should communities fail to weigh-in on the routine dispersal and placement of homeless service venues into surrounding communities without informed oversight, then, the sum total of the aforementioned client results is not just predictable, but should be expected and therefore should not shock anyone.

Unless and until communities and the individuals that live within them agree to join together to promote for quality results from our public officials, and until communities can begin to advocate for the development of quality programming, communities had better brace themselves: for the new homeless service operandi promises to shuffle homeless people from their hither to your yon.

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