

DATE ISSUED: January 31, 2001

REPORT NO. 01-014

ATTENTION: Honorable Mayor and City Council  
Docket of February 5, 2001

SUBJECT: Initial Report of the East Village Redevelopment Homeless Advisory  
Committee

### SUMMARY

Issues - Should the City Council adopt the recommendations of the East Village Redevelopment Homeless Advisory Committee, as follows:

1. Preserve and Create Homeless Shelter Beds and Low-Cost Housing. The Committee recommends that the City continue to prioritize homeless shelters and low-cost housing in its funding decisions, and that each Council District commit a significant portion of its CDBG funding to homeless projects. The Committee also recommends that available funds from the General Fund be devoted to homeless shelter, housing and programs.
2. Increase Public Sanitation Facilities Downtown. The Committee recommends that the City of San Diego and CCDC immediately begin working on a program to install self-cleaning public toilets in convenient locations throughout the downtown area, as has been done by many other U.S. and European cities.
3. Extend Seasonal Shelter Period. The Committee recommends that the planned Seasonal Shelter period be extended to May 30, 2001 to provide more bed nights and to assure that the closure of the shelter will be during a time of moderate weather. The Committee also recommends that shelter locations be sought throughout the City to avoid disproportionately burdening any one or a few neighborhoods.
4. Continue HOT Team Support. The Committee recommends that all parties continue their funding of the HOT Teams, and that at least one of the HOT Teams re-establish an office in the downtown area to facilitate interactions with the hard to reach downtown homeless population.
5. Expand Serial Inebriate Program and Alcohol Treatment Facilities. The Committee recommends that the Police Western Division pilot program for Serial Inebriates be expanded to include the downtown area. This will require that capacity at the existing Volunteers of American (VOA) detoxification program be expanded, and beds be added to short and long term alcohol and drug treatment programs. Additionally, the involuntary time spent at the VOA Inebriate Reception Center should be expanded from four hours to up to just short of 24 hours.
6. Create Community Court to Serve Downtown Area. The Committee recommends that the community court concept that is being implemented in the Mid-City area be expanded

to the downtown area to assist in implementation of the Serial Inebriate Program and in appropriate handling of other low-level, non-violent misdemeanor offenses.

7. Report to Homeless Services Coordinator. The Committee recommends that the Homeless Services Coordinator's role be publicized more effectively to citizens and business owners, and that this position serve as the clearinghouse for resolution of all complaints about homeless issues for the downtown and nearby community areas.

8. Continue and Improve City/County and other Agency Collaboration. The Committee recommends that the collaboration between the City and County continue with the development of joint projects to serve the homeless and joint applications to secure funding. The City/County Homeless Task Force comprised of two City Councilmembers and two Board of Supervisors members should continue to meet to address collaborative solutions.

Manager's Recommendations - Adopt the Advisory Committee recommendations with some changes as follows. Direct staff to:

1. Work with the Housing Commission and Centre City Development Corporation to review funding for homeless shelters and low-income housing in the city, and with the Mayor and Council Districts on allocation of CDBG funding in these areas.

2. Continue discussions with the City Attorney to find a viable solution for implementing a self-cleaning toilet program in the downtown area, and continue to explore funding options.

3. Analyze the availability of funding to extend the seasonal shelter program to May 30 and report back in early 2001. Explore alternative shelter locations for 2001-2002.

4. Work with the Police Department to locate suitable space to re-open the HOT Team downtown office.

5. Work with the Police Department, City Attorney's Office, Sheriff, County Health and Human Services and the Courts to explore the feasibility of expanding the current Police Western Division Serial Inebriate Program to the downtown area. Continue to work with Volunteers of America and other drug and alcohol treatment providers, and the County Health and Human Services Agency to explore the costs and funding options for expanding drug and alcohol detox and treatment beds. Work with the City Attorney's Office, the Police Department and VOA on the feasibility and legal issues of expanding involuntary hours at the Inebriate Reception Center from four to just under 24 hours.

6. Work with the City Attorney's Office, Police Department and Courts to determine the feasibility of implementing a community court in the downtown area.

7. Work with the Homeless Services Coordinator to better publicize that office's functions, and to increase the Coordinator's role as a clearinghouse for homeless issues.

8. Continue to work closely with San Diego County on collaborative projects to address

homeless issues and obtain outside funding from state, federal and private sources.

Land Use and Housing Committee Recommendation - Approve the City Manager's recommendations, and support the work of the San Diego Housing Commission to obtain information from the General Services Administration regarding the possible loss of Single Room Occupancy rooms in downtown.

Fiscal Impact - None at this time.

## BACKGROUND

The East Village Redevelopment Homeless Advisory Committee was created as a mitigation measure by the City's Ballpark Environmental Impact Report to address the potential physical impacts of homeless displacement and migration on East Village and surrounding communities. The Committee was directed by the language of the mitigation measure to submit a report on the current state of homelessness to the City Council within three months of the issuance of grading/building permits. The Advisory Committee recommendations were presented to the Land Use and Housing Committee on October 11, 2000. **Attachment 1** is the complete text of the East Village Redevelopment Homeless Advisory Committee Report.

Committee membership includes 45 members and alternates representing community organizations, neighborhood and citizens groups, social service providers, government agencies, and City staff. The complete membership is shown in Attachment 1.

The Committee established its goals and objectives, based on direction provided by the EIR:

*Mission Statement:* Identify the specific physical impacts of homeless displacement caused by the proposed Ballpark and ancillary development projects on East Village and surrounding communities and work with identified representatives of local government agencies and social service representatives to develop and recommend remedies for those physical impacts.

- Goals:*
1. Determine if number of homeless identified in Ballpark EIR reflects current situation.
  2. Determine whether homeless are migrating either within East Village or to surrounding neighborhoods or Balboa Park as a result of Ballpark and/or ancillary development.
  3. Identify any physical impacts resulting from any homeless migration (trash, crime, vandalism, etc.).
  4. Review and evaluate the effectiveness of current methods for dealing with any physical impacts of homeless displacement in the surrounding neighborhood.
  5. Identify any additional problems and issues.
  6. Discuss and formulate solutions to recommend to the City Manager.

## DISCUSSION

### **Initial Findings**

On June 29, Committee members conducted a physical count of the homeless within the 26-block East Village redevelopment area, and identified 247 homeless individuals, which exceeded

the average of 180 homeless identified in counts done in previous months by the HOT Team and other Committee representatives, and the 100 reported in the Ballpark EIR. The Committee agreed that the number of homeless in the East Village has increased perhaps as much as 25% in the past year, largely for the following three factors: 1) displacement from construction within the East Village redevelopment area; 2) the dramatic increase in rents throughout San Diego, particularly in SRO's; 3) the closing of the Winter Shelters on April 15 and May 15.

Most of the communities represented on the Committee reported a commensurate increase in homeless activity since the beginning of construction in the East Village. The Barrio Logan representative reported a total of 130 homeless persons observed over several nights in the neighborhood's northern section, up from a total of about 50 in 1999. Similar increases were noted in the Hillcrest/Uptown area, Sherman Heights, and the Gaslamp Quarter. Only North Park reported no change in the number of homeless in their community. Although no representative of Balboa Park participated on the Committee, other community representatives reported an increase in the number of homeless persons seen leaving the park in the morning and returning at night.

Along with more numbers, neighborhood representatives noted a change in the type of activity associated with homeless persons in their areas. More homeless are observed to be visibly impaired, mentally ill and/or inebriated, to have an increasingly visible presence, and to be more likely to engage in aggressive panhandling or illicit activities.

### **Summary of Solutions Currently Underway**

The attached Committee report provides a summary of many of the major solutions currently underway to address homeless issues downtown in the areas of shelter, transitional housing and permanent supportive housing. These include housing projects sponsored by the Housing Commission, CCDC, the Alpha Project, St. Vincent de Paul, and the City of San Diego, as well as programs provided by the Police Department, the Downtown Partnership, the Rescue Mission and Catholic Charities.

### **Committee Recommendations**

The Committee provided eight short term recommendations to address the impact of homelessness on the East Village and surrounding communities. These recommendations are listed below, summarized at the beginning of this report, and explained in more detail on pages 8-10 of the attached Committee report:

1. Preserve and create homeless shelter beds and low-cost housing
2. Increase public sanitation facilities in downtown
3. Extend seasonal shelter period to May 30
4. Continue HOT Team support and add an office downtown
5. Expand the Serial Inebriate Program and alcohol treatment facilities in downtown area
6. Create Community Court to serve downtown area
7. Report all homeless incidents and issues to Homeless Services Coordinator
8. Continue and improve City/County and other agency collaboration on homeless issues

The Committee also provided a discussion of some long range issues and potential solutions, including affordable housing, training, employment, child care, substance abuse treatment and medical and mental health care. The Committee stresses the importance of a comprehensive approach to addressing homelessness in the city. Any long-term solutions to homelessness will require the involvement of both public and private offices and will span many sectors including health and human services, economic development, the building industry, training and education, as well as shelters, soup kitchens, and other service providers.

**Loss of SRO Units Downtown**

At the Land Use and Housing Committee meeting on October 11, East Village Advisory Committee members brought up the recent issue of potential loss of single room occupancy hotels due to federal courthouse expansion plans downtown. Three hotels—the 100-room Capri; 50-room State, and 250-room San Diego Hotel— have already been purchased by the federal General Services Administration (GSA), and some eviction notices had been issued preparatory to demolition to accommodate the expansion. However, construction of the courthouse is not expected until 2004, and the Housing Commission has taken the lead in trying to persuade GSA to let the hotels remain open for several years until the demolition/construction actually begins. The hotels could be operated by a non-profit service provider, thus allowing 400 units of low income housing to remain available. Current discussions with GSA are promising, but as of January 18, 2001, GSA was still awaiting the results of an environmental assessment of the San Diego Hotel, and had not yet made a decision on how to proceed.

ALTERNATIVES

- Do not implement Manager’s recommendations.
- Implement Committee recommendations as written instead of Manager’s recommendations.
- Implement only selected Manager or Committee recommendations.

Respectfully submitted,

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ann B. Hix, Program Manager  
Employee Relations and Special Projects.....

.....  
Approved: Bruce Herring  
Deputy City Manager

HERRING/ABH

Attachment: Initial Report of the East Village Redevelopment Homeless Advisory Committee