

Community Listening Session

On April 27, 2022, the Community Development Department, Homeless Division, hosted a Community Listening Session. This listening session took place at the Community Development Housing Commission meeting. The purpose of the session was to collect information on strengths, needs, and challenges of current and future programs to assist those experiencing homelessness in Santa Ana.

The following is feedback from the listening session. Feedback includes suggestions, insight and concerns that the community would like to see focused on:

Outreach

- Ensure people are not dehumanized.
- Some residents experiencing homelessness report feeling criminalized when they cannot park or stay in any area for a long time.
- The City is spending too much on Outreach vs other type of services.
- A greater response by both the SMART Team and SAPD since many homeless relocate throughout the City and are individuals released from jail that are dropped off at the Santa Ana train station.
- Collaborating with grass root groups in SA could assist the City in being more proactive.

Shelter & Housing

- Residents wonder if Santa Ana is taking on the burden of assisting the homeless, while others cities are not.
- Expressed homeless congregate near school sites and that having a “hot spot” system can help the City recognize which areas need the most assistance.
- Think about homeless children.

Mental Health

- There continue to be substance use, mental health on the streets of Santa Ana.
- Concerns around mental health, substance abuse and panhandling.
- A need for mental hospitals.

Public Safety

- There is a concern that Santa Ana’s services attract people from out of the area.
- Resident wondered where the homeless are coming from because they do not see individuals experiencing homelessness in Santa Ana mirroring the City’s majority race of Hispanic; that most individuals they see are white.
- Questions regarding legislation and about pressing charges for acts homeless do, when they are not charged, but residents are. Crimes needing punishment.
- Residents feel parks have become unsafe due to homeless leaving behind crack pipes and needles on the floor.
- Residents expressed concerns about indecent exposure by homeless around children and women.
- Residents expressed concerns about homeless-related drug activity near school sites.

The following is feedback from the listening session. Feedback includes suggestions, questions, insight and concerns that the Community Development Housing Commissioners would like to see focused on:

Outreach

- The SMART Team seems reactionary. The City needs to be more proactive.
- What does SMART Team do versus Santa Ana Police Department? When does one start and the other take over?

Shelter & Housing

- The homeless population along Lincoln is growing. Santa Ana is a dumping ground for other cities' homeless.
- Santa Ana should look at what other cities are doing successfully. Being unhoused is the biggest issue. Do a deeper dive into the program and where money should be allocated.

Mental Health

- Some of the homeless suffer from mental illness.
- Panhandlers with signs: She saw a sign in Newport Beach telling people not to give money to panhandlers. Maybe this should be done in Santa Ana.

Public Safety

- Is there funding that can be used for dealing with the problems created by homelessness?

**This event was advertised on the City's social media, and mailed to residents on the Orange County Continuum of Care mailing list.*