

# CIVIC CENTER ROUNDTABLE

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**TO:** Stakeholders and Allies

**RE:** Outreach to Homeless and At-Risk in Civic Center, Santa Ana, CA

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## **Long-Term Points**

1. Create access to affordable housing, single-residency occupancy (SRO) units, and community land trusts
2. Implement Restaurant Meals Program (RMP), allowing access to fresh prepared “hot meals” at local restaurants with EBT (CalFresh/food stamps)

## **Intermediate Points**

1. Creation of a homeless day center at the unused former OCTA bus terminal, to aid outreach efforts and fulfill needs requests
2. New investment into social enterprise programs that offer homeless people access to jobs and educational opportunities

## **Immediate Points**

1. Moratorium of “public camping” and “public storage” tickets within and around the Civic Center until needs of both are adequately addressed by city, county, and community stakeholders
2. Creation of a storage facility near the Civic Center
3. Increased access to clean bathrooms and other facilities

## Suggestions for Bathroom Improvements

*These suggestions were also made to Commander Ibarra of SAPD and Assistant to the City Manager Alma Flores of Santa Ana City Hall on April 2, 2014.*

1. Hours extended from 5am to 10pm M-F, 6am to 9pm Sa-Su.
  2. Needs to be cleaned every hour to keep floors dry and toilet paper stocked.
    - a. Employ people from Civic through some “work-program” grant or funding source.
  - ~~3. Reinstate hot water. (Completed on April 22, 2014)~~
  4. Stalls need to have some level of privacy - no doors are unacceptable.
    - a. Investigate cost and use of juvenile hall-style bathrooms, where door is waist high.
    - b. Achieves goal by increasing privacy without increasing more nefarious activities.
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## Current State of the Civic Center Storage Arrangement

Currently, the Parks & Recreation Department, through use of SAPD HEART (Homeless Evaluation Assessment Response Team), will confiscate items that are designated “abandoned or excessive”. The police and the homeless are **at impasse** with regards to the practical enforcement of either word, forcing the Roundtable to seek outside counsel for assistance and clarification. “The truck” arrives around 10am on Tuesday and Thursday.

### I. Costs of Storage Facility Pilot Project

- Storage units: \$11,000
  - 100 x Trash cans - \$30
    - Large (45 gal) w/ wheels
  - 4 x 40’ shipping containers - \$1,800 - \$2,000 (used)
- Staff: \$20,400
  - 2 x storage assistants - \$12/hr. - 1700 hours/year
  - Volunteers are encouraged to apply!
- Total: \$32,000 (very rough projection)
  
- Suggested Location - OCTA Building:
  - a. Provides a temporary and creative use of space near the Civic Center.
  - b. Rent free, with the County/city covering the cost of maintenance.
  - c. Opens possibility for expansion to a day center with extended services
  - d. Personal traffic crossing already exists near OCTA, reducing the chance of accidents.
- Given the diverse population at Civic Center, restricting access to residents of Santa Ana could render the storage useless to some people who might need the service

### II. Private Funding Options

- The Roundtable has also been accepting inquiries and recommendations from local churches regarding the establishment of a private operation with similar goals and amenities located in other prospective buildings around the Civic Center.

	<b>Program Denial/ Access Breakdown</b>	<b>Possible Solutions</b>
<b>Client Income Requirements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Must have form of income of at least SSDI benefits (\$650) for consideration</li> <li>□ Current programs are exclusive to those without checks or only on GR and/or CalFresh</li> <li>□ In cities and the County itself, waitlists for affordable housing are in the thousands, often taking over five years for predicted availability</li> </ul>	<p><b>a)</b> Eliminate income requirements; “housing first” at any cost</p> <p><b>b)</b> Advocate to Board of Supervisors (BOS) for the extension of general relief (GR) beyond three months</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Accept GR and CalFresh as a form of income</li> </ul> <p><b>c)</b> Advocate to BOS for Restaurant Meals Program, allowing homeless, disabled, and elderly people access to “hot food” like Jack-In-The-Box and Subway since they have no need for groceries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Increase opportunities for cash saving</li> </ul>
<b>Mental Illness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Police are unable to hold people, even if they present a public health concern</li> <li>□ SAPD and Civic Center residents have shared concerns and frustrations</li> <li>□ For the most severe, the only current option is jail or Civic</li> </ul>	<p><b>a)</b> Given everything from operational costs to Federal laws, tangible mental health solutions need direct sustained investment from state and federal governments. In all likelihood, change will need to come from a challenge of the current laws. (Author’s personal assessment)</p>
<b>People With Physical Disabilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Required government documents may not be readily available</li> <li>□ Some near retirement, with a sizeable population over 55 “just waiting those last few years”</li> <li>□ Commonly denied or made to wait months or years for help</li> </ul>	<p><b>a)</b> Employ services of SSI/SSDI application specialists and lawyers to assist in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Application completion and expedition</li> <li>○ Explain common reasons for denial and their recourse for appeals</li> <li>○ Representation through the process and at hearing if necessary</li> </ul>
<b>Credit Checks and “Previous Residence” Questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Required by renters who accept Section 8 housing vouchers</li> <li>□ Credit checks are around \$44 at each location</li> <li>□ “Previous residence” questions are discriminatory to the homeless and formerly incarcerated</li> </ul>	<p><b>a)</b> Costs need to be covered by agency not the client</p> <p><b>b)</b> Practice could be abolished through advocacy at state level or public shaming of landlords</p> <p><b>c)</b> Both clients and service providers need to be better prepared to creatively address issues of “previous residence”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The proposed “Homeless Bill of Rights” will make the homeless a “protected class” regarding discrimination</li> </ul>
<b>Legal Present &amp; History</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ “Homeless tickets” (camping, public storage, in the park after hours, etc.) are easily dismissed in court, but also from memory</li> <li>□ If not addressed, they turn to warrants, which leads to jail</li> <li>□ Though well-intentioned and somewhat successful in connecting people to services, Community Court (“Homeless Court”) is ultimately punitive and time consuming</li> <li>□ Committing life-sustaining activities are crimes of necessity or no crime at all</li> </ul>	<p><b>a)</b> A moratorium on “homeless tickets” within and around the Civic Center will establish a ground floor for which people could stop and gather themselves</p> <p><b>b)</b> The result will probably resemble a “tent city” of sorts until adequate housing can be created</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Civic Center is in a constant state of stress and survival and needs to be stabilized</li> <li>○ To solve a problem, it must first be legitimized</li> </ul>

**Serve.** What does it mean? To serve means to welcome the persons who arrives, with care; it means to bend down to one in need and to extend your hand to him, without reservations, without fear, with tenderness and understanding. To serve means to work beside the neediest, to establish with them first of all human relations, of closeness to establish bonds of solidarity. To serve means to recognize and welcome the demands for justice, for hope, and to seek ways together.

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From this place of welcome, of meeting and of service I would like you all to ask yourselves this question:

- Do I bend down to one in difficulty or am I afraid to soil my hands?
  - Am I closed in on myself, in my things, or do I notice the one in need of help?
  - Do I just serve myself or am I able to serve others to the point of giving my life?
  - Do I look into the eyes of those who ask for justice or do I look the other way so as not to look into their eyes?
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**Accompany.** Hospitality alone isn't enough. Charity that leaves the poor as they are isn't enough. True mercy calls for justice, for the poor to find the way so that they are no longer poor. It calls for – and asks us, the people, the institutions – for no one being in need of a meal, of chance meetings of legal aid service to have her right to live and to work recognized, to be fully a person. Do we accompany this way?

**Defend.** To serve, to accompany means also to defend; it means to be on the side of the weakest. How many times we raise our voice to defend our rights, but how many times we are indifferent to the rights of others! How many times we don't know or do not wish to give voice to the voice of those who – like you – have suffered and suffer, those who have seen their rights trampled upon, those who have lived so much violence that has suffocated even their desire to have justice!

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### **Civic Center Roundtable Organizational Needs**

- Establishment of a Document Fund, with monies being used only for government document replacement, such as state ID cards (\$8) and birth certificates (\$22.50 or \$43 with secure shipping)
- Social Security/Disability specialists and lawyers to expedite applications and secure benefits
- Organizational storage unit near the Santa Ana Civic Center