

Note: This document drafted by Peter Brown was approved at the January meeting of the Homelessness Committee of the City Council for forwarding to the full council for discussion. Underlinings reflect changes from draft 1 of the document. Capitalization is part of the draft.

City of Ventura Homelessness/Vagrancy Statements (intended to inform a conversation about working toward Guiding Principles) (DRAFT)

January 2015

- The City of Ventura subscribes to the general philosophy of “A Hand Up not Hand Out”, and while there has been some debate about what that means and how that philosophy is implemented for the purpose of this discussion it means that the City of Ventura recognizes that there are limited resources in Ventura to assist disenfranchised individuals. And because those resources are limited they are prioritized to individuals who intend to utilize the “hand out” to change their lives – via an active case plan working with a case manager.
- The general principles of assisting and aiding folks to move away from a street homeless lifestyle and toward self-sustainability start with Refuge (food, hygiene, clothing and shelter), moves to Recovery (with case managed plans), then to Restoration (life skills, mentoring, relational health) and finally to Results (physical health, employment, permanent housing, and connection to community)
- The City of Ventura has been careful and purposeful in separating the STATUS of not having a home (homelessness), and the illegal BEHAVIORS associated with vagrancy that impact Ventura’s quality of life. The City of Ventura does not criminalize homelessness, the city of Ventura holds people accountable for illegal behaviors - AFTER that individual has demonstrated an unwillingness to change those behaviors. When an individual demonstrates service and assistance resistance over time, the City of Ventura does believe that every individual has personal responsibility for their behavior and its impact on the community. And the City of Ventura has been purposeful and deliberate in implementing an Assistance Based Enforcement practice EVEN WHEN VAGRANT BEHAVIORS ARE ILLEGAL - "how can we help you connect to services so that your desperate situation does not compel you to break the law"?
- The City of Ventura further demonstrated its commitment to assisting individuals who want to help themselves by establishing the Community Intervention Court (CIC) program - a ONE LAST CHANCE program designed to give the seriously service resistant individual the opportunity to choose services over jail time - no other city (Police Department and City Attorney’s office in collaboration with social service providers) in Ventura County participates in the CIC program
- Everyone in the community, regardless of status, station or affiliation would agree that all public places must be Safe and Clean for all members of the community to enjoy
- While the City strongly supports and encourages the use of public places it opposes efforts to provide handouts in those places (such as parks). The (likely

unintended) consequence of feeding people in parks is that those same people populate those parks, or the immediately adjacent places next to those parks, while they await the next hand out - often engaging in unlawful behavior

- The City of Ventura does not object to properly permitted and distributed food service, that is organized within the confines of a building - a place that an individual can walk into, get off the streets and accept the nourishing offering.
- The practice of handing out food (Refuge step above) absent the other contributing steps DOES contribute to individuals NOT deciding to ask for next step assistance - in the same way that handing people money on the streets so that that can buy products to feed their addictions encourages them NOT to seek next step assistance
- When it comes to the City's approach to providing new housing units at all affordability levels, the guiding document is the City Council adopted and HCD approved 2013-2021 Housing Element – here the City has set targets based on RHNA numbers and has adopted policies and programs to ensure adequate capacity for this housing development
- The City desires to come to a higher level of understanding about what we submit are the shared goals of the faith based organizations and the municipal government in working with homeless individuals
  - City staff will encourage the faith-based organizations to demonstrate their capacity for compassion for the homeless and hungry by making their buildings available to host, and congregants available to supervise, individuals who are seeking shelter now that the Winter Warming Shelter program will no longer be located at the Armory and run by the Society of St. Vincent DePaul (assuming we can work out "group care" zoning challenges in residential areas)
- The city of Ventura subscribes to a Good Neighbor Policy philosophy - implemented operational values and practices that take into account how the provision of services will impact neighborhoods through increased traffic, noise, trash, parking, people congregating, and security risks to the neighbors and those receiving services
  - Generalized Good Neighbor Policies, among other practices, prohibit loitering, require litter control services, mandate removal of graffiti, security, provide adequate parking and restroom amenities, and the establishment of a relationship between and among the provider of services and the surrounding neighborhood for the purpose of mitigating the impact of the services upon those neighbors
- City staff are requesting Subcommittee support to explore the potential of working closely with Dr. Robert Marbut (<http://www.marbutconsulting.com/Dr.html> and [http://www.marbutconsulting.com/Seven\\_Guiding\\_Principles\\_FQ.html#SGP1](http://www.marbutconsulting.com/Seven_Guiding_Principles_FQ.html#SGP1)) to finalize the guiding principles/homelessness strategy documents.

