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March 22, 2016

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[Sobering Center to Open on Skid Row](#)

Los Angeles County is poised to open its first Sobering Center on Skid Row to divert homeless alcoholics away from jails and emergency rooms and onto a path toward healing.

Currently, police officers cite or arrest severely intoxicated homeless individuals who pose a danger to themselves or others. Firefighters and paramedics, meanwhile, transport them by ambulance to a hospital and then wait hours for them to be admitted into the ER.

Many homeless individuals with chronic alcoholism bounce back and forth between the streets of Skid Row and emergency room at LAC+USC Medical Center as many as 50 times a year.

To break that destructive cycle, the Board of Supervisors approved a [motion by Supervisors Mark Ridley-Thomas and Hilda Solis](#) to open a Sobering Center at Skid Row.

“This is a smart approach designed to save taxpayer dollars, improve the downtown area, free up scarce emergency resources and help the homeless heal,” Supervisor Ridley-Thomas said. “These are the types of efforts that the County needs to expand and scale up.”

“As the County looks for innovative solutions to address chronic homelessness, I am pleased to join Supervisor Ridley-Thomas on this motion,” Supervisor Solis said. “The Sobering Center will serve as an appropriate alternative to the costly cycle of streets, jails, and emergency room visits. With County-employed health

professionals and service providers on-site, it is my hope we can reduce the number of individuals on the street and connect them with the resources they need to make positive changes.”

The Sobering Center will occupy a 9,500-sq. ft. facility recently vacated by Department of Mental Health. It would be open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and accommodate approximately 8,000 visits a year.

Severely intoxicated homeless individuals are expected to stay an average of 8-23 hours at the Sobering Center. Once they have sobered up, they would be linked by staff to substance abuse treatment, housing and other services.

“The Sobering Center will provide a safe and healing environment that can begin to address addiction and other causes of homelessness, and provide an alternative to repeated incarceration and hospitalization,” said county Health Director Mitch Katz. “It is an important step toward the county’s broader effort to divert non-violent offenders away from the criminal justice system.”

Los Angeles Fire Department medical director Marc Eckstein said “the growing problem of providing emergency medical services for the serially inebriated poses a challenge.” He expressed hope the Sobering Center would help chronic alcoholics “finally break their tragic cycle of dependency.”

Even [members of the business community support the plan](#). “This is a compassionate and cost-effective solution to the problem of public intoxication on Skid Row, and one that gives homeless alcohol-dependent individuals a chance to receive mental health, addiction, social work and operational services,” said Carol Schatz, president and CEO of the Central City Association, a business advocacy organization representing more than 450 members employing over 350,000 people in the Los Angeles region. “This is one small, but very important step, to help the county’s homeless population and provide a clear path for recovery for those suffering from alcoholism on Skid Row.”

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