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[Avis & Mark Ridley-Thomas Life Learning Center](#)

Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors Chairman Mark Ridley-Thomas led the groundbreaking ceremony for the Avis & Mark Ridley-Thomas Life Learning Center with nearly 200 in attendance.

The Avis & Mark Ridley-Thomas Life Learning Center will be located at 5054 South Vermont Avenue in Los Angeles. The Life Learning Center was named in honor of two prominent leaders who proactively support coalition building, social justice, empowerment, and non-violent solutions. The newly reimagined and renovated building will be a dedicated youth center to encourage participants and their peers to “drop in” and use it as a safe zone and resource. This warm, welcoming stand-alone drop-in center will provide access to holistic arts education, permanent housing, comprehensive resources, school assistance, career training, and a positive support system.

“One of the most challenging periods in a young person’s life is the transition from adolescence to adulthood,” said Avis Ridley-Thomas.

There is a significant overlap between homelessness and commercial exploitation: a 2017 study found that 91% of homeless youth reported being offered work opportunities that turned out to be fraudulent work situations, scams, pandering, or sex trafficking. More than half of homeless youth report mental health challenges, including depression, anxiety, psychosis, and post-traumatic stress. Half of chronically homeless adults in the U.S. experienced homelessness between the ages of 18 and 24. And youth homelessness increased 61% from 2016 to 2017 in the County of Los Angeles.

“This transition from adolescence to adulthood also provides a window of opportunity to intervene and guide young people toward self-sufficiency,” the Chairman said.

The Avis & Mark Ridley-Thomas Life Learning Center will serve as a drop-in center for any young person seeking a sense of safety and belonging.

The Los Angeles Child Guidance Clinic (LACGC), a nationally acclaimed mental health service provider for children and youth in South Los Angeles, purchased the building that will house the Center which will occupy 10,000 square feet of space. The center will provide trauma-informed mental health services and support resources to at-risk transition-age youth, ages 16-25. LACGC’s Life Learning Program was founded in 1992. In 2014, the program was renamed the Avis & Mark-Ridley Thomas Life Learning Program in honor of their joint achievements in community empowerment and social justice.

“We fully expect that this Center will avert many a young person from the criminal justice system, the mental health system, and a lifetime on the streets,” the Chairman said.

The center is expected to open in mid-2018

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