Ideas on Homelessness: What's not Working, What Might Work

What isn't working:

1. LAHSA has been audited by the City Controller,and the County Auditor. Judge David Carter has ordered an independent assessment, and HUD has cut off their funding. These investigations/audits have all found similar faults, corruption, lack of financial management and internal controls, failure to conduct onsite management of grant recipients, lack of documentation, late payments, missed federally mandated fillings and false certifications.
2. Financial Spending Data showing homeless efforts are failing on a State, County and City basis.
   A. According to the California Globe the State has spent $37 billion on homelessness since 2019. Between the City and County we spend nearly $2 billion annually. Despite the money spent it is questionable if we've made any progress and some say homelessness has gotten worse.
   B. For every 200 people who get housed, 227 people become homeless. (AI)
   C. More than half the people who exit interim housing in LA leave for the streets or unknown locations. People are housed, leave and come back again, making the success rate look better than it is. (LA Times)
   D .LA County left an average of $286 million annually from its Mental Health Services Act Funds over a multi-year period and notably underutilized specialized allocations like Measure H funding. (westsidecurrent.com)
   E. The City of LA left $473 million in homelessness funding unspent, almost 50% of the homelessness budget. (westside.current.com)
   F. 75% of Inside Safe respondents to a survey stated they had never been offered mental health services, 45% stated they were never offered any services, only 7% say they were offered drug treatment. (Community Audit of the Mayors Inside Safe Program 7/3/2024
3. According to the Treatment Advisory Center, 22% of homeless are estimated to have a psychotic or bipolar disorder, 48-67% have been incarcerated. Many suffer from a condition called anosognosia. A condition where the brain areas responsible for self awareness are damaged or altered. The result is they don't recognize that they have a problem.

Recommendations:

1. We have 88 cities in Los Angeles County + 5 county departments + 3 city departments with no one in direct control of homelessness. There is no centralized information system. Someone needs to be in overall control. This fragmented system doesn't work.
2. Louis Abramason, an adjunct physical scientist at Rand offers this suggestion.Create centralized service hubs," they would need to offer same-day housing matching, low barrier behavioral health treatment, on-site documentation clinics and access to basic cellphones… In all cases they need to provide comfortable space, bathrooms, showers and laundry for the unhoused."
3. Because it is so difficult to live on the street without breaking the law (petty theft, shop lifting, drug sales, prostitution) it offers the city/county an opportunity to offer law violators

some choices. They could go to centralized hubs and take advantage of the services offered, they could be cited and jailed if warranted, or they could be offered a ticket out of town.

4. People with serious mental issues or drug addiction don't get better leaving them on the street, nor are their problems cured by being in jail. We need to get them into treatment.

Has anyone been successful in reducing homelessness?

Houston has reduced homelessness 63% in over a decade. Finland has virtually eliminated street homelessness. They have used a model called Housing First. LA claims to be using that model but isn't. For proof look at the funds not being used for mental health and addiction. Both Houston and Finland consolidated governance. Amsterdam and Zurich also had serious problems with drug addicts taking over public spaces and parks.They solved these problems with tough love, arresting those selling drugs and offering medication assisted therapy, psychiatric care and residential rehabilitation.

Cost of Homelessness vs. Success

According to a study by PATH (People Assisting the Homeless) from about 2015, the cost of a homeless person on the street was $63,808,housing someone in permanent supportive housing was $16,913.

Benefit for Councilman Lee

My sense is people are getting tired of the increased costs that we are paying as taxpayers CD12 is likely the most conservative council district in the city. It is the only one that has a Republican Councilmen, and has for roughly 40 years. Spencer Pratt won the North Valley, beating Bass by anywhere from 10-13% in Councilman Lee's area advocating similar ideas. It also aligns with his op-ed piece in the Times from 5-9-2021. I think advocating a new approach moving forward would appeal to his constituency and build support in future elections..

While these ideas may seem harsh to some they can be defended on the basis that they are actually more humane to the homeless, they would help to reduce the nearly 6 homeless who die on the streets daily and would be more cost effective in helping to solve this problem and appeal to his base and possibly gain support from independents.