

Addressing Homelessness in Ventura: City's Safe & Clean Team Works to Address Concerns

What is the City of Ventura doing to address homelessness? This is a frequently asked question. The City of Ventura works closely with local social service providers and the County of Ventura to support programs for long term solutions for homeless individuals. The Safe and Clean Program is a City led effort to make substantial impacts on homelessness in our community. Here are a few ways the City is working with community partners to address this issue in Ventura:

- 1) **Program Management:** The City hired a Homelessness Manager in 2018.
- 2) **Public Safety:** The Ventura Police Department is engaged in what's called restorative policing, or street outreach. This means that officers are working with chronic offenders, by conducting enforcement, uniting them with family or friends if they desire or getting individuals the appropriate medical attention that they need to get off the streets. Embedded within the unit is a mental health technician who assists in evaluating individuals and connecting them to resources for long term solutions. The Patrol Task Force works closely with the Safe and Clean Team to address concerns in Ventura. There is currently one Sergeant, two Corporals and three officers. An additional officer will join near the end of the year, making it an eight-person team.
- 3) **Homeless Shelter:** Construction is under way for the first year-round 24/7 shelter opening in early January 2020. The shelter will have 55 beds, with the main goal of moving individuals into permanent housing. This is an important part of a multi-pronged approach to make an impact in our homeless population.
- 4) **Safe Sleep Program:** This program, managed by the Salvation Army, has doubled in size. This is where individuals who are sleeping in their cars can park in specific lots from 7pm-7am. When they enter the program, they are case managed for an hour a week with the end goal being housing.
- 5) **Transitional Living:** River Haven is a transitional living center made up of tiny homes and managed by the Turning Point Foundation. This center continues to be funded and supports those who are moving out of homelessness but are not ready to enter traditional housing.
- 6) **Trash Removal:** The newly created Trash Removal Program in the Santa Clara River Bottom provides outreach in the river bottom area. Twice a month the Ventura Police Patrol Task Force and the Safe and Clean Team go into the Santa Clara River Bottom and remove trash bags that are brought to the trail. Homeless individuals are encouraged to bag their own trash. This helps alleviate the amount of larger encampment clean ups, helps build relationships and helps connect individuals to services when they will accept them. This program will end when the shelter opens.
- 7) **Safe and Clean Hotline:** Created to make reporting issues easier. Please call 805-677-3900 to report debris in public spaces, parks/public bathroom issues, graffiti, potholes and code violations.
- 8) **Safe and Clean Team:** The four-person team works proactively to address visible blight associated with homelessness, as well as general debris removal from public spaces throughout the City. In addition to removing debris, abandoned camps are cleaned-up in coordination with other partners such as the Patrol Task Force, Public Works, State Parks and Caltrans. The team is on duty 7 days-a-week.
- 9) **Park Safety Ambassador Program:** Downtown Ventura Partners contracts with Block by Block to offer a Park Ambassador program in Downtown's public spaces and historic core. This includes in and around Mission Park, Plaza Park, the Promenade and bike path, as well as Kellogg Park along the Ventura

Avenue. They help mitigate negative behaviors in public spaces. You'll see them riding bikes around the Downtown Area wearing red shirts.

These are just a few of the ways the City of Ventura is working to address homelessness. Have questions? Learn more about the Safe and Clean program and how you can get involved by visiting www.cityofventura.ca.gov or by calling Safe and Clean Program Manager Meredith Hart at 805-658-4735.