



Photo by Santa Monica Closeup

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE HOMELESS SITUATION IN VENICE. WHY PLACING THE UNHOUSED IN MOTELS FOR THE SECOND TIME MAKES ABSOLUTELY NO SENSE. ALLOW ME TO EXPLAIN.

By Gary Featherstone

I'm going to cut right through the bullshit. In my opinion, placing the unhoused in motel rooms is a good idea, if the city plans on doing what is necessary. Let me tell you what's necessary.

All this is supposed to lead to permanent housing. The first thing society must understand is that 75% of the unhoused in Venice suffer from a substance addiction. Out of the 75%, 35% of those suffer from some form of mental illness. You cannot place either one in an apartment suffering from either of these illnesses.

What the city has done is give the unhoused a place to live while they continue their drug use. The problem is not being addressed. The city must make an effort to provide these individuals with drug treatment, and mental health evaluations. How can we feel comfortable with placing drug addicts and mentally ill people in apartments? We have to offer these people treatment before we offer them an apartment.

Listen to me. The unhoused, right now, are sitting around in motels doing nothing. These motels should be equipped with Professional Drug Programs, and Mental Health Doctors. Don't tell me it can't be done, because I have seen it in action. If you really want help solving this problem, you should come to those who know what they are doing.

My problem is, I think the city and all its supporters are not serious about the problem. Allow me to explain. The Mayor's intentions are good, but the Mayor can only act on the information she is provided with. After placing the unhoused in motels last year, it was a total failure, with the exception of the motels supervised by St. Josephs, the Adventurer, and the Cadillac Motel.

My main concern is with this bandage approach. After you clean the streets and all the unhoused are in motels, then what? Where do we go from there? A plan should have been established before you went out and confronted the unhoused. I'm looking
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The Venice Place Hotel and the California Coastal Commission

by David Ewing

On Dec. 15th, the California Coastal Commission voted unanimously to approve Dan Abrams' Venice Place hotel mixed-use project with few conditions. Thus ended a ten-year battle by the community to stop or reduce the project, which occupies nearly the entire block between Electric Ave. and Abbot Kinney, from Broadway to Westminster Ave..

Several community groups, including Citizens Preserving Venice (of which I am a member), Save Venice, Keep Neighborhoods First, POWER, and others, along with Unite Here Local 11, have opposed the project as a major driver of gentrification and displacement, particularly in Oakwood, which it faces along Electric with a block-long, three-story wall, as well as for its size, consolidating most of the block into one lot, the expansion of a single restaurant's liquor license to serve the entire property, including a liquor store, and for traffic impacts on that very busy section of Abbot Kinney and the neighborhood, not to mention the parking problems it will create. Several other major projects on that section of AK, including another hotel mixed use project that's already broken ground where AK meets Main St., will all exacerbate cumulative impacts on the neighborhood, especially Oakwood, from traffic to late-night noise to liquor sales to schoolchildren's safety. (Westminster Elementary School is right across the street from Venice Place.)

Regardless, the City waved the project through hearings by the ZA, the West Los Angeles Area Planning Commission hearing, the City Council's Planning and Land Use Management Committee (PLUM), and the City Council itself.

The only City official to stand up for the community was Commissioner Esther Margulies, on the Area Planning Commission, who discussed the many problems with the project and cast the lone City vote against it in the entire City process.

Councilmember Bonin told project opponents he was undecided about it, but public records turned up an email he wrote early on, assuring the project support. Bonin did briefly sidetrack the project in order to collect \$700,000 to extend the life of some Section 8 housing in Venice, but that was it. And to put things in perspective, that was less than Abrams paid his City lobbyists.

At PLUM, Chair Marqueece Harris-Dawson spoke eloquently about the gentrification of Venice:

"Given that this seems like a very sensitive project in one of the most impacted neighborhoods in the United States, frankly, the Venice Beach community, the his-
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THE TRUE STORY ABOUT THIRD AND ROSE

By Jon Wolff

The following is from a YouTube video interview with Laddie Williams about the recent police action ordered by Councilmember Traci Park against unhoused people in Venice. The video is produced by Margaret Molloy.

Jon Wolff: Laddie, what's your background? You're born and raised in Venice.

Laddie Williams: Born and raised right here in Venice.

JW: So you may know some of the people who were affected by the special action performed by Traci Park.

LW: I knew many of those people that were affected by the mayor's plan for safe living, or however it's phrased.

JW: Can you say something about what happened the other night?

LW: Cecil Bowens was born and raised here in Venice. He has some mental challenges that we have been dealing with over on Third Street. Garry Featherstone, Michael Ridley and myself were getting him to remain calm, take his medicine. He was fed three square meals a day. He didn't know anything else but Venice. And the way he was treated to get him to go to Harbor General UCLA was very violent. They came in, it was like eight to ten cars of police. They all surrounded him. He then became very agitated. He became very hostile. They wrestled him to the ground. They zip tied him, hands and feet, lifted him up to the ambulance so he could go. He was screaming. He didn't want to go. We were trying to talk to them and let them know we could talk him down and get him to walk to the ambulance. We were not given that chance. Michael Ridley had promised to run home and get him two hot dogs. This is what he wanted, two hot dogs. And he wanted an iPad and he wanted to take his cell phone. None of this was allowed. He was just wrestled to the ground very abruptly. Hog tied, and put in the ambulance that was waiting down on Rose and Third. He called all our names. It was very heart-wrenching because we have known him all his life and we were helping him. And yes, he had been a hindrance to the community. Don't misunderstand me. Because he has mental challenges. But Cecil was very very very loving towards people he had known all his life. He did not trust people that he didn't know because of whatever's happened to him out on the street, but he knew there was love and compassion and there was us there taking care of him on Third. And we had been doing that for quite some time.

JW: Did the police perform this action under circumstances, heavy circumstances, like it was raining and it was dark and there were alarms going off?

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