**CABIN COMMUNITIES**

To save lives, provide a more humane alternative to sidewalk encampments, and improve public health and safety, the City of Los Angeles is currently moving forward on creating a variety of homeless shelters and interim housing including new “cabin communities” all across the City.  Councilmember Bob Blumenfield is doing his part to include Third District sites in this overall strategy, with two cabin communities expected to open in 2021.

Los Angeles cabin community locations were chosen after the City Administrative Officer was tasked with identifying all publicly owned lands that could potentially be used for this purpose.  There were only a few sites that worked in the Third District, one of which was the parking lot behind Councilmember Blumenfield’s Reseda District Office, adjacent to the West Valley Police Station, another was in Tarzana in an underutilized Orange Line Parking Lot, and a third is being evaluated in Canoga Park.

The Reseda site is estimated to hold 50 cabins and the Tarzana site is estimated to hold 75. In North Hollywood there are two cabin communities going up soon, one which will have 96 cabins and another which will have 34. One has been approved in the Harbor area, and two more are expected to be built in the Hollywood area. Other locations throughout the City are being considered as well. Cabin communities already function in Sonoma County and the cities of Riverside, Banning and Santa Cruz.

Cabin communities are one part in Blumenfield’s overall strategy to get homeless people off our sidewalks and streets and into housing.  Having these communities will help enable the City to enforce anti-camping laws and are directly related to a federal lawsuit about homelessness that is being heard by Federal Judge David O. Carter.  The pending L.A. Alliance for Human Rights case is similar to 28 other cases where nearby cities were similarly sued. In each of the other cases, Judge Carter helped forge a settlement agreement that enabled the City being sued to once again enforce its anti-camping laws (something LA has been prohibited from doing because of other Federal Court cases). However, in each of these cases enforcement was not allowed until the City being sued provided basic shelter for at least 60% of its homeless population.

In hearings on the case, Judge Carter has raised specific concerns about people living in the freeway areas due to dangers from toxins or risk of being injured or killed when hit by a vehicle. Judge Carter has frequently demanded that the City and County of Los Angeles rise to the occasion to meet the housing and shelter needs of people within 500’ of a freeway and with other vulnerabilities. With maximizing available rapid rehousing and voucher opportunities, people at these underpasses are now getting housed throughout the region and once cabin communities are up and running, they will add more local capacity for unhoused in the West Valley.

In prior cases, each of the cities that reached a settlement agreement is smaller in population than a single Council district in Los Angeles.  Consequently, the Judge has indicated a willingness to treat each Council district like its own city and potentially allow settlement agreements on a district specific basis.  While the City’s overall homeless population is 41,000 people, the Third District’s homeless population is 704 people. Finding shelter for at least 60% (hopefully 100%) of his district’s population is an achievable goal and Councilmember Blumenfield wants to be ready to hit that goal as fast as possible once a settlement agreement has been reached. He has stated, “It is the right thing to do legally and morally, and doing so would enable our local sidewalks and streets to no longer be a place of desperation and squalor, but the pedestrian and transit corridors they were meant to be.”

To reach this goal will require building interim housing in many communities, and Blumenfield is determined not to make any one neighborhood carry the burden alone. The proposed “cabin communities” in Reseda, Tarzana and possibly Canoga Park are part of this interim housing plan. Other elements of the interim housing plan include an 80 unit Bridge Housing facility in Canoga Park opening in January, the transformation of two local Project Roomkey hotels into Project Homekey hotels (125 rooms), and the possible expansion of Safe Parking to Woodland Hills and other communities.

‘Cabin communities’ offer immediate, temporary housing opportunities at a fraction of the cost of Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH). They are generally built on parking lots or empty spaces and consist of multiple tiny homes. These communities include:

* 8ft by 8ft tiny homes that contain a fold-out bed, shelves, an AC unit, and a door that locks.
* Separate structures for restrooms and showers and a separate structure for social services workers to meet with the residents and provide services, as well as shared community spaces, and a laundry room.
* 24/7 security that only allows residents and authorized visitors to enter.
* Case management services on site.  Food provided on site.
* Full perimeter privacy fence.

In other cities, these communities have proven effective and safe with rules, security, and services on site. The Councilmember and his team are committed to making sure that any interim housing does not become a magnet for crime or nuisances — he is pushing to create a buffer zone around these cabin communities where no camping will be allowed — even before the legal threshold to do so in a ‘district-specific’ settlement is reached.

The cabin community is meant to serve the local homeless population, not bring in people from other areas. An experienced non-profit service provider will be charged with managing each cabin community and they will be required to offer the cabins to the homeless population of the Third District — first the people near freeways most of whom are already involved with a new rapid rehousing pilot with LAHSA, followed by the most vulnerable like seniors, and then those in closest proximity to the cabin community itself.  Having sheltered people connected to services within the community will be far better for the health and safety of that community than having those same people living across neighborhood sidewalks, along the LA River, or in our parks.

Judge Carter’s goal and Blumenfield’s plan is to help people who are suffering, save the lives of people who are literally dying in the streets and to once again have sidewalks and streets that are safe, easily passable and clean. To read about other homeless initiatives or if you have questions and concerns about this cabin community please click [here to find a detailed FAQ](http://blumenfield.lacity.org/cabincommunityfaq) or reach out to Team Blumenfield at [Councilmember.Blumenfield@lacity.org](mailto:Councilmember.Blumenfield@lacity.org) or by calling 818-774-4330.