ELEVATING THE VOICES OF THE UNHOUSED

Research and Recommendations for A-Mark’s Philanthropic Strategies to Help the Homeless in Los Angeles

Jason Ballou, Fiona (Bofei) Yan
SPECIAL THANK YOU

A-Mark Foundation, Skid Row Brigade, Prof. Steinert-Threlkeld, Prof. Gilens, Denise Guttierez, Lauren Nemeh, Tan Chau, Tyler Martin, Tyrone Carter and Percy Vazquez
Our Client: A-Mark Foundation

The A-Mark Foundation is a local private philanthropic foundation which provides funding to individuals and organizations engaged in humanitarian, educational, or charitable purposes.

A-Mark Foundation has been around for about 25 years and is currently going through long term organizational planning and a more formalized structuring as its founding philanthropist and principal prepares for retirement.

Published a report on the costs of tiny home villages built as a temporary housing solution in Los Angeles.

Partnered with the LA Mayor’s Office, the Skid Row Brigade, and the ILM Foundation to fund a pilot program to collect data on the effectiveness of monitoring the approximately 50 portable toilets installed on Skid Row in response to COVID.
BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION
BACKGROUND: SIZE OF HOMELESSNESS PROBLEM

- 63,706 unhoused people (13% increase from 2019)
- 17,616 sheltered people (3% increase from 2019)
- 10,638 permanent supportive housing units
- 11,200 interim housing units in operation
BACKGROUND: SIZE OF LOCAL EXPENDITURE ON HOMELESSNESS

- LAHSA has an annual budget of $352 million dollars.
- City of Los Angeles budget contains nearly $1 billion dollar for homelessness measure in 2021, accounting for 9% of total budget.

A HUGE GAP BETWEEN WHAT THE GOVERNMENT IS DOING AND WHAT PEOPLE NEED

- New York City spent 2% of the total budget on homelessness in 2021, with 38% decrease in the number of unsheltered people.
By centering the voices of the unhoused themselves, what can our client, the A-Mark Foundation, do to implement policies that are more successful?
METHODOLOGY

01
Survey and Sample

02
Focus Group Interviews

03
Data analysis

04
Stakeholder interviews

05
Literature review
SURVEY AND SAMPLE

SURVEY BIG DAY

• DATE                February 19th, 2022
• LOCATION            6th Street known as Skid Row neighborhood, DTLA
• PARTICIPANTS        100 currently unhoused people

SURVEY TEAM

Surveyors: Jason Ballou, Fiona (Bofei) Yan, Denise Gutierrez, Tan Chau, Lauren Nemeh

Project coordinators: Manuel Compito, Lynne Price-Compito, Ron Crockett from Skid Row Brigade
SURVEY AND SAMPLE

SURVEY QUESTIONS

Opening Questions
What you would do about homelessness, if you were Mayor of Los Angeles?
What kinds of things would you do in the short run?
Which folks out here need the most help?

Demographic Questions
Age, Race Identity, Gender, Years of being homeless, Marital Status, Number of Children, Health & Disability

Additional Question
Is there anything you’d like to add to what we’ve talked about today?
FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

WOMEN FOCUS GROUP

- February 25, 2022
- 6 female participants
- Around 1h10m

• SENIOR MEN FOCUS GROUP

- March 6th, 2022
- 5 male participants
- Around 1h40m
DATA ANALYSIS
• Quantitative Analysis
  • R & Excel
• Qualitative Analysis
  • Otter

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS
Tracey DeFrancesco, Vice President of A-Mark
Lynne Price-Compito and Manuel Compito, Community Activists of Skid Row Brigade
Eric Schroer, Policy Analyst at LAHSA

LITERATURE REVIEW
Research report
Case studies
Scholarly articles
Newspaper articles
Committee reports
City and County policy literature
RESULTS AND FINDINGS
**OUR SURVEY**

More than three quarters of respondents (86%) are chronically homeless people.

People over 55 years old account for more than half of respondents (55%) and there are no people aged under 25.

Black people (66%), male (76%) are over-represented in the survey respondents.

People with physical disabilities account for more than half of respondents (56%).

**2020 HOMELESS COUNT**

38% of people are chronically homeless people.

People over 55 years old account for 24% of total population and people under 25 years old account for 19%.

Black people account for 38%, male account for 67%.

People with physical disabilities account for 19%.
## SURVEY RESPONSES CATEGORIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Policies and Programs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Housing</strong></td>
<td>● Affordable interim and permanent housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Shelter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community Resources</strong></td>
<td>● Basic living resources (food, clothing, etc)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Hygiene resources (toilets, laundry, sanitation, shower)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Education, employment and training opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Street cleaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Case management service and social service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Activities (entertaining, socializing and sports)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Public transportation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Healthcare</strong></td>
<td>● Mental health service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Substance abuse service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Medical service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Others</strong></td>
<td>● Safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Listening and caring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Effective system and funding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
88 respondents mentioned housing

Affordable housing

- 79 people (90%) stated that there is a scarcity of available affordable housing
  - More access to rental assistance programs
  - More Single Room occupancy (SRO) housing
  - Improving current housing living conditions

Shelter

- 25 people (28%) noted shelters and 16 (18%) noted that they need more shelters for people waiting for housing
  - Improving the current shelter living conditions
  - More nighttime shelters without curfew
  - More shelter during the cold and extreme weather
## COMMUNITY RESOURCE:

- **85 respondents mentioned community resource**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Living Resources (53%)</th>
<th>Hygiene Resources (45%)</th>
<th>Job and Education Opportunities (45%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Food (41%)</td>
<td>• Toilets (27%)</td>
<td>• Job training programs, job opportunities (31%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Clothing (22%)</td>
<td>• Shower (22%)</td>
<td>• Class for skills building, lifestyle class and education (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Blankets or tents (8%)</td>
<td>• Laundry (20%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Benefits (6%)</td>
<td>• Sanitation (16%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Street Cleaning (21%)</th>
<th>Case Management (16%)</th>
<th>Activities (15%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Cleaner neighborhood without trash, rats and bacteria</td>
<td>• More case manager and social workers</td>
<td>• Entertaining, socializing and exercising activities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
HEALTHCARE:

- 45 respondents mentioned healthcare

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Substance Abuse Service</th>
<th>Mental Health Service</th>
<th>Medical Service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(78%)</td>
<td>(69%)</td>
<td>(44%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- More treatment centers or programs
- Follow-up monitoring and drug & alcohol education
- Mental health counseling services, urgent care and other psychological help
- More case managers to support and assist
- More programs and services regarding diagnostics tests and vaccination
- More clinic resources
Safety

Increasing police staffing to reduce violence and other danger in navigating shelters and life on the streets for unhoused people

Effective System and Funding

Building a more effective system in the reform of budget and implementation of programs

Listening and Caring

Lifting up the voices of people experiencing homelessness to create better policies and raise public awareness of helping them
RANK OF PROPORTION OF PEOPLE WHO CHOSE THE CATEGORY

MAYOR QUESTION
1. Housing 2. Community Resources
3. Healthcare 4. Others

SHORT RUN QUESTION
1. Community Resources 2. Housing
3. Others 4. Healthcare

HOUSING: WHO CARES MOST?
WHO CARES MOST?

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

HEALTHCARE
### Homeless Individuals Who Need the Most Help

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>1st Priority</th>
<th>2nd Priority</th>
<th>3rd Priority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All homeless</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People with Mental Illness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People with Disability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elderly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women With Children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug Addict</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Top 5 Ranking

- **All homeless (32%)**
- **Children (30%)**
- **Women (28%)**
- **Mentally Ill (26%)**
- **Elderly (22%)**
FOCUS GROUP

HOUSING
- Barrier to secure housing
- No pets” policy, no place for family household
- Lack of privacy and safety
- Scarcity of personal hygiene facilities
- Too strict curfews

COMMUNITY RESOURCES
Entry to the society...
- Skill training program
- Access to internet and technology resources
- Social activities to build connection
- Service for women having children

HEALTHCARE
- Treatment
- Case management
- Discharge planning

LISTENING AND CARING
- Paying attention to, making connections with, listening to their stories
- Listening and lifting up their voices

SAFETY
- Be wary on the street and even in temporary housing
- Insecurity comes not only from the other homeless people on the street, but even from the police surveillance
- Police brutality and racial discrimination
- Victims of violence:
  - Feel unsafe in their surroundings and even social workers
  - Complex PTSD - Untreated
FOCUS GROUP

"Walking around with pepper spray, that's my life. I have to make sure I get my guard up"

I had a mental problem, not a drug problem, but I couldn't get help. In my situation, I have to act crazy, for people (extreme crazy) in order to get help. Extreme case.

"At least give them (women having children) a chance. Some people don't give them a chance, they just say "Oh, you're homeless" and they automatically count that against them with DCFS."

"More coping skills, more life skill programs can help people get back in (the society), start at a skill."

One of the biggest factors is where you take a shit, where you take a pee? Where do you change clothes, how can you have privacy if you don't have someplace to stash your belongings?

"So when you're doing whatever, make the person feel that you're doing it from your heart to help them, which is helping us in so many ways"
POLICY OPTIONS

HOUSING PROVISION

CAPACITY GRANTS

PILOT PROJECTS

PURE RESEARCH
EVALUATION CRITERIA

Preferences of those Unhoused

• Housing
• Safety
• Community Resources
• Healthcare
• Immediacy of Benefit

A-Mark's Capacity

• Degree of Research Orientation
• Financial Feasibility
• Cost Efficiency

Where 4 equals Maximum, 3 equals High, 2 equals Moderate, 1 equals Low, and 0 equals None.
POLICY OPTION 1: HOUSING PROVISION

• ANALYZED 2 CHEAPEST METHODS OF PROVIDING TEMPORARY, INDIVIDUALIZED HOUSING (by itself)

  • "Project Homekey" Style Motel Purchase + Conversion

  • "Tiny Homes" Project (lower cost/unit)

• While this Option scored well for Housing, Safety, and Immediacy

• Scored poorly for Community Resources and Healthcare, as well as the Capacity Criteria for A-Mark of being Research-Oriented and Financially Feasible (zero feasibility) at a minimum cost of $5.7 million
POLICY OPTION 2: CAPACITY GRANTS

- BASED ON THE CREATION OF THE “REFRESH SPOT” AS A MODEL
  - If A-Mark were to make a $50,000 grant to a local grassroots organization, to formally incorporate, hire and train community members
  - Leverage that into a $375,000 contract, which is approximately 1:8 leverage ratio
  - While this Option scores **poorly** for providing Housing and Safety*
  - Scored **highly** for Immediacy, Community Resources and Healthcare, as well as the Capacity Criteria being Research-Oriented and Financially Feasible
POLICY OPTION 3: PILOT PROGRAMS

• 1 YEAR COST OF A WEEKLY SERVICES PROGRAM

  • Based upon our collected data, we would suggest services for vulnerable populations
  • Seniors, women, trauma, mindfulness, meditation, transition skills, exercise, etc
  • Provided in an indoor, physically safe space, moderated
  • Experimentally designed with controls, tracking, outcome evaluation

  • Scores **poorly** for providing Housing and marginally better for Safety*
  • Scored **highly** for Immediacy, Community Resources and Healthcare, as well as the Capacity Criteria being Research-Oriented and Financially Feasible
POLICY OPTION 4: PURE RESEARCH

• 1 YEAR COST of RESEARCH OPERATIONS
  • Hiring a full time staffperson for leading research projects, making research grants
  • Could look into any of the several ‘dark’ areas of homelessness research that need enlightened
  • Cull and extrapolate data from agencies like DMH, housing and service providers like Step Up on
    Second, universities like Penn who’s looking at the County’s UBI experiment

• Option 4 scores **poorly** for providing Housing, Safety, and Immediacy
• Scores **moderately** for providing Community Resources and Healthcare
• Scored **highly** for being Research Oriented and Financially Feasible
## EVALUATION OF OPTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA</th>
<th>POLICY OPTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Housing Provision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preference: Housing</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preference: Safety</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preference: Community Resources</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preference: Healthcare</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immediacy Oriented</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Oriented</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Feasibility</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total score</strong></td>
<td>13/28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Cost Efficiency (cost / person) | $42,344 | $16 | $39 | $73 |
CONCLUSION

There is very little in the way of research done on the experiences, outcomes, or even detailed demographics of Los Angeles’s homeless population.

- Based upon our surveying, there is a significant difference between some basic types of people experiencing homelessness and that containment strategies have tended to leave vulnerable people to suffer the violence of criminals and those who are mentally ill.

- Pilot Programs and Capacity Grants are the highest ranking Policy Options that allow for empirical research, at the lowest cost, while delivering the most immediate impact to those experiencing homelessness.

- This presents a striking opportunity for our Client, A-Mark, to bring research and enlightenment to a field where large expenditures are being made with little empirical evidence to support the nature of these expenditures.
THANK YOU FOR LISTENING!