

# Down and Out in Hollywood

By ROSANNA MAH, The Independent Staff Writer 28.DEC.05

*Housing: Homeowners feel area is already overburdened with social services.*

A proposed \$10-million Hollywood housing project that will cater to the **homeless** is facing opposition from some residents who feel that their community is already flooded with social services.

Fran Reichenbach, a Hollywood Hills resident and founder of the Beachwood Can-yon Neighborhood Association, argued that Hollywood — which has the second largest concentration of **homeless** people in Los Angeles — is already overburdened with providing care and shelter for **homeless** people.

“The mantra I’m hearing from residents and business owners is ‘Enough is enough,’” said Reichenbach. “We are already oversaturated.”

The Community Redevelopment Agency paid \$5.8 million for a site at the northeast corner of Gower Street and Hollywood Boulevard that included a parking lot, a teen drop-in center and a two-story apartment complex that all belonged to the Hollywood Presbyterian Church.

The property, located at 1720 — 1726 Gower Street, will be turned into around 50 units of permanent housing for the chronically **homeless**, as well as provide mental health services and social programs.

“This is part of a growing movement nationwide to ending **homelessness** by moving towards permanent housing rather than temporary shelters, care and hospital and other types of services people go through,” said Helmi Hisserich, CRA regional administrator.

“I don’t expect this project to solve **homelessness** in Hollywood, however, I think it’s moving in the right direction.”

But opponents argue that Hollywood continues to struggle with its drugs, **homeless** and crime problems and may be a few steps away from turning into another downtown Skid Row.

Meanwhile, some are simply disenchanted with the growing **homeless** population in Hollywood.

Helen Yu, who owns “Chinatown Express” restaurant in the strip mall on the corner of Gower Street and Hollywood Boulevard, said she was tired of having **homeless** people and pan handlers drive away customers with their presence.

“Of course, it’s a bad thing,” said Yu, a Monterey Park resident, referring to the proposed project.

“They always ask for money. ... I think it’s better to tell them to go to work. We work so hard just to come here [from China]. Why should I keep giving them free stuff?”

But not all in Hollywood believes that this project may serve to exacerbate social ills in a community .

“It’s a very good idea,” said Bache Hasrtyan, a Hollywood resident and owner of Little Planet, a children day care center, near the proposed site. “Everyone should have a home or generally get to live a normal life.”

Sarah Phelps, associate director of L.A. Voice, made up of a coalition of Hollywood interfaith communities that came up with the vision for the **homeless** project, hailed the new housing project as the only real and permanent solution to getting the chronically **homeless** off the streets of Hollywood.

“There is no other good way to end **homelessness**,” says Phelps, “and if that is ultimately what we are looking for as a community, this is the way to do it.”

She later adds, “I don’t know a better way to say it, but how is getting people off the streets permanently going to contribute to the problem?”

Meanwhile, others are taking a wait-and-see approach and seeking more details before making up their minds on the **homeless** housing project.

“We see the value and necessity of the project,” said Maurece Chesse, member of the Hollywood United Neighborhood Council, “but again, there are a lot of questions we can’t answer until they give us more information to work with and bring back to the community.”