

## The Other Side

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By Fran Reichenbach

I read “Down and Out in Hollywood,” published on December 28, 2005, and feel that only half the story was revealed. I understand the concept of ink space in a publication but the omissions make the story in this case.

What Sarah Phelps (LA Voice) didn't tell the reporter is that there will be social services (5,000 sq. ft.) on the main floor of this facility (1720 – 1726 N. Gower St.) that will not only serve the residents of it, but will be open to the general public (According to their own documents and that of the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH), and the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA)). Why is this important? This very component of the project is what created Skid Row in downtown L.A. This is the reason hospital staff, Sheriff's deputies, and often L.A.P.D. drop off the homeless downtown. When interviewed, they say that they are aware that this is where the concentration of social services are – this is where the help is – and often this is where the homeless person wishes to be.

The area around Gower and Hollywood Blvd. is not a good location to place people who are trying to get off or stay off drugs since Hollywood and Gower is “drug central.” This is not a great place to put your homeless schizophrenic aunt since her first walk in the neighborhood may end with the drug addicts, some of which are kids who live on the local streets who may target her for her food stamps or money. Look at the crime stats for this intersection and see if you would want your family to walk through it. Local businesses are suffering today because of the current street element.

And this project will not get those street addicts housed. They tend to be resistant to authority in any form. They refuse to be told how to behave and that is probably the number one requirement for tenancy – that you behave according to the requirements stated on the lease. This is one reason why they are “homeless” in the first place. Another reason for their “homelessness” lies in the fact that they can eat 4 – 5 square meals a day in a one-block area from 5 social services that cater to their every need. (There are 20 social services within one mile of Hollywood and Gower.) These young people can even get their court papers, General Relief and Cal Works re-application forms and any other kind of mail by giving the County and State the address of My

Friends Place (Bronson & Hollywood) as their personal address of residence. My Friends Place has little room to house kids – they enable them until around 10 p.m. like all the other local social service programs and then they are sent out on the street. Ask local businesses where these kids are after 10 p.m.

Not to belabor the point, but did any of the CRA, LA Voice, CSH, or the city council check to see what the crime challenges in that neighborhood have become recently? What about the White Fence gang creeping into that area and taking up residence on Carlton Way and Gordon – what about the shooting on Gordon recently and the stabbing at the 76 Station at Bronson and Hollywood? Their myopic attachment to their goal prevents such interest.

There is a great deal wrong with the chosen placement of this Permanent Supportive Housing facility. The CRA knew it, LA Voice and CSH can't admit it, and the City Councilman, Eric Garcetti granted permission for it to go forward.

There was a clear opportunity for Mr. Garcetti to give notice to the local neighborhood council prior to hearing this issue before his Housing Committee last July, yet he chose to avoid them. A week later, the matter was heard before the full City Council with not one neighbor or neighborhood council representative in the room. He contends that it's not his job or obligation to inform the community. The locals feel that he has failed them in this regard.

The remaining tenants in the newly renovated apartment building (1726 N. Gower) also feel betrayed. Mrs. Gomez and her caregiver son, Martin will have to look for housing after living there for 25 years. Mrs. Gomez is 78 years old and handicapped. She could be a victim of this project while the CRA declared that this apartment building was “run down” and “dilapidated and in poor condition.”

By the way, the local neighbors say they are willing to help find a location that would be more suitable for the project. Will they be able to do that in time to make a difference for Mrs. Gomez?

This is not a NIMBY situation – this is about public safety. There is much spin being used to sway public opinion away from the reality of this project. Councilman Eric Garcetti will have to work hard to reconnect with the people he is supposed to serve.

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