



Answers to Questions

About The Current Homelessness Crisis In The OC

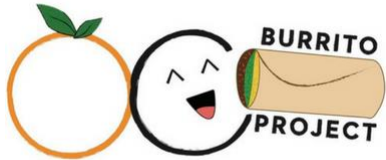
In late March and April of 2018, discussions erupted among many Southern Orange County residents about homelessness in the OC. In an effort to help the community know more about the history, the current situation, and potential solutions of homelessness, on May 31st, 2018, the Orange County Chinese Americans Parents Book Club (OCCAPBC) and Future Chinese Leaders of America (FCLA) organized a forum at 10 Corporate Park, Suite 120, Irvine. Professors Dr. David Snow, Dr. Jacob Avery, and Dr. Yang Su, three experts in researching homelessness, social inequality and poverty from Department of Sociology of UCI were invited to present their research results on the true cause of homelessness and the better initiative to combat it. People planning to attend the forum sent 8 questions to Jing Sun. Irvine For Everyone (I4E), a grassroots initiative that was launched on April 11, 2018 to change the dominant NIMBY narrative and help residents become informed, supportive neighbors, publicized the forum, and prepared this document. I thank Mr. Jing Sun for organizing the forum and allowing me to share about I4E. It is my honor to invite OCCAPBC and FCLA to join I4E and thank those members who've already signed-on. Resources plus opportunities for learning and service are included. Anita Coleman, Ph.D., Irvine, CA. June 1st, 2018.

OCCAPBC & FCLA hosted Homelessness Forum with UCI Sociology Professors 05/30/2018

Questions sent to Jing Sun by those planning to attend
Answered By

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Garrett: First of all, a distinction needs to be made between the short term creation of an emergency shelter in Irvine versus the long term creation of inclusive integrated and supportive housing units. The community tends to lump them all together as “housing” but there are clearly different kinds of housing. There is an obvious need for emergency shelter housing. Because of the urgency in which this emergency housing is needed, we should be looking towards existing structures that need as little construction as possible to be operational.

Personally, I think Irvine is best suited to replicate the design style of [Skid Row Housing Trust](#). If Irvine is going to take the time to build something new, find up-and-coming architects that can create human centered design integrating affordable and homeless housing seamlessly within the community. Not an eyesore, but an improvement; something that will make headlines for the right reasons.

Anita: Different types of people experience homelessness, requiring different housing and services: Families, couples, vets, mentally ill, disabled, suffering drug addictions, chronically homeless, and others. The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (commonly called HUD, which is the housing authority in the US), for example, defines different kinds of homeless housing (and services) such as emergency shelters, transitional housing, bridge housing, and permanent supportive housing.

Majority of people who become homeless transition out but a small percentage, the chronically homeless don't. One thing all homeless/housing insecure people require initially is a central place where they can be assessed and emergency housing provided. Judge Carter calls this the “emergency intake.” I4E calls it the South County Regional Assessment Center with wraparound services and housing. Thus, issues facing Irvine are three-fold at least: 1) De-stigmatize homelessness including the language for emergency housing; 2) Provide emergency housing for the Irvine residents currently overcrowded in Santa Ana/Anaheim shelters as well as currently homeless in Irvine; and 3) Collaboratively create the Regional Assessment Center with wraparound services and housing on County owned SB-2 zoned land. Something to consider: [What does SB2 zoning mean with regards to the 100+acres?](#) (Judge only wants an acre or so).

1. What kind of measures were taken by the City of Irvine in the past with regards to the homeless? Did the city need to figure out and confirm their identities and background? How?

Garrett: The County's 211 service, along with nonprofits on the ground, right now, have already conducted assessments of a significant percentage of our nearly 5,000 homeless neighbors; the City doesn't have to do anything to confirm backgrounds. Regardless, if you live in Irvine right now, do you know the background and identity of all your neighbors? No. Furthermore, that question identifies a larger stigma that falsely assumes that our homeless neighbors are criminals whose backgrounds and identities we need to be concerned with.

Anita: We intend to meet with the Irvine Police department (report forthcoming). Our current understanding is documented in the City's Housing Element which has a section on Homelessness. I4E spoke with Brooke Weitzman the attorney in one of the current lawsuits, Margie Wakeham (Families Forward), Paul Cho (Illumination Foundation), Jamboree Housing (Helen Cameron), Heather Stratman

(ACC-OC). And Kathie Bowman (WISEPlace and SAFEPlace). Brooke is ok with Irvine offering emergency housing only to those who can prove former Irvine residency and currently in shelters in Santa Ana/Anaheim; the number can be as low as 20. Margie, Paul, Helen, and Heather confirmed that there are homeless in Irvine. The City of Irvine's long term policy of preventing homelessness means that numbers are hard to get but it also means that we don't recognize the need for emergency housing. Yet, church people in Irvine will tell you that they consistently get requests for emergency housing. Finally, the stigma of homelessness means that people hide it; they're living in cars and hiding in cul-de-sacs.

2. Are there models that have been proven successful in solving homeless issues in other communities and if yes, what are the hurdles that keep California from adopting such models?

Garrett: Yes, there are multiple models that have been proven effective nationwide as well as right here in California; "Housing First" and the "Recovery Model" are the two most successful. However, the two biggest hurdles are lack of funding and lack of community support. Simply look to Los Angeles who recently added Measures H and HHH to specifically generate more funding for projects aimed at ending homelessness but at the same time is struggling to find locations to build because of the community opposition. Despite national models proving that "Housing First" and "Recovery Models" have a 90% success rate, under-informed community members violently oppose any type of development based upon on proven incorrect information. Housing our homeless neighbors increases property values by getting people off the streets and back into our communities where they belong and decreases the amount of tax dollars being used on emergency services such as hospital rooms, interactions with law enforcement, and cleanup efforts by the Department of Public Works.

Anita: The Housing First model is working in a number of places around the country to decrease homelessness (in combination with other programs as Garrett has noted above): LA for the first time in 4 years has reported a decrease in the number of homeless (see <https://www.lahsa.org/documents?id=2059-2018-greater-los-angeles-homeless-count-presentation.pdf>); Detroit has seen a 15% decrease in homelessness over the last year (2017) when they added 143 permanent supportive housing units under the housing first model (see <https://www.detroitjournalism.org/2018/05/09/detroits-focus-on-supportive-housing-drives-down-homelessness-15-percent/>); and in Philadelphia there's Sister Mary Scullion, *The Nun who's eradicating Homelessness* with the Project HOME (Housing, Opportunities for Employment, Medical Care, and Education) approach, another Housing First model with services solution (see <https://aleteia.org/2018/05/29/the-nun-whos-eradicating-homelessness-in-philadelphia/>).

3. What is the main reason that people become homeless? What's the trend of the number of homeless people?

Garrett: Per the [UC Irvine study on homelessness in Orange County](#); the number one reason causing people to become homeless in Orange County is that their costs of housing are rising faster than their household income. Nearly 70% of Orange County's homeless had been living here for 10 years before becoming homeless and 75% of all Orange County households are currently one or two paychecks away from becoming homeless themselves. Things like a car accident, emergency room visit, or lacking retirement savings are thrusting our neighbors onto our streets where they are ignored for years and become the people in need of hope that we see today. The trend in the number of our neighbors becoming homeless rising is a direct result of Orange County's housing market reaching unstable conditions. Our Cities and communities favor luxury housing at the detriment of inclusive or workforce housing and the result is that people are putting so much of their income towards rent that it is not sustainable. With more than 50% of Orange County being renters and not owners, we are starting to see things like rent control gain a lot of traction. And it only makes sense for tenants to demand rent control as a protection against homelessness when the City creating the largest amount of homelessness was the City of Anaheim with all of its tourism and luxury development at the expense of minimum wage Disneyland employees and

families in the surrounding community who are being forced out of what was once affordable living.

Anita: The results from the 2017 United Way/UCI/Jamboree Housing study led by Dr. Snow included people evacuated from the Santa Ana Riverbed and Civic Center encampments. As the graphic below shows economic insecurity and housing shortages contribute to increasing visible homelessness. A person must have an income of \$35 an hour approx. to afford the \$1800 rent for an apartment in the OC.



4. What's your solution to OC's homeless relocation argument?

Garrett: These are our neighbors, who became homeless because of our Cities and our County's conscious neglect. There should be no relocation argument. Our communities need to adapt to be inclusive of everyone that is already here. If we cannot accommodate our own existing community members, with time we will only continue to fail to accommodate incoming community members as well.

5. What is the relationship between setting the homeless people and the safety of the community?

Garrett: There have been multiple studies published showing that there is no correlation between providing our homeless neighbors with housing and increased rates of crime in those communities. Further, there are multiple studies showing that by housing those who are experiencing homelessness in encampments there is a direct reduction of petty theft in the community where the encampments were present. By putting a person inside of housing, you immediately reduce the amount of time they are getting sick or injured outside, reduce the amount of law enforcement interactions, and create a sense of stability that many have not had in years. All this contributes to decreased taxpayer spending long-term.

Anita: I highly recommend reviewing Dr. Jacob Avery's presentation on [The Vicious Cycle of Homelessness](#). Homeless people are feared because of "displacement" – they are in places they shouldn't be. Fear is a part of human categorization. When we see homeless people sleeping in public places with all their belongings, we understand something is wrong; this is displacement, and then, we label and fear that behavior and them. See also *No link between homeless villages and crime, Guardian review suggests*: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/may/23/homeless-villages-crime-rate-seattle-portland>

I also recommend reading the [OC Grand Jury Report 2017-2018, "Where there's a will there's a way."](#) The Grand Jury dispels many of the myths held by people protesting housing for the homeless: There is no evidence for crime increasing, property values decreasing, or the magnet effect: If we build homeless housing more of them will come! By saying no, residents in fact make it worse for everybody including themselves. They create an impossible and unjust future for all of our children too. Think about it. The majority of the homeless in the OC are US citizens and long-time residents of the OC. The primary reasons for increasing homelessness are economic insecurity and housing shortages: Lack of secure well-paying jobs and a scarcity of homes for the very low-income, vulnerable, and homeless populations.

6. How to balance the need of homeless people and people's feeling of security?

Garrett: “Housing First” and the “Recovery Model” are not models where our homeless neighbors are simply given the keys to an apartment and nothing else. There are a plethora of supportive services that accompany a person on their journey through recovery with the ultimate goal being to have provided enough support for that person to be empowered in their own life and not rely on a high level of services for the remainder of their lives. Part of each individual’s assessment is a determination of what level of care a person will likely need if and when they become housed. Housing is not the end of the work, but the beginning. Ensuring that the community feels safe with those embarking on their recovery journey is all about education, introducing the community to their new neighbors, and a clear level of communication between the team that is supporting the individual and the community.

7. What is the situation of homeless over these years and what was the solution of the government?

Garrett: In Orange County, homelessness is nothing new. The Civic Center and Riverbed encampments had been present for nearly 30 years but have now reached such a crisis level that it demands attention. Back in 2009, and again in 2012, the County developed a “10-year plan to end homelessness” which went largely unfunded and unimplemented.

Up until 2016, the only emergency shelters in Orange County were open from November – April from 6pm - 6am; what everyone did the rest of the time no one seemed to care.

By 2015, the County abandoned the 10-year plan and instead hired a brand new Director of its Continuum of Care, the County entity tasked with allocating funding for homelessness services in Orange County. Her assessment of County services determined that Orange County should be broken into three “Service Planning Areas” (SPA); Northern, Central, and Southern. The idea was that each service planning area would contain the variety of services that would make up the infrastructure of the Continuum of Care.

In late 2016, in the Northern SPA, County created in the City of Santa Ana The Courtyard Emergency Shelter and by early 2017, in the City of Anaheim the Bridges at Kraemer Place Transitional Shelter. In furtherance of the solution to divide homelessness services evenly across the Northern, Central, and Southern SPA the Cities of Irvine, Huntington Beach, and Laguna Niguel were asked to come up with potential locations for homelessness services. However, all three cities threatened to sue the County to oppose the development of any homeless services. That brings us here.

8. How is the outcome of homeless rehabilitation programs?

Garrett: Outcomes of homelessness services are required by their contracts to meet certain successes; the models being replicated across the country all utilize highly successful evidence-based practices. Operating under the “Housing First” and “Recovery Model” have proven not only a reduction of taxpayer spending on law enforcement and medical care but have also shown nearly 90% retention rates with many people being able to return to work. That is precisely why we need to create more long term housing to create more opportunities for our homeless neighbors to regain full and meaningful lives in our communities.

Anita: Consumers in a Housing First model access housing faster and are more likely to remain stably housed. This is true for both permanent supportive housing as well as rapid-re-housing. PSH has a long-term housing retention rate of up to 98 percent. Rapid re-housing helps people exit homelessness quickly—in one study, an average of two months—and remain housed; other studies have shown 75 percent and 91 percent of households remain housed a year after being rapidly re-housed. Paraphrased from: <http://endhomelessness.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/housing-first-fact-sheet.pdf>

Anita, In Conclusion:

The total population of Irvine is now >250,000, double what it was when we first came here. Irvine has grown but the growth is at a human and moral cost; many Irvine friends and neighbors are struggling to make ends meet. These include middle class two parent families with children, and young professionals who went to K-12 schools in Irvine and graduated from local colleges and Universities. There are ~88,000 housing units in Irvine of which ~52% household unit are occupied by renters. The median rent in Irvine is ~\$ 1,903 and ~46 to 48% of the renters are overburdened; this means that roughly half the people renting in Irvine or a quarter of those living in Irvine are paying more than 30% of their income on rent. Some pay as much as [80% of income on rent](#); they can't face the long commutes to work here, and this is not unusual either. Furthermore, UCI (up to 10%) and Irvine Valley College students are increasingly experiencing homelessness.

Homelessness is a survival issue that is also regional. The housing shortages and high rents are regional issues with great impact on the economy and our collective future. Irvine with its strong family values, long tradition of excellence in planning, development and innovation (e.g. OC Great Park, [Irvine Community Land Trust](#)), not-for-profits, and faith communities who are already working on the homelessness issue is well endowed to take on this kind of courageous, cutting edge, and collaborative leadership. Irvine is a world leader in innovation, diversity, schools, public safety, with a great plan for [inclusionary affordable housing](#). Given the track record for innovation, cost-efficiency, excellence, Irvine can successfully show what true housing integration looks like: A full spectrum of housing, which includes emergency housing, very low income affordable, as well as permanent supportive housing, not just affordable, market rate, and luxury homes. This is the kind of prevailing leadership and resident support and advocacy Irvine needs if we are all to thrive and shine sustainably into the future.

There are many opportunities to learn about homelessness in the OC. Check them out.

Service: [Wednesday Night at the Courtyard Ministry](#) led by Yuichi Suda

Educational: Get to know formerly homeless, advocates and activists in the OC who've been working a long time with the homeless here by attending their weekly meetings: [OC Poverty Alleviation Coalition](#) (Saturdays at 11 am, 635 N. Eckhoff, Suite L, Orange) and [Housing is a Human Right OC](#) (Mondays, 7 pm, Unitarian Universal in Anaheim).

Advocacy and Educational: Sign on to Irvine4Everyone – <http://tinyurl.com/irvineforeveryone>

Resources:

1. **Tim Houchen was homeless** and living at the Santa Ana Civic Center between 2011 and 2015. **He is now in permanent supportive housing** in Anaheim where he serves as a **Commissioner of Housing and Community Development**. He created a website to share his knowledge, and *experience* from his *“Homeless Perspective*. <https://www.hope4restoration.org/>



2. **Housing is a Human Right OC – Facebook Group -** <https://www.facebook.com/groups/394832850969410/>

3. **A Conversation on Poverty/OC Poverty Alleviation Coalition, Mohammed Ally with Dr. Anita Coleman** - Irvine resident, researcher, wife, and mom, Dr. Coleman discusses Irvine for Everyone, which she founded to advocate for shelter in Irvine. This video provides a good overview of the current crisis: <https://youtu.be/RZUIkU5oQ1M>

4. **Federal Judge sets June 13 Deadline For OC Cities to ID New Shelter Sites**

<https://voiceofoc.org/2018/05/federal-judge-sets-june-13-deadline-for-oc-cities-to-id-new-shelter-sites/>

5. **Suggestions from I4E members:**

Immediate solution: One modular emergency housing unit in every fire station in Orange County (which is public land); County social services and others can come to them here, if needed.

Two-stage solution: 1) Emergency shelter - Fairview facility, Costa Mesa 2) Housing for homeless (psh, very low income, etc.) along with all other kinds of housing on County owned land near OC Great Park, Irvine.

Sites Suggested by Bonnie Benton: Homeless need shelter + safety + public transportation + access to social services agencies, and job training.

- 30700 Rancho Viejo Road, San Juan Capistrano 16 acres of land + building of 124,000 sq ft – R&D – Endevco (\$33 mil)*
- 25872 Muirlands Blvd. Mission Viejo – 77,000 sq ft. Haagen’s grocery store with a huge parking lot. Vacant since 2015.

* Former employee of MV & Irvine companies, shown this on iHope tour of 04/17/18; the second she found herself. Both sites are close to a major medical facility (Mission Hospital), bus lines, Amtrak. Both have large abandoned structures that could accommodate an intake and evaluation center, space for satellite Social Services offices, some long term residents. Both have additional land for emergency housing. Both require major zoning change.

6. **Question by I4E: Are there ways to increase security with regards to homeless individuals staying in either PSH or emergency shelter?**

“We are prepared and equipped to deal with this issue, should it become a reality.” Chief Mike Hamel, Irvine PD chief vows to increase patrols if temporary homeless shelter is erected in *Behind the Badge OC* March 26, 2018. URL: <http://behindthebadgeoc.com/cities//irvine-pd-chief-vows-increase-patrols-temporary-homeless-shelter-erected>

7. *Where There’s Will There’s A Way: Housing Orange County’s Chronically Homeless.* Orange County Grand Jury 2017-2018 Report. URL:

http://www.ocgrandjury.org/pdfs/2017_2018_GJreport/2018-05-31_Homeles_Report.pdf



Irvine for Everyone is a group of Irvine residents who support the full spectrum of housing in Irvine. Join us. Learn with us. Sign on. Let us empower our city leadership to convicted and courageous action. End homelessness in the OC. Learn: <http://facebook.com/irvine4e/> | Sign-On <http://tinyurl.com/irvineforeveryone> #irvine4everyone #endhomelessnessOC