



City of Arts & Innovation

Housing and Homelessness Committee Memorandum

**TO: HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS
COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

DATE: JANUARY 27, 2025

FROM: HOUSING AND HUMAN SERVICES

WARDS: ALL

SUBJECT: SAFE PARKING PROGRAMS

ISSUE:

Receive a report on safe parking programs.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Committee:

1. Receive and file a report on safe parking programs; and
2. Direct staff on whether to pursue a safe parking program in the city of Riverside.

BACKGROUND:

Staff was requested to present to the Committee an overview of the different safe parking program options available.

DISCUSSION:

Safe parking programs provide communities with a safe homelessness intervention for people who are living in their vehicles to stabilize and be connected to resources. Most of these programs include access to restroom facilities and include security guard services.

In 2004, New Beginnings started their safe parking program by partnering with the City of Santa Barbara, local churches, and non-profit organizations to provide 200 safe parking spots in 31 parking lots throughout the cities of Santa Barbara, Goleta, Carpinteria, Lompoc, and the neighboring unincorporated areas of the county. The program provides case management and rental assistance to help program participants achieve housing stability. On a case-by-case basis, New Beginnings writes grants on behalf of clients to help them obtain cash assistance to pay for medical and dental expenses, and other costly, but life-changing assistance. To participate in the program, participants must show a driver's license, vehicle registration, and vehicle insurance.

In 2009, the City of San Diego had its first congregate safe parking program. Today, Jewish Family Services (JFS) of San Diego operates six safe parking programs at Balboa Avenue, Aero Drive, Mission Village Drive (open 24 hours), Rose Canyon, Encinitas, and Vistas with a total of 221 parking spaces in the City of San Diego. The program offers meaningful resources and tools, and dignified support to help families stabilize and transition back into permanent housing. With wraparound services focused on basic needs assistance, employment, family wellness, school success, financial education, credit repair, and most importantly, a return to housing. The goal is to connect individuals to the resources they need to ensure their experiences with homelessness are brief and non-recurring.

In 2017, Safe Parking LA began operating a safe parking program in Los Angeles and today they operate six lots in San Fernando Valley, Hollywood, Downtown Los Angeles, and West Los Angeles, including programs on the VA West Los Angeles and Los Angeles World Airport campuses. In total, their six lots can accommodate up to 174 vehicles. The sites are open every day from 7:30 p.m. to 7:30 a.m. During these hours, a security officer is onsite. The sites offer accessible bathrooms and hand washing stations. Some locations provide Wi-Fi and the VA location provides food. To participate in the program, participants must show a valid driver's license. If an individual's car insurance or registration is expired, they may enroll into the program on a provisional basis. Safe Parking LA will assist participants with updating their insurance and registration.

Upon enrollment, case management assesses the needs of safe parking program participants, develop personalized housing service plans, and make connections to essential resources and housing solutions. After 30 days of enrollment, participants may apply for assistance from Safe Parking LA to address financial burdens such as vehicle maintenance, credit repair, first month's rent, and move-in costs. They also provide support in addressing emergency situations, such as urgent vehicle operability issues. Their ability to provide financial assistance depends on the availability of funds. The lots cater to more than 8,500 residents who live in cars, vans, and campers throughout the city. Together, these residents account for about a quarter of LA's homeless population, which is has the largest homeless population in the United States.

In 2021, Long Beach City College offered up to 15 students with safety while sleeping in their cars during the school year. Students have easy access to showers and restrooms. The onsite security guard checks in the students in the evening and schedules the showers for the following morning. Students were also given access to Wi-Fi, electrical outlets and, most of all, a safe place to sleep. The pilot's budget was \$200,000, which included the cost of the security contract to help secure the parking lot between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m.

There are several existing safe parking programs that operate throughout California on faith-based organizations, public and privately owned properties. Programs can be established to serve several subpopulations or a specific subpopulation (i.e. veterans, seniors, families, transitional aged youth, students, single adults, etc.) based on the needs of the community.

If the City is interested in creating a new Safe Parking program, staff will reach out to existing Safe Parking Program operators to learn best practices and lessons learned and schedule a few tours of existing programs to see how different programs are set up, their impact to the surrounding community and services being provided to program participants.

STRATEGIC PLAN:

This staff report aligns with **Strategic Priority #2 - Community Well-Being** and **Goal 2.3** to strengthen neighborhood identities and improve community health and the physical environment through amenities and programs that foster an increased sense of community and enhanced feelings of pride and belonging citywide.

1. **Community Trust** – If created, a safe parking program would serve the City's unhoused population by providing a safe place to park while receiving resources and service to help individuals and families work on obtaining housing and other needs.
2. **Equity** – A safe parking programs would treat all program participants with dignity, respect, and compassion regardless of the circumstances, ability, or identity.
3. **Fiscal Responsibility** – There is no fiscal impact to the General Fund associated with this item.
4. **Innovation** – This item will allow the City of Riverside to capitalize on an innovative program for people sheltering in vehicles.
5. **Sustainability & Resiliency** – A safe parking program can be quickly established on existing parking lots that are utilized and serve as a temporary shelter.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact related to this staff report. If Council were to pursue this program, there would be additional costs that would need to be quantified, however, at this stage the potential future fiscal impact is unknown.

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