



City of Arts & Innovation

# News Release

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## **City of Riverside to Devote Oct. 11 Meeting to Examining Homelessness**

*Afternoon and evening sessions to document conditions, discuss potential solutions to homelessness*

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – Residents and business owners who want to know what the City of Riverside is doing, and could do in the future, to reduce homelessness in the city are invited to an all-day City Council meeting Oct. 11 devoted almost exclusively to that topic.

The meeting includes sessions at 2 p.m. and 6:15 p.m. in the Art Pick City Council Chambers at City Hall, 3900 Main Street in downtown Riverside.

The sessions can be viewed live or watched later on [www.watchriverside.com](http://www.watchriverside.com).

All documents that will be discussed at the meeting are at: <http://bit.ly/RiversideHomelessWorkshop>

The unusual, all-day effort is designed to examine what factors are contributing to homelessness; the programs and services that already exist; and new options for policies and programs.

“Homelessness is a multi-faceted problem that demands a multi-pronged approach. This workshop will help the city focus its efforts moving forward,” Mayor Rusty Bailey said. “Many departments in the City already work very hard every day on this issue, and this workshop will help ensure their efforts achieve the best results possible.”

The workshop, which is virtually the only thing on the City Council’s agenda that day, is scheduled to include nearly 40 speakers from the City and County governments, local businesses and business organizations, social service agencies, academics, affordable housing advocates and local non-profit organizations.

The workshop comes as City officials seek to become more proactive, and less reactive, to the problem of homelessness in our community. The City has engaged in a number of specific and focused small-scale efforts over the years, but is seeking to develop a more comprehensive approach that yields better results.

About 26 percent of homeless people in the United States live in California, according to the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development. San Francisco, Los Angeles and San Diego have the largest number of homeless people, but homelessness is increasingly a problem for cities of all sizes.

The goal of the workshop is to improve everyone's quality of life by maintaining clean and sanitary streets, parks and public areas; reducing the impacts on residents and businesses; educating the community on the best ways to assist homeless people; and connecting the most vulnerable people without shelter to homeless services, employment and housing opportunities.

The workshop seeks solutions to community problems associated with homeless individuals' behavior, including occupying parks to the extent that families do not feel safe going there: exhibiting disturbing and sometimes threatening behavior in public places, like libraries; urinating and defecating in the entryways of local businesses; committing crimes, including violent crime; and building encampments, including in the Santa Ana River bottom, that are unsafe, unsanitary and cause fires.

Responding to situations associated with homelessness drains resources from City departments, including Police, Fire, Public Works, Code Enforcement, homeless outreach workers, and the Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department.

Possible solutions that will be discussed include public and private partnerships, enforcement, social services and positive community participation.

"There has been no lack of effort on behalf of the City of Riverside over the years to help people escape homelessness," Mayor Pro Tem Andy Melendrez said. "This workshop will acknowledge that good work while setting the stage for even better results in the future through a more coordinated and in-depth approach."