

VSA

**VENICE
STAKEHOLDERS
ASSOCIATION**

June 26, 2024

Dr. Jason Matheny, President and Chief Executive Officer
RAND Corporation
c/o Nora Pasco at Nora_Pasco@rand.org
Santa Monica, CA

Dear Dr. Matheny:

I am writing to refute the conclusions of RAND's recent study of homeless cleanups in Los Angeles, as they pertain to Venice, CA.

Your study found: "continuing evidence that local encampment cleanup activities don't appear to lead to a persistent reduction in the number of unsheltered residents in the area," said Jason Ward, co-author of the study by Rand's Center on Housing and Homelessness. "They just tend to move them around and the numbers tend to return in our relatively small area to previous trends pretty quickly."

Our organization has been monitoring the phenomenon of homeless campers in Venice for over 15 years. I would invite you to tour with me the following former homeless encampment sites in Venice, which are currently devoid of any homeless campers today:

1. Windward, Riviera and Grand, around the Venice Post Office. About six years ago there was an encampment on the 200-300 block of Grand of roughly 25 campers. At that time the LAPD Patrol Captain and the Senior Lead Officer recommended to residents that we, at our cost, install 4' x 8' planter boxes to displace the campers and restore ADA passage on sidewalks. The campers were advised that a landscaping project would be installed the following day, they left, a cleanup was performed, and then 50 residents worked over two weekends to install 57 planter boxes at a cost of \$35,000. There are no campers there today.
2. Venice Beach and Boardwalk. In an effort led by residents Cari Bjelajac and Connie Brooks, the City of Los Angeles conducted an extensive clean-up and removal of 205 homeless campers and all their structures/tents/and personal possessions from Venice Beach and Boardwalk over the summer of 2021. While about 50 campers remain scattered along the beach, some from before the 2021 removal and some new, no new encampments or tents have been allowed by the LAPD.
3. Third, Rose, Hampton and Sunset. In one of the first operations of Mayor Bass' Inside Safe program, over 125 campers on Third St., Rose Avenue, Hampton Avenue and Sunset Avenue (AKA "Skid Rose") were removed during the torrential rains in January 2023. The large and problematic encampment on Third Street had existed since 2009. Since these locations are within the 1,000-foot exclusion zone centered on the Bridge Housing facility at Main and Sunset, which bars any lying, sitting or sleeping 24/7 under LAMC 41.18, there are no sidewalk campers on these streets today. The removal of the campers was preceded by several cleanups. (See attached photos sans any campers on July 25, 2024.)

The Venice Stakeholders Association is dedicated to civic improvement. The VSA supports slow growth, protection of the limits of the Venice Specific Plan, neighborhood safety, better traffic circulation, increased parking for residents, neighborhood beautification projects, historic preservation, habitat restoration and protection of coastal waters.
www.venicestakeholdersassociation.org | 310-392-4843

4. Centennial Park, next to the Venice Library, was cleared of 60 campers a couple years ago during Councilman Bonin's tenure. The park was fenced, then new landscaping was installed. The park remains free of campers.
5. Dell/Pacific Avenue parking lot. 40 or so of the campers in Centennial Park moved west to occupy the dirt planting areas and sidewalks around this large city parking lot at this location (bounded by North Venice Boulevard, Pacific Avenue, South Venice Boulevard and Dell Avenue). Following offers of housing by social service organizations, an extensive cleanup was performed and then the entire area was landscaped, fenced, irrigation systems added, and planter boxes were installed where there were wide sidewalks to bar a return of encampments. There are no campers in this location now.
6. Flower and Lincoln. For many years a problematic homeless encampment existed on Flower Street just west of Lincoln. The property owner eventually landscaped the parkway and installed planter boxes to narrow the sidewalk footprint available for camping. There are no sidewalk campers in this location now.
7. Palms at Lincoln. A disturbing encampment existed for several years on Palms at Lincoln Boulevard, with sidewalk campers and the selling of drugs from vans parked next to Staples and Lincoln Hardware. Following a city cleanup, residents installed planter boxes and displaced the campers and the drug sales vans. There are no campers on the sidewalk at this site today.
8. At the request of Councilwoman Traci Park, last year the city designated three locations along the Venice Boardwalk as LAMC 41.18 500-foot exclusion zones; i.e., no lying, sleeping or sitting 24/7, at Ozone Avenue (next to a large residential senior facility), Windward Avenue (the main gateway to Venice Beach) and Washington Boulevard (the entrance to the Venice Pier). There are no homeless campers in these locations. Removal of the campers was preceded by offers of housing and cleanups. (See attached photos of Windward, Market and Ozone. All of these sidewalks were previously strewn with encampments.)

There are several more examples where homeless campers were removed or displaced and have not returned, including Harding at Lincoln, along the north side of Rose Avenue next to Penmar Park, and on the west and south sides of Whole Foods at Rose and Lincoln.

Recently I was asked by a television reporter to respond to the U.S. Supreme Court's decision reversing the Ninth Circuit Court's decision in the Grants Pass case. Initially, the reporter wanted to have one of Venice's encampments in the background. I could not find one. Venice's remaining homeless problem is the last 50 mentally ill and drug addicted homeless in the Venice Beach Recreation Area and the over 100 vans, SUVs, trucks, RVs and campers with live-aboard campers, who disturb us with late night noise, take our parking in an already parking-starved tourist destination, and use our alleys and gutters as latrines.

I ask that you ask Mr. Ward to identify one significant homeless encampment that has re-established itself after a city cleanup in Venice. Or ask his co-author, Rick Garvey, who has publicly announced himself on social media over many years as a homeless advocate. His presence on the research team raises serious questions about the objectivity of the study.

If, as I suspect, Mr. Ward and Mr. Garvey cannot show where any large encampments in Venice have returned after city cleanups, that RAND will publicly announce that its original study results were incorrect, and that in Venice, cleanups, along with LAPD enforcement, landscaping, and offers of shelter have indeed removed many large encampments that have in every instance have not returned.

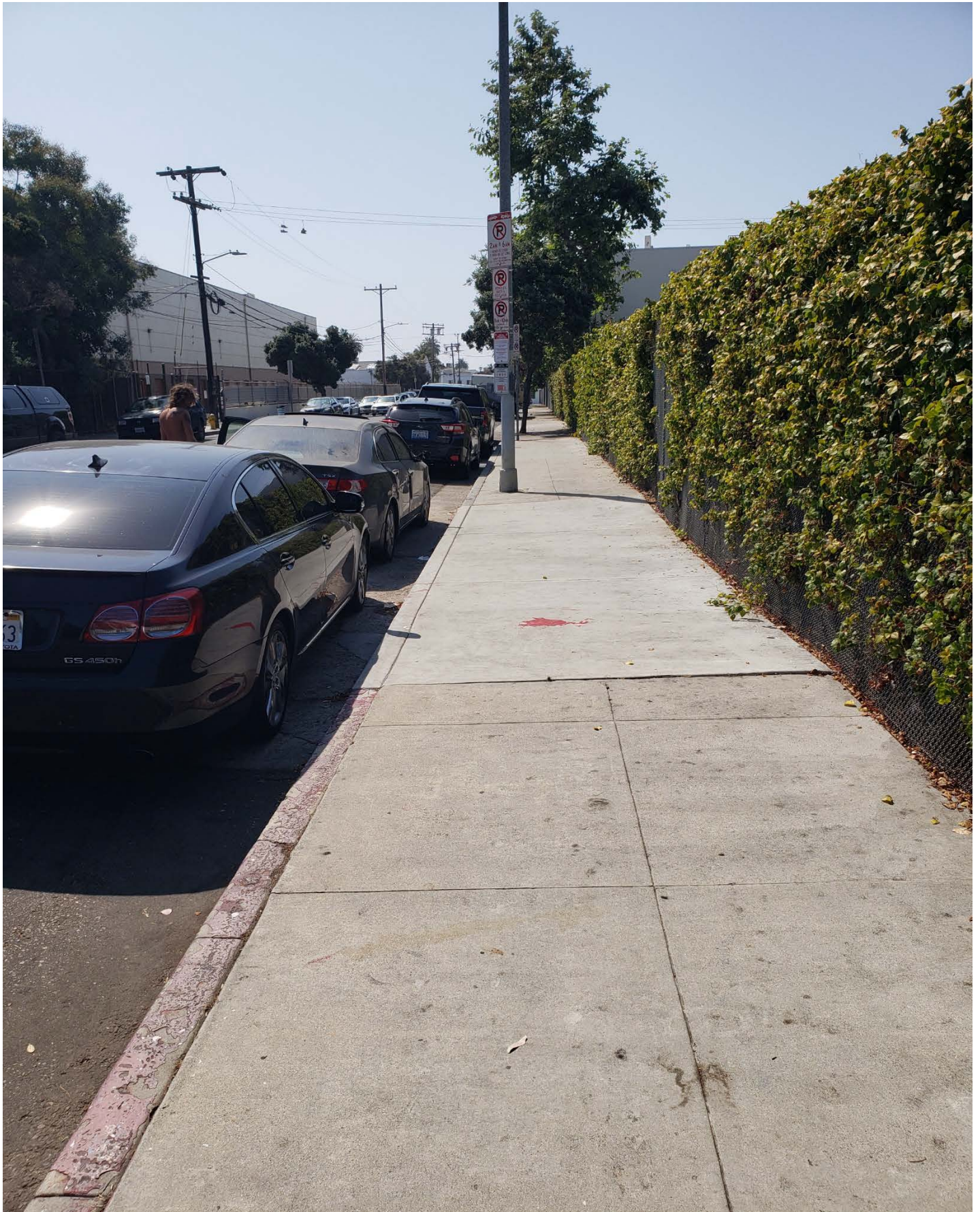
Sincerely yours,

Mark Ryavec

Mark Ryavec, President



Hampton Avenue from Rose Avenue 7/25
Located in 1000-foot 48.18 Exclusion Zone



Third Street from Rose Avenue, west side 7/25
Located in 1000-foot 48.18 Exclusion Zone



Third Street from Rose Avenue, east side 7/25
Located in 1000-foot 48.18 Exclusion Zone



Ozone Avenue from the Boardwalk, next to the Safran Senior Residential Center 7-25
Located in 500-foot 48.18 Exclusion Zone



Market Street, north side, from Pacific 7-25
Located in 500-foot 48.18 Exclusion Zone



Windward Avenue, north side, from Pacific 7-25
Located in 500-foot 48.18 Exclusion Zone