

Gao, Beilei

From: Bert Newton <
Sent: Monday, June 23, 2025 4:19 PM
To: PublicComment-AutoResponse
Subject: Item 9 homelessness in Pasadena

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Dear Mayor and City Council

Despite all the progress we've made in affordable housing and tenants rights, the number of unhoused people seems to be climbing upward. We are a wealthy city, however, and we do have resources to continue toward a goal of functional zero homelessness.

In her letter, Sonja Berndt provides some excellent proposals for how to reallocate existing funds. I would like to add to her list a proposal that the city explore a vacancy tax and a transfer tax. The housing element states that the city will do a study of a vacancy tax. I suggest that the vacancy tax study include vacant commercial properties. There are numerous commercial sites in the city, including some on Colorado Blvd, that have remained vacant for many years, in some cases decades. These sites could be used for affordable housing.

Last year's annual count of unhoused people showed a sharp increase of people falling into homelessness. Once people fall into homelessness, mental health and substance abuse issues often are exacerbated from the stress of being on the street, then it becomes harder to get people housed. The best way to bring down homeless numbers is to not let people end up on the street to begin with, so we need to find ways to increase affordable housing. We can save money and lives.

We also need to house people on the street now. Too often the police are called to deal with complaints and issues, and that is a very expensive way to try to help our unhoused neighbors. Housing and services would be more effective both in serving people and in saving money. So the more money we put into emergency and interim housing and permanent affordable housing and services for those who need them, the more money we are saving in the long run.

Thank you,

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Rev. Bert Newton

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"Blessed are the poor, for they will inherit the land." Matthew 5:5 EWN Translation