

PROPOSAL

SafetyNetCity

With half a million homeless every night (“The State”), homelessness in the US is not only a humanitarian catastrophe but an unaffordable burden on public services and a national disgrace. To date, an expensive collection of government resources have been devoted to this problem but homelessness is still growing at double digit rates (Mai-Duc). To overcome this crisis, an innovation new approach is required. This SafetNetCity proposal is a practical solution that is both economical and humanitarian. It is recommended that a pilot program be launched to test the potential of this approach.

The SafetyNetCity system is based on these assumptions:

- 1) Any approach needs to be practical, economical and humanitarian.
- 2) Homelessness is not about the availability of low-cost housing. Most of the homeless have no jobs and are mentally challenged, drug/alcohol addicted or suffering a personal crisis of some sort (“The State”).
- 3) Local, State and Federal money spent on homeless services has not been effective and in many ways anti-productive. Only coordinated, centrally managed programs backed by a well-funded set of services can economically and efficiently deal with real homeless requirements.
- 4) A core component of this approach is separating the SafetyNet population from unsanitary encampments and the substance abuse scene in order to effectively process them into drug/alcohol rehabilitation and mental health services.
- 5) In addition to providing services to the hardcore homeless, these facilities will also serve as a general “safety net” for families and dependents in extremis, providing housing, nutrition and educational options for that segment of the population.

In this approach, a locality would create a SafetyNetCity agency with advanced legal and police powers, funded by aggregating inefficiently spent monies from Federal, State and local entities. Empowered with new red flag legislation, needed to enforce homeless participation, this agency would have responsibility for managing an overarching homeless program and have the resources for procuring assets and services. To begin, the agency would identify an appropriate property and provision it as a SafetyNet Center. This property will serve as a low-cost hub for providing a “SafetyNet” of centralized homeless services: housing, food distribution, medical, dental, drug/alcohol rehabilitation, educational, legal, law enforcement, hygiene, etc. In addition, the SafetyNetCity Administration would manage coordination efforts with nonprofits and volunteer services. The property must be commercially accessible to facilitate the provisioning of housing and other services: electricity, water, Internet, refuse collection, etc. It must also be geographically remote from the locality to discourage recidivism. Housing can be efficiently deployed by leveraging manufactured housing units (MHUs) and mobile trailers. Once the property is provisioned, the agency, in cooperation with law enforcement, would begin processing the local homeless. Based on its centralized financial efficiencies, SafetyNetCity can operate for less than the government estimates for the average annual public expenditure for the chronic homeless, \$40,000 to over \$70,000 per person (United States).

References

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