Six Fixes for Homelessness in Santa Monica, Sourced

Updated October 28, 2026. Every phone number was checked against an official page.

On Jan. 22, 2026, 718 people were counted homeless in Santa Monica: 389 outdoors that night, 222 in shelter, 59 in occupied vehicles and 48 in tents or makeshift shelters. Los Angeles County's own bed roadmap put the need for subacute treatment beds at 1,641 to 1,758, against 1,343 in place. And what works here is already visible: SaMo Bridge, the City's diversion hub, placed 81% of the people it connected in its first year into housing or treatment immediately.

Empower Santa Monica is a group of residents who turned those facts into six plain asks of the City. Every number links to its source. Every ask is a resident draft.

What is the plan?

The plan is six initiatives that get people too sick to help themselves off the street and into treatment, and that make the City publish what its homelessness dollars deliver. Together they ask for a clinician who can write a hold on every outreach team, a guaranteed bed at the end of every hold, a 24/7 crisis drop-off on the Westside, a written offer-first standard before any enforcement, every homelessness contract published with its results, priority response around schools and parks, and one City desk for families.

#	Initiative	In one line
1	Treatment, not tents	Use the laws that already exist for people too sick to choose help, with a bed at the end of every hold.
2	Offer first. Then enforce.	A real bed offered the same day, then the rules already on the books.
3	A place to go, and a way up	A 24/7 crisis drop-off on the Westside, connected to recovery.
4	Open books	Every dollar, contract and result, published every month.
5	Safe blocks for kids and families	Priority response around every school and park.
6	Bring them home	One desk for families, and tickets home with family waiting.

Who is this plan for?

The plan is for five different groups of people, because one answer does not fit everyone on the street. Treating them all the same is how a city ends up helping no one.

Group	Who they are	What the plan does
1. Too sick to choose	Severe mental illness or addiction so deep the person cannot accept help on their own	Treatment, not tents: the lawful tools for families, clinicians and courts, with a bed at the end. For an arrest, jail or help.
2. Able to choose, saying no	Well enough to decide, turning down a real bed	Offer a bed first, then enforce the rules already on the books, the same for everyone.
3. Has family waiting	Someone with family who want them home and will take them in	Bring them home: one desk for families and a verified ticket home.
4. Newly homeless or living in a car	Working, recently evicted, or sleeping in a vehicle, often with kids	A bed and a fast way back. Families with children call **211**; outreach through LA-HOP. See who to call.
5. In the park, breaking no rules	Sitting, resting, using the park like anyone else	Conduct, not condition. Being homeless is not a crime; behavior is. The park rules apply to everyone the same way.

Humane does not mean leaving a sick person on the sidewalk until they die there. It means the right help for each group, and the same rules for everyone.

1. Treatment, not tents

When someone is too sick or too addicted to choose help, the law already lets an officer, a clinician, a family member or a judge act without their signature. Use it. Put someone on every outreach team who can write a hold, since Jan 1, 2026 for severe addiction too, and guarantee a bed at the end of every one. After three contacts, file. It's the same second chance drug court gives people every day: get clean instead of doing time.

Serves group 1: people too sick to choose help. See also jail or help.

> Every door has a time limit, a lawyer or advocate, and a judge. The person keeps their rights.

Read the full initiative: Treatment, not tents

2. Offer first. Then enforce.

Every contact starts with a real bed, the same day. Too sick to choose? The team uses the hold, the petition or the court, not a clipboard and a water bottle. Able to choose and turn it down? The rules already on the books apply. Camping on our sidewalks is against the law. Enforcing it, with help offered first, keeps everyone safe, including the person on the sidewalk. And every month, the numbers go public.

Serves group 2: people able to choose who turn help down.

Read the full initiative: Offer a bed first, then enforce

3. A place to go, and a way up

A 24/7 drop-off where police and outreach can hand someone off in minutes, on a hold or on their own, connected to a recovery campus. Stabilize. Get clean. Rebuild. Come home. People move up as they hit milestones: more freedom, then housing, then work. Slip, and you go back one step, not to the street. Graduates get paid work bringing the next person in.

Serves groups 1 and 4: a place to take someone in crisis tonight, and a way back for people who are ready.

Read the full initiative: A 24/7 Westside crisis drop-off

4. Open books

Every homelessness dollar, every contract and every result, published every month. Every person with a caseworker and a plan. Totals, never names.

Serves every group, and every taxpayer: it shows which programs actually move people off the street, including what each hotel and motel room buys.

Read the full initiative: Open the books on homelessness spending

5. Safe blocks for kids and families

Priority response on the blocks around every school and park, and parks full of life after dark.

Serves everyone, group 5 included: clear park rules about conduct, applied the same to all.

Read the full initiative: Safe blocks near schools and parks

6. Bring them home

One desk that files with families: the petition, the request, the report. A lawful way to learn they're safe that doesn't wait for a signature the person is too sick to give. And real tickets home with family waiting at the other end.

Serves group 3: people with family who want them home.

Read the full initiative: Bring them home

Who is behind the plan?

Santa Monica residents, working as volunteers. Empower Santa Monica is not the City of Santa Monica. Nobody is paid, it takes no donations, runs no ads and backs no party, candidate or company. The plan, the Santa Monica Street Blueprint, is published with every source under a Creative Commons license.

> "When a bed is offered the same day and turned down, the rules already on the books should apply, every time, and the numbers should be public every month. No bed, no enforcement. A bed first, then the law."
> A founding member of Empower Santa Monica

What does it cost?

Most of the plan runs on laws, staff and dollars that already exist. The hold standard changed on Jan. 1, 2026 under SB 43 at no cost to the City. Santa Monica's share of the County's Measure A Local Solutions Fund for FY26-27 is $1,296,779. In 2023 the City secured $1.5 million in federal and $1.5 million in state funding toward a Santa Monica Behavioral Health Center meant as a 24/7 destination for first responders. LA County's 2026-29 Behavioral Health Services Act plan lists law enforcement drop-off as a crisis service.

New money is needed mainly for guaranteed bed-nights. One benchmark: Irvine buys as-available shelter beds from Costa Mesa at $163 a bed-night (2026). Open books costs almost nothing: the City already has the numbers.

Where does the plan stand?

Every initiative is a resident draft. Nothing has been submitted to the City Council and nothing is on an agenda. Each initiative goes to Council when a councilmember sponsors it, and members plan to ask for a sponsor after the Nov. 3, 2026 election. Every step will be posted on the site.

How can I help?

- Take the two-minute neighbor survey. The answers shape what we take to Council.
- Add your name behind the six initiatives.
- Learn how to speak at Council or write in.
- Print the flyer for a café or building lobby, or send a friend the press brief.
- Questions or press: hello@empowersantamonica.com.

Sources

1. Santa Monica Daily Press: Santa Monica reports double-digit decline in homelessness (Jul 24, 2026)
2. City of Santa Monica: Unsheltered homelessness in Santa Monica falls (Jul 24, 2026)
3. LA County DMH: roadmap to address the mental health bed shortage (Feb 2024)
4. Santa Monica Daily Press: SaMo Bridge first year (May 22, 2026)
5. LA County DMH: SB 43 implementation (Dec 17, 2025)
6. LA County HSH: Measure A Local Solutions Fund guidance FY26-27
7. Rep. Ted Lieu: funding for the Santa Monica Behavioral Health Center (Mar 3, 2023)
8. LA County BHSA Integrated Plan 2026-29
9. Voice of OC: Irvine partners with Costa Mesa for shelter beds (Mar 4, 2026)

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