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CITY ATTORNEY MARKS SKID ROW SAFER CITY INITIATIVE'S 1ST ANNIVERSARY, TOUTS SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS IN EFFORT TO CLEAN UP SKID ROW

LOS ANGELES – Los Angeles City Attorney Rocky Delgadillo today joined Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, LAPD Chief William Bratton, and members of the City Council to mark the one year anniversary of the City's Skid Row Safer City Initiative and discuss the progress made in this collaborative effort to address the serious health and safety issues which have for too long plagued the Skid Row community.

"In September of last year, we stepped up to the plate as a City and decided that we would no longer tolerate the exploitation of the poor and mentally ill in Downtown LA's Skid Row," said City Attorney Delgadillo. "Through law enforcement action and coordinated and targeted prosecution and outreach efforts, we hoped to shift the paradigm by helping local residents to reclaim their public spaces, restore order, and re-establish community controls."

Working closely with the LAPD and other Skid Row SCI partners, the City Attorney's Office has combined tough new enforcement efforts with a commitment to facilitating supportive programs and services in order to provide greater opportunity to reduce rampant addiction, crime and homelessness. As part of this effort, the City Attorney's Safe Neighborhoods and Special Litigation Divisions have launched enforcement actions, including civil nuisance abatements, against nuisance businesses known to be the epicenter for drug and prostitution activity, as well as aggressively prosecuting landlords abusing tenant rights in residential hotels and low income housing.

In addition, the office has facilitated several outreach services, including hosting a summit for skid row service providers in order to formulate best practices; working with local community groups to organize a Skid Row Basketball league as an intervention tool; and training volunteers from Los Angeles' major law firms to participate in a pro bono legal clinic to aid homeless and indigent residents.

"This partnership between City and Law enforcement officials, community organizations, local businesses, and residents is nothing short of unprecedented," Delgadillo added.

"While there is still more to do, we have accomplished much in the past year – making our streets safer, cleaner, and letting criminal elements on notice that their days of unfettered exploitation of the residents of Skid Row are over."

(SKID ROW SCI FIRST YEAR ANNIVERSARY HIGHLIGHTS ATTACHED)

LA CITY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
SKID ROW SAFER CITY INITIATIVE
2006-2007 HIGHLIGHTS

NARCO ABATEMENT ACTIONS

Delgadillo's Safe Neighborhoods Division has targeted and filed a narcotics abatement and unlawful competition lawsuit against two notorious nuisance properties - Craby Joe's Bar and Mr. Fish restaurant- seeking the closure of the bar and restaurant for one year and financial penalties. The suit also asks the court to appoint a receiver to oversee the property.

Both Craby Joe's Bar and Mr. Fish are magnets for rock cocaine sales to both the homeless on Skid Row and others who came from outside the area.

VICE ABATEMENT ACTION

The City Attorney's Office in an effort to stem ongoing prostitution activity on Skid Row has secured an injunction against the property and business owners of the Vogue Hotel - a location known as a hub for prostitution activity and the site of several prostitution and drug related arrests over the past year.

Under the terms of the injunction, the Hotel owners are now prohibited from allowing or facilitating prostitution activity at the property, must aggressively pursue evictions of tenants engaging in prostitution activity, as well as employ a full-time management company to oversee inspection and maintenance.

FOOD STAMP FRAUD PROSECUTION

City Attorney Delgadillo's Identity Theft Unit has been working closely with federal authorities to investigate food stamp fraud schemes involving businesses on Skid Row.

One recent case came as a result of a larger investigation by the U.S. Attorney's Office into fraud in the food stamp benefits cards program. In November 2006, investigators discovered a an individual had obtained five electronic benefits transfer (EBT) food stamp benefits cards simultaneously from California, New York, Washington D.C., Maryland and Pennsylvania and used the fraudulently obtained cards to conduct \$2,760 in transactions at four Skid Row businesses.

HOMELESS PATIENT DUMPING

In an effort to address the continued concern over the improper discharge of indigent individuals onto skid row, the City Attorney's Office has filed civil and criminal actions against local hospitals including Kaiser Permanente, Hollywood Presbyterian Medical Center and Methodist Hospital of Arcadia.

As a result of these lawsuits, Kaiser hospitals across Los Angeles County have established and agreed to adhere to a set of best practices protocols and education training for hospital staff that will serve as a model for other area hospitals. Actions by the City Attorney's Office have lead to a drastic reduction in reported incidents of homeless patient dumping.

ILLEGAL STREET DUMPING

Working in close partnership with the Los Angeles Police Department, the City Attorney's Safe Neighborhoods division has taken a zero-tolerance approach to the rampant practice of illegal dumping of trash on city streets by merchants.

To date, the City Attorney's Office has prosecuted 34 Skid Row Business Owners for breaking the law by cluttering the streets with cardboard boxes and other refuse. In addition, the office has also conducted outreach and education forums to businesses owners in order to establish best practices for disposal of trash and other items.

28-DAY SHUFFLE LITIGATION

Over the past year, the City Attorney's Special Litigation section, in close partnership with the Safe Neighborhoods Division, is aggressively litigating a still-pending civil enforcement action against the owners of the Frontier and Rosslyn Hotels. The action alleges that the defendants engaged in an illegal practice known as the "28-Day Shuffle" to attempt to prevent the very low-income occupants of this "housing of last resort" from acquiring tenant rights, and that they emptied the Frontier Hotel of its occupants to make way for upscale lofts without giving notice and paying relocation assistance fees to affected tenants as required under the state Ellis Act and implementing ordinance.

Through the efforts of the City Attorney's Office, a first-of-its-kind electronic database of occupancy data from the two hotels was established. The suit also seeks financial compensation for residents displaced by this illegal practice.

SOCIAL SERVICES

The City Attorney's Safe Neighborhoods Division recently joined forces with other law enforcement and health services as well as downtown service providers in a summit focusing on the consequences of food delivery on Skid Row, including the unorganized rush to vans distributing food and clothing, excess trash or unused food in the street, and unmonitored food preparation that could end in sickness for members of Skid Row's homeless population.

Ongoing panel discussions are designed to bring all interested parties together in order to educate faith-based service providers on how to access existing resources and partner with community-based service providers to ensure safety, sanitary meals, cleaner streets. In addition, the program will also outline some of the unmet needs that exist on Skid Row and other communities.

In addition, Project HALO - a partnership between the LAPD, People Assisting the Homeless, the County Mental Health Department, the County Public Defender's Office, and the Sheriff's Department - was launched as a pilot program designed as a diversion to prosecution in order to steer homeless individuals away from the criminal justice system and into housing and recovery environments.

LEGAL CLINIC

Drawing on legal talent from some of Downtown Los Angeles major law firms, major public interest law firms including Bet Tzedek, Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles, Mental health Advocacy Services, Inner City Law Center and Public Counsel have begun training for skid row legal clinics to address the extensive range of legal issues facing homeless people.

The legal clinics will offer legal services on site at transitional living centers in different parts of the county. Lawyers will be trained to address several issues that delay the transition out of homelessness including unresolved tickets and warrants for misdemeanor crimes, back child support payments accumulated during sustained periods of homelessness, back taxes with unmanageable penalties, consumer debt as well as difficulty in accessing public benefits due to mental illness or emotional instability.

Following the training session, each of the facilities will refer up to five clients to the clinic where three lawyers will be on call to assist with legal matters.

INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

The Skid Row Street Ball League, organized by the United Coalition East Prevention Project, with uniform and equipment sponsorship through Delgadillo's Safe Neighborhoods Division, offers residents of downtown Los Angeles' Skid Row a positive atmosphere to compete, and an alternative to drugs and violence on the street. The League also serves as a focal point for providing outreach and mentorship to at-risk youth.

Three on Three basketball games are scheduled on a rotating basis at the Midnight Mission gymnasium and Gladys Park beginning in August through the Championship game in December.