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News

Hygiene Center Opens in Skid Row

Facility Responds to Restroom Shortage and Hepatitis A Outbreak

By Nicholas Slayton Dec 4, 2017

A new center on Crocker Street will open with a trailer holding toilets, showers and hand washing stations. Plans call for ultimately having three trailers with hygiene facilities.

photo courtesy the Skid Row Community Improvement Coalition

DTLA - Skid Row now has a new hygiene center with public toilets and showers. The move is partly in response to the community's drastic and well-chronicled shortage of restroom facilities, and partly due to the burgeoning Hepatitis A outbreak.

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The Skid Row Community ReFresh Spot opened this morning at 557 S. Crocker St. in Skid Row. Propelled by the Skid Row Community Improvement Coalition, it will operate on limited days at first, and later expand to full-time use.



The community group partnered on the effort with the offices of Mayor Eric Garcetti and 14th District City Councilman José Huizar, according to the organization's Louise Mbella (also known in the neighborhood as Frenchy).

The center will launch in a trailer with eight toilet stalls, six showers and six hand washing stations. Eventually a permanent collection of three trailers will be installed. One will hold six stalls with showers, toilets and sinks. The second will have seven shower and sink stalls, while the third will have 12 washer and dryer systems. Each trailer would have a separate section for men and women, according to Mbella.

“It's going to have a huge impact for safety, especially for the women,” Mbella said.

Huizar last month introduced a motion to set aside \$1.87 million for the hygiene center, which is on city-owned land. The center is funded through the end of June.

At first the Skid Row Community ReFresh Spot will be open Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Saturday mornings, with a security guard present. Eventually it will operate full time, seven days a week.

“Access to safe, clean toilets and a hot shower are a basic human right,” Huizar said in a statement to Los Angeles Downtown News. “This will be more than a hygiene center. Our aim is to give the residents of Skid Row a sense of hope and dignity while we also take action to protect them from the spread of Hepatitis A. More is needed, but this is a critical first step.”

An audit released this summer by a collection of community groups found that only nine public toilets are available during the night for people living on the streets in Skid Row. The report said that local inhabitants have less access to restroom facilities than refugees in places such as Syria, according to United Nations standards for hygiene.

nicholas@downtownnews.com

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