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LOS ANGELES CITY COUNCILMEMBER

— DISTRICT 10 —

****PRESS RELEASE****

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Los Angeles City Council Adopts First-Ever Citywide Homeless Street Engagement Strategy

Today, in a groundbreaking decision, Los Angeles City Council unanimously voted to adopt the first-ever Citywide Homeless Street Engagement Strategy which provides a uniform framework to offer street-based services and connections to housing for unsheltered residents living in Los Angeles.

“The time for street engagement couldn’t be more urgent. There are no quick fixes to this crisis – and an “enforcement alone” approach would simply shuffle unhoused residents throughout the City, from one neighborhood to another. This is a crisis that requires care, compassion, and compliance, and this Strategy can be our roadmap to seeing a true change on our streets.” said Councilmember Mark Ridley-Thomas.

Created at the request of Councilmember Mark Ridley-Thomas and his colleagues at the end of June, the first of its kind Street Engagement Strategy will ensure that the City only regulates designated public spaces after documented street engagement and housing placements occur.

The action today included a significant investment in additional outreach services, with each Council Office now having a minimum of three dedicated street engagement teams, which will be deployed to assess sites, determine the length of client engagement needed, and collaborate with relevant nonprofits, and City and County departments, to ensure appropriate connections to services and placements into interim and permanent housing.

Both community-based homeless service providers and business-sector advocates applauded the adoption of the Strategy.

“We are encouraged by today’s passing of the Street Engagement Strategy and thank Councilmember Ridley-Thomas for spearheading this essential effort. A comprehensive and coordinated plan is needed to address the magnitude of the homelessness crisis in Los Angeles and the Street Engagement Strategy is a necessary component to effectively identify the housing and resources required to move Angelenos experiencing homelessness off the street and reduce the number of encampments across the city,” said Mary Leslie, President of LA Business Council (LABC).

“The Downtown Women’s Center has been adamant on the need for the city to adopt a trauma-informed streets engagement strategy that centers the needs of unsheltered Angelenos and provides real pathways to permanent housing. We know that an enforcement-driven approach risks re-traumatization and puts personal stability further out of reach for our unsheltered neighbors. The passage of the Outreach Engagement Framework, championed by Councilman Ridley-Thomas, is a critical step in our efforts to develop a citywide homeless response system that helps unhoused Angelenos permanently break the cycle of houselessness,” said Amy Turk, Downtown Women’s Center C.E.O.

“PATH is eager to work alongside the City of Los Angeles in implementing the Street Engagement Strategy, to get people safe and housed peacefully and compassionately. Uplifting consistent outreach is the best practice to move people off the streets and into a home of their own,” shared Jennifer Hark Dietz, Deputy CEO of People Assisting The Homeless (PATH).

“Through the life-changing, innovative and person-centered work we have been doing in South LA with our Multidisciplinary Street Based Engagement Teams we know what works well. We understand the humanity side of this and infuse that in our efforts to help prevent illness and death as we successfully move people from living outdoors into their own homes. I am grateful that the City of LA is taking bold action to codify an effective street strategy for its residents that builds off of the lessons learned, accomplishments, and foundational work done for the past four years,” said Veronica Lewis, Director of Homeless Outreach Program Integrated Care System (HOPICS), a division of Special Service for Groups.

This work builds on the multiple motions brought forward by Councilmembers over the last 10 months, including instructions to the City staff to establish a framework to establish a Right to Housing in the City of Los Angeles, the Housing Now Proposal, which aims to increase the number of rental subsidies provided to homeless individuals with complex medical and behavioral health needs, and the Paxton & Bradley Encampment to Home Project, which modeled effective street engagement in the San Fernando Valley.

“The one-to-one approach of the new citywide initiative dovetails strategically with the ongoing efforts of houses of worship and other non-profits seeking to assist our siblings experiencing homelessness,” said the Right Rev. John Harvey Taylor, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles. “I join faith-based colleagues in thanking Councilmember Ridley-Thomas for his leadership in this vital work to bring Angelenos off the streets, out of encampments, and into housing with supportive services. In encourage local congregations to become fully involved in this essential collaboration.”

“The passing of this Strategy is long overdue. If we truly believe that all of our neighbors have a right to a roof and not a bench, it is essential that we stay focused on operationalizing this Strategy. Now we need boots on the ground. And we need to ensure that the incredible outreach workers that take to the streets each day are armed with a portfolio of housing options for the people they are engaging. I thank my fellow Councilmembers for making this work a priority, and I look forward to collaborating with our community-based homeless service providers and County partners to double-down on this work and hit the ground running,” said Councilmember Ridley-Thomas.

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Mark Ridley-Thomas serves as Los Angeles’ City Council Chair of Homelessness and Poverty Committee and served as Co-Chair of Governor Newsom’s Homeless and Supportive Housing Advisory Task Force.