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Homeless services get boost

Council votes in favor of affordable rental units that will create a 'transitional housing environment.'

September 30, 2009 | By Christopher Cadelago

CITY HALL — The City Council on Tuesday ramped up its homeless services, voting to spend \$336,000 each on four affordable rental units that will be used to get transient families off the streets.

The proposal pairs homeless clients with case-management services to get them back on their feet. It combines the four new units at 2615 Thornton Ave. with an existing group of three city-owned units on Naomi Street to create a "transitional housing environment."

The roughly \$1.34 million will come from city redevelopment and federal housing money.

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In what Councilman Dave Golonski called a "pretty cutting-edge proposal," one of the four new units would be rented out to Family Promise of East San Fernando Valley for use as an activity center.

The approved program includes case-management services by the Family Service Agency to be paid for by the Burbank Housing Corporation.

"We're connecting the people in need of services with resources with resources available to them," Ruth Davidson-Guerra, assistant Community Development director for Housing and Redevelopment, said before the meeting. "It's a beautiful example of leveraging a little bit of money for a whole lot of service. Everybody is pulling together really for the same goal."

But Councilman David Gordon, who cast the lone dissenting vote, objected to myriad aspects of the proposals, from qualifications of the nonprofits, to who is allowed to participate.

"If you have other ideas about what we can do, I am open to it," Vice Mayor Anja Reinke said. "These people are known in the community, and there's an overlap in services."

Family Promise of East San Fernando Valley, formed in March 2008 but not yet fully operational, is one of more than 150 networks across the country affiliated with Family Promise. The nonprofit helps low-income families

achieve independence by mobilizing communities to provide shelter, meals and support services through programs designed to remedy the root causes of homelessness, said Board President Jenny Smith.

The Burbank Unified School District in the 2007-08 school year identified homeless 45 families, Smith said.

Burbank Unified Deputy Supt. Joel Shapiro added that in some students' lives, simply getting to school is a challenge.

The pair were joined Tuesday by a coalition of homeless advocates speaking on behalf of the day center, the acquisition of 2615 Thornton Ave. and case-management services by the Family Service Agency.

Guest families, not to exceed 15 people, would use the 1,000-square-foot activity center from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., providing them with a mailing address and hub from which to search for employment and housing. The center will also include shower and laundry facilities.

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