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# OC LEADER BOARD

Opinion, Analysis, Insight

## Solving Homelessness Is a Good Business Decision



**By Steve Churm**  
EVP Public Affairs  
FivePoint Holdings LLC

Homelessness in Orange County has grown by nearly 50% in the past five years to reach what many agree are crisis proportions.

The debate as to the reason for the spike has been vigorous and so has the finger-pointing over solutions. But what's conspicuously missing from the rancorous public dialogue is this: Homeless individuals are here (many are longtime OC residents), and they're not going anywhere.

Along with the human costs of this crisis, as a community, we are spending a tremendous amount of public and private resources to maintain the status quo. How much?

A 2017 study by the University of California-Irvine revealed that per-person annual costs to service chronically homeless individuals—our most vulnerable population—exceeded \$100,000.

That same study showed that placing those individuals in supportive housing units—either existing apartments or newly developed facilities—would slice those costs in half.

In total, Orange County would save more than \$42 million annually.

Those are funds that can be reallocated to other important public safety needs while at the same time change the lives of those who have lost hope on the streets.

### Supportive Housing: It's More Than Just a Bed

Along with many others, we strongly believe the answer is permanent supportive housing: homes in which individuals can live in stable environments, off the streets, away from danger and easy drug access. With a home must come wrap-around supportive services and case management to address their diagnosed disabilities.

Cities like Orlando and Salt Lake City have found success stabilizing homeless individuals and keeping them off the streets through supportive housing as opposed to the ever-controversial—and temporary—shelter option.

Moreover, supportive housing is critical to our local economy.

Orange County corporate leaders have long talked about the importance of quality of life as a key reason for doing business here. It's what separates us from cities

and regions that seek to lure our companies and jobs on a daily basis. It's our most compelling game changer when it comes to business development and retention.

But images of tents strewn along the Santa Ana River Trail, scores of homeless individuals sleeping in local parks, and people begging for money or food outside of businesses all serve as direct threats to our world-class quality of life.

These are just a few of the reasons Orange County business leaders should—and in growing numbers are—getting involved to help lead the effort to solve homelessness here before it spirals further out of control.

### Businesses Must Unite to End Homelessness

United to End Homelessness was launched this year by **United Way** to end the crisis in Orange County. The aim is to harness our community's collective private-sector resources, employ the strategic, entrepreneurial thinking that local business professionals apply to problem-solving on a daily basis, and focus it all on proven solutions.

We are honored to partner with so many high-profile executives serving on the United to End Homelessness Leadership Council.

They include: **Charles Antis, Antis Roofing & Waterproofing; Bill Balfour, Bank of America; Mark Costa, Kaiser Permanente; Greg Custer, Whittier Trust; Lucy Dunn, Orange County Business Council; Dan Hedigan, Irvine Co.; David Kim, The Bascom Group; Dennis Kuhl, Los Angeles Angels; Wing Lam, Wahoo's Fish Taco; Ethan Morgan, JP Morgan Chase; Mary Niven, Disneyland; Ernie Schroeder and Asia Pham, Schroeder Management Co.; Tom Rogers, MemorialCare, Todd Talbot, Fluidmaster Inc.; George T. Urch, Anaheim Ducks/Honda Center; Dan Young, Camino Enterprises;** and so many other philanthropic, faith, government and nonprofit leaders who are passionate about ending homelessness in our community.

We invite every concerned and caring member of the Orange County business community to join us in this effort. The time to act is now. Learn how by visiting [UnitedToEndHomelessness.org](http://UnitedToEndHomelessness.org).



**By Lawrence R. Armstrong**  
CEO  
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