



**CITY OF BEVERLY HILLS**  
**HUMAN SERVICES DIVISION**

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Traffic and Parking Commission

**FROM:** James R. Latta, L.C.S.W., Human Services Administrator  
Wendy K. Hughes, National Urban Fellow, Special Assistant to City Manager

**DATE:** January 10, 2013

**SUBJECT:** *Positive Change, Not Spare Change.*  
Public Awareness Campaign around Panhandling; <http://beverlyhills.org/change>

**ATTACHMENT:** A. An Ordinance of the City of Beverly Hills Prohibiting Certain Conduct on Public Property and Amending the Beverly Hills Municipal Code (Ordinance No. 07-0-2538)

B. Public Awareness Campaign poster (provided under separate cover)

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The following item is provided to the Commission for information only.

Panhandling is not against the law, but where and how one panhandles in the City of Beverly Hills can be (see attachment I). Typically, there are two kinds of panhandlers, aggressive and passive. Aggressive panhandlers block your way, follow, touch and intimidate to solicit money. Passive panhandlers, on the other hand, stand or sit quietly in a specific location with a sign asking for money. Most complaints about panhandling to BHPD are for aggressive panhandlers. On any given day, the business triangle attracts the majority of panhandlers. The most common areas for panhandling are the City owned parking garage exits and elevators, both Rite Aids in town, Rodeo Drive and east Beverly Blvd.

Professional or sophisticated beggars have the right to panhandle under the First Amendment. Even though panhandling is legal, is it appropriate to solicit money under false circumstances? **In the case of Beverly Hills, many of the local panhandlers are professions who are not homeless nor in need of food or assistance.** If these individuals were panhandling for a known social service agency that helped homeless individuals then, soliciting funds would be an honest endeavor. Instead, donations are given under false circumstances to support an addiction or supplement income.

For the few panhandlers that are homeless, contributions of money or food provide just enough subsistence to enable them to deny real help that's available. Many residents are not aware that the City of Beverly Hills provides a homeless outreach team that offers referrals for shelter, benefits, health and other assistance. Please refrain from giving to individual panhandlers and give to your charity of choice or a local food pantry or faith-based organization.

Cities across the nation have tried various approaches to deter panhandling. Common strategies to reduce panhandling include:

- Solicitation free zones;
- Donation centers;
- Readily available social services;
- Restrictions on aggressive panhandling;
- Designated time periods for panhandling;
- Targeted enforcement;
- Increased punishment for offenders;
- Local business efforts working together;
- Community education and outreach.

Most researchers and practitioners seem to agree that the enforcement of laws prohibiting panhandling plays only one part in controlling the problem. **Public education to discourage people from giving money to panhandlers, informal social control (an engaged business community) and adequate social services for panhandlers are the other essential components of an effective and comprehensive response.**

One approach the city has taken to address this issue is the use of the reinstated BHPD bicycle patrol which uses a mix of formal and informal approaches to keep panhandlers working within the boundaries of the law. The lone bike patrol officer will normally inform the aggressive panhandler about the rules they must follow and give them several warnings before issuing a citation. This method has been very effective in controlling the behavior of the more aggressive panhandlers.

Other methods currently being pursued include working with the Beverly Hills Chamber of Commerce to engage the business community, in particular, the outside dining restaurants and local tour bus operators to play a pre-recorded 30 second PSA requesting the visitors to not give money to panhandlers. Signage in City owned parking garages is also another option being pursued. Research continues into additional methods that have worked and not worked in communities similar to Beverly Hills.