

Palisadian-Post

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Palisadian Artist and Activist Debuts Groundwork for 2021 Installation

By Lily Tinoco - April 2, 2020



*Samples of the colorful tents
Photos courtesy of Ed Massey*

By LILY TINOCO | *Reporter*

Palisadian Ed Massey debuted his latest art installation in Santa Monica in late February, calling direct attention to the homeless crisis in Los Angeles.

The artist and activist unveiled the prototype to what is quite possibly the largest art project in Los Angeles:

Up to 5,000 colorful tents with striking patterns may emerge on the streets of LA in the next 12 to 15 months if there is not enough progress in combating homelessness.

“Twenty-five to 28 years ago, I would never think that I would be discussing the unsheltered communities in Los Angeles the way I am right now,” Massey said to the *Palisadian-Post* in the beginning of March. “It’s not only unfortunate, it’s so unlike one of the greatest countries in the world ... to have a situation like this unfolding on our city streets.”

The El Medio Bluffs resident hopes the tent initiative propels a wake-up call to the city and its residents to welcome the development of higher-density housing units or the transformation of unoccupied buildings into temporary shelters with proper running water, heat, ventilation and plumbing.

“This is an opportunity for Angelenos to say, ‘We may live in Los Angeles, we may not want more density and more traffic, but we’re gonna have to live with it,’” Massey said. “With more availability, prices will presumably drop in rent, and that’s really critical and something that the general public would have to decide themselves: Would they rather have more density or welcome the next wave of homeless men and women?”

Massey added that at minimum, the initiative will provide a new tent to somebody in need. The tents will be distributed at no cost to any unsheltered person in LA County that he and his group of volunteers can accommodate.

“Sleeping on cement or pavement is not for humans, and sleeping in tents in an urban environment like a city, a metropolis like Los Angeles, is unfathomable,” Massey said.

He shared the tents will be well made to endure environmental conditions.

But Massey shared one striking difference between this project and his past work: He hopes he doesn’t have to do it.

“What I’m hoping happens is that the project does not move forward because we see tangible improvement,” Massey explained. “That means men and women getting the appropriate care ... If it’s important enough, we need to get agitated enough to start demanding remedies.”

Temporary housing only solves a fraction of the problem. Massey shared he hopes the people experiencing homelessness can receive comprehensive mental health and addiction treatment.

Ideally, the situation will improve over the course of the next 12 to 15 months, but other California cities may be included in Massey’s initiative if the crisis expands.

“It’s a band-aid in a sense,” Massey said. “It’s not the solution whatsoever, it’s going to hopefully be a wake-up call, a visual presence. It’s up to the general public — when the general public is agitated enough, we will start to see the changes that are necessary.”

