

# Pasadena uses meters to raise change for homeless



**ASSOCIATED PRESS**

ASSOCIATED PRESS | September 13, 2014

---

PASADENA — The city of Pasadena is letting homeless people keep the change.

The Los Angeles suburb is turning 14 parking meters into repositories for donations made to nonprofits that serve the homeless, the Los Angeles Times reported Saturday.

Pasadena's housing director, Bill Huang, says the hope is that people who might be reluctant to hand spare change to a panhandler will be more open to putting it in a meter.

"This is a clear alternative where people contributing know that all the money will go to effective services," Huang said.

The meters, painted bright orange and covered with smiley faces and inspirational sayings, are also designed to raise awareness of homelessness.

So far the pilot program's first two meters have raised about \$270 over three weeks.

Some homeless advocates complain the meters aren't a serious enough effort to help the homeless. They also say that in some cities meters have been used to push panhandlers out of town.

"If we would get serious about addressing the actual economic and social issues that we find so off-putting, we wouldn't need meters," said

Paul Boden, director of the Western Regional Advocacy Project, who called the project "asinine."

Pasadena is the first city in Los Angeles County to try the meter approach. Officials said the primary purpose is to raise awareness about homelessness, although they acknowledge it could also reduce panhandling.

Dorothy Edwards, who panhandled near a Target store until she found a home, had mixed feelings.

Getting handouts from strangers allowed her to buy necessities she needed immediately like rain gear, tents and food for her dog, she said. But she added that panhandling also made it easier for her to remain homeless long-term.

"When you look at the big picture, the meters are going to be a long-term solution," she said.

Denver, with 55 meters, says it has raised more than \$30,000 annually for homeless programs while seeing panhandling decrease. But in Orlando, Florida, the Times reports, 15 meters have raised just \$2,027 in three years, \$27 more than it cost to install them.

Pasadena's meter campaign was put together by students at the Art Center College of Design and funded by various grants. The meters themselves were donated.

Local charitable groups are collecting the money.