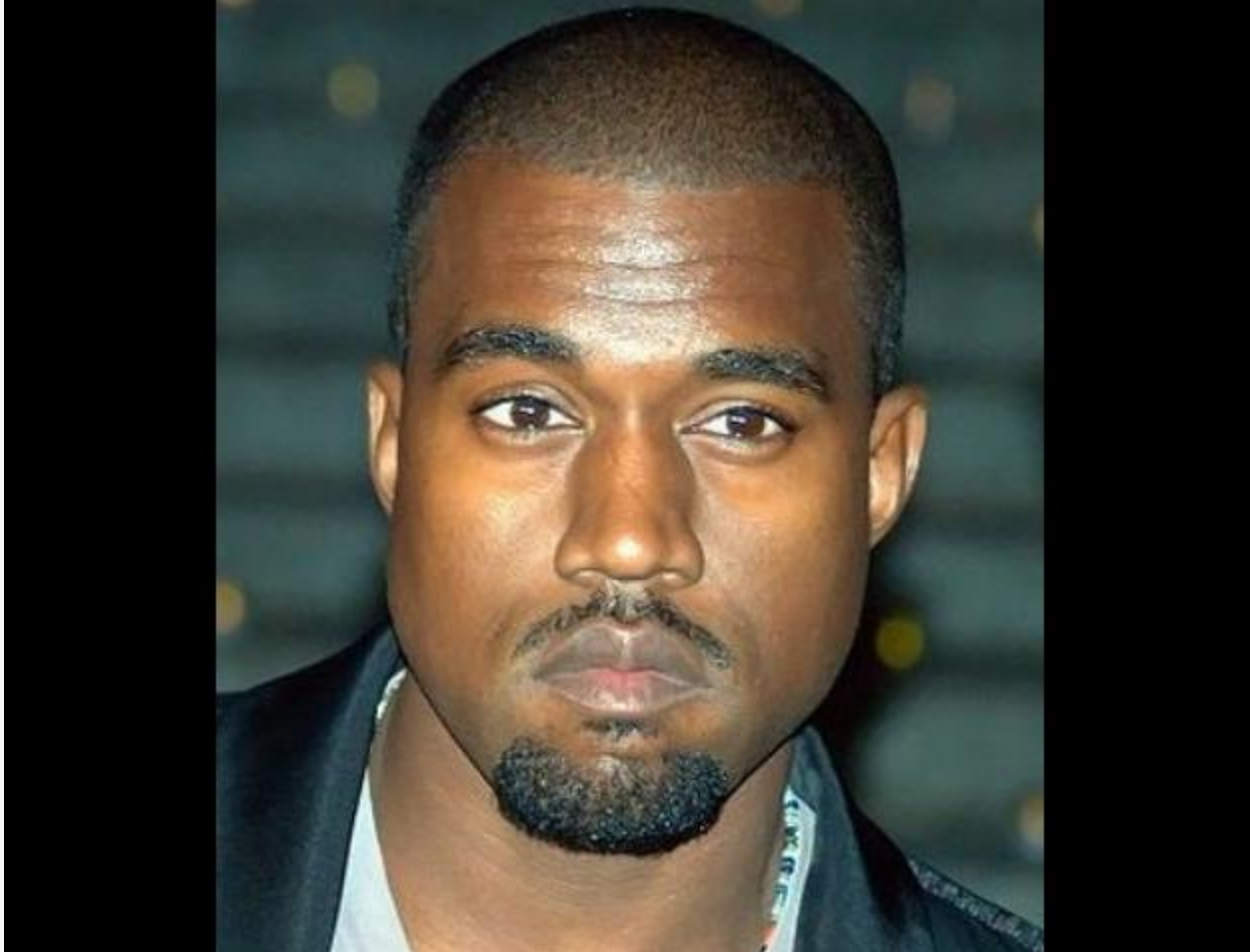


Kanye West's Building Project to Help Solve the Homeless Crisis Is Shut Down by Los Angeles Bureaucrats

written by GEG | December 9, 2019



This past summer, musician Kanye West tried to solve the housing crisis in Los Angeles, which has a homeless population of 59,000 people, by building domed structures on his personal 300-acre plot of land to create low-income housing. Kanye says his goal was to create a community that would “break the barriers that separate classes.” He was addressing the homeless crisis on his own property, on his own dime, at zero cost to the the government. Yet, the government required him to either get a new set of permits or tear down the structures. -GEG

If you only know Kanye West from his music (or the Award Show Interruption Heard Round the World), you would be forgiven for being more than a little surprised by the headline above. But there are few things about Kanye West that aren't surprising.

This past summer, Kanye began work on a new housing community in Los Angeles, developing a series of dome-like structures on a 300-acre plot he owns. The plan was to treat the nascent community as low-income housing, with the long-term goal of creating a community

that would “break the barriers that separate classes,” according to Kanye himself.

California faces one of the largest homelessness crises in the nation, and Kanye was experimenting with ways to address that on his own property, on his own dime. It would have cost the government nothing to allow him to try to solve the problem.

Yet not long after work started, city officials, spurred by complaints from neighbors incensed by the noise from the construction, **informed Kanye he had to either acquire certain permits, or tear down the structures**. Ultimately, the project was scrapped and the structures were destroyed.

All of this leads me to what I am fairly certain is a never-before-typed sentence: Kanye’s foiled attempt at housing construction illustrates the importance of **property rights** to address the need for affordable housing.

Whatever your thoughts on his music (answers may range from “genius” to “wouldn’t play at my worst enemy’s funeral”), Kanye was, by any objective measure, trying to accomplish something good here. In setting his sights on a solution to the city’s affordable housing crisis, Kanye was taking action to solve a problem Los Angeles city officials have failed to properly address.

And it’s a very real problem: By the most recent official count, Los Angeles County has a homeless population of just under 59,000, while the number for the entire state of California comes to 130,000. To put that in perspective, that’s more than the entire population of 23 different state capitals. Within the L.A. metro area, Orange County alone saw a 50 percent increase in homelessness in 2018.

This growth persists in spite of (or, as some critics would say, because of) continual spending by local and state governments. According to the *L.A. Times*, Los Angeles spent \$619 million on homelessness last year, largely funded by additional sales taxes and higher taxes on businesses.

Yet the government shut down Kanye because he didn’t properly ask permission first. Kanye was willing to do the project of his own free will, and still that wasn’t enough. He had to do it according to the government’s plan and procedures. There is no evidence Kanye’s project had construction troubles, faulty planning, or anything worth being shut down over (short of “you didn’t ask permission first”). According to some sources, the main reason the state inspector came by was because of noise complaints by neighbors. The stated permitting issue was because the structures had concrete bases, so they weren’t covered by the temporary permits Kanye had already obtained.

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