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Panhandling and Vagrants at shopping centers by [Charles Willis](#)

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With the dire economic situation panhandling and vagrants have become commonplace at shopping centers in the greater Los Angeles area. Vagrants and panhandlers will sit in front of entrance doors of businesses and solicit customers for money, cigarettes and food. The businesses most of the time cannot do much besides calling the police. The police most of the time will respond very slowly and when they show up they normally do not arrest the vagrants, because after a lot of paperwork they would have to let them go anyway. Without fail the same panhandler will then return to the same spot.

A cycle has developed that perpetuates the situation and will not let it get better. Overcrowding in jails and lack of resources for law enforcement make it impossible for police officers to help businesses. The vagrants and panhandlers normally rely on their panhandling as a source of income to support them. Many times homeless people will look at strip malls and shopping centers to spend the night, because local homeless shelters and help organizations are overburdened and do not have the resources to help everybody. Many times vagrants have mental illnesses and try to stay in familiar surroundings and therefore continue returning to the same location after being warned by business owners, the police and private security guards.

The business owners that are normally renting their business location from property management companies do not want their customers to be harassed by panhandlers. Some vagrants do not have the opportunity to take showers or change clothes in weeks and therefore are dirty and smell. Most of them are normally harmless, but they look dangerous and uninviting to regular people. Consequently many people will stop going to businesses that have panhandlers posted in front of their door, which will result in a significant loss of revenue for business owners. Business owners will appeal to property management companies to do something about the problem. When they contact the police most police stations will state openly or between the lines that there is not much they can do.

Property management companies will need a reliable and experienced security company that will help them with their problem. The security company will have a very important task aside from keeping the vagrants away. They have to cooperate with business owners and the police. A good security company will assign a security consultant who will be the direct contact person for business managers and the property management company alike. He will establish a relationship with the local law enforcement and probably encourage more patrols by the police and faster response times if the police are called. Aside from that he will ensure that security guards are executing to post orders, which means there should be no letdown from confronting and asking panhandlers to leave the property.

The security company must enforce a zero tolerance policy for panhandling and loitering and stay consistent. The only way that will be possible is if the security company strictly holds their security guards accountable through site visits and electronic equipment. A strong and dedicated security company will help store owners focus on their business without worrying about panhandlers and vagrants. They will allow patrons to visit local businesses without being harassed and property managers will not get daily calls from upset business owners and managers.

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Charles Willis is a security consultant for a [security company in Los Angeles](#) frequently training and coaching a [Los Angeles Security Guards](#) and a [Dallas Fort Worth Security Guards](#). He has provided security consultations to numerous Fortune 500 companies and smaller businesses. He is recognized as one of the specialists in the security consultation field.

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