

Ves in my [4!

A Guide to Supportive Housing



Courtesy of the League of Women Voters of Los Angeles

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The Estate of Betty Ingalls

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Study is not enough, becoming experts is not enough. Good citizenship requires not only knowledge but ability to act.

- Marguerite Wells President, League of Women Voters, 1934-44

About the League of Women Voters

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization dedicated to engaging all citizens in the decisions that impact their lives.

In service of this mission, the League studies civic issues and establishes informed positions on them. In 1987, the League of Women Voters of Los Angeles established this position on homelessness:

We support the city's responsibility to provide shelter for people and to seek long-term solutions to homelessness by cooperating with all levels of government and the private sector.

Read the full position at: lwvlosangeles.org

We present this guide as a tool for citizens to get involved in this critical issue.



While I was on the streets, I was diagnosed with stage IV prostate cancer.

Under the best of circumstances, stage IV prostate cancer is hard to beat, but when you don't have a home, you can't get insurance. I developed a plan to die. I had lost my humanity so completely that I didn't think I deserved to keep living. Once I had been there for a few months, I was introduced to Brilliant Corners. Through them, I entered a supportive housing program, and for the first time in my adult life, I had my own home, door and keys. I started working a regular job.

Without a place to live, I would not be alive.



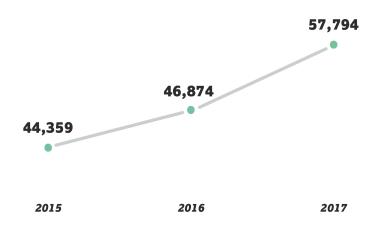
Juan
CSH Speak Up! Advocate
and Resident of PSH

Introduction

A brief overview of homelessness in LA

There are currently almost 60,000 people experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles County, a 23% increase in the homeless population from the previous year.

Many factors have contributed to this increase. A shortage of affordable housing is one. Stagnant wages is another.



Total homeless population count for LA County // Source: LA Homeless Services Authority

Homelessness can affect anyone men, women, children, families, seniors, and veterans. Housing costs continue to rise across LA and many low-income households spend more than 50% of their income on rent. People become homeless because they can't afford housing.

Underlying causes include:

job loss

lack of affordable housing

poor physical or mental health

substance addiction

domestic violence

or inadequate support for people

transitioning out of the military,

the foster care system

or

incarceration

People with a disabling condition who have been homeless for over a year, or have experienced four or more episodes of homelessness in the past three years are considered *chronically homeless* by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Many of these people face serious challenges that prevent them from maintaining permanent housing. Some have very low incomes. Others suffer from substance addiction, mental illness, or chronic medical conditions. People with problems like these typically **cycle in and out of publicly funded institutions** like emergency rooms, mental health facilities, shelters, and jails. Such experiences often worsen their problems.

Since the 1930s, civic leaders have been working to find sustainable solutions that ensure all people have stable housing. They've tried a variety of approaches to eradicate homelessness. One common method was trying to ensure someone was "ready" to move into housing before providing that option.

These programs have not been as effective as planned. However, governments and nonprofits have built up decades of learnings which have paved the way to a better solution: **permanent supportive housing.**



Housing, especially housing with wrap-around services and counseling, saves lives.

It can bring salvation to the desperate and hope to those who were once forgotten.

- LA City Councilmember Jose Huizar, 14th District

Homeless service providers, advocates, and elected officials all agree that permanent supportive housing (PSH) is the most effective and cost-efficient solution to solving long-term homelessness.

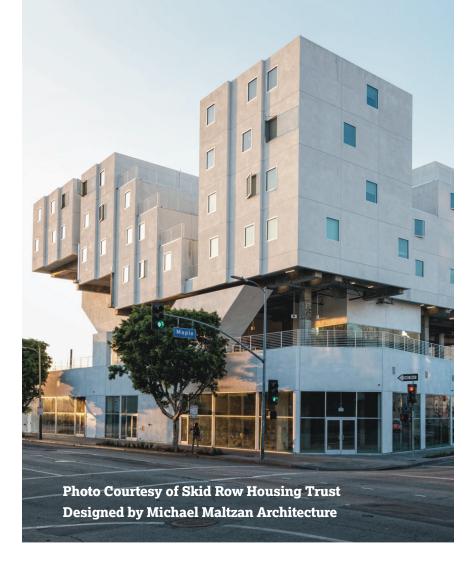
PSH supports an individual's ability to live independently by providing supportive services and appropriate care. However, there are not nearly enough new units to house those currently experiencing homelessness in LA.

In November, 2016, we passed Measure HHH to build 10,000 new permanent supportive housing units in the city of LA over the next ten years. In March, 2017, we passed Measure H, which will fund the services needed for these facilities (in addition to other services). These supportive housing units cannot be built without community support.

Permanent supportive housing has transformed communities by helping people live more stable, productive lives.

The League of Women Voters has developed this guide to help communities understand what permanent supportive housing is and to offer ideas about how we can support PSH initiatives in our own neighborhoods.

Star Apartments provides permanent supportive housing to 100 formerly homeless individuals with high health needs. On the ground floor, the Star houses a medical clinic operated by the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services (DHS), which serves both Star residents and the surrounding community.



What is PSH?

Illuminating permanent supportive housing

Permanent supportive housing is long-term, affordable housing with flexible on-site supportive services, including:



Case management

(to faciliate solutions across services)



Education programs



Job training



Independent living training



Medical, dental and mental health care



Money management



Substance addiction treatment



Support groups and counseling



Homelessness is the moral issue of our time.

We are not here to address homelessness or
manage homelessness or reduce homelessness.

We are here to end homelessness once and for all.

- LA Mayor Eric Garcetti

Residents enter permanent supportive housing through referrals from the Coordinated Entry System (CES), a community based program administered by the Los Angeles Homeless Service Authority.

PSH residents sign leases, and have all the same rights and responsibilities as any renter. They pay rent of up to 30% of their monthly household income (which usually comes from employment or government benefits). There is no time limit for how long someone can stay in permanent supportive housing.

Like market rate housing, permanent supportive housing is designed and built by professional developers and architects.

While PSH saves public dollars, it typically costs more to build than traditional housing units for a few reasons:

How Much the Public Saves with PSH







For chronically homeless population Reduces costs by 79%

Source: CSH/Economic Roundtable

- Offices must be built for on-site case managers and support staff
- Developers invest more in community outreach and the design process (in order to incorporate neighborhood input)
- Housing serving specific populations may need:

Wheelchair-accessible bathrooms

Additional security and safety features (for women or families)

Childcare and play facilities

Special considerations for senior citizens

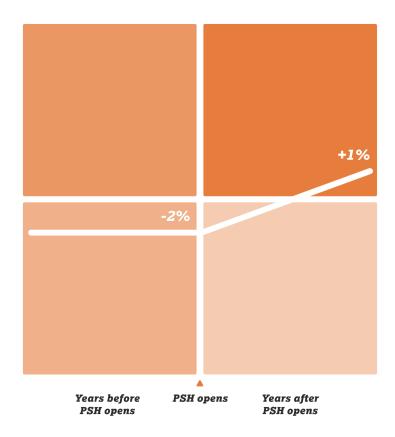
The most effective approach to encourage independent living is to build PSH in strategic locations throughout the community and near public transportation, grocery stores, and employment opportunities.

Permanent supportive housing frequently replaces vacant lots and dilapidated structures.

The buildings are designed to look like market rate housing and generally improve the look and feel of the neighborhood. For this reason, surrounding property values often increase. In addition, permanent supportive housing developments frequently lower crime rates.

Sales Prices of Properties within 500 feet of Supportive Housing

(Compared to Properties Not Near Supportive Housing)



Adapted from a study by the Furman Center: The Impact of Supportive Housing on Surrounding Neighborhoods: Evidence from New York City (2008) Below are descriptions of a few permanent supportive housing sites in LA:

Willis Ave Apartments in Panorama City

Built by A Community of Friends

The Willis Ave project has 42 one bedroom units and serves senior citizens who have a mental health diagnosis. Heritage Clinic provides on-site care. A fitness center, a community garden and a small library foster the residents' health and well-being.

Progress Place Apartments in Downtown LA

Built by Jovenes

Progress Place serves young people from ages 18-25. Residents share two bedroom units with a roommate.

All residents have access to counseling and mental health services on site. In addition, they offer classes on money management and job skills.

The Six in MacArthur Park

Built by Skid Row Housing Trust

The Six was designed to provide safe, beautiful, and healing homes for some of Los Angeles' most vulnerable homeless men and women. The Six is comprised of 52 studio and one-bedroom apartments, 18 of which are specifically set aside for homeless veterans. A supportive network of resident services coordinators and property managers work on-site to provide residents with the support they need to remain housed long-term.



I am a US Navy veteran. I served from 1997 through 2001 as a nuclear mechanic.

My experience in the military led to my homelessness and my passion for permanent housing. Sexual harassment in the military started on day one. Survival in that environment came at a cost. Upon reentry into civilian life, I tried to pretend like those four years didn't exist, but depression, suicidal thoughts, and feelings of worthlessness began to fester like an open wound. As a new mom I could not afford to run from my past any longer – I wanted to be healthy for my daughter and for myself. I sought psychiatric treatment through the VA to address my PTSD.

This began the healing process that led me to the Downtown Women's Center. Thanks to DWC, we found an apartment of our own. Introducing Layla to our new home was both heartbreaking and joyous.



Laura
CSH Speak Up! Advocate
and Resident of PSH

Why is PSH the solution?

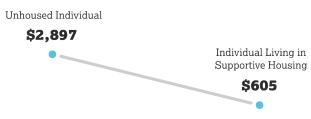
How and why it works

Individuals, families and children need stable housing in order to be healthy, productive members of society. To achieve this, LA County and City have adopted a "Housing First" model. This approach focuses on delivering services and care as needed after people are housed. Housing First has been proven to be the most effective and cost-efficient way to reduce homelessness.

It is designed to **meet the needs of highly vulnerable populations**

by removing the barriers and preconditions that would otherwise prevent an individual from being considered for housing in the first place (for example, low income, substance abuse, or a history of incarceration). It's easier to deliver services to someone who is already housed rather than living on the streets. And the people who benefit from the services are more likely to be receptive when they are in a safe and stable environment.

Average Monthly Costs for Public Services



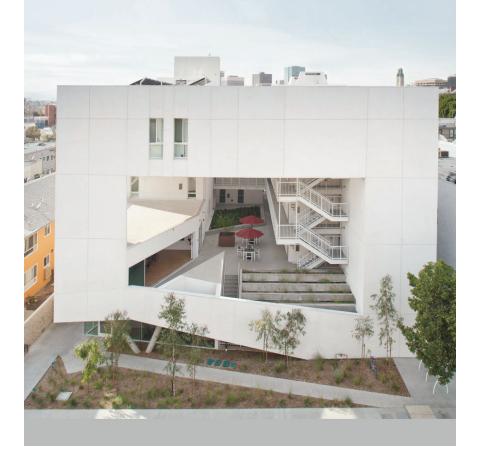
Source: Economic Roundtable "The Costs of Housing and Homelessness in Los Angeles"

PSH is a comprehensive

solution. It offers positive long-term benefits to our chronically homeless neighbors and to our communities. Pairing supportive services with housing increases people's health, income, and education. It also makes more efficient use of taxpayer dollars.

The Six, built and operated by Skid Row Housing Trust, provides homes and support to 52 formerly-homeless individuals, including veterans, in MacArthur Park.

Photo Courtesy of Skid Row Housing Trust Designed by Brooks+Scarpa Architects



How PSH Gets Built

The design and construction progress



Willis Ave Apartments built and operated by A Community of Friends Photo Courtesy of A Community of Friends

Each permanent supportive housing development is unique. Some projects align with existing codes and regulations and do not need special approvals.

Other projects may require permission for zoning changes, for instance, turning a parking lot into a housing development. If zoning variances are needed, developers will ask the Department of City Planning and the City Council for approval.

Generally, PSH is built by independent developers who seek funding through city, state and federal grants. Many of these developers also build market rate housing. These buildings have high design standards that comply with city or neighborhood ordinances.



Progress Place Apartments built and operated by Jovenes Inc.

Photo Courtesy of Jovenes Inc.

The Journey to Housing

An overview of how PSH is built



Locating a site

Developers find sites in a few ways:

- Applying for city owned sites
- Working with a real estate broker
- Approaching a private site owner



Determining the focus

Some developers are mission-driven and build for families, women, or veterans. Other developers may choose which population to serve based on the site and surrounding neighborhood.



Feasibility

As they consider both financial and neighborhood support, developers make sure the site and project suit the neighborhood. They look at environmental factors. How close it is to transit? Are there existing site capabilities like green spaces?



Zoning

Some projects need zoning changes to incorporate more units, include less parking, or build on a site not zoned for residences. These changes are customarily reviewed by City Planning, Neighborhood Councils and the City Council.



Design

Developers often work with architects who also design market rate housing. In fact, it's hard to tell a PSH project apart from any other apartment complexes; they are designed to fit their neighborhoods.



Construction

As construction starts, updates may get posted at the site location.



Operations

Once the building is complete, the important work begins - moving in residents and providing supportive services.

PSH is built by both nonprofit and for-profit developers. Some of the developers working around LA are:

A Community of Friends

Skid Row Housing Trust

Abode Communities

LA Family Housing

Mercy Housing

Jovenes Inc

STEP UP

LAMP

Developers aim to include the community as early as possible. They conduct community outreach to share their plans. Meetings, site tours, flyers and participatory design sessions are some of the tools they use.

If a development is planned in your area, you will often receive notices in the mail. In addition, you can learn about local housing by attending your Neighborhood Council meetings or **joining the mailing lists for the local PSH developers** mentioned here.



I kept my addiction hidden, away from my children and my family. With secrecy came shame, which only plunged me further into my addiction. In the dark, I became homeless. For five years, I lived without a home. Sometimes living in my car, shelters, transitional housing, deplorable conditions or with a man who abused me. Finally, [I found] the Downtown Women's Center (DWC), whose compassion and resources pointed the way and led me down the path to the light.

It was not an easy path. The application for supportive housing is three inches thick.

There were a lot of setbacks, but every step forward was because of the help and encouragement I received from Tracy at DWC. She didn't do it for me, she empowered me to do it myself. That's the thing about support. It's hard to pull yourself out of the darkness when you can't remember what light looks like.



Amiyoko
CSH Speak Up! Advocate
and Resident of PSH



Will a nearby PSH development affect my property's value?

No. Many studies throughout the nation have shown that supportive housing does not depress home prices. In fact, PSH facilities have either had a neutral or positive effect on their neighbors' property values, as they frequently replace unsightly parking lots and vacant buildings with attractive new housing that improves the look and feel of the neighborhood.

Will the PSH buildings be ugly?

Absolutely not! When people hear about government-subsidized housing, many recall high-rise eyesores from the '50s and '60s. However, today's facilities are designed to be attractive, positive additions to their neighborhoods. Developers routinely solicit feedback from local residents to ensure their plans are well-informed and blend seamlessly into the neighborhood.

Will supportive housing increase drug use and crime in the area?

No. If a new PSH tenant is identified as having a substance abuse disorder, he or she will have immediate access to treatment. Because on-site security personnel and caseworkers are concerned for the safety of vulnerable tenants, neighborhood crime often decreases around supportive housing.

The permanent supportive housing (PSH) development planned nearby may house tenants with mental illness. Will tenants cause disturbances in the neighborhood?

People with mental health issues are often stigmatized as more dangerous than others, but in fact, they are no more likely than anyone else to commit a crime.

The best approach to assure a reduction of

any possible disturbance is to make sure tenants are treated, supported and housed. Residents in PSH have access to mental health care and other supportive services to help them lead healthy, productive lives in a safe environment.

It is important to understand that PSH is not an open door shelter, but a permanent housing facility that finds tenants through referrals by local agencies.

Will my children be safe in the area around PSH?

The community is safer when people are in housing instead of living on the street without support. When PSH is in place, children on the streets are less likely to encounter someone who has an untreated mental illness.

How will the permanent supportive housing development affect traffic?

Architects charged with developing PSH routinely conduct preliminary studies of density so that they can design the facility in such as way as to have a minimal effect on local traffic. Moreover, PSH tenants often do not own cars and use public transit instead.

What types of social services will be available to tenants on site?

Permanent supportive housing developments always have a strong support network in place. On-site case managers and a 24-hour crisis response system are the norm.

Case managers assist residents in creating

an action plan to meet their individual needs and goals. They link them to services designed to improve their physical and mental health, employment skills, education, and independent living skills. All of the city's planned PSH locations will release detailed service plans as the size of the proposed projects and the specific groups of people to be housed are identified. You can look out for those by joining the Measure HHH meeting updates. Links are on our website: yesinmyla.org/resources

Will there be property managers and other staff at the development?

Yes. California law requires all apartment buildings of 16 or more units to include a responsible person living on-site. In the case of permanent supportive housing, this person is usually a highly trained resident manager. The staffing/residence requirements increase as the number

of units increase. Additionally, case managers work on-site in PSH buildings, as do maintenance personnel and other support staff.

Where can I learn more about the impact and success rates of permanent supportive housing?

The Corporation for Supportive Housing has published studies, research results, and other information available online at **csh.org**.

How is PSH funded?

Developers apply for funding through the city/county, state and national levels as well as through private grant programs. Measure HHH and Measure H will greatly expand the city and county's ability to fund PSH. If a developer applies for funds from the city, the Administrative Oversight Board and the Citizen's Oversight Board review and approve the projects. Once a project is supported by the city or county,

it's easier to get funding from other sources.

How cost efficient is PSH?

We spend many more taxpayer dollars on our current method of dealing with homelessness — police, courts, jails and emergency rooms — than we will be spending on PSH. PSH is not only humane; it's also cost-effective. Read more on pages 16 and 25

How can I learn more about the Measure HHH projects?

The city has established both an Administrative Oversight Committee and a Citizen's Oversight Committee to oversee funds from Measure HHH. Find out when they meet and what's on the agenda by going to the City Administrative Officer's website. We've included links at yesinmyla.org/resources

| What You | Can Do |
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If we want to see an LA where homelessness becomes a thing of the past, we must all become involved to support the solution. Here are some actions you can take:



Talk with your friends and neighbors about PSH

There are a lot of misconceptions out there about supportive housing. Let others know where you stand and what has helped shaped your perspective.



Write your City and Neighborhood Councils

Let them know you support PSH in your community.
Find your reps at:
neighborhoodinfo.lacity.org



Follow organizations involved in PSH

Join the mailing lists for United Way of Greater Los Angeles, Abundant Housing and community developers.
We've included a list at yesinmyla.org/resources



Attend meetings and speak up!

There are many opportunities to learn about projects or make a public comment. Your Neighborhood Council is a great place to start.

neighborhoodinfo.lacity.org



Tour housing sites

Invite your friends and neighbors to tour nearby PSH facilities. It's easy to arrange such events; just contact the local agencies that operate them. We've included a list at yesinmyla.org/resources

Further Reading

We've included a thorough list of the studies and resources we used to compile this guide on our website at:

yesinmyla.org/resources

Contributors

This guide was researched, written and edited by members of the League of Women Voters of LA

Homeless Action Committee:

Gabrielle d'Ayr

Nikki DuBose

Catherine Eichhorn

Catherine Hicks

Catherine Kim

Janet Kim

Karen Leonard

Madalyn Liautaud

Maggie Murray

Alexa Roman

Laurice Penny Sommers

Torene Svitil

Sandra Trutt

Virginia Wexman

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Phil Ansell, LA County Homeless Initiative Claire Bowin, City Planning Anne Dobson, Skid Row Housing Trust Ann English, CSH Dora Leong Gallo, A Community of Friends Matthew Glesne, City Planning Marilu Guevera, League of Women Voters LA Ed Holder, Mercy Housing David Howden, CSH Tim Iglesias, University of San Francisco Andrea Marchetti, Jovenes Inc Blair Miller, Office of the CAO Maria Montero, League of Women Voters LA Alisa Orduna, Office of Mayor Garcetti Mee Heh Risdon, CSH Frank Romero, United Way of Greater LA Martha Sklar, League of Women Voters LA LWV of LA Board of Directors





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