

MOTION

Expanding Housing Options to Help More Homeless Individuals Transition from the Streets through a Housing Now Fund

On March 3, 2021, the Los Angeles City Council unanimously instructed City staff to develop a framework to establish a Right to Housing in the City of Los Angeles (City). Subsequently, on May 13, 2021 and June 24, 2021 the Los Angeles Housing Department provided updates on the plan to create a cohesive Right to Housing framework to organize and scale up the City's response to the homelessness crisis. A Right to Housing is predicated on four components: homelessness prevention, adequate interim housing including specialized mental health beds, sufficient permanent affordable and supportive housing, and effective street engagement. These four components must work seamlessly to build a robust and responsive system that effectively prevents and addresses the homeless crisis that profoundly impacts communities across the City.

On July 2, 2021, the City Council directed staff to develop and implement a standardized Street Engagement Strategy that would provide robust and uniform street engagement in order to connect with unsheltered individuals and help them transition from the streets to housing. In response, on July 28, 2021, the City Administrative Officer released the first-ever Citywide Street Engagement Strategy, which will be further discussed, refined and enhanced. However, the success of the Citywide Street Engagement Policy will be predicated on the ability to provide people experiencing homelessness with sustainable housing opportunities.

"Street to Home" initiatives, which have been piloted across the City, have demonstrated the efficacy of deploying street engagement staff that provide dedicated outreach and engagement at particular encampments with the goal of rehousing each person living at the site. The dedicated street engagement team is able to develop relationships with those experiencing homelessness at the site, link them to specialized services such as mental health resources and legal assistance, and critically, connect them to the most appropriate housing options. If sufficiently resourced, this model has demonstrated that it is possible to help individuals swiftly transition from the streets to more sustainable housing options.

Successful street engagement requires an adequate supply of affordable and supportive housing that is readily available to place unhoused clients without delay. Ongoing subsidized rental assistance, especially for those on the street who are coping with serious health, mental health and substance abuse issues, is a necessary and cost-effective strategy to help end not just an episode of homelessness, but chronic homelessness for many living on the streets of Los Angeles. While Project Roomkey and the Bridge Home shelters have been valuable additions to the housing toolkit to provide swift opportunities to bring individuals indoors, these beds represent temporary placements and the clients in these situations will ultimately require a long-term housing placement.

Currently, over 60% of the homeless crisis in the County of Los Angeles (County) is located in the City. According to the most recent data provided by LAHSA, the City, in collaboration with the County, has expanded the homelessness safety net to approximately 15,000 shelter beds and 24,600 permanent housing slots. However, this supply remains insufficient to address the crisis on our streets – as it has been estimated that 28,000 Angelenos remain unhoused.

It is the responsibility of the City Council to double down on resources to invest in re-housing strategies that can be operationalized efficiently and effectively. Moreover, it is critical that we build a balanced system to prevent individuals from remaining stuck in shelter beds without a viable exit strategy to transition into long-term housing. Without a long-term placement readily available, individuals will continue to occupy a shelter bed that can assist other unsheltered individuals transition from the street. Experts assert that a balanced system would have five permanent housing beds available for each interim housing bed.

The State of California's budget for Fiscal Year 2021-22 includes \$4.8 billion in new one-time resources for programs including Homekey, new capital for permanent housing, and local grants. To fully take advantage of these capital investment opportunities, localities need an infusion of ongoing subsidized rental subsidies to fund the operating costs.

Ongoing subsidized rental assistance, especially for those on the street who are coping with serious health, mental health and substance abuse issues, is a necessary and cost-effective strategy to help end not just an episode of homelessness, but chronic homelessness for many living on the streets of Los Angeles. One of the premier rental assistance programs is overseen and operated by the County of Los Angeles' Department of Health Services' Housing for Health Program, and provides flexible rental assistance that targets those with complex health issues. The County's flexible rental assistance has helped over 9,000 Angelenos transition off the streets into long-term housing and stay housed owing to the intensive case management services that accompanies each recipient of rental assistance. An infusion of ongoing rental assistance funded by the City, coupled with intensive case management and supportive services provided by the County, would provide the expansion of resources to swiftly and sustainably house those living on the streets – specifically targeting those with serious health and mental health needs. The agreement between the County and the City could be formulated in a similar manner to the Memorandum of Understanding executed in 2017 which jointly committed City Proposition HHH and County Measure H funds to create more housing and provide supportive services, respectively.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the City Administrative Officer and the Chief Legislative Analyst seek to work in partnership with the County of Los Angeles' (County) Chief Executive Officer and the County's Director of the Department of Health Services to:

1. Support the implementation of the City of Los Angeles' Street Engagement Strategy and Right to Housing framework by identifying funding to increase flexible rental housing subsidies through a partnership with the County's

Department of Health Services that targets clients in the City of Los Angeles who have significant health and mental health needs (Housing Now Program);

2. Direct the City Administrative Officer with the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles, and the Los Angeles Housing Department, to report to the Los Angeles City Homelessness and Poverty Committee within 30 days on the operating or rental subsidy needs of the current pipeline of interim and permanent supportive housing, including projects in the Roadmap, Homekey Round 1, HHH projects, other City-funded Supportive Housing Projects, and prospective Homekey Round 2 projects; and
3. Report back to the Los Angeles City Homelessness and Poverty Committee in 30 days with recommendations to create the Housing Now Program, memorialized by a Memorandum of Understanding between the City and County of Los Angeles, with the objective of doubling the program by creating a minimum of 10,000 ongoing flexible housing subsidies.

PRESENTED BY:

MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS
Councilmember, 10th District

MIKE BONIN
Councilmember, 11th District

CURREN D. PRICE, JR.
Councilmember, 9th District

SECONDED BY:

PAUL KORETZ
Councilmember, 5th District