

December 21, 2022

**Los Angeles County
Board of Supervisors**

Hilda L. Solis
First District


Holly J. Mitchell
Second District

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Janice K. Hahn
Fourth District

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Fifth District

TO: Supervisor Janice K. Hahn, Chair
Supervisor Hilda L. Solis
Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell
Supervisor Lindsey P. Horvath
Supervisor Kathryn Barger

FROM: Christina R. Ghaly, M.D. 
Director

SUBJECT: **SKID ROW ACTION PLAN: IMPROVING THE
LIVES OF RESIDENTS ON SKID ROW BY
ADDRESSING HOMELESSNESS STEMMING
FROM DECADES OF INSTITUTIONAL RACISM
(ITEM 17, FROM THE AGENDA JUNE 28, 2022)**

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On [June 28, 2022](#), the Board of Supervisors (Board), directed the Department of Health Services' Housing for Health (HFH) in conjunction with the Chief Executive Office Homeless Initiative (CEO-HI) to convene working groups that include representatives from the City of Los Angeles Mayor's Office, Los Angeles City Council District 14, the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA), Department of Public Social Services, Department of Mental Health, Department of Public Health, Los Angeles County Department of Aging and Disabilities, Los Angeles County Department of Economic Opportunity, and Skid Row community partners including residents, service providers, and stakeholders, to develop a collaborative Skid Row Action Plan. The working groups were directed to work together to leverage existing resources to support the action plan. This is the final report from HFH.

Attached, please find the Skid Row Action Plan (SRAP) recommendations (**Attachment A**).

As stated in previous reports, Dr. Alisa Orduña and HFH staff facilitated a total of 15 workgroup meetings from August 2022 through November 2022 in the following categories:

- Permanent Housing
- Safe Services
- Interim Housing
- Drug-User Health Hub
- 24/7 Low Barrier Health and Behavioral Healthcare Center

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patients and our communities by
providing extraordinary
care"*



In addition, the CEO-HI facilitated two meetings with the City of Los Angeles (LA City) and two meetings with the applicable Los Angeles County (LA County) departments and LAHSA.

These meetings brought together community members, local organizations, service providers, LA City and LA County departments, and other stakeholders which informed the attached SRAP recommendations. In addition, a Skid Row Resident Advisory Committee also guided SRAP's development.

On November 18, 2022, the Skid Row Resident Advisory Committee hosted a festival for the community to review draft recommendations, provide feedback, and identify priorities in each workgroup category. On December 14, 2022, a final meeting with stakeholders and contributors was conducted to present the groups' recommendations.

The next steps include HFH working with CEO-HI to develop cost estimates and to identify potential funding sources to address each of the recommendations. It is anticipated that this work will take two to three months.

If you have any questions, you or your staff may contact Elizabeth Boyce, HFH Deputy Director, at eboyce@dhs.lacounty.gov.

CRG:sm

c: Chief Executive Office
County Counsel
Executive Office, Board of Supervisors
Department of Public and Social Services
Department of Mental Health
Department of Public Health
Department of Economic Opportunity
Department of Aging and Disabilities
Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority

ATTACHMENT A

SKID ROW ACTION PLAN: IMPROVING THE LIVES OF RESIDENTS ON SKID ROW BY ADDRESSING HOMELESSNESS STEMMING FROM DECADES OF INSTITUTIONAL RACISM (ITEM 17, FROM THE AGENDA JUNE 28, 2022)

Skid Row is a community whose residents care deeply about their neighborhood and who strive daily towards health and safety for all who reside there. The Skid Row Action Plan aims to address the history of Skid Row, which sits at the crossroads of historic and systemic racism and deep poverty. Since the end of the 19th century, housing scarcity and unaffordability throughout Los Angeles brought those experiencing financial and housing insecurity to the area's affordable, low-barrier housing. To begin to redress the harmful impacts of history, the Skid Row community is seeking investment and resources to build up the community to a place of thriving.

On June 28, 2022, the Board of Supervisors passed a motion introduced by Supervisor Solis to create a Skid Row Action Plan to outline recommended priorities for transitioning Skid Row into a safe and healthy community. The motion laid out several components to be included in the plan including increasing permanent and interim housing, creating a safe services space, a 24/7 health and behavioral health center, and a drug user health hub. The motion requested that the Department of Health Services Housing for Health (HFH) in conjunction with the CEO Homeless Initiative lead a stakeholder process to collectively develop the Skid Row Action Plan. HFH developed five workgroups in line with the five priorities outlined in the motion, as well as a Skid Row Advisory Council and a government workgroup, convening service providers, county and city staff, Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) staff, local residents, and persons who are accessing or have accessed services in the community.

These community contributors to the Skid Row Action Plan are advocating firmly for a shift away from inflexible service models or enforcement activities, and towards a public safety achieved through the empowerment of community members to promote community cohesion. As a result of the policies which have shaped Skid Row, Black, Latino and LGBTQ+ communities are prominently represented in the Skid Row population, and residents are clear: the services meeting the needs of the Skid Row population must culturally reflect the communities they are serving. The workgroups developed recommendations for a throughline of values for Skid Row operation, as well as tangible programs, processes, and spaces which will realize this vision for the neighborhood.

GOVERNING PRINCIPLES

Throughout its development and operation, the Skid Row Action Plan must be governed by the goals to:

- Provide all housing and services through trauma-informed practices and in a culturally aware manner, in recognition of the specific community culture of Skid Row.
- Develop services and infrastructure with particular attention to the most vulnerable Skid Row populations, including severely mentally ill individuals, substance users, sex workers, families, undocumented individuals, women, and members of the LGBTQ+ community.
- Develop housing and service spaces which are welcoming and designed with an eye towards positivity, tranquility, warmth, and trust.
- Employ and develop well trained, compassionate, non-judgmental staff who are invested in the wellbeing and nurturing of Skid Row and community members.

PERMANENT HOUSING

The Skid Row Community expressed significant concerns regarding the wellness of existing permanent housing in Skid Row. The workgroup discussed the difficulty of transferring to other housing opportunities based on changes in life circumstances such as aging-in-place.

Individuals who are currently housed in Skid Row permanent housing units unilaterally report unsafe, unhealthy, and poor living conditions. In addition, they feel as though they are not treated kindly by property management and that there is a lack of opportunity to build a sense of community and belonging among tenants, creating feelings of isolation and mistrust. This results in feelings of powerlessness and hopelessness of the tenants, which undermines the social value of housing as a place that people could proudly call home.

RECOMMENDATIONS	KEY COMPONENT(S)
Improve conditions of existing permanent housing stock.	Create a resident council of individuals who live in publicly funded permanent housing in Skid Row, which reports to a committee of leaders from City of Los Angeles, County of Los Angeles, and Department of Housing and Urban Development.
	Assess the safety, maintenance, and physical conditions of current permanent housing stock in Skid Row, and develop an improvement action plan based on findings, as well as written safety and maintenance standards of housing programs.
	Increase clinical, non-clinical, and property management staff, including staff to conduct activities and assistance with income and job acquisition.
Create pathways for individuals to move to other permanent housing opportunities.	Create pathways for permanent housing tenants in Skid Row to be able to access other housing opportunities, including multiple subsidy and service types.
	Create a pilot program for DHS Outreach Teams (C3) and DMH HOME teams to work together and directly match individual clients to permanent supportive housing resources in and outside Skid Row.
Increase permanent housing stock.	Establish a standard for new permanent housing that all units must be no smaller than a studio (include a kitchen and a private bathroom).
	Create new permanent housing opportunities to serve key target populations, including seniors, families, individuals with high medical and/or psychiatric services, and low-income affordable housing.

INTERIM HOUSING

The Skid Row Community needs more interim housing beds that are easily accessible and low-barrier. Multiple types of interim housing are necessary, meeting the various needs of the unhoused Skid Row Community. Workgroup members, particularly those with experience of interim housing in Skid Row, spoke of the trauma of losing a bed for being in noncompliance with a host of provider rules and guidelines.

RECOMMENDATIONS	KEY COMPONENT(S)
Improve access to Interim Housing.	Implement walk-in referrals and triage and expeditiously coordinate immediate access to all publicly funded interim housing in Skid Row.
	Implement a no-tolerance policy for returns to street homelessness, including a requirement that exits must be approved by the funder.
Improve existing interim housing.	Create an Interim Housing Council, which reviews non-client specific interim housing complaints and works with IH providers and/or funders to resolve.
	Create a County team that provides on-site technical assistance and support for safety and health conditions.
	Increase clinical and non-clinical staff.
	Provide comprehensive harm reduction services including amnesty lockers.
Increase exits from interim to permanent housing.	Increase housing navigation services at interim housing sites.
Increase interim housing stock.	Create additional non-congregate interim housing sites.
	Create Safe Sleep sites, where unhoused people can remain in outside dwellings and be provided supportive services and facilities for self-care.
	Create new interim housing opportunities to serve key target populations, including seniors, families, individuals with high medical and/or psychiatric services.

24/7 LOW BARRIER HEALTHCARE CENTER

The Skid Row Community needs 24/7 access to healthcare resources which is low-barrier and is set up to treat all residents of Skid Row. This Center should offer critical services for those in crisis and those seeking a low-barrier entrance into preventative and ongoing medical care.

RECOMMENDATIONS	KEY COMPONENT(S)
Establish a Healthcare Center for residents to access health and behavioral health care 24/7.	Ensure that the designated service provider implements a Consumer Advisory Council to guide and provide input on programming and service provision.
	Provide episodic and acute physical and behavioral healthcare support services 24/7.
	Provide Harm Reduction Services including Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) and substance-use counseling.
	Provide access to medication for acute needs.
Provide immediate pathways to interim housing, respite beds and primary health, mental health, and substance use services.	Create respite beds within the Center and access to interim housing.
	Establish a Skid Row health care provider network which (re)connects users to ongoing primary, behavioral health, and substance abuse services.
Provide transportation to Healthcare Center.	Establish a Transportation Unit, which responds to a 24/7 Healthcare Center hotline and provides transport from all areas of Skid Row to the Healthcare Center.
Establish a Data Sharing Agreement with healthcare, mental healthcare, and substance abuse providers in Skid Row.	Promote coordination of health, mental health, and behavioral health to ensure a no-wrong-door policy and (re)connection to ongoing healthcare.

DRUG USER HEALTH HUB

Skid Row is experiencing an acute overdose crisis that demands a rapid response. These deaths and the many non-fatal overdoses exacerbate trauma experienced by the Skid Row community. The Drug User Health Hub provides a holistic approach to supporting people who use drugs, supporting them to reduce harm in their lives and improve Skid Row community health. This model requires a relational approach to people who engage in services, supporting their self-defined health and wellness goals. The Health Hub would provide accurate, relevant health education, naloxone/ overdose prevention and safer consumption and safer sex supplies as well as linkages to programs and services for those seeking treatment.

RECOMMENDATIONS	KEY COMPONENT(S)
Expand substance use services, capacity, and treatment options.	Increase access to same day/immediate placement referrals to treatment and detox beds.
	Provide onsite short-term respite beds for Drug User Health Hub utilizers.
	Provide outpatient MAT services and alternative treatments which prioritize the immediate well-being and safety of substance users.
	Provide low-barrier access to harm reduction supplies, including drug composition testing.
	Provide ongoing, meaningful, and relevant drug health education and support groups involving drug users and supportive staff, as well as training in first aid, CPR, wound care, overdose reversals, and harm reduction and safe usage, etc.
	Employ community members with experience of drug use.
Create a community engagement and skill development space.	Offer workforce, social enterprise, and volunteer opportunities.
Provide low-barrier access to services and space.	Provide services 24/7/365 days of the year without time limits on length of visits.
	Create a welcoming space that includes food, activities, wellness, and personal care facilities, and which is free from monitoring by law enforcement.
	Provide onsite physical and mental health services including MAT and outpatient detox, as well as Overdose Prevention Centers/safe consumption sites when approved by LA County and LA City.
	Establish harm reduction satellite hubs within existing housing and service sites.

Facilitate access to the Drug Health Center.	Establish a 24/7 Drug Health Center hotline which connects all areas of Skid Row to the Drug Health Center with on-call overdose prevention assistance and connections to relevant services.
	Establish a Transportation Unit to respond to hotline requests requiring access to the Drug Health Center.

SAFE SERVICES SPACE

The Skid Row community needs a safe and inclusive low-barrier space which provides services and programming for the entire Skid Row Community. Services would include intensive care for vulnerable populations including mentally ill individuals, substance users, families, undocumented individuals, women, and members of the LGBTQ community. Safe services should build from what already exists in Skid Row and should incorporate and empower the voices and people of the Skid Row Community in the planning, implementation, and maintenance of the site.

RECOMMENDATIONS	KEY COMPONENT(S)
Create a low-barrier space for services and connections.	Purchase a centrally located site with sufficient space to host the variety of services outlined for the Space.
	Include in the space's infrastructure a stage for performances, seating and charging stations, personal care facilities (bathrooms, showers, laundry), and gardens.
Provide comprehensive services in one location.	<p>Recruit service providers to provide the following services including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health, mental health, behavioral health • Ticket expungement and legal aid, including immigration legal support via LA Justice Fund • Income support via disability and other benefits advocacy (eg. SSI/SSDI, CAPI, Veteran Benefits) via HFH's Countywide Benefits Entitlement Service Team (CBEST). • Public benefits application and support via the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) for CalFresh, Medi-Cal, General Relief (GR), and CalWorks. • Military and Veterans Affairs • Aging and Disabilities Services • Economic Opportunities including workforce development, training, and placement • ID receipt via the CA Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) • Budgeting, money management, credit repair • Veterinary services • Daily community activities including spiritual programming

ADDITIONAL COMMUNITY RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were developed by community members in support of the recommendations from the individual workgroups.

RECOMMENDATIONS	KEY COMPONENT(S)
Create local economic opportunities.	Prioritize community-based hiring and develop recruitment and retention practices which meet the needs of community members seeking employment.
	Support local entrepreneurship through expansion of social enterprise programs.
Build the capacity of the workforce which provides services in the Skid Row community.	Increase compensation and retention incentives for service provider staff.
	Provide training, skill-building, and staff development opportunities which promote continued learning.
	Embed ongoing wellness activities and resources for staff to address burn out and vicarious trauma.
Establish a Community Ambassador Program that employs Skid Row residents to promote safety, care, and a message of empowerment to the unhoused residents of Skid Row.	Augment programs employing local residents for the promotion of community safety and beautification.
Create a dignified and welcoming neighborhood by improving the accessibility and built environment of Skid Row.	Enhance and replace street lighting.
	Add green space and safe walking paths.
	Increase sanitation facilities, including gender neutral facilities.
	Commission street art featuring local artists.
Sustain the Ad-Hoc Resident Advisory Committee to oversee the implementation for the Skid Row Action Plan.	The Committee serves to advocate on behalf of the residents of Skid Row and provide ongoing feedback and support throughout SRAP implementation, through problem solving and uplifting concerns to governmental partners.