

## **West Los Angeles National Guard Armory Bridge Housing Proposal**

Prepared by the Office of Los Angeles County Supervisor Sheila Kuehl

### **Homelessness in Los Angeles**

Los Angeles County is facing a tremendous homelessness crisis as a result of increasing rents and stagnating incomes. The 2018 Los Angeles Point-in-Time Homeless Count reported 52,765 individuals experiencing homelessness on any given night, 39,396 of whom are currently unsheltered. Data from 2018 revealed that in the Service Planning Area (SPA) 5 of West Los Angeles, a total of 4,401 individuals are experiencing homelessness on any given night. Of these individuals, 79% are currently unsheltered. While we have made great strides towards building Bridge Housing at the West Los Angeles VA for veterans, there are only 15 year-round shelter beds available for non-veteran, single-adults.

### **Bridge Housing**

Thankfully the voters of Los Angeles supported Measure H in the County and Los Angeles City Proposition HHH that are allowing the County and City to expand housing and services for people experiencing homelessness. This historic investment is expanding homelessness prevention, outreach, safe parking, bridge housing, rapid re-housing, permanent supportive housing, social services, and employment and benefit opportunities. Bridge Housing is a critical component of our homeless crisis response system as it allows outreach teams to provide a safe place for these individuals to sleep while helping them navigate the path towards permanent housing. It is open 24/7, has ample on-site services, and has low access barriers which can include allowing pets and providing storage for belongings. In the third district, we are working on opening bridge housing in Hollywood, Sylmar, Canoga Park, and Venice.

### **Winter Shelter**

Winter Shelters are another tool that provides safety and services to the most vulnerable Los Angeles residents experiencing homelessness during the winter months. Despite the tremendous number of unsheltered individuals in SPA 5, there is only one operating Winter Shelter located at the West Los Angeles Armory with a 160-bed capacity, leaving roughly 96% of these individuals without an option for shelter during the most of year. It is important to note that Winter Shelters were designed decades ago and have not proven to be effective in linking clients to permanent housing. That said, they do provide critical life-saving shelter from the elements for people who nowhere else to sleep. In April 2017, the Board of Supervisors moved to examine all winter shelters in the County to determine if they could better serve the County's growing homeless population by becoming year-round 24/7 crisis housing sites.

### **Opening Year-Round Bridge Housing at the West LA Armory**

West Los Angeles is some of the most expensive real estate in the Country. Because of the high cost of real estate there are extremely limited options for public or private land that could be used for Bridge Housing. The City of Los Angeles, Los Angeles County, and California state representatives have begun exploratory conversations with the National Guard to close the current winter shelter program and build a year-round Bridge Housing program on a portion of the West LA Armory parking lot. The National Guard welcomed these negotiations, but learned that the original deed for the property from the federal government to the state in 1960 and Public Law (PL) 85-236 restrict the use of the property to military purposes only. With support from Assemblymember Bloom and Senator Feinstein, the City and County are seeking amendments to the deed and PL 85-236 to allow the property to be used for both military and

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other public purposes, which would allow continued negotiations with the National Guard to use a portion of the property for year-round Bridge Housing. It is important to remember that the homeless crisis response system is expanding across all of Los Angeles County and Bridge Housing is just one critical component of that expansion.

During 2019 the County, City and State will explore the feasibility of building a Bridge Housing facility at the West LA Armory and conduct a robust community engagement effort to determine community support for this proposal. If the proposal is deemed feasible and community support is demonstrated construction would likely begin in 2020.