

Communication from Public

Name: End Homelessness Now-LA
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Comments for Public Posting: See attached letter to Mayor Garcetti, CLA, CAO, and HCID

End Homelessness Now-LA

2122 W. Jefferson Blvd., L.A., CA 90018
endhomelessnessnowla@gmail.com
323-732-6416

February 19, 2021

Mayor Eric Garcetti
200 N. Spring Street Room 303
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Chief Legislative Analyst Sharon Tso
200 North Spring Street Room 255
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Chief Administrative Officer Richard Llewellyn
200 N. Main St. Suite 1500
Los Angeles, CA 90012-4137

Director Ann Sewill
Housing + Community Investment Department
1200 West 7th Street, 9th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90017

Los Angeles City Council
Council File: 20-0197

Subject: Social Housing

Dear Mr. Garcetti, Ms. Tso, Mr. Llewellyn, Ms. Sewill, and City Council Members:

The End Homelessness Now-LA Campaign and the endorsers listed below are deeply concerned about the plight of the unhoused and low-income residents in our community.

Today, L.A.'s homelessness catastrophe is compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, continues to be plagued by systemic racism, and will greatly worsen when hit with a tsunami of evictions in 2021. We cannot wait any longer for a comprehensive solution.

The City Council's November 4, 2020, request for a report on types of government-owned social housing used in other countries and for recommendations on their implementation in Los Angeles gives our city a valuable opportunity to bring our unhoused neighbors indoors and keep others from losing their homes. We urge you to act courageously and with the utmost urgency. It is time to step away from the costly and wasteful private-ownership, for-profit approach to housing. Instead, we must recognize housing as a human right and a matter of public good, like mass transit, libraries, or schools.

Social housing is the share of housing that is treated as a social resource for the community, rather than as a for-profit commodity. Rents are calculated through cost-based or income-based formulas. It is a state-supported approach to providing housing outside of the market, free from the ravages of inflation and speculation. As you will see in studying what other countries and cities have done, homelessness is largely prevented, and millions of very-low to moderate-income people have long term access to high quality housing.

When public housing is available to a range of income levels, two things happen: (1) higher rents can be charged to higher-income residents, offsetting much of the capital cost; and (2) poor people have better access to amenities like parks, services, and transportation that come with a mixed income community. This model encourages real social integration and discourages culturally and economically segregated enclaves.

As you design social housing for Los Angeles, we urge you to:

Treat this situation as the dire emergency that it is. Every day that we fail to resolve this calamity, four unhoused people die in our streets.

- In developing this social housing proposal, involve people with lived experience in being unhoused and members of grass roots organizations and advocacy groups. They know what it takes to become successfully rehoused.
- Start with empty or underused buildings or lots that are already publicly owned. This would eliminate property acquisition costs.
- Consider purchasing more hotels, motels, and other properties that can be quickly and economically transformed into permanent housing. This would invest the large amounts of money now being spent on short-term rent of these facilities in permanent housing instead.
- Maintain public ownership of this social housing. This would prevent the displacement of long term and low-income tenants when contracts with private owners expire. We've seen too much of that already as the original 30-year public/private contracts are not renewed. The HHH housing now being built will face the same fate in 55 years.
- Maintain public operation of this housing so that the sliding scale rent from all the tenants would go back into the public coffers to pay for operation, maintenance, and loan repayment.
- Once in operation, provide for meaningful participation in building governance by the residents.

As you study social housing elsewhere in the world, you will see that principles such as these have made it successful.

COVID-19 and the economic crisis we are facing make the pursuit of aggressive social housing policy difficult. However, they also make it absolutely crucial if we are to find permanent solutions to both the homelessness disaster and the chronic shortage of affordable housing.

Please take the same kind of bold and immediate measures to address this tragedy that you are

taking to the pandemic. Business as usual is too deadly to continue.

Sincerely,
Zerita Jones, Jeff Lassanske, Jess Steever, Val Carlson
End Homelessness Now-LA Steering Committee

Endorsing organizations:

Academia del este de los ángeles
AFSCME Local 2626 Librarians' Guild
AFSCME Retiree Chapter 36
Artists United to End Homelessness
Bags Into Beds
Central Hollywood Neighborhood Council
Change Links News
Concerned Community Members of Chesapeake Apartments
Daniel Lee - Culver City Vice Mayor
Eviction Defense Network
Freedom Socialist Party
Ground Game LA
Harriet Tubman Center for Social Justice
Ktown for All
L. A. County Committee of the Peace and Freedom Party
LA Tenants Union - Baldwin Leimert Crenshaw Local
LA Tenants Union - South Central
LA VOICE
Leonard Peltier Defense Committee
Martin Luther King Coalition of Greater Los Angeles
National Lawyers Guild of Los Angeles
NOlympics LA
North Hollywood West Neighborhood Council
Park Mesa Heights Community Council
POWER
Public Bank LA
Puerto Rican Alliance
Reclaim Our Schools
Safe Place for Youth
SEIU Local 721 - Latino Caucus
SEIU Local 721 - Lavender LGBTQ+ Caucus
SEIU Local 721 - Social Worker Chapter
Somos Familia Valle
Transgender Service Provider Network
UC-AFT Local 1990
United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA)
Venice Justice Committee
Western Regional Advocacy Project
Women's Leadership Project