

MOTION

The City of Los Angeles is home to a significant number of sober living facilities, also known as group homes or recovery residences. These facilities provide critical housing and support for individuals in recovery and play an important role in advancing public health and equity.

At the same time, certain neighborhoods in Los Angeles have raised concerns about the overconcentration of such facilities in limited geographic areas. While research shows that well-run recovery residences typically do not harm neighborhood character when dispersed, studies and real-world experience indicate that excessive clustering can overwhelm community infrastructure and create tangible quality-of-life impacts.

For example, a 2016 Minneapolis study concluded that “group homes a block or more apart produce no negative impacts,” but cautioned that clustering them too closely together can create cumulative effects. In Newport Beach, where over 100 facilities were concentrated in a small coastal area, residents and city staff documented issues such as parking shortages, traffic congestion, noise, and a sense of institutionalization in formerly single-family neighborhoods. Larger sober living homes with 7 or more residents may also increase burdens on public services and neighborhood compatibility when clustered.

Courts and state housing agencies have consistently affirmed that local governments cannot exclude or discriminate against sober living facilities. Federal Fair Housing law requires reasonable accommodation, and California recognizes recovery residences as protected housing. However, precedent now exists for narrowly tailored regulations designed to address overconcentration without eliminating access. Notably, the City of Costa Mesa adopted a 650-foot spacing requirement for sober living homes, which was challenged in court. The Ninth Circuit upheld the ordinance, finding it a reasonable and lawful measure to balance neighborhood stability with fair housing obligations.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the City Council instruct the Department of City Planning, with the assistance of the City Attorney, to report back on legal and policy options to reduce the overconcentration of sober living facilities in residential neighborhoods, including:

- Establishing minimum spacing requirements between facilities, modeled on the Costa Mesa ordinance upheld by the courts.
- Exploring caps or dispersal requirements within community plan areas to ensure equitable distribution citywide.
- Considering thresholds based on facility size (e.g. homes with more than 6 residents) to target regulations at the uses most likely to create infrastructure burdens.

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- Reviewing case studies and research to evaluate how the City can preserve the benefits of recovery housing while avoiding the drawbacks of excessive clustering.

PRESENTED BY:

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SECONDED BY:

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