

## ***Why We Support the Lincoln Apartments Supportive Housing Project***

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In 2017, when folks voted to pass Measures H and HHH, Los Angeles aimed to offer our neighbors experiencing homelessness immediate resources and develop the long-term housing infrastructure to give everyone a place to call home. In the past few months, the urgency of Measure HHH, a \$1.2 billion bond measure for the construction of supportive housing, has only become clearer. Indeed, the public health crisis of COVID-19 has shown that we are only a truly sustainable city equipped to confront such emergencies when everyone has a place to live.

Now is not the time to stand by. We must carry through on our pledge.

It is within this context that a current debate is unfolding in Venice. Echoing movements across the country and throughout Los Angeles to allocate non-profit and church property to housing our unhoused neighbors, Safe Place for Youth (SPY), a non-profit that aims to provide all homeless youth a lasting home, joined with Venice Community Housing (VCH) to build a 40 unit permanent supportive housing complex on the existing lot. The Lincoln Housing project, funded through Measure HHH and No Place Like Home will offer 40 currently unhoused folks a place to live. As extensive research has shown, including from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, supportive housing, which combines residences with programs such as job training and other assistance, is a “highly effective strategy” in helping folks maintain a stable home.

Building homes is what our crisis needs, because a home is what people experiencing homelessness need. In the city of Los Angeles, over 110 developments, for a total of 7,000 units, are in the pipeline. Many units are already complete.

Unfortunately, as soon as the Lincoln project was announced, myths began popping up. Some claimed the housing project would jeopardize the safety of the neighborhood; others asserted that it would rob valuable parking, or that the residents themselves would cause disruption to the neighborhood.

These concerns are understandable---change, after all, brings concerns. As leaders of faith, we recognize that it is difficult to encounter folks whose lives appear radically different from your own. That's why we repeatedly return to the Golden Rule: love thy neighbor as thyself.

It's important to recognize some key facts. First, supportive housing projects funded by Measure HHH are not, as some have argued, a threat to public safety. In fact, they are an essential part of it. Healthy communities are those where everyone has a place to call home. Today, too many folks are living on the streets simply because they fell on hard times, or lost their job, or missed a rent payment. The fact is that supportive housing poses no risk to the well-being of residents, but rather contributes to the overall well-being of the entire community.

Second, supportive housing is more than just a new building. It is a series of supportive systems, like job training, rehabilitation, and treatment programs. Through such projects, we are offering our neighbors a chance to get back on their feet and chart a new path in life.

Finally, we want to address logistics. There are misconceptions that the building won't have security, or that it will block parking access. This is misleading. In fact, it will have security, and is in full

alignment with the very goal of supportive housing: to develop plans with the community's interests in mind. SPY and Venice Community Housing (VCH) coordinated with key stakeholders, including neighborhood councils, to ensure that the project addressed community needs and benefited the entire neighborhood, both economically and socially.

As leaders of faith, we advocate for the rights of our unhoused neighbors because we know that when we extend a hand to folks in need, we are carrying out not just the work our faith demands, but also the work our nation needs in order to become a place truly equal for all.

As we all stay at home during COVID-19, I invite you to be a part of the solution to ending homelessness. One option is to attend a training workshop with the Everyone In Campaign, a community movement to galvanize neighborhoods to end homelessness, or a virtual Stories from the Frontline Event, where you can hear directly from folks who have transitioned into supportive housing. Or you might simply speak up in your neighborhood council about proven solutions to ending homelessness.

Today, we all have a unique opportunity to be forces of change, and ultimately to create the kind of future where our children can discover a Los Angeles where everyone has a home.