

Supportive Housing, Project Homekey and LAX Suites Site

Frequently Asked Questions

What is affordable and supportive housing?

Affordable housing generally serves people earning less than 60% of the area median income (AMI) in Los Angeles County, and can specifically target individuals or families, seniors, artists, and other groups. Supportive housing is a category within affordable housing, in which tenants are experiencing homelessness at the time of move in, and can include or target families or individuals, veterans, transition aged youth (TAY), people with disabilities and/or serious health conditions, or people who have been experiencing homeless for a very long time (“chronically” homeless). Supportive housing has a higher level of onsite services, to support people in maintaining housing long-term, accessing meaningful opportunities, and contributing to their communities. All residents in affordable and supportive housing are tenants, with legal tenant rights and responsibilities.

What is proposed for the LAX Suites site?

Located at 11838 Aviation Blvd, in the Del Aire neighborhood of unincorporated LA County, LAX Suites will be renovated into a 48-unit permanent supportive housing development. Venice Community Housing (VCH) is a non-profit affordable and supportive housing developer and will renovate and operate the site. It will provide:

- Homes for 47 households experiencing homelessness and/or at risk of homelessness.
 - These households are tenants of rental housing with all the rights of tenants in California and LA County; must sign and abide by a standard rental agreement (lease); and pay 30% of their income in monthly rent.
 - Eligible households will have 1 to 2 members, including one parent-one child families.
- One onsite staff residential unit for a full-time Property Manager.
- Comprehensive onsite services to support residents, provided by a trained, professional social service team, as well as health care partners.
- A transit-oriented development, with easy access to the Metro C (Green) Line and bus routes.
- The opportunity for any current tenants living at LAX Suites to maintain their tenancy if their income qualifies them for the extremely low-income targeting, and/or be provided full relocation benefits and supports.

What is Project Homekey?

Project Homekey is a statewide effort to sustain and rapidly expand housing for persons experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness, and who are, thereby, inherently impacted by COVID-19 and other communicable diseases. Administered by the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD), approximately \$1.4 billion (FY 2021-22) in grant funding will be made available to local public entities, including cities, counties, or other local public entities, such as housing authorities or Tribal Entities within California. Homekey is an opportunity for state, regional, and local public entities to develop a broad range of housing types, including but not limited to hotels, motels, hostels, single-family homes and multifamily apartments, adult residential facilities, and manufactured housing, and to convert commercial properties and other existing buildings to permanent or interim housing for the target population.

Project Homekey includes land use authority in order to streamline implementation: “Land Use Pursuant to HSC section 50675.1.3, subdivision (i), Homekey Projects are deemed consistent and in conformity with any applicable local plan, standard, or requirement, and any applicable coastal plan (local or otherwise). Such Projects shall not be subject to any discretionary local permit review or approval process (e.g., a discretionary use permit process) before being able to proceed as a permitted use.” Because of the land use authority in the Project Homekey legislation, projects don’t require a public decision-making or approval process.

The detailed funding application, with more information about the program, is here:

<https://homekey.hcd.ca.gov/sites/default/files/2022-05/Homekey-2021Guidelines-NOFA-Amended-05-05-22.pdf>. Data about the program’s implementation is here:
<https://homekey.hcd.ca.gov/awards-dashboard>.

In what stage of the Project Homekey process is LAX Suites, and what additional approvals are needed for the site?

A Project Homekey award was approved for LA County and Venice Community Housing to implement supportive housing at LAX Suites in March 2022. The award will result in grants from both the State and the County. Those agreements are being drafted and approved as of May 2022, and are expected to be finalized and executed by the end of May. Venice Community Housing will then purchase LAX Suites in June 2022 and begin rehabilitation of the property soon afterward. Administrative approvals by LA County are needed prior to beginning construction.

How will the supportive housing development at LAX Suites be staffed?

There will be at least 3.75 full-time, on-site professional staff, including 2 full-time case managers as the main social service point person for tenants with offices on site and 1 full-time property manager who will live on site. The last 0.75 FTE of staffing at the site will be a combination of a case manager, mental health specialist, supervisors. If needed, a site monitor will work occasionally at the site generally on evenings or weekends. VCH will be responsible for the management of the building and the overall provision of services, via this team of staff.

How will the operations plan promote safety and security?

The above, robust staffing plan is the core of providing safety and security at LAX Suites, and staff is well trained on emergency response, de-escalation, site activation and monitoring, and other safety tools. Additionally, security cameras will be installed throughout the site and monitored by the property manager, and the exterior and common areas of the site will be well-lit, including some continuous and some motion-sensor lighting. There will be a tenant council formed at the property, and safety and security will be an ongoing focus for tenant leadership.

Other safety features, such as a parking lot gate and/or other tenant-only access points, fob/keyless locks, design/landscape that prevents “blindspots” and other features are still in development. The rehabilitation plans will not be finalized until ownership of the building is secured and all testing and site investigations are completed. The additional safety features will be part of the renovation plans.

How will people be able to apply for and/or referred for housing at the LAX Suites site?

Applicants will be referred through the Coordinated Entry System (CES) for LA County's Service Planning Area 8 (South Bay communities - <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/CHS/SPA8/index.htm>). The CES system creates centralized waitlists for permanent supportive housing by sub-region throughout LA County. All households experiencing homelessness should ensure they have completed the CES intake/assessment process to be eligible for referrals for future tenancy at the LAX Suites site. The CES includes referrals for adults, transition age youth (age 18-25), and families with children experiencing homelessness.

What specific social services will be provided for people who have experienced homelessness?

There will be at least two full-time case managers, as well as mental health specialists and supervisors, working on-site and a 24-hour crisis response system for tenants with off-hours emergencies. The case managers work with tenants to identify actions and services that can improve their health, mental health, and address other needs and goals as well as ensure their housing stability. Community partners will also provide services on and off site to provide a comprehensive and accessible service approach for tenants, including Venice Family Clinic for comprehensive health services. Also, the case managers connect people to off-site services they may need such as education and training, job placement services, and others. There is a very detailed social services plan for the LAX Suites site that has been approved through the Project Homekey funding process.

What is Housing First and how does it impact tenant screening and selection?

Generally, Housing First is a homeless assistance approach that prioritizes providing permanent housing to people experiencing homelessness, thus ending their homelessness and serving as a platform from which they can pursue personal goals and improve their quality of life. Housing First does not require people experiencing homelessness to address all of their problems including behavioral health problems, or to graduate through a series of services programs before they can access housing.

Project Homekey requires the Housing First approach, a documented best practice in supportive housing: "The Eligible Applicant shall certify to employ the core components of Housing First, as set forth at Welfare and Institutions Code section 8255, in its property management and tenant selection practices. Projects shall accept tenants regardless of sobriety, participation in services or treatment, history of incarceration, credit history, or history of eviction in accordance with practices permitted pursuant to Housing First practices, including local Coordinated Entry System prioritization protocols, or other federal or state Project funding sources."

From Welfare and Institutions Code section 8255, part (b), "Core components of Housing First" means all of the following:

- (1) Tenant screening and selection practices that promote accepting applicants regardless of their sobriety or use of substances, completion of treatment, or participation in services.
- (2) Applicants are not rejected on the basis of poor credit or financial history, poor or lack of rental history, criminal convictions unrelated to tenancy, or behaviors that indicate a lack of "housing readiness."

- (3) Acceptance of referrals directly from shelters, street outreach, drop-in centers, and other parts of crisis response systems frequented by vulnerable people experiencing homelessness.
- (4) Supportive services that emphasize engagement and problem solving over therapeutic goals and service plans that are highly tenant-driven without predetermined goals.
- (5) Participation in services or program compliance is not a condition of permanent housing tenancy.
- (6) Tenants have a lease and all the rights and responsibilities of tenancy, as outlined in California's Civil, Health and Safety, and Government codes.
- (7) The use of alcohol or drugs in and of itself, without other lease violations, is not a reason for eviction.
- (8) In communities with coordinated assessment and entry systems, incentives for funding promote tenant selection plans for supportive housing that prioritize eligible tenants based on criteria other than "first-come-first-serve," including, but not limited to, the duration or chronicity of homelessness, vulnerability to early mortality, or high utilization of crisis services. Prioritization may include triage tools, developed through local data, to identify high-cost, high-need homeless residents.
- (9) Case managers and service coordinators who are trained in and actively employ evidence-based practices for client engagement, including, but not limited to, motivational interviewing and client-centered counseling.
- (10) Services are informed by a harm-reduction philosophy that recognizes drug and alcohol use and addiction as a part of tenants' lives, where tenants are engaged in nonjudgmental communication regarding drug and alcohol use, and where tenants are offered education regarding how to avoid risky behaviors and engage in safer practices, as well as connected to evidence-based treatment if the tenant so chooses.
- (11) The project and specific apartment may include special physical features that accommodate disabilities, reduce harm, and promote health and community and independence among tenants.

These Housing First principles will be implemented in the supportive housing project at LAX Suites both because they are required, and because they are proven best practices in ending homelessness and providing stable, healthy housing.

What information will be gathered about tenants/applicants during the lease up process?

A detailed Property Management plan has been prepared and approved through the Project Homekey funding process. Typically, a credit and criminal record report will be obtained and reviewed for each applicant 18 years of age and over. Income verification documents will be obtained, and previous landlords will be contacted for reference. Applicants will be provided the results of credit, criminal background and past landlord reports and be provided an opportunity to respond and to provide evidence of incorrect information and/or mitigating factors. The Housing First model ensures that people are not unnecessarily denied housing, though denials in limited circumstances are allowed.

What is the project timeline?

The estimated timeline includes:

- Final execution of State and County grant funds, May-June 2022
- VCH purchases LAX Suites, June 2022
- Site rehabilitation, August 2022 – March 2023
 - Current tenants who remain will remain in place during the rehabilitation, via temporary relocation within the building
- Full tenant lease-up, Spring 2023
- Periodic community meetings will be held throughout this process, including one community meeting focused on input regarding the exterior renovations of the building and site