

City of Riverside Housing First Strategy Plan

Frequently Asked Questions

Why does the strategy promote a low-barrier-to-entry model approach to addressing homelessness?

Historically, many programs addressing homelessness focused on treating the underlying conditions of homelessness and set high expectations for program entry. This deterred people with the most significant challenges and vulnerabilities from seeking access to life changing services and led in part to increased rates of unsheltered homelessness. Today, national best-practice programs utilize a low-barrier-to-entry approach that focuses on meeting people where they are at and providing them with stable housing. These programs help people meet their obligation as tenants, and approach the circumstances that people face with a deeper understanding of their needs. These people also engage people despite their challenges and readiness for change, and acknowledge that change may take time depending on each individual's needs. Benefits of these programs include:

- Increased housing stability and reductions in returns to homelessness
- Improved quality of life in the areas of health, mental health, substance use, and employment
- More cost-effective than traditional programs with higher barriers to entry

Are people required to participate in services or treatment programs?

Programs that adopt a Housing First philosophy connect people do not require participants to take part in treatment programs, but do connect them with a case manager who provides ongoing support for participants. Identified as a best practice, this approach acknowledges that all people should have a right to safe and affordable housing, regardless of their participation in services. Case managers support clients in the following ways:

- Educating tenants about their rights and responsibilities as tenants
- Supporting tenants to at minimum comply with the rules outlined in their lease
- Assisting tenants with identifying their own goals and supporting them with achieving those goals
- Working with them to improve overall quality of life in domains of health, mental health, and substance use issues.

What rules are people in supportive housing required to follow?

People living in supportive housing are held to the same standards as all individuals and families renting an apartment or house in the community including:

- Following the lease agreement, including respecting neighbors' peace and quiet
- Keeping up their unit in a manner adequate to pass annual inspection
- Allowing the landlord to enter the premises for routine maintenance and repairs

For example, it is not a requirement for those in supportive housing to abstain from alcohol or participate in substance use treatment services; however, if an individual's drinking causes problems for their landlord and neighbors such as loud noise, excessive guests, and unruly behavior, he or she will

receive lease violations. If an individual routinely fails to meet the requirements of tenancy, he or she will ultimately lose their housing.

For this example, supportive housing services would assist the person with understanding the impact that drinking is having on their tenancy, help them problem-solve and engage in respectable behavior that will not jeopardize their housing, and work with them in their home to support long-term goals such as sobriety if the person so chooses.

Will the strategy provide housing for undocumented residents?

To be eligible for subsidies, the City of Riverside will be required to follow the criteria set by federal and state funding sources. For the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, federal housing assistance is limited to US citizens and applicants who have eligible immigration status.

Under other federal homeless programs such as the Continuum of Care (CoC) program and the Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) program, those who are undocumented are eligible for certain services and temporary housing.

Where will housing be located?

The Riverside City Council asked City staff to identify two to three sites per ward that could serve as a potential location for supportive housing, so that all wards are making an equitable contribution to identifying and implementing solutions to preventing and ending homelessness. While some residents raise concerns about the potential impact of having people experiencing homelessness move into their area, others recognized that providing people with stable housing has been shown to achieve the following goals:

- Reduce costs incurred by public agencies
- Reduce the day-to-day impact of homelessness on businesses and residents
- Enhance public safety
- Increase the likelihood that people experiencing homelessness will access services that enable them to improve their health and quality of life.

Should we consider locating supportive housing in more remote locations to give people the opportunity to rebuild their lives rather than placing housing within the community?

One of the critical features of supportive housing is its focus on helping people use their housing as a platform for reintegrating into society, and housing is typically paired with services available in the community. This includes basic services such as a transportation, a grocery store, healthcare, and employment opportunities. It also includes access to other community-based resources and services, such as counseling, treatment programs, and support groups.

What do we already know about integrating supportive housing into the community?

The City of Riverside currently has 16 units of supportive housing located in the Arlington and Eastside neighborhoods. These units have been recognized by local residents as improving the aesthetic, quality of life, and safety of the neighborhood.

How will locating supportive housing in my neighborhood affect my property value?

The median home value in the Arlington neighborhood, where the City currently operates supportive housing, is \$325,800, which reflects an 8.4% increase over the previous year. Since 2010, homes in this market have nearly double in value. This is nearly double the value since 2010, home values in the neighborhood have doubled in value from approximately \$150,000.¹ The median home price in the Eastside neighborhood is \$317,450, where homes have also more than doubled in value since 2010.²

How will housing projects be funded?

Funding for supportive housing can come from a variety of federal, state, local, and private sources depending on the type of development and target population. For example, supportive housing for people with disabilities, those experiencing homelessness, or transition age foster youth qualifies as a special needs project, and developers can apply for a 9% tax credit under a state set-aside program operated by the California Tax Credit Allocation Committee. These credits are then sold to investors who take an equity stake in the project. Competition for the limited supply of 9% tax credits is high, so developers may also apply for the non-competitive 4% tax credits. A special needs project must have at least 45 percent of its units set aside for people with a disability, people who are homeless, and transition age foster youth. The capital funding is then paired with targeted funding for services.

Projects that do not qualify for tax credits or other sources of federal and state funding would need to explore local funding sources, such as Measure Z, or private philanthropy. For additional information on funding sources, please refer to page 17 of the Housing First Strategy.

¹ Zillow. (2018.) [Arlington Home Prices and Values.](#)

² Zillow. (2018.) [Eastside Home Prices and Values.](#)