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Two recent housing ordinances seek to address LA's homeless crisis



Los Angeles has long faced a serious homelessness problem - one that has only increased in recent years. Two new housing ordinances from the city seek to address that issue.

More than 34,000 citizens of LA are homeless, and an estimated 25,000 are living without any shelter at all.

Last year, the city passed Measure HHH, a \$1.2 billion measure to build 10,000 units of housing for homeless people over the next decade. That project —

a long-term strategy for combatting homelessness — is underway. However, in the interim, the city is proposing two additional ordinances to ease the transition into permanent housing and to address the immediate need for shelter.

One ordinance, the [Proposed Permanent Supportive Housing Ordinance](#) (or PSH), is designed to streamline the process of getting to those 10,000 units. Under the PSH, normal zoning laws and parking regulations would be relaxed to allow construction to proceed more rapidly. The ordinance is also proposing allowing by-right construction of multifamily units on land that is currently already zoned for public facility (providing that there are other existing multifamily developments already in

existence nearby). Each permanent supportive housing project could receive up to four zoning concessions, including:

- Decreases in setback requirements
- Decreases in required open space
- Increases in lot coverage limits
- Increases in allowed height & floor ratios

While the PSH seeks to streamline the construction process, the second ordinance is designed to address the immediate and urgent needs of those who lack shelter. The [Interim Motel Conversion Ordinance](#) would allow existing residential structures, like hotels, motels, and hostels, to undergo interior renovations and repurpose themselves as transitional housing for homeless people.

According to an article by [Urbanize.LA](#), 2016 data from the LA County Assessor's office shows that LA currently has about 10,000 total guest rooms. The majority of motels (about 83%) have fewer than fifty rooms, with the average being 26. The IMC ordinance would permit these buildings to serve as transitional housing over a half year to two year period for people who are moving off the street or out of shelters and into permanent supportive housing.

Both of these ordinances are especially timely, as Mayor Eric Garcetti reported this year that LA's homeless population had swelled by 23%. The largest increases were in younger people, between the ages of 25 and 54. The population of veterans who are now homeless also jumped substantially, up 57% from the previous year.

According to the Homeless Services Authority, the major culprit for the dramatic rise has been the economic stress on renters in the LA area. As the [LA Times reported](#):

More than 2 million households in LA & Orange counties have housing costs that exceed 30% of income, according to data from Harvard University's Joint Center for Housing Studies...[while] according to the nonprofit California Housing Partnership Corp., median rent, adjusted for inflation, increased more than 30% from 2000 to 2015, while the median income was flat.

And as housing prices continue to rise in Southern California, the problem of homelessness motivated by economic distress and the inaccessibility of affordable housing seems likely to only intensify. While the first multifamily dwelling funded by Measure HHH is going up in Rampart Village, more will need to happen to substantively address the housing crisis that is affecting all of Southern California's residents, both those on the margins and those who have already moved to the streets.

If you or your clients might need appraisal services related to the City of Los Angeles' homelessness ordinances, or any other kind of commercial real estate need, please email us today at LA@valbridge.com or call (626) 486-9327.

SOURCES/FURTHER READING:

- [“Want to build housing for homeless people faster? Here’s how,” *Los Angeles Times* \(31 August 2017\)](#)
- [“Los Angeles Advances Two Ordinances to Combat Homelessness,” Urbanize.LA \(1 December 2017\)](#)
- [“What’s Behind the Dramatic Rise in LA County’s Homeless Population?” *Los Angeles Times* \(31 May 2017\)](#)
- [Los Angeles Department of City Planning](#)
- [“Measure HHH-Funded Project Breaks Ground in Rampart Village,” Urbanize.LA \(20 December 2017\)](#)