

THE STREET STRATEGY FOR L.A. COUNTY

Executive Summary

Los Angeles has invested unprecedented resources to create permanent solutions to homelessness. As those investments materialize, the number of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness continues to escalate and could be dramatically worsened by the economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic. This is particularly true for our Black neighbors, whose increased risk is tied to the enduring legacy of racism and the systemic theft of intergenerational Black wealth.

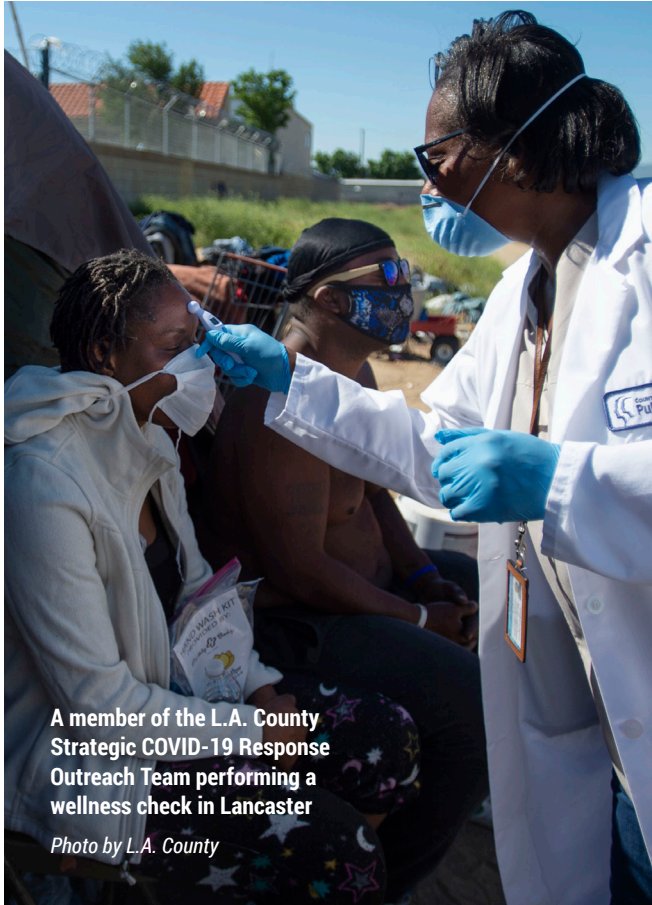
The Home For Good (HFG) initiative recognizes that maintaining widespread public support for long-term solutions depends on our ability to credibly impact the humanitarian crisis on our streets. That is why the HFG team interviewed over 150 stakeholders, listened to their ideas, and used our best judgement to reflect the strategic interests of the broader community. The result is The Street Strategy for L.A. County which highlights 10 strategies and three cross-cutting competencies that the community should consider funding and implementing while we bring permanent solutions to scale.

Realizing the vision laid out in this Street Strategy requires a trusting and collaborative community to share resources, resist blame, and commit to solving this problem through a unified effort - where every individual, community, government, and organization does their part. It also requires an unwavering commitment to our values during these challenging times, when

there is pressure to move the problem instead of solving it. For this vision to fully materialize, we must design an easier system for people to access and navigate for themselves or others. Through a unified effort, an unwavering commitment to our values, and human-centered design, these ten strategies have the potential to improve the lives of those experiencing homelessness, particularly those who remain on our streets.

TEN STREET STRATEGIES

- 1. Improve the Quality & Performance at Targeted Shelters:* The fastest way to “create new” shelter is to better utilize the beds we have. Accomplishing this requires public and philanthropic partners to invest in targeted facility upgrades and capacity building for specific sites, where conditions are challenging and providers need help with overcrowding, pandemic safeguards, cultural competency, trauma-informed care, de-escalation, conflict resolution, harm reduction, and housing navigation techniques.
- 2. Create the Diverse Immediate Housing Options that People Need:* Like anyone else, people experiencing unsheltered homelessness don't want to have to choose between privacy and community. They want, need, and deserve both - and our collective response to COVID-19 has proven we can quickly leverage



A member of the L.A. County Strategic COVID-19 Response Outreach Team performing a wellness check in Lancaster

Photo by L.A. County

resources to create dignified places to come inside. To bridge a gap between life on the streets and a permanent home, philanthropy and the public sector should partner to create smaller immediate housing options at scale. Helping providers purchase land, motels, and materials for stackable/modular units in shared configurations or secure shared private housing for clients with fewer barriers can foster both privacy and community.

3. *Expand Safe Parking for RV's & Incentivize Safer Vehicles:* Before the pandemic, L.A. was expanding safe parking for cars, and was seeing an increasing number of RV's on our streets. The government should identify vacant public land to be repurposed as permanent safe parking lots with electricity, water, and sewage infrastructure. With the help of private and philanthropic partners, providers could work with safe parking users on longer-term housing plans in exchange for the eventual purchase and disposition of their RV.

4. *Provide Daytime Service Centers in Every Neighborhood:* Safe places for our unhoused neighbors to go during the day are just as important as safe places to sleep. When the pandemic is over, every neighborhood should use new, one-time, public and private investments to partner with local faith organizations, libraries, access sites, and drop-in centers to safely serve more people on the streets during the daytime.
5. *Ensure the Coordinated Entry System (CES) Achieves Street-Level Impact:* Matching interim beds more strategically will increase system flow and generate better pathways from the streets to housing. During the pandemic, government and non-profit providers maximized the utilization of scarce interim beds by adapting triage tools to prioritize older adults and those with underlying medical conditions. Moving forward, we must ensure that CES continues to help us expand beyond permanent supportive housing (PSH) and strategically prioritize more people for more exit pathways, particularly our growing population of seniors who remain extremely vulnerable to COVID-19.
6. *Broaden the Outreach Coalition to Continue Increasing Effectiveness:* Prior to the pandemic, we had expanded street outreach and improved coordination, but hundreds of potential force multipliers remained disconnected. The proactive testing and welfare checks needed during the pandemic proved that homeless outreach alone cannot respond to the full range of needs on our streets. By strategically coordinating with paraprofessionals like sanitation workers and business improvement districts, our most skilled government outreach workers can safely focus on the most impactful work—equipped with housing assets and supported by recruitment and retention strategies that attract and keep top talent.
7. *Bring Life-Saving Health Services to the People:* People living outside can often be very sick and can have major barriers to accessing health care. The pandemic magnified

TEN STRATEGIES *continued...*

this need, and public and private funders responded by collaborating to accelerate the expansion of medical partnerships like street-based medicine and on-site care to stabilize people where they are and reduce health decompensation. Academia invested in deeper research on the specific health issues faced by people experiencing unsheltered homelessness and what interventions are most effective. These partnerships and investments should continue because they will further strengthen informed integration between the health and homeless systems after the pandemic has passed.

8. *Close the Capacity Gaps in the Mental Health System:* Without re-institutionalizing, we must restore capacity within the mental health system to meet the needs on our streets by investing one-time private and philanthropic money into stabilizing Board & Cares; increasing the supply of routine, crisis, and sub-acute services to reduce hospitalization bottlenecks; expanding mobile crisis response teams; and innovating around new funding and service delivery models.
9. *Deliver Hygiene, Sanitation & Harm-Reduction Services:* This public health crisis requires public and private partners to continue accelerating, maintaining, and expanding hygiene services into more neighborhoods and jurisdictions. The public sector should also provide more trash bins and a regular pickup schedule to help maintain shared public spaces, and increase access to harm reduction services to keep people safer as they engage in survival and coping activities.
10. *Manage Encampments with Consistency & Predictability:* Prior to the pandemic, inconsistent engagement practices shuffled unsheltered people from place to place in ways that eroded trust and disrupted the re-housing process. The easing of some disruptive practices during the pandemic highlights their futility when not connected to a clear public health interest. Philanthropy and the private sector should promote regional consistency by investing in shared



Outreach worker for DHS's Housing For Health

Photo by L.A. County

encampment teams and resources that travel between smaller L.A. County jurisdictions in exchange for adopting consistently-applied, services-led, encampment management protocols that honor safe access to public space for all residents, including those experiencing homelessness.

The Home For Good initiative remains committed to expanding affordable housing as our top priority, because homes end homelessness—and the COVID-19 pandemic has only strengthened our commitment to that cause. While we work with our partners to bring housing to scale, we acknowledge the dangerous and untenable conditions on our streets and in some congregate facilities. Together, we can end chronic homelessness in Los Angeles County, and we can ensure fewer people live and die on our streets or overcrowded shelters in the meantime. As a next step, the HFG team will work with our partners and the Funders Collaborative to bring these opportunities to life through deeper analysis, realistic cost estimates, investment strategies, trackable milestones, and actions each partner can take. During that process, UWGLA will work diligently to ensure the voices of those impacted by these ideas are represented, respected, and reflected in the subsequent implementation.