



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# THE OLDER ADULT STRATEGY

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A Roadmap of Strategic System  
Investments to End Homelessness  
Among Older Adults in Los Angeles



## Today's unhoused older adults are part of a generational cohort that has been disproportionately vulnerable to homelessness for decades, and our window to exit them from homelessness is closing.

That is why the Home For Good (HFG) team at the United Way of Greater Los Angeles (UWGLA) is working with our philanthropic, public, non-profit, and private-sector partners to help unify our community around a bold vision of ending homelessness among older adults (i.e. those age 55 and older) and seniors (i.e. those age 65 and older) in L.A. County.

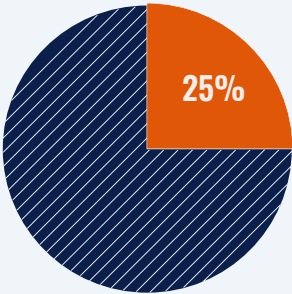
The prevalence of COVID-19 and its disproportionate impact on older adults exacerbates this urgent situation. Fortunately, our local, state, and federal governments have initiated multiple large-scale efforts that prioritize unhoused older adults, and key organizations have been leading major efforts to improve integration between the aging and homeless systems. However, those efforts must be strategically aligned, coordinated, and resourced to be managed effectively.

Therefore, Home For Good (HFG) created this strategic roadmap to help funders and policy makers better understand the crisis and the opportunities to pioneer promising approaches, improve coordination across coalitions, and scale the most transformative, equitable solutions. To support this collective impact approach, HFG received a multi-year grant from Cedars Sinai to

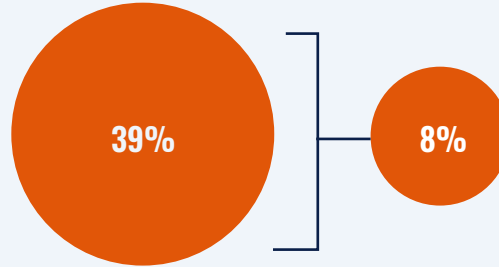
use our policy expertise and philanthropic resources to support integration work, coordinate the development of a cohesive roadmap of strategic system investments, and establish an integrated management model to ensure progress toward ending homelessness among older adults, with particular attention to Black older adults.



# KEY FACTS ABOUT OLDER ADULT HOMELESSNESS



Older adults account for **25%** of LA County's homeless population and will be the fastest growing age demographic through 2030.



Black and African American people are more over-represented among older adults experiencing homelessness (**39%**) than they are in the general homeless population (33%) despite accounting for only **8%** of the total population in L.A. County.

MANY OLDER ADULTS IN CA EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS FOR THE FIRST TIME ARE

**50+**

The latest research in California shows a large portion of older adults experiencing homelessness are experiencing it for the first time after age 50, and many are related to post-incarceration housing instability.



**75%**

OF SENIORS IN RENTAL UNITS ARE RENT-BURDENED

In California, over half of the seniors living in rental units are low-income and more than 75% are rent-burdened, spending 30-50% of their income on rent.

WHAT SHOULD WE COLLECTIVELY FOCUS ON RIGHT NOW?



## Invest in large-scale advocacy and communications about this once-in-a-lifetime moment.

Given the urgency of older adult homelessness and the narrow window for change, our primary aim is to advocate for expansion of existing entitlement programs and services so that they are immediately more inclusive of older adults experiencing homelessness. Much of this advocacy requires quickly educating the public, policy makers, and funders on why these reforms are necessary and urgent. Philanthropy can support these causes by using its political influence to drive policy changes at the local, state, and federal levels and investing financially in advocacy efforts that target policies that enable Californians to age in place. Increasing awareness of the intersecting issues plaguing our aging and unhoused individuals can help generate public funding, improve services, and address the systemic causes of homelessness thus leading to large-scale public investments to end homelessness.



### KEY RECOMMENDATIONS INCLUDE:

- Create more affordable and accessible housing for older adults by supporting the proposals of the United to House LA and Our Future LA Coalitions, including the creation of new permanent funding streams a regional affordable housing finance agency.
- Urge the City, County, and LAHSA to use unprecedented one-time funding from the American Rescue Plan and state budget to implement the Older Adults Pilot with a Housing Allowance for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients.
- Insist the unprecedented ARP resources for eviction relief, property acquisition, and Emergency Rental Vouchers benefit the COVID-vulnerable older adults they were designed to support and protect.
- Help the state save money over the long term by ensuring Medi-Cal finally helps its older adults maintain their housing stability through smart CalAIM reforms, *In Lieu of Services* (ILOS) Provisions, Waiver Programs, and the Home and Community Based Services Spending Plan.
- Modernize SSI to cover the housing cost for vulnerable older adults, because SSI income levels have not kept pace with housing inflation in urban markets like L.A. since 2008.
- Deliver on criminal justice reform for Black older adults transitioning out of incarceration by implementing the Measure J spending plan that focuses on housing, intensive case management, and reintegration to better support Black older adults.

WHAT SHOULD WE COLLECTIVELY FOCUS ON RIGHT NOW?



## Build capacity for community/strategic planning and coordination.

A huge component of ending older adult homelessness requires us to ensure we have adequate capacity to effectively bridge the aging and homelessness sectors. This requires us to evaluate all aspects of talent acquisition, retention, relationship building, training, professional development, and to create key positions within the aging and homeless services systems that foster intersectional improvement.



### KEY RECOMMENDATIONS INCLUDE:

- Invest in the continuation of SPA-Specific cross-sector convenings between the aging and homeless sectors.
- Routinize thought partnerships between the aging and homeless experts through broad key stakeholder working groups and the genuine, compensated inclusion of people with lived expertise.
- Transition from restricted to flexible funding to build organizational capacity, especially for organizations led by and primarily serving people of color.
- Contribute to the sustainability and effectiveness of the aging and homeless sectors by creating capacity-building grants that focus on staff recruitment and retention.
- Fund creative team-building activities, work retreats, and networking events to fuel teamwork across the aging and homeless sectors.
- Enhance training for providers on older adult street outreach and other aging-related resources.
- Create targeted roles in the community like an Older Adult Regional Coordinator, Older Adult SPA Liaison, Skilled Nursing Facility Liaison, Older Adult Transitions Coordinator, Older Adult Peer Support Specialist, and an Older Adult Benefits Specialist.

WHAT SHOULD WE COLLECTIVELY FOCUS ON RIGHT NOW?



## Pilot, evaluate, and scale programs.

Over the past decade, the HFG Funders Collaborative has proven its ability to pilot innovative solutions, study the impact of those pilots, and leverage public and private dollars to bring promising solutions to scale. This collective impact model continues to drive our approach as we seek to impact older adult homelessness. To that end, funders should consider contributions toward pilot programs and interventions that show strong potential to prevent or end homelessness among our older adults and evaluate the impact of those investments for their replication and scaling potential. This roadmap includes several opportunities that the HFG team, and our partners are eager to fund, evaluate, and bring to scale.



### KEY RECOMMENDATIONS INCLUDE:

- Support the United Way’s Affordable Housing Initiative to develop small-lot, shared housing models that can be replicated across LA County.
- Fund ongoing research on older adult/senior homelessness through a strong partnership with the Homeless Policy Research Institute (HPRI).
- Streamline and accelerate access to SSI to achieve housing stability for older adults exiting incarceration.
- Develop a culturally competent housing stability assessment for older adults since the medical ages of PEH can often far exceed biological age, and the evolution of someone’s “vulnerability” as they age is not accounted for in current assessment tools.
- Create more flexible funding streams that help older adults exit homelessness to accessible housing.
- Develop an early warning system that triggers housing stabilization resources for older adults who lose a partner/spouse and may need an early intervention to remain housed.
- Optimize Project Homekey sites to create facilities and environments that are beautiful, comfortable, accessible, trauma informed, and therapeutic for older adults.
- Break the linkage between hospitalizations and homelessness by creating strong hospital partnerships that use emergency room care as an intervention point for housing stabilization services.