

# PROVIDER ALLIANCE TO END HOMELESSNESS

1309 East Seventh Street • Los Angeles, CA 90021 • (213) 891-3224

July 20, 2017

Council President Herb Wesson  
Los Angeles City Council  
200 North Spring Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Council President Wesson,

Thank you for meeting with the Provider Alliance to End Homelessness on June 28. We were glad to hear that the Los Angeles City Council is preparing a comprehensive plan to address the city's housing crisis.

The scarcity of affordable housing is perhaps the chief reason why the region's homeless population continues to grow. At our June 28 meeting, we voiced our support for a linkage fee that would generate at least \$100 million in new revenue for housing. We also stressed the need for new policies to overcome neighborhood resistance to Prop HHH sites. You indicated that these issues would be addressed in the forthcoming plan on July 25. Given the importance of this overall strategy, the Provider Alliance would like to add the following recommendations:

## **1) The City Council must act with greater urgency**

The housing plan should reflect the worsening situation facing Los Angeles. The linkage fee has taken far too long to enact, while homelessness has increased by 23 percent since the time it was included in last year's budget. The City Council should commit to passing the linkage fee at the recommended funding level of \$100 million (or more) no later than September 30.

The comprehensive housing plan you describe must expedite the approval process for building affordable housing. For example, when city-owned land is being used for a Prop HHH project, a binding agreement to use this land should be combined with HHH approval. The City Council should raise the Planning Department's threshold for site plan review from 49 units to 100 units for Permanent Supportive Housing and other deeply affordable housing to allow more by-right development. Density bonus applications that involve incentives, whether on-menu or not, should be ministerial decisions based on objective criteria rather than subject to lengthy agency deliberations. Appeals, whether related to density bonus applications or CEQA, should be scheduled for a hearing within 60 days.

Tougher safeguards must also be enacted to preserve affordable housing that already exists. Until we have reduced homelessness by at least 50 percent in Los Angeles, demolition permits should be denied for Ellis Act properties and a moratorium on condominium conversions should be imposed citywide. Just cause must be shown for all eviction proceedings and landlord harassment of tenants must be strictly outlawed.

## **2) The City Council must not impede the affordable housing process**

The City Council should change its role in the approval process. Currently, HCID has an informal process that requires the developer to obtain the support of the City Councilmember for a proposed

Permanent Supportive Housing project in his or her district. This practice should be reformed to a two-stage process: 1) The developer should request the Councilmember's letter of support in a standard written submission describing the project. 2) If the Council office does not respond within a reasonable time frame (e.g. 30 days), HCID by default will provide a commitment letter based on the merits of the project. The Council office's action should also be made public, indicating either a failure to respond or the reasons why support is being granted or withheld.

### **3) Rental assistance must be expanded and streamlined**

The housing voucher system for both Section 8 resources and County Department of Mental Health housing subsidies is so inefficient that people cannot be housed in a timely manner. A range of reforms are needed, including faster inspections and less paperwork, which the City Council and Board of Supervisors should work with the Provider Alliance to help implement. The City Council should also develop additional incentives for property owners to work with low-income families, and prohibit outright discrimination against participants in the Section 8 rental assistance program.

### **4) The housing plan must serve diverse populations**

The scale of the homelessness crisis in Los Angeles is matched only by the diversity of the people it affects. Programs should be customized to serve the full range of people who need housing, recognizing that different categories of homelessness may require different types of housing. In some cases, transitional housing may be the best option for unaccompanied homeless youth or survivors of domestic violence – federal cuts in this area shouldn't dictate how city funds are spent. Similarly, federal prohibitions against helping people who are undocumented should not be carried over into city policies. Too many homeless Angelenos with chronic health conditions or severe mental illness are unable to get help because of their immigration status.

### **5) The housing plan should invest in the nonprofit sector undertaking its implementation**

The housing plan should include resources to help service providers and affordable housing developers increase their capacity to deliver services and housing, not just pay for the work itself. Many costs related to expanding Prop HHH and Measure H activities are being shouldered by the nonprofit sector with no additional resources, from recruiting additional staff to launching new programs. These tasks are essential to successful outcomes and require greater resources.

The housing plan should enlist the full range of service providers and affordable housing developers in these efforts. Contracting procedures should work for agencies large and small, guided only by the grantee's competence and commitment to serve those in need. Prop HHH funds must be flexible enough to allow big projects as well as small ones, drawing on the skills of large nonprofit developers that can build hundreds of units and also smaller agencies with a more targeted range of impact. Project Labor Agreement policies, if approved, should only apply to Prop HHH projects of 75 units or more.

We would welcome an opportunity to provide more specific input as the housing plan is developed.

Sincerely,



Jerry Jones  
Provider Alliance to End Homelessness