

## Background

The City of Riverside, like other Southern California cities, is impacted by homelessness, especially those who are living unsheltered. The 2017 Point-In-Time Count shows that unsheltered homelessness increased in the City by 50 percent since 2016 to 389 persons.<sup>1</sup> Recognizing that lack of access to safe, clean, and affordable housing is a key social determinant of health, the City of Riverside is committed to taking a proactive approach to addressing homelessness. Housing First is a best practice characterized as deeply affordable housing paired with wrap-around supportive services for hard to serve homeless households.

## Purpose

The Housing First strategy will provide a “road map” for the City to pursue the creation of nearly 400 units to meet the long-term needs of individuals and families experiencing homelessness by employing best practice approaches and positioning the city to take full advantage of forthcoming state funding made available through the housing package signed into law in September 2017.

## Core Components of the Strategy

### Operationalizing and Evaluating

The federal government and the State of California are requiring communities to adopt a Housing First model, which is based on the philosophy that all people can achieve stability in permanent housing with the right supports. The City of Riverside embraced the Housing First philosophy as evidenced by past initiatives, including the Mayor’s Challenge and participation in the Riverside Continuum of Care (CoC), which recently adopted written standards that provide guidance to all CoC and Emergency Solutions Grant recipients.

This strategy will formalize the City’s commitment to the Housing First model and the use of national evidence-based practices for development, including the successful integration of tenants who were formerly homeless into the community. The strategy also outlines policies related to service coordination, wrap-around supportive services, and the adoption of performance benchmarks, as well as the alignment of the City of Riverside’s housing-related activities with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid so that the City of Riverside can take advantage of potential Medicare and Medicaid funding. In addition, the strategy provides guidance on a “Moving On” strategy for households that achieve stability and no longer need intensive services.

### Developing and Financing

In recent years, federal and state funding priorities have been realigned with the Housing First approach to addressing homelessness. The strategy provides background on the current funding environment and strategies for funding development and operations, including recommendations to proactively pursue Building Homes and Jobs Act funding to update planning documents and zoning ordinances to prioritize Housing First and expand development in city limits. Other recommended development and financing strategies include, but are not limited to, the following:

- a) Increasing the percentage of Measure Z funding allocated to the development of affordable housing, and make that funding permanent for the duration of the measure.
- b) Seeking partnerships with County agencies to focus funding for Housing First as a priority.

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<sup>1</sup> County of Riverside (May 2017) 2017 Point-In-Time Homeless County Report

- c) Making pre-development funding available to organizations interested in developing available surplus property.
- d) Setting aside 15 percent of all affordable housing developed.
- e) Explore waiving all fees from various City departments that collect fees related to Housing First development.

### Recommendations for Specific Sites

Local jurisdictions seeking innovative solutions to addressing homelessness are looking at development typologies that can meet their housing needs while retaining the character of local communities. To develop this strategy, a list of potential properties was initially reviewed through the lens of whether a site could accommodate a 2-story multifamily develop of 20 to 35 efficiency or one-bedroom units to be competitive for funding from low-income housing tax credits. This review examined lot size criteria—approximately 15,000 square feet—and proximity to a transit stop, grocery store, and hospital or healthcare provider.

Three of the seven wards—Wards 1, 2, and 6—have a total of 14 sites that meet size and amenity requirements, and Wards 1, 2, and 7 contain 5 parcels that meet size criteria and are located near food and transit. These include three City-owned properties that meet all criteria, and two that meet size criteria and are located near food and transit. Other sites included on the list could accommodate alternative typologies, including “tiny homes” that consist of free-standing single unit developments, often under 400 square feet.

### Benefits and Drawbacks

Typology	Density	Benefits	Drawbacks
<b>Multistory Development</b>	25 units/acre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires fewer projects to reach the target of approximately 400 units</li> <li>• Lower cost of development per unit</li> <li>• Eligible for financing, including tax credits and bank debt</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires larger parcels of land, which may be too large for the neighborhood</li> <li>• May require significant infrastructure</li> </ul>
<b>Multifamily Infill Development</b>	10 units/acre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires less than an acre of land, and fits easily into residential neighborhoods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires more projects to reach the 400-unit target</li> <li>• Too small for most tax credit investors</li> <li>• Inefficient number of units for PSH service delivery</li> </ul>
<b>Tiny Homes Infill</b>	10 units/acre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires less than an acre of land, and fits easily into residential neighborhoods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires significantly more projects to reach the 400-unit target; best used as a supplement to multistory and infill development</li> <li>• Untested for subsidy financing</li> <li>• Untested for PSH</li> </ul>
<b>Tiny Homes Low Density</b>	6 units/acre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires less than an acre of land, and fits easily into residential neighborhoods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Best used as a supplement to multistory and infill development</li> <li>• Untested for subsidy financing</li> <li>• Untested for PSH</li> </ul>