



MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS

LOS ANGELES CITY COUNCILMEMBER

— DISTRICT 10 —

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Councilmember Ridley-Thomas' Motion to Establish the "Housing Now" Initiative Unanimously Approved by the LA City Council

The LA City Council unanimously voted in favor of doubling down on the City's financial commitment to create more affordable housing for those transitioning out of homelessness by advancing the establishment of the "Housing Now" Fund at Tuesday's Council meeting.

[The "Housing Now" Program](#), proposed by Councilmember Mark Ridley-Thomas, who chairs the City's Homelessness and Poverty Committee, co-presented by Councilmembers Mike Bonin and Curren Price, and seconded by Councilmember Paul Koretz, recognizes that the City's success in expanding effective homeless [street engagement services](#) is contingent on street outreach and engagement teams being equipped with a significant infusion of resources to help transition people off the streets and into long-term supportive and affordable housing. Envisioned as a collaboration between the City and County of Los Angeles, the Housing Now Fund would provide rental subsidies coupled with supportive services for an additional 10,000 people experiencing homelessness, specifically targeting those with complex medical and behavioral health needs who reside on City streets.

"Successful street engagement depends on having a supply of affordable and supportive housing that is readily available to place unhoused clients without delay. We

need to accelerate our investment in these long-term permanent housing solutions, if we want to make a difference in the lives of our unsheltered residents,” said Councilmember Ridley-Thomas. “We need to work at the scale that this crisis requires. The Housing Now Fund envisions creating 10,000 new slots of permanent supportive housing using the tried and tested model of Los Angeles County’s Housing for Health Program. There is no better medicine for someone suffering from physical and mental health challenges on the street than supportive housing. Prescribing “housing now” is the right remedy.”

The Housing Now Fund complements the recently approved [Citywide Street Engagement Strategy](#) - the first of its kind in Los Angeles which would ensure a standardized assessment of encampments, an adequate period of dedicated street engagement at all sites where unsheltered people reside, and a transparent and accountable process by which outreach teams work collaboratively to help unsheltered individuals transition into housing.

“A right to housing, case management, tied to intensive supportive services is a positive approach in the right direction to addressing this emergency. With rising rents, the high costs of living and the pandemic, this situation has created unimaginable hardships for our neighbors,” said Councilman Curren Price. “Over the past several years, my office has implemented a series of initiatives including having permanent LAHSA outreach workers in my District Office, multi-disciplinary teams consisting of outreach and social workers as well as a nurse, with a clear focus on connecting individuals with supportive services and a pathway to housing. I am proud to say that District 9 is bringing nearly 2,700 units of affordable and homeless housing online with nearly 900 of those units ready to welcome tenants by the end of next year.”

The State of California’s 2021-22 Budget includes \$4.8 billion in new programs that predominantly focus on building permanent housing, but to fully take advantage of these capital investment opportunities, localities will need to supply rental or operating subsidies. The Housing Now Fund would complement the State’s proposed investment in order to bring thousands more Angelenos indoors.

The Fund proposes a potential collaboration with the County, where the City provides the funding for the rental costs, and the County provides the supportive services to the housed clients. The County has experienced tremendous success with the Housing for Health model, which provides rental subsidies designed to bring more unhoused Angelenos into housing expeditiously within a variety of housing settings. “We have largely used it to leverage the existing housing market - to lease up in the private sector and to do it quickly with the housing stock that already exists,” said Interim Executive Director of the Los Angeles County Homeless Initiative, Cheri Todoroff. “It has also been used to spur the development of new housing for the developers who are doing it outside of the traditional process. As long as there is a commitment with the rental subsidy, there are some developers out there that will get their own financing and not rely on additional funding from the public sector to create permanent supportive

housing.”

“We need quick action with tangible results to address our homelessness crisis, and Housing Now is a powerful and necessary tool to deliver it,” said Councilmember Mike Bonin, one of the motion’s cosponsors. “With Venice Beach Encampments to Homes, we demonstrated that with real, dedicated resources we could move people out of encampments, indoors, and on a path to permanent housing. Housing Now is how we do that around Los Angeles.”

“In order to ensure that people experiencing homelessness are on a path to housing - starting with street engagement - we need to make sure resources and support are available so individuals are able to transition into being permanently housed when they are ready,” said Reba Stevens, Homeless Lived Experience Community Advocate. “This is especially important for individuals in need of mental health services and supportive housing - the collaboration with the County Department of Mental Health is crucial for connecting some of our most vulnerable houseless neighbors with permanent housing that serves their needs long-term. I applaud the City Council for adopting this important motion.”

A report back from the City’s Administrative Officer and Chief Legislative Analyst on the development of the Fund is anticipated to come before the Homeless and Poverty Committee within 60 days.

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Mark Ridley-Thomas serves as Los Angeles’ City Council Chair of Homelessness and Poverty Committee and served as Co-Chair of Governor Gavin Newsom’s Homeless and Supportive Housing Advisory Task Force.