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New Apartment Building Opens For Homeless In L.A.

LOS ANGELES

More than 100 chronically homeless people have moved into a new apartment building on Skid Row that offers on-site support services to keep them off of the streets, it was announced today.

At a grand opening ceremony today for the Abbey Apartments, located at 625 S. San Pedro St., Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa said that the "winds of change" were blowing in the poverty-stricken Skid Row section of downtown. "Here on Skid Row the winds of change are picking up speed. Progress is being made, and our battle to give every Angelino a chance to survive is moving one step closer to victory," Villaraigosa said.

The Abbey features 113 rental units -- all of which are already occupied by formerly homeless individuals -- and offers medical, mental health and substance abuse treatment provided by the JWCH Institute, just "an elevator ride away," according to the Skid Row Housing Trust, which developed and manages the apartments.

"This apartment complex serves as a solution to the problem of homelessness by pairing a warm bed with access to affordable medical care, by coupling case management with a working kitchen, and by placing mothers and fathers, sons and daughters on a path to self-sufficiency and self-respect," Villaraigosa said.

The \$28 million, 51,000-square-foot development was paid for through a combination of city, county, state and federal money, with the supportive services funded by the county, according to the Skid Row Housing Trust.

Karen Burton, 49, moved into one of the 113 apartments in January. She performed a rap at today's event that described how she fell on hard times and subsequently got off of the streets.

"When I got to high school, I got with my crew. We started slinging drugs, trying to play it cool. Didn't even care what the future might hold, we were down crazy gangsters and our ways was cold," Burton rapped, going on to explain that she ended up on the wrong side of the law.

Then one day, Burton "saw the light," she said.

"I'm not free from my disease, but I can live my life respectfully," Burton rapped, adding that there were still a lot of people on the streets who needed help.

While praising the efforts that led to the building of the Abbey, Villaraigosa reminded people that "it's a drop in the bucket in terms of what we need to do."

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