

***IN THE CITIES AND COUNTIES: LOS ANGELES CITY-COUNTY
PARTNERSHIP, STRATEGIC PLANNING, AND RESOLVE BRING
SUPPORTIVE HOUSING TO MOST VULNERABLE LIVING ON SKID ROW
AND OFFER NEW HOPE FOR EFFECTIVE LONG TERM APPROACH***

USICH-12/21/07

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA. A new strategic partnership between Los Angeles City and County officials that is moving forward a disciplined approach to identify and prioritize housing and services for the most vulnerable and disabled is offering new hope for a more effective approach for ending the homelessness of those living long term on the streets of Skid Row in downtown Los Angeles. Beginning January 15, the first of 50 men and women who have been identified as being the most vulnerable will be moved into housing provided through the Skid Row Housing Trust with supportive services to be provided by the county.

City and county officials led by Board of Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky and Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa have sought a more effective approach to Skid Row, which has been referred to as "ground zero of homelessness in the nation." In October a meeting convened by then Supervisor Chair Yaroslavsky, the City of Los Angeles, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, Common Ground, and the Rockefeller Foundation brought together innovators from around the country with Los Angeles city and county leaders to discuss innovative approaches that are achieving results in reducing and ending street homelessness. Of particular interest was the Street to Home initiative pioneered by Common Ground and modeled after the successful "Rough Sleepers" initiative in England that reduced street homelessness by 75%. The Street-to-Home initiative replaces the ad hoc random approach to housing and services with a targeted strategic process to "identify and prioritize the most vulnerable persons living on the street, assess and negotiate housing options for those individuals, then house and retain." This approach has reduced street homelessness in the Times Square area of New York City by 87% over two years.

With support from now County Supervisor Chair Yvonne Burke, a longtime supporter of solutions for homeless people, city and county leaders agreed after the meeting to move forward within 100 days to implement a similar effort, dubbed "Project 50". On December 7, 23 outreach workers from the county, the VA, and a variety of agencies, with training provided under the leadership of Common Ground Street to Home Initiative Director Becky Kanis and Common Ground Los Angeles Field Director Beth Sandor, combed the streets of Skid Row from 4 am to 7 am for two weeks to identify those who were actually living and sleeping on the streets and used a risk factor analysis to assess their vulnerability. The intensive outreach effort produced a registry of those living and sleeping long term on the streets which number 471 individuals and prioritized them by vulnerability and needs. Common Ground President and Founder Roseanne Haggerty commended city and county leaders for "achieving consensus on an approach based on vulnerability and moving quickly to do a disciplined job of identifying and detailing the needs of those living on the streets of Skid Row." She noted that the timing of the outreach in early morning hours helped ensure that those identified were actually living and sleeping on the streets.

"Until now we've been intimidated by the sheer scale of the problem into doing very little," said Supervisor Yaroslavsky who had traveled to New York City to see first hand the Street to Home Initiative and also visited Denver's highly successful Road Home effort. He noted that the project is expected to save Los Angeles taxpayers millions of dollars by reducing the cycling in and out of shelters, jails, emergency rooms and hospitals. "To house someone in jail is more expensive than the Four Seasons Hotel."

" More resources from Washington, better strategies in the field, and decreased numbers on the street - these are the ingredients that are savings lives, said United States Interagency Council on Homelessness Executive Director Philip Mangano. "That's the focus of our investments in the lives of our country's most vulnerable citizens."