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January 29, 2020

Council File No.: 19-1087  
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Honorable Members of the City Council  
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**COUNCIL TRANSMITTAL: LOS ANGELES HOUSING + COMMUNITY INVESTMENT DEPARTMENT REPORT ON PROGRAMS THAT PROVIDE ASSISTANCE TO SENIORS AND THE FEASIBILITY OF CREATING A PILOT PROGRAM IN THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES**

**SUMMARY**

Per City Council File No. 19-1087 adopted on October 11, 2019, the Los Angeles Housing + Community Investment Department (HCIDLA) and the Los Angeles Department of Aging (LADOA), with the assistance of the Chief Legislative Analyst (CLA) were instructed to report on programs that provide cash assistance to seniors for basic essentials like rent, food, and medical needs by the Los Angeles County (County), Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA), and other municipalities, as well as report on the feasibility of creating a pilot program in the City that provides similar services to seniors.

This report summarizes current efforts in Los Angeles and the region, including HCIDLA's recommendation for City Council and Mayor to instruct the LADOA to report back with program design recommendations to launch a homelessness prevention program for seniors and for the CLA and City Administrative Officer (CAO) to identify options to fund this program.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- I. That the City Council, subject to the approval of the Mayor:
  - A. INSTRUCT the Los Angeles Department of Aging to report back with recommendations to expand homelessness prevention programming at Multipurpose Senior Centers;
  - B. INSTRUCT the CAO and CLA to report back to Council with potential funding sources and amounts to support this program, including, but not limited to, consideration of unspent Program Year 45 Consolidated Plan public services funds and Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention Program (HHAP) funds;
  - C. INSTRUCT HCIDLA to report back on options for ongoing rental assistance for seniors.

## **BACKGROUND**

There is a growing senior homelessness crisis in the City of Los Angeles (City). According to the 2019 Point-in-time Homeless Count (PIT), on a given night there are approximately 36,300 homeless individuals in the City, out of which 3,146 are 62 years and over. This is an increase of 5% from 2018. Of the 3,146 seniors, 602 are sheltered and 2,544 are unsheltered.

Statistical Data regarding Seniors Experiencing Homelessness states that 368,290 of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) / Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) recipients are over the age of 65 in Los Angeles. In 2018, 40% of older adult homeowners and 62.1% of older adult renters were cost burdened, meaning they spent 30% or more of their monthly gross income on housing. From 2012 to 2017, the average rent in Los Angeles County increased at three times the rate of the cost-of-living adjustments to SSI, and twice the rate of median household income for seniors. There are 125,000 very low-income seniors in the City and only 7,800 affordable units for seniors. Sixty percent of unsheltered people above the age of 55 said their homelessness was due to unemployment or financial reasons, including eviction or foreclosure.

## **CITY OF SANTA MONICA'S PRESERVING OUR DIVERSITY PROGRAM**

In November 2017 the City of Santa Monica launched a pilot program called Preserving our Diversity (POD) to assist seniors to remain housed in their rental units. POD was operated as an independent, locally-funded program with resources provided by the Redevelopment Replacement Housing Trust Fund. The purpose of POD is to cost-effectively maintain economic diversity by providing financial assistance to low-income, long-term residents aged 65 years and above who are living in rent-controlled apartments and whose inability to meet their basic income needs may result in displacement from the City of Santa Monica. The priority order for review of the POD applications was established by a lottery system. The pilot program assisted 21 households for 18 months with monthly subsidies that ranged from \$250 to \$500. The amount of money set aside for Phase 1 was \$300,000.

The City of Santa Monica has established a Memorandum of Understanding with the local Social Security Administration office to ensure that seniors will not experience a reduction in Social Security benefits since POD payments are classified by Social Security as basic-needs assistance funds from a local government source, and will not be calculated as income when determining eligibility for the amount of Social Security benefits.

In January 2020, the City of Santa Monica increased the scope of Preserving Our Diversity using \$2 million allocated from the City's Affordable Household Trust Fund. The expanded program aims to assist between 248 and 436 seniors, depending on how many live alone or in two-person households. The City of Santa Monica is currently reviewing applications.

### **LOS ANGELES COUNTY PROGRAMS**

Los Angeles County's Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) provides In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) that pays for services for low-income elderly, blind, or disabled individuals so they can remain safely in their own homes, and they also provide a Cash Assistance Program for elderly, disabled, and blind documented immigrants who may be ineligible for SSI/SSDI due to their immigration status. Other DPSS programs that are available include Medi-Cal, General Relief and CalFresh. In 2018, 7.2% of the 404,433 older adult households in the City received CalFresh benefits. There are Restaurant Meals Programs that serve elderly, disabled, and homeless CalFresh participants, allowing them to purchase hot, prepared meals using their Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards at approved restaurants.

Los Angeles County's Department of Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services (WDACS) has several programs that can provide assistance to seniors. Below are some of the programs offered by WDACS:

- Linkages Program is a program with the goal of preventing premature institutionalization of frail elderly and dependent adults by providing comprehensive care management services. The services include: Intake Screening; In-Home Assessment; Annual Reassessment; Care Planning; Informal Support Services; Arranged Services; Purchase of Services; and Case Monitoring / Follow-up.
- Los Angeles Commission for Older Adults advise the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) on the development, implementation, and evaluation of the Area Plan for Program Service Area (PSA) 19. It preserves and enhances the general well-being of the senior population living in the County and increases awareness of the Board of Supervisors regarding issues, conditions and needs that face senior persons in the County. It also makes recommendations as to how adverse conditions might be remedied and ensures that the Board of Supervisors are aware of the many contributions made by the County's seniors.
- Traditional Legal Assistance Program is provided to individuals aged 60 years or over with economic or social needs. The services include consultation at senior center sites, in-home consultations with individuals confined to the home, and monthly community legal education seminars at selected sites.
- Elderly Nutrition Program offers congregate meals which meet USDA dietary guidelines and are offered to mobile older adults at meal sites such as senior centers or parks throughout the County.

- Adult Protective Services provides a system of in person response to reports of abuse and self-neglect about developmentally disabled adults, physically and mentally disabled adults, and the elderly who may be victims of abuse.

The County has three pilot programs to address the needs of older adults experiencing homelessness:

- The Elderly Nutrition Pilot (ENP) program is currently operating in Service Planning Areas (SPAs) 1, 4, 5, and 8. Homeless providers provide weekly in-reach and outreach to one senior meal site in each SPA and have engaged an estimated 84 older adults since March 2018;
- WDACS started a co-location pilot on September 21, 2018, whereby People Assisting the Homeless (PATH) and Volunteers of America Los Angeles (VOALA) are co-located at three Adult Protective Services Offices; and,
- The Department of Social Services (DPSS) / Department of Mental Health (DMH) began a pilot program in May 2018, to expedite In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) referrals received from Operation Healthy Streets and DMH interim housing providers. Applicants are referred approximately two weeks before moving out of their interim housing and into permanent housing.

### **LOS ANGELES HOMELESS SERVICES AUTHORITY (LAHSA) PROGRAMS FOR SENIORS**

LAHSA has procured The Salvation Army to administer shallow subsidies for seniors. This is a rental assistance program for older adults (62 years of age or older) who are at-risk of homelessness, with the goal of transitioning them into affordable housing and/or senior housing. Just over 400 seniors are assisted directly by this program, in addition to seniors who are screened and placed into housing through Coordinated Entry System providers.

### **CITY OF GLENDALE**

In response to the affordability crisis, the City of Glendale developed and launched a program in 2019 with the aim of providing a short term monthly subsidy for low income seniors. Supported by funds received from an increase in local sales tax, the Monthly Housing Subsidy Program (MHSP) is a pilot program designed to provide financial subsidy assistance to extremely low income disabled senior renters in Glendale. A \$300 per month subsidy is issued directly to renters via direct deposit and may be used for general housing expenses, including but not limited to rent, utilities, food, and healthcare cost.

1,000 qualified households will be served under this program, selected via random lottery based on their priority and eligibility, which is that every member of the household must be aged 62 years or older. In order to be eligible for the program, the total household annual income can not exceed \$21,950 for one person or \$25,050 for two persons, which is the largest household size eligible for benefits. If the total household annual income exceeds, seniors will not be eligible for the MHSP. Applicants aged 75 years or older are higher priority. To qualify, at least one member of the household must be disabled. Applicants must be current renters of a unit in the City of

Glendale and cannot already be participating in Section 8 or other City of Glendale affordable housing initiatives.

### **HOUSING + COMMUNITY INVESTMENT DEPARTMENT REFERRALS TO DEPARTMENT OF AGING (SERVING OUR SENIORS REFERRALS)**

The City's 16 FamilySource Centers (FSC), administered by HCIDLA, serves over 40,000 residents annually. FSCs, which are located throughout the City, provide residents with screening and assessment, case management and wrap-around services and referrals to assist vulnerable residents with improving their economic well-being and educational attainment. The FSC system primarily serves families with children and teens, but makes referrals to LADOA when appropriate.

The Housing and Community Investment Department (HCIDLA) has partnered with the Department of Aging (LADOA) to create a mechanism that links seniors to additional services needed. The Compliance Division of HCIDLA is responsible for facilitating the Serving Our Seniors referral form to LADOA. LADOA has asked HCIDLA staff to notify and refer seniors needing assistance on a variety of issues. Many referrals are processed by HCIDLA housing inspectors, and involve cases including but not limited to, landlord/tenant relations, evictions, apartment accessibility, financial management, hoarding, and utility management. To date, HCIDLA has referred 47 individuals to LADOA.

### **DEPARTMENT OF AGING MULTIPURPOSE SENIOR CENTERS**

The Los Angeles Department of Aging provides services and programs through Multipurpose Senior Centers located throughout the City of Los Angeles and local contracted providers for specialized services. Programs include:

- In-Home Assistance - Designed to assist frail older adults to maintain independent living by providing assistance with household tasks.
- Nutrition Program
  - Congregate Meals - Dining centers throughout the City provide a hot, nutritious meal five days a week. The meals are available to any senior. Donations are encouraged but are not required.
  - Home Delivered Meals - Delivers one hot, nutritious meal to homebound seniors five days a week.
- Transportation - Curb-to-curb transportation services for frail older adults is provided through Multipurpose Senior Centers (MPC).
- Wellness Education and Screening - Health services and medical screenings are provided at MPCs.
- Social and Recreational Activities - MPCs offer an array of activities and programs designed to enrich the lives of older adults.
- Care Management - Designed to assess the social and health needs of frail older adults, develop a care plan to meet these needs, and ensure that the care plan works as designed.

## **HOMELESS PREVENTION PROGRAMS FOR LOS ANGELES RESIDENTS OF ALL AGES**

Several important Citywide initiatives are underway to prevent homelessness, including:

- Problem-Solving - In partnership with LAHSA and their nonprofit partners, FSC staff have received training in problem-solving and will receive access to problem solving assistance funds. This effort intends to equip case managers with tools and resources to address housing instability challenges that families are facing. This program is being implemented in January 2020 and is supported by \$1.2 million in City General Funds, State Homeless Emergency Assistance Program money, as well as Measure H prevention funds.
- Building on the Solid Ground pilot program in Van Nuys, the City has recently adopted a Citywide Homelessness Prevention Program to be implemented at FSCs in two phases. The first phase is expected to launch in March with eight FSCs hiring Housing Stability Advisors to assist with long-term case management, short-term cash assistance and other tools to strengthen households' housing security. Phase 1 is funded with \$1 million in City funds from the Unappropriated Balance.
- Additionally, the Citywide Eviction Defense Program will soon offer right to legal counsel citywide for persons facing removal proceedings. The City will procure nonprofit legal services partners to offer programs and services to residents. This program is initially funded with \$3 million in General Funds and Community Development Block Grant funds and will begin early in 2020.

While none of these three programs are specifically designed to assist seniors, each program may have relevant design criteria and implementation lessons learned that will be applicable to any new program intended to support seniors maintain housing stability. It will be many months until evaluation data is available.

### **STAKEHOLDER INPUT**

HCIDLA received input from the Los Angeles Aging Advocacy Coalition's Policy Action Team, which includes Shelter Partnership, St. Barnabas Senior Center and other nonprofit organizations. These community stakeholders are focused on lifting up the experience of seniors living in poverty in Los Angeles and identifying solutions. The Coalition presented remarks to the City Council's Homelessness and Poverty Committee on October 2, 2019 and provided HCIDLA with a seven-page report that included analysis and recommendations. This report and conversations with these stakeholders played a valuable role in shaping HCIDLA's understanding of the issue and informed the Department's recommended next steps.

The overarching recommendation from stakeholders is to allocate new funding to strengthen the City's older adult safety net, beginning with MPCs. Specific suggestions include co-locating older adult homeless prevention coordinators at MPCs to bridge the gap between the homeless and senior services sectors. Additionally, stakeholders recommend cross-training between Adult Protective Services, MPCs, HCIDLA, Coordinated Entry System, and health plan social workers.

The Coalition recommends that the scope of the prevention pilot program should have four components: (1) outreach; (2) accessible intake; (3) subsidy; and, (4) prevention services.

Implementing a research component to the program to contribute to the increasing field of prevention research and data. Staff should be linking their clients to available legal services. The pilot program should use the Elder Economic Security Index to determine eligibility, as this is believed to be a more accurate way to measure a senior citizen's need by considering expenses, household status and income.

### **IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Department of Aging administers the City's network of Multipurpose Senior Centers and leads the City's coordination of senior programs, policies and services with the Department of Recreation and Parks and nonprofit senior service providers. HCIDLA encourages the City Council and Mayor to designate Department of Aging as the lead City department to design and implement a senior homelessness prevention program.

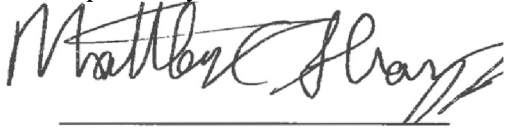
CAO and CLA can identify potential funding options for the City Council and Mayor to consider.

In the months ahead, HCIDLA can further explore ongoing rental assistance programs that can better support seniors at risk of homelessness.

### **FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

There is no fiscal impact to the General Fund associated with this report.

Prepared By:



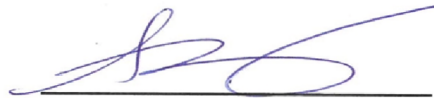
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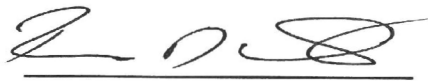
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