

Los Angeles Homeless Epidemic Alternative Housing and Locations

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Homelessness is a major problem across America and is also very expensive, costing billions of dollars each year. If Los Angeles has been booming with construction over the past several years, why has the homeless population continued to greatly increase? I will investigate what plans Mayor Eric Garcetti and the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority already have in place to aid this epidemic. This is such a large problem that the presented solutions and findings may only help a portion of the unsheltered homeless, but it will be a step in the right direction. In order to tackle this epidemic, I will be following a three step process, which will guide my research. I will begin by breaking down the core issues of why the homeless population is growing. This will allow me to understand the problem and will help me devise viable solutions. Next, I will analyze the current steps the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority already has in place that are facilitating this problem and see which solutions are working the best. Lastly, I will build upon the current solutions by introducing affordable alternative housing options and possible locations for the homeless to relocate in Los Angeles.

Key Words: Los Angeles, Alternative Housing, Homeless, Relocation, 3D Home Construction

Introduction

Los Angeles has one of the biggest homeless populations in the entire country, growing to just over 57,000 in 2017. It is so big in fact, that if you were to cut homelessness out of LA, the national average would drop for the first time since the Great Depression. Many of us take every day amenities such as transportation, food, water, and shelter for granted. But for those of whom are homeless, finding the strength of getting through the day and a safe place to rest at night can be a difficult task. According to the 2017 point-in-time count, homelessness was up 23 percent between 2016 and 2017 (See Figure 3). Unfortunately, the group of homeless that are growing the fastest are between the ages of 18-24 (up 64 percent). Normally these people would turn to local shelters for temporary housing but the shelters in Los Angeles have reached max capacity and have extremely long waiting lists. Approximately only 25 percent of the homeless in Los Angeles are provided shelter leaving the remaining 75 percent to fend for themselves. Eric Garcetti has proposed a 430-million-dollar budget for 2018 and 2019 to help decrease this percentage through a series of shelter and work programs, management strategies, clean-up crews, first aid, and housing solutions. With new advances in construction technology, alternative housing solutions are becoming a cheaper and efficient way of permanent living. By

implementing these new alternative housing techniques in locations where the homeless can give back to society, hopefully this number will decrease over time with lasting effects.

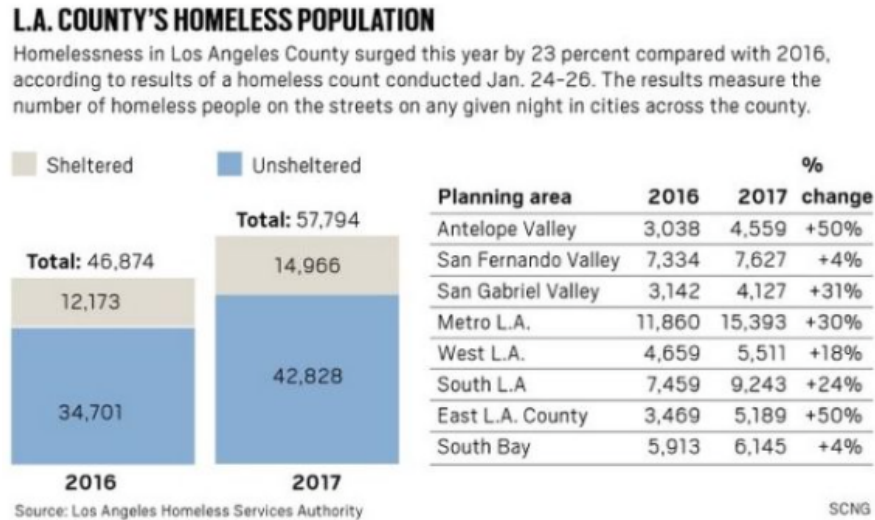


Figure 1 (<https://www.lahsa.org>)

General Background

Los Angeles 2018 & 2019 Homeless Budget

There are many factors that lead to homelessness but the main reasons are lack of affordable housing and unemployment which leads to the inability to pay for current housing. There are approximately 43,000 unsheltered homeless in Los Angeles and 15,000 more who seek nightly refuge in overcrowded shelters. The city council of LA has created the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority to act on behalf of the homeless. LAHSA is a direct administrator of publicly funded homeless programs throughout the Los Angeles region. LAHSA advises and participates in the framing of major public programs that affect people experiencing homelessness.

Eric Garcetti and LAHSA have set aside \$430 million gathered from Los Angeles property taxes to devise a plan to help solve this epidemic through the end of 2019. This plan includes the budget carried over from 2016-2017. This new “Homeless Budget” provides funding for the provision of housing and services to individuals and families in the City. Proposition HHH was approved by voters in November of 2016. Prop HHH provided the City with the authority to issue up to \$1.2 billion in General Obligation bonds to finance the development of permanent supportive housing, affordable housing, and various other facilities to aid in helping the homeless back on their feet. Some of the major programs within the new Homeless Budget that will help the homeless find housing solutions are the Shelter Program, City Planning Housing Unit, Coordinated Entry System (CES) Regional Coordination and the Crisis and Bridge Housing Fund.

Los Angeles Housing Market

The cost of living in Los Angeles is on the rise and the housing market has almost fully recovered to what it once was before the crash in 2008. Those who can't compete with increasing housing prices will be forced to move out of the city or to live on the streets. The current average home price in Los Angeles is around \$450,000 and is growing. Demonstrated by figure 2 below, home prices have steadily increased over the past three decades making it harder for people to maintain permanent residence in Los Angeles.

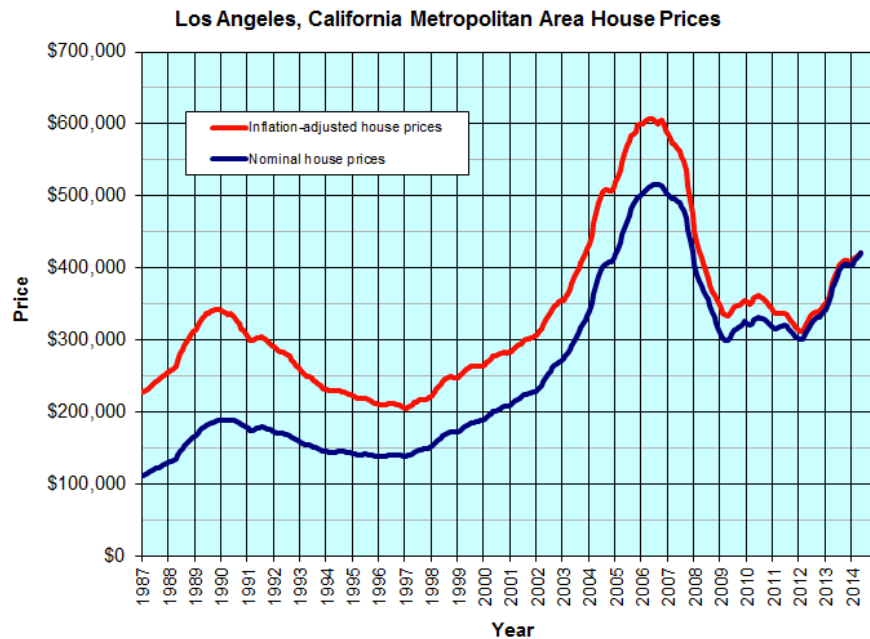


Figure 2: Average House Price From 1987-2014 (<http://www.losangeles.gov/housing/resources>)

Methodology

- Break down the core issues of why the homeless population is growing.
- Analyze the current steps Eric Garcetti and the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority already have in place that are helping this problem and see which solutions are working the best.
- Build upon the current solutions by introducing affordable alternative housing options
- Introduce possible locations for the homeless to relocate in Los Angeles.

A Growing Problem

Beginning around the 1980's, Los Angeles first started to accumulate a growing homeless community. Tents and makeshift shelters started appearing under freeways and bridges and Skid

Row, what is now widely known as having one of the highest densities of homelessness in a single area, was born. But how did this epidemic begin and why has it spiraled out of control?

The main reason why so many people were forced onto the streets since 1980 has been due to the extreme increase in housing prices in Los Angeles. Most of the homeless in Los Angeles did not come here without a home. They lived in LA, were working class citizens, and contributed to society, but as housing prices increased, minimum wage employees simply could not keep up with everyday necessities such as rent. Over time, the prices of rent steadily became more and more expensive which has led to this epidemic that we face today.

Noted by figure 3 below, in 2015 LA Family Housing conducted a study and determined that Los Angeles County is considered the least affordable rental market in the country. Those able to afford rent on average allocate 47% percent of their income towards this expense. A two-bedroom home in LA costs on average \$2,300 per month. This cost of living is 17% higher than what is considered affordable. With numbers like these, a family must earn approximately \$87,000 to maintain the ability to pay for rent.

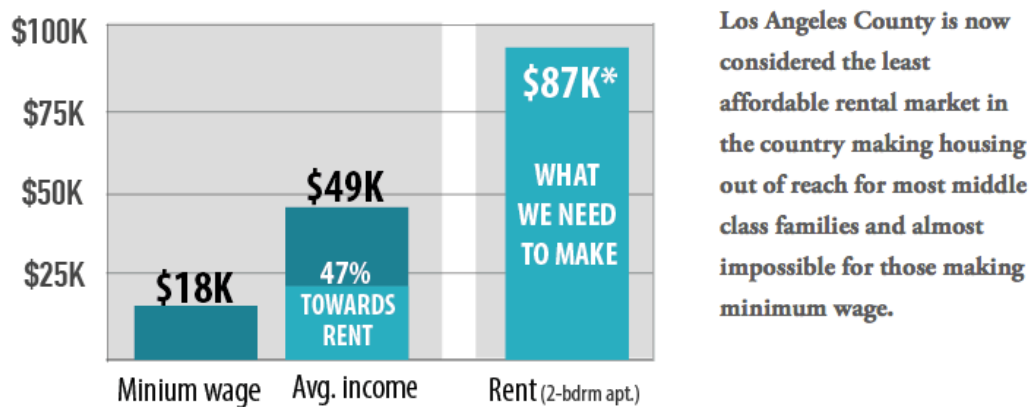


Figure 3 (<https://lafh.org/causes-solutions/>)

Due to the fact that minimum wage will not increase to a level to support current housing prices, housing prices must decrease to meet the demand of minimum wage. With new innovations in construction technology, the ability to construct permanent housing at an affordable rate is becoming a possibility and can have the ability to help remedy this situation.

Current Homeless Budget Solutions

Mayor Eric Garcetti and the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority have developed a Homeless Budget for 2018-2019 which has a detailed list of expenses drawn from mostly Los Angeles property taxes of over \$430 million. The main solutions that will quickly get a portion of the homeless off the streets and into forms of housing and shelters are the Shelter Program, The City Planning Housing Unit Initiative, Coordinated Entry System (CES) Regional Coordination and the Crisis and Bridge Housing Fund.

After reaching out to LAHSA, I was able to get in contact with one of their representatives and she walked me through the current Homeless Budget Initiatives that will most directly impact families and individuals who are seeking temporary and permanent housing solutions. The following programs are explained below.

The Shelter Program will have approximately \$2 million in HUD Emergency Solutions Grant funding to increase emergency shelter bed capacity in the City by over 800 additional shelter beds from December through February of each year. During a typical period of operation, over 80,000 emergency shelter bed nights are provided within the city limits of Los Angeles. The proposed increase secures funding to extend the program through the month of March. The proposed amount also includes an additional \$208,000 to replace Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) funding previously provided through the Consolidated Plan.

The City Planning Housing Unit Initiative will provide case management services from entitlement cases with housing development activities. Positions provide expertise in housing development and coordinate with other City agencies to help resolve issues related to affordable housing/permanent supportive housing development throughout the project entitlement and permitting process. The total amount is comprised of a General Fund and Specialized Fund of around \$550,000.

Coordinated Entry System (CES) Regional Coordination ensures that individuals and families experiencing homelessness throughout the system receive assessments and access to housing and services, so that they may be rapidly connected to the most appropriate housing and service interventions. CES lead providers oversee and coordinate engagement, assessment, and support of people experiencing homelessness.

Crisis and Bridge Housing Fund is provided in the General City Purposes budget to establish new crisis and bridge housing beds with hygiene facilities and storage for unsheltered individuals experiencing homelessness. Their goal is to add 50-100 new beds per Council District. Funds will be allocated evenly amongst districts until January 2019. Once each facility is open, additional homeless outreach sanitation and resources will be made available in the surrounding area.

These four initiatives will serve as immediate temporary support for homeless families and individuals to help them off the streets and will hopefully allow them to make lasting solutions of their own. Although these programs will have a huge benefit to the homeless community they do not provide permanent residence in the short term. But, through new construction innovation, alternative housing may become a possibility.

Alternative Housing

As technology advances, new forms of alternative housing are making their way into the construction industry. One company, Apis Cor, is gaining popularity and traction lately due to their speed and low cost 3D printed homes. Traditional 3D printed homes are typically erected off site and tend to come in compartmentalized pieces. They also can be highly expensive due to

transportation costs and materials used. This early style of 3D printed homes would not be feasible for Los Angeles' homeless epidemic but as the technology has advanced new methods of developing this style of housing has been introduced.

Apis Cor Construction has strayed away from traditional 3D printed buildings and has invented a mobile construction 3D printer capable of printing a 38 square meter concrete home on site for approximately \$10,000 excluding the MEPF components. The printer itself is 4 meters tall and has a reach of 5 meters. It has the ability to rotate 360 degrees and weighs approximately 2 tons. The maximum operating zone is 132 square meters. Only a single machine is required to print a single home and can be completed with little operator help in 24 hours only taking about an hour with commissioning and set-up.

The machine uses a geopolymers based concrete with fiberglass reinforced steel bars for interior support. This concrete is pumped based on a predetermined floor plan that can be altered to almost any design. Once the design is programmed into the machine, the printer will begin printing the concrete "ink" layer by layer, accounting for irregularities in the foundation, spaces for windows, doors, and hallways. Once the machine has constructed the home which consists of the foundation, walls and ceiling. During the process a small crew insulates the walls, installs the necessary mechanical, electrical, plumbing, fire sprinkler requirements and installs the doors and windows. The machine meets industry safety and ADA requirements.

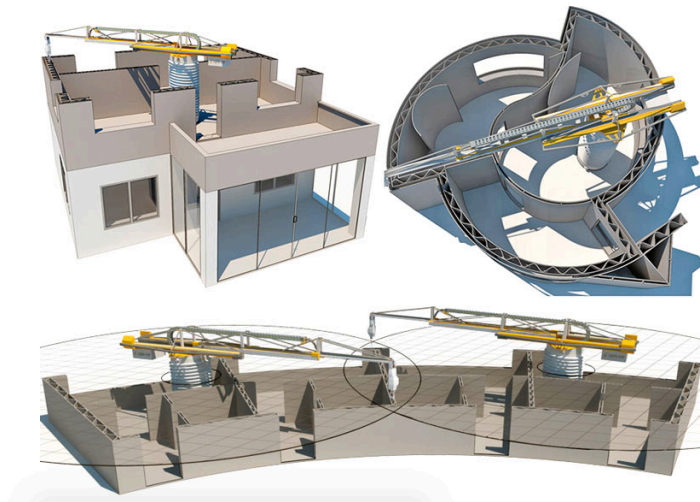


Figure 4 (<http://apis-cor.com>)

With new technology emerging such as innovations like the Apis Cor 3D printer, homes can be erected and built at a fraction of the cost. This technology has huge applications in the way of disaster relief construction as well and permanent residential construction for a fraction of the time and cost compared to more traditional methods. This option could be a solution for the upcoming 2020-2021 Homeless Budget and will give families and individuals experiencing homelessness a permanent option for affordable housing. The construction industry has been slow to adopt and integrate technology but soon it will be the way of the future.

Viable Living Locations

Los Angeles is notoriously known for having an extremely high cost of housing prices. Many places in Los Angeles are almost unattainable, far beyond the pay grade of minimum wage residents. Although this is true, there are still a few areas in Los Angeles where renting is attainable for even families and individuals living off minimum wage. Certain areas such as Central Alameda, Florence Graham, Glassell Park and Greater Cypress Park all have an average minimum single bedroom homes and apartments for around \$1300 a month.

These locations are well within reach of single families and individuals who are taking advantage of the programs set in place (Shelter Program, The City Planning Housing Unit Initiative, Coordinated Entry System (CES) Regional Coordination and the Crisis and Bridge Housing Fund) by LAHSA. With a conjoined effort between the LA Homeless budget initiatives and the homeless willing to get off the streets, they will have the capability to move into areas around LA. Based on the proximity of the current homeless population and the average rental price I determined that Central Alameda would be a well-suited area for a portion of the unsheltered homeless live.

Conclusion

After researching how the homeless epidemic came to be in LA, analyzing the current steps Eric Garcetti and the LAHSA organization have in place, and exploring alternative housing solutions and locations for the homeless to live, it seems as though there are promising lasting solutions to this crisis. Although the homeless epidemic has been growing in Los Angeles there are strong plans in place that should slow the growth and eventually decrease the overall amount of homelessness in Los Angeles. Current factors such as LA's huge homeless budget and new advances in construction technology are fresh developments and tools that have not been at the City of LA's disposal in past years.

Future Research

As 3D home construction continues and develops, prices and time necessary for constructing homes will diminish. Allowing this new technology to change the lives of homeless families and individuals by providing affordable permanent residence which otherwise would have been out of reach. More companies like Apis Cor will saturate the market, reducing the production cost. I was very surprised after speaking with LAHSA organization when I found out just how much money will be allocated to future developments regarding the homeless epidemic. The City of Los Angeles recognizes that severity of the widespread homelessness which will demand concrete plans moving forward.

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