



Supportive Housing Neighborhood Engagement Guide

This guide is a resource for neighbors and housing teams to constructively engage with each other and address homelessness by growing the supply of affordable supportive housing in Denver, Colorado, and beyond.

Supportive Housing Neighborhood Engagement Guide



Photo courtesy of Andrew Spinks and Dawn Deano

St. Francis' Cornerstone Residences provide supportive housing to 50 individuals or couples in Denver, CO.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	1
Community-Based Workgroup Message	2
Executive Summary	4
Introduction	6
For Neighbors	10
About Supportive Housing	10
Why My Neighborhood Was Selected for Supportive Housing	16
The Role of Neighbors When Supportive Housing Is Proposed	18
Who Creates Supportive Housing	23
Supportive Housing Lifecycle	25
Police Calls	28
For Housing Teams	29
Preparing for Community Outreach	29
Conducting Community Outreach	33
Tools and Resources	37
Good Neighbor Agreements	37
Frequently Asked Questions	39
Support Services Menu	42
Glossary of Terms	43
Resources to Learn More About Supportive Housing	44

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



Photo courtesy of Chris Lowell

Guide workgroup members at Volunteers of America in Denver, CO.

The content of this guide was shaped by representatives from neighborhoods (members of Registered Neighborhood Organizations and a business owner), housing teams (supportive housing developers, service providers, and a consultant), public and private housing funders, and those who have personally experienced homelessness, through a community-based process convened by Denver City Councilwoman Robin Kniech. The process was facilitated by Christie McElhinney, Third Sector Communication Strategies. We offer a special thanks to this dedicated workgroup (listed on Page 3) for their input, guidance and dedication in helping shape this guide.

Input was also provided through a series of sector-specific presentations and discussions. Though the list of individuals is too long to name, we are grateful to each person who attended or provided feedback:

- Registered Neighborhood Organizations and members of Inter-Neighborhood Cooperation
- Persons with personal experience of homelessness and supportive housing residents
- Supportive housing developers and other homelessness service providers
- City of Denver agency staff from planning, housing, police, and others
- Professional community engagement consult and mediators.

Financial and/or in-kind support for the community-based process and development of this guide was generously provided by:

- Office of Denver City Councilwoman Robin Kniech, with Aides Polly Kyle and Chris Lowell, and Council Staff Stacy Simonet
- The Denver Foundation
- Colorado Housing and Finance Authority
- Colorado Department of Local Affairs, Division of Housing
- The Colorado Health Foundation
- Volunteers of America, Colorado Branch.

While the recommendations in this guide were deeply informed by the community-led process in Denver, the United Way of Los Angeles has also conducted best-practice research to assist with engagement in their region, which both affirmed our local direction and informed the final draft of this guide. This guide was also inspired and informed by the work of Close to Home, a Denver Foundation campaign to increase public understanding of homelessness and to activate change, and the work of Enterprise and Tiffany Manuel, Ph.D., on building public support for housing solutions.



Photo courtesy of Chris Lowell

Individuals with lived experience of homelessness provided insights and feedback on the guide.

A MESSAGE FROM THE COMMUNITY WORKGROUP

This guide is based on the strong belief that we can do better when we work together.

With different perspectives and experiences related to the challenges addressed in the guide, our group worked together over several months to consider how neighbors and housing teams can constructively engage with each other to address homelessness by growing the supply of supportive housing.

THE VALUES WE HAVE IN COMMON

We acknowledge that bringing a new supportive housing apartment building to a community can trigger tensions not easily resolved. Still, we found hope in the realization that existing neighbors, supportive housing teams and their future residents all share key values, including:

- Everyone having a safe place to call home
- A strong and well-maintained neighborhood
- Having a voice in things that affect our neighborhood
- The well-being of our families and everyone in our neighborhood
- Living in an equitable city where residents can access affordable housing
- Being connected to our neighbors
- Living in a complete community near transit, stores, jobs, and other people.

BENEFITS TO HOUSING TEAMS

Community engagement isn't typically a legal requirement, but most supportive housing teams understand how important it is because proactive engagement can:

- Educate the housing team and future residents about their new community
- Improve the fit of a new development within the existing community
- Strengthen requests for funding or other government approvals
- Establish a strong foundation for positive relationships between existing neighbors, new residents, and housing operators long after the construction has ended.

BENEFITS TO NEIGHBORS

Surrounding community members can benefit through involvement in the planning and development process by:

- Becoming informed about supportive housing, including who lives there and why it works
- Sharing neighborhood insights and expertise
- Supporting the integration of the building and future residents into the neighborhood
- Ensuring ongoing communication to promote neighborhood relationships and safety.

Supportive Housing Neighborhood Engagement Guide

We encourage neighbors, supportive housing teams, and people with personal experience of homelessness to be a part of this process. By working respectfully together, we can continue to improve the approaches we use to strengthen and maintain the unique character of our neighborhoods while ensuring that everyone has a safe place to call home.



Photo courtesy of Chris Lowell

Guide workgroup members at Sanderson Apartments in Denver, CO.

Marsha Brown

Community representative

Amanda Gold

Community representative

Rachel Griffin

Capitol Hill United Neighborhoods
Registered Neighborhood Organization

Bob Hampe

Swallow Hill
Registered Neighborhood Organization

John Hayden

Curtis Park Neighbors
Registered Neighborhood Organization

Hassan Latif

Second Chance Center

Joe Sanchez

Community representative

Zac Schaffner

Colorado Department of Local Affairs
Division of Housing

Lindi Sinton

Volunteers of America

Nick Sullivan

The Keep Recording
Athmar neighborhood business owner

Katie Symons

BeauxSimone Consulting


Denise Rome-Tamulis

Colorado Housing and Finance Authority

Cat Vielma

Red Stone Equity

Executive Summary



The guide is a resource for neighbors and housing teams to constructively engage with each other and address homelessness by growing the supply of supportive housing in Denver, Colorado, and beyond.

The City of Denver has made a commitment to house people who are living on the street, including \$60 million for land and additional construction and service funding for community-based providers to build more supportive housing – a proven solution.

Homelessness happens when systemic challenges like high housing costs, low wages, or historic bias based on race or disability collide with individual challenges such as job loss, serious illness, substance use, divorce, or domestic violence. The absence of family or another support system with resources to help is one of the primary differences between those who become homeless and those who do not.

ABOUT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Housing First

Moves people who have experienced long-term homelessness into affordable rental apartments with services to help them regain stability and maintain housing.

Next Steps

Once housed, individuals and families are better able to address other challenges they face, such as substance use or mental or physical illnesses.

Proven Effectiveness

Outcomes demonstrate supportive housing keeps people safely housed over time, improving their health and saving taxpayer money. Recent success: 85% stable end of Year 1, 79% end of Year 2.

Tenants

Selection. Tenants are selected based on their level of vulnerability to dying on the streets due to their long-term experiences of homelessness and a disability they may have.

Diversity. Some buildings serve a mix of people; others are for specific populations, such as families with children, seniors, or veterans.

Supports

Services. Dedicated staff support tenants in setting goals, getting services, and tracking their progress. On-site staff connect with residents daily to promote safety.

Safety. Staffing and design can further enhance safety for tenants and community (e.g. 24-hour desk staff, lighting, cameras, etc.).

Harm Reduction. Voluntary participation achieves the best results for substance use reduction and/or recovery.

Requirements

Lease. All tenants undergo a background check and sign a lease.

Rent. All tenants pay 30% of their monthly income toward rent.

Fair Housing Act. Cities cannot treat supportive housing differently than other apartment buildings based on the disability of some or all residents.

Building

Appearance. Developers strive to create buildings that reflect the look and feel of other apartment buildings in the area.

Operator. A lead service provider (local nonprofit) coordinates programs and services.

Manager. A skilled property management company oversees building care, maintenance, and enforces lease terms.

FOR NEIGHBORS

Who Live Near Proposed Supportive Housing

Role of Neighbors

Neighbors can improve supportive housing in their community by learning about the model, lending their voices and expertise, sharing trustworthy information, and helping to shape agreements with housing teams.

Open to Neighbor Input

Matters external to the supportive housing building are most likely to be open for input from neighbors:

- Building design
- Landscaping
- Building/neighborhood maintenance
- Ways to communicate with the housing team
- Neighborhood safety strategies
- Ways to welcome and include tenants in neighborhood events.

Site Selection

Supportive housing apartment buildings can only be built where multi-unit zoning is in place. Land is scarce and expensive, making it rare to have many options. Even so, the City of Denver is committed to distributing housing in a variety of communities.

Not Open to Neighbor Input

Matters related to the internal operations of the building are typically determined by the funding source and evidence-based research, but can typically be shared with neighbors when final:

- Selection of tenants
- Lease terms
- Support services offered on site
- Building rules
- Plans, budgets for long-term management.

FOR HOUSING TEAMS

Developers, Service Providers, Design Professionals

Preparing for Community Outreach

What to Know

Learn about the neighborhood's current goals, its history, the housing landscape, other similar services, transportation, and safety.

People

Learn who lives in the community and identify respected community leaders. Consider engaging people with homeless experience to inform outreach.

Planning

Establish a shared vision for outreach among your team and clarify members' roles. Develop shared messages and identify an effective spokesperson, ideally someone who will be involved in the building long-term.

Conducting Community Outreach

Personal

Begin by making personal connections and building individual relationships. Reach out to neighbors, talk to elected officials, knock on doors, and phone bank.

Meetings

Focus on smaller gatherings, community open houses, listening sessions, and other formats that allow for diverse voices and personal engagement. Set ground rules to keep meetings civil and productive.

Other Outreach

You don't need to "do it all," but keep in mind that people take in information in different ways. Social media, websites, and materials can broaden your reach and increase understanding.

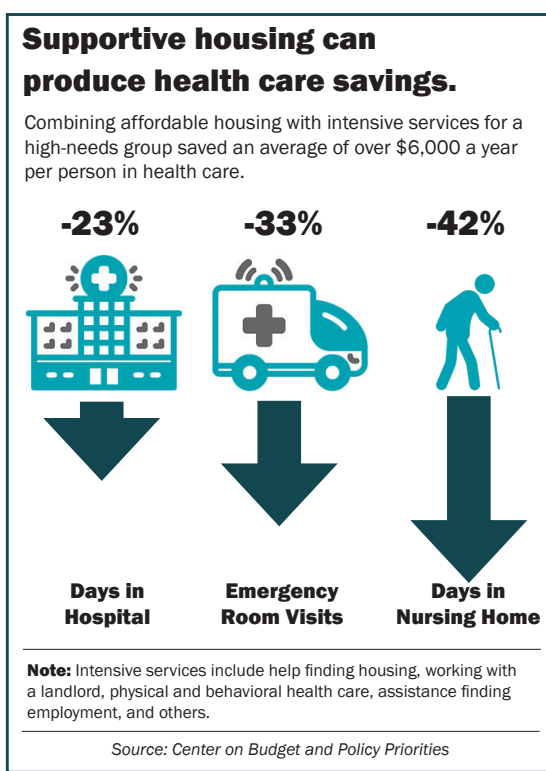
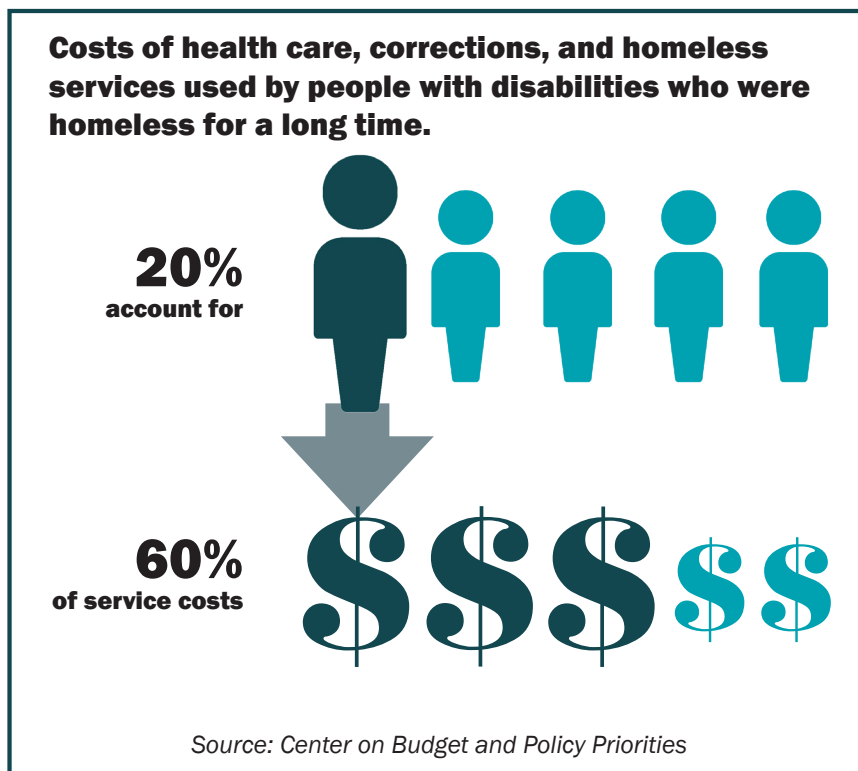
INTRODUCTION

The number of people living without a home and the visibility of homelessness in our streets, parks, and alleys is on the rise in Denver, as it is across much of the country. Residents with and without homes are calling on the City and each other for more and better solutions¹.

The City of Denver has made a commitment to house people who are living on the street.

Denver created its first dedicated housing fund in 2016, and doubled that fund in 2018, with land and housing for those experiencing homelessness a priority for 20%–25% of the funds. These and other City funds support diverse solutions, from one-time rent or utility assistance to keep people in their homes to emergency shelter, innovative approaches like Tiny Homes, and evidence-based supportive housing. Specifically, \$60 million in bonds secured by Denver Housing Authority will buy land for community-based developers to create 10-14 apartment buildings for supportive housing or housing for very low-income individuals and families.

Supportive housing is a priority for the City of Denver and throughout Colorado because it works. Using a “housing first” approach, supportive housing moves individuals who have experienced long-term homelessness into affordable, rental apartments with on-site and community-based services to help them regain stability and maintain housing. Once housed, they are better able to address other challenges they face, including substance use or mental or physical illnesses. National and local data show that this approach works to keep people safely housed over time, improving their health and saving taxpayer money.² The Colorado Division of Housing estimates that the average cost per person for emergency services before supportive housing is more than \$67,000 per year, and that supportive housing results in reducing these costs by approximately \$40,000.



¹ Affordable Housing Ranks #1 on Citywide Survey, All In Denver, 2017

² FAQs about Supportive Housing Research: Is Supportive Housing Cost Effective? Corporation for Supportive Housing

Introduction

Everyone wants to see people off the streets and safely housed, but it can be a rocky road when a new supportive housing development is proposed in a neighborhood.

Neighbors may have limited experience with supportive housing and they may have concerns about a new development generally, or supportive housing specifically, in their neighborhood. Developers face a complex, lengthy process in moving a new supportive housing building from concept to reality. Unlike market-rate projects, developers of supportive housing do not earn a “rate of return” or profit other than a modest fee earned after the building is completed. And while funders of supportive housing value a respectful and inclusive community engagement process, there are currently no funding sources for community outreach and engagement.

This guide is intended to help neighbors better understand supportive housing and the role they can play when a development is proposed in or near their neighborhood. The guide also advises housing teams – including developers, service providers, property managers, and design professionals – on how to prepare for and conduct an inclusive, respectful, and productive process that engages neighbors to help them understand and inform the new development.

Because each neighborhood and supportive housing development is unique, the guide offers a menu of ideas, considerations, and approaches focused on facilitating a positive engagement process that will vary from project to project. The suggestions aim to increase participants’ capacity and understanding of each other, paving the way for dialogue that benefits neighbors and housing teams alike while proactively addressing homelessness. Even as the guide was developed in Denver for supportive housing specifically, many of the recommendations can be applied to other communities, or to conversations about other types of new services or housing serving vulnerable households.

Homelessness is not a social issue that will simply “go away,” and the solution of supportive housing cannot only be done “somewhere else.” To meet the demand, we will need a concerted, respectful, and inclusive effort to build new services and housing for those experiencing homelessness in neighborhoods across all of Denver.

KEY TERMS

- **SUPPORTIVE HOUSING** combines apartments where residents pay rent based on income, along with on-site and community-based services to help individuals and families transition out of long-term homelessness back to having a safe place to call home. Research shows this form of housing is an effective way to end homelessness because it provides safe, stable homes with access to support from professionals who help residents coordinate services unique to their needs, which may include mental or physical health services, addiction treatment, job training, and more.
- **HOUSING TEAMS** include the supportive housing developer (oversees the acquisition of land, construction, and financing), service provider (leads and coordinates services provided to supportive housing tenants), design professionals (architects and engineers), funders (agencies and investors providing funding for the supportive housing building), and property manager (handles resident leases and maintenance).
- **NEIGHBORS OR CURRENT NEIGHBORS** include those who rent or own homes or operate businesses in or near neighborhoods where supportive housing will be developed.
- **RESIDENTS OR FUTURE RESIDENTS OR TENANTS** are individuals or households experiencing homelessness who will live in supportive housing apartments.

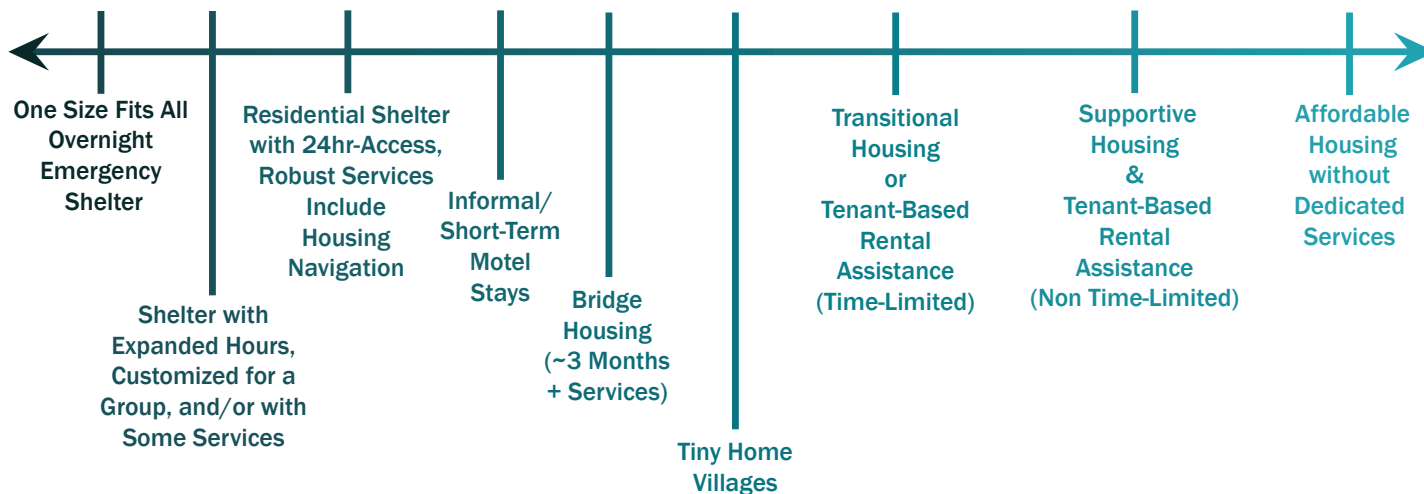
Introduction

APPROACHES TO PREVENT AND ADDRESS HOUSING INSECURITY IN DENVER

There are many circumstances that lead people to lose their housing. Most often, homelessness happens when inadequate systems like high housing costs, low wages, or historic bias based on race or disability collide with individual challenges such as job loss, serious illness, substance use, divorce, or domestic violence. Research and lived experience demonstrate that the absence of family or another support system with the resources to help someone out during a tough time is one of the primary differences between those who become homeless and those who do not.

People experience homelessness in different ways, from a brief circumstance to long-term or recurring situations. Most families and individuals without a stable, safe place to live transition among different settings, including short-stay motels, doubling-up in unsafe or overcrowded living situations, sleeping in cars, staying in transitional housing or shelters, or living on the street. Accordingly, the approaches to prevent homelessness and rehouse people are diverse, ranging from emergency shelter to affordable housing.

Continuum of Strategies for Sheltering and Rehousing People



Introduction

While this guide is focused on supportive housing, Denver uses a wide array of strategies to expand access to affordable housing for households across the income spectrum, from those with no income to those with low and moderate incomes, including:

- **Creating or preserving affordable rental or for-sale housing** for a full spectrum of low to moderate income levels (0%–80%+ of Area Median Income (AMI) (\$66,850/3-person family in 2019) (see Glossary Page 43)). Examples: Denver’s Permanent Affordable Housing Fund of ~ \$30 million per year + \$120 million bond issued by the Denver Housing Authority will create or preserve more than 6,000 affordable homes by 2023.
- **Promoting stability to remain in housing** provides assistance to 0%–80%+ of AMI renters and low- and moderate-income homeowners. Examples: one-time or short-term rental or utility assistance, property tax rebates, homeowner repair programs, and eviction legal defense representation.
- **Expanding access to existing homes** for 0%–80%+ of AMI renters and potential home owners from 60%-100% of AMI. Examples: down payment assistance, first/last month rent assistance, longer term rental assistance, prohibition on discrimination based on “source of income” (vouchers, alimony, etc.), and combatting other forms of discrimination.
- **Ensuring an adequate supply of housing** for those who don’t need assistance but struggle when there’s not enough housing overall. Examples: new housing in redevelopment areas, more density near transit, and integrating gentle density such as accessory dwelling units or duplexes or fourplexes in residential areas.



Photo courtesy of Chris Lowell

St. Francis Apartments at Cathedral Square in Denver, CO, provides supportive housing to 49 individuals or households.

FOR NEIGHBORS

ABOUT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Supportive housing combines affordable apartments with on-site and community-based services to help individuals and families exit out of long-term homelessness and have a safe place to call home.

While income inequality and a lack of affordable housing are the biggest barriers to keeping a home in cities like Denver, mental illness, chronic health conditions and/or substance use make the challenge even tougher for some individuals. Living without a stable home drastically worsens physical and mental health conditions. People with these conditions often end up in crisis, frequently using expensive, publicly-funded systems due to a lack of alternatives, especially emergency health care and the correctional system.

Research shows that providing a stable, affordable home to people with severe disabilities, coupled with services such as medical care, addiction treatment, employment programs and financial management, is the most effective way to end long-term homelessness³.

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING APARTMENT BUILDINGS

Whether an existing building is converted or a new apartment building is built, the goal is to reflect the look and character of the surrounding community so that a person passing by cannot tell the difference between supportive housing and other apartment buildings. Renovating an existing building can be more expensive but helps preserve the feel of an area. When a new building is proposed, early input from neighbors on site layout and building design can help ensure the building fits the desired character of the neighborhood.

Supportive housing apartment buildings are generally operated by a lead service provider (a local nonprofit) and a property management company that is trained and skilled in managing similar types of buildings. While these three components – the development of the apartment building, its ongoing operations, and the provision of resident support services – are funded out of separate budgets to ensure each function can be fully performed, all aspects of supportive housing work together to effectively support residents and ensure community safety.

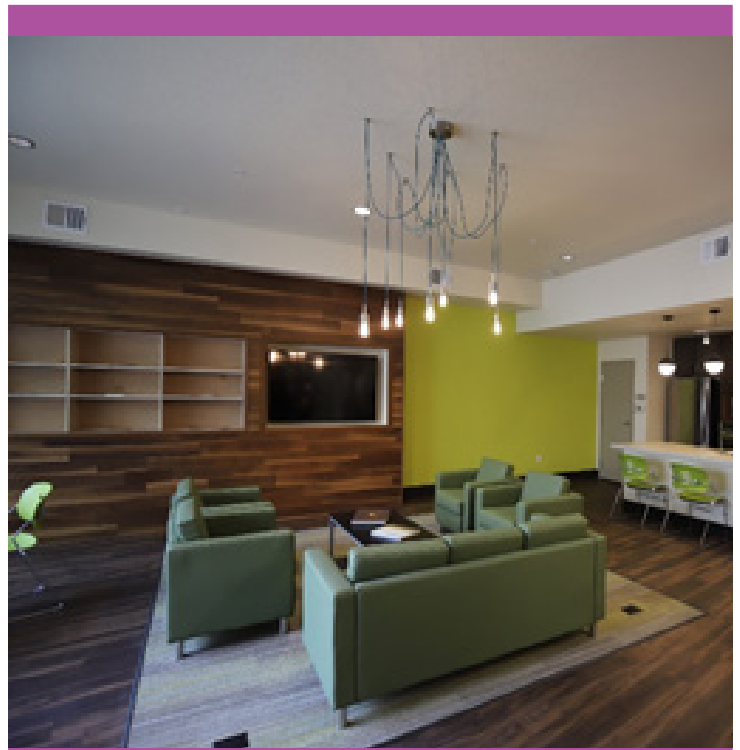


Photo courtesy of The Delores Project and Rocky Mountain Communities

Resident lounge at Arroyo Village in Denver, CO.

³ Supportive Housing Helps Vulnerable People Live and Thrive in the Community, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2016



Photo courtesy of The Delores Project and Rocky Mountain Communities

The Arroyo Village Affordable Housing Community in Denver, CO, includes 95 affordable and 35 supportive housing apartments, with 50-60 shelter beds for women and transgender individuals on the ground floor.

COSTS

All tenants are required to sign a lease before moving into an apartment. Most tenants have income, either through a job, or social security, disability or veteran benefits. All tenants are required to pay 30 percent of their monthly income for rent. The remainder of the funding comes from public and private sources (see FAQs, Page 39).

FUTURE TENANTS

Supportive housing residents are diverse and of different ages, backgrounds, cultures, education levels and experiences. There is no single path to homelessness, and each person moving into supportive housing has faced their own barriers and struggles, which might include domestic violence, a debilitating physical ailment, a sudden and unexpected loss of income, or loss of family support.

Some apartments serve a mix of people and others are for specific populations, such as families with children, seniors or veterans. Tenants are often selected to live in supportive housing based on the barriers to housing stability they face, such as medical vulnerability or having a disability, long-term history of homelessness, or utilization of emergency services. They have been matched to supportive housing because it will help them regain stability and well-being.

For Neighbors

Every tenant undergoes a thorough background check and must follow the terms of their lease by complying with building rules and requirements. The majority of supportive housing receives federal tax credits, and when federal funding is involved, additional screening criteria may apply.

Supportive housing must abide by the Fair Housing Act⁴, a law that protects tenants from discrimination by landlords, including discrimination based on a disability. The Fair Housing Act also prohibits cities from treating supportive housing differently than other apartment buildings, simply because of the disability status of some or all of the residents. For this reason, the zoning and building code approvals required to build or renovate supportive housing apartment buildings are the same as they would be for any other apartment building where residents have a key to their own apartment and a lease.



“When a person is experiencing homelessness, day-to-day survival tends to be the looming predicament. It is difficult to envision a life of value, meaning, and fulfillment when you don’t know where you are going to sleep.

Soon after my release from incarceration, I found myself homeless, displaced, and without a clear direction of what my next step would be. I knew this transition would be difficult; however, I was eager and committed to pursuing a life of legitimacy and purpose. First, I needed basics – proper identification, a job, shelter, transportation assistance, food, and clothes – and I wanted to go back to school.

Supportive housing gave me the resources I needed to facilitate a healthy and successful transition back into the community. By consistently working with the service providers, I was able to gain employment, find stable housing I could afford, and enroll in college. I am now a graduate of Metropolitan State University of Denver with a Bachelor of Science degree in Human Services and Counseling and am working as a case manager at St. Francis Center, providing assistance to others who are transitioning out of incarceration and/or homelessness.”

**– Ved Price
Personal Experience of Homelessness
Case Manager, St. Francis Center**

⁴ Fair Housing: Equal Opportunity for All, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

HARM REDUCTION

Supportive housing uses a “harm reduction” approach to support residents with substance use disorders. Research shows that recovery from addiction depends heavily on voluntary participation and decision-making on the part of individuals and that recovery is more likely when individuals are stable and living without trauma. The stability and support available in supportive housing are associated with reduced substance use and/or with recovery. For some supportive housing residents, abstinence will be an immediate goal. For others, the focus will be on improving the quality of life while taking steps to reduce the harm caused by risky behaviors. Professional staff explore with residents the benefits of changing, reducing, or eliminating high-risk behaviors and support them in identifying and working toward the goals they set.

SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

Each resident has access to a dedicated staff member to support them in identifying goals, connecting them to supportive services, and helping to track their progress. Services are:



“People believe that no one else knows their situation, that no one can help them. Because you don’t even know how you got here, how can you explain what you need to get out? But when a service provider believed in me, it was huge. When I got a bank account, it was huge. And communication for events — coffees, classes, meals, events — it is everywhere in my building, you can’t miss it. Even if I don’t go to it all, it gives me a sense of belonging.”

— **Katie Broeren**
Resident in Supportive Housing
Peer Recovery Coach
and Homeless Advocate

- **Housing-oriented** – With the goal of keeping people housed, services help tenants to build relationships with their landlord and new community, understand their rights and responsibilities as renters, and strive to prevent evictions.
- **Multi-disciplinary** – Services help tenants address their physical and mental health, substance use, and help with other issues like gaining employment and life skills training such as financial management.
- **Easily accessible** – Most supportive housing apartment buildings have staff on site to help residents set goals and develop their plans. Some also bring service providers in to have additional support such as group meetings, job coaching, etc. Residents may also be referred to service providers off-site, with transportation assistance provided. Services are typically administered by professional staff such as case managers, social workers, psychotherapists, psychiatrists or resident managers.
- **Voluntary** – Services are voluntary, but providers offer services assertively, which means that they will continue to show up and check on someone even if tenants don’t request help. In recent Denver buildings, nearly all residents engaged in services within the first year.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

The safety of building tenants as well as the surrounding community is of utmost priority to everyone involved in proposed supportive housing. Many apartment buildings benefit from the 24-hour presence of property management and/or service provider staff or volunteers. Some buildings may supplement that staffing with overnight private security as do other commercial apartment buildings in Denver. Trained staff, volunteers, or professional security personnel are there to help ensure residents are safe, protected from external concerns, and to ensure accountability to building rules. They also encourage residents to be good neighbors in their new community. Security cameras are also sometimes used to monitor access doors and/or external spaces. Neighbors may want to learn more about how property managers will address questions or concerns about noise, disturbances, individuals who don't live in one of the apartments, or illegal activities, before a building opens, and then stay in communication with the manager after it opens and the community evolves (see Communications, Page 21).

“In our newest supportive housing project near Colfax, we built in large windows facing the front, back and parking area, and a front desk staffed around the clock, to help serve as the ‘eyes and ears,’ both for our neighbors and for those who live in our building, enhancing safety for all.”

— **Lindi Sinton**
Vice President of Program Operations
Volunteers of America
Colorado Branch

When residents move into a building, they have access to intensive services to support them in being stably housed. It is a best practice for residents to receive an orientation that includes a review of their responsibility for complying with the terms of their lease. Property managers and service providers work together to reinforce expectations, trouble shoot concerns and incentivize compliance. Leases prohibit residents from engaging in illegal, dangerous, or disruptive activities. Residents are held accountable for not meeting the conditions of their lease. This may include mandatory meetings with property management and could lead to having to move out if there are serious or repeated violations.



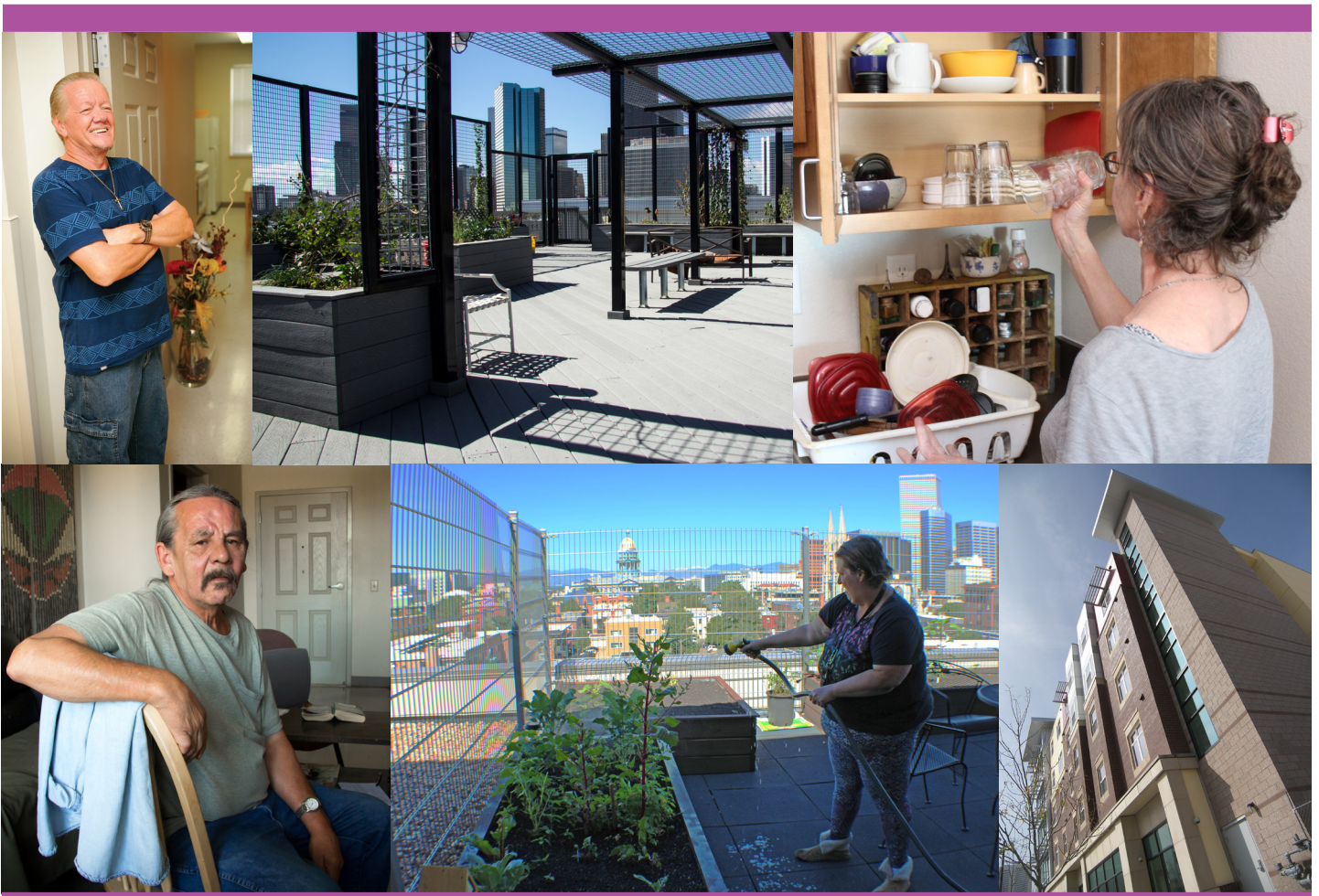
Photo courtesy of Shopworks Architecture

Volunteers of America's Brandon Courtyard Apartments in Denver, CO, provides supportive housing to 59 individuals and 44 families.

WHAT IS SUPPORTIVE HOUSING REALLY LIKE?

When supportive housing is proposed or planned for a community, it may be difficult for some neighbors to imagine what the building will look like or how it will feel. There may be questions on how services and rules work together to promote and reinforce safety for residents and the larger community. It can be helpful to see for yourself what supportive housing is like.

Reach out to a City agency, your City Councilmember, or the housing team proposing the supportive housing to connect you with a tour of an existing supportive housing apartment building. Or you might consider asking for a panel presentation to meet real-life residents and service providers or for small-group or one-on-one conversations. There are also video tours available to give you a feel for different buildings (see Resources, Page 44).



Residents at St. Francis Center Apartments.

Photos courtesy of Andrew Spinks and Dawn Deano

WHY MY NEIGHBORHOOD WAS SELECTED FOR SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

In addition to the quality of life for residents being connected to a complete neighborhood, two significant factors impact where supportive housing can be developed. First is zoning. Because supportive housing is provided in multi-unit apartment buildings, it can only be built in neighborhoods where multi-unit zoning is allowed. Some neighborhoods in Denver have more multi-unit areas than others, in part due to a history of racial segregation. While the City's most recent plans acknowledge this history and advocate for a more integrated approach to housing, zoning patterns that evolved over many decades persist and the city's neighborhoods still largely reflect concentrations of single-unit zoning in some areas and multi-unit zoning in others.

Second is the availability and cost of land. Land is scarce, and the real estate market in Denver is expensive and highly competitive. Most supportive housing developers pay full market price for land but are still challenged to locate and successfully purchase property. In some cases, the search for land takes years and it's very rare to have more than one parcel to choose from that a team can afford and secure to build apartments.

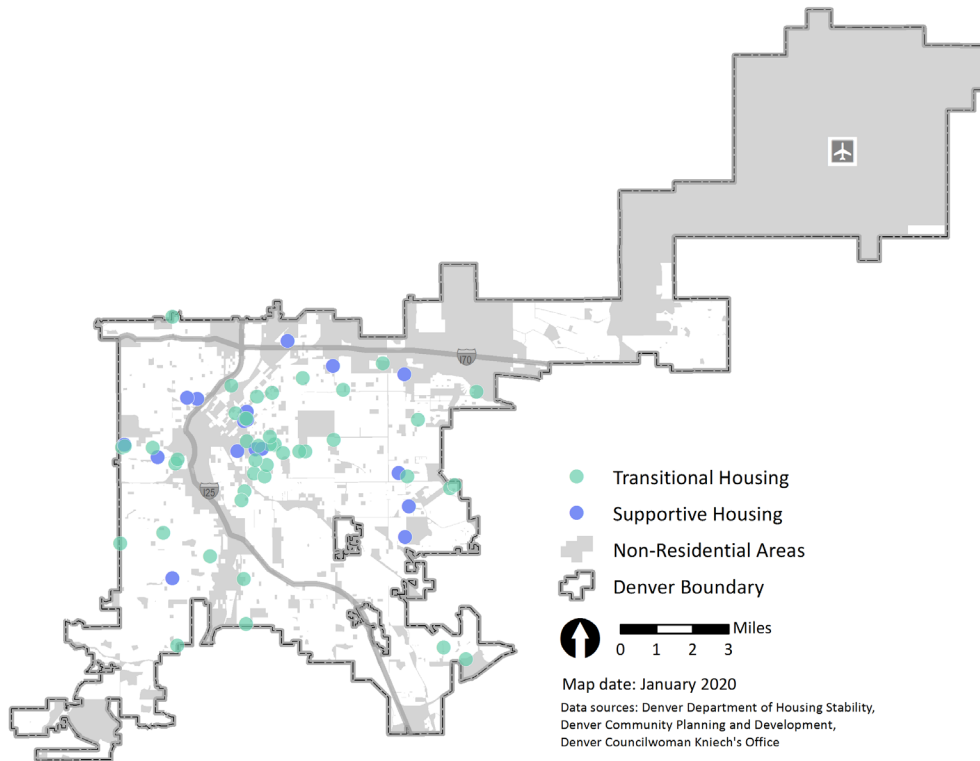
Despite these limitations, the City of Denver is committed to promoting equity for neighborhoods by distributing housing across diverse communities. For example, the \$60 million land acquisition fund (see Page 6) limits the percentage of funds that can be used in any one council district to ensure new housing is built across the city. Additionally, the City is working with communities in neighborhood planning processes to increase opportunities for multi-unit housing in different neighborhoods, especially near transit or in redevelopment areas.

The goal of supportive housing development is to promote equity for residents, to help them engage fully in their communities and lives, whether through housing, education, health care, healthy food or other connections they lost during homelessness. For this reason, supportive housing succeeds in the same kind of neighborhood where other residents thrive — one with access to transportation, jobs, grocery stores or other amenities. Isolating supportive housing far from other residents and/or amenities and services would be inequitable for residents and would reduce the success rate of keeping people stably housed.

“We are at our best when all of our neighbors are invited to be fully engaged in creating their future. Even if all our city plans and rules didn't anticipate this new reality, it is incumbent on us to seize opportunities as they arise to develop supportive housing where we can. We have the opportunity to be proud and grateful that our communities are stepping up to ensure our homeless neighbors have that chance for a better future.”

— Dr. Nancy McMahon
Denver Native and
long-time resident of Cheesman Park

HOUSING FOR THOSE EXITING HOMELESSNESS IN DENVER NEIGHBORHOODS



Through rental assistance provided by federal, state or local programs, more than 1,500 formerly homeless individuals/families are also housed throughout all of Denver’s neighborhoods in scattered-site, short-term or long-term housing.

Supportive housing residents benefit from living in the same connected neighborhoods as other residents. Supportive housing apartments can only be built where multi-unit zoning is in place. Even so, ending homelessness is a priority for the City of Denver, and it is committed to distributing housing across diverse communities. For example, the City’s \$60 million land acquisition fund requires new buildings to be located across multiple council districts, not just in one area of the city.

THE ROLE OF NEIGHBORS WHEN SUPPORTIVE HOUSING IS PROPOSED

Neighbors can improve supportive housing in their community by learning about this approach and lending their voices and expertise. Doing so may help a building fit better within the unique character of the neighborhood, whether through physical design or good communication and systems that build strong relationships between staff, residents, and neighbors.

HOW TO INFORM SUPPORTIVE HOUSING IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

Trustworthy Information – A lack of information or inaccurate information can result in rumors that spread quickly and unnecessarily raise concerns. Check information sources to be sure they are trustworthy, share only verified information, and speak up and help to correct inaccuracies. Go directly to core sources, such as a member of the housing team (see Who Creates Supportive Housing, Page 23), or check things out with other informed parties outside the housing team, such as a city agency that oversees housing and homeless services, Council staff or the Colorado Division of Housing.

Provide Input – Housing teams want to engage neighbors. Talk with them through the opportunities they offer (community open houses, listening sessions, presentations at community meetings, phone calls, etc.), look up available information (website, social media), and reach out to representatives to learn more about what’s being considered, with the understanding that some aspects will be unknown in the early stages of the process.

While city councilmembers are often a source of information about projects in neighborhoods, they typically don’t make decisions about which sites developers purchase or the tenants who will be served, unless City land is involved. Councilmembers and staff can provide information on land use rules and will take input where a vote is required, but councilmembers are legally prohibited from taking a position on a site when there is a proposal to change zoning until after the final public hearing. The only councilmember vote on a typical housing proposal would occur where the City contributes more than \$500,000 to the cost of the project. Such a vote would typically occur after all other funding is secured. If communications have broken down between neighbors and housing teams, a city councilmember may be helpful in trying to restart dialogue or can help identify a mediator.

Shape Agreements – Good faith agreements may help neighbors and housing teams understand each other’s goals and points of view and can result in a compromise that benefits all. Acknowledge agreements on areas of common ground, whether design, communication protocols, ways to maximize safety, or other areas. Where there is a desire for more formality, a “Good Neighbor Agreement” (see Good Neighbor Agreements, Page 37) may create a written structure to work through concerns in a collaborative, positive way.



Photo courtesy of Mental Health Center of Denver

Sanderson Apartments in Denver, CO, provides supportive apartments for 60 individuals, supported by Denver's Social Impact Bond services and evaluation program (see Page 44).

“As the Sanderson Apartment was being developed, the Mental Health Center of Denver (housing team) and neighbors worked with Councilman Kevin Flynn to create a Good Neighbor Agreement (GNA).

After Sanderson was fully occupied, some neighbors raised concerns that were not fully addressed in the initial agreement. Using a neutral mediator, the GNA was renegotiated with the South Mar-Lee, Brentwood, and Sharon Park Registered Neighborhood Organization to include more detail.

It wasn't easy to develop or change the agreement, but it has helped create clear expectations for all parties and helps keep people communicating.”

**— Sanderson Apartments
Mental Health Center of Denver**



Photo courtesy of Mental Health Center of Denver

Lobby of Sanderson Apartments.

WHAT NEIGHBORS CAN AND CANNOT PROVIDE INPUT ON

AREAS THAT MAY BE OPEN TO NEIGHBOR INPUT

While each supportive housing project is unique, a general rule is that neighbors will be able to provide input and share their expertise most often on things that are external to the building, with the internal operations of the building being determined by professionals, evidence-based best practices, government and funder requirements, and the residents who live in the building.

External Building Design and Landscaping – Learn about architectural and design elements being considered for the supportive housing apartment building. Ask questions and offer suggestions on the look or feel based on the surrounding community. Identify opportunities to create good transitions and maximize safety through the exterior design and landscaping. Encourage teams to consult with the police department on how best to promote safety through environmental design. Recognize that funding limitations or land use laws may impact the project’s ability to incorporate some suggestions.

External Building and Neighborhood Maintenance – Learn about what is planned, ask questions, and discuss what is needed to ensure the exterior of the new supportive housing apartment and its surroundings will be properly maintained (landscaping, property upkeep, art, litter-free, etc.).



Photo courtesy of The Delores Project and Rocky Mountain Communities

Children play in the Arroyo Village outdoor courtyard in Denver, CO.

“We were asked by a neighbor if we could place a couple trees in the landscape design at our Providence at the Heights supportive housing building to provide a ‘privacy barrier.’ It was not a major change to accommodate the request, so we adjusted our design plan accordingly.”

— Hassan Latif
Executive Director
Second Chance Center, Aurora, CO

For Neighbors

Communications – Provide suggestions on ways to ensure strong communications with the housing team and among community members throughout the planning, development, and operational phases of a new building. It may be easiest to use systems that are already in place if working well, such as neighborhood groups (Registered Neighborhood Organization, Homeowners Association) and existing platforms (neighborhood newsletter, Facebook). But it may make sense to put something new in place, such as a committee dedicated to communicating with the housing team or new building. If you hit a communications roadblock, consider requesting or engaging a neutral facilitator or mediator.

Neighborhood Safety – Many residents of supportive housing were victims of crime while experiencing homelessness, and all are eager to live in a safe environment. Communities also feel safer when individuals are not living in alleys or parks. Safety is a shared value for everyone. Ask questions to learn about specific plans to help ensure the well-being of tenants inside the building and appropriate security outside the building. Talk about when and how the building itself will enforce expectations regarding loitering or other potential community concerns, and when and who neighbors should call if there are non-emergency or emergency concerns.

Neighborhood Connections – Neighbors that live near supportive housing apartment buildings can play a key role in welcoming tenants and helping them become a part of the community. Request and engage in neighborhood get-togethers with new residents and the staff, or volunteer in programming (art classes, jobs trainings). Social connections and healthy networks are key to the success of people who have experienced homelessness as they seek to reintegrate into the community and thrive.

“Three of our residents reported that before they were housed, they would use stimulant drugs to stay awake all night so they wouldn’t get attacked. As soon as they were housed, they stopped using all drugs.”

– Saint Francis Apartments
at Cathedral Square

“Surrounding neighbors often want to help where they can. To this end, Volunteers of America has developed many ways community members can volunteer to help inside and out, from putting together household start-up kits to providing parties and educational classes for our residents, and everything in between. This is such a win-win, especially for neighbors who may be a little apprehensive. Relationships are one of the most powerful and important factors, especially in healing for those who have been traumatized by life’s events.”

– Volunteers of America
Colorado Branch



AREAS NOT OPEN TO NEIGHBOR INPUT

While the areas listed below are not open to external input, housing teams are encouraged to make internal operational information transparent and available to neighbors to help them better understand how the new building will operate. Because tenant selection and certain service requirements may not be known until funding is secured due to varying requirements in state and/or federal laws (one of the final phases; see Supportive Housing Lifecycle, Page 25), these questions often cannot be answered in the early planning phases of a typical supportive housing development process. But asking for and making an early commitment to share the information as it becomes available can build trust.

Tenant Selection – The public or private funding sources which help pay for supportive housing determine who may live in a specific apartment building. Once known, this information can be shared with neighbors. Supportive housing must abide by the Fair Housing Act⁵, a law that protects tenants from discrimination by landlords, with additional protections for individuals with a disability (substance abuse and mental illnesses are both disabilities and therefore tenants cannot be turned away for these disorders). Tenants are often selected to live in supportive housing based on the barriers to housing stability they face, such as medical vulnerability or having a disability, long-term history of homelessness, or high utilization of emergency services. They are matched to supportive housing because it will help them regain stability and well-being. Every tenant undergoes a thorough background check and must follow lease terms. When federal funding is involved, additional screening criteria typically apply.

Lease Terms – The lease terms are developed by the property manager, often with oversight of the funder, and sometimes with input from the service provider. A sample lease may be available for viewing by neighbors upon request.

On-site Support Services – The services offered to supportive housing residents will be determined by the service provider with the approval of funders (see Who Creates Supportive Housing, Page 23).

Long-term Building Stability – Learn about, ask questions, and discuss aspects of the proposed supportive housing plans or budgets that will set the apartment building up for long-term success in maintenance, operations, and services. If the vouchers that make supportive housing possible were to be discontinued, the supportive housing building would likely remain affordable housing.

Rules Inside the Building – In addition to the written lease, supportive housing buildings may develop additional rules or policies. These may evolve or change over time, such as policies about visitors and use of common outdoor areas. Most often, rules are developed by property managers with the input of service providers; however, as residents build trust and capacity through stable housing, it is a best practice to seek to involve tenants or tenant councils in collaboratively shaping these rules to increase resident buy-in. Rules are likely to evolve and change through the life-cycle of a building.

⁵ Fair Housing: Equal Opportunity for All, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

WHO CREATES SUPPORTIVE HOUSING?

The supportive housing development process (see Supportive Housing Lifecycle, Page 25) typically spans from an initial concept through a more in-depth exploration of the idea (feasibility) to planning and construction. The life cycle of a building begins with the initial lease up of apartments to tenants, followed by their acclimation to being re-housed, to residents' stabilization and the long-term operation of the supportive housing apartment building. The information below explains the roles of key players involved in this process.

HOUSING TEAMS

Housing teams include the lead parties working together to conceptualize, plan, fund, develop, provide support services to tenants, and manage the supportive housing apartment building. Members typically include a developer, service provider, property manager, and design professionals (architects and engineers). Although not usually a part of the community engagement, funders also play a key role in how supportive housing evolves. Some teams may also include partners to assist with community outreach or facilitation.

DEVELOPERS

Developers lead the purchase of land, financing (if needed), make final decisions on design, take on the risk of any cost-overruns, and oversee the apartment construction. They may do this as a partial owner of the project or as a consultant to an owner. Supportive housing developers are paid a fee for their time, work and upfront investments to create the housing, but do not earn a "rate of return" or profit on any up-front investment as market rate developers do. Most supportive housing developers must defer a portion of their one-time fee to fill financing gaps and/or to fund services. The developer ensures all the funds and systems are in place to maintain and operate the building in accordance with funding agreements through the compliance and extended-use period, typically 30-40 years. In some cases, the developer is also the lead service provider.

PROPERTY MANAGERS

Property managers are the caretaker of the supportive housing apartment building after it opens. Their responsibilities include:

- Leasing to tenants who meet the funder-approved criteria in the "tenant selection plan" (conducting background and other required checks, collecting rents, and managing lease violations)
- Working closely with the on-site service providers to ensure resident progress
- Promoting a safe environment and problem-solving any challenges that may arise
- Maintaining the building and grounds
- Facilitating positive relationships among supportive housing residents and across the neighborhood
- Ensuring guest procedures are followed.

SERVICE PROVIDERS

Service providers lead and coordinate services provided to supportive housing residents, such as creation of an individualized plan and goals, daily check-ins, and providing referrals and access to mental and physical health care services, addiction treatment, job training or transportation. While they are the main provider of services, they may subcontract or partner with other agencies to provide specific services. Providers also facilitate a stable environment by welcoming residents, monitoring common areas, identifying and responding to any emergencies and they work closely with property managers if questions arise about residents' activities or to problem-solve potential lease violations.

FUNDERS

Funders include agencies that issue tax credits (Colorado Housing and Finance Agency), private investors that buy tax credits, agencies that issue vouchers to help subsidize rents (Colorado Division of Housing, Denver Housing Authority, Veterans Administration), and agencies providing cash or loans (Colorado Division of Housing, City of Denver). Projects also rely on private donors and take out private bank loans for construction and permanent funding. Funders typically specify which individuals or families will be eligible to live in the supportive housing building, the types of services that must be provided, and service delivery models.

“Since 2006, Volunteers of America has operated Irving Street Women’s Residence, a supportive housing community living building in west Denver, and we have learned to prioritize:

- Setting clear expectations for the people who live in the building,
- Upkeep of the lawn and grounds by staff specifically assigned to those tasks, and
- Being responsive to the concerns of our neighbors.

These actions have helped make our presence a positive addition to the surrounding community.”

— **Lindi Sinton**
Vice President of Program Operations
Volunteers of America, Colorado Branch

“CHFA values inclusion and community engagement. We believe proactive, inclusive and respectful dialogue fosters better outcomes by leveraging and bringing awareness to diverse perspectives.”

— **Cris A. White**
Executive Director and CEO
Colorado Housing and Finance Authority

Supportive Housing Lifecycle

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING LIFECYCLE

The development process for supportive housing apartment buildings varies from project to project. Variables include whether construction will be for a new building or the renovation of an existing building, if the appropriate zoning is in place or new approvals are needed, the ability to secure needed funding, and so on. The process may take anywhere from 18 months to 4 years or more, though often the process takes about 2-3 years. The overview on the next two pages demonstrates development phases, along with possible neighborhood roles at each phase. Again, because each project is unique, keep in mind that this is not a strict formula.

VISION & CONCEPT



Rendering for Attention Homes Apartments.

Construction of Attention Homes Apartments.

CONSTRUCTION



LONG-TERM OPERATION



Operation of Attention Homes Apartments.

All photos courtesy of Attention Homes Apartments in Boulder, CO.

Supportive Housing Lifecycle

BUILDING DEVELOPMENT

Concept 6 months - 1 year	Feasibility 3 - 9 months	Planning 8 - 12 months	Construction Approx. 12 months
HOUSING TEAM			
<p>Vision for new supportive housing apartments, possible population to be served</p> <p>Housing team assembled to explore concept</p> <p>Begin to identify funding sources</p> <p>Determine whether organization has suitable property or if new land needed</p>	<p>Identify land, if needed, and costs</p> <p>Study and confirm whether site could work</p> <p>Begin site and building design concepts (high-level)</p> <p>Explore and possibly begin regulatory changes, if needed (zoning, variances, other)</p> <p>Narrow down funding; start to match ideas and work plan to funding requirements</p> <p>Create a timeline</p> <p>Prepare for and begin community outreach</p> <p>Start building relationship with local police (see Page 28); take design tips</p>	<p>Finalize planning details (building size, who will be served)</p> <p>Pre-construction/finalize plans</p> <p>Applications due; funding awarded; contracts</p> <p>Financial closing; all deal points are final</p> <p>Outreach and communications continue so neighbors know what to expect on construction; continue to shape relationship between residents and current neighbors</p> <p>If desired, begin exploring Good Neighbor Agreement (see Page 37)</p>	<p>Permits; ensure building complies with city codes</p> <p>Communicate with nearby neighbors on impacts (road closures, utility disruptions)</p> <p>Developer oversees/ meets often with architect and contractors</p> <p>Pre-lease up; services planning; staff training to prepare for opening</p> <p>Team responds to unplanned surprises, which are to be expected</p> <p>Completion; Certificate of Occupancy</p> <p>Groundbreaking, often with a celebration</p>
NEIGHBORS			
<p>It hasn't yet been determined whether a supportive housing apartment building will be developed; no answers to key questions like how many units, who could live there, when, etc.; too early for meaningful communication</p>	<p>Begin to receive initial information about the project</p> <p>Begin identifying questions for housing team to answer</p> <p>Provide early input on opportunities identified by housing team</p>	<p>Receive more detailed information about building design, concept</p> <p>Continue to identify questions; provide input in areas requested by team</p> <p>If desired, begin exploring Good Neighbor Agreement</p>	<p>Begin implementing any agreements for communications about questions/concerns if any arise during construction</p>

Supportive Housing Lifecycle

BUILDING OPERATION

Lease Up 4 - 12 weeks	Acclimation 2 months - 1 year	Stabilization 6 months - 1 year	Long-term Operation Ongoing
HOUSING TEAM			
<p>“Keys” turned over to property manager; developer’s role completed unless they are also the owner (a “turnkey” approach)</p> <p>Service provider coordinates with property management to implement tenant selection plan</p> <p>If a coordinated entry system is to be used (prioritizes those in need based on vulnerability), referrals begin flowing from the system</p> <p>Residents move in; may be gradual or all at once depending on agreements</p> <p>Residents begin paying rent, and vouchers help cover a portion of costs</p> <p>Residents learn about rules and expectations during leasing process</p>	<p>Residents begin to adjust to living indoors, in stable proximity to others; acclimation influenced by length of time homeless, severity of trauma, and other conditions</p> <p>Service staff begins to build relationships and trust at a pace that works for each resident; supports most urgent needs with goals identified by residents</p> <p>Referrals for services may begin, determined by how quickly residents acclimate</p> <p>Housing team begins to track data on success and outcomes</p> <p>Rules put in place, adapted, and enforced through property managers</p> <p>As residents learn about their new community, continue communications with neighbors</p> <p>Problem-solve any new or unanticipated issues</p>	<p>Residents build deeper trust with providers and each other</p> <p>Residents continue to utilize/benefit from services</p> <p>Resident councils may begin to form, taking an active community role, identifying ways to support successes</p> <p>Small rates of turnover begin due to residents moving to other housing, highly vulnerable residents passing away due to natural causes, leases terminated for serious violations, etc.</p> <p>Residents grow skills/ capacity to work through typical “aggravations” of apartment living (reducing trauma-triggered police calls)</p> <p>Ideally, building relationships with neighbors have solidified</p> <p>Provide agreed upon updates to neighbors, especially if security or governance approaches change</p>	<p>Adjustments to services and property management as the building community evolves; updates to the community</p> <p>Outcome trends start to emerge, providing opportunities to refine model</p> <p>Funding must be maintained</p> <p>Property must be maintained</p> <p>Tax credit provider monitors building maintenance and compliance with rules, typically for 30 years</p> <p>Identify ways to make connections and build relationships to be a good, long-term neighbor, such as hosting an open house, summer cookout, etc.</p>
NEIGHBORS			
<p>Neighbors can play a role in welcoming new supportive housing residents to the neighborhood to build relationships</p>	<p>Utilize agreed upon communications protocols to address questions and problem-solve</p> <p>Ideally, talk with property managers often during transition time</p>	<p>Nearby neighbors know who to call when questions/ concerns arise; trust is built with respectful interactions</p> <p>Continue problem-solving, as needed</p>	<p>Maintain/refine communications methods</p> <p>Get to know the building staff and residents; be a good neighbor</p>

Police Calls

POLICE CALLS

It is helpful to understand why police calls may increase in an area surrounding a newly opened supportive housing apartment building and to know how police and housing teams work to promote safety.

Many of the early police calls are made by new supportive housing residents who haven't yet adjusted to their new surroundings; rarely are the calls in response to crimes that pose a risk to the neighborhood. Supportive housing residents often need to learn the skills and gain the trust needed to work through typical "neighbor aggravations" (loud music or noise, interpersonal conflicts with neighbors who are no longer mobile but now living next door permanently).

Existing neighbors may make more police calls based on the presence of unfamiliar individuals and confusion over who belongs as a new resident versus who is a visitor or unrelated to the building, or due to new travel patterns like someone walking across private property. In some cases, building staff call the police for situations that have no relationship to the tenants, serving as new "eyes on the street" to an area that may have previously been vacant. Because many of the residents in supportive housing are medically vulnerable, there also may be calls for emergency medical care, which often bring accompanying police response.

The City of Denver is in the process of training the Denver Police Department and housing teams on how to build strong relationships with each other, the broader community, and new supportive housing residents to maintain safety and maximize public understanding.

It is highly recommended for housing teams to talk with Denver Police and neighbors, long before a building opens, about safety through environmental design of the exterior of their buildings and about minimizing police calls for non-emergency situations once the building opens. For example, could neighbors call the front desk to check whether someone who appears to be loitering is a resident of the building? Could they talk to a property manager about fencing to discourage certain travel patterns? Is there an after-hours number for noise complaints?

Early and clear communication is likely to reduce unnecessary police calls and the concern they may generate.

Service providers are also highly encouraged to educate residents on when to call the police or 9-1-1 and on building their trust with staff for non-emergency problem-solving. When building staff need emergency intervention for someone in crisis, they should consider requesting Denver's trained mental health professionals who "co-respond" with police to those suffering from mental illness or crisis.

Regular communication is helpful to understand why calls occur and how teams are working to promote safe buildings, along with ways to improve processes. This is equally important to existing neighbors and to supportive housing residents.

FOR HOUSING TEAMS

PREPARING FOR COMMUNITY OUTREACH

WHAT TO KNOW BEFORE CONDUCTING COMMUNITY OUTREACH

History – Research recent and past neighborhood history, including community goals, accomplishments and points of pride, and where trust may have been violated or concerns voiced.

Neighbors – Neighbors are your most important audience. Learn who lives, works and plays in the neighborhood, including homeowners and renters, area businesses, and recreational resources.

Services – Identify services and supports available to and/or desired by neighbors, including for individuals and families experiencing homelessness or challenged to meet their basic needs.

Housing – Understand the housing landscape, including supportive housing and other forms of affordable housing available in the neighborhood and how that compares to other neighborhoods, along with housing and development goals and concerns (is displacement a concern, are there visibly homeless individuals in the vicinity who could be helped by this housing that could be evaluated under the tenant selection plan, etc.).

Transportation – Learn how people move around the neighborhood, their preferred and available modes of transportation, and parking needs and availability.

Safety – Understand the crime and safety landscape in the neighborhood and explore ways to engage and build trust with police and first responders early in the planning process.

Community Leaders – Learn who the respected and engaged leaders are among neighbors, businesses and institutions (neighborhood organizations, community-based and nonprofit organizations, the faith community). Reach out to gain insights from local leaders on how best to communicate with neighbors and invite them to help communicate with neighbors about the planned supportive housing apartment building.

Local Elected Officials – Understand where local elected officials stand on the issues of homelessness and supportive and affordable housing and any prior efforts or goals they have been involved with in the neighborhood.

STEPS HOUSING TEAMS CAN TAKE TO PREPARE FOR COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Once your housing team has conducted research and has a strong, shared understanding of the community and neighbors, and before you engage in community outreach, consider and discuss the strategies and planning tips below.

HOUSING TEAM PLANNING

Members – Bring together your supportive housing team, including the developer, lead service provider, architect, engineer, and property manager. Even if each member of the housing team won't participate in community engagement, they all need to be on the same page. **In addition to the housing team, you may also want to gain insights from funders at this stage. It is also important to consider at this early stage whether an experienced community engagement professional or an organizer with experience in the neighborhood can help you to improve your plan and avoid pitfalls; it's important to NOT leave their involvement only to the end of project for big, contentious meetings.**

Vision – Determine your team's shared vision for community outreach, such as why are you doing it, what success will look like, and the approaches you will take to reach your goals.

Alignment – Identify and agree on the approaches you want to take to reach out to, engage, and communicate with neighbors in the area (see Conducting Community Outreach, Page 33). **Agree on the language that everyone who is part of the housing team (including informal members) will use, as even small differences in describing services, location, safety approaches and more can erode trust with neighbors or create confusion.**

Roles – Identify and **be sure everyone understands the roles each team member will play in the engagement process**, such as who will be the primary spokesperson, who needs to be at key meetings with neighbors, who will be responsible for written materials, and who will keep a record of all contacts current and ensure all stay informed.

“People expect to succeed. Homelessness is only temporary. And more than anything, people need hope. I would like for neighbors and others to hear who people experiencing homelessness are. They may have one or two degrees. They've been there. But they fell. And they need to be helped back up. Judgement is the hardest part. No one would have known I lived in a shelter if I didn't tell them. But I want folks to have hope, so I share what I've been through and that I'm living in housing now, so they can have hope that they'll get there too.”

— Carla Respects Nothing
Client of Supportive Services
Denver Public Library Peer Navigator

Homeless Experience – Consider engaging individuals who have personally experienced homelessness in your planning and communications processes, such as by serving as a team member, providing insights, and/or serving as a valued messenger. Their first-hand knowledge and passion to make the road smoother for others can inform and strengthen planning and community engagement. When you do engage persons with lived experience, take care to make engagement opportunities low-barrier (convenient meeting times and locations, transportation assistance, etc.), provide opportunities that are meaningful to them, and honor their expertise (pay for their time). Carefully consider the settings where their perspective might be best heard and their comfort level (perhaps starting with smaller meetings or relationship-building before working up to larger group meetings or having several individuals attend rather than one person alone in larger crowds). Ask if they need support with preparation, debriefing, or self-care. Clearly convey that it is okay for the individual to step back from the commitment at any time if it becomes uncomfortable or seems it may trigger challenging memories of traumatic experiences.

COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING

Key Audiences – Neighbors near the planned supportive housing location are your number one audience. It's also helpful to communicate with stakeholder organizations active in the area, such as registered neighborhood organizations, homeowners' associations, local businesses, faith communities, schools, business improvement districts, etc.

Messages – Identify core information to share with neighbors to increase understanding about supportive housing and address questions and concerns, such as:

- Explain what supportive housing is and how it has proven to help highly vulnerable individuals and families who have experienced long-term homelessness successfully transition back to having a safe place to call home.
- Include information about the people who will live in the apartments and the supports they will receive.
- Identify steps that will be taken to promote community safety.
- Communicate why this community was identified for the supportive housing apartment building.
- Encourage neighbors to be a part of informing the design and development of the apartments where opportunities for such input are genuine and could be incorporated.

It is important to be consistent when describing the new apartments as even small differences can create confusion or erode trust among neighbors. Make sure the whole group understands and buys into message refinements needed along the way and is able to adjust the pace or emphasis of the messages for diverse audiences.

The FAQs (see Page 39) are intended to help you create messages that neighbors care about and understand.

Messengers – Identify and agree on an individual to serve as the accessible lead messenger for the building development, along with additional messengers

to provide support and greater reach. **Ideally the lead messenger is known and trusted in the neighborhood, an effective public speaker and someone who will continue to be engaged and available after the supportive housing building is completed and tenants have moved in** (this is rarely an architect or a contract developer, but each team will be unique). Be sure to include and engage the voices of local experts, community leaders and people with personal experience where they can provide insights and reinforce information shared by the team's messengers.

Facilitation – If you don't have an effective public speaker to serve as the lead messenger, consider using a public engagement facilitator to help the team effectively communicate with neighbors and other important stakeholders. A professional facilitator can also be helpful if you anticipate or encounter challenging situations (such as participants in community meetings not sticking to ground rules). Where parties wish to negotiate over a set of issues, a neutral mediator can be provided by the City of Denver.

Inclusion – While the most active or well-known neighbors may request the most communications or attend the most meetings, **it is important to ensure a representative group of neighbors is included, such as community members of color, renters, those who may not be members of an established organization, those with disabilities.** Because some of these individuals may be less comfortable engaging in formats frequented by experienced neighbors, it is appropriate to design opportunities that may be comfortable for a more diverse array of community members (see Community Open House, Page 34). All meetings should be held in ADA-accessible locations, with consideration for needs like interpretation in other languages, childcare, food, etc. Ask those who work with underrepresented communities for their advice on both outreach methods (where to advertise opportunities) as well as best meeting approaches (meeting formats, etc.).

For Housing Teams

FOCUS ON VALUES

Identify what matters most to both neighbors and housing teams, emphasizing these shared values (see Page 2) as a base for discussion, rather than launching into facts or details, especially when responding to challenging statements.

SEEK DIVERSE VIEWS

Aim for smaller group sessions (see Page 34) that provide the opportunity to engage and talk with people from diverse backgrounds who may not be as comfortable with attending or speaking up in a larger town hall format.

OTHER COMMUNICATIONS BEST PRACTICES

Plan Ahead

Allow adequate time and devote resources to develop communications resources (flyers, website, etc.).

Be Proactive

Communicate early and often; it won't benefit anyone to stay quiet about the possible development of a new supportive housing apartment building.

Be Transparent

Communicate what is open for input, what isn't, and why.

Be Clear

Use clear, direct, and jargon-free language to help everyone have a shared understanding (see Messages, Page 31).

Be Consistent

Identifying messages and keeping team members up-to-date on work in progress helps everyone to convey similar information and diminishes the likelihood of confusion.

Be Responsive

Be easily accessible, listen thoughtfully and respectfully respond to questions, complaints and concerns in a timely way; be clear and consistent, not defensive.



Photo courtesy of Shopworks Architecture

CONDUCTING COMMUNITY OUTREACH

When conducting community outreach, it is often best to begin with personal connections and relationship-building and then add in additional outreach methods. The “possible timing” (see Supportive Housing Lifecycle, Page 25) noted for each approach below are suggestions and will vary by circumstance. Keep in mind that while you don’t have to “do it all,” it’s best to use multiple approaches as people take in information in different ways.

MENU OF OUTREACH TACTICS

Personal Communications – Reaching out to the nearest and most interested neighbors and key leaders for one-on-one discussions is the recommended way to start the conversation. This approach can help teams validate any insights from their initial research and planning and should inform the rest of the outreach. It offers neighbors the chance to get to know members of the team personally and sets their first impression about the proposed building. Conversations give neighbors a chance to share their thoughts and have questions and concerns answered. But these communications have the greatest risk of being heard differently by different parties, so reinforcing one-on-one contact with written talking points and following up with emails confirming any key messages may help to minimize divergent messages from emerging.

Possible Timing: Concept, Feasibility and Planning

Talk to Elected Officials – Open early dialogue with local elected officials and maintain it throughout the process, including staff to supplement scarce time with the elected official. Ask early for their tips on how to conduct effective outreach in the community. Ask for introductions to others if needed, particularly to underserved communities or less obvious leaders.

Possible Timing: Feasibility, Planning

Canvassing – Knocking on doors and phone banking may be good ways to have conversations with neighbors who are unlikely to attend meetings. It allows teams to share information and answer questions and concerns personally and brings in a broader array of feedback.

“It’s important for the developers and providers of supportive housing to connect with neighbors early, before it’s a ‘done deal.’ Let people know how important their feedback is to the proposed apartment building and clearly explain how it can benefit the neighborhood.”

– John Hayden
Curtis Park Neighbors
Registered Neighborhood Organization

This approach can be a good opportunity for those with lived experience or other personal stories relevant to the supportive housing (faith leaders, those with family who have needed housing, volunteers, etc.) to be paired with team members or others well-versed in the proposal.

Possible Timing: Feasibility, Planning

Attend Others’ Community Meetings – Identify opportunities to share information about supportive housing at community-based meetings that are already happening, such as registered neighborhood organizations, homeowners’ associations, faith communities, schools, business improvement districts, etc. Housing team messengers may wish to attend meetings prior to seeking time on the agenda to learn more about the group, requesting time on the agenda in advance when ready to introduce themselves and the supportive housing concept. Ask meeting organizers to set ground rules in advance if they aren’t standard (see Set Ground Rules for Meetings, Page 35). Plan to stay and engage in personal conversations after the meeting.

Possible Timing: Feasibility, Planning, Construction and Lease Up

Social Media – At times, the tone on social media can be rude, which may tempt housing teams to opt out of this communications channel altogether; however,

For Housing Teams

that would be a mistake as many neighbors not only use social platforms, but for some it is the only way they get information about what's happening in the neighborhood. Begin by identifying the social media networks neighbors most often use, such as NextDoor or Facebook. If the registered neighborhood organization in the area manages a moderated social media account, ask them if they would share information, news stories, or press releases on that account in a neutral journalistic tone and refer visitors to your website for additional information.

Proactively share news and updates, using inexpensive ads and boosted posts to target information to nearby neighborhoods about important meetings. Designate one or two team members to follow and participate in the online conversations on those platforms. Provide links to correct information and avoid engaging in back and forth arguments. It may be helpful to encourage engaged and informed neighbors to proactively join online communications so neighbors themselves can describe how they are giving input, not just the team. Encourage the online audience to visit the housing team's website for information and updates and to participate in in-person communication opportunities.

Possible Timing: Feasibility, Planning, Construction, Lease Up, Acclimation, Stabilization

Materials – Flyers, information sheets and other types of written materials can convey important core messages and information in a brief format, helping to clarify rumors or confusion that can be exacerbated by a totally verbal outreach strategy. Always include information about upcoming meeting opportunities and indicate where to find additional information (such as a website and who to contact). Consider sharing materials such as flyers on doors or through a mailing.

Possible Timing: Planning, Lease Up

Website – Websites are readily accessible, can feature important core messages and additional information (FAQs, supportive housing examples) and visuals (building design, maps). They also offer the ability to provide real-time updates and can direct people on where to find additional information and get their questions answered. Be sure to provide information on the proven effectiveness of supportive housing as well

as specific information about your project. **Rather than getting into back and forth dialogues on social media, simply posting links to website FAQs in threads about the project might direct the “silent masses” who observe on social media and want to verify what they're reading to information they may not have found otherwise.**

Possible Timing: Planning, Construction, Lease Up

Community Open House – Consider hosting an open house with “drop-in” hours where community members can stop by a location in the community to hear about supportive housing and the planned building and provide feedback. Be sure to use a variety of methods to advertise it, including through the registered neighborhood organizations, flyers/mailers to nearby residents and electronic advertising. This type of approach can accommodate a broader array of community members' schedules, facilitate one-on-one personalized answers to questions, and engage people from diverse backgrounds who may not be as comfortable with attending or speaking up in a town hall format. Include robust information about the model of supportive housing, what it means and how it works, as well as specific information about the proposed supportive housing (including visuals, if available). It is important to provide community members with an outlet to share their questions and feedback, ideally in a format where they can see each other's thoughts (such as on a wall poster or flip charts or sticky notes). Capture contact information and commit to following up with anyone who provides you with a question and their contact information, or consider compiling answers to all questions and providing answers to all attendees who signed in.

Possible Timing: Planning, Construction

Small Group Listening Sessions – Hold a series of listening sessions with a brief (five-minute) presentation followed by roundtable discussions among housing team representatives and neighbors. Keep the total group size below 20 (use an RSVP system if needed to keep to small size). Consider a neutral moderator to help ensure that all participants have a chance to ask questions, make suggestions, and participate (see Ground Rules, below).

Possible Timing: Planning, Construction

For Housing Teams

Set Ground Rules for Meetings – It is important to set ground rules for group meetings on proposed supportive housing to ensure equitable opportunities for participation and to get attendee buy-in for the type of respectful conversation they wish to have. As time allows, encourage participants to help set the rules by using question prompts like: what kind of conversation do we want to have, what does respect look or sound like, how do we want to handle disagreements? (Or you can provide a beginning list of suggestions if short on time.) Ask the group for agreement to abide by the rules before beginning, including their permission for whoever is leading the conversation to remind the room of the rules as needed. This process may be easy to incorporate in any group meeting on supportive housing (though see recommendations above about open house vs. town hall formats). Ground rules are also recommended before beginning a presentation at someone else’s meeting. Ask the host ahead of time if they can set those rules at the beginning of the meeting you are scheduled to be a part of, or right before your presentation.

Media Coverage – Supportive housing media coverage often begins when a reporter covers a public meeting, but housing teams have a better opportunity to deepen public understanding about supportive housing generally, and their proposal specifically, if they proactively reach out and offer a sit-down interview (or a tour of a similar apartment building or other experiential opportunity) before an open meeting. The ideal reporter

SAMPLE GROUND RULES

1. Listen respectfully, do not interrupt (verbal, body language)
2. Ok to disagree – focus on idea, not the person
3. Equal time, allow new folks to speak before same person speaks again, do not dominate, equal time for different perspectives
4. Respectful language, no name calling or disparaging comments

is one who frequently and thoughtfully reports on housing and homelessness and/or someone the housing team knows. Lead with information (preferably local data and examples) on the effectiveness of supportive housing as a proven means to transition individuals and families experiencing long-term homelessness back to being safely housed. Describe the vision behind the proposal in human terms without lingo before getting into project details. Identify supportive housing residents and/or neighbors from the current and other supportive housing sites who are willing and able to effectively talk to reporters about supportive housing.

Possible Timing: Planning, Construction, Lease Up, Long-Term

COMMUNITY OUTREACH BEST PRACTICES

Start Early — Early communications and outreach with authentic opportunities for the input and engagement of neighbors goes a long way toward building trust and reducing the likelihood of misunderstandings. Be honest about what is not known and why (such as a tenant selection plan that is not final), commit to transparency and estimate a timeline when important information will be available.

Prioritize Personal Communications and Smaller Groups — It’s often best to begin with individual or small group communications to listen, learn, and build relationships.

Outreach Area — Prioritize the closest neighbors but broaden to the larger vicinity and include the organizations that work in the area.

Right-Size Responses — If a small number of neighbors express concerns, offer to reach out to them directly; there is no need to “overcorrect.” It is important to ensure those who are less vocal or experienced get fair time to ask questions and provide feedback.

Follow Through — Do what you say you will do. If the plan changes, inform neighbors and interested parties.

THE BENEFITS OF THE OPEN HOUSE MODEL

“We hosted an open house on three separate days and times at a church adjacent to where the Attention Homes supportive housing apartments were to be built in downtown Boulder. There were “stations” set up around a large room, each on different aspects of the project, with housing team members available at each area to provide information and answer questions. Participants also had the ability to provide anonymous comments.

After each open house, we wrote up the comments and made them available to people. We also put up a dedicated website (which was requested at the first open house) and kept it updated and directed people there throughout the project as a central communications hub.

We found the open house format to be more productive than town hall-type forums because it allowed for conversation rather than prepared statements; sometimes when people are waiting their turn to make a brief statement, they don't consider emerging information and the dialogue isn't as productive. The community open house approach didn't eliminate all misunderstandings and anger, but it helped us to better listen, learn, and have empathy, and to more effectively share information and address concerns.”

— Ryan Jones
RCH Jones Consulting



Photo courtesy of Matthew Staver Photography.

Paris Family Apartments in Aurora, CO, by Brother's Redevelopment, includes 15 supportive housing apartments for families at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

GOOD NEIGHBOR AGREEMENTS

When neighborhoods have questions or concerns about a new use or building in their community, and they are open to committing to support the project if their concerns are addressed, a Good Neighbor Agreement (GNA) may be helpful. GNAs may help neighbors work through issues or concerns with housing teams in a collaborative, positive way to document areas of agreement in writing. When approached in good faith, the process can help the parties understand each other's goals and points of view, with the intended result being a compromise where each party makes commitments that benefit all. For this reason, if the only desire of a neighbor/organization is to stop supportive housing from being built, then it would not be appropriate for them to participate in negotiation of a GNA.

In Denver, GNAs are common when new liquor or marijuana licenses are sought, and occasionally used when new development is proposed. These GNAs often include limits on how a business will operate, or specific land-use, parking or physical design elements agreed to by the owner. Supportive housing differs significantly from business licenses because it is designed to serve the most vulnerable people in our community, not to sell a product to customers or make a profit. Even so, GNAs may offer benefits to supportive housing teams and neighborhoods, along with several cautions, as noted below.

Areas for Potential Agreement

There are many areas of potential information sharing or agreement that could be established for a supportive housing apartment building with or without a GNA, including:

- Sharing copies of model leases and/or building rules, which may evolve over time, to ensure neighbors understand the expectations for residents
- Working through a list of neighbor concerns and identifying the specific ways the building is being designed or operated to address those concerns (for example, whether there will be 24-hour desk/staff on site to monitor the building)
- Naming points of contact for both parties for various

types of concerns, including after-hours/weekends

- Establishing a committee of neighbors and building team members committed to meeting periodically to maintain relationships and ongoing communications after the building opens
- Membership or participation of the building owners/operators in neighborhood or business associations, events or activities
- How the building will approach outdoor design, lighting, maintenance, etc.
- How the building will approach parking for staff/service providers and/or residents.

Circumstances When a GNA May Be Helpful

- When all parties are interested in collaborating with each other in good faith to find areas of common ground, many of which will involve compromise
- Where all parties are willing to make commitments on both sides, commonly neighbors will commit to supporting the project during any required approvals and/or waive legal challenges
- The process of writing the document will promote better dialogue and/or clarity between parties than may be possible to achieve through meetings alone
- The parties come to the table interested in learning from each other
- There is a trust gap among neighbors on whether the team will deliver on promises in the absence of a written agreement
- There is a need to see progress on shared agreements more visually, in order to demonstrate it is "worth it" to keep talking.

Circumstances Not Appropriate for a GNA

- Where the goal of would-be participants is to prevent the supportive housing apartment building from being built, or when neighbors are not willing to engage in constructive dialogue about how a building can be integrated into the neighborhood
- Where a housing team is not willing to commit to anything in writing
- Where neighbors aren't willing to commit to anything in exchange for housing team commitments, such as supporting the project

Tools and Resources

- To dictate terms related to residents of the building, for example: who may or may not live there, the terms of their leases or types of services offered (these aspects are governed by a mix of landlord/tenant laws, funding criteria, and evidence-based best practices)
 - Where planning is too far along or when building constraints are so strict (such as an existing building with no exterior renovations planned) that there is not much room for public input, a GNA on design elements may not be possible (but may still be pursued to address communication, protocols, etc.)
 - Where the parties are unable or unwilling to dedicate the significant amount of time it will take to meet with each other and/or through professional facilitators or mediators, as well as reviewing and responding to drafts.
- more concerned, but capable of being constructive, and some who are more open or supportive
 - Be thoughtful at the outset about what the potential impacts of any element may be on the future residents of the housing. If possible, include people who have personally experienced homelessness in the discussions. If that is not possible, consider including faith leaders or others who may represent community perspectives beyond those of the parties at the table.
 - Ensure roles are identified for all parties in the GNA, not just for the housing team. For example, how might neighbors commit to communicating with the building representatives before filing official complaints, when should they call 9-1-1 versus a building representative, what role could they play in welcoming new supportive housing residents, etc.?
 - While they may not be parties to an agreement, consult with experts like Police Community Resource Officers for advice on the practicality and pros/cons of any safety protocols or measures being proposed.

How to Pursue a GNA

If a community decides to pursue a GNA, considerations include:

- Utilizing a professional facilitator (who may be retained by one of the parties), or if that is not acceptable, a neutral mediator who can be provided by the City of Denver
- Set an expiration date to ensure that the agreement will be re-examined periodically in a dynamic and changing environment, and to ensure the parties stay in touch
- Ensure the right housing team members are at the table: only developers can agree to physical design aspects; only service providers/property managers can agree to long-term communication protocols or items related to building operations
- Ensure the right neighbors are at the table, ideally including respected representatives of those living closest to the supportive housing apartment building, experienced members of the neighborhood/business organization, if any exists, and a mix of perspectives including some who are

Benefits of Shared Dialogue and Agreements

Whether through informal agreements or a GNA, a shared dialogue and agreements have the potential to achieve the following benefits:

- Better understanding of the perspectives and constraints faced by all the parties
- The foundation of a stronger relationship for coming back together as circumstances change over time
- Reduced fear of the supportive housing apartment building or its future residents, achieved through greater information and understanding of both the model and the providers, and/or through reassurances achieved through clear commitments
- Better odds for more welcoming attitudes toward new supportive housing residents
- The support of governmental or funding entities.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Is supportive housing a shelter?

No. Residents have keys to their own apartment, a lease, and pay rent based on their income. They will come and go based on their individual schedules, not all at the same time. Almost all supportive housing residents can remain in their home if they wish, if they comply with the terms of their lease. Some of the neighborhood impacts associated with shelters, such as individuals standing in line to enter, are not connected with supportive housing.

Do tenants pay rent?

Yes. All tenants are required to sign a lease that establishes rent. Most tenants have income from work or benefits such as social security or veteran benefits and will be required to pay up to 30 percent of their monthly income for rent.

Who determines how much money there is to spend on a supportive housing building?

There are typically three or more funders who each contribute different funding, loans, or grants to build a supportive housing apartment building. Many developers of the building work for several years without any pay while they plan a building, with the expectation of receiving a modest one-time fee to pay them back for their time or up-front investments when it is built. But, in the early years, it is so hard to make ends meet in these developments that most developers forego up to half their fee to fund other priorities, such as services. Funders typically have guidelines that determine how much can be spent per apartment. They also require funding to be identified up front for long-term maintenance, services, and in case of emergencies, ensuring buildings are set up for long-term success. While this model has proven successful, teams will have external limits under these guidelines that may affect their ability to accommodate some requests that add cost to a building.

The numbers I heard for the cost of this project seem expensive.

Most supportive housing developers purchase land at the same price others would pay, and land in Denver is

expensive. Effort is also made to ensure buildings are attractive and blend into neighborhoods through use of comparable materials, interiors are built to last, and labor and materials cost the same no matter who you are housing, so the costs to build supportive housing will be comparable to other apartment buildings even if the incomes of the residents are lower. Every dollar spent on services saves dollars in emergency services (see Introduction, Page 6), so whether measuring the value of lives saved and individuals moved off the street, or the cost savings compared to other government services, there is a demonstrated return on investment for supportive housing.

Is funding for a supportive housing development being taken away from something else in our neighborhood?

The primary source of funding for supportive housing comes from state and/or federal tax credits, which is planned for up front in these budgets and therefore is not taken from other services. In Denver, the city's dedicated housing fund is set aside for housing and supportive services alone; it does not compete for funds with other city services.

How long will development of the supportive housing apartment building take?

From concept to construction, a typical supportive housing apartment building may take 2-4 years to complete. This timeline may be shorter if existing land or an existing building can be used, or longer if new land must be acquired and/or re-zoned (see Supportive Housing Lifecycle, Page 25).

Who from the housing team stays involved to maintain the property and services after the building is completed?

In most instances there are two separate entities that stay involved. A service provider typically has staff that work with residents daily to create individualized plans and access services. A property manager typically oversees leasing, collecting rent, and maintaining the building. It is a best practice for them to work closely

together, although their roles are different (see Who Creates Supportive Housing, Page 23).

How long does a property serve as supportive housing? What happens to a property if/when it ceases to serve as supportive housing?

There are two public funding sources that determine the income levels of tenants served in housing. First is the Area Median Income (AMI) standards usually associated with federal tax credits. The second, and the one that usually makes an apartment building into supportive housing, is a voucher that further reduces the rent and limits tenant selection to those experiencing homelessness. A property will remain as supportive housing if the vouchers are funded. If, for some reason, the vouchers are no longer available, the property would default to the income limits established in the tax credit application and residents would not be displaced. A transition plan would be established and different residents may be selected to live in units as they become available.

Who lives in supportive housing?

Residents are diverse and of different ages, backgrounds, cultures, education levels, and experiences. There is no single path to homelessness, and each person moving into supportive housing has faced their own challenges and struggles that led to the devastating experience of having no home. They may be survivors of domestic violence or may have experienced a debilitating physical ailment or a sudden and unexpected loss of income. In some of the recent supportive housing that has opened in Denver, most of the residents transitioning out of chronic homelessness were seniors over the age of 55. Other buildings might be dedicated to youth under age 25 or families with children.

How are tenants selected?

Tenants are selected to live in supportive housing based on their level of vulnerability, such as people who have been homeless many years and/or have a mental or physical disability and are desperately in need of immediate, stable homes. They have been matched to supportive housing because it will help them regain stability and well-being. Every tenant undergoes a

thorough background check and must follow building rules and requirements. The majority of supportive housing receives federal tax credits, and when federal funding is involved, additional screening criteria may apply.

What services are available to tenants in supportive housing?

When residents move into a building, they have access to a dedicated staff member to support them in identifying goals, connecting them to supportive services, and helping to track their progress. The types of services range from medical treatment options and specific supports for tenants with a mental health diagnosis and/or addiction, to employment programs and job training, and life-skills training such as financial management, decision-making and more. While the professional coordination of services is typically on site, many of the services residents receive will be accessed from elsewhere in the community.

Are tenants required to receive services?

Services are voluntary but providers offer services assertively, which means that they will continue to show up and check on someone even if tenants don't request help. This method is based on research and best practices. Individuals who have experienced long-term homelessness often need to build trust with providers over time, and communities have more success bringing individuals into housing from the streets when individuals know they will be able to go at their own pace. Based on the experience of recent Denver supportive housing buildings evaluated through the Social Impact Bond, nearly all residents engage in services within a year of being housed.

What about mental illness? Or substance use?

The model described above also applies to those who experience these conditions. Residents will be offered a range of services including medical evaluations and treatments, peer-support groups, and tools for daily life. Research demonstrates that recovery from addiction depends heavily on voluntary participation and decision-making on the part of individuals and that recovery is more likely when individuals are stable and living without trauma. So, the stability and support available

Tools and Resources

in supportive housing are associated with reduced substance use and/or recovery. Supportive services staff help track and monitor engagement in treatment plans, creating continuity that contributes to success.

Does this building require special zoning?

Where the housing is in the form of apartments, no. Many of the residents of supportive housing have a disability in addition to having experienced chronic homelessness. Both mental illness and substance abuse/addiction are disabilities protected by the Fair Housing Act (FHA). The FHA prohibits cities from treating supportive housing differently than other apartment buildings simply because of the disability status of some or all the residents. For this reason, the zoning and building code approvals required to build or renovate supportive housing apartment buildings are the same as they would be for any other apartment building where residents have a key to their own door and a lease.

Does a supportive housing building require a special license?

While supportive housing includes important on-site services, these services do not rise to the level of skilled

nursing, medication management, or other clinical services that require licensing. If residents require hospice or other outside services, these services would be provided either in or outside the home by professional caregivers, the same as they would to someone in any other apartment building and would not require the building itself to receive a license.

How does supportive housing ensure the safety and security of the surrounding community?

The safety of building tenants as well as the surrounding community is of utmost priority to everyone involved. Many apartments benefit from the 24-hour presence of property management and/or service provider staff or volunteers. Some buildings may supplement that staffing with overnight private security as do other commercial apartment buildings in Denver. Trained staff, volunteers, or professional security personnel are there to help ensure residents are safe, protected from external concerns, and to ensure accountability to building rules. Disturbances, excessive guests or illegal activities will be immediately addressed by staff on site. Security cameras are also commonly used to monitor access doors and/or external spaces.

SUPPORT SERVICES MENU

Below is a sample list of services that may be provided in supportive housing. A building will offer some, but not all, of the listed services, depending on the residents to be served and the resources available in the community.

General Supportive Services

- Tenant orientation/move-in assistance
- Tenants' rights education/tenants' council
- Case management
- Coordination of all resident services
- Psychosocial assessment
- Individualized service planning
- Individual counseling and support
- Referrals to other services and programs
- Crisis intervention
- Peer mentoring
- Support groups
- Recreational/socialization opportunities
- Legal assistance
- Transportation
- Meals
- Other nutritional services
- Emergency financial assistance

Independent Living Skills

- Communication skills
- Conflict resolution/mediation training
- Personal financial management & budgeting
- Credit counseling
- Representative payee
- Entitlement assistance/benefits counseling
- Training in cooking/meal preparation
- Training in personal hygiene and self-care
- Training in housekeeping
- Training in use of public transportation
- Assistance with activities of daily living

Health/Medical Services

- Routine medical care
- Specialty medical care
- Medication management or monitoring
- Health and wellness education
- Nursing/visiting nurse care
- Home health aide services
- Personal care
- HIV/AIDS services
- Pain management

Mental Health Services

- Individual psychosocial assessment
- Individual counseling
- Group therapy

- Support groups
- Peer mentoring/support
- Medication management/monitoring
- Education about mental illness
- Education about psychotropic medication
- Psychiatric assessment
- Psychiatric services
- Liaison with psychiatrist
- Psychiatric staff (nurse)

Substance Abuse Services

- Recovery readiness services (tenants with active addictions)
- Relapse prevention and recovery planning
- Substance abuse counseling (individual)
- Substance abuse counseling (group)
- Methadone maintenance
- Harm-reduction services
- Peer support groups (AA, NA, CA)
- Sober recreational activities
- Detoxification treatment and in-patient rehabilitation
- Rehabilitation program (out-patient)

Employment Services

- Job skills training (certificate programs)
- Job skills training (non-certificate services)
- Education
- Job readiness training: resumes, interviewing skills
- Job retention services: support, coaching
- Job development/job placement services
- Opportunities for tenants to volunteer

Services for Families

- Support group for parents
- Support group for children
- Support group for families
- Assistance in accessing entitlements (including child support)
- Parenting/child development classes
- All-day childcare
- After-school care
- Temporary childcare during parent's illness, detox, etc.
- Tutoring children
- Other children's services provided
- Referral to other children's services
- Domestic violence services
- Family advocacy
- Family reunification

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Area Median Income (AMI) — The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) sets income limits that determine eligibility for assisted housing programs including the Public Housing, Section 8 project-based, Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers, State Housing Vouchers, Section 202 housing for the elderly, and Section 811 housing for persons with disabilities programs. HUD develops income limits based on Median Family Income estimates and Fair Market Rent area definitions for each metropolitan area, parts of some metropolitan areas, and each non-metropolitan county. The Colorado Division of Housing sets voucher payment standards annually using HUD income limits.

Chronically Homeless/Long-term Homelessness means an individual with a disability who lives either in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter, or in an institutional care facility if the individual has been living in the facility for fewer than 90 days and had been living in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter immediately before entering the institutional care facility.

Coordinated Entry is a regional, client-centered process that enables communities to assess and identify the housing and support needs of individuals experiencing homelessness. Coordinated Entry Systems also match the right level of service and housing intervention as quickly and efficiently as possible, while being respectful of client choice and local providers.

Extremely Low Income is a household whose income is at or below 30% of Area Median Income (see definition above).

Harm Reduction is a set of practical approaches aimed to reduce the harm associated with substance use rather than on the prevention of substance use itself. Research demonstrates that recovery from addiction depends heavily on voluntary participation and decision-making on the part of individuals, and that recovery is more likely when individuals are stable and living without trauma. Professional staff explore with residents the benefits of changing, reducing, or eliminating high-risk behaviors and support them in identifying and working toward the goals they set.

Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) is a local information technology system used to collect data on people experiencing homelessness and at risk of losing their housing, to identify the housing and services available to these individuals and families in the coordinated entry system.

Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) is a federal program to assist very low-income families, the elderly, and individuals with disabilities to afford decent, safe housing. Vouchers are issued federally and administered through local agencies. A housing subsidy is paid to the landlord by the local agency administering the voucher, and the individual or family with the voucher is responsible for paying up to 30% of their income for rent.

Housing First is a homeless assistance approach that prioritizes providing one-time limited housing to people experiencing homelessness, thus ending their homelessness. It serves as a platform from which individuals can pursue personal goals and improve quality of life. This approach is guided by the belief that people need necessities, such as food and housing, before attending to other basic needs and self-sufficiency goals, such as employment, budgeting, and substance use treatment.

Lived Experience Voice means collecting input and feedback from individuals who have personally experienced homelessness to inform decisions regarding housing solutions. Their first-hand knowledge uniquely positions them to inform and strengthen approaches to prevent and address homelessness through policy, systems change, programs, and processes.

Supportive Housing is decent, safe, affordable housing that provides tenants with the rights of tenancy and on-site and community-based services to help them transition out of long-term homelessness. Research shows that this form of housing is an effective way to end homelessness because it provides individuals and families with safe, stable homes and access to support from professionals who coordinate individualized services such as mental and physical health services, addiction treatment, job training, and more.

Supportive Services are available through supportive housing and administered by professional staff (social workers, psychotherapists, psychiatrists, etc.) with the goal of helping residents address their physical and mental health, substance use, and other issues like gaining employment and life skills training, such as financial management. Each resident has access to a dedicated staff member to support them in identifying goals, connecting them to supportive services, and helping to track their progress.

RESOURCES

WATCH TO LEARN MORE ABOUT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING:

Arroyo Village (Denver, CO)

Pre-opening overview of combined shelter, supportive housing and affordable housing

<https://www.thedeloresproject.org/arroyo-village/>

Sanderson Apartment (Denver, CO)

Supportive housing for highly vulnerable individuals, with service funding through Denver's Social Impact Bond

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BJ5eZMuQUol>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8MNt3litebY->

Pathways Village (Grand Junction, CO)

Explanation of the Colorado Supportive Housing Toolkit, capacity building and how the Pathways Village project came about

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oTC3Bayip6M>

San Marco (Duluth, MN)

An in-depth look at a successful supportive housing model that has been operating for more than a decade

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ETGd2EP4z70&t=29s>

READ MORE ABOUT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING:

Studies on Cost Savings of Supportive Housing

<https://endhomelessness.org/resource/permanent-supportive-housing-cost-study-map/>

Fact Sheet on Housing First

<http://endhomelessness.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/housing-first-fact-sheet.pdf>

Supportive Housing 101 and Link to Training Module

<https://www.csh.org/supportive-housing-101/>

LEARN ABOUT DENVER'S SOCIAL IMPACT BOND MODEL AND OUTCOMES:

Denver Social Impact Bond Reports

<https://www.urban.org/policy-centers/metropolitan-housing-and-communities-policy-center/projects/denver-supportive-housing-social-impact-bond-initiative/publications>

Urban Institute Podcasts on Denver's SIB (See Episodes #28 and #29)

<https://www.urban.org/criticalvalue#breakinghomelessjailcycle1>

