Long Beach Senior Housing
Long Beach, Calif., Menorah Housing Foundation

In Los Angeles County, more than 4,000 homeless are aged 62 and older. The subpopulation of adults aged 50 and older is the fastest growing segment of homeless in the county.

It’s a startling trend that the nonprofit organization Shelter Partnership studied in depth, searching for a solution to the growing problem. How do you get homeless seniors off the streets and into permanent, supportive housing?

Working with organizations like Menorah Housing Foundation, Shelter Partnership found an answer.

A Place to Call Home
Menorah and Shelter Partnership developed an innovative program to link Long Beach Senior Housing directly with homeless service providers. Working together, Menorah and Shelter Partnership created a streamlined process to refer and to place formerly homeless seniors and older adults with mental illnesses into housing. By eliminating screening and waitlist barriers that put the homeless at a disadvantage, high-risk seniors are able to access stable and supportive housing.

At-a-Glance

Project type: 65 one-bedroom apartments

Key funding sources: HUD Section 202, City of Long Beach Redevelopment Agency and the City of Long Beach Housing Redevelopment Company

Resident profile: Average age is 71, earning up to 50 percent of the area median income

Green features include: Open-air corridors to accommodate natural ventilation and cooling, low-flow plumbing fixtures, energy-efficient lighting and Energy Star appliances, drought-tolerant landscaping

Services and activities include: On-site service coordinator arranges educational programs on topics such as health care, psychological well being, life skills training and art therapy. With Shelter Partnership, Menorah conducts adult homeless outreach program by working closely with service providers and providing a streamlined application process.

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Because of this innovative program, 73-year-old Martin Serpico found a permanent home. “I was on the streets before, for a year before I came here,” explains Martin. Working with his case manager, his name was placed into the Long Beach Senior Housing lottery while the facility was being constructed. Martin was the 65th pick.

“There are some people that I moved in here with. Great people, friendly, honest, sincere. They appreciate what this is,” Martin says. “I mean you can just see it…. There’s always a quiet applause for what this is.”

Today, 15 percent of Long Beach Senior Housing residents are formerly homeless. The partnership that Menorah and Shelter Partnership formed set a standard for the city of how housing providers and homeless service providers can work together to tackle homelessness in older adults.

**A Design for the Future**

An independent living facility, Long Beach Senior Housing was created to allow residents to age in place for as long as possible. Universal design features were thoughtfully incorporated in anticipation of seniors’ future physical needs.

Ramps never exceed a 5 percent incline and corridors are wider than normal, making it easier for residents to walk and to maneuver in wheelchairs. All apartments are accessible with features such as grab bars and non-slip floor surfaces. Two elevators accommodate wheelchair access, with an elevator on each side of the building.

The design of the building employs the use of different color schemes and design elements to minimize disorientation when navigating the layout. Building signs are set apart with high color contrasts to allow for a greater feeling of personal security among residents with visual and hearing impairments and those who suffer from disorientation.

**Menorah Housing Foundation**

Established in 1969 as a non-sectarian, non-profit, Menorah Housing Foundation has developed and currently manages 1,139 apartment units in 17 buildings geographically dispersed throughout Los Angeles County. The foundation serves an ethnically diverse population in its various locations, provides on-site service coordination to allow residents to age in place and collaborates with local social service providers on an innovative Homeless Older Adult Outreach Program.