

# SUPPORTIVE HOUSING NEIGHBORHOOD ENGAGEMENT GUIDE OVERVIEW

*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.

**Diverse.** 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. Onsite 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.

Read the full guide to learn more: [bit.ly/SHNE-Guide](https://bit.ly/SHNE-Guide).

Published in February 2020, the guide was shaped by representatives from neighborhoods, housing teams, funders, and those who have personally experienced homelessness through a community-based process convened by Councilwoman Robin Kniech. [KniechAtLarge@denvergov.org](mailto:KniechAtLarge@denvergov.org). 720.337.7712.