



DOWNTOWN **WOMEN'S** CENTER
Every woman housed

**PRESS RELEASE
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**DOWNTOWN WOMEN'S CENTER RESPONDS TO CRISIS OF UNSHELTERED WOMEN
BY OPENING FIRST-OF-ITS-KIND BRIDGE HOUSING FOR WOMEN**

LOS ANGELES — Today, the [Downtown Women's Center](#) (DWC) — the only organization in Los Angeles focused exclusively on serving and empowering homeless and formerly homeless women — is opening overnight bridge housing for women. DWC's Enhanced Bridge Housing program is being launched in response to the crisis of thousands of women sleeping on the streets, in public parks and in other areas not meant for human habitation. Funded by Wells Fargo, Los Angeles City Council District 14 and the City of Los Angeles, DWC's Enhanced Bridge Housing program is the first program of its kind in Skid Row to exclusively serve women.

DWC will host a press event to officially launch its Enhanced Bridge Housing program on **Tuesday, August 13 at 4:00 p.m. at 442 S. San Pedro St., LA 90013**. Mayor Eric Garcetti, Supervisor Ridley-Thomas, Councilmember Mitch O'Farrell, CD-14 Chief of Staff Paul Habib, and other local leaders will give remarks.

For women living on the streets, every day brings the risks of experiencing or witnessing violence, and of traumatization. According to the 2019 Homeless Count, nearly 11,000 homeless [women are unsheltered in Los Angeles County](#).

The Enhanced Bridge Housing program will provide safe, overnight accommodation and ongoing support for women in the process of securing long-term housing. The program will provide 25 beds available nightly, 365 nights a year, between the hours of 5:00 p.m. and 5:00 a.m. In addition to temporary housing, the program will help connect women with permanent housing resources. Women will also be able receive evening meals, access to showers, hygiene products and clean changes of clothes as well as participate in enrichment activities.

"The Downtown Women's Center provides an invaluable service to our community by providing critical resources for women daily," said Patricia Gonzalez, Wells Fargo Vice President and Regional Manager, and a DWC board member. "Wells Fargo is proud to partner with the Center in their latest venture to ensure women in crisis have a safe place to sleep while they await transition to long-term housing."

"Angelenos don't run from challenges — we rise to them — and that will always be our approach in confronting the homelessness crisis," said Mayor Eric Garcetti. "The new Downtown Women's Center bridge housing site reflects the power of partnerships and puts hard-fought state funding to use so that more homeless Angelenos can receive the housing, healing and hope they urgently need and deserve."

The opening of the Enhanced Bridge Housing program comes at a crisis point for thousands of women living without a home across Los Angeles. According to the 2019 Los Angeles Homeless Count, women's homelessness is increasing across the County:

- In 2019, [more than 18,000 women](#) were experiencing homelessness across Los Angeles County, a 13% increase over the number of homeless women in 2018.
- Of those, more than 11,000 women were unsheltered, meaning they were sleeping on the streets, in public parks and in other areas not meant for human habitation.
- [Nearly 1,500 women were experiencing homelessness in Skid Row](#), a 3% increase over 2018. Of those, more than half -- 834 women -- were unsheltered.
- More than half of Angelenos (53%) who fell into homelessness for the first time in 2019 cited economic hardship as a leading factor. Of those, more than half (50.7%) were women.

"The Downtown Women's Center has reaffirmed their pledge to provide a safe place for women experiencing homelessness by providing additional bridge housing. The need is tremendous, and DWC is helping fill a gap for a growing demographic of homeless," said Councilmember Jose Huizar. "As we continue to build more permanent supportive housing for the long term, increasing bridge housing is imperative."

"We must do more for the thousands of women who have no choice but to sleep on our city streets," said Lisa Watson, Interim Chief Executive Officer of the Downtown Women's Center. "These new data confirm what we see and hear from the women we serve every day: the resources available to them are extremely limited. Thanks to support from our partners, we are able to take a significant step forward today by opening the Enhanced Bridge Housing program, but much more is needed to ensure every woman is safe and eventually has a permanent home."

The Enhanced Bridge Housing Program will be housed in a converted portion of the DWC's Day Center. Approximately 200 women access the Day Center each day to find respite from the streets and access emergency services such as meals, showers, hygiene products, laundry services and clean changes of clothes. Women can consult with housing support staff and receive mental and physical health services from DWC's women-only medical clinic.

"We must intensify our efforts to provide safe housing for all Angelenos, because the latest Homeless Count shows this crisis is more urgent than ever," Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas said. "The Enhanced Bridge Housing program at the Downtown Women's Center will ensure that vulnerable women on the streets of Skid Row will have a safe place to sleep at night. This is crucial while we provide them with intensive case management to help them on the path to stable housing and supportive services."

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*The **Downtown Women's Center (DWC)** is the only organization in Los Angeles focused exclusively on serving and empowering women experiencing homelessness and formerly homeless women. DWC envisions a Los Angeles with every woman housed and on a path to personal stability. Our mission is to end homelessness for women in greater Los Angeles through housing, wellness, employment, and advocacy. For more information, visit www.downtownwomenscenter.org.*