Slaying Skid Row: Finding a Solution that Works for Both the Homeless and Housed Communities in Los Angeles, California

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Introduction

Today, it is clear to the average urban dweller that homelessness is one of the most pressing social policy issues American cities face today. With widespread inequality and rising housing prices becoming the norm, an increasingly large percentage of the populace are forced to move out of their homes with the hopes of finding a new place of residence in the shrinking low-income housing market. According to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), their 2018 single night, point-in-time count found that about 553,000 individuals in the United States were homeless. Of these 553,000, about two-thirds (65%) were staying in either emergency or transitional shelters, while the remaining one-third (35%) were unsheltered, staying “on the street, in abandoned buildings, or in other places not suitable for human habitation” (M. Henry et al. 2018). HUD noted that the 2018 homelessness count marked a slight 0.3% increase over the U.S.’s 2017 count, and attributed this growth to a decline in sheltered individuals coupled with a 2% increase in unsheltered individuals (or 4,300 people). A similar trend can be seen through a broader examination of the U.S. homeless population over time. Although HUD’s homeless count shows a significant decreasing trend in this population (with about 647,000 homeless individuals in 2007), the percentage of homeless who are unsheltered has been steadily increasing. In 2014, this unsheltered population reached a record low, with about 175,000 individuals living on the streets on any given night. In 2018, HUD estimated there were about 194,000 unsheltered individuals across the U.S., marking an 11% increase over the past four years (M. Henry et al. 2018).

While most American citizens recognize this growing crisis, they are simply unwilling to do anything to resolve it. Afraid of an adverse effect on their home values, and potential substance abusers and other unwanted individuals moving into their neighborhoods, these
citizens refuse to allow homeless shelters and low-income housing, the obvious solution to the homelessness crisis, to be built anywhere near their communities. This begs two important policy questions: first, what policies or strategies have cities in the United States utilized to either reduce or outright eliminate homelessness? And second, what policies or strategies have cities in the United States implemented to overcome community resistance to the placement of unwanted structures, such as homeless shelters or affordable housing, in their neighborhoods?

For cities like Los Angeles, these two policy questions have become increasingly pressing in recent years. Among major U.S. cities, LA has the second largest homeless total (52,765 individuals in 2018), behind only New York City. Additionally, Los Angeles’s mild winters have resulted in a large unsheltered population, as compared to New York and many Midwest and eastern towns. According to LAHSA, of the 52,765 homeless counted in 2018, 39,396 individuals were unsheltered, or 75% of LA’s total homeless population. Chronic homelessness is an additional issue in Los Angeles, with 13,559 individuals (26% of the total population) noting they had been homeless for at least a year (Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority n.d.a) (Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority n.d.b).

In spite of this large homelessness crisis, prior to 2016, Los Angeles city and county officials were unable to implement an effective policy solution. While the city council and individual municipalities within LA County offered various levels of housing and services to their respective homeless populations, these efforts were uncoordinated and on a much smaller scale than was needed to end Los Angeles’s homelessness. As a result, from 2013 to 2015, the County experienced a 12% growth in homelessness, from about 39,461 individuals in 2013 to 44,359 individuals in 2015 (“2015 Results Los Angeles Continuum of Care” 2015). It should also be noted that all eight of the County’s service planning areas experienced a growth in their
respective homeless populations during this time; in other words, LA’s homeless crisis affected all Angelenos on some degree. In response, city and county officials started to create a coordinated homeless plan. While they had enough resources to enact portions of this plan (e.g. hiring more outreach workers to help street homeless), the hallmark of this new strategy, building thousands of housing units, would require far more resources than either the city or county had at their current disposal (Board 2016).

To this end, in 2016 and 2017, Angelenos took two unprecedented actions to address the growing homelessness crisis in their communities. In November 2016, city residents passed Proposition HHH, a $1.2 billion bond measure that will provide supplemental funding for 10,000 permanent housing units with support services to be built over the next ten years (Smith 2016b). On March 20, 2018, LA’s fifteen City Council members each pledged to build at least 222 units in their respective districts by July 1, 2020 (a total of 3,330 units, or about one-third of the city’s total goal). As of December 2018, 2,788 housing units have been funded through Proposition HHH, 2,088 of which are permanent supportive units. Fifteen more development projects have been proposed, which would provide an additional 922 units, 722 of which would be supportive in nature (Garcetti n.d.). Additionally, in March 2017, county residents passed Measure H, a quarter-cent sales tax increase, which will generate $355 million annually for county homelessness programs over the next ten years. The County of Los Angeles hopes to build 45,000 permanent housing units with this money over the next five years (The Times Editorial Board 2017). As of September 2018, 18,714 homeless individuals have been placed in bridge housing or emergency shelters funded by Measure H, while 9,635 individuals have been permanently housed (or 21% of LA County’s total goal) (The Los Angeles County Homeless Initiative n.d.).
A final homelessness policy that has been introduced in Los Angeles is called “A Bridge Home.” Introduced by Mayor Eric Garcetti in April 2018, the policy is designed to address the delay homeless individuals sometimes face while waiting for the permanent supportive units funded by Proposition HHH and Measure H to be developed and built, a process that could take years. To this end, A Bridge Home aims to provide temporary emergency shelters in each of Los Angeles’s fifteen city council districts, capitalizing on a new state law that allows California cities to construct bridge housing on any publicly–owned or –leased land (Garcetti 2018). Mayor Garcetti plans to fund these fifteen shelters through an equal distribution of a $20 million fund, which amounts to about $1.3 million per city district. Once a site is selected, case workers will engage in an intensive period of street outreach to inform nearby homeless individuals of the temporary shelter’s provisions. After the shelter is constructed and these individuals begin to move in, the city of Los Angeles and its sanitation teams will work to clean up the vacated homeless encampments, thereby providing an incentive for the nearby housed community to support construction of this bridge facility.

While both the city and county of Los Angeles have been able to raise unprecedented funding to address their homeless crises, the question remains: are the ways LA officials propose to use these resources the most efficient way to end homelessness or should they adopt other cities’ approaches? For instance, in March 2017, New York Mayor Bill de Blasio announced a plan to develop ninety new homeless shelters across the city, primarily in neighborhoods where large amounts of homeless individuals live, so as not to disrupt their community connections and overall way of life. This plan fits more broadly into New York’s long–term homeless strategy, which has focused on building shelters over permanent housing units. As a result, the city has a lower street homeless population than many other major cities, including Los Angeles, San
Francisco, and Seattle (Bellafante 2017). Philadelphia, on the other hand, has adopted a more comprehensive plan to end its homelessness. Despite being the poorest major city in the United States, among these cities, Philadelphia has the smallest unsheltered homeless population. To this end, its five–year homeless strategy focuses less on creating shelters and more on providing permanent housing and wraparound services. For instance, a stated goal is to increase the number of affordable units by forming partnerships with landlords who would otherwise be hesitant to lease to individuals who rely on housing subsidies. Additionally, Philadelphia plans to partner with several nonprofits to help create employment assistance programming and to find entry–level jobs for its homeless. This strategy, city officials state, will help individuals create the financial stability needed to maintain permanent housing (Moselle 2018).

Although several U.S. cities have been able to create comprehensive homeless strategic plans, community resistance to the construction of shelters and/or low–income housing has proven to be an additional obstacle to surmount. For instance, in April 2019, San Francisco officials proposed a new navigation center, which would provide 225 beds and various other services, near the Embarcadero on the eastern edge of the city. The negative response from nearby residents was swift; these individuals were fearful that the proposed center would turn their high–end neighborhood into a dirty, dangerous place to live. In response, city officials proposed an amended plan, which would reduce the initial amount of beds to 130, with plans to increase this to 225 over the course of several months. Additionally, the new center’s design would incorporate more community feedback, including a higher police presence to address residents’ safety concerns (Cowan 2019). To quell future community resistance, several San Francisco district supervisors also introduced a proposal to require districts without a navigation center to build one within thirty months. They note that this equitable distribution strategy would
create a stronger collective effort to end the city’s homelessness, with residents feeling less like
their respective neighborhoods are being targeted for these unwanted structures. Additionally,
officials observe, homeless individuals not living near existing navigation centers can remain in
their current communities once the new centers are built.

Given the wide range of methods cities have implemented to address both providing
housing/services to their homeless, as well as growing community resistance to this provision,
two important questions are raised. First, what policies or strategies have these
cities/neighborhoods utilized to either reduce or outright eliminate homelessness? And second,
what policies or strategies have these cities/neighborhoods implemented to overcome community
resistance to the placement of unwanted structures, such as homeless shelters or affordable
housing, in their neighborhoods?

To answer these two questions, this paper proceeds as follows. The next section is a
literature review that summarizes various policies cities have enacted to house their homeless
and strategies utilized to address community resistance. Following is a research design, which
lays out my hypotheses, gives a brief overview of my case studies, and describes how I will
measure my variables and collect relevant data. The subsequent four sections describe my cases:
Pasadena, Pomona, Koreatown, and Venice. The first two case studies examine the effectiveness
of Housing First, a growing housing strategy adopted city– and county–wide in Los Angeles.
The latter two cases examine whether an open and accessible planning process is the best
strategy cities can use to address community resistance. A final section concludes, and describes
various policy lessons U.S. cities can draw from my research.
Literature Review

Given the negative effects of homelessness, both on those without permanent places to live and on nearby housed communities, many scholars have sought to find effective housing policy solutions. While cities have turned to homeless shelters and transitional housing for decades, experts have increasingly noted the benefits of permanent supportive housing. This model emphasizes comprehensive, wraparound services provided in tandem with permanent units. The first section of this literature review thus addresses the following question: what policies or strategies have cities/neighborhoods utilized to either reduce or outright eliminate their homelessness?

Housing/Homelessness Policy

Continuum of Care Model

The continuum of care model, also known as the linear staircase approach (Padgett, Henwood, and Tsemberis 2016), has been the primary method cities have used to solve their homelessness crises for decades. Under this model, homeless individuals must prove their “housing readiness” by successfully progressing through a series of shelters and transitional housing whilst simultaneously working with service providers and social workers to develop the skills needed to live independently (e.g. abstinence from substances, the ability to constructively interact with others, behavioral self–regulation) (Kertesz et al. 2009). Under this model, service integration between local and regional public services and a strong, coordinated effort between case workers at every stage of the transition to permanent housing is paramount. Without this
integration and coordination, Meschede (2011) argues, it can be difficult for homeless individuals to transition between the different stages of the model, thus dissuading them from entering it in the first place. Padgett et. al (2016) note that many cities have been drawn to the continuum of care model because of its close connection with the traditional American view of personal responsibility. In other words, most individuals see the homeless as undeserving of permanent, independent housing unless they actively better themselves and show a sincere effort and desire to be a constructive member of their local communities (a principal requirement of the continuum of care model).

Given its central position in cities’ strategies to end their homelessness, many scholars and other housing policy experts have conducted a range of tests examining the continuum of care model. In 2015, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development released the short–term findings of its Family Options Study, which measures the effectiveness and relative cost of four different housing policies, including the continuum of care. The study involved 2,282 homeless families from twelve different communities, who were then randomly assigned to one of the four housing policies. After eighteen months, researchers noted that many continuum of care participants successfully utilized their shelters’ housing assistance programs, with 28% of families accessing a permanent subsidy and 25% receiving transitional housing (Gubits et al. 2015). After three years, these percentages increased: 37% of families were now using permanent subsidies, while slightly less than 33% were living in transitional housing. It should also be noted that those utilizing permanent subsidies were doing so for an average of 19 months, meaning they were successfully maintaining a stable place of residence (Gubits et al. 2016). Researchers also observed that while these homeless families were waiting to find more permanent housing, they were able to access a wide range of centralized, shelter–provided
services, including case management and supportive services; and in some instances, employment assistance, life skills classes, and mental health care.

Despite these wide-reaching successes, many scholars have noted that the continuum of care model is only practical for a small subset of the broader homeless population. In a 2016 study, Skinner and Rankin note several barriers individuals encounter while trying to access the first step in the model: shelters. First, homeless shelters have a limited number of beds. As a result, hundreds of thousands of homeless individuals across the U.S. are forced to remain on the streets. And because many shelters require in-person registration, these individuals spend their days in shelter lobbies hoping for a spare bed. In response, many cities have begun to encourage shelters to accept more homeless individuals, thus leading to overcrowding and an increased risk of various illnesses. Additionally, many shelters, and the continuum of care model more broadly, require complete sobriety or treatment towards this end. Skinner and Rankin note, however, that many homeless individuals suffer from addiction issues, using substances either as a way to cope with being homeless or as a way to self-treat their mental illnesses. Although entering the continuum of care can lead to the housing these individuals need, many find complete sobriety extremely challenging without having this stability in place. A third barrier homeless individuals face in entering shelters are its strict residency requirements, which leaves marginalized groups, including sex offenders and LGBTQ youth, on the streets. Skinner and Rankin observe that due to fears of recidivism and a desire to protect nearby residents, many sex offenders are limited in where they can live, including homeless shelters. While LGBTQ youth do not face the same restrictions, many shelters do not accept unaccompanied minors, and several that do are ill-equipped to effectively address the specific challenges these individuals face. For instance, many
transgender homeless youth note being housed based on their biological gender rather than their expressed gender, which they observe leads to higher rates of physical/sexual assault.

**Housing First**

Perhaps the most important homelessness policy introduced in the past twenty–five years has been the Housing First model, first introduced by Sam Tsemberis in the late 1990s. In 1992, Tsemberis founded Pathways to Housing, a New York nonprofit committed to ending homelessness. In the mid–1990s, Pathways developed an outreach and drop–in center program called Choices, where homeless individuals were able to speak honestly about their struggles with homelessness and propose potential policy solutions. Through this dialogue several issues regarding the traditional continuum of care model were highlighted, including the difficulties of giving up substances as a coping mechanism in the face of imperfect conditions in homeless shelters and the hardships of transitioning from an independent life on the streets into the highly regulated shelter and transitional housing systems. As a result of these conversations, Tsemberis and other Choices workers realized that to be effective, housing policies must be structured around what the homeless actually want and need, rather than what cities perceive they require (Tsemberis 2010). Thus, Housing First was born.

Housing First was founded on the principle that the key to leaving homelessness was stability and a sense of autonomy. Choices workers noted that many homeless individuals refused to begin the continuum of care model because they saw the shelter system as too constrictive and the services shelters would provide as too impersonal (Meschede 2011). Thus, the first, and most important tenet of the Housing First model is exactly that: giving the homeless a permanent place to live immediately upon entering the program, no strings attached. Unlike
under the continuum of care model, Housing First participants would not have to leave this housing after a certain period of time. This difference, the founders believed, would allow these individuals to build a more stable lifestyle in which they could find success, with only minimal services from outside providers.

According to Padgett et. al (2016), while there are slight variations in the Housing First model across cities, the principal Pathways Housing First model consists of an additional four aspects. First, the model’s primary philosophy is consumer choice. Unlike the rigid continuum of care (which is the same for all consumers regardless of preconditions), the Pathways model is almost entirely shaped by the specific needs and desires of the client, thus giving them a sense of autonomy and freedom. Second, services are provided through a community–based, mobile support system, known as Assertive Community Treatment (ACT). ACT staff members include peer substance abuse counselors, nurse practitioners, psychiatrics, and social workers. Third, the Pathways Housing First model emphasizes permanent, scatter-site housing. Living alongside other low-income residents who may not necessarily be struggling with issues of mental health or substance abuse but are similarly facing financial hardships, and can thus serve as role models or mentors for the recently housed clients, shows the benefits of maintaining housing. Fourth, and most radical from the traditional continuum of care model, is Housing First’s emphasis on harm reduction, rather than on complete sobriety or psychiatric treatment. Under harm reduction, social services are structured to reduce the adverse effects of psychiatric diseases or drug/alcohol addiction to better ensure that clients will maintain their housing.
Positive Housing First Studies

Given the unique nature of the Pathways Housing First model, in order to demonstrate its effectiveness over the traditional continuum of care, several scholars have conducted a variety of studies testing the merits of the model, and extending it to other homeless communities (e.g., rural and suburban homeless, chronically homeless, homeless with mental illnesses). In general, the findings are mixed. Many studies show Housing First is effective when expanded to these other communities (with a few minor changes in some cases). Other studies, however, find fault with the overall structure of the Housing First model, including its emphasis on consumer choice over the realities of the housing market or its lack of job support. This subsection will focus on those studies that see the model as a favorable and marked improvement over the traditional continuum of care.

In 2003, Tsemberis et al. conducted a test that expanded Housing First to the intersection of two important homeless populations in New York City: the chronically homeless, or those who have been homeless for over a year, and homeless with psychiatric disabilities. Participants were randomly assigned to either Housing First or the continuum of care. After six months, 79% of those who had been assigned to the former model remained in the given permanent housing, as compared to only 27% of those who were assigned the traditional latter model. The researchers also found positive conclusions regarding the harm reduction aspect of Housing First, as those assigned to this model did not worsen their substance abuse. Tsemberis, Gulcur, and Nakae (2004) performed a similar experiment with homeless individuals with dual diagnoses; that is, those who suffer from both a mental illness and substance abuse. They found that 80% of those assigned to the Housing First model remained stably housed over twenty–four months, thereby proving that contrary to conventional wisdom, substance abuse does not
preclude the ability to maintain housing. Additionally, researchers noted that those assigned to the continuum of care model, despite having used more substance treatment services, did not exhibit higher rates of sobriety than those assigned to Housing First. Padgett et al. came to a similar conclusion in their 2011 study.

In 2003, Gulcur et al. examined the hospitalization rate for chronically homeless individuals with psychiatric disabilities, assigning participants to either the Housing First model or the continuum of care model. After twenty-four months, the researchers qualitatively concluded that participants assigned to the former had been housed earlier, had remained stably housed for longer, and spent fewer days hospitalized than those who had been assigned to the continuum of care. They noted this was most likely due to Housing First’s reliance on consumer choice, as participants were able to select the services most likely to keep them away from hospitals and a return to the streets. In 2018, Byrne, Henwood, and Scriber examined the relationship between Housing First and the number of residential moves an individual experiences utilizing it. They found 52% of Housing First participants moved at least once within one to four years after initially being housed, but remained in this new housing, rather than returning to homelessness. The researchers noted that this percentage averages to a move every 2.3 years, which is similar to the average individual in the United States, who moves more than eleven times during their adult life.

**Negative Housing First Studies – Structural Issues**

While there have been several studies that demonstrate the benefits of the Pathways Housing First model, a wide literature documents policy makers’ difficulties in implementing the model either in general or to specific communities, most notably rural neighborhoods. In each of
these studies, these difficulties arise from what I deem inherent problems that exist within the Housing First model’s specific structure; that is, within its five major tenets.

In their study, Zerger et al. (2016) examine the causes of housing delays and relocations under the Housing First model in Toronto, noting that are three. First is ineffective communication between consumers and service providers, including case workers and housing providers (e.g. landlords). Because Housing First is centered on consumer choice, homes are given based almost exclusively on consumer preference. If this preference is ineffectively explained to housing providers, it is almost impossible to find a home that meets the consumer’s specific desires. Second, the authors note that housing can be delayed if clients clearly prefer one house and are willing to wait if this preferred house is not on the market. This connects to the third cause: housing providers prioritizing consumer choice over the realities of the housing market. If consumers are ambivalent about housing options, the traditional Housing First model suggests that providers do not intervene to break this stalemate, even if these housing options are all available. Zerger et. al suggest that to prevent future delays, providers should focus on creating a mutually–agreed upon housing plan and developing clear communication with the homeless participant in order to fully explain the consumer choice tenet and to more collectively overcome housing market constraints.

In their study of housing long–term shelter residents with psychiatric issues in a suburban county, Stefancic and Tsemberis (2007) note two issues Housing First advocates may find in expanding the model outside of the urban area it was initially designed for. First, community–based services may be scarcer in these areas given their smaller populations, or there may not be enough clients in a particular suburb to justify funding a complete service team. Additionally, the far distances these case workers have to travel to reach the consumers require additional
resources that Housing First advocates simply may not have (e.g. cars, gas money). Second, there are fewer houses in suburbs (many of which are designed for higher income families anyways), and less tenant turnover. As a result, consumers may have a housing goal that is impossible to achieve, and thus may have to settle for unfavorable options. In 2013, Stefancic et al. provided some solutions to these challenges through their examination of extending Housing First to rural Vermont. They noted that rather than providing services through the Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) model, in which a small, multidisciplinary staff covered a wide range of services, it was best to utilize a combination of the ACT model and the Intensive Case Management (ICM) model. Under this hybrid, urban social workers visit clients at least once a week, helping them with housing issues and community integration. Meanwhile, regional specialists are utilized according to the specific needs of the consumer. This way, Housing First can overcome the potential scarcity of resources in non–urban areas. To solve the accessibility issues, Stefancic et. al suggest using technology, primarily computers equipped with video chat, which would be provided to consumers upon entering the Housing First model. To test these conclusions, the researchers applied this hybrid model to 170 individuals in rural Vermont. After almost three years, the overall housing retention rate was 85%, which Stefancic et. al noted was similar to previous Housing First studies.

Zerger et al. (2014) test whether interim housing, or temporary housing used while homeless individuals are working to obtain a permanent place of residence, is needed under the Housing First model. To do so, they interviewed twenty randomly–selected participants from the At Home project, designed to test the effectiveness of Housing First in five Canadian cities. Ten of these participants had experienced 4–12 month delays in obtaining permanent housing, while the remaining ten had relocated at least once during the project’s duration. Qualitatively, the
researchers discovered that during the interim period before finding permanent homes, the homeless interviewees experienced a lifestyle very similar to that of the streets/shelters. They noted a strong sense of disappointment during this period because they falsely assumed that under the Housing First model, they would obtain permanent housing immediately. Similar issues arose with the model’s service aspects. Given interviewees’ strong focus on housing provision, researchers observed that their interactions with case workers during the interim period generally neglected other service goals, including treatment for substance abuse and mental health issues. Zerger et. al argue that if interim housing is provided to Housing First clients, these individuals would gain an important sense of stability, and could work with their services providers to address underlying personal issues that would make it difficult to maintain permanent housing.

Finally, Aubry et al. (2015) study the perspective of private landlords who rent the scattered–site permanent units to Housing First clients. Because the model heavily emphasizes placing its clients in housing that the average citizen would live in, homeless clients’ relationships with their landlords is paramount to the success of the model. To this end, the researchers interviewed 23 landlords who had at least six months of experience with the model in Greater Moncton and Southeast New Brunswick, Canada. These interviewees noted that one of the biggest issues they face in leasing their units to Housing First clients is difficulty communicating with case workers when tenant issues arise, especially after hours. This difficulty is compounded by the fact that many landlords assume Housing First has a screening process to assure homeless individuals are housing ready before admitting them into the program, thus leaving them even less prepared to properly address potential tenant issues.
While not a critique of the specific Pathways Housing First model, there have been a few studies that suggest a key service the model omits is assistance with job acquisition. These studies highlight the importance of immediate housing and reduced reliance on the shelter system at the heart of the continuum of care model, but note that once a homeless individual obtains housing, it is difficult to remain housed without a steady source of income. Scholars note that while government benefits and subsidies could provide this income to some, several key homeless communities are prevented from obtaining these benefits (e.g. disabled individuals, single mothers with children, retired homeless) (Wagner and Atticks 2018).

Through their study of the recently housed in Los Angeles and Portland, Maine, Wagner and Atticks (2018) note three factors that helped these individuals leave homelessness and maintain their housing. Two of these factors, creating more low-income housing and developing a stable support system (either through continued relations with services providers or with family and friends), support the underlying tenets of Housing First. The third factor, however, is what separates Wagner and Atticks. They argue that a principal reason the recently housed individuals they interviewed became homeless was a lack of steady income. While government benefits do help, the rising number of homeless nationwide, coupled with the shrinking allocation of national spending towards social programs, usually means these benefits are not sufficient enough to prevent low-income individuals from becoming homeless. Wagner and Atticks propose expanding the low-income job market as a solution. Thus, jobs plus rapid housing (as in the Housing First model) is the key to overcome homelessness and prevent the recently housed from recidivism.
In his study, Rosenheck (2010) examines different service models that have been implemented to better serve the homeless with mental illnesses. He notes several broad categories of services which have proven effective and are similar to those provided under the Pathways Housing First model: system integration, or better coordination between service providers; supported housing, or providing homes alongside community–based social services; and case management, or working collaboratively with the consumer to provide the services that they see as most useful to achieve their own personal goals. However, Rosenheck notes two other service categories that address consumers’ source of income: benefits outreach and supported employment. Unlike Wagner and Atticks, Rosenheck argues that a lack of access to public–support payments is one of the primary reasons individuals remain homeless, particularly those who suffer from mental illnesses. On the other hand, he also views supported employment as necessary to maintain one’s recently housed status. He notes that the individual placement and support (IPS) model is the most commonly supported employment model, which advocates rapid job placement, competitive jobs, consumer choice of jobs, and vocational training as one of the services provided (Rosenheck 2010).

In a study beginning in 2000, Rosenheck and Mares (2007) expanded the IPS model to nine Veterans Affairs programs serving homeless veterans. Under this study, thirty individuals were employed without the aid of an IPS employment specialist, while thirty individuals were given jobs after the IPS model had been fully implemented. After two years, the researchers discovered on average, the latter group were employed 13.7% more days a month, although hourly and monthly wages between the two groups were statistically similar. Similar conclusions were reached under a study conducted by Cook et al. (2005), who noted that after twenty–four months, 55% of IPS participants were employed as compared to 34% of non–IPS participants.
A growing school of thought argues that individuals become homeless, and thus cannot become rehoused easily, because of fundamental structural flaws in the housing market. These scholars argue that as a result of these flaws, there is a growing trend towards building high-end housing. Consequently, even innovative strategies such as the Pathways Housing First model are doomed to fail, since without available affordable housing, homeless individuals will have to turn to the traditional continuum of care model to avoid life on the streets.

Raphael (2010) argues that as a result of the increasing regulation of the housing market, as well as further compounding of this regulation through a decrease in available developable land and an increase in uneven economic growth, contractors and developers are less willing than ever before to build low-income housing. This preference shift, coupled with the growing homelessness crisis, means it is now nearly impossible for homeless individuals to find housing. He notes that regulations such as minimum lot size requirements, quality standards, and density restrictions has affected the low-income housing market in two adverse ways. First, several affordable housing units had to be demolished or shut down because they did not fulfill the new regulations. Second, as a result of these new restrictions, builders may not be able to use the cheapest materials to construct new houses, and cannot build as many units on one parcel of land as before. Moreover, developers also are adversely affected financially, as it may potentially cost more to get a plan approved (e.g. legal fees if a zoning board disapproves a plan). As a result, the price of homes across all incomes has increased dramatically. Raphael also argues that with increased regulation, contractors are less willing to build high-income properties, which generally have a positive effect on property values in nearby areas (even in low-income
neighborhoods), and which create property that can be developed into affordable housing once individuals move to the new high–income property.

In a more abstract study, Madden and Marcuse (2016) argue that the lack of affordable housing, and by extension, the increasing inability to leave homelessness, is due to the growing view of housing solely as a commodity in the global economy, rather than a fundamental social institution. They argue that this commodification of housing has resulted in individuals developing homes purely for personal reasons (most notably for investment purposes), rather than to create stable places of residence. This can be seen in housing trends such as gentrification, which has increasingly displaced low–income residents and reduced the number of homes available to them. Madden and Marcuse, supporting the claims made by Raphael, note that cities with deregulated housing markets have seen a rise in high–end real estate development. But rather than opening up this real estate to the superrich, thus creating a trickle–down effect to free up land for low–income housing development, Madden and Marcuse argue these housing units are either kept by the developers or sold to international contractors. If housing was instead decoupled from the global economy and viewed as a fundamental social institution, homes could return to what they were initially designed to be: stable places of residence where one could feel a sense of autonomy and security. While Madden and Marcuse only suggest expanding and defending the public housing stock as a way to create these stable residences, U.S. cities have adopted a variety of strategies to create more low–income housing. These include inclusionary zoning, or a requirement to include a share of affordable units in proposed buildings (Pendall 2009), and manufactured housing, or prefabricated homes that are cheaper to construct than traditional units, but subject to more regulations due to their temporary nature and resulting “unsuitability” for city neighborhoods (Dawkins and Koebel 2010).
Not in my Backyard (NIMBY) Policy

Although scholars have noted a variety of methods local governments have used to reduce or outright eliminate their homelessness, there has been a growing trend among residents in these cities known as Not in my Backyard, or NIMBYism. In other words, housed citizens note the widespread social benefits of being housed, but they do not want the low-income housing homeless individuals would be moving into to be located anywhere near where they frequent regularly. This section thus takes up the following question: what policies or strategies have cities in the United States implemented to overcome community resistance to the placement of unwanted structures, such as homeless shelters or affordable housing, in their neighborhoods?

Strong–Arm Tactics

For many decades, the traditional approach cities used to overcome NIMBYism was known as Decide, Announce, and Defend, or DAD. Under this strategy, developers decided the best location for their project, announced their intention to build this project to the relevant local government bodies and officials, and then defended this decision from community opposition (Rydin 2011). It should be noted that in defending these decisions, developers did so without assistance from local governments. Given the lack of say residents had under this system, it is unsurprising that they quickly developed more effective NIMBY tactics, leading developers to turn to an alternative DAD strategy. Under this new approach, regulatory protection from the state was obtained. In other words, local governments alongside developers determined where unwanted structures, such as waste facilities, should be placed, and then used strong–arm tactics to enforce this decision on their communities (Richman and Boerner 2006). For instance, local officials frequently denied access to the traditional political or legal processes communities could
use to delay or altogether stop the siting or construction of the unwanted structure. In response to the marches and protest movements that accompanied the frequent use of these strong–arm tactics, cities have increasingly seen the value of recognizing the concerns of those who advocate NIMBYism, and are thus beginning to compromise with these individuals.

*Compensate Opposition Politically/Socially*

A major concern local residents had with the Decide, Announce, Defend strategy and subsequent government strong–arm tactic was that they felt their opinions were overlooked and their input was ignored. They believed they had justifiable concerns that local governments and developers may have overlooked, and that being forced to accept an unwanted structure without having any say in the matter went against the democratic principles they stood for. Recognizing that these grievances would only lead to more NIMBYism in the future, cities have increasingly turned to incorporating their citizens in the development and siting processes, allowing them insight into the planning procedures and promoting compromises when possible.

After observing two multiyear regional projects confronting local opposition in the San Francisco Bay Area, Iglesias (2002) developed a strategy to overcome NIMBYism known as Managing Local Opposition (MLO). He argues that community resistance against unwanted structures is founded on deeply held beliefs, and thus, community resistance can only be managed, not outright eliminated. Additionally, the reasons local communities give for opposing certain structures being placed in their cities tends to be similar across cases. As a result, developers looking to avoid NIMBYism can easily create a plan that takes these reasons into account, thus managing the expected opposition. Iglesias views five key audiences developers should include in these plans: local government, supporters, concerned neighbors, the media, and
the courts. Regarding supporters and concerned neighbors, he argues that in order to avoid opposition, developers should research each sides’ opinions regarding the proposed project, creating a plan that maximizes the benefits the former sees while minimizing or eliminating the consequences the latter sees. Additionally, Iglesias notes that education can be an effective tool to reduce any apprehensions opposed individuals may have, while simultaneously recognizing the importance of their approval (as opposed to the strong–arm tactics used in the past).

In their study of deconcentrating assisted housing, including supportive housing and Section 8 voucher programs, in Denver and Baltimore County, Galster et al. (2003) conclude that a neighborhood–friendly strategy is the best tactic to overcome NIMBYism. Under this strategy, the expansive opportunities living with individuals who have not faced the same struggles with homelessness can bring to the recently housed, including community role models and a heightened sense of stability, is promoted, while still valuing the opinions of those in the community, thus being friendly to the neighborhood. Galster et al. note five factors policymakers and housing developers should consider in order to overcome NIMBYism: siting and concentration, development type and scale, monitoring of tenants and operators, management of buildings, and collaboration with neighborhoods and public education (Galster et al. 2003). They note that the first four factors address how to practically change housing projects to overcome NIMBYism, but the last factor addresses the perceptions of the communities these projects are being built in. Collaborating with neighborhoods establishes the trust needed for local citizens to believe that developers are going to take their thoughts and concerns into account, thus ending the need for NIMBYism. Public education can be used to eliminate many of the misconceptions these citizens tend to have about adverse introductions to their neighborhoods, and can even show the large amount of benefits these introductions can bring. Although Galster et al. have not
conducted an empirical study on the effectiveness of the neighborhood–friendly strategy, the strategy was developed through quantitative and qualitative observations of efforts in Denver and Baltimore County to deconcentrate assisted housing in the 1980s and 1990s, as well as interviews with focus groups on the effects of these efforts on housed community members.

Based on her study of affordable rental housing in New York state through the federal low–income housing tax credit (LIHTC) program, Scally (2013) concluded that city governments facing community NIMBYism should actively work to overcome controversial development strategies used in the past; challenges associated with the city’s specific environment and resources; and most importantly, unfounded perceptions. In observing the LIHTC program in six New York cities, she noted that government officials were more successful in gaining support for affordable housing development if they were fully transparent about its financing, its future effects on city services, and potential individuals that would be housed. Scally notes this transparency is particularly important because much of the NIMBYism associated with the placement of low–income housing and homeless shelters are due to misperceptions about the impact of these unwanted structures in neighborhoods. Many associate the homeless with violence and crime, and as a result, fear a decrease in property value if affordable housing or a shelter is built close by. However, Scally argues that with transparency, many of these fears will disappear.

Compenenate Opposition Financially

Another method cities have begun to use to overcome NIMBYism is to financially compensate those who are adversely affected by the siting of unwanted structures. Many of these individuals advocate NIMBY primarily because they are afraid of the negative effects these
structures would have on their home value, an important monetary asset for most homeowners. By paying these individuals on a monthly or yearly basis for as long as the structure remains, local governments can in part counteract this potential economic loss. An additional form of financial compensation cities can utilize is a tradeoff. In other words, in exchange for a community’s approval of an unwanted structure, local governments provide public benefits or resources, such as a public park or an increased police presence around this unwanted structure.

In her examination of how state and local governments have negotiated wind farm projects, Martin (2010) concludes that wind farm companies should pay anyone adversely affected by the projects, but should do so based on how adverse this effect is (i.e. more adverse, more compensation). She rests this argument on two factors. First, those who take legal action against developers and local governments generally do so because of their fears of decreased home values and a poor neighborhood aesthetic once the project is complete. Martin argues that the ensuing legal battles are a waste of government resources, and are counterproductive. Second, it is morally unfair to ask a specific community to bear the costs of something that will give society at large a great benefit (e.g. wind farms, low–income housing) when this structure could usually have been placed in several other locales, thus making the community in question a somewhat arbitrary choice. To solve both of these issues, Martin concludes that local governments or private developers should compensate not only those who live in the community where the unwanted structure will be placed, but also those who are adversely affected by the structure in any way (e.g. aesthetically, pollution, etc.).

Wassmer and Wahid (2018) suggest cities implement a cap and trade system, much like the one currently being utilized to address greenhouse gas emissions. Under this system, officials would set a target rate (e.g. cities must increase their low–income housing by 30% in five years).
Because the level of NIMBYism varies across neighborhoods in a city, some communities are more receptive to building affordable housing than others. Thus, through a cap and trade system, those areas with a high level of community resistance could ask those with a low level to build more low-income units on their behalf (i.e. Neighborhood 1 increases their affordable housing stock by 35%, while Neighborhood 2 only increases theirs by 25%). Thus, the city’s ultimate percentage goal is reached, and community concerns can be addressed. Wassmer and Wahid note that neighborhoods who build less low-income housing than the target rate should financially compensate those that build more. While this funding would most likely be used to construct the extra units, the researchers argue that it could also be used to pay for new, favorable structures in those communities with an abundance of financial resources.

*Transaction Cost Model*

Richman and Boerner (2006), taking a radical approach, argue that NIMBYism should be viewed under the framework of the theory of the firm, which allows the Transaction Cost Economic (TCE) model to be applied. This model views resistance as a contracting struggle between local governments and their constituents, with various government regulations as solutions. They conclude that there is no one set method to overcome NIMBYism, but rather a series of methods that should or should not be applied given the specific grievances NIMBY advocates have, and the tactics they implement. Specifically, they note that under the TCE framework, contracting problems (or disagreements between the developers/local governments and citizens) with a specific siting location are identified, the costs of various regulatory solutions are weighed, and the least costly and most effective solution is then implemented. Richman and Boerner note that this solution may involve citizen participation or compensation,
but could also involve the strong–arm tactics described in the beginning of this section. Thus, the TCE framework can be viewed as an intermediary between strong–arm and compensation.

**Creating and Utilizing New Structures**

A couple of scholars have noted that NIMBY tactics have continued to succeed because no structure or institution exists which facilitates active dialogue and negotiation between developers/local governments and NIMBY advocates. Additionally, these scholars note structures could be implemented that would shield these advocates from some of the adverse effects of unwanted structure siting, thus reducing the need for financial compensation.

In a 2015 study, Schleicher and Hills, Jr. argue that cities should focus on creating binding and comprehensive zoning plans to build low–income housing, which would effectively overcome both pre–existing regulatory barriers, as well as city officials hesitant to counter NIMBYism in their neighborhoods. They conclude this for two main reasons. First, the comprehensive nature of these plans will allow officials to create city–wide plans, rather than relying solely on individual districts creating their own, separate housing strategies (which oftentimes opposes new housing developments for fear of increased community resistance). Because the zoning plans would generate specific, binding policies, city officials would not be able to renege on their promise to build more affordable housing if NIMBYism arose in the future. Second, Schleicher and Hills, Jr. note that having one comprehensive strategy, rather than several smaller district strategies, would create a more transparent planning process. Citizens could thereby more easily see what nearby communities are doing to help address their homeless, thereby reducing the NIMBY sentiment that their particular neighborhood is working more than others to end homelessness.
Taking the position that NIMBYism should be seen as a rational, risk–adverse strategy, Fischel (2001) concludes that the creation of an insurance market or an increase in the renters’ market would help reduce residential fear of introducing unwanted structures into their neighborhoods. He notes that typically, NIMBYism is seen as an irrational stance that emphasizes unreasonable biases/prejudices or that opposes projects with minimal negative impact. What this view ignores is the fact that for many individuals, their house is their primary asset, which has increased salience upon retirement. Additionally, houses are a unique asset because they cannot be diversified to numerous locations, and thus are especially prone to devaluation. This is particularly prominent if the unwanted structure in question is low–income housing or a homeless shelter, as many associate the homeless with crime and substance abuse, and thus value a far proximity from residences housing these individuals. As a result, citizens turn to NIMBYism. Fischel argues that two solutions can be utilized to protect against home devaluation: an insurance market or an increased renters’ market. An insurance market would reduce the adverse effects of siting unwanted structures, and could even compensate individuals if their houses get devaluated. The benefits of an increased renters’ market rest on the fact that renters generally do not care about the value of homes, since they are not the owners and thus do not consider their homes to be a measurable asset. As a result, these individuals are more likely to accept potentially unwanted structures in their communities.

Conclusion

Today, homelessness is an increasingly pressing humanitarian issue, and is in dire need of government action. The increase in housing prices and high–income housing development, coupled with the decrease in government funding for numerous benefit and subsidy programs
has resulted in a higher inability to find or maintain low–income housing than ever before. While cities across the U.S. have begun testing a variety of housing policies, the most notable of which is Pathways Housing First, they have also been tasked with overcoming strong community opposition. This NIMBYism has taken on many forms, which has prompted several solutions suggested by scholars, including compensating those who would be adversely affected by the siting in question, either politically/socially or financially. Thus, to fully end the homelessness crisis plaguing American cities, governments need to develop a solution that is both beneficial to the local homeless communities and consented to by the nearby housed residents.
Research Design

What policies or strategies have been most effective in either reducing or outright eliminating homelessness in U.S. cities? And what policies or strategies have been most effective in overcoming community resistance to the placement of unwanted structures, such as homeless shelters or affordable housing, in their neighborhoods?

I hypothesize that the most effective policy to overcome homelessness is Housing First, with a particular emphasis on five prerequisites: having a strong political will and an abundance of monetary or land resources, street outreach, quality temporary shelters/bridge housing, job assistance and career building programs, and centralization/coordination between service providers. Under this strategy, homeless individuals will be able to benefit from Housing First’s main tenets, including consumer choice and harm reduction. Additionally, having a strong political will and sufficient resources will allow cities to build the low–income units needed to provide permanent housing, while quality temporary shelters/bridge housing give homeless individuals a place to stay while these permanent units are being built. With effective street outreach, case workers will be able to explain the unique benefits of the Housing First model, which is especially important given the negative sentiments surrounding the continuum of care. Having effective job assistance programs will offer homeless individuals the skills needed to find employment, which will then give them economic stability and financial autonomy. Finally, centralizing services will better facilitate Housing First’s wraparound service provision.

I also hypothesize that having an open and accessible development process is most effective in overcoming community resistance, or NIMBYism. Under this method, residents are able to voice their thoughts and concerns in every step of the siting process, from where the
homeless shelter/low–income housing will be placed to how many and what type of homeless clients these structures will serve. This citizen input is heard and considered by city officials through town halls, public and private meetings, and online forums. In other words, citizens and policymakers work together to craft a strategy that works for both the homeless and the housed communities.

More formally, these two hypotheses can be stated as follows:

Level of Fidelity to Housing First Model with Emphasis on Five Prerequisites $\rightarrow$ Level of Reduction in Homelessness

Level of Openness and Accessibility to the Planning Process $\rightarrow$ Level of NIMBYism

To fully understand my hypotheses, these four concepts need to be further defined. By level of fidelity to the Housing First model, I mean how closely a city’s housing or homelessness plan adheres to the model’s five main components: providing a permanent housing unit upon entering the program, no strings attached; consumer choice; fidelity to the Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) model; permanent scatter–site housing; and harm reduction. Consumer choice emphasizes clients selecting the housing unit and neighborhood they wish to live in, as well as the services and treatment they plan to utilize; this component, nevertheless, may be limited by what housing is currently available, proximity to relevant treatment centers, and how busy case workers are. Fidelity to the ACT model can be measured by six main provisions: “(1) low client to staff ratios; (2) providing services in the community rather than in the office; (3) shared caseloads among team members; (4) 24–hour staff availability; (5) direct provision of all services by the team (rather than referring consumers to other agencies); and (6) time–unlimited services” (Center for Evidence-Based Practices et al., n.d.). It should be noted that because these
provisions are so resource-intensive, many cities find it difficult to fully implement the ACT model. Cities utilize permanent scatter-site housing if no more than 15% of the units in any one building are rented to Housing First clients, and if these units are rented from private landlords. In other words, these housing units should not be designed around the Housing First model or designated specifically for homeless individuals. Finally, I will measure harm reduction similar to consumer choice: that is, clients select the services and treatment they plan to utilize (which can be no services), and housing/participation in the Housing First program is not mandated on utilization of these services and treatment (Padgett et. al 2016) (“Pathways Housing First” n.d.). Like consumer choice, this component may be limited by proximity to treatment centers and by the caseworker’s general availability.

It is also important to define the five additional prerequisites Housing First should focus on. Briefly, cities with a strong political will have officials who are committed to ending their community’s homelessness, and who will actively seek the housing and anti-NIMBYism policies needed to do so. Similarly, cities with an abundance of resources have enough money and land (either within city limits or in nearby municipalities) to build homeless shelters and/or low-income housing. Street outreach entails case workers specifically assigned to interact with non-sheltered homeless individuals. These case workers should first focus on forming friendships with these individuals, after which they can begin to encourage entrance into a Housing First program. Job assistance and career building services can be provided either by homeless shelters or by outside agencies, and encompass both finding appropriate places of employment for homeless clients and developing the skills needed to apply to and maintain these jobs. Finally, cities with strong centralization between service providers have shared caseloads and frequent communication among team members, in accordance with the ACT model.
The third concept that needs to be defined to fully comprehend my first hypothesis on Housing First is level of reduction in homelessness. Quantitatively, it is the number of homeless individuals who are successfully placed in permanent housing (given immediately under Housing First) and how many of these individuals retain this housing over time. This reduction level can be measured for the overall homeless population or for individual subgroups (e.g. chronic homeless, those with substance abuse and/or mental health issues, women and families, etc.).

With regards to my second hypothesis on NIMBYism, it is important to define both what an open and accessible planning process entails and how I will measure the total level of NIMBYism. By an open and accessible planning process, I mean a development model in which transparency is held paramount, thereby resulting in frequent communication between government officials, developers, and affected community members. Additionally, citizens can voice any concerns they have with the proposed plan, which developers should respond to by working with these citizens to either modify the existing plan or assuage any unfounded fears. By NIMBYism, I mean the specific oppositional strategies and community organizing tactics used by citizens to resist the placement of low-income housing units or homeless shelters in their neighborhoods. Thus, NIMBYism takes on two forms: the different strategies citizens use against their pro-siting elected officials and city planners, and the various tactics these citizens use to create a unified, preferred alternative to the proposed development plan.

To test my first hypothesis on the effectiveness of Housing First with emphasis on the five prerequisites, I will examine the specific housing policies Pasadena and Pomona, two suburbs of Los Angeles, have adopted. At first glance, this seems like a faulty comparison since both cities have implemented a Housing First model, much like most other cities within Los
Angeles County. However, despite practicing a similar housing policy, Pomona has been more successful in reducing its homeless population in recent years, thus highlighting the importance of the five prerequisites needed to successfully implement Housing First. Again, these include having a strong political will and an abundance of resources, street outreach, quality temporary shelters/bridge housing, job assistance and career building programs, and centralization/coordination between service providers. I hypothesize that Pomona has been more successful in reducing its homeless population because they have been better able to implement these prerequisites. Thus, it is important to examine recent trends in both Pasadena and Pomona’s homeless populations.

In 2011, Pasadena formally adopted Housing First, and has since seen a large decline in its homeless population, from 1,216 in 2011 to 677 in 2018. This 44% decrease was in part aided by the 161 homeless individuals who were successfully placed in either rapid rehousing or supportive housing in 2017. However, since 2016, Pasadena has experienced a 28% increase in homelessness (530 in 2016 to 677 in 2018). (“2018 Homeless Count & Subpopulation Survey”, n.d.). Pomona, on the other hand, has seen wide fluctuations in its homelessness since 2013, but in the past few years has experienced a decrease of this population. For instance, from 2011–2015, there was a 50% homeless increase, from 608 to 912 individuals. Since then, however, this count has begun to decrease, with 773 homeless individuals in 2018 (a decrease of 15% since 2015) (Pomona’s Promise Partners n.d.) (Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority n.d.d).

I believe these two cases will allow me to test my first hypothesis because Pasadena and Pomona have implemented, in differing amounts, the five prerequisites needed to successfully reduce homelessness through the Housing First model. Thus, through comparing Pasadena’s homeless population with Pomona’s, I will be able to test how important these prerequisites are
in the success of Housing First. Moreover, given the relative similarities in homeless population and overall citizenry demographics (e.g. Pasadena’s total population was 142,647 in 2017, while Pomona’s was 152,393; median income in Pasadena is $62,825, while in Pomona it is $54,242) (“Pasadena” n.d.) (“Pomona” n.d.), in addition to the relatively close geographic proximity between the two cities, other competing factors, such as accessibility to city/county resources, and the amount/type of homeless client served, are controlled for.

To test my second hypothesis on a planning process’s openness and accessibility, I plan on studying Koreatown and Venice, two neighborhoods within the City of Los Angeles. As previously discussed, in April 2018, Mayor Eric Garcetti announced his A Bridge Home Initiative, which aims to provide temporary emergency shelters in Los Angeles’s fifteen city council districts while permanent housing is being built (Garcetti 2018). In Koreatown, City Council President Herb Wesson initially proposed to build District 10’s temporary shelter on a city–owned parking lot in the heart of the city. Claiming President Wesson did not consult the community before suggesting this site, hundreds of Koreatown residents pushed back through a series of weekend protests/marches and online petitions. This NIMBYism led to several months of negotiations, town halls, and private meetings between the city council and interested stakeholders, in which President Wesson earnestly listened to community concerns and tried to be as transparent as possible with his progress in finding a more acceptable site. In August 2018, this new site was found, moving the proposed shelter location to a park at the very edge of Koreatown (The Times Editorial Board 2018).

In Venice, a similarly contentious debate arose regarding Councilman Mike Bonin’s proposal to use an unused MTA yard to build District 11’s temporary homeless shelter. Although Venice citizens expressed their NIMBYism in a slightly different way than Koreatown citizens
(i.e. no public protests, but online petitions and requests to meet with Councilman Bonin), their dissatisfaction with the proposed site was equally as large. During an October 2018 town hall, Councilman Bonin proposed the MTA yard, having not sought any community input or approval beforehand, much like President Wesson did in Koreatown initially (Dakota Smith 2018). However, unlike his co–councilman, Councilman Bonin was not forthcoming with important details about the shelter, merely providing the site address and the amount of homeless individuals that would be housed there (Ryavec 2019). Two months later, in December 2018, the site was approved. Unsurprisingly, this quick and secretive approval process gained the ire of many community members, including those connected with the Venice Stakeholders Association, who recently filed a lawsuit against the city of Los Angeles seeking the MTA yard go through the traditional California Environmental Quality Act and Costal Commission examinations, which Councilman Bonin had gained exemptions from to hasten the approval procedure.

I believe studying Koreatown and Venice will allow me to test my second hypothesis because both neighborhoods similarly protested temporary shelters, and pursued comparable anti–NIMBYism tactics, including town halls and private meetings. Although both had contentious, months–long debates, Koreatown’s efforts to overcome NIMBYism were successful, unlike comparable efforts to overcome NIMBYism in Venice. This difference will allow me to test the nuances in an open and accessible planning process, and what specific actions cities can take within this broad categorization. Additionally, given their close proximity in adjoining city districts, and relatively similar homeless populations (Koreatown has 313 and Venice has 849) (“Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count By City/Community: 2018,” n.d.c)
control for competing explanations.

To measure my variables, I intend on using a variety of qualitative and quantitative data. First, for my housing policy hypothesis, I will measure the independent variable, level of fidelity to Housing First, by comparing Pasadena and Pomona’s homelessness plans to the five provisions of the Housing First model. These five provisions are immediate permanent housing, consumer choice, service provision through the ACT model, scatter–site housing, and harm reduction (D. Padgett, Henwood, and Tsemberis 2016). I intend on rating the two cities’ plans on how prevalent each of these provisions are on a scale of 1–5, with five being the highest. Because both Pasadena and Pomona state an allegiance to Housing First, I will also measure the prerequisites needed for a successful implementation of the model, that is, having a strong political will and an abundance of resources, street outreach, quality temporary shelters/bridge housing, job assistance and career building programs, and centralization/coordination between service providers, through a similar 1–5 scale. This measure is reliable because both Pasadena and Pomona’s homelessness plans lay out the specific strategies each city is pursing. It is valid because the five metrics I am seeking in each city’s plan are the stated components of the Housing First model and because the five prerequisites were developed through observations of researchers’ difficulties in implementing the standard Housing First model. To measure my dependent variable, or level of reduction in homelessness, I plan on using three metrics. First, to determine the change in Pasadena and Pomona’s homeless populations over time, I will use both cities’ yearly homelessness count. Second, I will utilize both cities’ stated homelessness retention rates to measure how many homeless individuals remain permanently housed over time. Third, I will measure a city’s quality of service provision by examining its adherence to the ACT model’s
aforementioned six policies, measuring this through a 1–5 scale. This measure is reliable because
the Pasadena and Los Angeles Homeless Service Authority yearly counts and homelessness
reports are official, unchanging statistics, and my observations of a city’s service provisions are
of an ongoing treatment that should not drastically change client–to–client. Additionally, this
measure is valid because a homeless plan is effective if it both keeps individuals off the streets,
and if it provides services based on the specific needs and goals of these individuals.

To measure the independent variable of my second hypothesis, level of openness and
accessibility to a planning process, I intend to look both at how many individuals attended a
planning meeting/town hall, and how frequently these meetings were held. I will use newspaper
accounts of these town halls, as well as any public minutes published by either Koreatown or
Venice. This measure is reliable because both the newspaper articles and public minutes try to
give impartial accounts of the town halls, and is valid because the more individuals attend a
planning meeting and the more frequently these meetings are held, the more the final
development plan will reflect the desires of the community at large. To measure the dependent
variable, or level of NIMBYism, I will use five different metrics. First, I will look at how
frequently Koreatown or Venice held protests during the negotiation process. Second, I plan to
examine these two cities’ level of engagement with elected officials through public forums,
online message boards, and private meetings. Third, I will analyze the cities’ level of public
appeals through media usage, both print and television news stations. Fourth and fifth, I plan on
reviewing how many individuals attended town halls and their level of anger during these
meetings through comments made either during or immediately after the meetings. I believe
these measures are adequately reliable because I will be using newspaper articles, television
interviews, and public minutes, all of which aim to give impartial accounts, although
readers/viewers may interpret these sources in slightly different ways. Moreover, these measures are valid because all five are different ways individuals express NIMBYism.

I plan on using four primary research methods to test my hypotheses. First, I will look at articles in both the *Los Angeles Times* and local city newspapers and magazines that focus on the specific housing policies being implemented in both Pasadena and Pomona, and on Venice’s and Koreatown’s NIMBY tendencies and the city’s/county’s strategy response. Second, I will consider government publications (e.g. city/county homelessness plans, Measure H and Proposition HHH progress reports) to determine Pasadena and Pomona’s official homelessness policies and how much success they have had to date. Third, I plan on observing different homeless shelters in both cities, specifically examining how they are run, and what homeless communities they serve. Fourth, I will interview both city planners and housing providers about their homelessness policies and strategies to overcome NIMBYism, as well as concerned citizens using NIMBY tactics about what their local government could be doing to reduce these anti–homeless sentiments.
The Pasadena Housing First Experience

Pasadena, California is an idyllic city in the San Gabriel Valley known worldwide as the home of the Rose Bowl and Rose Parade on New Year’s Day. Home to about 143,000 individuals according to the latest census data (“U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Pasadena City, California” n.d.), the city is the perfect blend of Southern Californian history and cutting-edge cultural and scientific landmarks, including the Norton Simon Museum, the Gamble House, and the California Institute of Technology, or Caltech.

Yet Pasadena, like most cities in Los Angeles County, faces a growing homelessness problem. According to its 2018 Homeless Count and Subpopulation Survey, conducted over one night in late January, Pasadena has 677 homeless individuals (“2018 Homeless Count & Subpopulation Survey,” n.d.). This marks an 18% increase over the city’s 2017 homeless population (575 individuals), and a 28% increase over its 2016 population (530 individuals, which marked a ten–year low). Prior to this recent increase, Pasadena’s homelessness had been experiencing a five–year, 56% decline (from 1,216 individuals in 2011 to 530 individuals in 2016). Among the 677 homeless during the 2018 count, 462 were unsheltered, or about 68% of the total homeless population. According to the homeless count report, unsheltered individuals were “those living on the streets, in parks, encampments, vehicles, or other places not meant for human habitation” (“2018 Homeless Count & Subpopulation Survey,” n.d.). Additionally, 164 individuals, or 24% of Pasadena’s total homeless population, were chronically homeless. The Department of Housing and Urban Development defines chronic homelessness as “experienc[ing] homelessness for a year or longer … [or] experienc[ing] at least four episodes of homelessness in the last three years if those episodes cumulatively add up to a year” (“2018
Homeless Count & Subpopulation Survey,” n.d.). Pasadena’s 164 chronic homeless count in 2018 marks a 27% decrease in this subpopulation since 2016.

Although Pasadena’s homeless represent a very small percentage of the city’s total citizenry, it still has one of the higher homeless populations in its county district.¹ To this end, Pasadena officials have implemented or attempted to implement numerous policies to eliminate this pressing humanitarian issue, the most important of which is Housing First. Prior to the model’s adoption in 2011, the city’s main homeless strategy included a series of independent shelters and an intake center. However, this method relied solely on homeless individuals willingly seeking these services, a difficult task for many homeless who had negative experiences with the shelter system in the past (J. Henry 2016). In response to this ineffective system and its growing homeless population, Pasadena decided to adopt Housing First. The city did so on a gradual level, first implementing the model a year or two prior with Housing Works (a local housing and service provider) clients, utilizing Pasadena housing vouchers and a scattered–site approach to do so. City officials were particularly encouraged by Housing First’s reliance on consumer choice and general avoidance of the shelter system, believing these tenets would encourage street homeless to finally seek the help they needed (Morrissey 2019a). As a result, in 2011, Pasadena implemented the model city–wide, the effects of which were immediate.

As previously mentioned, after this model was adopted, Pasadena experienced a dramatic five–year decline in its homeless population. This was largely due to Housing First encouraging a shift in focus towards intense street outreach and on finding permanent housing as soon as possible. William Huang, the director of Pasadena’s Department of Housing and Career

¹ For instance, Alhambra has 52 homeless individuals, Covina has 98, Glendora has 63, Monrovia has 70, and West Covina has 277.
Services, explained that after Housing First was adopted “outreach teams make contact with homeless individuals daily in an attempt to build trust so they are more likely to use the city’s resources. It can take months of contacts before someone comes around to accepting help” (J. Henry 2016). These relationships with outreach and case workers importantly continued after the homeless found a permanent home, thereby keeping Pasadena’s recidivism rates low. Through rental subsidy vouchers and new projects designed to build more permanent supportive units, city officials were quickly able to find appropriate dwellings for their homeless. According to Huang, today, the city’s Housing First policy is a two–step process: “[w]e identify first the most vulnerable among our homeless and then we reach out and build trust with them and get them into permanent housing. Once we get them to permanent housing, that’s when we address the other issues – mental health, substance abuse, physical chronic illnesses, things like that” (Vitalicio and Cross 2016). This approach can be more simply defined as house first, treatment and services second. Although there has been a slight increase since 2016, Pasadena still had 44% less homeless in 2018 than it did in 2011 (“2018 Homeless Count & Subpopulation Survey,” n.d.). Additionally, it is important to note that while Pasadena was finding success using the Housing First model, other cities within Los Angeles County continuing to follow the continuum of care model were experiencing a sustained growth of their homeless populations.

It is clear that Housing First has been successful in reducing Pasadena’s homelessness in recent years; nevertheless, the recent growth in the city’s homeless population despite its reliance on the model demonstrates that strict adherence to Housing First may not be enough to end homelessness. This begs the question: what prerequisites must cities have in order for Housing First to succeed fully? I hypothesize five prerequisites are needed: a strong political will and an abundance of resources to construct low–income housing, effective street outreach, quality
temporary shelters, job training/assistance programs, and a strong coordination between service providers. I will now examine Pasadena’s implementation of these prerequisites in turn.

What makes the Housing First model so unique is that it emphasizes permanent housing not as something to be attained after a long process of self-improvement, but rather as the linchpin needed to create the stability missing in a homeless individual’s life. To this end, an abundance of permanent supportive units is paramount to Housing First. Pasadena was initially successful in creating these units through housing projects such as Centennial Place, which houses single individuals; Heritage Square South, which houses homeless seniors; and Euclid Villa and Marv’s Place, both of which house families. Nevertheless, current efforts to create more affordable units have been met with fierce community resistance, the most recent of which was the city council’s attempt to convert the Ramada Inn motel into permanent supportive housing units (Villalovos 2017). According to Chris Lindahl, “[t]he idea [was] to take properties sometimes known for attracting crime or other nuisances and transform them into needed housing for those who most desperately need it — and at speeds much quicker than developing, permitting and constructing a project from the ground up — which means getting people off the street faster” (Lindahl 2018). To this end, in October 2018, the Pasadena Planning Commission and city council approved a simplified process to convert motels into low-income housing units. Under this process, conversion projects that did not increase the floor area or number of rooms, that provide onsite services, and whose converted units would all be transitional or affordable housing would not have to undergo a public hearing process before being submitted to the city council for approval (Rivera 2018). Two weeks after this streamlined process was approved, a proposal to transform the Ramada Inn was given to Pasadena city officials by National Community Renaissance, a nonprofit affordable housing developer. Although this proposal quickly gained all
the city councilmembers’ approval, a contentious town hall held on October 17, 2018 reversed this decision. Many community members cited concerns with the motel’s close proximity to a school, small businesses, and a residential neighborhood, as well as its current well-maintained nature and potential loss in tax revenue if the conversion plan was pursued. As a result, the next day, the city council decided to abandon the Ramada Inn plan altogether (Pasadena News Now 2018). Stan Rushing and Sam Gonzalez, vice presidents for Hathaway–Sycamores, note that the Ramada Inn case highlights the importance of site placement for low-income housing, stating “I think that everyone would like to build more affordable housing … [but] you just gotta know the right people and make sure that it’s in a situation where the public don’t get too offended by it” (Rushing and Gonzalez 2019).

To try and overcome its lack of affordable housing and community resistance to creating more low-income units, Pasadena has attempted to partner with other cities to utilize their existing housing stock. Nevertheless, Denisse Mirkin, a case worker for Friends in Deed’s The Women’s Room, notes that, at times, it can be difficult to convince Pasadena’s homeless to abandon their community ties, both with nearby homeless and with local outreach and case workers, to move to other cities (Mirkin 2019). Additionally, Pasadena has been working with other cities within the San Gabriel Valley to create a more robust homeless program, both to create a space for Pasadena residents to move to, and to prevent these cities’ homeless from moving to Pasadena, which has long held one of the most comprehensive homeless programs in the area (Morrissey 2019b).

Another important prerequisite to the success of Housing First is effective street outreach. As previously mentioned, before Pasadena adopted the model in 2011, the city utilized a series of shelters and an intake center that relied primarily on homeless individuals actively seeking the care they needed. In many cases, however, these individuals were wary of doing so due to negative past
experiences with shelters. This apprehension of the shelter system, coupled with the uniqueness of the Housing First model, means that street outreach, both to establish connections between case workers and homeless individuals, and to explain the tenets of the model, is a crucial, albeit resource-intensive, prerequisite. As Shawn Morrissey, Director of Advocacy and Community Engagement at Union Station states, the goal of street outreach is to “get them [homeless individuals] to understand that there’s a whole new way of doing things now … we’ll help them walk through the process of getting a voucher, we’ll help them find their own apartment, … we’ll pay for deposits, we’ll get them all set up” (Morrissey 2019b). He notes that at the heart of this outreach are authentic, supportive relationships, which in many cases takes months of consistent meetings to establish.

Once case workers gain the trust of homeless individuals (which usually is obtained by not actively suggesting various housing and service options), they begin to prepare these individuals for the realities of living under a Housing First system. For instance, Friends in Deed tries to emphasize the importance of flexibility under the model. While consumers do have first choice under Housing First, at times, the realities of Pasadena’s available low-income housing stock counters this tenet. Additionally, Mirkin notes the importance of preparing homeless individuals for the actualities of living under a lease, and in an environment where these individuals do not have complete control of their surroundings (like they do when living on the streets). To this end, several Pasadena case workers partner with former clients who are now housed when engaging in street outreach, as these clients can further explain the realities of living under a Housing First model (Mirkin 2019). It is important to note that during this time, homeless individuals can decide they are not ready to leave the streets, even if case workers deem them to be. To overcome this possibility, Morrissey emphasizes developing meaningful, authentic relationships with these individuals.
individuals grounded in trust and understanding. These relationships should not entail outreach workers immediately suggesting entrance into Housing First, but should instead be focused on developing a genuine friendship with the homeless client. Only when the client believes that the outreach worker has their best interests at heart can Housing First begin to be introduced. While this practice can be time consuming (especially for those with mental illness and/or substance abuse issues), utilizing this method, Pasadena has been able to reduce their street homeless by 50% since adopting Housing First in 2011 (Morrissey 2019a).

Because low-income housing has a long development and building process (even without the community resistance Pasadena has recently experienced), under the Housing First model, it is important to give homeless individuals a temporary place to live while these affordable units are being built. As previously mentioned, in April 2018, Mayor Eric Garcetti unveiled his A Bridge Home project, which seeks to place a bridge housing shelter in each of Los Angeles’s fifteen city council districts. These shelters would provide a transitory place of residence, as well as a range of optional services to individuals, including mental health and addiction treatment and job training programs. While Pasadena is not within the jurisdiction of the city of Los Angeles, it has also not followed Mayor Garcetti’s lead by creating similar large-scale bridge housing. While various Pasadena organizations offer emergency shelters, they tend to be small in scope and insufficiently funded, and are thus more oriented towards short-term stays (e.g. individuals who lost their home due to a natural disaster). Similarly, bad weather shelters exist through the city, but are only open during winter months (generally late November to early March), and in the case of Friends in Deed, is weather activated (open at 40 degrees or below, and/or a 40% chance of rain). Because there are certain requirements for this shelter to accept homeless individuals, Mirkin notes that it cannot be used as viable bridge housing (Mirkin 2019). Given Pasadena’s difficulty in constructing
affordable housing units coupled with this lack of temporary shelters, several homeless are forced to stay on the streets, many of whom possess a housing voucher and a strong desire to enter Housing First.

A fourth prerequisite to the success of Housing First are job training/assistance programs, which further provide formerly homeless individuals with a sense of stability and purpose, and provide the monetary resources needed for these individuals to maintain their newfound housing. While Pasadena does provide these job programs, it does so in a decentralized manner; that is, individual shelters utilize different methods to help their homeless clients become job-ready, and to find these individuals appropriate jobs once they are. For instance, according to Rushing and Gonzalez, Hathaway–Sycamores’ three–year housing and services program for transitional age youth implements a dual approach to finding their clients jobs. This approach consists of both a core team comprised of a case manager, clinician, and therapist, as well as outside services, including an employment coordinator and an education specialist. The former work with the homeless youth to build necessary life and employment skills; that is, help these individuals become job–ready. On the other hand, the latter work with the youth to find entry–level jobs or opportunities at local community colleges, both of which provide experiences Hathaway–Sycamores hopes these youth will utilize in the future to advance their careers (Rushing and Gonzalez 2019). The Women’s Center at Friends in Deed, on the other hand, does not provide any formal job assistance programs to their clients, but does work with these individuals on a case–by–case basis when necessary. The services the Center provides mimics those provided by Hathaway–Sycamores to their transitional age youth, in that Friends in Deed works with their clients to build their resumes and seek potential employment opportunities. Nevertheless, because The Women’s Center works with adult females, many of these individuals have past job experience; thus they
require less assistance in becoming job-ready, and seek careers outside of the traditional entry level positions Hathaway–Sycamores provides to its clients (Mirkin 2019). In other words, while Pasadena does work to provide jobs for its homeless population, it does so in a decentralized manner. As a result, individuals working with multiple shelters/case workers to find jobs may receive conflicting career building services (e.g. reworking an old resume with one organization vs. applying to jobs with this resume through another). If centralization existed, multiple service providers could collaborate in creating wraparound job services, much like case workers do through the ACT model to address personal barriers to maintaining permanent housing.

The fifth and final prerequisite to the success of Housing First is centralization and strong coordination between service providers. As stated in my research design, in a Housing First program, services are provided through the ACT model, which emphasizes low client–staff ratios and sharing cases between team members (Center for Evidence-Based Practices et al., n.d.). In other words, all applicable case workers should collaborate to create a sensation of wraparound services in which there is a clear housing/treatment plan that is pursued faithfully by all team members. Pasadena does not have a single service provider, but rather contracts with a series of local shelters, most notably Union Station, Friends in Deed, and Hathaway–Sycamores. As previously noted, the manner in which homeless individuals receive services from each of these organizations varies. For instance, Union Station focuses primarily on providing shelter for single adult men and women, and is the primary operating body for many of Pasadena’s single-site permanent supportive housing buildings, including Centennial Place and Marv’s Place (Morrissey 2019a). On the other hand, Friends in Deed’s main focus is on providing resources, such as a food pantry or a bad weather shelter, to homeless individuals. Although clients of the Women’s Room do get assistance finding permanent supportive housing, these services are not nearly as robust as
those of Union Station. As a result, many homeless women work with both Friends in Deed and Union Station to find housing and services, both organizations of which utilize different methods to do so. Mirkin notes this is a common practice among her clients, stating “they make appointments at several locations … they go to a lot of different places … they kind of have us all working at the same time” (Mirkin 2019). Although there is some coordination between different Pasadena service providers, the city lacks the robust centralization needed for the ACT service model, and by extension, Housing First, to succeed.

Ultimately, Pasadena initially found large success utilizing the Housing First model, but has experienced a recent growth in its homeless population due to the lack of important prerequisites. While the city does engage in intense street outreach and provides various job assistance programs, it does so in a decentralized manner, which can make it difficult for homeless individuals working with multiple organizations to get the coordinated services they need. Additionally, the widespread lack of low–income housing in Pasadena makes it extremely difficult to house the city’s homeless, and without a long–term temporary shelter or bridge housing in place, these individuals are forced to stay on the streets or seek housing in cities away from the important community connections they have made. Finally, the recent reversal of the city council with regards to the Ramada Inn project highlights both the lack of community support for building these necessary affordable housing units and the weak political will, and general willingness to comply with constituents over the needs of the homeless in Pasadena. Until these issues are solved, Pasadena will continue to experience a rise in homelessness, despite its implementation of the Housing First model.
The Pomona Housing First Experience

Pomona, California is a picturesque city in the Pomona Valley, located about 30 miles east of downtown Los Angeles. It is home to about 153,000 individuals according to the latest census data (“U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Pomona City, California” n.d.), and is best known as the home of California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, or Cal Poly Pomona; and the Fairplex, where the Los Angeles County Fair is held annually.

Like Pasadena and many other cities within Los Angeles County, Pomona is experiencing a significant homeless crisis. According to the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA)’s annual point–in–time count conducted in January, as of 2018, Pomona has 773 homeless individuals (Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority n.d.d). This marked a slight 1% increase over its 2017 homeless population (765 individuals), a 12% increase over its 2016 population (689 individuals), and a 15% decrease over its 2015 homeless population (912 individuals). Of the 773 homeless individuals in Pomona in 2018, 585 were unsheltered (of whom 293 lived on the streets), while 188 were sheltered (51 of whom lived in a transitional shelter and 137 of whom lived in an emergency shelter) (Márquez 2018). This marked a dramatic shift from just a year prior, during which time 390 homeless individuals were unsheltered, while 375 were sheltered (Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority n.d.d). In general, Pomona has been experiencing an increase in their unsheltered population and a decrease in their sheltered population for several years.

Despite Pomona’s large homeless population, the city actually has one of the most robust homeless strategies in the area. For instance, since 1994, Pomona has been issuing federal Housing and Urban Development vouchers to lease permanent supportive housing units. In 1997,
the city council created the Pomona Continuum of Care Coalition, which “consists of over 40 community and faith–based organizations, local government agencies, and residents, homeless representatives and other community stakeholders” (Pomona’s Promise Partners n.d.). The coalition’s goal is to centralize services and increase coordination between Pomona’s many service providers in order to reduce gaps in service delivery and prevent service duplication amongst different case workers. Additionally, since 2003, Pomona has been the only city in its immediate area to have a homeless coordinator as a staffed position (Doug Smith 2017). This individual works with the city council, the Pomona Continuum of Care Coalition, LAHSA, and other regional partners to ensure heightened coordination. Pomona’s homeless coordinator also helps to organize the city’s intake, referral, and evaluation systems, using these systems to create policy recommendations for the city council when appropriate (Pomona’s Promise Partners n.d.). As a result of this robust homeless strategy, it was easy for Pomona to transition to a Housing First model.

Although Pomona and Pasadena both have adopted Housing First, as evidenced above, these cities have had wide discrepancies in their homeless population, which raises the question: what prerequisites does the Housing First model need to be effective in reducing/eliminating a city’s homelessness? Again, I hypothesize that five prerequisites are needed: a strong political will and an abundance of resources to construct low–income housing, effective street outreach, quality temporary shelters, job training/assistance programs, and a strong coordination between service providers. I now turn to Pomona’s implementation of each of these prerequisites.

Like Pasadena, one of the major issues Pomona faces regarding reducing its homeless population is a lack of low–income housing. Unlike Pasadena, however, both the local community and city council/mayor are widely supportive of creating these affordable units that
are paramount to Housing First’s success. In response to the city’s 2015 homeless count (which marked the highest Pomona’s homeless population had been since 2003), the city council applied for Los Angeles County funding to develop a new homeless strategic plan. When this funding was allotted, Pomona engaged in a homeless summit, which involved a series of about 15 meetings and over 350 community stakeholders, including housing and service providers, case workers, and interested community members. During these meetings, stakeholders were able to express their thoughts, both good and bad, about Pomona’s homelessness and the direction they believed Pomona’s homeless strategic plan should turn towards. A lived experience summit was also held with over a hundred homeless individuals to determine their needs and how the city could best meet them. As a result of these discussions, the city council developed four core areas the new strategic plan should focus on: reducing Pomona’s unsheltered population, coordinating services to reduce negative impacts on local community members, creating a two–way communication between residents and the city council, and updating local policies and ordinances to better balance the needs of the housed and homeless populations (DeFrank, n.d.a). This new strategic plan was formally adopted in January 2017. A little over a year later, in February 2018, city officials held another series of community meetings and lived summits to identify ways the initial plan could improve, which led to an enhanced strategic plan adopted in July 2018. This new plan stated additional actions Pomona should pursue within the original plan’s four core areas, and identified various Measure H grants as potential funding sources (“City of Pomona Enhanced Strategic Plan to Prevent and Combat Homelessness,” n.d.).

The most notable effect of this robust development process was a lack of community resistance to proposed low–income housing development projects. Benita DeFrank, Pomona’s Neighborhood Services Director, notes this is “because we [the city council] went to the
community, our community came up with the solution, and we just implemented what our community gave us” (DeFrank 2019). This lack of resistance, coupled with a recently elected city council and mayor who recognize Pomona’s dire need for more affordable housing, has resulted in numerous development projects creating more low-income units. According to DeFrank, in the past three years, over 300 new affordable units have been built in Pomona, many of which are permanent supportive units used for Housing First clients. Additionally, four more affordable housing projects are in development, two of which were recently submitted to the city council for approval. It should be noted that unlike Pasadena, Pomona’s rental assistance does not extend beyond its city limits. Because the city cannot rely on nearby communities to house its homeless, these increased efforts to create more low-income housing are even more important.

Nevertheless, Pomona, like Pasadena, is trying to encourage nearby cities to create more affordable housing and permanent supportive units, as well as to develop a more robust strategic plan. These efforts have resulted in an increased partnership between the Tri-City area, composed of Pomona and nearby Claremont and La Verne. In February 2019, LAHSA granted the three cities almost $600,000 to create a new housing navigator program, a safe storage facility, and 819 showers. Under this new program, a housing navigator is available to homeless individuals who need help finding the proper housing (whether a permanent unit or a temporary bridge shelter bed) and services. Because of the coordination between the tri-cities, these navigators will be familiar with what is available in Pomona, Claremont, and La Verne, and can thus steer their clients towards the appropriate housing/services in any one of these three cities. In other words, Pomona’s increased support of ending their homelessness is augmented by a similar sentiment by nearby cities.
A second prerequisite to the success of Housing First is effective street outreach. Like Pasadena, Pomona officials have noted the importance of explaining the model and its unique method of providing housing first, treatment second to homeless individuals who are wary of the traditional shelter system. Toni Navarro, executive director of Tri–City Mental Health Authority, the primary mental health service provider for the tri–cities, notes that this street outreach is only effective with a high level of commitment and effort on the part of the case workers. She states, “it takes about nine months to a year … of you really showing up every week, not just once a month, like, oh, here’s me checking in. … Our staff go and meet people two, three, four times a week if we need to. … So it takes that level of commitment and that level of effort, and it’s not easy” (Navarro 2019). She notes that this intense street outreach is needed because about one–third of the individuals Tri–City Mental Health do outreach work with have a mental health issue, many of whom are particularly wary about how shelters have traditionally provided services.

An additional form of outreach Pomona engages in is giving services to unsheltered individuals. For instance, in September 2016, in response to a lawsuit accusing the Pomona Police Department of seizing homeless individuals’ belongings without a viable storage alternative, the city council agreed to build 388 sixty–gallon lockers, which would be available four hours a day, seven days a week. These lockers, part of the Pomona’s Transitional Storage Center, were designed to store those belongings that homeless individuals may not need on a daily basis (e.g. clothes, extra blankets, books). In coordination with the city’s street outreach efforts, those who sign up for a locker were entered in Pomona’s intake system, and were given a packet that included contact information for various housing and service organizations (Smith 2016a) (Rodriguez 2016). Additionally, Pomona recently opened a year–round emergency
homeless service center (see below), whose services include restrooms, showers, and laundry facilities available to both sheltered and unsheltered individuals. These shelter and locker services provide an alternative to street outreach, as on–site case workers are able to interact with these unsheltered homeless, thereby creating the foundation for the trusting, sincere relationships needed for these individuals to enter a shelter or search for permanent supportive housing.

Because it takes several years for low–income housing projects to be developed and built, quality temporary shelters, which provide an alternative to living on the streets, are another prerequisite to the success of Housing First. According to DeFrank, despite the numerous affordable housing developments that have been occurring recently in Pomona, the city still had 585 unsheltered individuals in early 2018, and as previously noted, has been experiencing an increase in their unsheltered population in recent years. She noted that many of these individuals had housing vouchers, but were unable to use them due to the lack of low–income housing in the area (DeFrank 2019). In response, both community and city council members discussed constructing a full–time emergency shelter, which would be designed to provide temporary lodging and optional services, much like Pomona’s annual winter shelter did at the local armory, and would provide a more humane alternative to living on the streets. To this end, in January 2017, the city council approved a proposal that would build a combination emergency shelter–centralized service center on a 2.61–acre property in the heart of Pomona. Under this proposal, the emergency shelter would be a semi–permanent, tent–like structure, which could accommodate between 175–200 beds, while the service center would be orientated towards providing basic health and behavioral services. Additionally, the shelter would contain restrooms, showers, a laundry facility, dog kennels, and a kitchen which nonprofit and faith–based groups could utilize to continue to serve meals to the homeless (Rodriguez 2017).
After a lengthy building process, which was delayed due to unforeseen difficulties in preparing the land for construction, the new emergency shelter, or Hope for Home, opened in December 2018. Although the shelter has only been open for a few months, it has already been widely successful, housing between 200–230 individuals a night and having found permanent housing units for twelve households (DeFrank 2019). DeFrank attributes this success to the fact that Hope for Home’s primary goal is help Pomona’s homeless work towards finding permanent housing, and that all of the services the shelter provides, although optional, are designed to help these individuals remove personal barriers to being housed. To this end, the shelter partners with three different local organizations: Volunteers of America Los Angeles is Hope for Home’s primary site operator, provides housing services, and helps to engage in street outreach; East Valley Health Partners provides health services; and Tri–City Mental Health provides mental health services (DeFrank, n.d.b). Similarly, Navarro notes shelter residents are also able to utilize Tri–City Mental Health’s offsite services, most notably their Wellness Center, which has a computer lab for individuals to check their email, and their Therapeutic Community Garden. Because Hope for Home was initially conceived as a more humane alternative to living on the streets, it is a low–barrier shelter with minimal house rules. While residents are not allowed to bring weapons, drugs, or alcohol on–site for the safety of other clients/employees, the only cause for removal is being a threat to other residents/staff, such as continuous violent behavior. However, this behavior would be reviewed by case managers and program staff first, with eviction as the last resort (DeFrank 2019). In other words, Hope for Home is truly dedicated to helping Pomona’s homeless find permanent homes, and provides a temporary alternative while these homes are being found/built.
A fourth prerequisite to the Housing First model finding success is a city’s provision of a strong job training/assistance program. DeFrank notes that once Hope for Home finishes its second development phase later this summer, numerous job assistance opportunities will be available to residents. She states, “one of the things that we’re looking at is actually creating onsite job training … avenues through food prep, custodial [work], and landscaping. … So those participants who are onsite can begin to … learn some new skill sets or be able to say ‘Yeah, you know, I’ve been working at the shelter for the last three months’” (DeFrank 2019). In addition to this practical, hands-on experience, the city council has also been exploring the possibility of partnering with local goodwill agencies at Hope for Home to provide career assistance programs to the shelter’s residents, potentially in an on-site office or computer room. Pomona plans to couple this job training programming, which would focus primarily on finding jobs and building resumes/job experience, with mental health programming through Tri–City Mental Health, which would focus on helping individuals become job-ready by working through any potential barriers to being able to hold a part-time or full-time job. These services, much like Hope for Home’s housing services, would be time-unlimited, and would be provided until a client finds a job. Unsheltered homeless, on the other hand, are able to work independently with different service providers to gain this job assistance and training. For instance, Tri–City Mental Health has an employment specialist that teaches clients how to write professional emails, how to write a resume, and how to interview, among other skills. Additionally, the organization holds a variety of employment fairs throughout the year to connect employees with appropriate job candidates. As is the case in Pasadena, Tri–City Mental Health clients have a variety of skills and past job experiences, so the employment opportunities that they seek vary widely, from jobs at
Target and Walmart to administrative support at the San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Department (Navarro 2019).

The fifth and final prerequisite to success under the Housing First model is centralization of services and strong and frequent coordination between service providers. Through my observations of other aspects of Pomona’s homeless strategy, it is clear that this coordination is prevalent throughout the city. Most notably, Hope for Home was designed in part to be a centralized location for Pomona’s, and the tri–cities’, service providers to operate. The success of this vision can be seen by the fact that the shelter has three different site partners, and is actively seeking others today. Additionally, organizations like Tri–City Mental Health serve as the preeminent mental health service provider in the area, thereby coordinating Pomona’s strategic plan with those of Claremont and La Verne to create a more robust regional effort in implementing Housing First to end homelessness. But perhaps the most notable sign that Pomona values the centralization needed for Housing First to succeed is that one of the four core areas their new strategic plan focuses on is “reduc[ing] the negative impacts on community neighborhoods and public spaces through the coordination of services” (DeFrank, n.d.b). To this end, eleven strategies have been identified, seven of which are either being developed or already implemented. Some of these strategies include establishing a centralized service center as part of Hope for Home; coordinating community–based volunteer services; collaborating with Los Angeles County, Tri–City Mental Health, and the Pomona Valley Medical Center to address systemic causes of homelessness; advocating fair–share participation amongst nearby cities; and engaging with the Pomona Continuum of Care Coalition at Hope for Home (DeFrank, n.d.b). Apart from the last strategy regarding the Coalition, Pomona has either begun to develop or has already fully implemented these policies. The effects of this strong coordination is clear: a team
of case workers and service providers all working together to help deliver the crucial treatment and programming homeless individuals seek to reduce their barriers to permanent housing. Perhaps Navarro describes this model the best: “we’re going to wrap around you a whole bunch of people. They’re going to figure out what you need to live the way you want to live. It’s going to take us a minute to get there … but you can trust that we’re gonna keep showing up [and] we’re gonna keep being here for you” (Navarro 2019).

Ultimately, like Pasadena, Pomona has found wide success implementing the Housing First model. But in recent years as Pasadena’s homeless population has begun to increase slightly, Pomona’s population has remained largely stagnant. This stagnancy, rather than a decline, is in large part due to the city’s successful ability to implement Housing First’s five prerequisites, counterbalanced with the large amount of time needed to construct more low-income housing units, which has left many individuals homeless in the meantime.

Furthermore, the difference between Pasadena and Pomona’s success in implementing Housing First can be attributed in large part to Pomona’s recently developed homeless strategic plan. This plan, by nature of its collaborative and inclusive development process, has the support of all interested stakeholders, from the community to the city council, and from the homeless to local housing and service providers. As a result of this support, Pomona has found it relatively easy to build more low–income housing, which they have begun to do on a grand scale. This community approval stands in stark contrast to Pasadena’s struggles in convincing its citizenry of the need for more affordable units, as best seen by the widespread community resistance to the Ramada Inn project. Additionally, the city’s new year–round emergency shelter, Hope for Home, gives Pomona a centralized space for its service partners to operate, allowing increased opportunity for collaboration in street outreach and job training/assistance services. While
Pasadena does provide both street outreach and service provision, it does so in a decentralized manner, thus creating unnecessary delays in treatment and further difficulties for homeless individuals working with multiple organizations. Moreover, Hope for Home gives the city a temporary place to house its homeless while affordable units are being built, and allows its homeless residents to begin to establish genuine relationships with the site partners who will be their primary service providers once housed. While various Pasadena organizations operate their own emergency shelters, these tend to be on too small or temporary of a scale to properly address the city’s lack of bridge housing. Ultimately, while Pomona still has a long way to go before it eliminates its homelessness completely, the city has taken many important steps to establish the prerequisites needed for its Housing First model to succeed.

As previously discussed, one of the primary obstacles to implementing Housing First, and eliminating a city’s homelessness more broadly, is community resistance. This begs the question: what policies or strategies have been most effective in overcoming community resistance to the placement of unwanted structures, such as homeless shelters or affordable housing, in their neighborhoods? It is this question I turn to next.
Koreatown, A Bridge Home, and NIMBYism

Koreatown, California is a neighborhood in central Los Angeles that is the most densely populated area in Los Angeles County, with over 120,000 individuals housed in 2.7 square miles. Although the neighborhood’s name evokes an image of LA’s Korean ethnic enclave, Koreatown’s population is actually only 32.2% Asian, with Latinos making up the majority of the neighborhood citizenry at 53.5% (“Koreatown” n.d.). As a result, the neighborhood is a diverse blend of both cultures.

With regards to city governance, Koreatown is part of Council District 10, which is represented by City Council President Herb Wesson. This district is comprised of fifty–two neighborhoods located in southern Central Los Angeles and northern South Los Angeles (“Council District 10” n.d.). Like most neighborhoods within this district and the city and county of LA more broadly, Koreatown has been experiencing a prominent homelessness problem. In 2018, according to the Los Angeles Housing Service Authority (LAHSA)’s point–in–time January count, Koreatown had 313 homeless individuals, which marked a slight 1.5% decrease from the neighborhood’s 2017 homeless population (368 individuals) and a 1% decrease from its 2016 population (349 individuals). It should be noted that in 2017 and 2018, all of Koreatown’s homeless were unsheltered, with the majority living either on the streets or in tents (Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority n.d.c). What obstacles prevent Koreatown officials from sheltering these individuals? I hypothesize that a strong community resistance movement, fueled by a lack of an open and accessible planning process, is the primary barrier officials face.

As previously mentioned, one of Mayor Eric Garcetti’s primary strategies in ending Los Angeles’s homelessness is A Bridge Home, which sets aside $20 million towards a Crisis and
Bridge Housing Fund. This funding will be distributed evenly amongst the city’s fifteen council districts with the intention that it will be used to construct a temporary emergency shelter in each district. These shelters will last for three years, and are designed, much like Pomona’s Hope for Home, to provide temporary lodging while low-income units are being built utilizing funds from Proposition HHH and Measure H (Garcetti 2018). A Bridge Home was formally announced in April 2018; on May 2, Council President Wesson became the first city councilmember to propose a site in his district, suggesting a city–owned Department of Transportation parking lot near the Wilshire/Vermont Metro station (see photo below).

682 South Vermont Avenue

It should be noted that at the time of the proposal, “[n]o details were available, [as] [t]he cost estimate, type of structure, and capacity [were] awaiting engineering reports, although the mayor said he hoped the site could hold at least 65 beds” (Holland 2018). Due to the short period of
time between Mayor Garcetti’s announcement of A Bridge Home and Council President Wesson’s proposal of the South Vermont site, many Koreatown residents were taken by surprise. According to the Wilshire Community Coalition, which later organized several weekend protests against this site, this is because other city council districts had been holding public hearings to determine a community–acceptable site to place their bridge housing in. The Coalition further states that it was Koreatown residents’ constitutional right under the Due Process Clause to be able to express their concerns with Council President Wesson’s proposal (Wilshire Community Coalition 2019). In response to these concerns, President Wesson published two documents, one showing the proposed site’s close, one–to–two block proximity to the majority of Koreatown’s homeless encampments, and one noting that the proposed site was the only land owned and controlled by the city of Los Angeles that was also available for an emergency shelter (Staff 2018a) (Staff 2018b).

In response to these growing community concerns, an online petition on Change.org calling on the city of Los Angeles to stop developing the Vermont site that garnered over 9,000 signatures, and the threat of widespread protests, Council President Wesson held a rally on May 17, 2018, alongside Mayor Garcetti and five other city council members. During this rally, President Wesson did not discuss the specifics of his proposal, but rather advocated for bridge housing more broadly. Victoria Kim notes he “called homelessness ‘the most important issue in the city of Los Angeles.’ He called the temporary shelters … a ‘bold and creative solution’” (Kim 2018b). Much of the rally was designed to convince Koreatown residents of the same. However, many local community groups, including the Wilshire Community Coalition, note that they recognize the pressing homelessness crisis that is sweeping the city and county, and are generally supportive of finding solutions to this problem. In other words, their main concern was
not with placing an emergency shelter in Koreatown, but rather with the specific site Council President Wesson chose, and the secretive, non–accessible manner in which he did so. They argued that the site was close to local businesses, was within a one–mile radius of thirteen different schools, and was in a residential area, noting that there were other suitable locations in Council District 10 (Wilshire Community Coalition 2019).

An additional concern many residents had with President Wesson’s closed–off siting process was that this non–recognition of Koreatown’s needs evoked past sentiments of city officials viewing the neighborhood as significant only as an area to concentrate District 10’s unwanted structures and citizens. In other words, these residents wanted to know: why did Council President Wesson choose Koreatown over other neighborhoods to cite District 10’s bridge housing? The Wilshire Community Coalition answered this by stating, “I think they chose Koreatown to begin with because they thought we all were relatively weak … [what with] Asian being Asian” (Wilshire Community Coalition 2019). Although Koreatown is only one–third Asian, many Koreans throughout the city and county of Los Angeles see the neighborhood as a place to express their heritage and ethnic identity. To this end, these individuals saw Council President Wesson’s attempts to place a shelter in Koreatown as fundamentally harming this cultural ability. As a result, many of those who protested President Wesson’s initial proposal, either at in–person rallies, through anti–shelter ads, or at town halls, were Korean individuals who lived outside Koreatown, and thus, would not be immediately impacted by the shelter’s placement. These community members also drew comparisons to the city’s response to the 1992 riots in Koreatown, in which thousands of local businesses were looted and destroyed, in large part due to a lack of police presence in the area. These sentiments of abandonment and as if the city council was overlooking the needs of Koreatown residents can help to explain why the
neighborhood had such a strong negative reaction to Council President Wesson’s proposal (Kim 2018a).

On June 28, 2018, recognizing the importance of listening to his constituents and finding a balance between the needs of the homeless and of the housed, President Wesson agreed to look into alternative plans in a press release administered in both English and Korean. He stated that the original proposed site on South Vermont Avenue would still be evaluated as a potential bridge housing site, but was also being considered as potential permanent supportive housing units for the elderly homeless. Additionally, President Wesson proposed to examine the possibility of turning the parking lot at his district office into a smaller emergency shelter, as well as a privately–developed plan to convert lots on South Kenmore Avenue into bridge housing. Most notable, however, was President Wesson’s promise to “[c]reate a Council District 10 Commission on Koreatown Homelessness to oversee and provide recommendations to the Council Office with respect to the crisis and bridge housing facility in Koreatown throughout its development and operations” (Wesson 2018). Despite this new plan, however, community members still had concerns. For instance, they argued that the Kenmore lots were no different from the contested Vermont site, as both were close to schools and in a residential area. Chan Yong Jeong, a local attorney associated with the Wilshire Community Coalition, noted that Council President Wesson should work to identify a wider variety of sites, which would then allow community members to have a proper discussion on the best solution to Koreatown’s homelessness. Other community members note that although President Wesson did propose alternative locations, he was still not particularly forthcoming with details about how he would develop these sites and how the proposed shelter/affordable housing would affect the local
community once built. As a result, they argue, Koreatown residents will still find fault with his new proposal (Reyes and Kim 2018).

Throughout the summer of 2018, Council President Wesson worked with the community to develop a homeless plan that worked for both the housed and the homeless. The Wilshire Community Coalition noted these efforts included a series of private meetings in which he seemed genuinely invested in learning from his earlier mistakes, thereby making an honest attempt to listen to the concerns of his constituents. These meetings were facilitated by United Way’s Chris Ko, who was specifically chosen because he was both an employee of one of Los Angeles’s premier advocates for affordable housing and other solution to ending homelessness, and a Korean with ties to the Koreatown community. The result of these meetings was clear: a newfound partnership between city officials and Koreatown residents. The Wilshire Community Coalition states, “when we met with him [Council President Wesson] on August 2nd … we didn’t settle for anything, any final decision. He … agreed to have communication with the people and he said we’ll be sitting in an advisory committee. … Basically, he said, ‘Thank you for doing all this. Now we are actually thinking about putting in police security, medical doctors, and consultants and therapists’” (Wilshire Community Coalition 2019). These important services, which benefit both the homeless and the housed, would not have been generated had President Wesson not met with community members. Additionally, as a result of these summer meetings, city officials selected a new site for Koreatown’s emergency shelter: a small section of Lafayette Park, located about a half mile east of the original Vermont site, thereby retaining its close proximity to nearby homeless encampments. It should be noted, however, that this new site gained the approval of Koreatown citizens in part because it is on the edge of the neighborhood’s borders (The Times Editorial Board 2018).
Ultimately, Council President Wesson’s attempts to place an emergency shelter in Koreatown last summer highlight the need for an open and accessible planning process to reduce or outright eliminate NIMBYism sentiments. The city council initially chose the Department of Transportation parking lot on South Vermont Avenue because it was close to the majority of Koreatown’s homeless encampments and was a vacant, city–owned property. Nevertheless, Koreatown citizens and other Korean Angelenos argued that the proposed site was too close to local schools, businesses, and residences, and would thereby fundamentally alter the character of the neighborhood. After a series of protests, contentious town halls, and online petitions calling on the city council to abandon the site altogether, Council President Wesson agreed to work with community members to develop a new plan to end Koreatown’s homelessness. Although he proposed several sites of his own, he also listened to other citizens’ suggestions, striving to create a planning process that was open and accessible to all who wanted to express any thoughts/concerns they may have with his proposals. Although the new site at Lafayette Park, as well as the sites Council President Wesson proposed in June, are still in the development phase, there has been significantly less NIMBYism by Koreatown residents in recent months, in large part because President Wesson has strived to be more transparent in his planning process. While it could be argued that there is less community resistance in part because the Lafayette Park site is on the edge of the neighborhood, I would argue that the fact that there is less resistance to all of the proposed sites shows that collaboration with the community, rather than merely location, is needed to end NIMBYism. Perhaps the Wilshire Community Coalition said it best when they stated, “it’s not fair to call us NIMBY when [all] we want [is] transparency” (Wilshire Community Coalition 2019).
Venice, A Bridge Home, and NIMBYism

Venice, California is a neighborhood in Los Angeles’s coastal Westside region that is home to over 40,000 individuals, perhaps best known for its laid–back attitude and upscale businesses (“Venice” n.d.). Its bohemian spirit is best captured through the Venice Ocean Front Walk (better known as Venice Boardwalk), which features specialty shops and restaurants, as well as a variety of street performers and artists. Venice is also known for its picturesque beach and, like its namesake in Italy, for its canals.

With regards to city governance, Venice is part of Council District 11, which is represented by Councilman Mike Bonin. This district is comprised of ten neighborhoods in western Los Angeles (which is bordered by the Pacific Ocean) (“Neighborhoods” n.d.). Like many other cities and neighborhoods within Los Angeles, Venice is experiencing a severe homeless crisis, possessing one of the highest homeless populations in the region. This is in large part due to a recent growth in the number of highly paid individuals (many of whom work for tech companies like Google and Snap) moving into Venice and significantly increasing rent and housing prices. According to the Los Angeles Housing Service Authority (LAHSA)’s point–in–time count, in 2018, Venice had 975 homeless individuals, which marked an 18% decrease from the neighborhood’s 2017 homeless population (1,151 individuals) and a 14% increase from its 2016 population (855 individuals). Of these 849 individuals, 121 were sheltered, and 728 were unsheltered, the majority of whom lived on the street, in tents, or in vans (Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority n.d.e) (Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority 2018). In particular, Venice has struggled to house its homeless youth and veterans, experiencing a far greater growth in these populations as compared to the city of Los Angeles’s averages (Catanzaro 2018a).
In response to this heightened overall homeless population and general difficulties housing particular subpopulations, Councilman Bonin decided to place Council District 11’s emergency shelter in Venice, a decision that, like in the case of Koreatown, led to widespread protests. This response further highlights the need for an open and accessible planning process to reduce NIMBYism against homeless shelters and low-income housing. In February 2018, before Mayor Garcetti formally announced his A Bridge Home project, Councilman Bonin published an op-ed in *The Argonaut*, a local Westside magazine, highlighting the importance of bridge housing. He states, “[w]e need places where people can sleep next week, next month, and even next year until enough housing is available. Not bare-bones, one-size-fits-all shelters that feel like prisons and become permanent warehouses for people. We need specialized, welcoming centers or shared housing” (Bonin 2018). Given this pro-bridge housing view, coupled with Venice’s homeless problem, Councilman Bonin quickly identified a potential site for his district’s emergency shelter after A Bridge Home was announced. In May 2018, in conjunction with Councilman Bonin, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) identified a vacant 3.15-acre Metro Bus lot on Main Street and Sunset Avenue as a viable bridge housing site (see photo below).
Besides the obvious benefits of identifying a unoccupied, city–owned lot in Venice, the Main and Sunset lot is located two blocks from Venice’s large homeless encampment on Third Avenue (Nelson 2018). Nevertheless, community members quickly found fault with this proposal, noting that the site is three blocks from an elementary school and three preschools, many of which already experience negative interactions with homeless individuals.

On June 13, 2018, Councilman Bonin formally introduced this Metro site during a town hall that proved to be extremely contentious. Many community members argued that due to the large size of the proposed lot, which would house 154 beds, in addition to two housing projects that would create over 200 low–income units in other areas around the neighborhood, Venice residents were being asked to shoulder too much of the region’s housing and services. These individuals further noted that more affluent neighborhoods in District 11, such as Pacific Palisades and Brentwood, were not being asked to carry such a burden (Reyes 2018). Councilman Bonin argued, however, that because Venice has the largest homeless population in his district, they should be expected to carry much of the solution (i.e. affordable housing units).
Additionally, community members highlighted that Councilman Bonin merely chose the Metro lot because it was close to Venice’s homeless encampments. Mark Ryavec, president of the Venice Stakeholders Association (VSA), summarized this by stating, “he didn’t do it [select a site] on the basis of any criteria. He has one criteria which is a false criterion. He used the criteria of where’s the biggest number of homeless people … as opposed to how do we avoid the shelter being a burden upon residents or schools … and how do we ensure that there are jobs and transportation for the people in the facility” (Ryavec 2019). Ryavec further notes that there are other vacant city–owned properties that fulfill his three criteria. While these properties are not close to existing homeless encampments, he notes that Venice officials can easily solve this problem through busing homeless individuals. A final issue that community members noted with the proposed Metro lot was that Councilman Bonin was “‘… spending more time and money [publicizing] that “Venice says yes” instead of actually communicating with the residents of Venice about this project so that [they could] make an informed decision’” (Catanzaro 2018b). In other words, these individuals expressed frustration that Councilman Bonin sprung the MTA lot proposal upon them without any community input, much like Council President Wesson did initially in Koreatown.

A few months later, in October 2018, Councilman Bonin held another town hall with Mayor Eric Garcetti, which much like the June town hall, quickly developed into a screaming match between city officials and community members. The town hall was designed to inform citizens of the results of a feasibility study conducted by the Bureau of Engineering, Metro, and LAHSA, as well as the future timeline if the Metro lot proposal was approved. However, Venice residents still expressed concerns with the closed–off way Councilman Bonin selected the site and his general unwillingness, since he proposed the location, to listen to community concerns
and meet privately with interested stakeholders (Ryavec 2019). These individuals questioned why a homeless individual would give up a free home in one of Los Angeles’s most sought-after neighborhoods to move to permanent supportive housing in a nearby city. One longtime resident summed this up by stating, “‘[t]here is a difference between homeless people who are down and out and transients who want to come to the beach and party’” (Dakota Smith and Smith 2018).

Despite these widespread NIMBYism sentiments, Councilman Bonin ignored Venice residents’ pleas to meet with him to discuss viable alternatives, seeking ways to speed up the approval process instead. In November 2018, he used the Bureau of Engineering viability study to justify a categorical exemption under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). This exemption allowed Venice officials to waive an examination of their development plan’s environmental impacts. Additionally, Councilman Bonin sought and gained a similar exemption from the California Coastal Commission. With these releases in place, the Metro lot plan was formally submitted to the Los Angeles City Council on December 7, where it unanimously passed four days later. This plan states that once constructed, the emergency shelter will contain 154 beds, 100 of which will be designated for adults, with the remaining 54 designed for Venice’s homeless youth between the ages of 18–24. The adults will be housed in a modular tent structure, much like Pomona’s Hope for Home, while the youth will be housed in nine trailers. The site will also have trailers housing administrative offices and hygiene services, such as showers and toilets; storage units; a pet area; and outdoor dining space (Dakota Smith 2018). It should be noted that as a result of this expedited approval process, the proposal was only available for public comment for about two weeks. Ryavec notes that this short comment window is “unheard of for a project of this size. That is why I referred to it [the planning process] as the subterfuge and misuse of the … city process and a blatant flaunting of
California’s environmental laws” (Ryavec 2019). He further observes that if the city’s plan was to be examined under CEQA and the California Coastal Act, lingering issues, such as noise (in large part due to the bridge housing’s pet area and outdoor dining space) and parking concerns, would be addressed.

While Councilman Bonin’s initial plan was approved by the city council, his unwillingness to listen to his constituents, aside from creating a large NIMBY resistance, also created a system in which Venice residents were unable to point out relevant issues they believed city officials overlooked, such as the aforementioned noise and parking concerns. To this end, in January 2019, the Venice Stakeholders Association filed a lawsuit against the city of Los Angeles and the Coastal Commission, alleging that “the controversial project [the Metro lot proposal] was ‘jammed through’ with insufficient review of the environmental effects on nearby schools and residences,” (Holland 2019) and thus violated both the California Environmental Quality Act and the Coastal Act. The VSA is seeking a temporary restraining order to halt the city’s progress until a full environmental review is conducted. According to Ryavec, “they [Metro] plan to break ground in three years. So if we delay them until trial two years from now, they only have [a] one–year window, and it’ll take them four months to build the thing or five months or six months. So at some point they just, we assume, will walk away to another site without the opposition and conceivably to a site that doesn’t have the Coastal Act involved” (Ryavec 2019). In other words, the Venice Stakeholders Association is using this lawsuit as an indirect way to force the city council to abandon the project altogether, and if this does not succeed, at least to reduce some of the Metro lot proposal’s negative impacts on the surrounding community. The VSA’s main objection to this proposal was that it was chosen simply because it was close to Venice’s homeless encampments, and that there were more appropriate shelter sites
for District 11’s emergency shelter in Westchester and West Los Angeles, both of which have housed less of the district’s homeless than Venice has. Ryavec also noted that rather than spend large sums of money on bridge housing and permanent supportive units, the city should focus on building or master–leasing shared housing with two homeless individuals to a room (Ryavec 2018), a far cheaper and more efficient solution. Ultimately, while the Venice Stakeholders Association’s lawsuit and subsequent trial proceedings are just beginning to get underway, it is clear that even though Councilman Bonin was able to get the Metro plan approved, the Venice community still carry NIMBY sentiments, which they are unafraid to act on.

Ultimately, Venice’s efforts to site District 11’s emergency shelter further highlights the need for an open and accessible planning process. From the beginning, Councilman Bonin was not forthcoming with important details about the shelter, and much like Council President Wesson initially in Koreatown, was unwilling to compromise with community members to find a plan that worked for both the housed and homeless. Despite two contentious town halls at which Venice residents angrily and vocally laid out their case as to why Councilman Bonin should select a new, more appropriate site, the Councilman never wavered from his original plan, stating that the Metro bus lot was the best location given its close proximity to pre–existing homeless encampments in the neighborhood. In fact, he sought out an expedited process from both the city council and the California Coastal Commission, which would avoid environmental impact analysis, thereby hastening the development and building process to give Venice’s homeless an alternative to the streets sooner. Because the Metro plan the city council approved was generated without much community support or input, it is unsurprising that NIMBY sentiments still exist in the neighborhood, as evidenced by the Venice Stakeholders Association’s lawsuit, and its primary goal of forcing Metro and the city council to abandon their plans altogether. Perhaps
Councilman Bonin could have avoided the costly legal proceedings that will ensue if he listened to his constituents and truly worked to find a homelessness solution for Venice that would work for both the housed and the homeless.
Conclusion

As evidenced in Pasadena, Pomona, Koreatown, Venice, and the city and county of Los Angeles more broadly, homelessness is a complex issue that will require the support of both the housed and the homeless in order to be solved. While Housing First appears to be the best practice and has been adopted both city and countywide, Pasadena and Pomona have had differing levels of success utilizing the model. After adopting Housing First in 2011, Pasadena experienced a five–year, 56% decline in its homeless population, but has faced a 28% increase in this population since 2016. Pomona’s homelessness, on the other hand, has fluctuated in recent years, with a 15% decrease from 2015 to 2018, but a 12% increase from 2016 to 2018. This discrepancy highlights the need for five prerequisites in order for the model to effectively house homeless individuals.

First, a strong political will and an abundance of resources, most notably a large affordable housing stock or the land and/or money to construct these units, demonstrates that Housing First does not succeed without permanent supportive units to house the homeless in. Pomona’s greater ability to generate these resources and political and community support, most notably through its collaboratively–generated homeless strategic plan, helps to explain their increased success utilizing Housing First. Second, effective street outreach is needed, both to explain the unique tenets of the Housing First model to homeless individuals who may be wary of the traditional continuum of care, and to begin to establish sincere, meaningful relationships with these individuals that will carry over once they are housed. Both Pasadena and Pomona have highlighted both the importance of street outreach and the need for high quality case workers (and the financial resources to hire them), although Pasadena conducts this outreach on
a more decentralized level. Third, quality temporary shelters or bridge housing is needed to provide a more humane alternative to living on the streets while low-income units are being built. These structures can also provide a centralized locale for local service providers to coordinate treatment to housed clients, and serves as an additional way for case workers and homeless individuals to begin to bond. Pomona’s recently-opened Hope for Home succeeds in achieving all these provisions, housing over 200 individuals a night and working with three service partners. As the second phase of the shelter finishes construction in June or July of this year, the programming Pomona will be able to provide to its homeless will only increase. Fourth, quality job assistance or training programs is needed to give homeless individuals a steady stream of income which they can use towards housing and general amenities, as well as an increased sense of stability and responsibility. Like street outreach, both Pasadena and Pomona provide these job programs, although Pasadena’s various shelters do so in a decentralized manner, utilizing different models and methods. Fifth and finally, centralization and coordination between service providers is needed to create proper wraparound services that address the needs of homeless individuals effectively and consistently. Pomona’s recently adopted homeless strategic plan specifically calls on the city to coordinate services to reduce the impact on nearby housed residents, an effort that can be seen most notably through Hope for Home.

With regards to my second research question on policies/strategies to overcome NIMBYism, I hypothesized that an open and accessible planning process was needed. The discrepancy in Koreatown and Venice in their ability to successfully implement this model helps to explain why there is still community resistance in Venice even though its final development plan was approved last December. In Koreatown, Council President Wesson did not originally consult the community when selecting the South Vermont Avenue site, citing that this property
was vacant, city-owned, and close to the neighborhood’s homeless encampments. As a result of this lack of transparency and accessibility to the city’s planning and siting process, Koreatown residents engaged in wide-scale protests, both in-person and through online petitions, and contentious town halls. In response, President Wesson agreed to look into alternative sites. Although he proposed several of his own, including the parking lot of his district office, he also agreed to meet with a variety of interested stakeholders in order to honestly determine what the community needs, and how best to balance these needs with those of the homeless. To this end, Council President Wesson, with the help of various Koreatown residents, selected a new site at Lafayette Park to construct District 10’s emergency shelter. While there have been small-scale protests as this plan continues to be developed, on the whole, these residents are widely supportive of President Wesson’s new proposal.

On the other hand, in Venice, Councilman Bonin has been met with widespread NIMBYism despite his final plan being approved by the city council months ago. Like Council President Wesson, Councilman Bonin announced his decision to site District 11’s emergency shelter on Sunset Avenue without any community support, noting that this site was chosen primarily due to its close proximity to Venice’s homeless encampments. Like in the Koreatown case, Venice residents quickly protested this decision, albeit on a smaller scale, through online petitions and town halls. During the two town halls Councilman Bonin held to announce the Sunset site, community members were not given many details about his development plans, which resulted in them feeling as if the city council did not care about their well-being and general concerns with the shelter. To add insult to injury, Councilman Bonin then proceeded to seek environmental exemptions from the California Environmental Quality Act and the California Coastal Commission in order to expedite the development and building process. As a
result, the Metro site was one of the fastest moving development plans in recent Los Angeles history. To try and slow down this progress, community resisters associated with the Venice Stakeholders Association have recently filed a lawsuit calling on the city council and the Coastal Commission to properly review the approved plan, or run the risk of a lengthy and costly trial proceeding. In other words, although the Metro proposal has been approved, NIMBYism still exists widely in Venice.

Although I tried to be as comprehensive in my research and data collection as possible, due to time and geographical limitations, I was not able to conduct as much field work as I would have liked. Most notably, I was not able to find a city within Los Angeles County that had not adopted the Housing First model, and thus, had to use the five prerequisites as a proxy to explain the model’s effectiveness. Additionally, I was not able to conduct interviews with individuals who were pro–shelter in both Koreatown and Venice, so much of my data regarding these two cases is one–sided. Similarly, my Pasadena interviewees were all affiliated with different homeless shelters. Speaking to a more centralized figure, such as someone associated with the city’s housing department, may have allowed me to see ways in which Pasadena services were more coordinated. Finally, because I was studying a city far from Haverford, I was only able to conduct field work during a couple weeks in January and one week in March. As a result, I was not able to visit the cities and neighborhoods represented in my case studies more than once or twice. Visiting more times would have allowed me to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the effects of both Housing First and NIMBYism in these locales. Further research could look into the success of the Housing First model in other parts of Los Angeles, especially in more urban and less affluent neighborhoods. Additionally, future researches could examine NIMBY efforts towards permanent supportive housing units, rather than temporary
emergency shelters, as well as NIMBY efforts in more affluent suburbs within Los Angeles County.

Ultimately, how should cities and neighborhoods in Los Angeles begin to find a solution to their homelessness that works for both the housed and the homeless? While both the city and county of Los Angeles have adopted Housing First, and thus require communities seeking either city or county funding to demonstrate fidelity to this model, it is clear that there are several prerequisites these neighborhoods need to have in place to ensure Housing First succeeds. As Proposition HHH and Measure H continue to fund affordable housing projects, cities should work diligently to implement the five prerequisites I proposed in order to ensure that these new low-income units properly reduce their homeless populations and prevent future recidivism. Similarly, as other city councilmembers look to identify potential sites and development plans for their district’s emergency shelters, they should encourage community participation from the start, and should hold transparency and accessibility paramount. These councilmembers should make an honest attempt to listen to their constituents’ needs and concerns, and should collaborate with these individuals to create a plan that works for both the homeless and the housed. For only through the support of all can Los Angeles, and other cities within the United States more broadly, truly end the nation’s growing homelessness crisis.
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