



The Interim Housing Act: SB 1395

Historically, in California we have placed the predominance of resources toward permanent housing solutions. While permanent housing is the ultimate goal and the only thing that actually ends homelessness, today the cost of building PSH has become so extraordinary and it takes so long that the net result is that people end up languishing on the streets for years waiting. For every 1 person who exits homelessness into PSH, 3 or 4 are falling into homelessness. Furthermore, the cost and damage of leaving people languishing on the streets creates extraordinary costs to society that could be avoided if people had a dignified, safe place to stay while permanent housing supply becomes available. Our streets cannot be the waiting room.

Cities have realized the need for interim supportive solutions, and yet interim housing has not been officially embraced as a valid use of taxpayer money. The Interim Housing Act validates this model and makes it easier for cities to take advantage of streamlining provisions to bring people indoors quickly.

It is important to note that “Interim Housing” differs from “shelter” in that (by [definition from HUD](#)) “housing” is defined as units with separate sleeping quarters. “Interim Housing” is not “shelter” nor is it intended as Permanent Housing. It is a new middle-ground tool where people have the benefits of “housing” (separate sleeping quarters, extended stays) but not the benefits of a permanent home. It is a place they can work toward more permanent exits.

Specifically, SB 1395 makes several important changes to California law:

- First and foremost, The Interim Supportive Housing Act formally validates Interim Housing as an appropriate and useful tool in a city’s toolkit for addressing unsheltered homelessness.
- The Act confirms that ISH is a valid state program. While in reality ISH is today already an eligible use of many State programs such as Homekey, this Act makes that official.
- By extending the Emergency Shelter Crisis Act the state is sending a signal that municipalities need to continue to treat this crisis as the crisis that it is.
- By extending the Low-Barrier Navigation Center law, it allows Interim Housing (as well as Navigation Centers and other models) to be constructed widely and without red-tape.
- By further clarifying CEQA exemptions, this bill ensures that Interim Housing can be built fast, cost-effectively, and at scale.

We know that this model works in San Jose. The city has taken interim housing and unsheltered homelessness seriously, and it's paid off over the last 12 months, unsheltered homelessness across the state of California, rose by an alarming 10.3%. In that same period, in San Jose unsheltered homelessness fell by 10.7% -- a remarkable 21% swing largely credited to the Quick Build interim housing projects The city has been focused on building. Importantly, 70% of the participants of those programs have remained stable in house. That is the kind of evidence that shows that this new model is working.

It's Important to note that bringing people indoors into interim housing does not solve homelessness. Only permanent housing ENDS homelessness. But Interim Housing ends UNSHELTERED homelessness, which is the most visible, the most inhumane, and the most solvable portion of this complex problem.

Interim Housing is specifically about unsheltered homelessness, which is a uniquely California problem: 50% of the nation’s unsheltered population reside in California. The Interim Housing Act is California taking a bold step to end unsheltered homelessness. If we can bring people indoors and avoid the trauma caused by languishing on our streets, we will be able to free up resources to be directed to more productive uses, such as building the permanent housing we need.