

# Playbook for a Modular, Supportive Interim Housing Community

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



## Mountain View's Perspective

Santa Clara County has one of the largest homeless populations in the nation. The City of Mountain View in Santa Clara County, saw its homeless population rise from 276 in 2015 to 606 in 2019, a 220% increase. Recognizing the problem, the City implemented a multi phase plan - implementing safe parking locations, additional street cleaning, outreach support services into encampments and adding cold-weather shelter capacity. So when LifeMoves called with the idea of a Homekey application, they found a City in alignment. But there was little time to act -- the priority application deadline was 72 hours out. Mountain View City Council members and City staff dug into the extensive Homekey application requirements and the duo met the deadline. The partnership grew from there: "Especially during the pandemic, we are proactively working to respond to the needs of all members of our community," said Mayor Ellen Kamei. "More than ever, we need to be flexible, be creative and be collaborative. We now have the Project Homekey interim housing community ready to serve our most vulnerable populations."

## Introduction

In under 6 months, LifeMoves built and began operating **LifeMoves Mountain View**, a supportive interim housing site that will serve over 350 individuals each year. With a Homekey award from the State of California, a key partnership with the City of Mountain View, and financial support from Google, LinkedIn and local philanthropic investors, LifeMoves will serve 50% of people experiencing homelessness in Mountain View within the the first year of operation. The efficiency, speed and lower cost achieved with modular units created the critical interim housing needed to support the most vulnerable in our communities.

This Executive Summary outlines how we conceived and built LifeMoves Mountain View and how you can do the same in your community. We created this document to catalyze interim housing projects and help you harness federal, state and community funding across the nation to combat homelessness at scale. We will continue to add data, toolkits, webinars and other assets to our Playbook website, [www.lifemoves.org/playbook](http://www.lifemoves.org/playbook), in order to share best practices with as many communities as we can.

## The Problem

If you're reading this, you know that homelessness is a pressing issue in the Bay Area and throughout California. In a recent report by **All Home**<sup>1</sup>, leaders across the Bay recognised Interim Housing as one of the three 3 solutions that we must immediately act on. This is our pioneering approach: Supportive Interim Housing (SIH), a blockbuster solution which combines an integrated approach to rapid deployment, cost-efficiency and supportive services. LifeMoves has successfully prototyped this rapid SIH approach in Mountain View, CA in the heart of Silicon Valley, and we know that with the right information and inspiration, you can do it too.

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All Home spent the last year researching how we can bring 75% of our neighbours experiencing homelessness inside by 2024. The report highlights three concrete solutions that can be immediately implemented in the bay area: Interim Housing, Permanent Housing and Homelessness Prevision. (<http://www.allhomeca.org/regionalactionplan/>)

### The current economic picture

People experiencing homelessness lack access to health care and often have chronic illnesses, made worse by tough living conditions: sleeping outside in all weather, eating cheap starchy foods, and being in close quarters at social service agencies with other unhealthy people. Homelessness is an economic problem.

According to the Economic Roundtable's 2015 study, each person persistently experiencing homelessness costs the public an average \$83,000/year, which significantly exceeds the cost of providing permanent supportive housing<sup>2</sup>. The 2800 people reported as persistently homeless is a small sample, but if this number goes up, caring for them will cost society more than taking action.

Between 2015 and 2019, Santa Clara County reported a 48% rise in homelessness from 6556 to 9706 people. (see Figure 1). What you may not realize, however, is that in California in 2019, 71.7% of individuals experiencing homelessness were unsheltered. In contrast, in New York, a state with similar conditions and constraints on housing, only 4.4% of such individuals are unsheltered. CA and NY are both struggling to create permanent housing solutions, but in the meantime, NY has managed to offer interim shelter to unhoused residents. Finding solutions to homelessness involves a combination of interim shelter and permanent housing and we believe California is ready to get on board! SIH is ripe for quick delivery to an urgent problem.

<sup>2</sup> Fleming, D., et al. (2015) Home Not Found: The Cost of Homelessness in Silicon Valley. Economic Roundtable. [https://destinationhomesv.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/er\\_homenotfound\\_report\\_6.pdf](https://destinationhomesv.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/er_homenotfound_report_6.pdf).

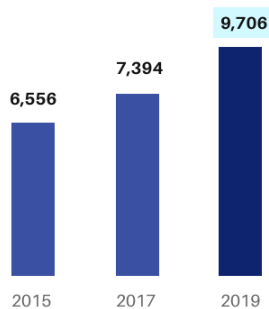


Figure 1. Longitudinal trends from the Santa Clara County PIT count -- from 6,556 unhoused individuals in 2015 to 9,706 in 2019

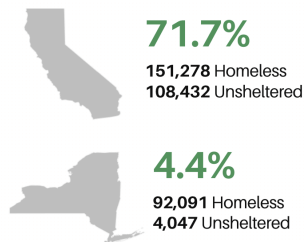


Figure 2. The State of California has a significantly higher percentage of people experiencing homelessness who are unsheltered vs New York

## THE BIG PICTURE

# 48%

Rise in homelessness from 2015 to 2019 in Santa Clara County

# 9,706

People experiencing homelessness in Santa Clara County in 2019



### OUR TARGET


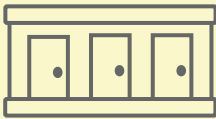
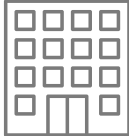

10 more modular, supportive interim housing sites in Silicon Valley at an estimated cost of \$250 million would serve 20,000 people over 5 years

# Supportive Interim Housing (SIH): A key solution in the housing continuum

To rapidly address the problems detailed above, we propose expansive development of a new option: Supportive Interim Housing (SIH). SIH is a short term (3-6 months), dignified environment where community members can be housed and supported with a range of critical services. SIH communities are designed to provide privacy, security and an array of individually tailored services like mental health support, recovery programs, employment services, financial literacy, and programs for children. With support and interim housing, individuals and families can learn how to be successful permanent housing residents, burnish employment prospects and begin to build savings while working toward securing affordable housing options. Supportive Interim Housing works for four reasons:

## Cost Efficient

Not only is it fast, SIH is extremely cost efficient. SIH units can be built for \$50k-150k/door compared to permanent housing which costs \$500-800k+/door. Through public-private partnership, creative use of land, light touch construction, and inexpensive modular design, a site like Mountain View that can accommodate 124 beds can be built for ~\$10 million (land costs and 5 year operating funding pushed the Mountain View budget to \$25M). And, if needs change or land is no longer available for use, the same modulares can be moved and reused on a new site. Further, SIH allows municipalities to quickly leverage newly released funds from legislation like HomeKey to scale their response to homelessness in a community.

EMERGENCY SHELTER Hotel, congregate shelter	SUPPORTIVE INTERIM HOUSING	AFFORDABLE HOUSING Hotel, congregate shelter	MARKET RATE HOUSING
 <p>Cost to build: <b>\$400-800k/unit</b> Time to build: <b>Years</b></p>	 <p>Cost to build: <b>\$50-200k/unit</b> Time to build: <b>6 months or less</b></p>	 <p>Cost to build: <b>\$500-800k/unit</b> Time to build: <b>5+ Years</b></p>	 <p>Cost to build: <b>\$1mill/unit</b> Time to build: <b>Years</b></p>

## Rapid Timeline

SIH can be built in 6 months by using modular housing units with a rapid deployment approach. In Mountain View, the LifeMoves SIH began occupancy in the beginning of May 2021 after obtaining its CA HomeKey funding commitment in October 2020 and beginning construction in December 2020. Traditional construction would have added at least 6-12 months. This speed can be achieved through a combination of offsite modular construction with State (In CA, HCD) inspections/permits complete prior to delivery, light touch infrastructure, AND prioritized engagement with municipal agencies and inspectors for all site-specific work.

We know that the longer people are forced to live on the street the harder it is for them to return to self-sufficiency and become sustainable permanent housing residents. While we wait for permanent affordable housing, encampments mushroom and more families and individuals live in vehicles as our streets become waiting rooms for housing. SIH disrupts the status quo by delivering solutions faster than most think is possible.



## Flexible Deployment

**SIH** is a solution that can flexibly fit on any land, with the inclusion of dedicated spaces for support services that set clients on the path to permanent housing. Modular **SIH** units, like legos, can be placed on any size lot in a wide variety of configurations (see example configurations below). **SIH** can be built safely on awkward shaped lots in industrial areas with less cost per unit than that of converting an existing motel room.

Additionally, site control over **SIH** land gives the opportunity to create space for supportive services, parking, programming and services for children, and community areas.

**SIH** sites are also flexible in regard to time horizons. They can be planned with a short term time horizon like 3-5 years on leased land, the 5-10 year plan for our Mountain View facility, or, can be transitioned into permanent housing by providing leases to residents. When rapidly deploying shelter, this flexibility provides agility in selecting land and responding to the changing needs of the community.

Flexibility in unit configuration also provides a flexibility in cost. When support spaces, rooms or showers need to be added, they can be added in isolation or scaled incrementally with minimal disruption and greater speed than a traditional custom construction project.

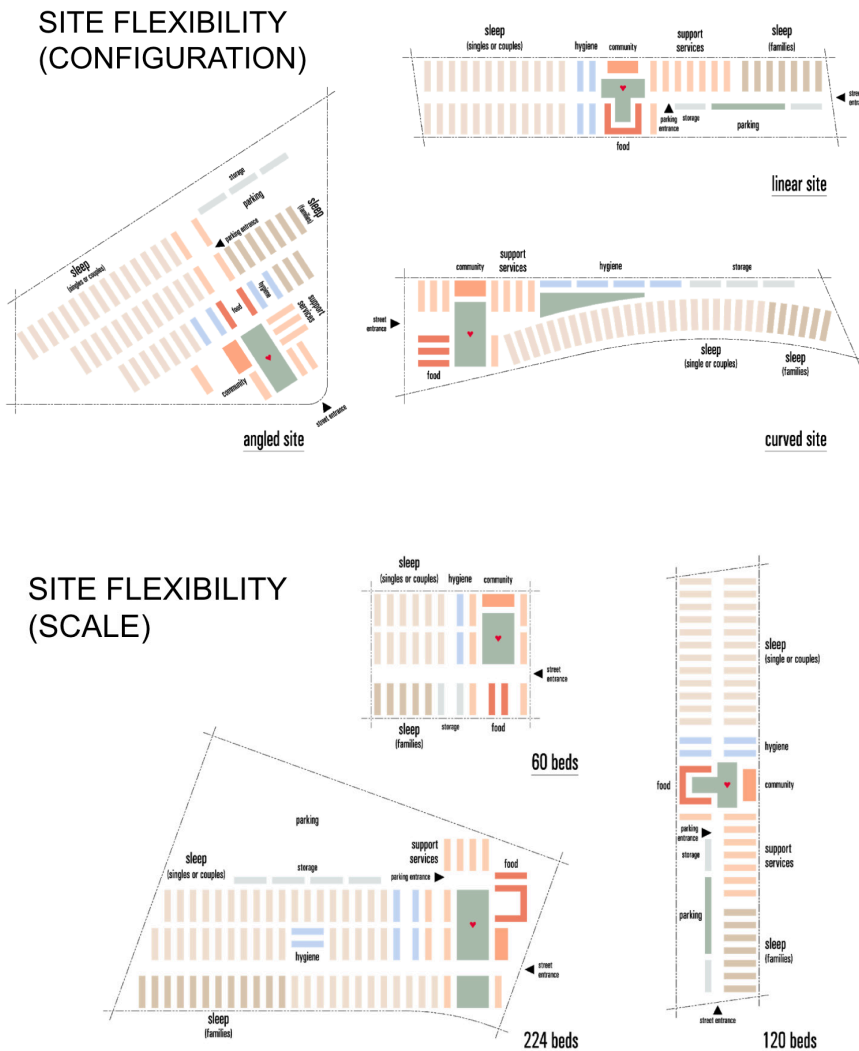
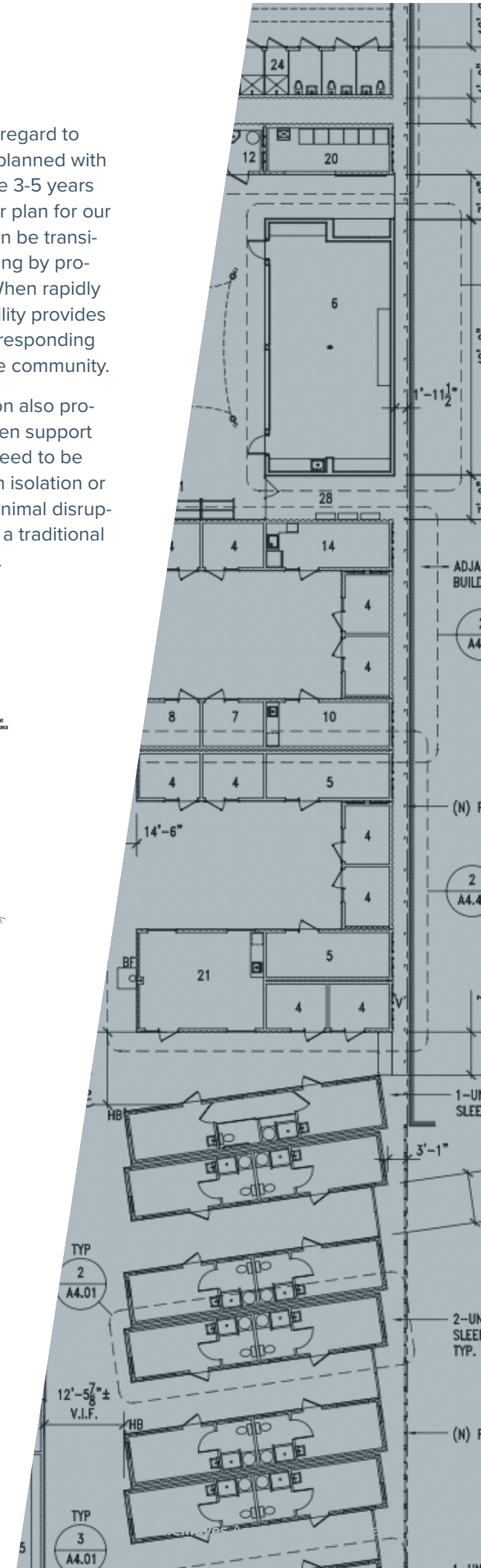


Figure 3: Different configurations of lots.





## Optimal Impact

**SIH** provides the dignity, independence and privacy that all people value. People who have rejected congregate shelters will more readily engage in programming and work toward housing goals in a non-congregate **SIH** model. As housing first models have demonstrated, a secure place to sleep is fundamental to the human condition; wellness can only progress once this basic need is met.

**SIH** is highly effective at getting people off the streets quickly and stabilizing them with support services. While affordable housing is rightly considered the gold standard, it is time and resource intensive to build and should be considered as part of a continuum of housing solutions. **SIH** is a key part of that continuum because it rapidly puts a roof over people's heads and is an evidence-based strategy for breaking cycles of homelessness.

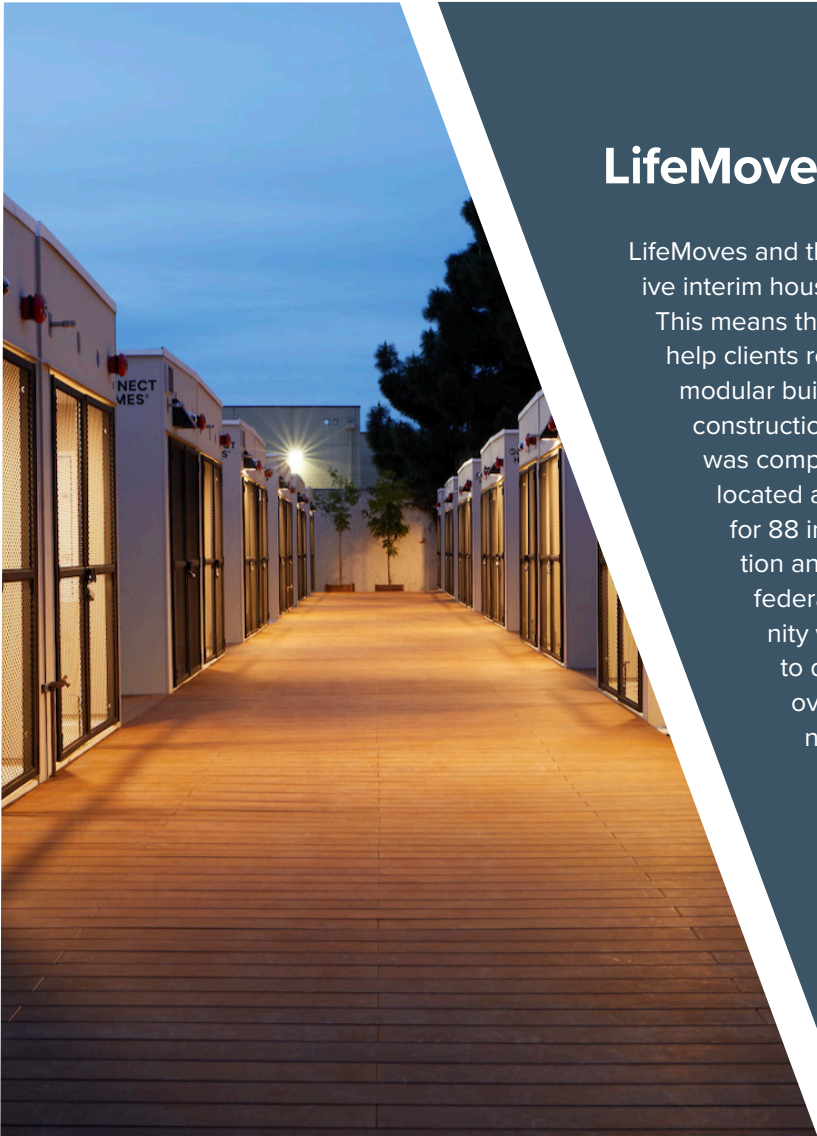
### **SIH vs. Alternative Models**

Alternative models include hotel conversions, an important asset in the fight against homelessness. However, hotels often require expensive retrofitting and maintenance expenses. Hotels also are not designed for clients with primary and behavioral health care problems, and may lack space for staff to provide support services. Finally, hotel utilization results in loss of hotel tax revenues and conversion may result in a negative community response.

Sanctioned car and RV safe parking programs are important, but not ideal for addressing homelessness. People in oversized vehicles often do not consider themselves homeless, and may be reluctant to access shelter and other services. Long-term RV living creates health problems, generates trash build-up, and burdens merchant and residential communities as well as public health resources. An **SIH** program will often provide the privacy and independence required to encourage these folks to move out of their vehicles. In contrast, investments in sanctioned Safe Parking Programs in lieu of **SIH** risks creating a dependency on RVs that municipalities cannot sustain.

In summary, rapid action through **SIH** will visibly, measurably and effectively put us on a path towards eradicating homelessness in our community without the downsides of other short term solutions.



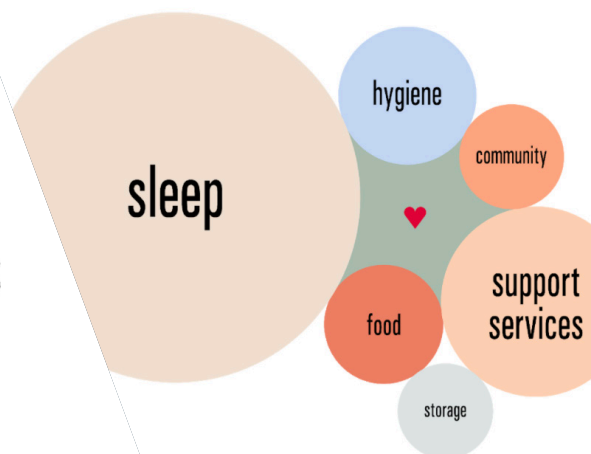


# LifeMoves Mountain View

LifeMoves and the City of Mountain View partnered to build a new supportive interim housing community for people experiencing homelessness. This means that 30% of the site is dedicated for supportive services to help clients return to stable housing. Through the use of prefabricated modular buildings, an experienced design team, a rapid design & build construction approach and creative collaboration strategies, the project was completed in six months from conception to move-in. The site is located at 2566 Leghorn Street in Mountain View and provides rooms for 88 individuals and 12 families. The project is funded for construction and five years of operating expenses through a combination of federal, state, local and private money. The site creates a community where clients receive intensive case management services to develop a tailored plan that specifically helps each person overcome homelessness and return to stability. LifeMoves connects clients to mental health care, behavioral health services, addiction services, SSI and other benefit resources along with providing job placement resources, classes on subjects such as parenting and financial literacy, and a wide array of other services. Above all, LifeMoves works tirelessly to help clients find their way back to stable, permanent housing.

The site includes ample private meeting space for confidential case management, workshops, dining, recreation, laundry, even dog kennels. Unlike traditional congregate shelters, every individual or family gets the privacy and dignity of their own private room, with a door that locks. Clients stay approximately 90 - 180 days while they get stabilized and find sustainable housing. With 124 beds serving 350+ people each year, this site provides a major boost to Mountain View's efforts to address homelessness: 3x the existing number of shelter beds available in Mountain View during the winter season, and 10x the number of year-round beds.

Figure 4: Support Services Units implemented by LifeMoves and the City of Mountain View





# SIH Execution Overview

To create an interim housing solution in your community, we see 5 key ingredients:

## 1. A willing municipality

Identifying a willing municipality is the first critical step of execution. We selected the site for our first SIH project after speaking to various municipalities and identifying strong internal advocates with a supportive city council in Mountain View. Proponents in the city were well aware of the problem they wanted to solve - a growing population of people living on the streets and in their vehicles. They were determined to serve a broad range of needs in the homeless population -- families as well as individuals and couples. The committed city support allowed us to move quickly on land, expedite needed entitlements and facilitate a relationship with the crucial City Offices required to enable rapid decision-making during the rest of the project (planning, building, fire, public works, water/sewer, etc.). The relationships with City offices will become crucial to your ability to timely execute on your project.

A [national study](#) performed by the Urban Institute showed that communities making real progress toward lowering the homeless population in their communities all had one thing in common -- commitment of leadership. Public and private leaders must see ending homelessness as an important goal, speak about it publicly, encourage collaboration and commitment from the community at large.

## 2. Available Land

Site Selection is critical and must support the needs of the population being served. In most areas, there will be public land options to consider. The State of California has created a publicly available database to identify [underutilized public land](#). To speed execution, however, private land is particularly appealing - the constraints associated with public land use may take years to negotiate. Mountain View was an ideal location because it had land options for purchase that were conducive to fast execution.

Land can be acquired permanently or leased for temporary use. Because we bought land in Mountain View for our site, it made sense to install semi-permanent utilities and infrastructure during Site Development. However, lease of land for ~3+ years can also be an effective option to deploy interim housing with much “lighter touch” site development -- bringing lower levels of electricity, mobile bathrooms, and other temporary

## Key Criteria for Land

- Ideally 1 acre +/- (to be able to site 100 doors + support rooms/offices)
- Industrial/Commercial zoning preferable, although all zones considered
- Close to transit, jobs
- Close to other amenities and resources – healthcare and groceries, shopping
- At least 500 ft away from any schools
- Raw Land or vacant buildings preferred
- Environmentally Clean preferred
- Easy access to utilities – power/sewer
- Two entrances preferable to facilitate construction



structures. This “light-touch” development can be especially suited to underutilized public land, parking lots or long-term affordable housing sites that are often left vacant while undergoing years-long entitlement processes.

### 3. Public-Private Partnership

The most effective projects harness public funds and leverage them with private sources of capital to accelerate execution. For example, unrestricted funds can enable you to purchase privately-owned land. Additionally, public funds can help pull in private funds by signaling support for the project from the start. You should expect to raise at least  $\frac{1}{3}$  of your funding from private sources.

Funding requirements will be driven by your budget. And budgets for SIH projects need to address both the capital to build a site as well as operating funding. Capital requirements can range from inexpensive pallet-type structures to factory-built modular units ready to be dropped on a site. The infrastructure (power, water, sewer, telecom) required to support these units will end up costing as much as or significantly more than the units themselves (in the LifeMoves Mountain View SIH, the housing/support units cost ~\$4M while the Site Development cost ~\$6.5M). The extent of your Site Development and the longevity of the product will determine your capital budget requirement. Operating budgets should be set with your programming partner.

Starting a project like this may also require the developer to take on risk. In our case, Project Homekey was the galvanizing public funder for our project. Our total budget was ~\$25M, including \$15M to buy the land and build the site (capital) and \$10M+ to operate the site for 5 years. LifeMoves received an initial public grants from Project Homekey and an local public funding to support operations. With an early commitment of \$3M from private philanthropy, LifeMoves made the decision to commit its balance sheet and move forward on the project, confident it would be able to raise the “gap” funding from its significant base of supporters. Knowing what public funding vehicles are available will be crucial for determining how much risk a developer is willing to take in choosing the type of structure and extent of Site Development.

Land 15%	Construction 45%	5 year operation 40%
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Figure 5: Typical project budget breakdown.





## 4. Focus on a supportive services provider and programming

To fulfill their potential, interim housing solutions require not just the physical housing units, but must also prioritize programming. Support services should be planned concurrently with physical infrastructure to ensure the success of an SIH project.

Effective programming requires intensive case management. Each client is assigned a case manager who serves as a guide, beginning with an assessment of the client's housing, employment, and health history, and other baseline information. The case manager and the client work together to create a plan or roadmap for exiting homelessness and housing. Support often focuses on building skills, accessing resources, and decreasing barriers:

- **Housing Moves** - documenting identification and income, credit report, housing applications, meeting with landlords
- **Financial Moves** - applying for benefits, budgeting, auto-deposits money into savings, paying off debt, building credit, improving financial literacy
- **Career Moves** - connecting with employment programs, resume, securing additional or improved employment
- **Behavioral Moves** - onsite mental and behavioral health services, counselling services, therapy groups
- **Health Moves:** - medication management, onsite Licensed Vocational Nurse, connecting with primary and specialist health care, linking to Social Security and disability insurance, helping understand medical bills and payments
- **Learning Moves** - educational support for adults, parents and children, skill building workshops, onsite children services coordinators, onsite child care

## Service partners

The City of Mountain View identified early on that LifeMoves would be the right partner to provide support services. In 2020, LifeMoves served 559 families with children (836 adults and 1,059 children), and in 2019 LifeMoves returned 2,127 people to stable housing. LifeMoves' programming emphasises low barriers to entry and minimizes attrition to unstable housing. Low barriers of entry can include making participation accessible to those who may need support with behavioral health, substance abuse, or credit history.

The space requirements for delivery of these services are crucial to the SIH success - Identify and plan your programming needs from the start. The LifeMoves Mountain View SIH dedicated 30% of its built square footage to support services infrastructure. We will share building designs and ideas for great programming [on this site](#) in the coming weeks and months.



## 5. Creative “All-In” Teamwork to develop the site

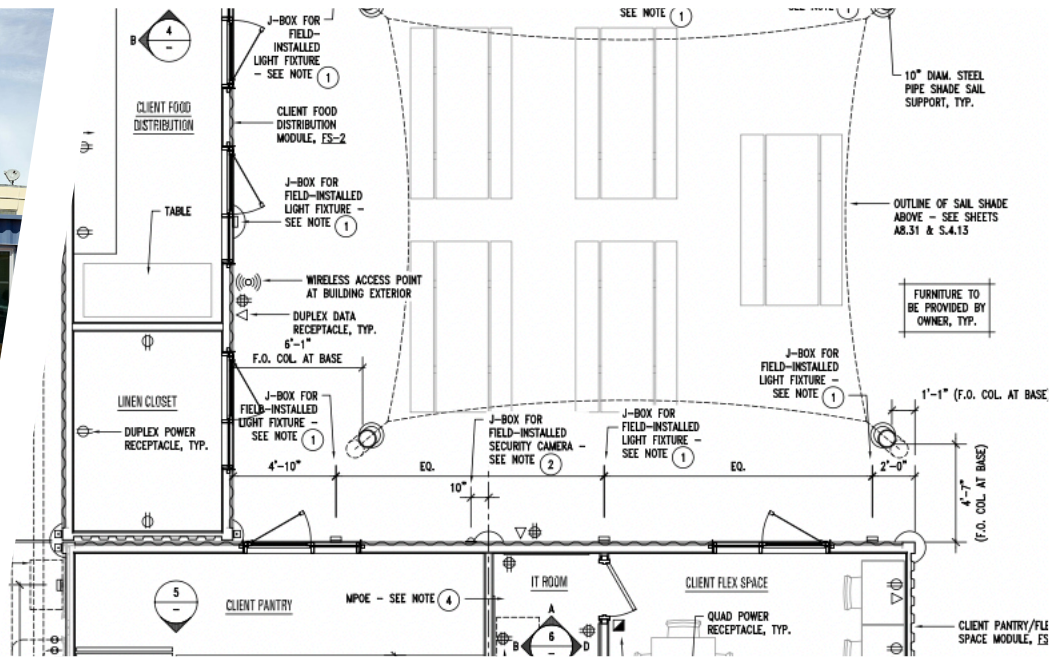
The final element for effective SIH execution is a commitment to a creative team-based approach to the construction of the site. This means involving the city departments (building, planning, fire, public works, etc.), the local electric utility, architectural designers, civil and mechanical engineers, a general contractor and programming specialists from the start. Many shortcuts for speed and budget will result from regular meetings with these partners and with getting city staff and utilities on board early on. Our creative team scrutinized EVERY decision from a time and cost based-perspective to execute delivery in 6 months that many said wouldn't be possible.

In addition to the Mt View City Staff, the LifeMoves I Mountain View team included Sares/Regis, our development manager, lead design architect and structural engineer Charles Bloszies FAIA, BKF and ARUP as civil and mechanical engineers, and XL Construction as the general contractor. The team had many extended experts who weighed in and all team members dedicated many pro-bono hours in the lead-up to a committed funding arrangement. As the project progressed, we expanded to add members with specific site related expertise.

### OUR TEAM



Figure 6: The team that made it possible to shelter 50% of Mountain View's homeless population in 6 months.





# Next steps

With the problem defined by a willing municipality, a piece of land and a budget, the assembled team is ready to get to work. The design and engineering of the site itself and customizing the modular units to the needs of the program and the site topography is critical to cost effective and timely execution of the project. LifeMoves and its design/construction team are in the process of cataloging the alternative design concepts it developed and the long list of critical site infrastructure issues it grappled with. We will be publishing these ideas and concepts in the weeks and months to come -- we invite you to review these ideas and provide your own to us.

Our intention is to share this knowledge on an “open source” construct to allow this concept to be built and evolved cost effectively and timely. Topics we will cover include:

**Site Development** - parcel configuration, density and programming strategies, soil geology, environmental

**Modular Unit Design** - occupancy types, panelized vs volumetric systems, new factory built vs shipping container, specs, accommodating all utility connections, and conduit needs, vendor ratings, availability

**Structural Design** - foundation alternatives, multi-level considerations for densifying

**Life Safety Considerations** - Fire detection/suppression/monitoring design and cost factors, exiting, areas of refuge

**Electric and Dry Utilities** - electrical standards and capacity considerations, including sustainability options below, planning, coordination and installation with local power utility, low voltage and data distribution for security and wifi, trenching vs under decking conduit runs

**Wet Supply and Waste Utilities** - domestic water storage and management for showers, restrooms drinking stations, fire water, waste and stormwater, trenching vs under decking runs  
**Sustainability Options** - potential for off-grid power and battery backup, including solar or other alternative energy sources, gray water harvesting and reuse, black water treatment, irrigation designs, shade sail usage

**Non-Modular Components** - shade sails, canopies, decks, landscaping, fences, etc.



# We can do this

**We can dramatically and visibly change the face of homelessness in Silicon Valley in 5 years. You can do it in your community too.**

If Silicon Valley were its own country, it would be the second richest in the world. Yet today the inequity gulf that exists will only continue to widen if we fail to curb one of the fastest growing homeless populations in the US, before it spirals beyond reach. Silicon Valley's entrepreneurial spirit is contagious and effective, one that has delivered huge value across the globe. Now is the time to use that same spirit to make an immediate and lasting impact much closer to home, on our very own doorsteps. It requires each community to lean in, rise to the challenge and close the gap on inequality.

LifeMoves has raised its hand to call for the development, building and operation of 10 more modular, supportive interim housing sites in Silicon Valley at an estimated cost of \$250,000,000. 10 additional sites in Santa Clara County, as an example, could serve 20,000 people over five years.

Executing on this challenge will take the alignment and cooperation of like-minded people at all levels of government as well as our local communities -- corporate, philanthropic and non-profits. Take the lead today -- LifeMoves is here to help.

For more information, go to [www.lifemoves.org/playbook](http://www.lifemoves.org/playbook) where we will regularly share best practices.

