



VENICE COMMUNITY HOUSING

**STRATEGIC PLAN
2023 – 2027**

Prepared by VCH Board & Staff

Board of Directors Approval: February 26, 2023

Venice Community Housing
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Mission

Venice Community Housing supports and builds equitable and inclusive communities by providing affordable housing with supportive services, education, employment programs, and public policy advocacy that advances racial and economic justice.

Community-Based, Inclusive and Equitable Approach

Venice Community Housing (VCH) is the sole nonprofit Community Development Corporation based in Venice, serving Venice and other lower-income communities primarily in the western area of Los Angeles. We stand for justice, equity, inclusion and caring for one another, and are recognized as a champion for people who are without a home, are economically disadvantaged, or have otherwise have faced historic discrimination. VCH is a neighborhood-based developer, with Appendix A mapping our neighborhoods, focused on engaging, supporting and building communities beyond solely the development of our housing.

While VCH partners with supporters and neighbors of all incomes, our work and organizational purpose is focused solely on improving conditions for people with low incomes and/or who are currently unhoused. Throughout this plan, whenever people or constituents are referenced, VCH means people who have incomes between 0 and 80% of the area's median income. VCH recognizes that Black, Indigenous and other People of Color (BIPOC) are over-represented in unhoused and low-income communities largely because of historic and current systemic racism, and applies a racial equity and justice lens to our work, constituents, and outcomes.

VCH works to ensure that constituents have a visible and vocal partner in addressing their needs. VCH is often called upon to speak and act on behalf of racial, housing and economic justice issues, and attempts to always answer this call. VCH recognizes that people ideally live in a home with a roof and door, but that our community includes people who make their homes in tents, RVs, and the streets and these neighbors deserve to live with dignity and respect as well. VCH works to sustain vibrant and inclusive communities in the face of gentrification, which displaces low income and BIPOC residents and causes additional hardship for people who are unhoused.

People with low incomes are able to achieve healthy and positive outcomes when they are able to access and remain in affordable housing over time – whether in our rental units or in housing owned by others. VCH has learned that affordable housing is necessary but not always sufficient in achieving housing stability, healthy outcomes, and advancing equity. Therefore, VCH's approach integrates targeted, responsive, individualized and trauma-informed supportive services and active community-based advocacy, along with providing high quality affordable housing.

This five-year Plan reflects some new and/or enhanced goals and strategies, renews our commitment to others, and reflects recent and likely somewhat permanent changes in the context of our work due to the COVID pandemic and the Movement for Black Lives.

Direction Forward 2022 - 2027

VCH implements seven core, interconnected strategic priorities through which to create lasting impact and ensure effective operations:

- 1. Affordable and supportive housing development and operations**
- 2. Community, family and youth development services**
- 3. Tenant and community engagement**
- 4. Advocacy**
- 5. Sustaining and strengthening an anti-racist organization**
- 6. Financial sustainability**
- 7. Leadership and governance**

In implementing our core approaches, VCH is committed to the following broad, collective goals:

- Expand housing opportunities by securing sites, completing sites in progress, public policy advocacy and community engagement, and other creative alternatives.
- Operate high-quality, best practices housing and programs.
- Sustain and advance equity, meaningful participation, team-building and transparency in organizational decision making and development.
- Continue implementation, enhanced communications and collaboration, and evaluation measurements for the VCH shared leadership model.
- Support community organizing and other grassroots efforts to promote and demand racial, housing and economic justice, as well as other equity platforms, by speaking out forcefully in numerous ways.
- Reflect and advance racial equity and justice throughout the VCH organization, both internally and externally, including solidarity work outside of our core focus areas.

Through the coming years, the environment will continue to change, and VCH will face both opportunities and challenges that cannot be anticipated today. VCH will consider the following factors to apply its current strategy to new situations.

- Consistency with mission and collective goals
- Number of people served or impacted; depth and length of that impact
- Impact on VCH general funds, positive and/or negative
- Impact on staff workloads and availability, including geographic considerations
- Impact on constituents and lower income communities
- Impact on the surrounding community
- Contribution to VCH strategic priorities and synergy with other VCH programs
- Availability of alternative providers
- Value to VCH of gaining recognition or building needed capacity through the opportunity

Venice Community Housing

7 Inter-connected, Strategic Pillars



Affordable and supportive housing development and operation

Preserve and expand the number of people who have quality, affordable housing in the Western region of LA and other communities in the LA region that present mission-aligned opportunities



Community, family, and youth development services

Ensure high-quality services, community building, empowerment, and capacity for residents of our buildings, students in our programs, and other constituents in ways that support our mission



Tenant and community engagement

Ensure VCH tenants, unhoused residents, and others with lived experience in our home communities are key decision makers in the organization and have other leadership development opportunities



Advocacy

In order to ensure lasting impact, VCH recognizes the necessity to impact public policy and focus on systemic change. To that end, we participate in a wide range of advocacy issues aligned with our mission



Sustaining and strengthening an anti-racist organization

VCH knows that anti-racist organizational work must be internal, external, and across every level and person in the organization



Financial sustainability

Strengthen the long-term financial health of VCH through diversification of funding sources, leveraging of assets, building a strong and supported staff, and marketing and communications strategies to promote VCH's success and unique contributions



Leadership and governance

Establish the depth and breadth of Board, staff, tenant, and student leadership to successfully fulfill VCH's commitments, achieve its priorities, and demonstrate accountable and shared leadership internally and externally

2023 – 2027 Priorities

Priority 1: Affordable and Supportive Housing Development and Operations

Preserve and expand the number of people who have quality, affordable housing in Venice and communities in the western region of Los Angeles, as well as communities in the LA region presenting mission-aligned opportunities.

Why affordable housing development and preservation matters: Housing is central to our purpose, mission and commitment in the community, and is a basic human right. Advancing the human right to housing also means working diligently to ensure that directly impacted people, including and particularly BIPOC communities, are represented in our leadership and decision making and have equitable access to our housing. Developing and preserving affordable housing has the dual benefit of offering a solution to one of the core challenges for low income people and communities while also generating important unrestricted funds to support our community, family and youth programs.

VCH is committed to continuing to try and meet multiple housing needs, either in each new development individually or across our portfolio. This means we will attempt to design and finance projects that include both supportive and affordable housing, include units that serve a variety of household sizes, and prioritize multiple under-housed groups of people. We must think creatively about alternatives to traditional housing development models and new partnerships, and explore preservation and alternative means of creating new affordable housing, to ensure we maximize VCH's contribution to addressing the homelessness and housing crisis in Los Angeles. VCH will remain committed to ensuring affordable and other housing in our home communities is preserved long-term as affordable and have new affordable housing opportunities, while also exploring new neighborhoods using mission-aligned methods.

Priority 2: Community, Family & Youth Development Services

Ensure high quality services, community building, empowerment, and capacity building for residents of our buildings, students in our programs, and other constituents, in ways that support our mission.

Why community, family and youth development services matter: While housing provides the cornerstone to sustain people in their communities, integrated and responsive supportive services are necessary for many to maintain stable housing and thrive in ways of their choice. VCH provides trauma-informed, strengths-based resources and supports that all tenants and program participants need to secure and maintain housing, improve health, enhance education, and expand economic opportunity. All of our services build from a meaningful engagement model, ensuring that resident input and experience guides their own service plans and VCH's overall services and programming. VCH will maintain its longstanding focus on youth development, particularly transition age youth, and expanding its youth specific housing, education and employment services, and other comprehensive responses to support youth leadership as a critical element in sustaining healthy, strong and diverse communities.

Priority 3: Tenant and Community Engagement

Ensure VCH tenants, unhoused residents, and other people in our home communities with lived experience relevant to VCH's work are key decision makers in the organization and have other leadership development opportunities.

Why tenant and community engagement matter: Meaningful community engagement with directly impacted people is essential to accountable housing development and operations, programs, advocacy, and other areas of VCH's work. VCH's approach to tenant and community engagement is also informed by and directly supports community organizing. Community organizing drives and has driven the most effective social justice movements and campaigns in Los Angeles and beyond. While VCH is not currently in a position to incorporate community organizing fully into our work, as that would require a re-examination of leadership, decision making, constituency definition(s) and other elements, we believe in, support and participate in community organizing as a lead mechanism for change promoting social, racial and economic justice. VCH is highly skilled at tenant and community engagement, and will ensure all aspects of our work is rooted in the experiences of low-income leadership and deeply aligned with community organizing that is advancing racial, social and economic justice. At a minimum, tenant and youth council(s) will impact maintenance and improvements in buildings and other VCH policies and practices and the VCH Board will include members who are tenants and past program participants. Residents, youth, and other constituents will be actively encouraged to become meaningfully involved in contributing to the VCH mission.

Priority 4: Advocacy

In order to ensure lasting impact, VCH recognizes the necessity to impact public policy and focus on systemic change. To that end, we participate in a wide range of advocacy issues aligned with our mission.

Why advocacy matters: In order to ensure lasting impact, VCH recognizes the necessity to address public policy and focus on systemic change, equity and inclusion. In leading select advocacy efforts, we will advance our policy analysis and community engagement capacities, amplify the stories and voices of residents, students, and other program participants, and build strategic partnerships to achieve systemic change goals. The advocacy needed in Los Angeles to fundamentally change outcomes for people goes beyond VCH's capacity, so we also contribute our voice and relationships to efforts ably led by others in support of our values and mission. Our goals include contributing VCH's unique voice and experience regarding homelessness and housing to advocacy work aligned with our mission; engaging tenants, students, and other residents in advocacy efforts and effective community organizing partnerships; and increasing voter engagement among low-income and unhoused communities in Venice and throughout the Westside of Los Angeles. Advocacy is also needed at the County, State, and National levels, which VCH will support and participate in as capacity allows. Building on our long-established presence in Venice, and commitment to serving the interests of low income people, we are dedicated to increasing awareness of issues surrounding homelessness and to advocating for local, state and federal policies that sustain vibrant and diverse communities.

Priority 5: Sustaining and Strengthening an Anti-Racist Organization

VCH knows that anti-racist organizational work must be internal, external and across every level and person in the organization.

Why Anti-Racism matters: White supremacy culture is pervasive in institutions across the United States, including non-profit and social justice oriented organizations. To undo this culture and rebuild, a focus on anti-racist analysis and actions are the foundation of advancing racial equity and justice in an accountable manner. To that end, we are committed to implementation and action items reflecting our beliefs:

We believe that affordable, healthy and stable housing is a human right and racism, particularly anti-black racism, is a root cause of homelessness and housing injustice.

We believe that in order to create a just society, we must challenge root causes of homeless and housing injustice and actively confront institutional racism that creates barriers for all to have access to healthy, safe and affordable homes and public spaces.

We believe as an organization, we must work to be intentional in our strategy, leadership, decision-making, and partnerships to consider the impact on racial equity and accountability to those most impacted by systemic racism and other forms of oppression.

We believe we have an obligation to ensure that BIPOC people have an active role in making decisions that affect their own housing and community and have the power, voice and access to decision-making to advance racial and housing justice.

We believe our anti-racism and racial justice work at VCH requires all staff, board, tenants, residents and program allies to continue to engage in learning and reflection, invite conversations about impact and accountability, and deepen our internal and external capacity to make more effective and impactful change.

Priority 6: Financial Sustainability

Strengthen the long-term financial health of VCH through diversification of funding sources, leveraging of assets, building a strong and supported staff, and marketing and communications strategies to promote VCH success and unique contributions.

Why financial sustainability matters: VCH cannot continue to effectively implement our mission and sustain lower income communities without financial health and sustainability. Our properties are the largest single source of revenue and our greatest asset, and are therefore our main source of financial sustainability if cared for responsibly. We need to align and balance a mix of funding sources that complement our property-generated income, as well as make best use of financial opportunities generated by assets and housing development. VCH will become financially stronger by increasing the level and proportion of unrestricted funding contributed by private sources to supplement government funding and property income. A focus on building and supporting staff, and ensuring they can be financially sustained while doing this work, is critical to VCH's mission but also long-term sustainability. Lastly, by increasing our public profile as a leader with unique expertise and commitment, VCH increases broad public awareness and engagement, promotes our impact in the community, and expands public action and support. VCH is committed to finding ways and avenues for communicating who we are, what we do and why it matters, with a focus on diverse platforms that reach varied audiences.

Priority 7: Leadership and Governance

Establish the depth and breadth of Board, staff, tenant and student leadership to successfully fulfill VCH's commitments, achieve its priorities, and demonstrate accountable and shared leadership internally and externally.

Why leadership and governance matters: Effective and accountable leadership and governance structures are key to the long-term success of VCH, our credibility to funders and the broader public, and the impact of our dedicated staff. Staff recognize that effective leadership involves dedication, goal orientation, modeling, balance, and willingness to make and admit mistakes. VCH is committed to a shared leadership model, advanced by a strong and diverse senior management team in partnership with the Board and other organizational leaders, all of whom must be representative of low-income and BIPOC communities. Shared leadership encourages and incorporates new voices and people throughout all aspects of the organization; it is not a centralized approach. Underlying this leadership approach, we are committed to governance structures that ensure financial responsibility, legal and ethical compliance, measurable program impacts, and fair and just employment practices. Succession planning is an intentional process in order to achieve the established priorities and sustain our mission and protocols as key leaders retire or otherwise positively move on from the organization. VCH will incorporate succession planning into budgeting and financial planning, strengthen collaborative working relationships among Board and senior staff, and develop internal training and transition materials to document organizational history and knowledge.

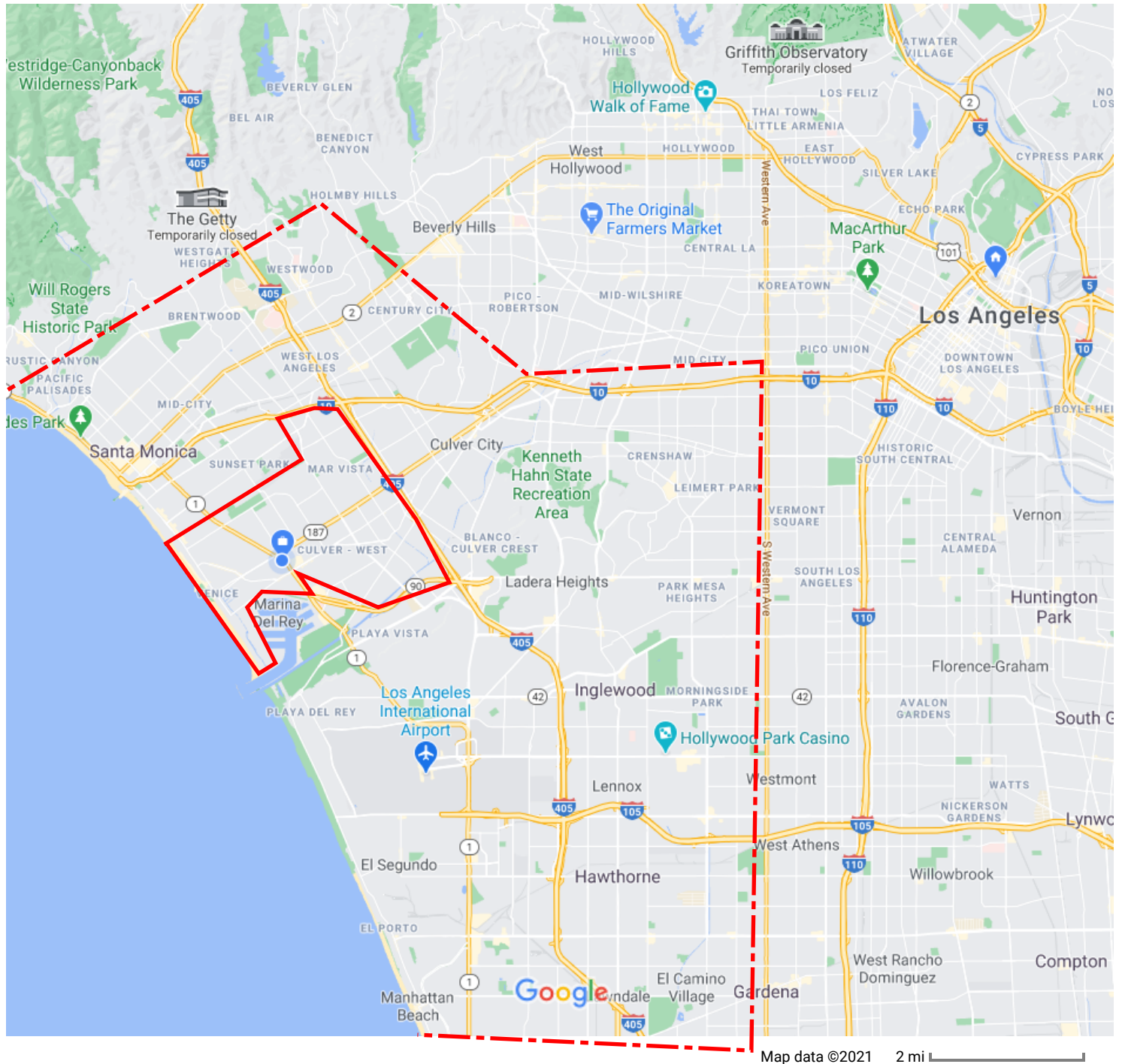
Implementation and Monitoring

This strategic plan was developed in late 2022 through an informed, engaged, and thoughtful process by Board members, management team representatives, and staff members. Each of these groups includes tenant leadership and people with other relevant lived experience, and tenant input was also obtained via meetings and surveys.

This plan is written to become a consistent part of the leadership, governance, and decision making at Venice Community Housing. As part of our approach to Leadership and Governance, staff and Board members will utilize this plan and its core strategies to guide decision making, program development and implementation, and other aspects of VCH operations. Everyone across the organization is committed to contributing to the success of the plan. In times of significant crisis, such as the COVID pandemic or natural disaster, Board and staff will convene and make adjustments to the plan if needed.

The VCH leadership team, through a collective process with staff and tenants, will create a set of measurable, impactful goals in each of the seven strategic priority areas in January of each year, and present to the Board for input and approval at its annual meeting/retreat in February. The full Board will embed discussion of the strategic priorities and progress toward goals into the governance calendar at least twice per year. At annual retreats, Board and staff will step back to consider overall progress relative to the plan, revisit the assumptions that underlie the plan, and challenge whether the work is achieving the mission-driven results that were intended.

This plan reflects the shared vision and future direction developed by VCH Board and staff. It is not set in stone; it is meant to be revised to reflect the changing times, conditions, and opportunities. It is our roadmap to sustain and build upon our rich history and legacy.



Legend

- Primary Focus Area
- - - Secondary Focus Area