



The Los Angeles River Basin Encampment Resolution: Case Study

August 2025



Photograph: Abt Global

The area around the Los Angeles River Basin (LA River Basin) has seen an increased number of homeless encampments over the past few years. People living in the LA River Basin stay in a variety of terrains including the islands in the center of the river, bike paths, within the concrete pipes that support the flow of water from the river, and on the concrete pathways and slopes that lead to the river. They use the walking and bike paths to move throughout the area and to leave and get supplies. The dangers for people living in encampments along the River Basin are significant and include heavy rain and flooding, which has been more common in the Los Angeles area in recent years, and exposure to pollutants and bacteria.

Since accessing the areas along the LA River Basin is challenging, homeless outreach teams seldom conducted street outreach to these encampments. Typically, the only outreach conducted was in partnership with an enhanced River Basin clean-up effort from the Los Angeles Department of Sanitation, the California Department of Transportation, or the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers.

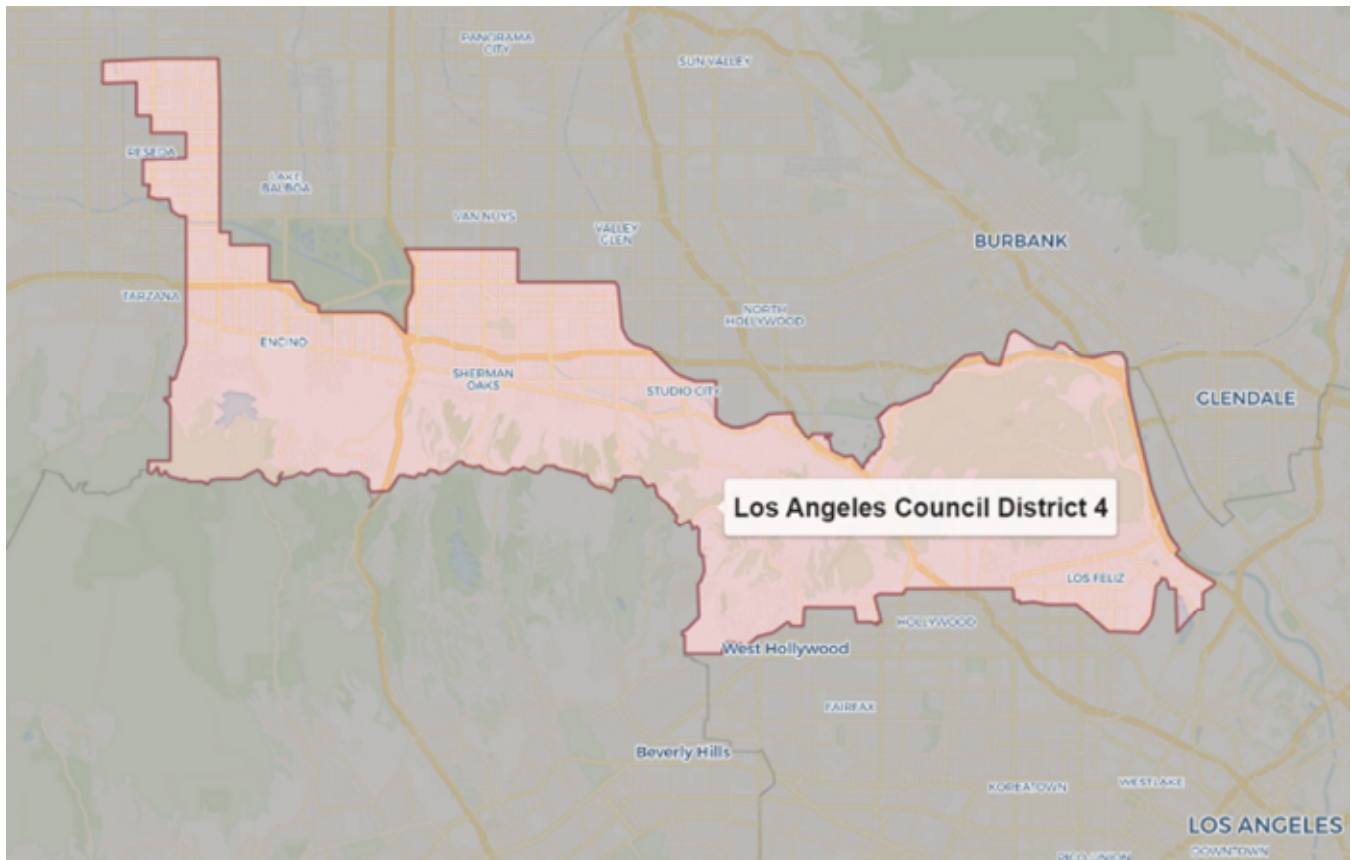
Response to River Basin Encampments

The City of Los Angeles has 15 council districts, each governed by a council member. Council districts are geographically determined and can span large, diverse areas of the city. In 2022, under the leadership of City of Los Angeles' Council District 4 (CD4), an encampment resolution was proposed to house 60 people living in the LA River Basin. CD4 spans an area which includes Los Feliz, the Hollywood Hills, Studio City, Sherman Oaks, Reseda, and Encino [Exhibit 1].

The proposed encampment resolution included consistent outreach, case management, the use of both congregate and non-congregate (i.e., hotels/motels) interim housing, healthcare, and pathways to permanent housing. To fund this encampment resolution, the CD4 team applied for the state's Encampment Resolution Funding (ERF) grant and was awarded \$1.75 million. Additionally in March 2023, CD4 received nearly \$1 million in congressional appropriations for the LA River Basin encampment resolution.¹

¹ District 4 Press Release. Councilmember Raman Announces Congressional Funding For LA River Encampment Resolution Grant. https://cd4.lacity.gov/press-releases/cd4release_larivergrant_031323/

Exhibit 1. Map of Los Angeles City Council District 4



Since her election in 2020, CD4 council member Nithya Raman has focused on responding to homelessness in her district. The CD4 team prioritizes relationship building with people experiencing homelessness, transparency of available resources, consistency, and follow-through. The CD4 team coordinates with the homeless service providers, county health and mental health providers, and street medicine teams that operate in the council district to ensure all resources are used to capacity.

Prior to the LA River Basin resolution, the CD4 team had successfully executed four place-based encampment operations across the district and worked closely with local, state, and federal governmental partners and homeless service providers on encampment resolutions. To execute the LA River Basin resolution, CD4 partnered with People Assisting the Homeless (PATH), a large homeless service organization in the Los Angeles region providing support to people experiencing homelessness that includes street outreach teams, interim housing, supportive services, and permanent housing. Smaller community organizations (SELAH Neighborhood Homeless Coalition and NoHo Home Alliance) also assisted with the effort.

A 19-mile stretch of the LA River Basin was divided into three zones for the encampment resolution (Exhibit 2). These sections of the LA River Basin stretch east of Interstate 405 in the Sherman Oaks neighborhood through Glendale, ending near the Silver Lake and Atwater Village neighborhoods. These zones surround Griffith Park, a historic municipal park in Los Angeles with attractions such as the Griffith Observatory, the Los Angeles Zoo, and the Hollywood sign.

PATH began outreach in all three zones in September 2022. Outreach to encampment residents in Zone 1 ended in February 2023 and outreach to encampment residents in Zone 2 ended in March 2023. Initial assessment and outreach to Zone 3 showed mostly encampments with RVs and vehicles. Since the resolution was not designed to address RVs or vehicles, PATH did not move forward with Zone 3 and refocused efforts to Zone 1 and 2.

Exhibit 2. The Three Zones of The LA River Basin



Source: Map of Los Angeles River Basin, Google Maps. Photographs: Abt Global

Exhibit 3. Council District 4 Encampment Resolution

Encampment Location	A 19-mile stretch along Los Angeles River Basin, divided into three zones: • Zone 1: LA River starting at Fletcher Drive, ending near the Griffith Park tennis courts • Zone 2: LA River starting at Los Feliz Boulevard, running north until the 134 Freeway • Zone 3: Forrest Lawn Drive, paralleling the LA River and the 134 Freeway, through the Warner Brothers Studio lot, ending at Olive Avenue
Encampment Size	160+ residents

Funding Source	State of California Encampment Resolution Fund (ERF) grant; Congressional appropriations
Lead Organizations	Los Angeles City Council District 4 (CD4) People Assisting the Homeless (PATH)
Key Elements of the Intervention	• Offer of interim housing • Case management • Connecting people with long-term housing options

Key Activities and Services Provided

The goal for the LA River Basin encampment resolution was to ensure people experiencing homelessness were offered: (1) interim housing/shelter, (2) case management, and (3) help with securing identification and other legal documents. Any person living in an encampment within the defined zones was eligible for assistance, which included placements in motels or other interim housing, food, and connections to mental health and other supportive services. PATH began the effort by visiting encampments residents along the LA River Basin, introducing their team and the effort underway, and started to build relationships with the residents. Then PATH assessed the residents and asked if they were interested in coming indoors and offered interim housing. PATH staff also focused on securing legal documentation and income and disability verification for residents as they transitioned to interim housing and searched for permanent housing.

In CD4, there is one city funded interim housing site, A Bridge Home Riverside, that provides semi-congregate, temporary housing for approximately 100 individuals. PATH also leveraged the use of motel rooms to serve as interim housing and Los Angeles County funded substance use beds given the high instance of substance use.

In most cases, PATH continued to work with encampment clients as they transitioned indoors. PATH staff visited clients in the motels on Mondays and Wednesdays. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, PATH staff continued outreach and engagement at the LA River Basin and visited the other interim housing location. PATH also provided weekly food allowances for encampment clients in the motels and on the LA River Bed.



Photograph: Abt Global

CD4 also secured 20 time-limited rental subsidies from the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority. The intention was for encampment clients to use these rental subsidies and then transition to either a permanent housing subsidy (i.e., housing voucher) or be connected to public benefits and employment and pay their own rent. Then CD4 would reuse the time-limited rental subsidy for another encampment client. The plan was to cycle through the 20 slots three times, to help 60 individuals. However, this approach was unsuccessful because finding available and affordable rental units was challenging for encampment clients. One PATH staff member explained, ***“Uptake of time-limited subsidies has been really slow. CD4 is having to augment them with motel vouchers, people need time to get document ready.”*** As clients moved out of the LA River Basin and into interim or permanent housing, CD4 engaged the City’s

Department of Sanitation to conduct a comprehensive clean-up of the river’s bike path.

Valerie’s Story

Valerie had been living in her tent along the LA River Basin for the past 3 months. Previously she had been at another location along the river. She explains that she is friendly but mostly stays to herself. She initially moved to the river to find more space. Other areas of the city where she had been homeless had cleaning crewing constantly and she had to move her belongings repeatedly. Overall, she had been homeless for the past five to six years. She had seen outreach teams in the past but they were inconsistent. She explained that PATH under this resolution effort has been very consistent with outreach and services. Currently she is working with PATH to find permanent housing. She says the hardest part about being homeless was having her pictures of her children and other personal belongings stolen. She also discussed some physical pain in her back that makes living on the streets difficult.

Funding/Cost

CD4 received \$1.75 million from the state of California’s Encampment Resolution Fund – Round 1 grant to implement this resolution effort. CD4 and PATH spent most of the ERF Round 1 funding (nearly 100 percent) on direct services and housing and a small portion of the grant for administration. Most of the nearly \$1 million congressional appropriation for this intervention was spent on expanding the duration of services such as street medicine, case management, and motels.

Client Characteristics

While CD4 and PATH only intended to serve 60 clients through the encampment resolution, they engaged with and served 160 clients. Most clients were white (50 percent) or Hispanic/Latino (34 percent) and

between 25 and 54 years old (74 percent). Almost none of the population identified as a veteran.

Exhibit 4. LA Encampment Resolution Client Demographics

LA River Basin	
Total Clients	160
Race/Ethnicity	
Hispanic/Latino	53 (34%)
White (non-Hispanic)	77 (50%)
Black (non-Hispanic)	15 (10%)
Other (including multiracial)	8 (5%)
Age	
18 to 24	7 (4%)
25 to 54	118 (74%)
55 to 64	29 (18%)
65 and Over	6 (4%)
Veteran	
Yes	3 (2%)
No	144 (98%)

Source: Homeless Management Information System data provided by PATH, 2025. Note: The HMIS data did not include clients’ gender. Sums may not equal 100 due to rounding.

LA River Basin encampment clients experienced multiple episodes of homelessness in the last three years, with over half reporting four or more episodes of homelessness. Over 80 percent of clients also reported their last episode of homelessness lasted more than 12 months. Some clients staying in the LA River Basin encampment reported chronic health conditions (20 percent), mental illness (37 percent), and substance use disorder (31 percent). About 13 percent of clients reported having experienced domestic violence. Sixty-six percent of clients reported having health insurance coverage at the time they enrolled in the CD4/PATH encampment resolution program.

Exhibit 5. LA River Encampment Resolution Client Health Characteristics

LA River Basin	
Total Clients	160
Health Insurance Coverage	
Yes	87 (66%)
No	45 (34%)
Substance Use Disorder	
Yes	43 (31%)
No	94 (67%)
Chronic Health Disorder	
Yes	27 (20%)
No	108 (80%)
Mental Health Disorder	
Yes	50 (37%)
No	87 (64%)

Source: Homeless Management Information System data provided by PATH, 2025.

Note: Sums may not equal 100 due to rounding.

Length of Stays and Exits

Approximately 70 percent of encampment clients enrolled in the resolution program between 3 and 12 months and another 20 percent enrolled between 12 and 18 months. Very few people remained less than three months in the program. We see this length of stay distribution to be consistent across demographic variables (exhibit 6).

The encampment resolution was designed to move 60 encampment clients from the LA River Basin into either interim or permanent housing. While conducting outreach, CD4 and PATH engaged more than twice that number (160). Of all encampment residents engaged by PATH, 60 households moved into either interim housing or permanent housing. Fifty-three participants moved into permanent housing with an ongoing housing subsidy, and seven participants moved into interim housing (i.e., emergency shelter, motel/hotel). Ninety-six encampment residents either decided not to engage with PATH and CD4 staff on housing efforts or their preferred housing option was not available during the resolution. However, these encampment residents still received outreach and linkages to other services. One person died during the program.² Two organizations, Ascencia and Healthcare in Action permanently housed an additional nine residents from the River Basin encampment.

“One lesson – you need a variety of [interim housing] IH options that are attractive – that means allowing them to bring in partners together, private room and bath are important, congregate is a hard sell, lots of people may have had justice involvement, so you need security at site. [Interim housing] must be very client centered and low barrier.”

—PATH Staff Member

Exhibit 6. LA River Encampment Resolution Length of Stay by Client Demographic and Health Characteristics

LA River Encampment Resolution Length of Stay						
	0-1 Months	1-3 Months	3-6 Months	6-12 Months	12-18 Months	18+ Months
Full Population (N=160)	2 (1%)	6 (4%)	57 (36%)	56 (35%)	33 (21%)	6 (4%)
Race/Ethnicity (N=153)						
Hispanic/Latino	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	17 (32%)	18 (34%)	13 (25%)	3 (6%)

LA River Encampment Resolution Length of Stay						
	0-1 Months	1-3 Months	3-6 Months	6-12 Months	12-18 Months	18+ Months
White (non-Hispanic)	1 (1%)	3 (4%)	30 (39%)	27 (35%)	14 (18%)	2 (3%)
Black (non-Hispanic)	0	2 (13%)	6 (40%)	5 (33%)	2 (13%)	0.0
Other (including multiracial)	0	0	2 (25%)	3 (36%)	2 (25%)	1 (13%)
Age, in Years at Program Entry (N=160)						
18 to 24	0	0	1 (14%)	4 (57%)	2 (29%)	0.0
25 to 54	1 (1%)	3 (3%)	48 (41%)	38 (32%)	22 (19%)	6 (5%)
55 to 64	1 (3%)	3 (10%)	7 (24%)	12 (41%)	6 (21%)	0.0
65 and Over	0	0	1 (17%)	2 (33%)	3 (50%)	0.0
Veteran Status at Program Entry (N=147)						
Yes	0	1 (33%)	1 (33%)	1 (33%)	0.0	0.0
No	2 (1%)	4 (3%)	51 (35%)	51 (35%)	30 (21%)	6 (4%)
Disability at Program Entry (N=137)						
Yes	2 (3%)	2 (3%)	21 (36%)	15 (26%)	14 (24%)	4 (7%)
No	0	3 (4%)	24 (30%)	34 (43%)	16 (20%)	2 (3%)
Total Months Homeless in Last Three Years at Program Entry (N=130)						
Up to 12 months	0	0	7 (37%)	11 (58%)	1 (5%)	0
More than 12 months	2 (2%)	5 (5%)	33 (30%)	35 (32%)	30 (27%)	6 (5%)
Times Homeless in Last Three Years at Program Entry (N=132)						
One time	1 (5%)	0	6 (32%)	6 (32%)	5 (26%)	1 (5%)
Two times	1 (4%)	2 (9%)	9 (39%)	8 (35%)	2 (9%)	1 (4%)
Three times	0	2 (11%)	5 (26%)	9 (47%)	2 (11%)	1 (5%)
Four or more times	0	1 (1%)	21 (30%)	24 (34%)	22 (31%)	3 (4%)
Chronic Health Condition at Program Entry (N=135)						
Yes	1 (4%)	0	9 (33%)	9 (33%)	8 (30%)	0
No	1 (1%)	4 (4%)	36 (33%)	36 (36%)	22 (20%)	6 (6%)
Substance Use Disorder at Program Entry (N=137)						
Yes	0	1 (2%)	10 (23%)	13 (30%)	16 (37%)	3 (7%)
No	2 (2%)	4 (4%)	35 (37%)	35 (37%)	15 (16%)	3 (3%)
Developmental Disability at Program Entry (N=135)						
Yes	0	0	4 (33%)	3 (25%)	2 (17%)	3 (25%)
No	2 (2%)	4 (3%)	41 (33%)	46 (37%)	27 (22%)	3 (2%)
Physical Disability at Program Entry (N=139)						
Yes	1 (4%)	0	13 (46%)	6 (21%)	7 (25%)	1 (4%)
No	1 (1%)	4 (4%)	32 (29%)	46 (41%)	23 (21%)	5 (5%)

Source: Homeless Management Information System data provided by PATH, 2025.

Note: For all characteristics, population is restricted to clients who exited the program. For a given characteristic, Ns vary due to missing responses. Program length of stay was measured in days. "0-1 months" corresponds to 0-30 days; "1-3 months" corresponds to 31-90 days; "3-6 months" corresponds to 91-180 days; "6-12 months" corresponds to 181-360 days; "12-18

LA River Encampment Resolution Length of Stay						
	0-1 Months	1-3 Months	3-6 Months	6-12 Months	12-18 Months	18+ Months

months" corresponds to 361–540 days; and "18+ months" corresponds to 541+ days. Percentages are percent of row. Rows may not exactly up to 100 percent due to rounding.

Client Experiences

Clients described moving to encampments along the LA river to find more space, privacy, and areas away from frequent encampment cleaning efforts. Multiple residents said they moved to the LA River Basin to have more privacy and to stay in a location that was less likely to experience encampment sweeps. Clients said in other encampments, they repeatedly lost personal items when sweeps or cleanings occurred or had their items stolen.

Clients described extreme weather as a daily challenge. Clients living in the LA River Basin encampments described extreme weather — particularly heat, rain, and the cold — as an additional challenge to experiencing unsheltered homelessness. Extreme weather and exposure to heat, rain, and cold, can complicate clients’ existing health conditions and damage their belongings.

Moving inside after experiencing persistent homelessness was an adjustment, and typically required clients to re-acclimate to a quiet environment and sleeping in a bed. For some clients, the transition to moving inside after experiencing unsheltered homelessness was difficult. Clients described feeling uncomfortable in quiet places without noise from traffic. One client described sleeping on the motel floor because he was not used to sleeping in a bed. Overall, clients liked the sense of

safety they felt in the motel and appreciated the meals and connection to services that PATH provided.

Clients expressed wanting to work towards self-sufficiency. Some clients described feeling grateful for PATH’s assistance (e.g., motel, rental assistance, transportation, linkage to benefits and services). However, they wanted to be able to pay for their rent and necessities on their own. Some clients found employment after moving into interim housing.

Successes and Challenges

Frequent outreach by the same outreach teams generated client trust and facilitated engagement.

The consistency of outreach to the LA River Bed ensured that encampment residents knew the outreach staff and what to expect when they conducted outreach. One particular success was quickly moving encampment residents inside to interim housing or a motel.

A shortage of interim housing in CD4 complicated efforts to quickly house encampment residents.

During the initial stages of the encampment intervention, CD4 had a shortage of interim housing.³ CD4 staff also reported having a limited number of rental subsidies and housing navigation resources for people experiencing homelessness in their district. In spring 2023, CD4 staff expected to have a new interim

³ Over the past two years more interim housing has become available in CD4.

housing motel as part of the city's Inside Safe Initiative. However, the city was unable to find a motel large enough to qualify for an Inside Safe site. As a result, PATH staff secured motel rooms for encampment residents as a form of interim housing.

Service providers needed to learn about the LA River Basin area and adapt service delivery during inclement weather. Staff from PATH noted that because they had not previously provided services to the LA River Bed encampments there was an adjustment and learning period early on during the intervention. In addition to being a new area for PATH, encampments along the river are difficult to reach and susceptible to flooding during heavy rains making it difficult for outreach workers to reach encampments. Flooding of the River Bed is incredibly unsafe for encampment residents and was a motivating factor for conducting outreach in this area.



Photograph: Abt Global

The full study report along with other case studies can be found on the [Conrad N. Hilton Foundation website](#).

For more information about the study please contact the Project Director, Nichole Fiore. (Nichole.Fiore@abtglobal.com)