

Housing Continuum  
in the Gateway

less  
than **30%**  
**AMI**

This project serves the  
needs of residents in the  
Extremely Low Income  
(ELI) category.



## Shipping Containers Become Housing for the Homeless

### Watts Works

#### Key Stakeholders

- City of Los Angeles
- Architect: Studio One Eleven
- Developer: Daylight Community Development

#### Project Timeline

August 2019 – October 2021

#### Project Budget

Each unit cost about \$380,000 to construct and funding for the more than \$8.6-million project comes from a variety of local and private sources, including Los Angeles County, the City of Los Angeles, Rose Community Capital, and Genesis LA.

### Project Background

This **permanent supportive housing** project provides 24-units of **affordable housing** to formerly homeless residents in Los Angeles. Funded with the support of Proposition HHH, the building is constructed using repurposed shipping containers to reduce construction costs and the project timeline.

To integrate the building into its surroundings, the structure incorporates an open stair and roof-top amenity space. The design additionally preserved existing landscaping elements to serve as a buffer between the building and the neighboring single-family homes.

Design features include a spacious community room overlooking the street, long-term bicycle storage, and outdoor community dining. This **modular housing** development has received a grant from Mayor Garcetti's Housing Innovation Challenge on innovative cost-effective housing.

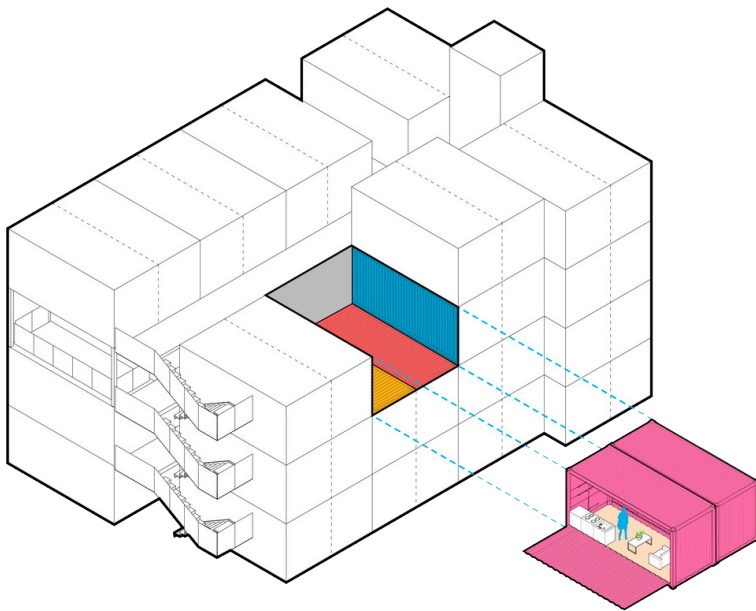
#### Key Terms:

**Affordable Housing** – In the United States, “affordable housing” refers to housing, rent or a mortgage plus utility payments, totaling 30% or less of a household's gross income. Affordable housing developments are often subject to a covenants or deed restrictions that preserve the property as affordable by creating rent limits and qualifying standards for residents, and restrictions on selling the property.

**Modular Housing** – Housing structures made from prefabricated units that are fully assembled on site

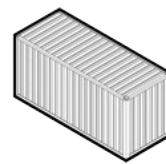
**Permanent Supportive Housing** – Supportive housing links decent, safe, affordable, community-based housing with flexible, voluntary support services designed to help the individual or family stay housed and live a more productive life in the community.

## Building Framework

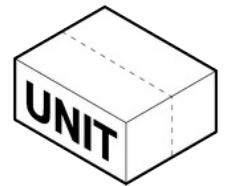


## Objectives/Goals

The City of Los Angeles is housing more people than ever before, but still cannot keep up with the number of people that are falling into homelessness every day. The goal of Watts Works was to provide affordable and accessible housing for low income residents, with comparable quality to higher-end units. The design of the compact building is intended to focus on exterior stairways connecting a variety of open spaces at various levels.



58



25

## Challenges

**Overview:** Despite the large number of units being built, residents are falling into homelessness at a staggering rate in Los Angeles.

- 1 Homelessness Urgency:** Homelessness is a central issue in the city of Los Angeles and requires projects that can move swiftly to house the most vulnerable.
- 2 Preserving Site Character:** Implementation of a new housing development requires knowledge and respectful integration with the existing site and neighborhood character.
- 3 Integrated Coordination:** Affordable modular projects involve every level of government, from federal funding & accessibility guidelines, state modular permitting, to local city permitting.

## Solutions

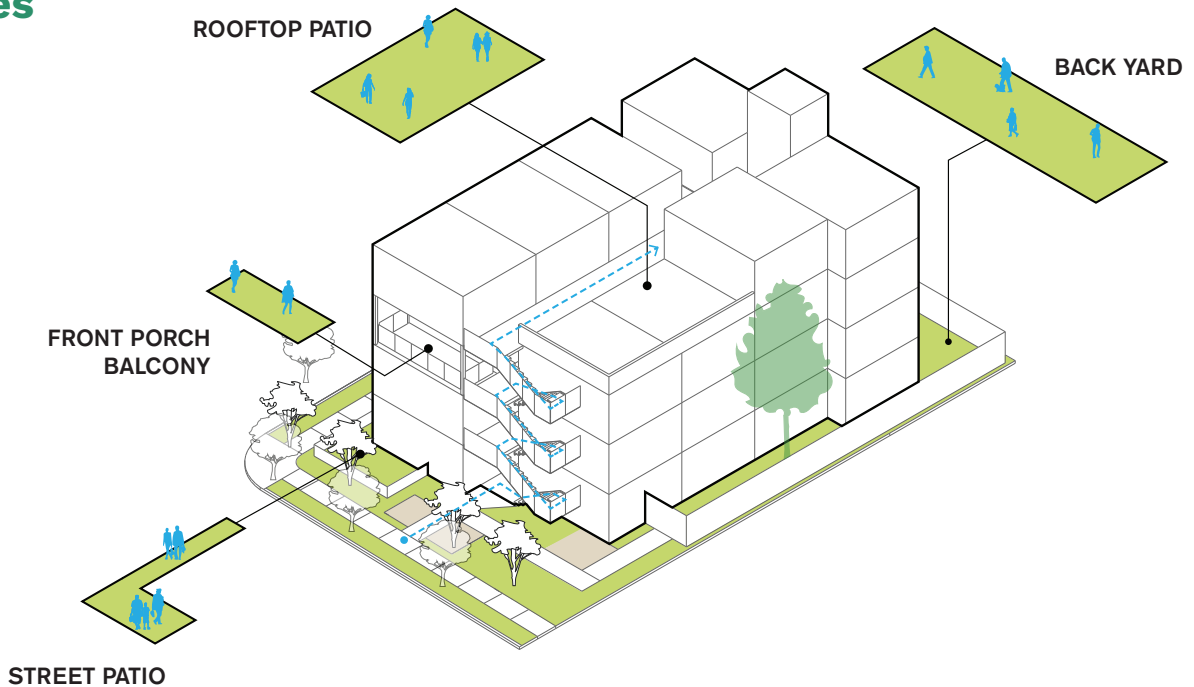
**Overview: Modular housing** introduces new kinds of efficiency and flexibility not traditional to typical housing development processes.

- 1 Modular Design:** Because modular housing is fabricated off site, there is a much higher speed of implementation. Modules that make up a building are structurally strong, high quality, and require shorter construction time.
- 2 Maintaining Existing Features:** The side yard was carved out to accommodate a large existing tree for the surrounding neighborhood.
- 3 Scale:** The benefit of creating housing density on small sites is that such properties may already be entitled for multi-family development. Further, with shipping container architecture, units are built off site and crane-lifted into place.



GATEWAY CITIES  
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

## Open Space Typologies



## Results

Modular containers work particularly well to accommodate constricting site parameters, the project scale and the unit size, all of which have helped expedite the construction schedule and reduce overall costs. The containers themselves are designed with interior and exterior finishes that will blend well with the neighborhood. The four-story complex is slated to hold 24 studio apartments for chronically homeless individuals, plus a manager's unit, at a site on Compton Avenue, north of Century Boulevard. Residents will have access to a ground-floor community room with an outdoor patio that overlooks the street corner, bicycle parking, a backyard and a rooftop terrace. The open stairs at each end of the building, in conjunction with open corridors provide cross-ventilation and encourage tenant use to engage in a healthy lifestyle. To further support residents, social services such as counseling, community-based health care, and employment training are provided on site.

## Key Takeaways

Watts Works is one of the first container modular housing projects in the city of Los Angeles. This development took on an innovative approach to financing cost-effective housing through the use of modular design and various funding sources such as Proposition HHH funds.

This funding will leverage three additional scattered sites to provide much needed housing for Los Angeles. The project is testing the potential for other modular building components such as elevators.

This project serves as an example of a successful process to create lower-cost permanent supportive housing. It utilized a state modular and local building plan check process. Throughout the process there was fluid design problem solving from all involved team members and this collaborate approach provided a diverse knowledge base.



# 58 REPURPOSED SHIPPING CONTAINERS

The project is being constructed with 58 repurposed shipping containers that were built-out in Colorado and shipped to Los Angeles.

## \$23.8 MILLION

Watts Works inspired a \$23.8 million commitment to replicate this model in subsequent housing developments.

## 66,436 HOMELESS IN LA COUNTY

There are about 66,436 people experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles County and 41,290 in the city of Los Angeles, according to LAHSA's homelessness count in 2019. The count for 2020 was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

