

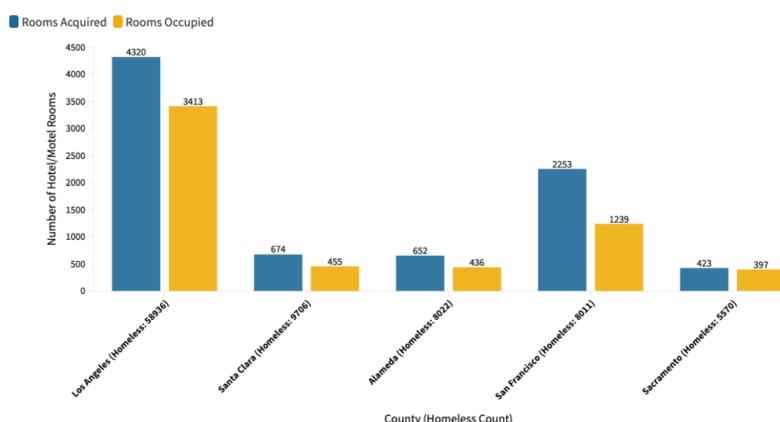
Advocacy Weekly Wrap

ISSUE 3: NOVEMBER 3, 2020

ISSUE SPOTLIGHT: Project Roomkey, Vacant Hotels & the COVID-19 Crisis

Project Roomkey Progress in Five California Counties

Data on room acquisition and occupancy as of June 9 in five of the state's largest counties, which account for 45 percent of the state's homeless



- Hotels are struggling.** Due to the COVID-19 crisis, experts predict that there will be a **"tsunami" of hotel closures** in the following months, as owners face decreased demand.
- Academics argue that hotels are integral sources of housing in the face of the current health crisis.** A **recent report** by UCLA Luskin Institute on Inequality and Democracy outlined a "comprehensive framework for the conversion of hospitality properties into housing through the large-scale public acquisition of tourist hotels and motels."
- During the pandemic, many hotels have been converted into temporary housing for individuals experiencing homelessness.** California launched **Project Roomkey** in early April to provide rooms for unhoused individuals most vulnerable to COVID-19.
- Project Roomkey has had mixed success.** While LA set goals to provide 15,000 rooms under the program, as of early August only **4,177 rooms** have been secured by the county. As of early November, **even less** are occupied. Activists note that the failure of the city to reach its goals is partially due to opposition from hotels, including those that have **received public subsidies**.
- Looking forward:** While the program is expected to end in early 2021, LAHSA recently announced plans to transition "at least 4,900" Project Roomkey clients into **"long-term housing solutions."**
- The numbers:** For context, the most recent LAHSA homeless count found **66,436 people** were experiencing homelessness in January 2020. As of early November, **2,048 unhoused individuals** have tested positive for COVID-19.



Protesters gather outside the Ritz Carlton Hotel in Downtown Los Angeles in early May to protest Mayor Garcetti's unwillingness to commandeer hotels for housing. (Source: [The Daily Beast](#))

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Article: "Project Roomkey, the Golden State's grand experiment" (The Howard Center for Investigative Journalism)

Article: "People Are About to Be Pushed Into Homelessness On a Large Scale: Hotels Are Key to Keeping Them Off the Streets" (The Appeal)

Thread: "By allowing hotels and landlords to opt out of participating in Project Roomkey and COVID rental assistance funds, City Council is leaving Angelenos to die from the pandemic, heatwaves, and toxic air." (Ktown for All)

Podcast: "Checking out of Hotel 166" follows one Chicago organization providing supportive housing for houseless individuals in a luxury hotel. (The Journal)

ACTION ITEMS:

- [Update from last week's action items]:**
 - Thanks to pushback from activists last week, LA City Council delayed vote on the **October 21** motion to criminalize homelessness. The motion has been **continued until November 24th**.
 - During the October 28 city council meeting, councilmember Mike Bonin introduced a **substitute motion** aimed at expanding LA's housing stock rather than criminalizing its unhoused residents. Among the suggested solutions: commandeer hotels and motels for housing, expand the Encampment to Homes program, and scale up the Master Leasing Program.
- What's happening:** City council meets this Wednesday, November 4. On the agenda: ITEM NO. 20-0197, which calls for the **"consideration of pathways to establishing Social Housing to accommodate the urgent need for affordable housing."**
 - Thread:** "This motion would explore the legal limits on what LA can do, explore funding options, and look at international comparisons on social housing." (Ktown for All)
- What you can do (0.5 hours):**
 - Call and/or email City Council to voice support of this motion. The LA Council Member for Westwood is **Paul Kortez**.
 - Submit written public comment ([link to LA Public Comment Form for this item](#)).

Thank you so much for reading! If you found this informative, please share! If you would like to subscribe, [click here](#).

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