

Ending homelessness in New York



23 Years of Innovative Programs That Transform People, Buildings and Communities

Common Ground's mission is to strengthen individuals, families and communities by developing and sustaining exceptional supportive and affordable housing as well as programs for homeless and other vulnerable New Yorkers. Over the last 23 years, Common Ground has grown into one of the largest providers of supportive housing in the United States. Our strategy has four components:

- We build and operate a range of housing options for homeless and low-income individuals – housing that is attractive, affordable, well managed, and linked to the services and support people need to rebuild their lives.
- We identify and house the most vulnerable: those who have been homeless the longest, have the most disabling conditions, and are least likely to access housing resources.
- We address homelessness by providing support services that focus on the multiple factors that cause individuals and families to become homeless.
- We create neighborhood assets that promote social inclusion. Our buildings preserve historic landmarks, transform neglected properties, and introduce new resources and opportunities to surrounding communities.

Accomplishments

Housing

As of the beginning of 2013, Common Ground has nearly 3,200 units of permanent and transitional housing in New York City, Connecticut, and upstate New York.

Common Ground's network of well-designed, affordable apartments — linked to the services people need to maintain their housing, restore their health, and regain their economic independence — has enabled more than 5,000 individuals to overcome homelessness.

Cost Effectiveness

Supportive housing costs approximately \$40 per night to operate – significantly less than public expenditures: \$54 for a city shelter bed, \$74 for a state prison cell, \$164 for a city jail cell, \$467 for a psychiatric bed, \$1,185 for a hospital bed.*

Outreach

Our ground-breaking Street to Home program reduced street homelessness by 87% in the 20-block Times Square neighborhood, and by 43% in the surrounding 230 blocks of West Midtown. Spearheading a citywide strategy, Common Ground is now responsible for securing homes for people living on the streets in all of Brooklyn, Queens, and midtown Manhattan. The program has served almost 3,500 clients.

Awards

Common Ground has received the Building Brooklyn Award, the Fast Company/Monitor Group Social Capitalist Award, the American Council of Engineers' Diamond Award, the Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence, the Peter Drucker Award for Non-Profit Innovation, the Lucy G. Moses Preservation Award, and the World Habitat Award through the United Nations and Building and Social Housing Foundation.

*The Lewin Group "Costs of Serving Homeless Individuals in Nine Cities"



Common Ground's Street To Home Program

Common Ground has a long and distinguished history of providing direct services to persons who are street homeless through its Street to Home (S2H) program, which began in 2003 on Manhattan's West Side with the aim of reducing chronic street homelessness in the 250-block area of midtown by developing the capacity to make permanent housing placements directly from the streets. As a result of the S2H initiative, homelessness in Times Square was reduced by 87%.

The philosophy of S2H is based on the premise that homelessness is a solvable problem and by focusing strategic efforts and resources on the most chronically homeless and vulnerable people, homelessness will be significantly reduced.

S2H incorporates a methodical system of counting and documenting who is street homeless, and bringing medical, psychiatric, and housing placement services directly to people on the street. S2H staff display genuine and non-judgmental attitudes as they are working to gain the trust and respect of the people they serve. Throughout the entire process of engagement, S2H staff members begin conversations of permanent housing which is more desirable than the City shelter system options that were historically offered to people who were chronically street homeless.

S2H offers people housing placement services based on a Housing First model that ascribes to the belief that housing is a basic human right and that once in housing people are more apt to address medical, mental health, substance abuse, and other needs. S2H staff help people access permanent housing that most appropriately meets their needs and then they ensure that the person has adequate social service

and support services in place to help maintain their housing. Over 90% of people who have been placed into permanent housing through Common Ground's S2H program have remained in housing.

In 2007 the City changed its approach to outreach services citywide. They adopted the S2H model and contracted with four lead agencies with one point of accountability in each borough. These new contracts emphasized a focus on reducing the street homeless population by securing permanent housing placements for people who are chronically homeless. Common Ground currently participates as a subcontractor in the Manhattan Outreach Consortium (MOC), and is the lead agency for operating the S2H outreach and housing placement program in Brooklyn/Queens.

Both programs are funded by the city Department of Homeless Services (DHS) and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH). As a part of MOC, Common Ground partners with two other contracted agencies to implement S2H outreach and housing placement services throughout Manhattan.

Common Ground's Manhattan catchment area spans from 59th to 10th Street river to river, and west of 5th Avenue down to Houston Street. In Brooklyn and Queens, Common Ground is the lead agency and is responsible for conducting S2H outreach and housing placement across both boroughs 24 hours per day, 365 days per year. Since the start of our outreach contracts in September 2007, Common Ground's S2H programs have helped over 800 chronically homeless people move into housing and have contributed to over 2,200 housing placements made citywide.