

## Common Ground

Our mission is to end homelessness through innovative programs that transform people, buildings, and communities. Common Ground is one of the nation's largest developers of supportive housing. We have created more than 2,000 units of permanent and transitional housing in New York City, Connecticut, and upstate New York. We plan to create 4,000 additional units by 2015.



## The Common Ground Institute

The Common Ground Institute brings hands-on technical assistance and field support to cities across the country and around the world in their efforts to end homelessness. In each community, we pursue four main objectives: create housing, build knowledge, test and model innovative solutions, and champion creative, effective practices. For more information, please contact our Institute Director, Lori Girvan, at [lgirvan@commonground.org](mailto:lgirvan@commonground.org).

## Times Square Alliance

The Times Square Alliance (formerly the Times Square Business Improvement District), founded in 1992, works to improve and promote Times Square so that it retains the energy, edge, and distinctiveness that have made it an icon for entertainment, culture, and urban life for almost a century. In addition to providing core services with 50 Public Safety Officers and 50 Sanitation associates, the BID promotes local businesses, co-coordinates numerous major events in Times Square (e.g., New Year's Eve and Broadway on Broadway), manages an Information Center, and advocates on behalf of its constituents with respect to a host of public policy, planning, and quality-of-life issues.

## Making it Work in Your Community

Common Ground's Breakthrough Series provides BIDs and local service agencies with the guidance, techniques, and resources to implement Street to Home in your community, and produce substantial and long-lasting reductions in street homelessness. From an initial two-day immersion in our process taught by a faculty of housing placement workers and BID public safety officers who have themselves successfully implemented the program, through six months of follow-up, we offer a comprehensive approach to reducing street homelessness in your community.

You receive access to our online community where best practices and lessons learned are shared by professionals with track records of effectively reducing homelessness in their cities. You learn how to connect those living on the street with housing and employment opportunities and to engage the business and philanthropic communities in the effort.

We teach your team how to assess individuals for housing, services, and benefits, and share helpful tips on expediting this process. Street to Home uses techniques derived from Motivational Interviewing and Trauma Informed Care to engage individuals on the street and negotiate their placement into housing.

The Street to Home process provides those living on the street with the help they need to establish and maintain a stable and healthier life. In the process, **you will help transform your community.**



COMMON  
GROUND

# 87%

## reduction in street homelessness in Times Square

“Long bouts with mental and physical illness, involvement with drugs, and run-ins with the law left him homeless, and hopeless, until three years ago. That’s when he found a home, and hope, in supportive housing at Times Square provided by Common Ground.”

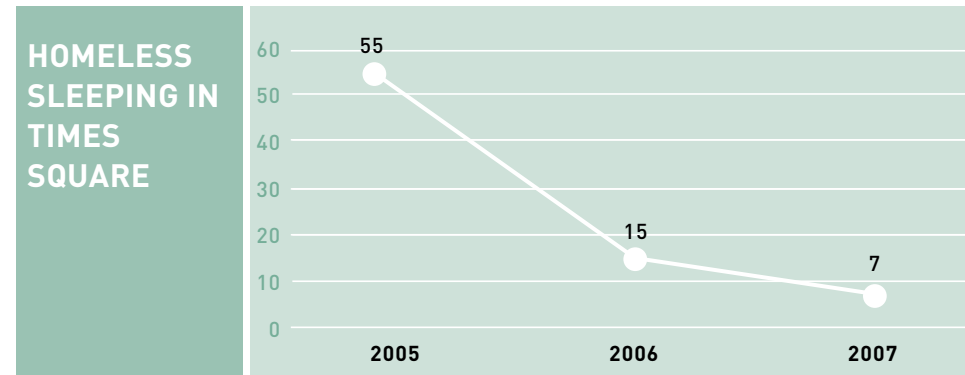
Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, *Ending Chronic Homelessness in New York City*, June 23, 2004

# The Street to Home Method

## Ending Street Homelessness One Neighborhood at a Time

Until recently, the 20 block Times Square neighborhood had one of the highest densities of street homelessness in New York City. For years, even on the coldest nights of winter, an average of 55 people made the streets and sidewalks of Times Square their home. **Common Ground's Street to Home**, working side by side with the **Times Square Alliance**, changed all this, **reducing street homelessness by 87%** over two years.

Other urban neighborhoods are achieving similar results—results so dramatic that the City of New York adopted our approach as a citywide strategy. Boston, Denver, Chicago, Atlanta, and Washington, DC—have also introduced Street to Home in their communities.



## How It Works

Street to Home focuses on securing housing for those who have been living on the street the longest and need housing the most. Street to Home replaces the random “first come, first served” approach with a targeted, strategic process: **identify and prioritize** the most vulnerable individuals on the street, **assess and negotiate** housing options with those individuals, then **house and retain**.

**IDENTIFY AND PRIORITIZE** Our proven methods rely on prioritizing for housing those who have slept outside the longest and need housing the most. The process starts by partnering with your BID’s public safety officers or community outreach workers who—because they are on the front lines every day—have a thorough knowledge of the people continually living on their streets. We can train these same ambassadors to introduce clients to a housing team that will help them to secure housing. We’ve developed a simple tracking tool that will enable

you to differentiate between those who are consistently in the targeted area and those who are transients. By targeting the former, you will be able to create a “tipping point” in your community and begin to see an exponential impact from your efforts.

We prioritize the most vulnerable, the most chronically homeless, and target services to the people who need housing most. Our research-based Vulnerability Index takes the guesswork out of outreach and offers a rational system for prioritizing the most vulnerable homeless for housing.

**ASSESS AND NEGOTIATE** Most people who have lived on the streets for a long time are suffering from multiple disabilities and are usually eligible for some form of housing subsidy. We will teach your service providers how to assess for eligibility for housing, services, and benefits, and share helpful tips on expediting this process. Street to Home uses techniques derived from Motivational Interviewing and Trauma Informed Care in working with clients to negotiate placement into housing.

**HOUSE AND RETAIN** **Common Ground** helped more than 175 adults—who had been homeless an average of 9.9 years—move from the streets directly into permanent housing since the start of Street to Home. Once inside, 90% of our clients are able to maintain their housing. Most individuals who have lived on the streets for long periods don’t wish to live in a shelter; but want and are successful in their own homes. Moving inside begins their reintegration into society. Some clients of Street to Home have re-established relationships with family members. Many are working or have returned back to school.

## Why It Works

Most individuals who have lived on the streets for a long time want housing. Partnering with these individuals on the mutual goal of housing radically changes the dynamics of street outreach. Most are suffering from multiple disabilities and are therefore eligible for some form of income and housing subsidy. Street to Home assesses each individual’s eligibility for subsidized housing and income benefits and walks each person through the process of obtaining permanent housing—registering for disability or income support benefits, completing medical and psychiatric tests, and finding an apartment that fits the person’s needs.



- > In the last year alone, **Common Ground's Street to Home** moved 54 people from the streets directly into housing.
- > In September, 2007, the City of New York adopted **Street to Home** as the Citywide strategy to reduce street homelessness by 2/3rds within three years. **Common Ground** will direct all efforts on the streets of midtown Manhattan and throughout the boroughs of Brooklyn and Queens.
- > Denver identified the 65 most chronically homeless individuals in its downtown area and raised \$1,000,000 from local business leaders to place these individuals directly into housing
- > Chicago discovered that while 94 people panhandled in the downtown corridor, only 24 actually slept outside on a regular basis. In less than three months from the project launch, 10 of the most chronic and vulnerable homeless were permanently housed.
- > Atlanta, with the help of BID ambassadors, identified the 18 most chronic homeless individuals in the downtown area; 7 were housed within the first two weeks of the project.