

# Hotels to Housing

*Combating Homelessness Track – Session Three*



Arizona  
Department  
of Housing

## Moderator:

Deputy Director Cindy Stotler

## Speakers

Lisa Glow, *Central Arizona Shelter Services*

Elizabeth DaCosta, *Community Bridges Inc.*

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# Lisa Glow

*Central Arizona Shelter  
Services  
(CASS)*



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Central Arizona Shelter Services

# Lessons from COVID-19: Hotel solutions for the most vulnerable

*Lisa Glow, JD, CASS CEO*

*[lglow@cassaz.org](mailto:lglow@cassaz.org); 602-448-2270*

# CASS: 37 Years—Leading the Charge to End Homelessness

- 1983—Phoenix Mayor Terry Goddard, firefighters, and other leaders respond to homeless crisis
- 1984—CASS opens downtown Phoenix shelter for both single adults and families
- Today—470-bed adult congregate shelter located on the HSC (soon 600 beds and becoming trauma-informed certified); 120 bed family shelter apartments; COVID-19 hotel accommodation for seniors (87 beds for seniors); Glendale Empowerment Center (new in 2020)



# Mission: To prevent and end homelessness among individuals and families while advancing compassionate community solutions.

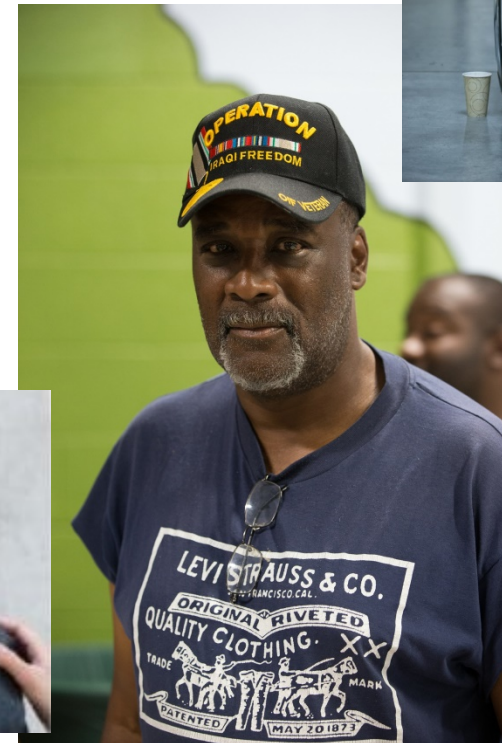
- Average of 5,600 served annually with shelter, case management and housing services
- During the pandemic we remained open 24/7
- And we helped 850 people with housing or permanency through our Flexible Housing Assistance Program; 275 additional people were housed through our Rapid Re-housing Program





# When the Pandemic Struck...

- 30% of our 470 (daily) congregate shelter clients were elderly
- The majority had disabling and medical conditions
- There was no ability to social distance with closely placed bunk beds, shared bathrooms, shared dining facilities, etc.



# WE NEEDED...

- Safe places for the most vulnerable to isolate
- To create social distancing, obtain personal protective equipment, and increase safety at our two shelters—600 beds
- To shore up our housing programs in order to move people quickly into housing
- To pivot and make eviction prevention part of our expanded housing services
- To adapt fast!

# PROJECT HAVEN Hotel—Opened June 2020

- Phoenix Mayor Kate Gallego and the City Council championed Project Haven
- Seniors over age 60 and/or the most medically vulnerable
- COVID-19 negative clients
- 100 rooms—87 for clients, 13 rooms for case managers, food, security, and partner agencies
- Opened June 2020, will close end of September, 2021
- NOTE: The hotel kept nearly 20 rooms open to the general public



# Closed Campus Model: All Services on Site

- 1:15 case management ratios
- Expanded housing resources (including vouchers from the City of Phoenix)
- 24/7 Security
- More housing partners (UHC, CBI, Resilient Health and others)
- Medical and mental health partners (Circle the City; CBI; Resilient Health)
- Food service: 3 Meals, Snacks (SVDP; In-Kind Hospitality; local AAA)
- Laundry service (Social Spin)
- Job support (St. Joseph the Worker)
- Housekeeping and daily rooms checks
- Government benefits enrollment (Az. Dept. of Economic Security)
- Other: Recreation, Spiritual Guidance, Clothing, Move-in Kits

# Outcomes & Who We Served

- 230 clients (projected at least 100), provided with nearly 27,000 bed nights
- Most came from CASS' Phoenix downtown adult shelter
- **87% were over age 55; 47% over age 61; many in their 70's and 80's**
- Common client traits: first time homeless; could no longer afford rent or had been evicted; had lost a job; had no family to turn to; or had been a low wage earner all their life

# Housing and Other Outcomes

- 70% have had a positive housing exit (versus 39% at our adult shelter)
- 118 day average length-of-stay
- 400+ medical appointments provided by Circle the City
- 54,000 meals provided by three partners



# What's Next? We are buying a 144-bed hotel!

## KEY STEPS TO SUCCEED:

- The RIGHT location—We chose the West Valley where homeless numbers have risen & a hotel in need of upgrades and safety to better the neighborhood
- Enroll politicians and gain the trust of neighbors in advance—and every step of the way
- Consider the model and the design carefully, and with neighbor input, before you file for a zoning or use permit
- Identify all available government funding: ADOH, Phoenix, the County, the State (SB1848), private, etc.
- Don't give up and have a back up plan

# Project Haven 2: A New Model for Vulnerable Senior Citizens

- Age 55 and older—will prioritize the most elderly and vulnerable
- Clients must agree to case management and to work on a housing plan
- Closed Campus, no walk up admission
- No visitors allowed (unless picking someone up)
- Similar services to Project Haven 1
- Curfews and check-in's required
- Fully fenced, monitored site, with 24/7 security
- Regular neighborhood meetings to be held

# Lessons & the Intangibles

- On the journey to ending one's homelessness:
  - Housing resources are everything...
  - Case management services are essential, both the quantity and quality of services...
  - Peer support is a critical stabilizing factor...
  - Community oriented environments bring support and healing to the process...
  - And the value of a safe and dignified space to get back on one's feet is immeasurable...



# Final thoughts

- COVID exposed weaknesses in our system we must begin to address
- Public health must remain at the table
- New, specialized shelter models are needed
- Hotels today could later become permanent housing conversions
- The Silver Tsunami of homelessness needs our continued attention

Please join us in challenging assumptions  
and finding new solutions



*Ending homelessness  
one life at a time*

# Liz DaCosta

*Community Bridges, Inc.*  
(CBI)



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“Every now and then one paints a picture that seems to have opened a door and serves as a stepping stone to other things.”

# HOTELS TO HOUSING: EVOLUTION

LIZ DaCOSTA, SENIOR DIRECTOR OF  
HOUSING AND COMMUNITY  
INTEGRATION

COMMUNITY BRIDGES, INC

**CBI**  
COMMUNITY BRIDGES, INC.  
CELEBRATE BELIEVE INSPIRE

# ORIGIN OF THE HOTELS

- Initially, the primary focus was to respond to COVID-19

## Eligibility:

- Experiencing homelessness
- High risk due to pre-existing medical conditions that put member at risk for severe COVID-19 symptoms if contract virus
- Persons Under Investigation (PUI)
- COVID-19 Positive

## Expected outcomes.....*initially*

- Isolate members experiencing homelessness from COVID exposure
- Isolate community from members experiencing homelessness with COVID
- Connect members experiencing homelessness to COVID related medical services

*What was CBI's expected role in the hotel shelter response?*



- Integrated Healthcare Agency with 30+ years serving high risk populations
- CBI serves as an active community partner with an “all hands-on deck” culture
  - Approached COVID response as a familiar crisis response with a lot of PPE involved.
- Built on a peer support model of lived experience

**CBI**

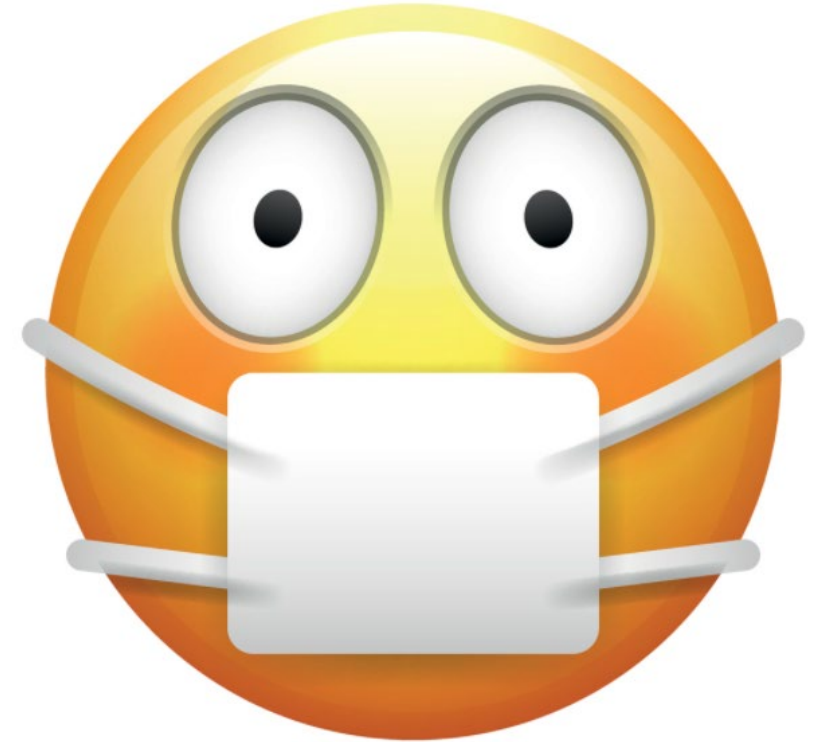
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# EVOLUTION OF THE HOTELS

## Ending homelessness

- A renewed involvement from leaders in the community providing homeless services
- A new purpose behind protecting our vulnerable populations
- New and abundant resources to address housing stability (opportunities)
- New systems or updating systems to access the new resources



### ***UNEXPECTEDLY***

*Together, we the people, created a community wide response to homelessness I've never seen before in my 12-year career of providing direct homeless services*



## OUTCOMES ACHIEVED DURING PANDEMIC

7.1.2020-7.1.2021	Program Style	# Served	Chronically Homeless	Age 55+	3 or more Conditions	Length of Stay	Exit to Permanent Housing	Impact
Mesa High Risk	Hotel, PD referrals	484	144	119	117	69 days	33%	Police relieved of 1/3 of street homeless
Sure Stay	Hotel setting, outreach referrals	188	108	96	94	64 days	66%	Outreach resolved 2/3 of street homelessness
CBI Bridge Congregate	Pre-Covid Vouchered	168	145	66	112	38 days	74%	With voucher in hand majority housed
	Post Covid High risk, High need	130	80	53	78	85 days	54%	With no voucher in hand, benefits from longer bridge stay



## HOTEL SHELTER MEMBER STORY

- Homeless for greater than 90 days but less than one year
- 21 Interactions with Phoenix Police in 6-month period while on streets
- Decline current shelter options
- Moved off streets to hotel within 8 days of enrollment
- Housed in apartment through Rapid Re-housing within 90 days

# 2021 Arizona Housing Forum



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*Let's make this event an example of how to be safe in our new normal - No need to ask, just mask.*