

Housing Works Builds Housing

Housing Works has worked to end the dual crises of homelessness and HIV/AIDS since 1990

Housing Works

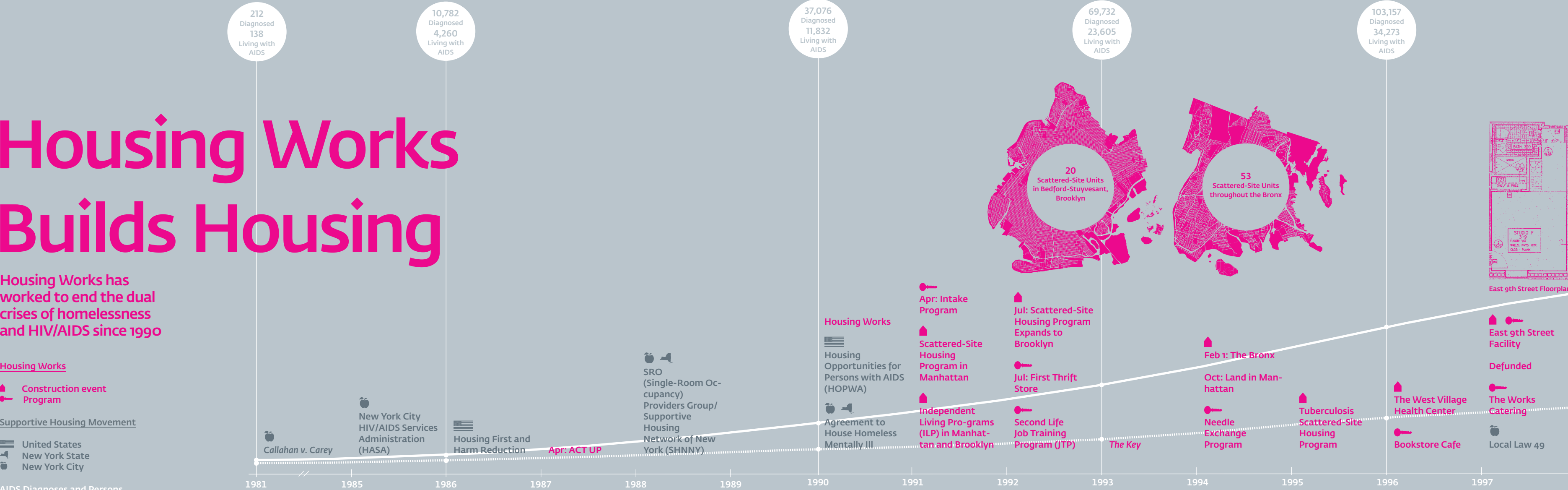
- Construction event
- Program

Supportive Housing Movement

- United States
- New York State
- New York City

AIDS Diagnoses and Persons Living with HIV/AIDS by Year in New York City

- New York City AIDS Diagnoses
 - Persons Living with AIDS
 - Persons Living with HIV/AIDS
- Source: New York City HIV/AIDS Annual Surveillance Statistics, New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene



Living Room: Housing Works Builds Housing is a space to explore the housing and related services created by Housing Works for homeless individuals and families living with HIV/AIDS in New York City. Since 1990 we have built over 170 units of permanent and transitional housing, complemented by legal aid, medical care, counseling, harm-reduction, and a job training program. Living Room is a full-scale replica of one of our many supportive-housing units throughout the five boroughs.

Housing Works emerged out of the direct-action group ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) twenty-two years ago. But our model is even further rooted in social movement history—the supportive housing movement of the 1960s sought to create affordable housing coupled with medical and social services.

Throughout its history, Housing Works has weathered periods of intense political hostility or indifference by offering care and gracious hospitality to communities in need. In 1993 Housing Works introduced The Key, a newsletter that boldly proclaimed, “Housing is the key to eliminating homelessness and ending the neglect of people with HIV.”

Today, Housing Works views housing as the key to end AIDS—it unlocks opportunities. It’s not over yet: the organization proposes to create another 330 units for homeless individuals living with HIV/AIDS by 2016.

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1950s–1980s

Supportive Housing Movement Emerges^{1,2} The supportive housing movement emerged to address increasing homelessness and the inadequate and substandard housing available to vulnerable populations in the United States. Combining independent, affordable housing with social and medical services, supportive housing would become the model system for Housing Works.

Housing options available to at-risk populations have evolved over time, following medical breakthroughs, economic and political changes, and shifts in public opinion on what constitute acceptable living standards. The availability in the 1950s of psychotropic drugs led to the deinstitutionalization of people with psychiatric disorders. This shift, along with the closing of single-room occupancy hotels (SROs) and other affordable housing options, the emergence of HIV/AIDS, and a decrease in government benefits, led to a surge in homelessness across the United States in the 1980s. As policy makers in the late 1980s began to see value in the supportive housing movement, they established government funding programs to allow agencies like Housing Works to develop and operate.

1981

Callahan v. Carey³ This class action lawsuit established the legal right to emergency shelter for New York State’s homeless. Following this ruling, New York City policy specifies that homeless persons with HIV/AIDS must be given non-emergency housing within 24 hours of the client’s request.

1985

New York City HIV/AIDS Services Administration (HASA)^{4,5} New York City established HASA, formerly the Division of AIDS Services and Income Support, in response to the AIDS epidemic, to provide a range of services to low-income people living with HIV/AIDS. HASA rental vouchers allow homeless, very low-income New Yorkers with AIDS to enter private, transitional or permanent supportive housing, such as that operated by Housing Works, and bypass the general shelter system. These vouchers are not available for people with HIV. HASA currently makes thousands of emergency housing placements a month.

1986

Housing First and Harm Reduction^{6,7} Traditional homeless shelters often required people to be alcohol and drug free to be eligible for housing. In reaction to these policies, which effectively screened out most of the chronically homeless, early HIV/AIDS advocates developed complementary “housing first” and “harm reduction” approaches to address the interrelated epidemics of HIV/AIDS, drug use, and infectious diseases. “Housing first” makes shelter an immediate goal, with services following, while “harm reduction” strategies, such as needle exchanges, aim to reduce harm to individual and community health, without requiring abstinence. These strategies became guiding principles for Housing Works and would later be adopted as government policy.

1987

Apr: ACT UP The direct action group ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) was founded at a meeting at the Gay and Lesbian Center in Manhattan out of

anger at the governmental indifference to the AIDS epidemic.

1988

SRO (Single-Room Occupancy) Providers Group/Supportive Housing Network of New York (SHNNY)⁸ This coalition of supportive housing providers formed around shared issues related to funding, tenant-engagement, and building management of supportive housing in New York City. Housing Works would later join this network, known since 1996 as the Supportive Housing Network of New York (SHNNY), when the organization expanded to New York State. The network is now a powerful advocacy group comprising over 200 nonprofit supportive housing developers and providers.

1990

Housing Works Fewer than 350 units of housing existed for the estimated 13,000 homeless people living with HIV/AIDS in New York City. In response, members of the ACT UP housing committee Keith D. Cylar, Charles King, Eric Sawyer, and Virginia Shubert founded Housing Works with the slogan “Demand Housing for Homeless People Living with AIDS & HIV.”

Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA)^{9,10} The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) established the HOPWA program to fund housing, social services, program planning, and development costs for housing for people living with AIDS. Housing Works used this funding in the development of its Women’s Transitional Housing Program.

Agreement to House Homeless Mentally Ill¹¹ This joint effort of New York State and New York City created 3,615 units of

permanent and transitional housing for homeless mentally ill people in New York City.

1991

Apr: Intake Program Located at 130 Crosby Street in Manhattan, the Intake Program was the first step toward moving homeless people with HIV/AIDS off the streets—featuring a triage team, education and prevention programs, and referrals for new Housing Works clients to one of three avenues for securing housing during the organization’s early years: Scattered-Site Housing Program, Independent Living Program, or referral to other non-governmental agencies in New York City.

Scattered-Site Housing Program in Manhattan Housing Works leased apartments in different buildings—as opposed to within one centralized building—for clients who met the clinical diagnosis of AIDS as defined by the Center for Disease Control in Manhattan’s Lower East Side, a neighborhood highly affected by the epidemic.

Independent Living Programs (ILP) in Manhattan and Brooklyn The first program in New York City to house and provide case-management services to people who did not meet the clinical diagnosis of AIDS as defined by the Center for Disease Control. In the early 1990s, Housing Works would lease over 25 apartments from private landlords for clients.

1992

Jul: Scattered-Site Housing Program Expands to Brooklyn Housing Works followed the geography of the epidemic by leasing 20 apartments in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn.

Jul: First Thrift Store Deemed an “upscale boutique” by the New York Times, the thrift store at 136 West 18th Street was the organization’s single largest source of private income. By 2012, Housing Works had twelve thrift shops that earned approximately \$14 million a year.

Second Life Job Training Program (JTP) “[I am a] mother of two beautiful children and a proud graduate of Housing Works’ Job Training Program, better known as ‘Second Life.’ After eight long months, I finally did it! What did it take? Hard work, determination, and a great support system made up of the director, my job counselor, instructors, case manager, supervisor and great peers.” –Rosa Gonzalez, The Key, Winter 1995 Housing Works transitioned hundreds of clients into staff in the 1990s through classes in maintenance and repair, math, clerical skills, communications and self-esteem, harm reduction, computer technology, GED, and English as a Second Language.

1993

The Key “The key to eliminating homelessness and ending the neglect of people with HIV is in your hands,” contended the inaugural issue of Housing Works quarterly newsletter The Key.

1994

Feb 1: The Bronx Now with 60 apartments in Brooklyn, Housing Works leased 53 apartments in the Bronx—34 for its Scattered-Site Housing Program, and 19 for its Independent Living Program.

Oct: Land in Manhattan¹² Housing Works purchased land at 743–749 East 9th Street in Manhattan for a new facility, noting in their Annual Report that the task of moving people

off the street “grows harder every day as a result of the City’s policies of issuing vouchers instead of security deposits and the City’s inability to make timely rental payments, not to mention the absolute havoc the massive budget cuts have wreaked on the Human Resources Administration.”

Needle Exchange Program “We began the needle exchange program at Housing Works as part of implementing a philosophy of harm reduction. Instead of exercising negative judgment about drug users and barring them from services, we work with them in a way that allows them to set their own pace. Needle exchange is a concrete manifestation of our belief that clients can be responsible, can act to reduce the spread of HIV, and can move forward into drug treatment when they’re ready.” –Keith D. Cylar, The Key, Spring 1994

1995

Tuberculosis Scattered-Site Housing Program Housing Works leased 25 apartments and established relationships with Bellevue and St. Vincent’s Hospitals as part of an agency-wide effort to address the needs of homeless individuals living with HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis when discharged from hospitals.

1996

The West Village Health Center Housing Works rented and renovated this facility at 320 West 13th Street to offer primary care, case management, and other services to clients.

Bookstore Cafe “Imagine sipping cappuccino in a pleasant cafe while curled up on a sofa reading a book—and knowing it’s all for a good cause. Such a setting will soon come to life as Housing Works opens



its Used Book Cafe in the heart of SoHo at 128 Crosby Street,” announced the Fall/Winter 1995 issue of The Key. The store would be a “complete vindication from those naysayers who fear that service programs like those operated by Housing Works would have a negative impact on the presence of the neighborhood.”

1997

East 9th Street Facility
Housing Works’ first capital project, the 19,000 square-foot housing and health care facility features 36 units for single adults living with HIV/AIDS, with a cafeteria and day-treatment center.

Defunded
Citing inaccurate accounting, Mayor Rudolph Giuliani withdrew \$6.5 million worth of New York City government contracts to Housing Works.

The Works Catering
Housing Works established The Works, a commercial catering company trains and hires clients to cater events at the Bookstore Cafe and beyond.

Local Law 49^{13,14}
New York City Local Law 49 requires permanent and temporary housing for homeless people to be “medically appropriate,” and goes beyond *Mixon v. Grinker* to codify HASA’s existence. Addressing populations with HIV/AIDS, housing must be “suitable for persons with severely compromised immune systems” and including, but not limited to, “individual refrigerated food and medicine storage and adequate bathroom facilities” with locking doors. Housing Works facilities far exceed these requirements.

1998

Housing Works Sues¹⁵
The organization claimed that Mayor Giuliani’s defunding was out of retaliation “for years of furious

protests, mocking placards and critical news releases.”

East New York Community Health Care Facility
The 33,000 square foot facility at 2640 Pitkin Avenue in the East New York section of Brooklyn offers medical and dental care, a cafeteria, counseling, and other services in a neighborhood hard-hit by the epidemic. It has since become a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) that serves the general public.

New York City AIDS Housing Network (NYCAHN)¹⁶
Supported by a 1998 grant from the New York City AIDS Fund, NYCAHN formed to address HIV/AIDS in the context of “race, gender, and economic inequalities.” Housing Works was instrumental in the founding of NYCAHN, which in 2010 was renamed VOCAL-NY (Voices Of Community Activists & Leaders) to reflect the larger range of constituencies now represented by the organization.

1999

Housing Works Wins¹⁷
US District Judge Allen Schwartz found that city officials acted out of “retaliatory intent” against Housing Works for its criticism of Mayor Giuliani’s policies on HIV and AIDS.

Agreement to House Homeless Mentally Ill II¹⁸
More modest than the first New York/ New York agreement, this effort committed government funding for 1,500 units of permanent supportive housing. New York City and State split construction costs evenly, with New York State funding services and operating costs.

2001

Women's Transitional Housing Program (WTHP)
WTHP helps single women living with HIV/AIDS who have been released from the correctional system within the past 24 hours.

2002

Gotham Assets
Housing Works established Gotham Assets, a commercial property development and management company that offers job training and placement for Housing Works clients.

The New Housing Marketplace¹⁹
Making commitments to fund affordable and supportive housing and services, Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s plan aimed to reduce homelessness by two-thirds by 2009. The plan included many of the strategies proposed in SHNNY’s Blueprint to End Homelessness in New York City, but advocates for the homeless have criticized it for not being adequately robust.

2004

Transgender Transitional Housing Program (TTHP)
Housing Works established ten initial scattered-site apartments for transgender and gender-variant individuals living with HIV/AIDS in the East New York, Bushwick, Bedford-Stuyvesant, Crown Heights, and East Flatbush sections of Brooklyn. The organization would acquire 20 additional TTHP apartments in the following years.

2005

2605–2609 Pitkin Avenue
Housing Works renovated and opened this 2,000 square-foot townhouse in the East New York section of Brooklyn in 2005.

New York City Settles²⁰
In response to a \$4.8 million settlement with New York City in Housing Works’ favor, Housing Works CEO Charles King said, “I’m not sure people appreciate how much the Giuliani administration attempted to silence dissenting voices, in particular in communities that relied on city funds to service needy people...I think Housing Works was used as an example to let other organizations know what would happen to them if they advocated on behalf of their clients.”

Agreement to House Homeless Mentally Ill III²¹
The third of its kind, this New York City/ New York State agreement included the creation of 9,000 new units of supportive housing over the next ten years, setting aside specific funding for housing people with AIDS. NY/NY III provided operating funding for Housing Works’ Stand Up Harlem House and its new Jefferson Avenue Residence in Brooklyn.

2006

The Keith D. Cylar House Health Center
The East 9th Street Facility—deemed a “special project of national significance” by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development—was renamed in honor of activist and Housing Works founder Keith D. Cylar.

Downtown Brooklyn Health Center
Housing Works renovated this facility at 57 Willoughby Street to offer medical and dental care, job training, and other services for clients.

Staten Island Housing Program (SIHP)
Housing Works established 20 scattered-site apartments for single adults living with HIV/AIDS in the St. George section of Staten Island.

2008

Stand Up Harlem House
Housing Works renovated three Harlem brownstones that were originally built in the 1880s. The 6,800 square-foot brownstone at 143–145 West 130th Street features eleven units, a common area, and a backyard for single adults living with HIV/AIDS. The 3,000 square-foot brownstone at 162 West 130th Street features two two-bedroom and two three-bedroom units for families with at least one parent living with HIV/AIDS.

2009

Women's Transitional Housing Program (WTHP)
WTHP finds a home: a renovated 6,720 square-foot townhouse at 454 Lexington Avenue in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn, featuring 20 units for single women living with HIV/AIDS who have been released from the correctional system within the past 24 hours.

2010

The Claremont Residence
Housing Works acquired an established multifamily, rehabilitated 19,260 square foot property at 415 Claremont Parkway in the Bronx. Although not developed for individuals living with HIV/AIDS specifically, The Claremont Residence’s 18 two-bedroom units will be allocated to homeless families living with HIV/ AIDS as the units become available.

2012

Apr: East New York Expands²²
With \$541,000 in federal funds from the Affordable Care Act, the expanded East New York Community Health Care Facility will “be able to see more than twice as many primary-care patients a year—about 2,600—approximately 80 percent of whom are homeless.”

874 Jefferson Avenue
Housing Works will renovate and open this 6,100 square foot townhouse in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn in August 2012. It will feature twelve units for single adults living with HIV/ AIDS.

Equal Access to Housing in HUD Programs, Regardless of Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity^{23, 24}
Following evidence suggesting that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals were being excluded from private housing, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) implemented policy to “ensure that its core programs are open to all eligible individuals and families regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or marital status.”

HIV/AIDS Services Administration (HASA) Caseload²⁵
As of February 2012, HASA’s caseload numbered just over 32,000 homeless and very low-income New Yorkers with AIDS. Critics of HASA, including Housing Works, believe that HASA has not done enough to address the needs of homeless and very low-income people with HIV/AIDS in New York City.

Next Steps

330 Housing Works Units
Housing Works plans to begin development on 330 additional units of housing in the next five years, bringing the organization’s total to 500.

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