



## **COUNTY OF KINGS** ADMINISTRATION OFFICE

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **KINGS COUNTY HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY SECURES PERMANENT HOUSING FOR 95 PROJECT ROOMKEY RESIDENTS**

*Stardust & Holiday Lodge Provided Shelter to 386 Individuals During Three-Year Operation*

**HANFORD, CA (July 31, 2023)** – Effective today, federal and state funding for Project Roomkey will no longer be available following termination of the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Emergency Declaration. The termination of funding will result in the closure of Holiday Lodge, the sole Project Roomkey site still in operation in Kings County. Holiday Lodge residents were notified of this closure on July 1, 2023, and provided with resources and information to assist with a successful transition into permanent housing. Since inception, Kings County Human Services Agency (HSA) has secured 65 Project Roomkey rooms, provided temporary housing to 386 individuals, and successfully transitioned 95 unhoused residents into permanent housing. Project Roomkey operations at the Stardust Hotel ceased in January 2023 when the remaining residents were relocated to Holiday Lodge to allow for construction work to begin on the Project Homekey Sunrise Apartments site.

Governor Gavin Newsom announced the launch of Project Roomkey in April 2020. Project Roomkey was the first effort in the nation to leverage Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) funding to provide thousands of Californians experiencing homelessness with temporary housing. Deployed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Project Roomkey was funded to provide non-congregate shelter options for people experiencing homelessness, and for those at a high risk of medical complications should they become infected.

While Project Roomkey has proven successful, funding for the project ended upon the Governor's termination of the State of Emergency, and Holiday Lodge will cease operations at the end of the month. Kings County HSA continues to work diligently to identify permanent housing for the existing Holiday Lodge residents ahead of the July 31<sup>st</sup> closure.

*"Our goal has always been to do our best to successfully transition the Project Roomkey residents into permanent affordable housing," said Wendy Osikafo, Kings County HSA Director. "We are working diligently with our partners to address the unique, individual needs of the handful of individuals unable to make the transition into permanent affordable housing. Most of these individuals are eligible for enhanced community support through the State's new CalAIM initiative, and we continue to work to connect them with support services as we wind down Project Roomkey operations."*

To address the termination of Project Roomkey, the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) developed Project Homekey, a \$1.4 billion statewide initiative aimed at reducing and preventing homelessness throughout California. By offering this unprecedented funding opportunity to local governments, along with additional tools to rapidly convert or construct new housing units, Project Homekey offers hope for those struggling with housing insecurity. Kings County is currently in the final phases of construction of two Project Homekey sites, Triangle Courtyard, scheduled for completion in December 2023, and Sunrise Apartments, scheduled for completion in April 2024. Upon completion, the combined projects will add 46 permanent housing units accommodating approximately 70 individuals.

*“Like the rest of the state, we continue to experience a lack in local affordable housing here in Kings County,” continued Osikafo. “There is a need in our community for landlords willing to rent to individuals currently experiencing homelessness, as well as a need for additional affordable housing (apartments, manufactured homes, single family homes, etc.) and developers to rehab or bring in new housing stock.”*

Details on the status of Project Homekey sites in Kings County can be accessed [here](#).

### **Project Roomkey Testimonial**

A resident (name withheld to protect client confidentiality) was checked into Holiday Lodge in September 2020. The resident began fostering a positive relationship with staff and confided that she had temporarily lost custody of her children to the Foster Care system. The resident was open about her desire to reach sobriety and reunify with her children. While residing at Project Roomkey, she worked with Social Service staff to attend support groups and church. She overcame obstacles, had to end relationships, and worked to reconstruct existing ones.

After one year, the mother was able to secure permanent housing through the Housing Support Program, and was able to regain custody of her children. She is now employed and working in the health care industry. She said *“I would not have been able to regain custody of my children without the help of the Project Roomkey staff and my CPS case worker. They gave me a second chance at life with my children. All I needed was someone to talk to and believe in me. I thank them all.”*

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