



San Mateo County Health System, Behavioral Health and Recovery Services

The Impact of Supportive Housing on Neighborhood Crime and Property Values

Supportive housing is a type of affordable housing that provides social services and case management for individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, mentally ill, or recovering from substance abuse. Often, when such projects are proposed, nearby residents raise concerns about safety and property values.

It is important for residents to know that many groups, including the National Association of REALTORS®, have studied the impact of affordable/supportive housing on neighborhoods and have found “no consistent impact of federally assisted housing on nearby residential property values.”²



Cedar Street Apartments, a supportive housing development in Redwood City, CA

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING STUDIES

All of the numerous studies on the impact of housing for the mentally ill (supportive housing, group homes, etc.) on property values and crime have concluded that there is no negative impact on neighborhoods.^{1,3} In fact, some studies have found a positive impact and evidence to suggest that neighborhood residents’ actual experiences with supportive housing turn out to be much more satisfactory than they had expected.

Myth: My property value will decline if you build supportive housing nearby.

Fact: Property values do not decline when supportive housing is built nearby.

The Furman Center of New York University, looked at the effect of 123 supportive housing developments in New York City. The research revealed that prices of properties within 500 feet of the projects did not decline after the projects were implemented.

Myth: Crime will go up in my neighborhood if you build supportive housing nearby.

Fact: Crime does not increase when supportive housing is built.

Researchers from Wayne State University and the Urban Institute investigated the extent to which proximity to 14 supportive housing facilities in Denver from 1992-1995 affected crime rates. The findings came to the same conclusion as other studies^{3,4} there was no evidence that the development of these facilities led to increased rates of crime.

National Church Residences, a developer of over 5 supportive housing facilities throughout Columbus, Ohio, hired a third-party consulting firm to analyze the potential short and mid-term neighborhood



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impacts of their five supportive housing facilities. The conclusion of the study was that the five housing facilities have no discernible negative impact on crime and property values. In fact, most of the Comparative Areas had higher rates of crime and larger fluctuations in real estate value.

Myth: Residents living nearby supportive housing will be scared of the housing and the people in it, changing the neighborhood character.

Fact: Residents' fears disappear once the supportive housing is built.

The Dream Team, a group of individuals and families who live with mental illness, teamed up with partner agencies, a research consultant and the University of Toronto, to study the impact of two supportive housing developments on both property values and crime. Public data, interviews with tenants, staff, and neighbors revealed that out of 54 immediate neighbors, 52 expressed a positive attitude toward the impact of the housing development.

IN SUMMARY

Supportive housing is designed to blend in or improve the overall look of neighborhoods and is often built on abandoned, unsightly property providing an opportunity for neighborhood revitalization. Supportive housing provides regular services to tenants, security, and is run by non-profits that must be responsive, often leading to improved community safety. Furthermore:

- There is no significant evidence linking supportive housing to property values and crime rates.
- Some studies suggest a positive impact on a neighborhood property value and crime reduction.
- Neighbors' attitudes about supportive housing developments change to more positive experiences in the long-term.

Almost every one of us will have a close relative, friend or ourselves suffer from mental illness. The Centers for Disease Control reports that almost 25% of adults in the U.S. have a mental illness and nearly 50% of U.S. adults will develop at least one mental illness during their lifetime. We have many people living with mental illness around us all the time, and we never notice. Supportive housing actually helps reduce what people don't like -- homeless people loitering in areas, and people in distress walking the streets. People with mental illness need a stable place to live so they can take the medication and get the therapy that improves their lives.

¹ Galster, G., Pettit, K., Santiago, A., Tatian, P. (2002) *The Impact of Supportive Housing on Neighborhood Crime Rates*. Journal of Urban Affairs 24(3-4): 389-315

² Mental Health Law Project (1988) *The effect of group homes on neighborhood property* Washington, D.C.

³ National Association of REALTORS®- National Center for Real Estate Research (2002) *A Review of Existing Research on the Effects of Federally Assisted Housing Programs on Neighboring Residential Property Values*.

⁴ National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty (1997) *Access delayed, access denied*.

⁵ Centers for Disease Control (2011) *Mental Illness Surveillance Among Adults in the United States*.