

Part V. Organizational History and Accomplishments

A. Organizational History and Mission

SRO Housing Corporation (SRO) was established in 1984 by the City of Los Angeles' Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) to provide critically needed housing and supportive social services for homeless and low-income persons within the Central City East area of downtown Los Angeles, a neighborhood commonly referred to as "Skid Row". It is the largest, non-profit organization of its kind in the western United States.

SRO's mission is to revitalize and foster the development of a healthy community in Central City East through the provision of decent affordable housing, and supportive social services for poor and disadvantaged individuals including senior citizens, people with disabilities, persons with HIV disease, veterans, and those with various addictions.

SRO Housing carries out its mission by:

- Developing and managing safe, decent, affordable housing for persons who are disadvantaged by health and income.
- Helping people to assist themselves in overcoming barriers to decent housing and employment.
- Actively promoting linkages between community organizations concerned with housing, public safety, economic development, health care, education, transportation and cultural affairs.
- Promoting public policies that improve the quality of community life.
- Conducting business activities with integrity and treating all community members and employees with respect.

SRO currently owns and operates 17 hotels providing over 1,400 units of housing along a continuum: Emergency Housing (approx. 400 units); Transitional Housing (approx. 150 units); and Permanent Housing (approx. 850 units). Additional units are continuously under development.

SRO collaborates with dozens of community agencies, county-wide, to provide appropriate supportive social services. These include both private and government organizations such as the Department of Public Social Services, Los Angeles County Department of Health, Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health, AIDS Project Los Angeles, Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, hospitals and health clinics, churches, legal clinics, and more.

SRO currently operates two city parks within the Central City East area. It continues to work with the Department of Recreation and Parks along with other entities to develop additional "green space" for the community.

SRO works closely with local businesses, politicians, the Los Angeles Police Department, the SRO Tenant Advisory Council and other community agencies to develop methods to address crime, graffiti, panhandling, drug and alcohol use, prostitution, or other matters such as deteriorating buildings that may adversely affect the health of the total community.

B. Organizational Structure

A Board of Directors, comprised of committed community leaders from both the corporate and social service worlds, provides guidance and direction to SRO Housing administration. The board meets on a monthly basis. In the past 18 months every meeting has attained a quorum, continuing a history of high board participation. The only standing board committee is the Audit/Finance Committee, however ad hoc committees are formed, as needed. The Board receives neighborhood input from the Tenant Advisory Council of SRO Housing. (please refer to Attachment 5 for list and a brief biography of board members)

The Chief Executive Officer/Executive Director of the organization presides over three major corporate divisions, the Housing and Property Management Division, Administration and Finance and the Community Planning and Development Division.

Within the Housing and Property Management Division, the Director of Housing is responsible for the management of all activities related to housing, maintenance, security, parks and resident services. The Chief Financial Officer has responsibility to oversee administrative, personnel and financial services.

The Community Planning and Development Division has responsibility for community planning and real estate, program and fund development activities and the administration of all supportive services programs. In addition, this division administers the United Coalition East Prevention Project, a drug and alcohol abuse prevention project.

The Corporation employs over 130 full-time staff and an additional 20 homeless persons work as casual laborers as part of its work-readiness program. One method by which SRO Housing Corporation promotes stability in the community it serves is by hiring persons from the neighborhood. A significant number of employees are current or former residents of Central City East. SRO Housing's staff reflects the cultural diversity of the area.

Training for all SRO Housing employees is an on-going process. Employees are well versed in the philosophy, principles and values of the organization.

The core of SRO Housing's supportive services training is presented in the Case Management Training Packet. The utilization of this 100 page training guide ensures that all SRO Housing Case Managers in the field have a solid understanding of case management philosophy, comprehensive knowledge of in-house and community-based resources, and the requisite skills to provide high quality service to our consumers.

Housing management policy and procedures are provided in the comprehensive, 250 page Housing Management Manual. SRO Housing has marketed this manual to providers of affordable housing throughout the country.

C. Organization's History and Administration

1. Real Estate Development

a. Overall Achievements. Founded in 1984, the SRO Housing Corporation is the largest developer of single room occupancy housing in the Western United States. Since its inception, SRO Housing has developed 17 residential hotels in the Central City East section of downtown Los Angeles, commonly referred to as "Skid Row." SRO currently has just under 1,400 units of housing, and the Corporation has 287 additional units in active development. The following information provides a summary of SRO Housing's housing venues.

- **Emergency Housing:** SRO offers a wide range of emergency housing programs at the Russ and Panama Hotels (combined occupancy of over 400 units). Over the years we have developed a comprehensive 24-hour program to assist homeless persons make the transition to permanent housing.
- **Transitional Living:** Two hotels, the Golden West and Marshal House, provide case-managed, sober-living transitional housing for persons with a mental illness and persons in recovery from substance abuse.
- **Permanent Housing and Permanent Supportive Housing:** SRO Housing also provides permanent housing in twelve hotels, with a combined occupancy of nearly 850 units. These are among the few safe and sanitary permanent housing units that are affordable to General Relief recipients who currently receive benefits of \$212 per month.

b. Recent Achievements. In the past three years the following real estate developments have been initiated and/or completed:

- **Management of Leonide and Prentice Hotels.** In 1998, SRO Housing assumed management responsibilities of these two C.E.F.-supported hotels. Renovation of the properties will be completed by November, 1998, bringing on line 108 units of rental assisted housing for homeless persons.
- **Rehabilitation effort following the Northridge earthquake of 1994.** The earthquake severely damaged a number of our hotels. However, the organization considers the post-earthquake rehabilitation effort to be one of the great achievements of the past three years. The extensive rehabilitation that followed the temblor was completed in 1996. The Ellis (also a C.E.F.-supported hotel and the Florence are fully restored. Only the Eugene Hotel appears to have suffered such damage that it remains uninhabitable. The Palmer House (67 units), a non-earthquake related rehabilitation effort, will be ready for occupancy in October, 1998.
- **High Tolerance Drop-In Center.** SRO is in the process of erecting an 8,500 square-foot, drop-in center for homeless persons that will be open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- **Southern Hotel acquisition.** The corporation will close on the acquisition of the Southern Hotel by the end of this month. This facility will provide housing for veterans with disabilities. All funds to proceed with this development have been secured including: 10-year Section 8 rental assistance certificates, tax credits and grant funds.
- **Improvement in management efficiency.** The Director of Housing has instituted changes in housing management that have reduced operating costs by \$300,000 per year.

2. Organizational Development

a. Board and Staff Development. The past three years have been a time in which the organization experienced major personnel and organizational changes. 1997 saw the retirement of the founding executive director and the recruitment and hiring of a new Executive Director/CEO. Also, during the past two years the Board has actively worked with the administration to reorganize the corporation's financial management system.

b. Administration and Operating Systems. In response to the general feeling that the previous leadership model relied too heavily on "top-down" decision-making, the new leadership team has delegated far more decision-making and leadership responsibility to division heads.

Several new positions have been established in the past two years. A full-time Human Resources Specialist was hired in early 1997, a year that saw the publication of SRO's first employee handbook of policies and procedures. The Housing Division underwent significant restructuring in 1997. Two Property Supervisor positions were created to provide frontline support for hotel Managers and Assistant Managers. Also, the position of Resident Services Coordinator was established. Additionally, in 1997, the position of Grant Writer was created within the Community Planning and Development Division.

The organization, under the direction of the Chief Financial Officer and MIS personnel is presently upgrading the communications and information gathering capabilities of the entire organizational network. Presently, all hotels are linked with the Central Office via network email, and future developments will include the installation of advanced real estate management software to enhance all management systems.

c. Fund-Raising. SRO Housing has 14 years experience acquiring capital resources and operating social services programs from a variety of public funding sources. All but a handful of this funding has come from local, state, and federal agencies, including: the Community Redevelopment Agency; the Community Development Department; the Department of Aging; the Department of Public Social Services; the County Health Department; California Housing and Community Development Department; and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. In addition, SRO properties generate over \$1 million each year in rent, and the corporation has attracted much in the way of private investment dollars through the syndication of tax credits.

SRO Housing has historically had considerable success in maintaining a solid base of governmental funding; however, the organization is aware that future success might depend upon the development of a more well-rounded fund base. Thus, in late 1997, the organization created a Grant Writer position with the intention to seek and secure funds from private foundations and corporate funding sources. Little success has been achieved thus far. The organization hopes that through the NTI and existing LISC resources, we may accelerate the evolution of this in-house capacity.

3. Business/Economic Development. To the outside observer, "Skid Row" is an area characterized by an appearance of pervasive poverty and despair. However, we at SRO Housing can offer an insider's perspective of a very different Central City East; one that contains the human and material resources that are collaborating to dramatically transform the neighborhood and progress towards the creation of a healthy community.

The community has a vigorous economic base that includes wholesale fish and produce markets, food manufacturing, garment factories, toy factories and other types of industry. SRO Housing has contributed greatly to the growth of business in the Central City East area through

the promotion of a normative environment that is conducive to normal business development. Obviously, SRO can not patrol and monitor every street in the area. However, whenever possible, the organization has worked vigorously with the Los Angeles Police Department, local businesses and other service providers to create "drug-free" zones and begin to rid the area of drug dealers and large street encampments that inhibit the growth of healthy community life.

SRO Housing's supportive service programs work tirelessly to link unemployed persons who wish to work with governmental and non profit agencies that provide job search and employment readiness services. In this regard, SRO Housing's long-standing successful relationship with Chrysalis, Inc., the nationally recognized provider of employment services to homeless people, is important. A significant number of SRO's current full-time staff are graduates of Chrysalis programs, and SRO continues to be one of the major employers of Chrysalis temporary workers. For the past four years, SRO Housing and Chrysalis have collaborated in the implementation of the Homeless Assistance Program (HAP). Participants in HAP are provided with free emergency housing and case management services as long as they remain active participants in a Chrysalis employment program.

4. Job Creation. SRO Housing is one of the major employers in the Central City East area, especially as regards the employment of persons who actually live in the community. As mentioned in the section above, the organization works closely with Chrysalis, Inc. to assist unemployed and homeless persons to secure employment. When SRO hires community residents, the typical career-path is from janitor or desk-clerk to assistant manager and eventually resident manager. Many of SRO's workers have continued their upward mobility and moved on to successful employment outside the area. SRO Housing is currently reorganizing its housing management staff to provide even greater opportunities for career growth.

5. Community Building. SRO stands at the forefront of community planning and development as well as coalition-building efforts aimed toward the revitalization of the Central City East area of downtown Los Angeles. Through a dynamic coalition of community residents, members of the business community, politicians, social service agencies, and others, Central City East has become one of the fastest growing, redevelopment areas in the country. The following are some of SRO Housing's major community building linkages.

- SRO is a member of the Los Angeles Central City Association the Central City East Forum, the "Community Services Roundtable" the Downtown Network Association and sponsors periodic community forums addressing a wide range of community planning and development matters. In addition, SRO has established collaborative relationships with dozens of community agencies and businesses that have an interest in the revitalization of the Central City East area.
- SRO works closely with the United Coalition East Prevention Project. This Project is a collaborative project with Social Model Recovery Systems aimed at enhancing the Central City East environment by combating the harmful effects of drugs and alcohol in the area.
- SRO maintains an exceptionally cooperative relationship with the Los Angeles Police Department in its efforts to ensure a safe and secure environment for community residents and visitors. In fact, SRO's security guards attend training by the LAPD.

6. Continuum of Supportive Social Services. SRO has 13 years experience in the administration of supportive social service programs for low-income and homeless persons. At present, SRO provides services to area residents through the implementation of programs for persons with chronic and severe mental illness and other disabilities, persons in recovery, senior citizens, stabilized homeless persons with disabilities, persons with HIV disease and persons who

are simply homeless. In the past four years, the number of supportive service personnel has grown fourfold, to a total of thirty-four staff members. In addition, SRO administers two congregate meal sites for seniors, a wheelchair-accessible transportation service for the elderly and persons with disabilities, and a substantial number of tenant amenities for residents including weekly distribution of surplus food. Also, SRO Housing operates the only two public green spaces in Central City East, San Julian and Gladys Parks. The parks serve as the venue for medical and social service outreach as well as a site for cultural and recreational events.

Two Learning Experiences

a. Community Involvement. The absolute essence of grassroots community development involves efforts to maximize the role of community members in the formulation and implementation of development efforts. SRO Housing has incorporated this ideal in its planning efforts since it was established in 1984. The organization has consistently worked to empower representative consumer groups such as the Tenant Advisory Council (TAC), the Senior Advisory Council, and the Resident Councils of individual hotels. Our efforts have met with mixed results. The TAC in particular has, at times, been a very active advocacy role for residents; other times it has been difficult to determine if there is the slightest interest in participation in the planning processes of the corporation. SRO Housing has learned that many individuals who live in Central City East have a long-standing distrust of organizational processes. In the past, they have been so far outside the decision-making center that they feel insecure and inadequate when invited into the process. Emotional, physical and economic factors can also hinder participation. Persons in recovery often have difficulties in broadening their outlook beyond the issues connected with their own sobriety.

Facilitating the participation of "Skid Row" residents in community planning is a tremendous challenge to our organization. Recently, SRO assigned one of its most experienced workers to serve as a Resident Services Coordinator. This person has done much to facilitate the more active involvement of TAC representatives. The organization needs to attempt more and different approaches, and investigate innovative ideas for involving community members in our revitalization efforts. Building Common Ground will be an attempt to take dramatic strides in making this happen.

b. Diversifying Funding Portfolio. SRO Housing receives almost 100% of its funding from government sources. Funding comes from many public sources, which is good; however, the organization is aware that, in an era of declining public funds, private foundation and corporate funds can be crucial in the maintenance of housing and supportive service programs. In 1996, the organization instituted a direct solicitation campaign that clearly illustrated the fact that potential donors did not recognize the organization and its work and seemingly did not really care very much about the intractable issue of homelessness in our community. In 1997, SRO hired a Grant Writer to prepare proposals for submission to foundations and corporate donors. This effort met with little success. The organization is in the process of hiring a Grant Writer with a track record of success in approaching foundations; we hope for an improved result.

Through these efforts we have learned that our successes in attracting public funds are not automatically transferable into the realm of private donors. New relationships have to be established and nurtured, contact between the corporation's upper level administrators and the "power elite" of the community must be cultivated. Great care must be taken in the choice of proposals that are sent to specific donor sources. SRO hopes that one result of the NTI project is an enhanced capacity to attract alternative sources of funds.

D. Organizational and Programmatic Goals and Priorities

SRO Housing is a multi-faceted community development organization and the breadth of its activity is represented in the following list of organizational goals and priorities for the next five years.

- **Construction and opening of James Wood Memorial Community Center.** This facility has been designated as an initial project for SRO's NTI project. Over \$400,000 in public money has already been pledged toward this project and initial architectural plans have been completed. Additional funding must be secured before construction can begin. This critically needed community center will provide the venue for many Building Common Ground community development activities.
- **Establish mechanisms to maximize community input into planning processes.** The promotion of community participation in the formulation and implementation of community planning processes is a central concern of SRO Housing. SRO Housing will employ innovative strategies to determine how to enhance resident input and continually work toward creating processes that fully involve community members. The Building Common Ground Community Builder will be a key figure in this effort. Within five years we expect that Building Common Ground will be a fiscally sound independent entity, working for and supported by the greater community.
- **Further expansion of affordable housing options.** A recent front page story in the Los Angeles Times reminds us once again that Southern California has the greatest deficit of affordable housing in the entire country. SRO Housing is certainly aware of this. *Vacancy rates in our hotels are at an all time low, even at a time when public benefits are being cut dramatically.* Yet, it is becoming increasingly difficult to secure the financing necessary to purchase and renovate dilapidated private market single room occupancy hotels. This is a great challenge for our corporation, but one that we must creatively and resolutely address. SRO Housing has created healthy living environments for thousands of current and past residents; our mission is to bring the benefit of safe, decent, affordable housing to many more homeless and low-income persons. Two of the first projects to be addressed as part of Building Common Ground will be the renovation of the Southern and the Eugene Hotels.
- **Further expansion of supportive social services.** SRO Housing's current supportive service programs serve vital needs in the Central City East community and SRO must maintain funding for existing services. In addition, Building Common Ground will complete a full assessment of the community's need for and gaps in supportive services. Presently, SRO's transitional housing program for persons in recovery has a waiting list of close to 50 people. This is one indication of the unmet need for this important service.
- **Establish additional "green space" and secure funding for ongoing operational expenses.** The "Skid Row" area presently has two public parks, both operated by SRO Housing. SRO has come to realize that these public spaces truly are the heart of the community. In a neighborhood where most residents live in single rooms, community space takes on tremendous importance. SRO Housing has proven expertise in the administration of public space and will work with the community to identify strategically located land that can be developed for this purpose. A major corollary effort will be to identify a funding mechanism to properly maintain and operate any newly developed space.

- **Development of commercial space and public facilities.** Using in-house planning and construction expertise, SRO Housing is presently developing the "High Tolerance Homeless Drop-In Center" for the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority. The organization has developed the capacity to undertake major construction ventures of this type through years of experience in rehabilitation, renovation and new construction efforts. In coming years, SRO plans to expand this capacity with an emphasis on the development of commercial space and public facilities such as the proposed James Wood Community Center and facilities designed to meet the physical and mental health needs of the community. The expansion of this capacity will have the additional benefit of providing solid employment opportunities for additional persons in the community.
- **Creation of employment opportunities for neighborhood residents.** SRO plans to develop a greater capacity to assist willing residents to obtain training and employment opportunities that will lead to upwardly mobile career paths. SRO expects to coordinate this effort with partners such as Chrysalis, Inc., the area's premier employment services agency. A key component of this effort will be the involvement of area businesses. In the past, area businesses have been slow to provide employment to local residents. SRO feels that one reason for the hesitancy of businesses is the fear of hiring drug addicts and criminals. SRO will lead a concerted effort to link local employers with the many residents of our hotels who would make excellent employees, if given a chance.
- **Institution of a successful volunteer program.** SRO expects to have a full-time Volunteer Coordinator who will implement the recruitment, orientation and supervision of volunteers for the organization's supportive services programs. Of particular importance will be the integration of volunteers into the activities of Project Hotel Alert, SRO's case management program for senior citizens. More than a quarter of SRO Housing's tenant population is over the age of 60 and this trend is accelerating. Volunteers will prove invaluable in this era of shorter hospital stays and pressures on the elderly to remain in independent living situations.
- **Full deployment of a "state of the art" management information system.** The integration of this system will allow management to efficiently organize information and resources, and make sound fiscal and programming decisions.
- **Sharing of organizational expertise.** SRO Housing is one of the nation's premier developers of affordable single room occupancy housing. In the past, the organization has sponsored seminars to offer its expertise to other nonprofit developers, however this has occurred on an intermittent basis. In order to more fully implement the corporation's mission in the greater community of American cities, SRO plans to establish a capacity to offer professional training and consulting services to management personnel from affordable housing providers throughout the nation. This effort will involve the creation of appropriate training curricula and materials, and adequate staff to undertake this expansion of services.

E. NTI Project Area

The Mission of SRO Housing Corporation is to revitalize the Central City East area of downtown Los Angeles, traditionally referred to as "Skid Row". Central City East is composed of 55 city blocks and is approximately 1.5 square miles in area. NTI project activities will take place in three defined Strategic Impact Areas encompassing a total area of 17 city blocks.

"Skid Row" is an area characterized by an appearance of pervasive poverty and despair. Amid a landscape dominated by warehouses, mission-operated shelters and dilapidated hotels, one finds the highest concentration of homeless persons in Los Angeles County. Demographic, social and economic indicators for the area indicate the extreme level of poverty and dysfunction that has made Central City East one of the most entrenched areas of urban despair in Los Angeles County.

SRO Housing's NTI efforts will essentially mirror the organization's past and present geographical focus and serve as a springboard into the area that has long been planned as an area for future revitalization efforts. The Strategic Impact Areas are as follows:

SIA-1. This area was the first focus for SRO Housing's redevelopment activities in Central City East. the boundaries of this area are Wall St. to the West, 5th Street to the North, 6th Street to the South and San Pedro to the East. San Julian Park serves as the center of what SRO refers to as its western cluster of hotels. Twelve SRO Housing hotels are located in this SIA. Projects that will be implemented in this area include the renovation of the Southern Hotel and the construction of the James Wood Memorial Community Center.

SIA-2. This area encompasses three blocks around Gladys Park, located on 6th Street between Gladys and Stanford Streets. This cluster includes the La Jolla and Regal Hotels, the Eugene Hotel (which will be brought on-line as part of the NTI project) and the Ellis Hotel (a residence that serves persons over 60 years of age). Adjacent to the Ellis Hotel is Gladys Park, one of two public parks that is managed by SRO Housing. This urban oasis is the venue for many activities including daily dominoes and some of the "hottest" pick-up basketball games in the City. The park is also used as a playground by the children of Para Los Ninos, a local organization that provides day-care for the children of local garment workers. In addition, Gladys Park hosts the daily recovery meetings of the Skid Row Drifters, the oldest continuous 12-step recovery meeting in downtown Los Angeles.

SIA-3. An enhancement and expansion of past efforts is the proposed concentration of strategic planning and community revitalization in the area on 7th Street between San Pedro Street and Central Avenue. SRO calls this initiative the New Century Project. The section of 7th Street in question is unquestionably a severely blighted area of Central City East. It is an important area for revitalization efforts because of its position adjacent to the Garment District (located to the South), the Produce District (to the East) and an area, also to the East, that is increasingly a home to local artisans. SRO Housing has long viewed this area as an important area for expansion of revitalization efforts. The NTI funding will allow SRO to take concrete strides in making this a reality.

SRO Housing will have no problem deploying resources in the 7th Street area. The organization already maintains an active presence there through its management of the Prentice Hotel, located at 1014 E. 7th Street.

F. Linkages with residents of neighborhood

As the largest provider of housing and supportive social services in Central City East, SRO Housing has a close, ongoing interactions with community residents. Each of SRO Housing's 17 hotels has a Resident Manager and/or Assistant Manager who are trained to work cooperatively with residents to assist them in maintaining healthy, residential stability. In addition, SRO's social service staff provides an on-going supportive presence for all residents.

The organization does not confine its activities and programs to SRO tenants. Many SRO Housing sponsored programs and activities are open to all community residents. For example, SRO Housing's Project Hotel Alert (PHA) program is funded by the Los Angeles City Department of Aging to provide congregate meals, transportation, case management and other supportive services to senior citizens throughout the entire Central City East area whether or not they reside in SRO Housing's facilities. Also, SRO Housing is deeply involved in the local recovery community as a provider of multiple venues for recovery meetings. On a daily basis, many area residents interact with SRO Housing and its employees through activities sponsored at San Julian and Gladys Parks. In addition, SRO sponsors periodic health fairs, cultural and artistic presentations and other celebratory community events.

SRO Housing sponsors numerous community forums to solicit input from all community residents regarding development plans and strategies for the area. In addition, SRO Housing personnel regularly attend coordination meetings such as the Community Roundtable discussions and the Downtown Neighborhood Association (DNA). In these venues, agencies share the concerns and perspectives of their respective consumer populations.

SRO Housing is committed to empowering its tenants and enhancing the level of community input into its planning processes. In this regard, the organization provides staff support and resources for its Tenant Advisory Council (TAC). The TAC has served a role in SRO Housing's planning processes since the founding of the organization in 1984. A TAC representative is elected by the residents of each of SRO Housing's transitional and permanent hotels, and serves for a one-year period. Besides their role as tenant representatives with input into SRO Housing's planning and policy-making efforts, the TAC also publishes a quarterly newspaper, "The Nickel", which is distributed throughout the entire community. The publication contains articles and contributions from management, hotel representatives and tenants. Additionally, SRO Housing is currently in the process of forming Resident Councils in each of its fifteen (15) permanent and transitional hotels.

To better coordinate and strengthen TAC, SRO Housing recently established the position of "Resident Services Coordinator" within the Housing Division. One of our most experienced employees has assumed this position. Additionally, the TAC will be further strengthened by its inclusion as a partner in the Department of Rehabilitation-funded "Self Advocacy Project." TAC members will receive intensive training to assist them in promoting self-advocacy efforts by disabled residents of SRO Housing hotels.

G. Collaboration with other organizations

SRO stands at the forefront of community planning and development as well as coalition-building efforts aimed toward the revitalization of the Central City East area of downtown Los Angeles. Through a dynamic coalition of community residents, members of the business community, politicians, social service agencies, and others, Central City East has become one of the most dynamic redevelopment areas in the country. Some of SRO Housing's coalition-building activities are centered on the following:

- SRO is a member of the Los Angeles Central City Association and an active participant in its planning and development efforts for the downtown area.
- SRO is a prominent contributor to the Central City East "Community Services Roundtable" and sponsors periodic community forums addressing a wide range of community planning and development matters.
- SRO is an active member of the Downtown Network Association and often takes a lead role in such matters as agency collaboration, staff training, community development,
- SRO has established collaborative relationships with dozens of community agencies and businesses that have an interest in the revitalization of the Central City East area.
- SRO works closely with the United Coalition East Prevention Project. This Project is a collaborative project with Social Model Recovery Systems aimed at enhancing the Central City East environment by combating the harmful effects of drugs and alcohol in the area.
- SRO maintains an exceptionally cooperative relationship with the Los Angeles Police Department in its efforts to ensure a safe and secure environment for community residents and visitors.

SRO Housing also has long-standing collaborative relationships with most of the major service providers in the Central City East area. The following are some examples of these relationships.

- **SRO and Chrysalis, Inc. - Homeless Assistance Program.** SRO Housing provides emergency housing and case management; Chrysalis provides employment services.
- **SRO and Salvation Army's Bethesda House** – the two organizations coordinate services to ensure emergency housing for homeless individuals and families with HIV disease.
- **SRO and Homeless Outreach Project (HOP)** – SRO accepts many HOP referrals for emergency housing, especially for SRO's Winter Shelter Program.
- **SRO and Weingart Center** – Program participants from two SRO Housing programs are provided with three meals a day under a contractual arrangement with the Weingart Cafeteria.
- **SRO and the Downtown Womens Center** – SRO provides free weekly transport to an economical supermarket located outside of Central City East to a group of women from the Center.
- **SRO and the LA County Department of Mental Health** – SRO has a long-standing relationship with the Downtown Mental Health Center (formerly Skid Row Mental Health). The Center personnel work closely with the staff and residents of SRO's Golden West Hotel program for persons who are mentally ill.
- **SRO and Los Angeles Poverty Department (LAPD)** – The two organizations receive joint funding to present cultural and arts programs in local public settings.

H. Fiscal Health and Funding Strategies of SRO Housing Corporation

SRO Housing expects no difficulty in maintaining its core operating budget over the next three years. Many of our government contracts are for multi-year periods and the organization's administrators and development planners have solid experience and success in maintaining current contracts and developing new sources of funds.

SRO Housing has 14 years experience acquiring capital resources and funds to operate social services programs from a variety of public funding sources. Much of this funding has come from local, state, and federal agencies, including: the City of Los Angeles' Community Redevelopment Agency, Community Development Department, Housing Opportunities for People With AIDS (HOPWA) program and Department of Aging; Los Angeles County's Department of Public Social Services, Health Department, and Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA); the State of California Housing and Community Development Department and Department of Rehabilitation; and the federal government's Department of Housing and Urban Development. In addition, SRO properties generate over \$1 million each year in rent, and the corporation has attracted much in the way of private investment dollars through the syndication of tax credits.

The corporation has had consistent success in the preparation of successful proposals to government donor sources. The Community Planning and Development Division, under the direction of the Associate Executive Director, has a number of skilled professionals who have significant experience in securing government assistance for both housing acquisition and supportive social service programming. SRO Housing expects that we will be able to maintain this success in the future.

This variety of funding sources has helped maintain the fiscal stability of the organization; however, SRO Housing realizes in the volatile housing market it is crucial that the organization broaden its fund-raising and revenue-generating strategies in order to maintain this fiscal health.

As mentioned above, SRO Housing, since its inception, has relied almost exclusively on public monies. In late 1997, the corporation created a position for a Grant Writer with the task of soliciting support from private foundations and corporate donors. Limited progress has been made thus far; SRO hopes that the organization's capacity in this area will be enhanced through the training resources associated with LISC and the NTI.

SRO Housing also strives to improve the efficiency of its operations. In the past year alone, the Director of Housing has re-organized the division in such a way that over \$300,000 have been cut from the budget with no decline in the type or quality of services to the tenant population.

VI. Organizational Capacity

A. Constraints/Barriers to Workplan

Consensus-building in Central City East. This is the major challenge of our proposed NTI project. In the past, individual service providers in Central City East have formed collaborative efforts to establish referral networks to assist homeless consumers. Typically, agencies that lack specific services link their consumers with other agencies that offer needed services. SRO Housing has many such arrangements with fellow service providers. This inter-agency coordination begins to break down when attempts are made to coordinate strategic planning to encompass community-wide concerns. It is essential that a mechanism be created that will provide the means for area stakeholders to coordinate their efforts when planning for community development.

The Community Builder's primary task will be to implement strategies to motivate all local stakeholders to participate in community-wide strategic planning efforts. The process will be carefully planned and paced; a gradual coalition-building effort that will, above all, give a voice to and seek to seat all community stakeholders around the same table. Early in the life of the project, despite the stature and credibility of SRO Housing in the community, the Community Builder will have to overcome the perception of some agencies that he/she is simply another SRO Housing employee. SRO believes that the community's need to develop a mechanism to coordinate planning is profound enough that any organizations that have initial doubts about the process will soon realize that Building Common Ground is a unique opportunity.

Project Funding. As previously mentioned, SRO Housing has an extremely successful record of attracting public monies, however its record in soliciting private funds is quite weak. It is essential that SRO develop a capacity to tap into foundation and corporate sources of funds if the organization is to move forward in the implementation of its key projects. Quite obviously, there will be no community center, no additional public "green space" and no "New Century Project" on 7th Street without an appropriate level of funding. This will be an on-going challenge to SRO Housing and one that it will successfully address through an assessment process that determines what measures should be taken to enhance SRO's capacity to raise funds. Possible strategies include training opportunities for key staff members, coordination of overall fund-raising strategies between employees, development of board members' involvement in fund-raising efforts and of course, most importantly, the development of sound, beneficial projects for the community.

"Skid Row" Environment. As the most impoverished section of our entire community, "Skid Row" offers degrees of social isolation, dysfunction and economic want that are unparalleled in other parts of Los Angeles County. The degree of need has resulted in a large number of service organizations locating programs and facilities in the neighborhood. Among these organizations there are a wide range of different perspectives concerning the philosophy and implementation of community development and organization. In particular, the role of the large religious missions is crucial to the success of any community revitalization in Central City East. The missions typically serve large numbers of homeless people, their distribution of free food acting as a magnet for those in need. Unfortunately, this service prompts the growth of large street encampments in the neighborhood, an outcome that hinders the development of normative, residential life in the area. SRO Housing's relationship with the major missions has been cordial in the past but not cooperative to the point where major strides have been made in establishing a

coordinated strategy to address the issues of street encampments. In fact most organizations in Central City East tend to work autonomously, sometimes to the detriment of overall community planning and development. SRO truly believes that the missions seek to assist persons to exit homelessness. It will be the "mission" of Building Common Ground and the Community Builder to ensure that the missions as well as the secular service providers of the area are involved in constructing community revitalization plans that will help homeless persons to exit homelessness while building a healthy, safe and dignified community in Central City East.

Greater Economic and Political Environment. The potential barriers in this category are dependent upon developments in the greater world that impact on the residents of Central City East. For example, many observers predict that the recently enacted General Relief cuts will result in a significant increase in the homeless population. A downturn in the current robust economy would certainly carry negative outcomes for area residents. Such events impact on individuals, institutions and their behaviors. Certainly, the funding habits of many donor entities are affected by events outside the community.

SRO Housing and other major housing and social service providers of Central City East have significant experience in weathering financial and social crises that have threatened the community in past years. SRO Housing has the organizational flexibility and leadership to adapt to a dynamic and, at times, unpredictable environment.

B. Organizational Strengths and Weaknesses

Organizational Strengths

Housing and Facilities Management. SRO Housing has established a national reputation as one of the premier developers and managers of affordable single room occupancy housing. SRO has taken rundown, slum properties and turned them into safe, decent and affordable living spaces for low-income people. SRO Housing properties are places where persons can begin the process of bringing a greater measure of dignity into their lives. SRO's skilled Managers and Assistant Managers, the majority of whom were hired from within the neighborhood, undergo extensive training to help them acquire the skills to maintain the high level of service that is characteristic of the organization.

SRO Housing has also consistently demonstrated its ability to properly staff public parks. Because the area's dominant housing type is single room occupancy, the area's two public park spaces assume great importance as a meeting and recreational space away from the small rooms that are rented by residents.

Supportive Housing – Integration of Housing and Supportive Services. SRO Housing recognizes that often there are underlying issues of mental and physical health that prompt a person's entry into homelessness. Appropriate supportive housing can often be the link that ensures that a person will be able to stabilize his or her life. In order to meet the need for supportive housing options for persons who have a mental illness or dual diagnosis and persons in recovery from substance abuse, SRO Housing has established two case-managed transitional housing programs. In addition, persons with significant disabilities who live in permanent housing can also avail of case management services from the Shelter Plus Care/Long Term Case Management program. SRO Housing offers a complete range of supportive services for persons who have HIV disease. In addition, Project Hotel Alert, the seniors program, provides case management to assist our senior tenants to maintain independent living.

Fundraising. This category listed as a weakness as well as a strength. In fact, our fundraising in the public sector has been a resounding success. In the past year alone, SRO Housing proposals generated in excess of \$10 million in public funds. These funds often originate with the federal government, however they come to SRO through agencies at all levels of government.

Financial Management. The past two years has seen significant progress in SRO's efforts to develop and implement a state of the art, computer-based management information and communication system. This is no small feat given the organization's need to coordinate 20 remote sites and report information in a timely and accurate fashion to numerous donor entities. Fundraising and the gradual deployment of the system are presently taking place.

Credibility in Community. SRO Housing is well-known among the population of Central City East. SRO Housing's housing and social service programs, and its periodic community affairs in the parks(cultural/arts presentations and health fairs) have made it a recognizable presence in the lives of virtually every area resident. Nearly every long-term resident of the area has benefited directly from the efforts of SRO Housing.

Organizational Weaknesses

Planning. Although SRO Housing has been able to maintain a consistent funding support from a variety of government sources, the organization needs to progress toward a model of development planning that is not driven by the availability of funds, but rather is responsive to defined community needs and is the result of well organized, inclusive planning processes.

Fundraising. As mentioned above, SRO Housing has a proven ability to generate funds from a variety of government sources. However, the corporation's ability to secure funds from private sources has been poor. It is essential that the organization move forward to develop the in-house expertise to secure funds from private foundations and corporate donors. The creation and maintenance of a long-term base of private donors would provide many of SRO's programs with long-term fiscal stability.

Integration of Volunteers. SRO Housing has long been disappointed in its inability to develop and sustain a sound volunteer program. The organization has utilized volunteers in the past in a variety of ways, however the full potential of volunteerism has not been tapped. A broad-based volunteer program would provide volunteer opportunities both for residents of SRO Housing's hotels and also for persons who live outside the community. In addition, volunteer opportunities/internships can be created for students at various local universities. As a agency that provides housing and supportive social services to many persons who have significant disabilities, volunteer opportunities abound. Whether it is through a "friendly visitor" program with isolated, homebound seniors, an escort for a physically disabled person, tax preparation, literacy training, arts and crafts activities, the list can go on and on. SRO believes that the creation of a Volunteer Coordinator position is an essential step in the creation of an active program.

C. Staff Level of Expertise

SRO Housing has assembled a staff of skilled committed professionals. The following are brief biographical sketches of some of the organization's key staff members.

Charles "Bud" Hayes, M.B.A., Executive Director, was previously Executive Director of Social Model Recovery Systems, Inc., an agency that he established and led for nearly 10 years. He brings to SRO Housing critical management expertise and a national reputation for innovative programming in the areas of recovery, mental health, and community development.

Geoffrey Gilbert, Ph.D., the Associate Executive Director, serves as the Director of the Community Planning and Development Division which supervises real estate development and the implementation of community and social service programs. Mr. Gilbert, a former university instructor, has significant past experience with HUD in the administration of McKinney Act homeless programs.

Kevin Pierik, C.P.A., the Chief Financial Officer, is responsible for the administrative functions of the corporation, including accounting and information system development. While in private practice, Mr. Pierik served as a financial consultant for a number of nonprofit, as well as for profit organizations. He has extensive experience in the areas of information and financial management, and planning.

Ervin Munro, M.S., Director of Social Services, supervises all social service programs. Mr. Munro has 30 years of experience working with "special needs" populations and managing human services programs. Mr. Munro was one of the founders of AIDS Project Los Angeles.

Bill Edwards, Director of Housing Management, supervises the operations of SRO's 17 operational residential, transitional, and transient hotels. He has previously served as Director of Public Housing for the Housing Authority of the County of San Bernardino.

Robbie Vairo, the Director of Maintenance, supervises the physical maintenance of SRO properties. The maintenance department also plays an important role in both the development process and the delivery of special events in SRO's parks. Mr. Vairo, a general contractor, has been with SRO for 11 years.

The front-line workers of SRO also have extensive experience working with persons in need. For example, the Case Managers of the Marshal House transitional program for persons in recovery all have their State certifications as drug and alcohol counselors. Similarly, the staff members of the Golden West transitional housing program for persons with a mental illness all have considerable experience working with this population.

SRO Housing considers its in-house training programs to be well above the norm for nonprofit community development organizations.

Gaps in workforce expertise. The lack of the following positions can be considered deficiencies in our organizational structure.

Volunteer Coordinator. As previously mentioned, SRO has a tremendous capacity to develop volunteer opportunities both for persons outside the community to assist SRO residents and SRO supportive service programs, and for SRO residents to work within the organization. The responsibilities of the position will be complex enough that a skilled experienced person should be hired. SRO Housing plans to seek private funding to secure this position.

Grant Writer/Development Director. As mentioned several times in this document, SRO Housing needs to broaden its funding base to include foundation, corporation and other private sources. SRO is aware that funds are available since many similar organizations seem to have a great deal of success in accessing private funds. We have had little or no success to date. The addition of a knowledgeable, experienced professional will help fill this need.

Community Organizer. Central City East is a unique community and the degree of dysfunction and disability among the population is unparalleled in any other section of Los Angeles County. Thus, a person in this position will need to have a rare combination of skill and talent. The successful community organizer will mentor persons in the community and over time create a cadre of committed activists who can work autonomously and sustain a community participation in development.