

# Affordable Housing: Shifting the Paradigm

## A Sustainable and Socially Responsible Approach

The Barcelona Metropolitan Area (AMB) focuses on sustainable and socially responsible approaches to the design of affordable housing by emphasizing flexibility, inclusivity, and a better quality of life. To achieve these innovative housing designs, IMPSOL, the Metropolitan Institute of Land Development and Property Management from AMB, launches a competition to attract talented architects and invites them to challenge traditional models by conceiving non-hierarchical spaces or chained rooms to enhance inclusivity, quality, energy efficiency, and a gender balance, giving spaces for house chores the same quality as the rest. Affordability and long-term social impacts are also addressed in this innovative projects by involving

inhabitants in the design process and explaining responsible and sustainable living approaches. Long-term social impact is addressed by engaging communities throughout and collecting ongoing feedback to help build ownership, address any issues, and continuously improve projects to maintain affordability and quality of life over time.

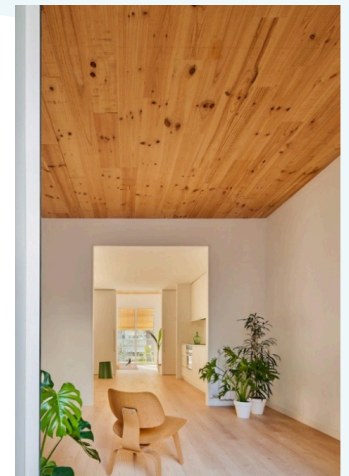
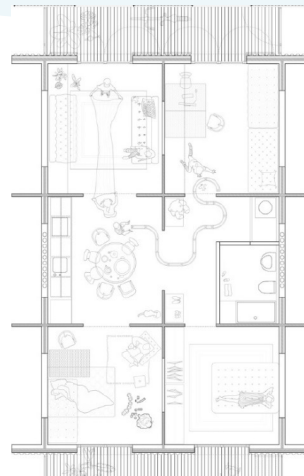
IMPSOL is a non-profit institution that doesn't receive funding from the administration. Through the European Investment Bank, they obtained financing with low interest rates to develop the projects. In order for the financial model to work, there is a balance between dwellings for sale and for rent.



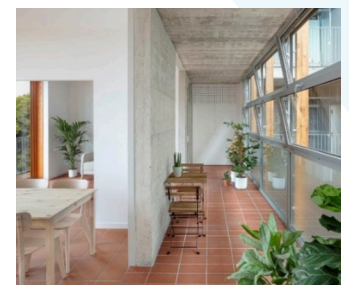
## Key recommendations from AMB

- Engage communities throughout the planning and development process to understand their needs and build a sense of ownership.
- Contract innovative + experienced architects through an open competition boosting high-level designs for affordable living models.
- Explain cooling systems and responsible living approaches to new inhabitants in detail to ensure comfort and sustainability.
- Consider long-term affordability and social impacts when designing affordable housing projects to prevent displacement over time.
- Clearly communicate efforts around quality, sustainability, and how to address crises to maintain community trust and support.
- Guide residents to understand it is a win-win approach; they get a uniquely designed dwelling, and in return, they support their community and the city by behaving responsibly.
- Collect feedback from current residents on their experiences and any issues to continuously improve projects.

### ► Cornellà de Llobregat | Peris + Toral Arquitecte



### ► Gavà | Harquitectes

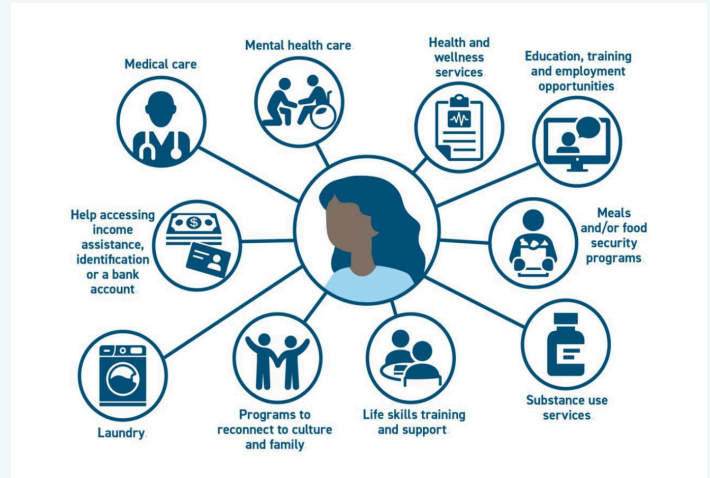


## New Construction Methods and Supportive Housing

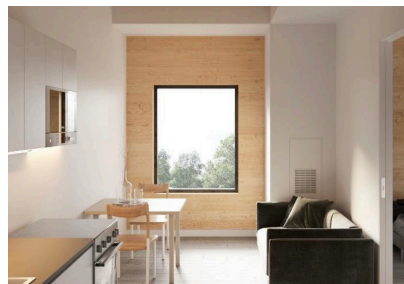
Toronto is addressing its housing crisis, marked by 11,000 homeless individuals and long waits for subsidized housing, by focusing on supportive housing, especially during the pandemic. Since 2020, over 1,000 new supportive housing units have been created through government partnerships. Innovative construction methods, such as modular and mass timber, are being utilized for their speed, cost savings, and environmental benefits. The city collaborates with non-profit organizations to manage these units, providing financial incentives for compliance. Flexible, adaptable interior spaces are highlighted as beneficial for changing household needs and overall community sustainability.

### Key recommendations from Toronto

- Supportive housing is an effective model to help people experiencing homelessness transition to permanent affordable housing.
- Wraparound support services provided within supportive housing buildings are critical to helping residents live independently and improve their health and well-being.
- Integrate sustainability features like energy efficiency, renewable energy, and green building materials into new affordable housing developments right from the start.
- Modular and mass timber construction methods can help accelerate the development of affordable housing while reducing costs and providing environmental benefits compared to traditional construction.



- New construction methods should be piloted, and the data gathered will help better define annual cost savings.
- Incorporate flexibility and adaptability into housing unit designs to accommodate changing household needs over time. This allows units to be reconfigured as families grow or shrink.
- Partnerships between different levels of government and the nonprofit sector are essential to funding and developing supportive housing at scale. Involving nonprofit organizations in supporting housing models helps ensure units remain affordable and accessible over the long term.
- Explore incentives and funding models to encourage the conversion of vacant commercial properties like offices into affordable residential units.



This factsheet was based on the webinar [Affordable Housing: Shifting the Paradigm](#), where **Josep Maria Borrell**, Technical Coordinator at IMPSOL, and **Mercedeh Madani**, Acting Director for Housing Policy & Strategy in the City of Toronto, presented new approaches to designing and building affordable housing.

