



Santa Monica-based Koning Eizenberg Architecture's design for Los Angeles Abbey Apartments will provide housing for 115 formerly homeless individuals in downtown Los Angeles.

## Abbey Apartments

**Architect:** Koning Eizenberg Architecture  
**Location:** Los Angeles, CA

**For the Abbey Apartments, creating a strong community is challenging considering the residents: the homeless of Los Angeles's notorious Skid Row.**

"If we don't reach a certain level of design and inspire care, what we're going to end up with in ten years is housing that looks like it was thrown up at the last minute to meet an extreme need—just to get up a bunch of rooms and beds," says Brian Lane, a principal with Koning Eizenberg Architecture, designers of the downtown Los Angeles Abbey Apartments.

"Forging a community among 115 formerly homeless individuals starts with interfacing with neighbors," Lane says. At the heart of the single-room occupancy hotel is a single, open-air staircase that unfolds from each level onto a central courtyard. "Descending the grand stair is designed to be more appealing than the code-required, enclosed exit staircases in the building's corners," Lane explains. Hallways are open and single loaded. "So you're looking at other people, instead of walking around in enclosed corridors with interior circulation and cameras [trained] on you," he adds.

The lobby is also a great place to meet and greet, and a community center will house staff for social services and provide meeting space for groups like Alcoholics Anonymous. All communal spaces including laundry rooms and a kitchen are located off the airy courtyard.

"We have staff here at Koning Eizenberg that say the Abbey is nicer than what they have in Venice," Lane says. "We don't really say, 'just because it's a homeless population, they deserve anything less.'" ■