

HOMELESSNESS

in Costa Mesa

Here are the FACTS:

(Updated February 2019)

City to provide 62 shelter beds as part of settlement talks

The City of Costa Mesa has been a county leader in finding compassionate and creative solutions to help individuals experiencing homelessness, while at the same time appropriately conducting enforcement efforts to ensure the safety and well-being of residents, business owners and visitors.

- ▶ Despite those efforts, a lawsuit was filed against the City of Costa Mesa and through settlement negotiations with the court and plaintiffs, the city will need to provide shelter beds equal to 60 percent of the city's last homeless count numbers to enforce the local encampment ordinance and to avoid further litigation. In January of 2017, the count found 103 unsheltered homeless individuals in Costa Mesa, and 60% of 103 equals 62 beds.

Crisis unit established by College Hospital

Costa Mesa has already satisfied the need for 12 of its 62 required beds by approving an application from College Hospital, a longtime and respected provider of mental health and medical treatment in the community. College Hospital will create a new mental health crisis unit that can hold up to 12 people. This will give law enforcement officers and firefighters the ability to quickly transport people they encounter on the streets who are a threat to themselves or the community to this emergency unit. This will result in fewer individuals with mental health issues on Costa Mesa streets, which will make the community safer.

The benefits to the city and residents

By opening a 50-bed community shelter, the city can put a heightened focus and strict enforcement of the city's anti-encampment ordinance, while avoiding further litigation. These laws will be an important tool in reducing homeless encampments and ensuring the safety and well-being of residents, business owners and visitors. When our shelter is opened, individuals will no longer be able to illegally camp in Costa Mesa public spaces.

Temporary and Permanent Bridge Shelters

The City of Costa Mesa has reached a deal with the Lighthouse Church of the Nazarene to operate a 50-bed temporary interim bridge shelter on a portion of their property located at 1885 Anaheim Avenue. This would expand what is an already existing inclement weather shelter into a reservation-based, high-security temporary solution to offer shelter beds to those in need.

- ▶ The Lighthouse Church shelter will be run by a combination of city outreach staff and Mercy House, an experienced, well-respected operator who will ensure the facility is a reservation-based model along with 24-hour security and management covering a half-mile radius.
- ▶ Through this temporary shelter arrangement with the Lighthouse Church, the city will invest in the property creating security fencing around the church, and adding portable buildings for restrooms, storage of personal belongings, offices and space for shelter beds.
- ▶ Unsheltered individuals will be offered job training and placement services, mental health assessments, health and dental care, substance abuse treatment and connections to permanent housing.
- ▶ The city continues to pursue commercial property for a permanent shelter in the northeast portion of the city near John Wayne Airport.

Shelter Operator Hired

The Costa Mesa City Council approved a \$1.45 million annual agreement with Mercy House for professional shelter operator services at both the City's temporary interim and long-term bridge shelters.

- ▶ Established in 1989, Mercy House provides housing and comprehensive supportive services to homeless populations and is a long-respected shelter operator.
- ▶ Mercy House currently operates the county's Bridges at Kraemer shelter that has a similar security and reservation-based model.
- ▶ Mercy House operators will work in tandem with the city's existing community outreach staff members to manage the shelter on a 24-hour basis.

The City's Commitment to the Community

The city's goal will be to ensure any impacts from both the temporary and permanent bridge shelters to the neighboring communities are minimized. The city's commitment with both the temporary and permanent shelters will be to design the highest quality facility with 24-hour security, professionally operated, well lit and free of loitering or neighborhood disruptions. Costa Mesa city staff will continue to seek input and feedback from the Costa Mesa community as this process moves forward.

Working on solutions daily

The city provides support and resources to aid Costa Mesa's homeless population through the city's Network for Homeless Solutions, a collaborative effort comprised of city staff, volunteers, community members, churches, nonprofits and community-based organizations who specifically work with unsheltered individuals in the Costa Mesa community.

- ▶ Costa Mesa continues to have its outreach team, more than 100 volunteers and over 50 social service providers and agencies make contact with 60 to 80 people each week (more than 3,000 a year) and assist park rangers, police officers and residents who encounter individuals seeking assistance.
- ▶ Trellis and The Crossing Church provide a check-in center with 63 bins to safely store materials for individuals and keep it out of public streets and parks.

What is happening in other cities

In addition to Costa Mesa, a lawsuit was filed against the cities of Anaheim, Orange, Santa Ana and the County of Orange regarding the scheduled removal of encampments and individuals who were illegally camping along the Santa Ana River Trail. These cities and others are also expected to provide shelter beds as part of a coordinated, regional effort. Here is what they are doing:

- ▶ **City of Santa Ana: 200 to 600 beds**
- ▶ **City of Anaheim: 345 to 400 beds**
- ▶ **City of Buena Park: 100 to 125 beds**
- ▶ **City of Fullerton: 100 beds**
- ▶ **City of Orange: 100-200 beds**
- ▶ **City of Tustin: 50 beds**
- ▶ **City of Laguna Beach: 46 beds**

In the future, the court indicated that other and/or all cities in Orange County may be expected to add shelter beds as part of a countywide response to homelessness.

To learn more

For more information on the city's efforts and to provide feedback contact Public Information Officer Tony Dodero at 714-754-5288 or via email at citynews@costamesaca.gov.

BY THE NUMBERS

(through 2017)

62

Total number of shelter beds required for Costa Mesa.

12

Beds provided by College Hospital in Costa Mesa.

50

The remaining number of shelter beds required for Costa Mesa.

120

The number of clients assessed by the city's outreach team throughout 2017.

380

Costa Mesa unsheltered individuals housed since 2013.

277

Number of individuals who remain in housing.

73%

The retention rate for keeping individuals housed.

