

Temporary 50-bed bridge shelter opens in Costa Mesa

The City of Costa Mesa officially opened a 50-bed temporary bridge shelter on a portion of the Lighthouse Church property at 1885 Anaheim Avenue that will be a first step toward cleanup and restoration of Westside neighborhoods while addressing the issues of helping individuals up and out of homelessness.

“By opening this bridge shelter, we are taking a compassionate and caring approach toward individuals experiencing homelessness,” Mayor Katrina Foley said. “But at the same time, we need to keep the safety and security of our entire community as our top priority. Living on a sidewalk is inhumane. It’s not good for anyone forced outside and it’s not good for maintaining the quality of our community.”

Mayor Katrina Foley announced the opening of the bridge shelter at a 9 a.m. press conference Friday April 5. The mayor was joined by Federal District Court Judge David Carter, Assembly Member Cottie Petrie-Norris, Mayor Pro-Tem John Stephens, Council Members Arlis Reynolds, Andrea Marr and Manuel Chavez.



Council Member Reynolds, who represents District 5 where the shelter resides, also spoke and told the crowd how much it meant to her to see this shelter open in the same place she grew up.



Also in attendance were Acting City Manager Tammy Letourneau, Parks & Recreation Director Justin Martin, who was instrumental in planning the shelter, City Attorney Kim Barlow, Police Chief Rob Sharpnack and Fire Chief Dan Stefano, Lighthouse Church Pastor Phil Eyskens and several city leaders and staff members from every department.

As of time of the press conference, there were already approximately 20 clients living in the bridge shelter and receiving services from city outreach workers and shelter operator Mercy House, an experienced, well-respected operator who will ensure the facility is a reservation-based model along with 24-hour security and neighborhood management covering a half-mile radius.

Establishing this 50-bed bridge shelter option for those experiencing homelessness will provide the number of necessary shelter beds that the City of Costa Mesa is expected to create based on a proposed settlement agreement in the OC Catholic Worker lawsuit that in turn would restore the city's ability to enforce trespassing and anti-encampment ordinances.

The new bridge shelter expands what is an already existing inclement weather shelter at the Lighthouse Church into a reservation-based, high-security temporary solution to offer shelter beds to those in need.

The city has installed security fencing around the facility, increased lighting in the area, cleaned and sanitized streets, sidewalks and parks where necessary, and added modular trailers for restrooms, showers, storage of personal belongings, and space for shelter beds.

Additionally, bridge shelter clients will be offered resources for job training and placement services, mental health assessments, health and dental care, substance abuse treatment and connections to permanent housing all while working on their plan to obtain housing.

The temporary bridge shelter is expected to operate for approximately one year when city officials anticipate a new permanent facility will open.

In March, the Costa Mesa City Council voted unanimously to allocate \$6.925 million for the purchase of an industrial warehouse at 3175 Airway Avenue that will be evaluated as a potential permanent bridge shelter for individuals experiencing homelessness in Costa Mesa.