

Court requires city to provide 62 shelter beds

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 Federal District Court Judge David Carter ordered the city to provide shelter beds equal to 60 percent of the city's last homeless count numbers. In January of 2017, the court found 103 unsheltered homeless individuals in Costa Mesa, and 60% of 103 equals 62 beds.

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 Santa Ana River trail and the individuals who were illegally camping there and were scheduled to be moved. These cities and others are also expected to operate emergency 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.

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 will avoid further litigation and then the court will allow the city to put a heightened focus and strict enforcement of the city's anti-camping laws. 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, homeless residents will no longer be able to illegally camp in Costa Mesa.

Working toward a solution

The City of Costa Mesa is aggressively searching to identify appropriate locations throughout the city for potential purchase and development of a new community shelter. A number of locations throughout the city have and continue being evaluated and inspected by city staff. City staff is evaluating market conditions and price, zoning and city code obstacles and potential community impacts for each location. There is no perfect location. The court order has created very short timelines that require fast decisions.

Seeking the community's support and input

Finding 50 more community shelter beds in Costa Mesa is going to take civic engagement and support by elected leaders and the greater Costa Mesa community as the city's goal will be to ensure any impacts are minimized. Costa Mesa city staff is in the early stages of working with the Network for Homeless Solutions and other non-profits as it seeks to fulfill the court's direction and balance that with the wider Costa Mesa community input and feedback.

The city's commitment to the community

The city's commitment with any location will be to design the highest quality facility that is securely operated and free of loitering or neighborhood disruptions and any impacts to the greater Costa Mesa community will be minimized. The particular focus will be a 2,000-foot radius around where the required shelter is placed. It is vital that this center does not negatively impact the immediate surrounding neighborhood.

Working on solutions daily

The city provides support and resources to aide 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 homeless individuals in the Costa Mesa community. Costa Mesa continues to have its homeless 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 homeless individuals seeking assistance. The city partners with the Lighthouse Church of the Nazarene, which serves as a homeless service center and inclement weather shelter for extremely vulnerable individuals. Trellis and The Crossing Church provide a check-in center with 63 bins to safely store materials for homeless individuals and keep it out of public streets and parks.

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

380

Costa Mesa homeless individuals housed since 2013.

277

Number of individuals who remain in housing.

73%

The retention rate for keeping individuals housed.

120

The number of assessments completed by the city's outreach team throughout 2017.

12

Beds provided by College Hospital in Costa Mesa.

50

The remaining number of shelter beds required for Costa Mesa.

