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Transitional Center for Civic Center Homeless Opens

A round-the-clock transitional center with emergency shelter beds and enhanced services for those without permanent housing who have congregated in the Orange County Civic Center has opened at the former Santa Ana Transit Terminal, which has been renamed "The Courtyard."

About 225 lunches were served after the center opened Wednesday mid-morning; about 100 people reserved space to sleep overnight.

The plan to use the former terminal was proposed by [Supervisor Andrew Do](#) at a special Board meeting in September, with a directive to open the center within 30 days. The center will operate for a year under two contracts approved last week by the Board of Supervisors.

"This homeless shelter will provide a warm bed and a hot meal for hundreds of people that have nowhere else to go," said Supervisor Do, First District, who has made homelessness his top priority. "And that's just the start. This homeless shelter addresses the root causes of homelessness by connecting homeless veterans with the VA, identifying mental health programs for patients in need, and delivering job training to help get people back on their feet."

The contracts with The Midnight Mission and Kingdom Causes Inc., also known as City Net, will allow expanded services to be available at The Courtyard, including hot showers, additional restrooms and food donations in conjunction with a safe environment where services and housing linkages are available as part of the broader solution to their personal homelessness.

The estimated cost to operate the center is \$1.4 million for a year.

"In a County with one of the state's most expensive housing markets, providing additional resources to help people transition to long-term housing is more critical than ever," said Board of Supervisors [Chairwoman Lisa Bartlett](#), Fifth District. "The Courtyard is one of several initiatives toward reaching this goal."

"This is a step toward ensuring the health and safety for all residents of Orange County," Board [Vice Chair Michelle Steel](#), Second District. "We will continue to pursue all viable options to address this issue and reduce the number of those individuals living on the street."

"What we've discovered in the past two years is how critical it is to build relationships with innovative organizations that have a proven track record demonstrating success with resolving homelessness," said [Supervisor Shawn Nelson](#), Fourth District. "This is a great opportunity to work together instead of pointing fingers that it's someone else's responsibility."

[Supervisor Todd Spitzer](#) urged his colleagues last month to schedule a study session for a more comprehensive and wide-ranging discussion of homelessness across the county. The special Board meeting is scheduled for 9:30 a.m. on Tuesday, October 18.

"We need to step up and emulate some of the best practices that I've seen used in places like San Antonio to find housing for the newly homeless and address the complex social and medical issues that result in chronic homelessness. I plan to implement the best practices in the operation of the Kraemer site that is moving into construction phase of the project," said Supervisor Spitzer, whose Third District includes the Anaheim location of a new 200-bed emergency shelter and multi-service center for those without permanent housing.

Last month, the Board of Supervisors selected Mercy House Living Centers Inc. to operate the new facility at Kraemer Place in Anaheim, scheduled to open next year, as well as operate seasonal cold-weather shelters at National Guard armories in Fullerton and Santa Ana.

The County has operated a seasonal armory shelter program in Fullerton and Santa Ana for the past 28 years. However, the armories are only open part of the year and only at night. The Fullerton armory program is slated to be discontinued when the Anaheim service center opens.

More information on the emergency shelter in Anaheim and the cold-weather armory program can be found here:

<https://cms.ocgov.com/civicax/filebank/blobdload.aspx?BlobID=57754>

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