



CITY OF SANTA ANA

October 7, 2022

Via E-mail

Orange County Board of Supervisors
County of Orange
County Administration Building North
400 W. Civic Center Drive, 6th Floor
Santa Ana, CA 92701

RE: County of Orange Cold Weather Shelter at the Santa Ana Salvation Army

Dear Board of Supervisors:

As Mayor of the City of Santa Ana, I am again writing to express my strong opposition to the County of Orange's decision to place the Cold Weather Shelter in the City of Santa Ana for the upcoming 2022-2023 winter season. On July 27, 2022, I notified Supervisor Foley of my concerns regarding the County's planned use of the Santa Ana Armory for the County's Cold Weather Shelter. I have recently been updated and now understand the County is preparing to open the Cold Weather Shelter using the Santa Ana Salvation Army location and that this shelter provider contract is proposed to be for one year. I still do not understand why the County of Orange has decided it is only in Santa Ana that this program can operate and not anywhere else in the County. I continue to respectfully oppose the placement of the Cold Weather Shelter Program in the City of Santa Ana in total.

The City of Santa Ana continues to take pride in providing quality services for individuals experiencing homelessness. The City's new 200 bed Homeless Navigation Center is operational, our use of CityNet for direct street outreach has been very successful and the City remains on the forefront of permanent supportive housing, developing hundreds of units. As I am sure you are aware, Santa Ana hosts the year-round low barrier Yale County shelter, where according to court settlement, the City has an additional 125 beds for Santa Ana residents experiencing homelessness. Together, the cities of Anaheim and Santa Ana account for 1,071 of the County total 2,661 shelter beds. Santa Ana has hosted the Cold Weather shelter for several decades, so it would be appropriate and fair for the County to utilize another host City for the Cold Weather Program.

The Fullerton Armory used to support the Cold Weather Shelter Program for the Northern SPA; however, after the Northern SPA opened several shelters, the County decided it would no longer utilize Fullerton. Santa Ana has similarly opened shelters and is only second to Anaheim in the total number of shelter beds for individuals currently experiencing homelessness. Under the same logic, the County should similarly site the Cold Weather Shelter program elsewhere in the County. Santa Ana has open beds for any individual currently experiencing homelessness who is or was a Santa Ana resident or who has ties to the Santa Ana community. Accordingly, it would be of greater benefit for the Cold Weather Shelter to operate elsewhere in a City that has no shelter beds,

CITY ATTORNEY
Sonia R. Carvalho

CITY MANAGER
Kristine Ridge

CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

in order to serve a population that does not have such ready access to beds, for example in South County.

Most recently, the County and the City of Santa Ana have found increasing concerns centered around the County operated Yale Homeless Shelter. Residents have reported homeless individuals living in cars and tents to the front of the shelter in violation of the Good Neighbor Policy agreed upon by the County and the area residents. Individuals from all over the County exited from the Yale Shelter, for disciplinary issues, are not returned to their City of origin but are instead expelled onto the streets of Santa Ana. Should the County of Orange go forward with the Cold Weather Shelter in Santa Ana, this same conduct and activity will undoubtedly occur there as well.

If the County refuses to consider other service providers and will be moving forward with the Salvation Army as a service provider, I must still call to your attention that the Cold Weather Shelter still does not need to be operated in Santa Ana. During the 2020-2021 season; due to COVID restrictions, the Santa Ana Armory was unavailable for use as a cold weather shelter. The County of Orange then partnered with the Salvation Army and placed the Cold Weather Shelter in a Thrift Store operated by the Salvation Army. The program was a complete success and provided the necessary services to those in need – all without even using the Armory. So, this has been done before and should be done again. The County and the Salvation Army, as it's chosen provider, can operate this shelter in ANY City in the County that has a vacant commercial store front, as it has been done in the past. Santa Ana has been and currently is performing more than its fair share to alleviate the homelessness crisis in Orange County.

In reality, the Cold Weather Shelter Program is simply an overnight program to provide a bed, a cot, or a mattress on the floor for a prospective attendee. There are no referral aspects for this program, which is a necessary component for virtually every other shelter operation. There is no review or vetting of an individual's criminal background. Individuals experiencing homelessness are brought to sleep for the night and then returned to the Santa Ana streets. They are dropped off at designated locations, but not a single City or the County itself takes responsibility for returning them to their home city during the daytime hours. When Santa Ana has been such a willing and progressive partner to the County on homelessness issues, this program needlessly exacerbates a crisis in the City that has done the most to address it.

Please let me know what alternate plans are developed. Should you have any questions or would like to discuss this matter further, please contact me or City Manager, Kristine Ridge at (714) 647-6900.

Sincerely,



Vicente Sarmiento
Mayor

C: Frank Kim, County Executive Officer
Kristine Ridge, City Manager