

PRESS ADVISORY

Groundbreaking for Long-Awaited Hayward Youth Shelter
Set for Friday, May 19, 2023

For More Information:
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The Ground Breaking ceremony for the Hayward Village will take place at 27211 Tyrrell Avenue in Hayward on Friday, May 19, 2023 at 2 pm. “This event is the near culmination of a modern miracle!” explains Pastor Arlene Nehring, Senior Minister of Eden United Church of Christ in Hayward, and the volunteer shepherd of the project.

This effort was launched five years ago by a small group of school and community leaders who were concerned about the wellbeing of newcomers enrolled in our local public schools. The group is known officially as “The South Alameda County Unaccompanied Immigrant Youth Collaborative”--and known more informally as “the Collaborative.”

“Funding shortfalls, zoning ordinances, and the COVID-19 pandemic were just some of the several reasons that this project could have blown up or been quietly mothballed, but some of us never gave up, because the need was too great!” Nehring explains. “We persistently organized faith and community leaders and prodded public officials to keep the project moving forward,” she said.

The late Supervisor Richard Valle ACBOS-D2 and others founded the Collaborative in 2014 out of a shared concern for young newcomers in the Hayward area who had fled violence from their nations of origin.

The Collaborative was reactivated in 2017 for similar reasons and has continuously met at Eden United Church of Christ or on Zoom. Jasmine Gonzalez with Alameda County HCSA’s Center for Healthy Schools and Communities, and Yuliana Wisner-León, who directs the church’s Newcomer Navigation Center, have co-facilitate the Collaborative in recent years.

Beginning in the summer of 2018, Pastor Nehring of Eden Church, and Aaron Ortiz, CEO of La Familia Counseling Services, repeatedly expressed the Collaborative’s cry for a youth shelter to be opened in South Alameda County.

Those clarion calls led to conversations and processes with Alameda County, the City of Hayward, and the Hayward school district’s administration, staff, and trustees that have lead to a “win” for all of us--most especially the young people who will populate the Hayward Village while progressing toward their personal, academic, and employment goals.

According to information provided by Covenant House California, the vendor selected by Alameda County to oversee construction and operations, the Hayward Village will consist of eight modular homes constructed around a courtyard on an undeveloped part of the SIAC site. It will provide low barrier access to housing and wrap-around services for up to 30 young adults, ages 18 to 24. Each of the 8 units will have 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, and a kitchen, and house 3-4 young adults. An administrative unit will be constructed at one end of the village, where staff and client meetings will be held.

While the housing needs of asylum-seeking youth are hard to overstate, newcomers are only one of several groups that the Hayward Village will serve. Others include youth who are aging out of foster care, and those seeking healthy environments for “adulting.”

Hayward Village will be the first shelter constructed solely for young adults in South Alameda County. “Finally,” Pastor Arlene explained, “our young people who need these services will be able to stay local, rather than have to disrupt their educational, work, and social lives in order to keep a roof over their heads.”

More than 150 faith and community leaders, public employees, and elected officials have helped move this project along, including the Alameda County Board of Supervisors, Alameda County Office of Education, Hayward Unified School District, Alameda County Health Care Services Agency, Housing and Community Development, and Social Services Agency, the City of Hayward, ret. CA State Assemblymember Bill Quirk D-20, and Congressman Eric Swalwell CA-14, the Eden Area Interfaith Council, Glad Tidings Church of God in Christ, St. Joachim Catholic Church, Alcance Victoria Hayward, and Eden United Church of Christ.

The construction costs for this project are estimated to run close to \$4M. Capital funds for the Hayward Village are being provided by Alameda County and the US Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2022, including a \$750K allocation earmarked by Congressman Swalwell.

Alameda County has awarded the program operation contract for the Hayward Village to Covenant House California. The City of Hayward and Alameda County are providing funds for wraparound services. And, Covenant House CA continues to raise private dollars to cover funding gaps in the capital and operating budgets.

“While we would all love to announce a ‘sure-thing’ opening date,” Pastor Arlene explained, “the number of projected opening dates that have had to be tossed in the trash along the way have led us to say, ‘The Hayward Village will be open when it’s open.’”