



LOCATION:

Santa Fe, NM

SIZE:

- 10 shelters (64 sq. ft.)
- 1 admin office (64 sq. ft.)
- 1 Hygiene unit
(Accessible + Half Bath)

POPULATION SERVED:

Vulnerable unhoused residents

OPENING DATE:

March 25, 2024

FUNDING:

- ARPA Funds for the City of Santa Fe
- Private funding

Santa Fe, NM: Spearheading a multi-site program to address homelessness

By bringing together a diverse set of community stakeholders, City of Santa Fe leadership successfully completed the pilot project of their new Safe Outdoor Space program.

After observing a growing population of people living unsheltered on the streets of Santa Fe, city leaders realized that their available options were not sufficient to meet the needs of many unhoused individuals. So, they looked to other cities around the country for alternative models to traditional congregate shelter.

What they found was the success of Safe Outdoor Spaces (SOS), which offer unsheltered communities a stable place to stay while providing connections to case management and supportive services. These sites also lower barriers that often prevent vulnerable people from accepting shelter, including the ability to bring a pet or keep couples together in a shared unit.

"It's been tried in other communities, it works," said Mayor of Santa Fe Alan Webber. "It provides safe sleeping areas, it also interestingly leads to safer neighborhoods."

Led by Mayor Webber, city leaders approved the implementation of an SOS program to aid their unhoused residents in April 2023. To provide safe, secure, and dignified spaces for incoming residents, especially with the cold of winter approaching, the purchase of 25 Pallet shelters was included as a key part of the program.

Mayor Webber's leadership and staff were crucial in uniting public and private sectors, community members, local nonprofits, and faith-based organizations to bring the SOS program to fruition. These efforts entailed a presentation by Santa Fe's Community Health and Safety Department outlining the causes of unsheltered homelessness in the city and how the SOS aimed to address them; an educational website hosted by the Santa Fe Housing Initiative detailing site development planning; and putting out a call for partnerships to secure site locations and service provision.

Christ Lutheran Church answered the call to host the site on an underutilized section of their parking lot in late 2023, while local nonprofit The Life Link was chosen for onsite service provision. This first SOS site consists of 10 sleeping shelters, one admin office, and hygiene facilities. Between The Life Link and church staff, operations include site maintenance and utilities, security, resident intake, meal provision, and psychosocial rehabilitation services along with connection to other support groups.

Ultimately, the goal of the pilot SOS is to provide support for vulnerable unhoused individuals who encountered issues accessing congregate shelter options. This means offering the privacy of an individual unit set within a supportive community environment.

"Basically, this project seeks to shelter people who are not using our current system," said Kyra Ochoa, Deputy Secretary of New Mexico Human Services Department. "There are a variety of reasons that a group shelter setting doesn't work for somebody, or a setting in which they can't be with their partner or their pet doesn't work for them. So this is really just one more option for people that are out on the streets or in the arroyo that we hope will get them in forming good relationships with those who provide services including case management, and housing navigation to find out really what it is that each person who hasn't been accessing our shelter system needs in order to get housed."

Mayor Webber offers his perspective of how the city came together to make the pilot SOS community a reality:

"When you have a plan, when everybody is in alignment, when government, private sector, nonprofits, religious organizations, the community are all in alignment. That we want to save people's lives, it's been done, and we can do it in Santa Fe."

After early proven success of this first site, the city has purchased additional Pallet shelters to expand the SOS program and its positive impact for the community.

It's been tried in other communities, it works... we want to save people's lives, it's been done, and we can do it in Santa Fe.

SANTA FE MAYOR ALAN WEBBER

Site Features:

- 10 private 64 sq. ft. shelters with integrated climate control
- 1 64 sq. ft. admin office
- 1 Accessible + Half Bath Hygiene unit
- Onsite maintenance, security, and meal provision
- Social services including psychosocial rehabilitation and support groups

