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## **DignityMoves and the County of Santa Barbara Announce the Launch of DignityNOW Santa Barbara County, a comprehensive plan to solve the County's interim housing needs**

The ambitious undertaking backed by the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors is an inspiring blueprint for counties across the country

**Santa Barbara County– January 25, 2023** In partnership with the County of Santa Barbara, DignityMoves announced today the launch of DignityNOW Santa Barbara County, a bold initiative to create sufficient Interim Supportive Housing for everyone experiencing unsheltered homelessness across the County of Santa Barbara.

Yesterday, the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors unanimously supported the updated Community Action Plan which calls for the development of several DignityMoves villages totaling approximately 437 beds, more than closing the existing shelter gap of 432 beds county-wide.

The 2018 Santa Barbara County Community Action Plan to End Homelessness identified the need for an additional 563 interim shelter beds across the County. Three years later, the 2021 status report showed progress towards that goal, but 432 beds are still needed. Around that time, the County began talking with DignityMoves about how their innovative model might accelerate progress towards that goal.

In February 2022, DignityMoves started construction on a 34-room community in downtown Santa Barbara in partnership with the County of Santa Barbara and Good Samaritan Shelters. Completed in less than 6 months, the community has been fully occupied since inception with a waiting list of over 100 people and has been positively embraced by neighbors and local businesses. With the help of Good Samaritan's intensive supportive services, numerous residents have found jobs, enrolled in programs, and/or moved into permanent housing. The

success of this first DignityMoves program has spurred the County Board of Supervisors to identify several additional county-owned sites for DignityMoves villages across the county. “The Board of Supervisors is committed to making a tangible impact on homelessness within the County by blending critical support services with dignified housing, said Terri Maus-Nisich, Assistant County Executive Officer of Santa Barbara County. “DignityMoves is a critical partner in sheltering the homeless with its innovative, nimble and affordable housing model. DignityMoves is that missing piece of the puzzle, which provides a real opportunity to shelter and serve the most vulnerable in our communities.”

“Unsheltered homelessness has an immeasurable cost to our county in terms of emergency room visits, law enforcement, encampment resolution, and preventable forest fires– not to mention the lost business revenue and emotional toll on all of our residents. While building sufficient interim housing does not solve homelessness, it can dramatically reduce the strain on the overall system and free up resources that can be redirected towards other programs including permanent housing. We are proud to take this bold step and aggressively address this crisis head-on,” said First District Santa Barbara County Supervisor Das Williams.

“DignityNOW” is DignityMoves’ innovative new strategy for ending unsheltered homelessness in a community with one bold, comprehensive campaign. “Building one shelter at a time is progress, but merely chips away at the problem,” says Elizabeth Funk, the Founder and CEO of DignityMoves. “DignityNOW expands that progress in a rapid and scalable way. We partner with cities and counties to determine the entire unsheltered homelessness need in a community, identify underutilized land for interim use, and solve for it in one initiative.”

The DignityNOW approach is cost-effective and time efficient, while also allowing for specialization in the variety of programs and services offered at each community. Additionally this approach can reduce local neighborhood objections, given that the projects are temporary, and every neighborhood takes its turn. DignityMoves communities are temporary by design and easily relocated. Each project will remain in place for several years, then relocated to another region in the county, thus allowing the flexibility to adjust the amount of shelter in each region as needed.

“DignityNOW Santa Barbara is a bold example of what incredible things can be achieved when public and private objectives align, with courageous County leadership and vision, and a generous and compassionate community. We believe that DignityNow Santa Barbara County will be a blueprint for other communities around the country,” said Elizabeth Funk, Founder and CEO, DignityMoves.

DignityMoves' interim supportive housing is starkly different from traditional congregate housing because everyone gets their own room, with a door that locks. Designed to emergency housing building codes, the prefabricated housing is quickly assembled and cost-effective. Each cabin unit has a bed, a desk, a chair, heating and A/C, a window– and privacy. The communities also include shared bathroom and shower facilities, dining buildings, patio decks, computer labs, community gardens, pet areas and staff offices. The housing is paired with wrap-around social services, providing the residents an opportunity to get off the streets and take a deep breath, allowing them to get out of survival mode and take active steps to improve their lives to find permanent housing and employment.

### **Hope Village in Santa Maria Announced**

The next community in the DignityNOW Santa Barbara initiative is already underway in Santa Maria. The 94-room Hope Village will host 3 different specialized programs: 11 of the rooms will be operated by Fighting Back Santa Maria Valley, an organization specializing in the needs of transitional age youth between 18 to 24, many of whom are leaving the foster care system. In collaboration with Dignity Health's Marian Regional Medical Center, 30 of the rooms will be reserved for individuals experiencing homelessness who have acute medical conditions or other complex needs and require care in a safe environment. The remaining rooms will be focused on serving residents experiencing homelessness within the city of Santa Maria, operated by Good Samaritan Shelter. Hope Village is slated to open to residents by August 2023.

### **Taking DignityNOW national**

DignityMoves' model of rapid, cost-effective, scalable solutions to unsheltered homelessness is spreading quickly across California, with communities open or underway in San Francisco, Santa Barbara, Rohnert Park, Alameda, Thousand Oaks and many others. DignityMoves isn't planning to stop with ending unsheltered homelessness in California; as news of its model of low-cost, rapidly-built interim supportive housing has spread, cities far and wide have expressed interest in the unique approach. DignityMoves is changing the narrative and instilling optimism that unsheltered homelessness can be solved with the right innovation, community will, and civic leadership such as that demonstrated by Santa Barbara County.

**DignityMoves** [www.dignitymoves.org](http://www.dignitymoves.org) works to end unsheltered street homelessness in our communities through the construction of Interim Supportive Housing as a rapid, cost-effective, scalable solution. Using innovative approaches such as prefabricated materials and modular housing, DignityMoves takes advantage of vacant parking lots or other underutilized sites to

build temporary “pop-up” communities which can be relocated as necessary. DignityMoves also develops permanent sites such as those funded by California’s Project Homekey program.

For information on bringing a DignityMoves community to your city, or to donate to this work, please visit [www.dignitymoves.org](http://www.dignitymoves.org).

DignityMoves, Santa Barbara County:

<https://dignitymoves.org/santa-barbara/>

<https://dignitymoves.org/santa-maria/>

Photos are available upon request.

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