



**NEWS RELEASE**  
**City of Chico**  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 4, 2023**

**\*\*\*MEDIA ALERT\*\*\***

**CITY OF CHICO REFLECTS ON THE ONE-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF  
THE CHICO PALLET SHELTER**

***Chico Pallet Shelter has become a model for other communities throughout the state***

**CHICO, CA — (May 4, 2023)** — The City of Chico held a media event Thursday to commemorate the one-year anniversary of the Chico Pallet Shelter.

Local elected officials reflected on how the shelter has enabled a plan to create a safe space for our homeless population, while at the same time, restore safe spaces in our community by cleaning up encampments and removing trash and hazardous materials from public spaces. Many of the speakers acknowledged that the Chico Pallet Shelter has become a model for communities throughout California.

The Chico Pallet Shelter first opened its doors on April 25, 2022, in response to the homeless crisis. It was the largest single location of tiny homes for homeless individuals in California at the time of construction.

Erik Gustafson, Director of Public Works Operations and Maintenance for the City of Chico, provided an overview of what it took to stand-up the site. “Over the past year, the city has continued to provide a safe, healthy living environment for individuals faced with homelessness at the shelter,” said Gustafson, who also served as the emcee for the media event.

Mayor Andrew Coolidge shared these statistics for the first year of operation:

- 401 individual homeless assessments have taken place through the City’s Outreach and Engagement efforts. Many of these individuals have chosen to go to the Pallet Shelter or the nearby Torres Shelter.
- Currently, 207 occupants are housed at the Pallet Shelter. These individuals receive safe housing with air conditioning and heating, the opportunity for three meals per day, laundry service, and shower service.

- The shelter has enabled the City to clear numerous encampments in public spaces through its Outreach and Engagement process including: Bidwell Park, City Plaza, Civic Center, Comanche Creek, Little Chico Creek, Highway 99 to Bruce Rd., Little Chico Creek Greenway-Dead Horse Slough, Little Chico Creek Greenway at 9<sup>th</sup> and Hazel Streets, Lindo Chanel, Manzanita Ave. to Holly, Teichert Ponds, Windchime Park, and the bike path from W. Sacramento Ave. to W 8<sup>th</sup> Ave.
- During the encampment clean-ups, Public Works Maintenance Workers removed 908 tons of trash.

“When the City took on this challenge, we knew that it would come with a large price tag. Our partners from the County of Butte stepped up and funded the 177 shelter units you see here today. For that, the City is incredibly grateful,” said the Mayor. “Through the American Rescue Plan Act and the Community Development Block Grant program, services at the Pallet Shelter in fiscal year 22-23 were entirely paid for through grant funds.”

The City continues to pursue additional grant sources to support homelessness, limiting the impact on the City’s General Fund. Mayor Coolidge recognized The Jesus Center, who operates the facility, for its leadership, and specifically, Amber Abney-Bass, Executive Director, for her compassion.

Councilmember Depeka Tandon, who represents District 7 where the Pallet Shelter is located, applauded the efforts of the Chico Public Works Maintenance Staff, the Outreach and Engagement Team and the Chico Police Departments Target Team and thanked Abney-Bass and the hard-working staff of the Jesus Center.

“Finally, to the community members who have supported these efforts and been patient with the City while we work through this difficult process, thank you for your commitment to making Chico a better place.” said Tandon. “One year later we can see the improvement in our community in general, and those improvements specifically within District 7.”

Additional speakers included Butte County Supervisor Tod Kimmelshue who discussed the County’s support for the shelter, including purchase of the shelter units and on-going support from the Department of Employment and Social Services, and Behavioral Health.

Abney-Bass, Executive Director of the Jesus Center and the operator of the site, shared more details about the operations of the pallet shelter, and what success had looked like for the residents of the shelter. She acknowledged community partners, and the staff and board of the Jesus Center in a heartfelt speech by saying, “Everyone serving in their various roles is working hard, and we are all working together to make our community better. We are leaning into hope.”

Media in attendance were offered a chance to ask questions and tours of the pallet shelter, including a view into what shelters look like for individuals who are housed there.

“This has been a difficult process, and there is more work to be done.” said Coolidge. “We hope the community can look back over the past year and see the improvements - Improvements to

our parks, improvements to our public spaces, improvements to our waterways, improvements to the services offered to the unhoused, and improvements to the quality of life.”

*Located in Butte County, California, Chico is the cultural and economic center of the northern Sacramento Valley and the largest city north of Sacramento. Known as a college town, the home of California State University, Chico and for Bidwell Park, one of the largest urban parks in the world. For more information, visit [www.chico.ca.us](http://www.chico.ca.us).*

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