



News from: **City of Oakland**

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Lake Merritt Lodge at Full Capacity *92 units of housing for formerly unsheltered residents*

Oakland – Yesterday, Oakland City officials, community leaders, and community members came together to highlight the occupancy status of the Lake Merritt Lodge. The City established Lake Merritt Lodge as a site for emergency COVID-19 response housing, intended to keep our most vulnerable homeless community members safe. The 92-unit building is now at full occupancy.

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“Oakland is determined to end the moral outrage of homelessness on our streets,” said Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf. “Lake Merritt Lodge is one step in the right direction. I could not be prouder of the partnership between the City, the County – specifically the County’s Healthcare for the Homeless team – local leaders, and community members who worked tirelessly around the clock to effectively address this crisis and these disparities.”

People experiencing homelessness are especially vulnerable to contracting COVID-19 as they have limited ability to safely shelter in place and socially distance. Many unsheltered people also have underlying medical conditions which put them at especially high risk of serious illness and/or death due to this disease. The Lodge supports Oaklanders who are medically vulnerable and/or 65+ years old, causing them the risk of serious complications from COVID-19.

“Before I was an elected official, in the City of Oakland, I experienced homelessness,” said District 3 Councilmember Carroll Fife. “And it is through that lived experience that I understand the necessity of having a space to live, a door to lock, the peace to grow. It was that stability that allowed me to become a councilmember.

People need that ability to rest and recover, especially in a period of COVID where people are ill and they need to regenerate. You can only do that with housing. It is through that lens that I am able to have compassion and the ferocity to push for urgent solutions now, we need accommodations now. That is the only way we will be able to address this crisis that we are experiencing.”

The site is run by Housing Consortium of the East Bay (HCEB), an experienced homeless services provider which currently operates a similar COVID-19 response intervention and two RV Safe Parking Sites for the City of Oakland.

“This program is here today because of the COVID-19 crisis,” said Darin Lounds, CEO of HCEB. “The Lodge is a wonderful, but temporary solution. As we look towards more sustainable, permanent solutions, we at HCEB look forward to partnering with the City and community to support these great efforts.”

"It is wonderful to know that the Lake Merritt Lodge is fully serving the public and helping people out of homelessness,” said At Large Councilmember Rebecca Kaplan. “I worked for and supported this building being used for the benefit of our vulnerable, unhoused neighbors. It is great to see that vision be fully realized. As we seek to bring more interventions with greater impact throughout the City, we pause today to celebrate this success, and recognize the importance of these types of actions that can immediately house people."

Funding for the program is provided by the City of Oakland. The City expects to receive up to 100% reimbursement for the costs of the program through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) through September 2021.

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