

NEWS

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For Immediate Release

Healing By Design: A New Era in Treating Mental Illness Takes Shape Among Oaks, Woodlands

Redwood City – A center that will transform the treatment of San Mateo County’s most vulnerable mentally ill residents is taking shape.

The 121-bed Cordilleras Mental Health Center will replace a drab concrete facility that opened during the Truman Administration as a tuberculosis ward and transitioned to a mental health treatment center more than four decades ago.

The new center comprises a cluster of small residential buildings with shared community spaces. The design reflects a new approach to treating mental illness: a home-like setting with windows and doors opening to nature.

“You can measure the compassion of a community by how it treats its most vulnerable,” said Don Horsley, president of the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors. “We made a decision that we, as a community, are going to provide the best setting possible to help those suffering from a severe mental illness, and do so close to home so that loved ones can stay connected.”

The County [began construction](#) on the \$155 million center in April 2021 following years of planning and site work. The new center is expected to open in 2024.

The project consists of:

- ▶ Four single-story mental health recovery centers, each accommodating 16 individuals.
- ▶ A separate housing unit for 57 individuals with a lengthy history of mental illness.
- ▶ A campus core with a multipurpose room, arts and crafts center, chapel, conference rooms and other support spaces.

- ▶ A variety of outdoor areas, including secure courtyards, for communal gathering, sheltered seating, gardens, sports courts and more.
- ▶ Tearing down the existing facility, a step that will improve views from the new center.

The site is off Edgewood Road between Redwood City and San Carlos, about a half mile east of Interstate 280 next to the Pulgas Ridge Open Space Preserve. ([Link to a map of the location.](#))

The site originally offered an out-of-the-way place for the tuberculosis hospital, which transitioned into a mental health facility in 1978. Now a new generation of experts in mental health see the location with its surrounding trees, a seasonal creek and fresh air as therapeutic.

The design of the new buildings will result in the project achieving what's known as zero net energy: the total amount of energy used by the buildings on an annual basis will be equal to the amount of renewable energy created on the site.

Once the new center opens, the old building -- deemed out-of-date and expensive to operate -- will be demolished. The cost of the new building is being paid primarily through the sale of bonds.

Want to learn more? Visit the County's [Project Development Unit](#) for the [feasibility study](#) to replace the existing facility, a [concept design report](#) and additional background.

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