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Center for Mental Health, Region 10 swap buildings

- Center to locate crisis unit at 300 N. Cascade Ave.
- Region 10 moving closer to downtown
- Emergency bed numbers rise to 19

By KATHARHYN HEIDELBERG

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The Center for Mental Health just got a whole lot more elbow room for the emergency crisis stabilization unit it is opening in Montrose — and in turn, Region 10 will be within striking distance of the heart of downtown.

The two entities are swapping buildings in a deal that closes today: The Region 10 League for Economic Assistance and Planning will move to the 145 S. Cascade Ave. property the center had obtained last year for an emergency clinic location. The Center will now locate that component of its services to 300 N. Cascade Ave., a much larger building that was historically used as a care center before being assumed by other entities, most recently, Region 10.

The Center for Mental Health's main facility will remain at its Miami Road location and Volunteers of America, which has administrative offices at the North Cascade location, is staying put.

"From a community perspective, it puts Region 10 in the downtown area," Shelly Spalding, Center for Mental Health's CEO, said.

"On the flip side, the building they have been in and own was actually historically built as a care center, which meant it already met a lot of the environmental requirements by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment for our needs as a crisis stabilization unit.



With construction underway in the Region 10 building, Clinical Director of Acute Services Robin Slater on March 15 puts on a hard hat during the tour of the building to get a good laugh. (Sydney Warner/Montrose Daily Press)

"It will save money on renovation costs and in the end be better for the community on both sides."

The Center last year acquired the property at 145 S. Cascade Ave. with the intent of remodeling it for use as a 24-hour

"It's amazing for the community. It's a win for everybody, including the community."

John Renfrow
Real estate agent

behavioral health clinic for crisis assessment and stabilization.

The emergency center is intended to stabilize patients in crisis to the point they can receive continued care through their long-term provider, instead of having to go to the emergency room and be sent to the nearest such crisis centers in Grand Junction, Durango or to the Front Range.

By acquiring the nearly 16,300 square-foot building on North Cascade, the Center will be able to maximize its state and grant funding to provide 19 crisis beds, instead of the seven the smaller site on South Cascade would have accommodated.

The crisis center will offer round-the-clock walk-in services for those in need of immediate behavioral health attention and a withdrawal management area for those experiencing substance-use crises.

"It enlarges the capacity for the number of people who can be served and the cost for renovations is decreased," Spalding said, referring to the swap.

"We're actually trading with them," Region 10 Executive Director Michelle Haynes said, explaining the entities' mutual contractor had connected the two and advised the Region 10 building would

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be better for the Center's purpose.

"We started having some conversations about what that could be like. Here, they'll have plenty of room to grow that (crisis) program. It just made a lot of sense," said Haynes.

It also makes sense for Region 10 to move to the South Cascade location, which sits between the Colorado Mesa University Montrose campus and the Elks building.

"We're really excited to be right downtown. I think it's going to be a great move overall for both organizations and for our community that we serve," Haynes said.

By acquiring a smaller building, Region 10 will see its maintenance and operations costs decrease, as well.

Region 10 had previously managed its enterprise center on North Cascade in part as a business incubator, which provided small businesses and nonprofits with office space. Now, however, there is Proximity Space, which offers shared working space and fills that need, Haynes said. Although Region 10 will no longer lease space to small, local startup ventures, it will continue other program support.

"It's good timing for us because we're comfortable to be moving into a small location," Haynes said.

"Managing a building of this size (the current location at 300 N. Cascade Ave.) takes significant time and resources. We can redirect that time and resources to more of our core program."

Center for Mental Health Chief Financial Officer Lance Lehigh praised Region 10 and the



Posing by the Region 10 building on March 15 before swapping locations, Renfrow Realty's John Renfrow, left, Region 10 Executive Director Michelle Haynes, Clinical Director of Acute Services Robin Slater and Center for Mental Health Chief Financial Officer Lance Lehigh stand by the sign to say goodbye to this location. (Sydney Warner/Special to the Montrose Daily Press)

assistance of Stryker Construction, the entities' mutual contractor, whose work he called "integral" to the process and "the catalyst."

The North Cascade site's layout and design were big pluses, he said.

"This offered us the opportunity to be able to offer that variety of service lines for adults, adolescents, and the walk-in clinic with the substance-use crisis unit. Region 10 had done an amazing job of having all the infrastructure in place," Lehigh explained.

"There were a lot of upsides to this particular building."

Because of the difference in the value of the two buildings, Region 10 and the Center negotiated an

amount the latter would pay in addition to giving over the 145 S. Cascade Ave. location. Although the amount is confidential, Lehigh said the payment allowed Region 10 to move forward with the plans it has for the South Cascade building.

The Center benefits despite making the payment, Haynes said.

"It will still be really cost-effective, particularly given the historical use of our building. It has the infrastructure to support the type of program they're looking to do," she said.

"The fact that we get to play a bit of a role in it is kind of cool. We're excited about what it's going to offer our region."

isolation in a spare room at the emergency department."

The Center for Mental Health received money for acquiring and remodeling the initial proposed site from the Colorado Health Foundation, the Denver Foundation, and state general fund appropriations under past legislation. The Center is making sure such funding is being spent in accordance with the applicable conditions, Lehigh indicated.

He said neither the Center nor Region 10 is incurring debt by making the swap.

"They (Region 10) immediately saw the value of making this exchange and what it would do, not only for the community but our entire region," Lehigh said.

"It's amazing for the community," said real estate agent John Renfrow, who brokered the deal between the parties. "It's a win for everybody, including the community."

Region 10 is looking forward to moving closer to more of its key downtown partners, Haynes said.

"We're really excited about the location ... to just be right in the center of downtown," she said.

The Center aims to have at least one wing of its crisis stabilization unit open at 300 N. Cascade Ave. by July 1, with others soon to follow.

Its representatives also look forward to completing the building exchange with Region 10 — to, as Spalding put it: "having more localized care available for our six-county region."

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The need for emergency behavioral health stabilization capabilities is high in the Center's six-county region (Montrose, Delta, Hinsdale, Gunnison, Ouray and San Miguel).

"This crisis stabilization unit will help support both law enforcement and the local hospital, in the sense that, so much of the time, these people have not had a place to go, other than the emergency room or a jail cell," Lehigh said.

"By having this in the region, that will alleviate a lot of that pressure for both hospitals and law enforcement. Frankly, you never want someone that's in that (crisis) state of mind to be put in a jail cell or to be in