GREEN RELIEF FROM THE STREETS

THE NEW CROSSROADS homeless shelter in Oakland has 186 solar panels atop its roof to supply electricity to the facility. It also includes a Wing where clients released from the hospital can recover (below).

County opens eco-friendly homeless shelter

At a glance

The Crossroads homeless shelter is opening at 7515 International Blvd.
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First night of providing beds for clients is January 30
Houses 125 people
Built with ecological sustainable facility, solar panels, hydraulic heat, natural light and eco-friendly paint.

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SHELTER, from News 1 said. The building, with high windows for natural light and walls painted with a green paint that does not emit fumes, has an airy, open feel to it.

Over at EOCP's 17-year-old shelter at 6795 International Blvd., resident Bobby Ross said he's excited about moving to the new place.

"It's going to be beautiful there, and we need to get out of here. It's freezing in here and the roof leaks," he said.

Chester Peaterson is one client who is sick with the flu and a chronic cough. He carries a blanket full of cold medicine, tissues and hand cleaners which he said he gives to others at the shelter. Handled up in a jacket, sweatshirt and shirt, he said "I'll be glad to not wear so many layers at the new building which should be warmer.

The new Crossroads shelter has other firsts besides being the nation's first green shelter.

It'll be the first in Alameda County with a respite wing for people who have been released from the hospital with no where to go. Now, homeless people who are hospitalized and return back to the streets have a good chance of succumbing to further illness.

It also has a family wing with bathrooms in each five units.

"Our little guys don't like to take showers," much less take showers with strange adults next to them, as they must do at the homeless shelter up the street. "The idea is to keep families intact, and let people preserve their dignity.

On any given night, about 8,200 people go homeless in Alameda County — and about 16,000 experience homelessness sometime in a year in the area.

Families make up 43 percent of the county's homeless population and children about 26 percent, Jackson said.

In some of those families the breadwinner loses his or her job and then fall behind on rent and was evicted. In other cases, families are running from abusive situations at home.

The new shelter cost $11 million to build and was funded by the U.S. Depart-