

LOCAL

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Teen homeless shelter hits new setback

Sentinel staff report

CORRALITOS — The proposed shelter for homeless teen-agers has been dealt another setback and is looking for a new site.

The nonprofit agency Above the Line and the county Redevelopment Agency could not come to terms with the owner of the Freedom Boulevard property that a year ago won county approval to become the site for the county's first shelter and educational center for teens.

Negotiations broke off when the owner raised the asking price, according to a statement released jointly on Friday by the redevelopment agency and Above the Line.

"Our top priority is finding housing for homeless teens. We must find suitable housing within our budget, and we found that the property on Freedom Boulevard wasn't within our budget," said Kimberly Carter, Above the Line's director.

This impasse comes after more than two years of fund-raising for the property and concessions to neighbors who initially loudly protested the proposed shelter location.

The project was granted a conditional use permit last June by the Board of Supervisors. But because of delays in obtaining permits, Above the Line lost some of its early funding for the purchase. The contract for the property

never closed.

Early this year, the redevelopment agency came in with additional support for the project and participated in new negotiations with the owner.

"We were disappointed our discussions with the seller were not successful," said Tom Burns, redevelopment agency director. "We realized ... that the owner's expectations of value had escalated considerably over time."

The Freedom Boulevard complex seemed ideal because it included a 5,500-square-foot home and several out buildings.

Above the Line started the project because its founder Kimberly Carter, a former production consultant, saw a

need. It was estimated two years ago that 250 homeless youths were fending for themselves in the county.

About 60 homeless young people between the ages of 13 and 17 now participate in a day program that Above the Line started in conjunction with the County Office of Education.

This summer, Above the Line, with the help of community donations, will enroll 25 teens in summer camp and recreational programs.

Carter said her organization and the county are committed to finding a new location.

"We have the funding for a residential site, now what we need to do is find that site which fits our budget."