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## Much-needed clinic in Oakley stalls due to budget cuts

By Jonathan Lockett  
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OAKLEY — As the need for a health clinic in Oakley grows, so have state budget constraints, making it even more difficult in recent months for stakeholders to push any plans forward.

Cuts to state health programs have left organizations such as the Contra Costa Interfaith Supporting Community Organization (CCISCO), La Clinica and others looking for a way to not only bring a health care site to the city, but to maintain it.

CCISCO organizer Nancy Marquez said there's huge a need for a city health clinic, with county clinics being consistently crowded and often too far to travel to for residents with little money.

"The clinic would relieve the county clinics and free up coverage for everyone," Marquez said.

Marquez works specifically in Oakley, lobbying to bring a basic level of health care to uninsured residents. The city's only doctor has left, leaving no one within the city to provide local health care for more than 35,000 residents.

Last year, a study cited more than 15 percent of people in Oakley lacked health care, prompting the Oakley City Council to support bringing a health clinic to the city. Marquez said it's likely the number of uninsured in the city has increased with the downturn in the economy.

"I'm sure (the percentage of uninsured people) has gone up," Marquez said. "I think without a doubt, it's continuing to grow."

Marquez said the stakeholders of a clinic are considering locating a La Clinica satellite in Oakley that would be open weekdays for a total of about 20 hours a week. A larger site would require a federal health center designation or a large number of Medi-Cal patients, which Oakley doesn't have, she said.

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La Clinica serves Solano, Alameda and Contra Costa counties. It currently has sites in Pittsburg and Pleasant Hill, and offers services on a sliding-scale basis. Most services are reimbursed by state-funded programs.

Marquez said an Oakley clinic wouldn't be more than what Sutter Delta's Urgent Care Clinic paid in its first year — about \$500,000. The Antioch clinic, which opened in 2004, initially needed about \$300,000 annually to operate.

City Manager Bryan Montgomery said the city has been in talks with other doctors who might locate in Oakley when the economy improves. The city, however, wouldn't have a large role in the process, he said.

"Health care is a huge priority for any community and we want to be a part of the discussions," Montgomery said. "However, health care is not a typical function/activity of municipal government."

Marquez said a good place for an Oakley facility would be in the Lucky shopping center off Main Street, where the previous doctor's office was. Oakley resident Elaine Wrigley said that location

would be good because of a nearby bus stop.

Wrigley has lived in Oakley for 12 years and has relatives who have had to travel out of the city for low-cost health care. If they don't have family or friends to take them to the county health care facility in Martinez, patients would have to use several modes of public transportation to get there, making it even more difficult to obtain health services, she said.

"How many friends are going to wait seven, eight hours for you while you go to see a doctor?" she said. "I'm lucky. I have people who will take me from church, or my daughter (will take me)."

**Jonathan Lockett covers East County. Reach him at 925-779-7174 or [jlockett@bayareanewsgroup.com](mailto:jlockett@bayareanewsgroup.com) .**

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