the ROCk
By Interfaith Community Services

CASE STUDY

Lessons from The Bridge Homeless Recovery Center, Dallas, Texas

Unsheltered homelessness creates disorder. A well-run shelter ends it.

How a Dallas shelter serving about 600 people a day turned a problem property into a stable, investable neighborhood, and what it means for The ROCk.

Concerns about litter, loitering, drug use and encampments are legitimate concerns. Those conditions come from **unsheltered homelessness**: people with nowhere to go and no one responsible for them. A purpose-built shelter and services center with professional staff, one controlled entrance and assumed responsibility for the blocks around it is the remedy, not the cause. The site of The Bridge is a half mile from downtown and was once the home to abandoned buildings and vacant land that drew people to congregate and use drugs. Eighteen years after it opened, the sidewalks around it are clear and clean, and new businesses, housing and a school campus have been built beside it.

2008
The Bridge opened

~600
Guests served on a typical day

70–75
Guests move into stable housing each month

$236M+
Identified new development nearby since 2017

Investment followed the shelter, not the other way around



Aerial view: The Bridge (red outline) and nearby projects, each built long after it opened.

Harvest Lofts	2017	n/a
Amelia	2019	**$53M**
Cortland	2021	**$74M**
Pearl Lofts	2023	**$29M**
Nolan Estes Campus	2027	**$80M**

Nolan Estes is a Dallas ISD PreK–12 campus under construction less than a block from The Bridge.

A school district chose to build for its youngest students down the street from a homeless services center.

Without a front door

- Lots, doorways and sidewalks become the default shelter
- No one is responsible for loitering, disruptive behavior, trash, safety or what happens next
- Neighbors' only recourse is a call to 911

With a professionally managed shelter

- Every guest is screened, registered and assessed on arrival
- Staff and street outreach personnel are accountable for the grounds and the surrounding blocks
- Services and a path to housing under one roof

Sources: Independent research and ICS site visit to The Bridge, July 23, 2026; bridgehrc.org; investment figures as compiled by ICS Harvest Lofts investment amount not available and excluded from the $236M+ investments total.

Order comes from management, not from absence

The Bridge works because of six practices. Each has a counterpart in The ROCk Operations Plan.

Practice	At The Bridge, Dallas	At The ROCk, Santa Fe
One controlled front door	A single intake building. Every guest passes a metal detector and bag x-ray, is assessed immediately and meets a Care Manager within 24 hours.	A walled perimeter with one supervised entry. Every guest passes a security check, registers and checks in; regulated items are stored at the door.
Responsibility beyond the fence	A two-block “Good Neighbor Boundary” patrolled in three shifts by about 30 security staff (all employees) trained in trauma-informed care. They know most guests by name and pick up trash.	A no-spillover standard with proactive street outreach on the surrounding blocks, plus a 24/7 Neighborhood Response Line to address disruptive behavior.
A structured day	Day services run 6 a.m. to 5 p.m. A 5 p.m. curfew clears day guests and brings overnight guests in; dinner at 6 p.m. is for overnight guests only.	Defined day-services hours, evening intake, curfew and quiet hours, and a staffed Welcome Area inside the gates for people not yet admitted.
A place worth being	A spotless, calm campus with roving cleaning crews. It is simply better to be inside the walls than on the sidewalk, so people choose to be inside.	A courtyard, common areas and a services hub designed so that staying inside the perimeter is the attractive choice every hour of the day.
Care that moves people forward	Every guest gets a Care and Housing Plan. Engaged guests get priority for transitional beds. A peer team led by a former guest helps the hardest cases.	Case managers, peer support and on-site partners for medical care and behavioral health, substance abuse, and housing navigation, provided by five MOU partners.
Accountable to neighbors	Monthly neighbor meetings attended by Dallas police. The main concern raised today is outside groups handing out food and leaving litter, not The Bridge.	A named Neighborhood Liaison, a Good Neighbor Agreement, standing advisory groups and a public Monthly Trust Report.

The Bridge: a 4-acre block, seven buildings, about 75,000 sq ft, 115 employees and a $17 million annual operating budget.

The ROCk: a 1-acre lot, about 18,000 sq ft, 125 beds and an anticipated 150–200 guests a day, a smaller operation to manage but with the same operating standards.

THE TAKEAWAY

Disorder follows the lack of a front door, not the presence of one.

Where staff are accountable for the building and the blocks around it, neighbors, developers and even a school district have chosen to invest. The ROCk is designed to the same standards, and we will publish our results every month so Santa Fe can hold us to it.



Sources: ICS site visit to The Bridge, July 23, 2026; bridgehrc.org; The ROCk Operations Plan (July 2026). Figures for The Bridge are as reported by its staff.