

## **CCCS to house federal inmates But it's not expanding**

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The federal government has agreed to pay Community Counseling & Correctional Services to house up to 15 federal prisoners a day in Uptown Butte.

But the Federal Bureau of Prisons contract does not mean CCCS, 68 W. Broadway, is expanding.

"It's still within the total amount of beds that we have here," CEO Mike Thatcher said. "We're not adding anymore buildings" or beds.

The contract was approved Jan. 30 amid some discord Uptown, where about 85 people signed a petition against CCCS' adding federal prisoners. CCCS is a private corrections company with campuses in Butte, Warm Springs, Galen and elsewhere.

"I feel like (CCCS) has done some harm in the Uptown area," said Ristene Hall, who owns the Park Street Gym. "There are people who don't come Uptown because they are here." Hall circulated the petition in late 2005, after CCCS applied for renewal of a federal contract, and submitted it to the Council of Commissioners Feb. 10. She said a four-person committee asked her to gather signatures, but would not identify its members.

The petition was misguided, Thatcher said, because CCCS is not trying to add prisoners. Rather, it wanted more federal prisoners to fill existing beds.

"I felt there was some intent to misinform people," he said.

CCCS' contracts with the state and federal governments dictate how many prisoners it can accept to fill its 118 beds.

The state pays CCCS to take up to 112. Under the new contract, the federal government will pay CCCS to take up to 15 — five more than the previous contract allowed, he said.

"We don't have to take all 15, but let's just say that we had empty state beds ..." Thatcher said.

Several petition signers said they had believed CCCS was adding to its total prisoners.

And the mention of expansion concerned some Uptown, who have seen CCCS grow from 40 prisoners since its inception.

"It's a good employer, but we were concerned that the program is getting big enough for the area," businessman Ernie Richards said.

But if CCCS expands, Thatcher said, it will not be in Uptown Butte. The only change here is a remodel allowing more space for existing operations.

"We're not going to run out there and buy another building and put 100 bodies in here," he said.