

NEVADA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS RESPONSES TO

2019 Nevada County Civil Grand Jury Report

Investing in Housing for People Experiencing Homelessness in Nevada County

DATED July 9, 2019

Responses to findings and recommendations are based on either personal knowledge, examination of official county records, review of the responses by the County Executive Officer, Auditor-Controller, County Counsel, Public Defender, Behavioral Health, and Health and Human Services agency representatives or testimony from the Board of Supervisors and county staff members.

A. RESPONSES TO FINDINGS

F4. Citizens in our community who are opposed to any projects or programs related to addressing homelessness occurring near their residences or businesses often slow or impede beneficial projects proven to save counties money.

Agree.

F5. The Housing First model of providing people experiencing homelessness with permanent housing is an evidence-based approach with proven outcomes that is considered, a best practice across the country. The County will benefit from supporting the Housing First model, making it eligible for federal and state funds.

Agree.

F6. The majority of the funding to address homelessness comes from state and federal sources. The County and the new organization overseeing the Nevada County CoC are the two major entities best suited, at this time, to diligently pursue such funding for the benefit of our community.

Agree.

F7. The County's severe shortage of low-income housing contributes to homelessness and requires an aggressive approach to comply with Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) plan for funding. The County is best situated to address the many obstacles to building low-income housing locally.

Partially Disagree.

While the County is a significant stakeholder in addressing low-income housing, both private developers and stakeholder like the Regional Housing Authority of Sutter and Nevada Counties, City of Grass Valley, Nevada City, and The Town of Truckee are critical in addressing the many obstacles of building low-income housing locally.

F8. The BoS approved the 2018 Ten Year Plan on December 11, 2018. However, it lacks an implementation plan with accountable leadership.

Agree

The Strategic Plan itself lacks a specific implementation plan. However, an implementation plan is currently being developed.

F9. Homelessness financially impacts all County residents. The cost of homelessness includes significant expenses related to medical, law enforcement including incarceration, clean-up of trash and human waste, damage to the environment, and increased risk of fires. Numerous studies across the country have shown that the public cost per person is reduced to less than half when housing is provided.

Agree.

F11. The recent transition to an independent Nevada County CoC has increased stakeholder engagement and access to funding opportunities.

Agree.

F12. Until the current shortage of low-income housing is remedied, there will be a continuing need for traditional emergency shelters, winter warming shelters, and other overnight options for people experiencing homelessness.

Agree.

F13. The current contracts between the County and non-profit providers regarding winter warming shelters in western Nevada County do not extend beyond the winter of 2018-2019, leaving uncertainty about the availability of such shelters in the future.

Partially Disagree.

Although it is true that the most recent executed contract with Sierra Roots was for one year, this is a standard contract term in the County and doesn't imply uncertainty. The intent of the County is to continue to support a warming shelter this coming winter. Building off the experience from last winter, the County, Nevada City, and service providers continue to work together to improve facility availability, operation protocols, and to develop cooperative agreements for the coming winter season.

B. RESPONSES TO RECOMMENDATIONS

R1: The County should take the leadership role for addressing homelessness.

The recommendation has been implemented.

In 2019, the Board of Supervisors made homelessness a Priority A Objective and has directed staff in multiple agencies to allocate and secure resources for the development and coordination of homelessness services.

R2. The BoS should supplement the 2018 Ten Year Plan with an implementation plan that links goals and resources to outcomes and timelines.

Recommendation not yet implemented but will be implemented in the future.

The plan adopted by the Board of Supervisors identified a series of recommended strategies. As referenced above, an implementation plan is being developed and will be completed within six months of the release of this Grand Jury report. The implementation plan will link goals and resources to outcomes and timelines.

R3, The BoS should adopt the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness recommendation that "a strategic plan implementation have an oversight body involving a broad spectrum of the community." The new organization overseeing the Nevada County CoC could serve in this function/capacity.

This recommendation has been implemented.

The Homeless Resource Council of the Sierras and the Nevada County CoC already serve in the capacity as an oversight body. Both entities are comprised of a broad spectrum of the community that include representatives from schools, hospitals, county government, law enforcement, veterans, shelter providers, disability advocates, and more.

R4. The BoS and Municipalities should form a collaborative entity, perhaps a Joint Powers Authority, with the mandate to establish county-wide rules and programs to facilitate the development of housing. As suggested in the 2018 Ten Year Plan, "A unified effort in relation to housing ordinances and allocation of service resources would be a highly effective approach." This Joint Powers Authority should generate a list of incentives for developers to construct low income housing including adjustments to impact fees, adjustments to building requirements, and the use of general funds to assist in funding housing. In the absence of such a collaborative entity, the County should take the lead to determine how to provide low-income housing and invite developers and builders to collaborate.

This recommendation requires further analysis.

The Mountain Housing Council fulfills this function but limited to the Truckee-Tahoe region. More exploration of broadening that model to include Western Nevada County and/or other options is warranted and underway. This analysis will be completed within six months from the date of publication of the grand jury report.

R5. The BoS should explore reinstating an inclusionary housing policy.

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not reasonable.

Inclusionary housing was a popular concept in the late 90's and early 2000's but these programs were ineffective at producing affordable housing. The programs were also fairly complicated, which made it resource intensive for staff to manage and maintain the relatively small numbers of units that were produced. Even HCD no longer supports inclusionary housing as a viable program for developing affordable housing. An inclusionary housing policy is inconsistent with the new Housing Element recently passed by the Board of Supervisors.

R6. The CEO should conduct an assessment of County personnel requirements necessary, prepare homelessness funding applications and oversee existing and new programs. A plan should be submitted to the BoS on staffing requirements and alternatives.

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted.

The County added a Housing Resource Manager in 2018, shifted responsibility for homelessness to the Director of Housing and Community Services in, and utilizes existing staff resources for funding applications and oversight of programs. In addition, the County contracts with outside consultants and non-profits to prepare funding applications and implement homeless services programs.

R7. Homelessness should be a regular board/council meeting agenda item for the BoS and Municipalities.

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted.

Agenda items are brought to the Board of Supervisors as needed for input, direction or approval. Homelessness continues to be a priority of the Board, and as such items are heard on a regular basis as specific projects progress.

R8. The County should continue to partner with relevant stakeholders to secure funding for and commence construction of the Day/Navigation Center as a top priority.

The recommendation has been implemented.

The County has collaborated with stakeholders to develop a proposal for a Day/Navigation Center known as the Brunswick Commons Resource Center. The County applied for a highly competitive round of Community Development Block Grant funding, and unfortunately the project was not awarded funding. The County and stakeholders continue to actively seek funding to bring this project to realization. Additionally, the County and community partners continue to explore interim navigation options.

R10. The new organization overseeing the Nevada County CoC should actively recruit

membership and participation from all stakeholders serving people experiencing homelessness.

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted.

The Nevada County CoC membership already includes a broad spectrum of community stakeholders serving people experiencing homelessness. This is a critical feature of the Nevada County CoC that is already in place.

R12. The County, Grass Valley, and Nevada City should renew existing winter warming shelter agreements with non-profits by October 1, 2019, including more flexibility on the part of the operators as to when weather conditions, both forecasted and actual, warrant opening.

This recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future,

Nevada County is working with the cities and non-profit service providers and will be executing a warming shelter agreement before October 1, 2019. Part of developing that agreement will be evaluating criteria to ensure clarity and minimize confusion between service providers and the public as to when a warming shelter may be opened.

R13. The County should explore the risks and benefits of designating and maintaining an approved camping area for people without homes. The analysis, findings, and conclusions should be shared with the public.

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted.

The County's homeless efforts are a collaboration, leveraging partnerships with non-profits and other local jurisdictions to address a wide spectrum of needs. This spectrum includes outreach and engagement, low barrier emergency shelter, recovery residence, supportive housing and permanent housing. The County has long partnered with Hospitality House to support emergency shelter needs, and in 2018 the County expanded that partnership to add eleven low barrier shelter beds, and four medical respite beds to

Utah's Place. We remain focused on this partnership to address emergency shelter needs.

R14. HHSA should continue to partner with community service providers and the Municipalities to increase outreach to educate and inform the community' about homelessness issues and solutions.

The recommendation has been implemented.

The County has created multi-agency teams made up of law enforcement representatives and community providers that meet bi-monthly to coordinate services, educate each other on pending issues related to homeless issues, and coordinate response to needs. In the coming months these multi-agency meetings, the monthly Continuum of Care meetings, and the implementation of strategic plan recommendations will combine to communicate, educate, inform, and converse with a diverse constituency including service providers and the public. Additionally, the HOME team will deliver a coordinated and unified approach to engaging multiple partners daily including businesses, law enforcement, medical centers and public locations like libraries and bus stops.

R15. Residents should contact their local-elected officials to encourage them to fund housing for people experiencing homelessness in order to reduce the costs to the economy, environment, and healthcare and judicial systems.

Recommendation has been implemented.

Nevada County residents have multiple avenues to communicate their views to elected officials such as by phone, e-mail, social media and in person.