



**NEVADA
COUNTY**
CALIFORNIA

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NEVADA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS Board Agenda Memo

MEETING DATE: January 29, 2026
TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: Ryan Gruver, Health and Human Services Agency Director
SUBJECT: Homelessness Update

RECOMMENDATION: Information only.

FUNDING: N/A

BACKGROUND:

2025 Grand Jury Report

County response addressed findings and recommendations, but agreed to research two recommendations by January 2026:

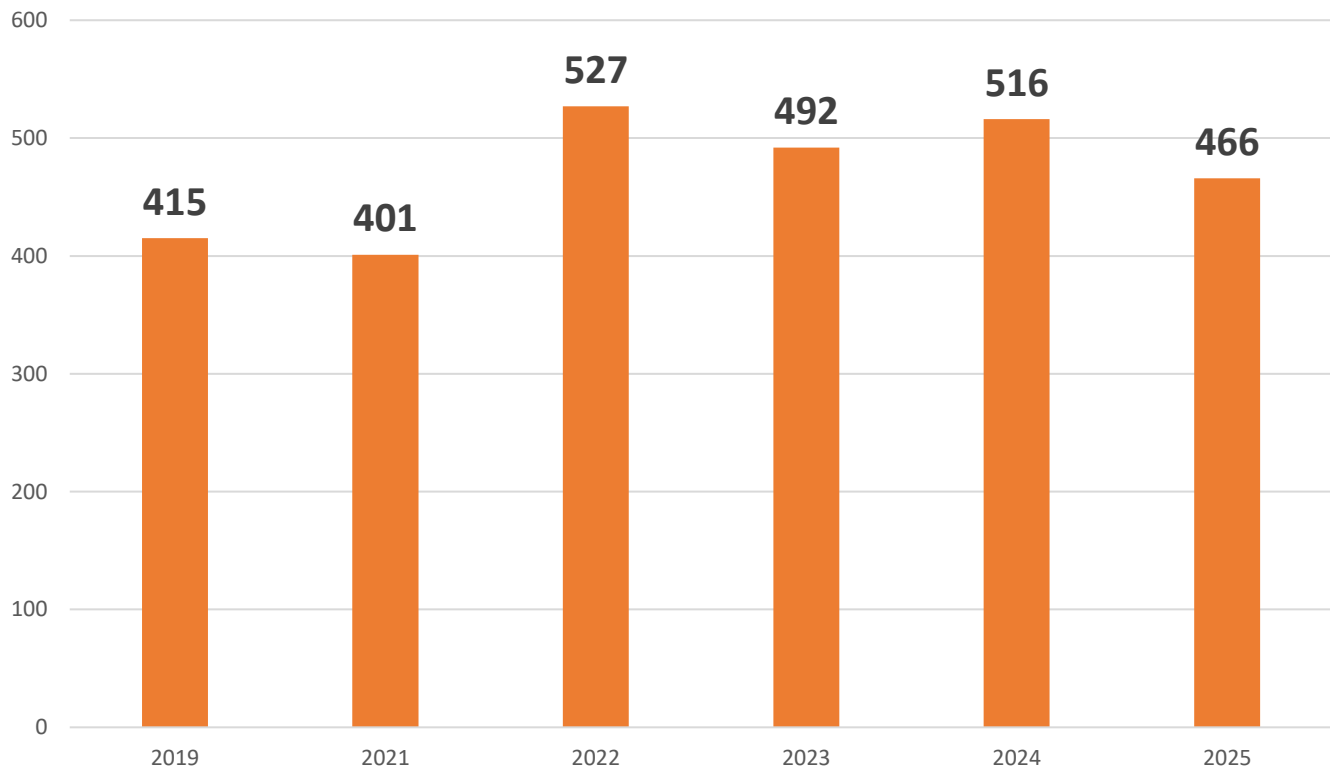
- Recommendation 1: Local governments (cities, the county and the BoS) should enact comprehensive and coordinated anticamping laws; possibly consulting existing anti-camping laws in other counties and states.
- Recommendation 2: Local governments should develop one or more designated low-barrier “sanctioned” camping areas for the homeless, with facilities and access to supportive services similar to those established by other municipalities.

The Board will hear a brief presentation on homelessness data and resources, followed by a presentation of the research conducted in response to the Grand Jury recommendations.

Data and Resources

Point in Time Count

Point In Time Count



Behavioral Health Housing Inventory

Housing/Shelter Type	17/18 beds	25/26 Beds (projected)
Shelter (motels)	0	4
Interim Housing (e.g. Behavioral Health Bridge Housing)	4	51
Recovery Residences (formerly Transitional Housing)	7	41
Respite	4	5
Permanent Supportive Housing	42	130
Other (Board & Care, etc)	2	6
Odyssey House	10	16
Total	69	253

Managed Camping Research

- Grand Jury Recommendation: Local governments should develop one or more designated low-barrier “sanctioned” camping areas for the homeless, with facilities and access to supportive services similar to those established by other municipalities.

Comparison of models

Program & Jurisdiction	Model	Description	Annual Cost & Source
Auburn Mobile Temporary Shelter – Placer County	Managed Camping	A low barrier managed campground with on-site navigation, laundry and bathrooms. Capacity of 60. Partnership with Auburn, established due to lawsuit adjacent to unsanctioned camping.	\$1.7 Million, General Fund, Opioid Settlement Funds
14 Forward – Yuba County	Tuff-sheds	Grew from community action adjacent to unsanctioned camping in dry river bed. Tuff sheds without utilities. Capacity of 15, transitioning away from County support.	\$300K, HHAP Funds
Better Way Shelter – Sutter County	Tuff-sheds	Highly managed shelter operation in Tuff-sheds with utilities and climate control. Capacity of 40. One of Sutter’s main shelter solutions.	\$1.6 Million, General Fund, Grants, CalAIM
2 nd Street Camp – Sutter County	Sanctioned Camping	In response to jurisdiction and law enforcement pressure, established a 24/7 campground adjacent to unsanctioned camping. Resource intensive and didn’t work. They transitioned to overnight only and serve 3-5 per night. Try to transition people to the Better Way Shelter.	\$170K per year, run by public works.
Chico Alternative Camping Site – City of Chico	Sanctioned Camping	Established as part of a lawsuit, this program is basic sanctioned camping. The city provides for clean-up, but little case management. The project is closing as soon as they’re out of the lawsuit. Capacity 40, occupancy 18	Case management \$62K per year, unknown facility costs.
Santa Rosa Safe Parking – City of Santa Rosa	Safe Parking	Safe, designated parking area on city-owned land, with space for 52 vehicles and RVs.	Operating contract \$2M for 18 months, unknown public works and facilities costs. City funds

Cross Jurisdictional Differences:

Scale and Shelter Type

- Sacramento and San Diego operate large-scale facilities with individual tents or pallet shelters serving 100–750 residents.
- Sutter’s Better Way Shelter and Auburn’s MTS are smaller (20–60 people) with more emphasis on casework intensity.

Governance and Enforcement Models

- Sacramento and San Diego apply managed camping as part of an enforcement-linked continuum. Residents may be offered placement as an alternative to citation.
- Sonoma, Napa, and Yuba rely on collaborative or trauma-informed management, limiting law enforcement presence and focusing on peer-led rules.
- Some sanctioned camping projects like Chico's pilot and Sutter's Second Street Campground are hands-off in regards to case management and oversight

Outcome Tracking and Evaluation

- Sacramento and San Diego maintain robust data dashboards that include % exits to housing and service engagement rates.
- Smaller jurisdictions like Auburn, Napa, and Yuba track progress less formally, relying on narrative updates and partner reports.
- Sonoma County integrated managed camping into a countywide homelessness strategy with explicit reduction targets while Dillon, CO treats its model as a seasonal, harm-reduction effort

Cross Jurisdictional Similarities:

Temporary, Service-Oriented Models

- All programs were designed as transitional or low-barrier alternatives to unsheltered street encampments, often positioned as temporary bridge housing rather than permanent solutions.
- Sites typically integrate case management, housing navigation, and Behavioral Health outreach delivered by local nonprofits.
- Most jurisdictions emphasize voluntary participation and prioritize people already camping nearby to reduce displacement and tension.
- Many projects/programs were initiated in response to court mandates.

Basic Infrastructure and Health/Safety Focus

- Common features include fencing, sanitation, water, waste disposal, and 24/7 staffing or security presence.
- Programs aim to mitigate public health, wildfire, and environmental hazards by consolidating unsanctioned camping into managed, monitored sites.

Governance and Outcomes

- Most sites are county- or city-owned.
- Most sites are operated by contracted nonprofits, for example, The Gathering Inn, Twin Cities Rescue Mission, and First Step Communities.
- Success depends on integration with housing pipelines, community support, and sustainable operating funds.

Spectrum of Shelter and services

There is a spectrum of services, shelter and housing, ranging from unsheltered homelessness to market rate housing. In furtherance of the Board's priorities around housing and homelessness, the County has invested heavily across the spectrum. As one example, supportive housing has grown from 42 units in 2017/18, to a projected 130 units by the end of 25/26.

Tent camping models do not count as "shelter" but rather as services to the unsheltered. Tuff-shed models are emergency shelter.



Recommendations & Board Discussion

Research indicates that there are numerous and varied models to learn from across the state, including similarly sized jurisdictions in our region. The less intensively managed projects tend to be less well received and less effective. More intensively managed projects show successes, but are as costly or more costly than traditional shelters and housing solutions. For County of Nevada to stand up a managed camping program right now would require diversion of current resources and focus that have resulted in housing for many unhoused residents. The recommendation of staff is to not pursue managed camping at the present time, but to keep successful models in mind if future capital and ongoing funding is available.

Ordinance Research

- Grand Jury Recommendation: Local governments (cities, the county and the BoS) should enact comprehensive and coordinated anticamping laws; possibly consulting existing anti-camping laws in other counties and states.

Ordinance Research:

County staff researched camping ordinances from multiple jurisdictions, from large counties, to smaller adjacent counties. We also analyzed ordinances in the incorporated jurisdictions within Nevada County borders. Additionally, the county analyzed the State's model ordinance for addressing encampments, and the county's existing encampment protocols. A matrix comparing the researched ordinances and policies is attached.

Key Highlights:

- State Model Ordinance – Originally targeted at CalTrans right of ways, the State's model ordinance prohibits camping on state property within 200 feet of posted notice. After a notice period, the ordinance allows for enforcement, with a shorter period for "exigent" circumstances. The ordinance spells out protocols for clearing encampments and handling personal belongings.
- Placer County Ordinance – Similar to the State model ordinance, and the ordinances of other counties, Placer's ordinance makes it unlawful to camp where non-camping signage is posted. The ordinance prioritizes connection to housing and other resources first, and includes protocols for handling personal property.
- Cities in Nevada County – Since many county properties are within City and Town borders, the ordinances of the jurisdictions within our borders are relevant. Grass Valley, Nevada City and the Town of Truckee all prohibit camping on public property, but with different penalties for each. In Nevada City, camping on city land is an infraction (i.e. a ticket with a fine) while in Grass Valley and Truckee, violations can be charged as a misdemeanor offense.
- County Encampment Protocol – The county has an existing protocol developed by HHSA, County Counsel and County Facilities for addressing encampments on county land. This protocol includes similarities to the State Model Ordinance, and the ordinances of Placer and other counties. The protocol has never been adopted by the Board, but has been employed successfully to resolve encampments on County property. This protocol is out of date as it was drafted before the "Grant's Pass" Supreme Court decision.

Reasons to Consider an Ordinance

- Grand Jury Recommendation: The Grand Jury recommended an anti-camping ordinance in order to address wildfire safety concerns. As discussed in the next section, there are some key existing policies and limitations to consider in this recommendation.
- State requirements: With upcoming rounds of homelessness funding, the State is requiring recipient jurisdictions to have adopted something similar to the State's model ordinance. This does not necessarily have to be in the form of an ordinance.
- Safety and Service: In addition to external recommendations and requirements, the Board may want to consider an ordinance and policy in order to ensure encampments are not creating unsafe or unhealthy situations for residents, and to help the county more effectively serve unhoused residents.

Private Property

- The Grand Jury's focus on anti-camping ordinances is related to wildfire safety
- Ordinances are the tool if property owners are condoning or neglecting camping on their property
 - Camping for long-term habitation is already effectively banned on private property based on existing codes/standards
 - Not as explicit as in some jurisdictions ordinances, but enforceable by Code
- Trespass is the tool if the property owner has unauthorized campers on their property
 - The jury also recommended shortening the notice to enforce trespass, but we're already at the limits of state law
- In practice most encampments on private property are either unauthorized or on vacant land. As discussed above, there are existing tools for this.

Public Property

- The State's model ordinance and other Counties' ordinances focus on public property
 - The now overturned "Boise" decision focused on public property. Many managed/sanctioned camping programs arose out of lawsuits related to Boise
 - The Grant's Pass decision overturned Boise, and allowed the state to create their model ordinance, and urge counties and cities to follow the same path.
 - Nevada County has an unadopted protocol with similarity to the State model ordinance and other county ordinances.
- Jurisdictional Limits
 - We do not have authority over federal or state land, which is where encampments often occur.
 - Most of our facilities are in City/Town limits and are subject to their encampment ordinances.

Considerations in determining approach

In determining the approach to encampments, the Board should consider unintended impacts.

- Board Priorities:
 - Housing – While Grant's Pass provided jurisdictions with more discretion in enforcing anti-camping ordinances, it does not address the fundamental lack of housing and shelter that were the basis for the Boise decision.
 - Wildfire Risk – Enforcing in visible/urbanized areas may exacerbate the wildfire risk the Board and Grand Jury seek to mitigate, by forcing people deeper into more heavily wooded areas.
 - Fiscal Stability – Ordinances that criminalize homelessness risk increasing county costs
 - Homelessness – Heavy handed approaches may alienate the people we're trying to serve, making the work of getting people into interim and permanent shelter and housing harder.
- Other Considerations:
 - Some jurisdictions report that when their cities/counties enforce ordinances, people experiencing homelessness end up going back and forth between jurisdictions.
 - County authority to ban camping on public property is limited, so coordination with local jurisdictions is more important than the specific ordinance/policy we use.
 - We have existing tools for enforcing camping on private property.

Recommendations & Board Discussion

Recommendation: Update the encampment protocol and bring to BOS for formal adoption by March, to include:

- Alignment with State model ordinance & other county ordinances
- Coordination with Jurisdictional Partners
- Grant's Pass Updates
- Not limited to our properties in unincorporated

Alternative: Work with CDA to develop an ordinance modeled on State and other county ordinances (timeframe TBD)

Item Initiated and Approved by: Ryan Gruver, Health and Human Services Agency Director

Submittal Date:
Revision Date: