

Tuolumne County Housing Initiatives

Supportive Transitional & Permanent Housing

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Revised 12/8/2023

The Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors has authorized staff to create a continuum of housing as a part of a system of care for families and individuals who are homeless or are vulnerable to homelessness. Several housing initiatives are in process. The information below represents staff efforts to bring clarity to specific areas of Law Enforcement, Safety & Security; Facilities; Zoning & Use; Finances; and areas of General Concern.

LAW ENFORCEMENT, SAFETY & SECURITY QUESTIONS

- 1. Is the Sheriff supportive of this location?** *The Sheriff has stated that he thinks endorsing one location over another is outside of his purview of responsibility but that he does believe housing is an essential element in providing homeless services. He has further stated that he trusts the Health & Human Services Agency staff in operating successful housing programs that support individuals toward self-sufficiency and reduce homelessness in Tuolumne County.*
- 2. Does the Sheriff's Department have capacity to respond to calls at the Navigation Center and surrounding areas?** *The Sheriff has stated that his department will continue to respond to all calls across the County within their protocols for priority and urgency, and staffing ability. He has also stated that their successful recruiting and training of new staff is on the rise in part because the Board of Supervisors has placed more funding into competitive deputy pay. Furthermore, the Sheriff is willing to work with community members who reach out, to organize Neighborhood Watch program in their neighborhoods.*
- 3. What should be done if there is a need for law enforcement at one of the County Housing sites?** *If there is an imminent threat to safety, call 9-1-1. Otherwise, for properties in the County jurisdiction, call the non-emergency line for the Sheriff Department at (209)533-5151. For non-emergency calls for properties within the City limits, call (209) 532-8143*
- 4. Is there a law regarding how close this type of facility can be to a school?** *No.*
- 5. Will there be smoking restrictions to mitigate fire concerns?** *People will be allowed to smoke tobacco in designated areas only and not inside the buildings. Medical and recreational use of marijuana is prohibited.*
- 6. Can Cal Fire inspect the property and address fire fuels and needed mitigation?** *Yes and this request will be made if the board approves the purchase of the properties related to current housing initiatives.*
- 7. Will the use, possession, or sales of illegal substances be allowed at the Navigation Center?** *No.*
- 8. How will the County prevent camping in tents and cars onsite?** *The housing initiatives are not safe parking or camping initiatives. No camping in tents or cars will be allowed onsite. Both law enforcement and County staff will assist in enforcing these rules.*

FACILITIES, ZONING & USE QUESTIONS

- 9. Will vehicles and bikes be allowed onsite?** *Only operational, registered and insured vehicles will be allowed on site. Bikes will be allowed.*
- 10. Will an environmental review take place?** *Yes. The purchase of this property is required to go through the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) process.*
- 11. Is the intended use of this property consistent with the current zoning?** *The County is exempt from its own zoning ordinances, pursuant to Tuolumne County Ordinance Code, Section 17.52.070, and a conditional use permit is not required.*

OPERATIONS QUESTIONS

- 12. What is a transitional housing?** *Transitional housing is short term housing up to two years and includes case management and supportive services.*
- 13. What is a permanent supportive housing?** *Permanent Supportive Housing is long-term housing with case management and supportive services that are person-centered and self-determined.*
- 14. Are these housing initiatives walk-in emergency shelters?** *No. All residents will be program participants with Tuolumne County Health & Human Services Agency.*
- 15. Who is eligible to be housed?** *Tuolumne County residents who are engaged in social services and who meet funding criteria for the program. Currently, funding criteria is limited to elderly, disabled, families, and transitional aged youth and veterans.*
- 16. What is the admission process?** *Referrals will be screened by the Homeless Services Unit for program eligibility. An intake appointment will be scheduled with eligible participants to include a background screening, and an assessment. Admission will be determined by a team of local services providers using information gathered from the intake, their experience, and safety guidelines following Housing First and Fair Employment and Housing Act rules. Once determined eligible, participants will be required to engage in case planning and case plan development, review the Bridge/Interim Housing rules and sign the facility agreement stating they agree to follow the terms of the program.*
- 17. Will background checks be conducted on each program participant?** *Health & Human Services staff will utilize public access systems such as Megan's Law, eCourts, and self-disclosure to determine if there is criminal activity. Staff do not have the legal right to conduct a criminal background check on program participants and law enforcement is only allowed with probable cause.*
- 18. Will registered sex offenders be allowed to live in the facility?** *No*
- 19. Will drug addicts and alcoholics be allowed to participate?** *Yes, a person with an addiction who has successfully completed a rehabilitation program or is actively engaged in outpatient services and is currently clean and sober may become a program participant. Random drug testing cannot be a mandatory part of the program as it is a violation of regulations. Some program participants may have testing as a part of their mandated case plan.*
- 20. Will homeless people from out of town be able to participate in this program?** *If a person is receiving public benefits in another community, they would not be eligible for assistance through Tuolumne County Health & Human Services Agency programs and staff.*
- 21. How will the program be managed?** *Tuolumne County Health & Human Services will provide case management services. Participants must be eligible for a Health and Human Services Agency homeless/housing program. Participants will be connected with various community service providers contingent upon the service objectives outlined in their case plan.*
- 22. Will people be allowed to bring personal items?** *Yes, but with limitations due to space constraints and no illegal or dangerous items.*
- 23. Will people be allowed to have pets?** *Consideration of pets and how that program will work is still under development and will require community partnerships and support. Each housing initiative will likely have its own pet policy. There are laws that govern the allowance of service animals.*
- 24. If a person is exited from the program for lack of compliance, how will that be handled?** *Case workers will cooperatively develop an exit plan and provide support to implement that plan. No participant will be "kicked out the front door" and left to their own devices in the community.*

- 25. Will new staff be hired and how will it be paid for?** *New staff were hired in 2022 specifically to support the homeless program. These staff will share time at the facility where their clients reside. There is grant money for social service and housing navigation workers.*
- 26. Are program participants expected to pay rent? What if they can't, how will this affect the budget?** *Rent will be collected from program participants who live in transitional and permanent housing.*
- 27. Will there be "house rules & chores"?** *Yes*

FINANCES

- 28. How will this be funded?** *Current funding is available for Tuolumne County through the following grants: Homeless Housing, Assistance & Preventions, Permanent Local Housing Allocation, CARE Act, Mental Health Services Act, Behavioral Health Bridge Housing, Encampment Resolution Funds, and the Opioid Settlement. Staff continues to seek State and Federal funds to support the development and operations of the proposed housing initiatives.*
- 29. Does funding from the Opioid Settlement have to be used to support addicts?** *Opioid funding may be used to support outpatient and inpatient rehabilitation, and those who have successfully completed a rehabilitation program, who are currently clean and sober and who need a safe and healthy environment in which to live and complete their rehabilitation.*
- 30. Are there deadlines for the use of the grant funds?** *Yes, but none that are immediate. Every grant has a life cycle with milestones that must be reached and timelines that need to be followed.*
- 31. What is the budget for this program?** *None of the Homeless Services programs are supported by General Fund dollars, rather all funding comes from grant sources. The Homeless Services Coordinator position is partially funded by the General Fund. Health & Humans Services Agency staff are funded through the California Department of Social Services and the California Department of Health Care Services. Additionally, County programs cannot be budgeted with deficit spending*
- 32. How is the County affording property taxes, insurance and utilities for operations of this project?** *The County doesn't pay property tax to itself, neither does it have to purchase consumer level fire insurance because it is self-insured. Also, as a part of the Tuolumne Public Power Agency, the County gets significantly discounted electricity.*

GENERAL COMMUNITY CONCERNS

- 33. How many people is the County trying to House?** *While the total numbers of homelessness in Tuolumne County are estimated to be around 800, the County is seeking to develop a continuum of supported housing for 150 people.*
- 34. Where can I get more information on the various homeless housing initiatives that are being developed?** *Tuolumne County Homeless Services Virtual Bulleting Board (<https://www.tuolumnecounty.ca.gov/1505/Homeless-Services-Virtual-Bulletin-Board>) has a great deal of information that is helpful in gaining a broader perspective on County efforts to reduce homelessness. Also, community members are encouraged to sign up to receive notifications on agendas for Supervisors meetings as well as meetings for committees and commissions (<https://www.tuolumnecounty.ca.gov/list.aspx>).*
- 35. What will happen with property values in this area?** *There is no definitive answer to this question. What is known is that if the program is run poorly and the facilities are not maintained properly then surrounding property values would be at risk. The County currently runs three supportive homes that have not affected neighboring properties adversely. Several licensed appraisers were consulted, they all agreed that if the housing programs are run well, then values on adjacent homes would not be adversely affected.*

- 36. Why was the process of selecting a site so hasty?** *The Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors have been developing strategy and policy for homeless services since 2018 through the development of the Plan to Combat Homelessness, the Housing Element and several other strategic initiatives. All these processes included public input and participation. Over the last two years these plans have been gaining traction for implementation. Actual movement toward acquiring housing as a part of the implementation of these plans has only become a concern to the public recently because those plans are being implemented near them.*
- 37. Were other sites considered?** *Many properties have been investigated. Staff feels that the properties being presented to the Board of Supervisors are aligned with the program criteria and goals.*
- 38. What improvements will be made to the facilities if they are purchased?** *Each property is unique. The Veteran's housing project will involve a complete redesign and renovation. The transitional homes will require attention to deferred maintenance. The motel conversion involves repurposing rooms into studio apartments with efficiency kitchens. Other changes will be considered as necessary and based on public input (fencing, parking, lighting, landscaping).*
- 39. Does the County have a real estate agent representing them as an agent on this property procurement?** *No. The County has not contracted with a real estate agent to represent their interests on this transaction.*
- 40. Does the County or any staff member receive a bonus or commission for their work related to the acquisition of this property?** *No. Multiple staff members from multiple departments are working on the legal procurement of this property in compliance with government code. No staff member receives commission, bonuses, or additional compensation.*
- 41. Why can't you use currently unused County buildings?** *All the buildings that the County owns are currently used, slated to be used or otherwise not in a condition to be used for this purpose.*
- 42. Why isn't the County spending this money on more staff for sheriff and fire instead of homeless?** *The homeless housing grant funds that the County has been awarded cannot be used for any other purpose.*
- 43. Why homeless housing initiatives instead of greater effort put forth to develop more permanent and affordable housing options?** *These housing initiatives are just one of several steps that are being developed to create a managed homeless system of care in Tuolumne County and it is a priority that is approved by the Board of Supervisors. There are also great efforts being put into developing other forms of affordable housing by the Tuolumne County Community Development Department.*
- 44. If the housing proposals move forward, what kind of work will be done at the sites to secure and improve the properties?** *Each property will have individual development plans and the extent of work varies from property to property. Security systems, lighting, fencing, gating, and physical property improvements will be considered for each site.*