

**COUNTY OF SACRAMENTO
CALIFORNIA**

For the Agenda of:
May 11, 2022
3:00 p.m.

To: Board of Supervisors

Through: Ann Edwards, County Executive
Bruce Wagstaff, Deputy County Executive, Social Services

From: Emily Halcon, Director of Homeless Initiatives
Jeff Gasaway, Director, Department of General Services

Subject: Sanctioned Encampment Sites Workshop

District(s): All

RECOMMENDED ACTION

This is an informational workshop on potential sites for development and operations of Safe Stay Communities and/or Safe Parking programs.

BACKGROUND

As part of the Fiscal Year 21/22 budget, the Board of Supervisors approved funding to develop and operate up to 200 "spaces" in sanctioned encampments. This commitment recognized that existing shelter space is not adequate to serve those experiencing homelessness, and that alternative shelter options (including sanctioned encampments, safe parking, etc.) are a necessary part of a shelter crisis system. The Board envisioned these sites being coordinated through the newly funded multi-disciplinary encampment services teams, as part of a holistic response to the crisis of unsheltered homelessness. The Board directed staff to pursue non-traditional options for providing sheltering, including sleeping cabins, vehicles, shipping containers, etc. and to consider both publicly and privately owned land, focusing primarily in the unincorporated County.

During the February 16, 2022 Board meeting, multiple Supervisors requested a report back on staff efforts to identify appropriate sites to expand sheltering opportunities for those experiencing unsheltered homelessness, including an assessment of County owned land. Staff divided the 1,673 County owned parcels into three categories as follows:

- Not Viable: Parcels not deemed appropriate for sanctioned camping. These parcels, generally are:
 - Within the Regional Parkway system; or
 - Within a drainage canal, retention pond, or other waterway; or

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- Are an active, programmed County building (e.g. libraries, water treatment facilities, etc.)
- Are too small; or
- Are fully within easements, path of travel, under power lines, etc., and, therefore, not developable; or
- Are within the oversight of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA, e.g. owned/managed by County Airports); or
- Are too far away from services, transit, and other amenities needed to appropriately provide service enriched sheltering.
- Unknown Viability: These parcels may be viable, and staff needs more input from the Board and community to complete assessment.
- Viable: These parcels are considered viable for potential encampments, due to their size, proximity to services, and/or current use

The list of County owned parcels is included at Attachment 1, divided into these three categories that reflect initial staff recommendations.

While the County owns a significant amount of property, based on the objective criteria for Safe Stay/Safe Parking communities, staff has determined very few to be potentially viable. Those criteria include:

- At least one acre in size, flat terrain, with some portion(s) paved
- Able to support basic infrastructure needs – electricity at least, water/sewer preferred
- Proximate to existing unsanctioned encampments
- Proximate to services - transit, health care, retail, social services, etc.

While not every parcel recommended meets all the above criteria, those recommended include enough characteristics that staff believe they could support a viable Safe Stay or Safe Parking community.

Because the review of County owned sites did not produce sufficient parcels, and because there were not appropriate parcels throughout all parts of the County within the County owned inventory, staff is simultaneously expanding the search to include privately owned sites. While only one privately owned site (8144 Florin Road) is far enough along in real estate negotiations to discuss, there are many more throughout all County districts be actively investigated.

While privately owned sites greatly expand the potential sites for consideration, they bring their own challenges. Not only do privately owned sites bring additional costs associated with purchase or lease and property maintenance, the real estate transactions must be considered in the context of a site approval.

Specifically, negotiation of a lease with a private owner may take months, during which time staff cannot discuss the site publicly. Once the property owner has agreed to the terms of the lease, the County may need to move quickly to secure the lease, which can conflict with some of the Board objectives to fully engage the community before acting on a site. Most lease arrangements require some up front description of the operations and site planning as part of the negotiations, which can appear to get ahead of community and Board buy off.

Purchasing of sites by the County carries some of the same concerns as leasing, although the timeframe to purchase is often much longer, allowing more thorough community engagement. However, the process for the County to purchase real property can be time intensive, meaning that a site that is identified and approved by the Board and community may not be available for construction for months after final approvals. In that the Board asked staff to work with a sense of urgency, securing land through purchase may not meet this objective.

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

The recommendations have no financial impacts as the item is a Board workshop on the efforts to identify potential sites for Safe Stay Communities and Safe Parking Communities.

Attachment(s):

ATT 1 – List of County owned parcels