

Opportunity Village At A Glance

December 12, 2017

Why

Nevada County Opportunity Village (Nevada County OV) is designed to help people build a pathway out of homelessness by prioritizing the creation of a community that fosters a rich network of compassion and mutual support. Those who choose to live in Nevada County OV agree to be non-violent, drug/alcohol-free, and to participate in community operations and maintenance. In exchange, Nevada County OV is a place for these people to learn to work as a team (ie. gardening and shopping for shared meals), practice their skills (ie. cooking, maintaining a microbusiness, etc.); and most importantly, they have the opportunity to make a fresh start.

Through guidance from a hired community manager/organizer, Nevada County OV will become a self-governing community. Local organizations and businesses, including McCamant & Durrett Architects, Hospitality House, Thurmond Consulting, LLC, and Sierra Roots have joined forces to form the backbone of Nevada County OV, providing resources, guidance, and training. Local advocates and volunteers continue to work hard to get everything lined up. This \$3,000 grant will greatly aid in kick-starting Nevada County OV's momentum in being planned and implemented in a timely fashion.

National studies show significant savings to local municipalities in transitional housing-first models. We're taking it one step further by applying community-first principles. By prioritizing shelter for the homeless and providing access to services, the county will see a reduced strain on emergency response teams, incarceration facilities, the police force, the fire department, and a myriad of other related sectors. By incubating community within Nevada County OV, this model will sustain itself for years to come.

Specifics

Nevada County OV will be comprised of approximately 30 Tiny Houses (portable lockable structures which contain a bed and small living space) which share a footpath leading to a large Common Area. The Common Area is comprised of bathrooms, showers, a kitchen, and a dining room. A local architecture firm, McCamant & Durrett Architects (MDA) has drawn house designs, based on the most economical and safe options available. MDA specializes in designing multi-family neighborhoods called cohousing communities, two of which exist in Nevada

County (Wolf Creek Lodge and Nevada City Cohousing.) Nevada County OV will be modeled after this community design, which has proven to be supportive and empowering for residents.

Nevada County OV's management structure includes an application and intake process (see below), village meetings, a village council, volunteers, security, and evaluations. Residents will have the opportunity to take advantage of skill building activities on-site.

Nevada County OV residents will sign a Community Agreement, pledging to abide by five basic rules:

1. No violence to self or others
2. No theft
3. No alcohol, illegal drugs, or drug paraphernalia
4. No persistent, disruptive behavior
5. Everyone must contribute to the operation and maintenance of Nevada County OV

Volunteers have created a preamble titled: The Emergency Before Us, which is included in this email. Also attached is a document titled: 51 points, which gives further details on the Nevada County OV proposal.

Opportunity Villages have already been accomplished in places like Eugene, Oregon, which Nevada County OV will be based on. At the inception of Opportunity Village Eugene, the Eugene City Council voted 6-2 to permit a one-year pilot project, with the City leasing a piece of underutilized land for \$1. It has been renewed every year since, 8-0 by the City with no public opposition.

A recent article published in the Register Guard, a daily newspaper in Eugene, reported:

"The last time Opportunity Village's dollar-a-year lease came up for renewal, it was on the Eugene City Council's consent calendar of routine items approved without debate. It's just not controversial anymore. People in Eugene have figured out how to operate homeless camps safely, economically and without neighborhood conflicts — a success that ought to be remembered when sites for new encampments are discussed." – Oct 2017

This model is impacting Eugene in positive ways and it can in Nevada County too.

Payback

There is both immediate and long-term payback by creating Nevada County OV. Short term, Nevada County OV residents will pay \$50 per month per household to cover rent. From this, the grant will be repaid with 4.5% interest. This money will go towards management, programming, maintenance, and training costs.

The long-term benefit is that Nevada County OV will provide a safe place for those currently without housing to get back on their feet. By providing a roof over their head and a place to eat a warm meal (and take a warm shower), Nevada County OV is helping its residents to manage day-to-day life so that they can find a job and become healthy, productive residents. Through community-building activities, such as maintenance and skills-sharing, residents can feel pride in their home and their community, which will in turn rouse the confidence they need to be contributing members to society. Nevada County OV pledges to pay back the larger community by setting the homeless up for success, assisting their reentrance to the workforce and giving them the tools to provide for themselves.