
Sponsor: Board of Commissioners

Meeting Date: 8/4/2026

Title: Ramsey County's Response to Encampment Closures in the City of Saint Paul

File Number: 2026-297

Background and Rationale:

Ramsey County is committed to ending homelessness by working with local, regional, and national partners to connect people experiencing housing instability with the services and support they need. The county plays an established and critical role in addressing homelessness through coordinated investments in housing, human services, and public health. Recognizing that homelessness is both a housing issue and a public health issue, the county works to address the health impacts of housing instability while advancing equitable access to safe, stable housing.

The county has existing programs and services for people experiencing unsheltered homelessness, including outreach, support with basic needs, housing services, and public health initiatives that promote health, prevent disease, reduce health inequities, and connect people to behavioral health, healthcare, and other essential supports. These efforts help mitigate the immediate health risks associated with homelessness while supporting long-term housing stability.

In addition, the county's Housing Stability department serves as the administrative entity for Ramsey County's local Continuum of Care, known as [Heading Home Ramsey \(HHR\)](https://www.ramseycountymn.gov/your-government/projects-initiatives/preventing-ending-homelessness/heading-home-ramsey). [The vision of HHR is to work together to create a community where homelessness is rare, brief \(with adequate crisis response\), and non-recurring; where racial disparities are eliminated; and everyone is housed. HHR's mission is to prevent and end homelessness by delivering effective, people-centered, integrated responses that are racially equitable and driven by community voice, advocacy, and learning. HHR includes partners from across the county-including nonprofits, community leaders, local governments, healthcare and public health partners, and people with lived experience-and encompasses the City of Saint Paul and all other cities in Ramsey County.](https://www.ramseycountymn.gov/your-government/projects-initiatives/preventing-ending-homelessness/heading-home-ramsey)

On July 8, 2026, the City of Saint Paul announced a plan to close encampments across the city, citing growing concerns about risks to health, safety, and dignity for residents of encampments. The first closure is planned to occur at Pig's Eye Park on August 5, with additional encampment closures occurring subsequently on a rolling basis.

The county is coordinating with the city and other partners to provide intensive support to help encampment residents transition toward safer, more stable housing. This effort includes working with county contracted outreach partners and the city of Saint Paul's Homeless Action Response Team (HART) to engage encampment residents. The county's response, the Community Wellness and Resources initiative, builds on existing efforts while recognizing that the announced encampment closures created rapidly changing conditions requiring an expanded, coordinated response. The county mobilized staff from multiple departments to provide regular, on-site engagement with residents, strengthen coordination across services, and ensure people were connected to the housing, health, and supportive resources they needed. Coordinated outreach is also focusing on identifying existing connections residents may already have with county services

and strengthening those relationships to create individualized pathways to shelter and housing alternatives and long-term stability whenever possible. In addition, Ramsey County teams continue to provide basic needs such as food, water, and essential supplies while building trust and connecting individuals to housing navigation, health care, behavioral health services, financial assistance, and other supports. The county's response advances a coordinated service delivery model that will continue to evolve and strengthen over time.

Ramsey County is also intensifying efforts to strengthen the housing continuum by aligning investments, partnerships, and innovation around a shared vision for housing stability and community well-being. This includes increased investment into quality, stable affordable housing across the county, including the addition of new units directly connected to residents on Coordinated Entry. The county will continue to build upon work already underway across county departments, regional partners, local governments, and community organizations. The county is committed to a coordinated approach that connects prevention, housing access, supportive services, and long-term housing stability into one integrated system.

Recommendation:

The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners resolved to:

1. Affirm that people experiencing homelessness are valued members of the Ramsey County community and deserve to be treated with dignity and respect, regardless of their housing status.
2. Affirm the county's commitment to serving residents experiencing homelessness in ways that reduce barriers to services and advance opportunity, wellbeing, prosperity, and housing stability.
3. Recognize that homelessness is driven by a combination of housing challenges, systemic economic pressures, health conditions, and social factors, and that the county's response must address both immediate needs and the underlying systemic causes.
4. Direct the County Manager to continue implementing a coordinated effort focused on providing support to residents of encampments in Saint Paul, including:
 - a. Strengthen existing outreach efforts by providing expanded onsite support at encampment locations, with the aim of supporting basic needs; helping residents apply for benefits; and connecting residents to public health, physical health, mental health, substance use, disability, and housing services.
 - b. Invest in partnerships that help expand emergency shelter capacity to assist residents with opportunities to transition from encampments to temporary shelters, housing or other options.
 - c. Provide additional support and case management to help residents move from encampments or temporary shelter to more stable housing.
 - d. Work closely with the city of Saint Paul and community partners to advance the housing continuum of care and coordinate services.
 - e. Continue to provide the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners with regular updates about the current phased closing of encampments in the city of Saint Paul.
 - f. Continue to provide high-level, periodic updates on the county's efforts to members of state legislators.
5. Direct the County Manager to advance existing strategies and develop additional strategies to strengthen the housing continuum, including the following actions, in alignment with the...
[Heading Home Ramsey Strategic Plan](#)
<<https://www.ramseycountymn.gov/archival-document?id=23765>> and the [Economic Competitiveness and Inclusion Plan](#)
<<https://www.ramseycountymn.gov/your-government/projects-initiatives/economic-development-initiatives/economic-competitiveness-inclusion-plan>> :
 - a. Expand housing access through building partnerships with landlords.
 - b. Increase supportive housing capacity through strategic investments and coordinated system planning.
 - c. Transform access to housing by redesigning and modernizing the Coordinated Entry System.
 - d. Strengthen services that improve housing stability by addressing complex behavioral health, medical, and housing needs.
 - e. Advance the Community Wellness and Response initiative through a One Ramsey County approach that coordinates and integrates the work of Financial Assistance Services, Public Health, Community Corrections, Social Services, Veteran's Services,

Workforce Solutions, and other county departments.

- f. Champion regional policy and systems change through advocacy at the local, state, and federal levels.
- g. Build data-driven system performance by aligning investments and system improvements with data from the Ramsey County Community Needs Assessment and other sources.
- h. Preserve existing affordable housing by supporting the acquisition, renovation, and preservation of naturally occurring affordable housing.
- i. Increase the supply of affordable housing through competitive housing development funding.
- j. Expand opportunities for homeownership through downpayment assistance and support for home rehabilitation and repair.
- k. Strengthen homelessness prevention and housing stabilization efforts to help households remain stably housed and reduce inflows into homelessness.
- l. Strengthen partnerships across cities, healthcare, housing, philanthropy, local governments and community organizations to improve coordinated responses to housing instability and homelessness.

A motion to approve was made by Commissioner Xiong, seconded by Commissioner Moran.

Motion passed.

Aye: - 6: Jebens-Singh, McGuire, Miller, Moran, Ortega, and Xiong

Excused: - 1: McMurtrey

By: 
Jason Yang, Chief Clerk - County Board