

CITY OF LAS VEGAS
ENCAMPMENT ORDINANCE
Key Messages

Background on encampment ordinance:

NOVEMBER 6, 2019: PASSED 5-2 BY CITY COUNCIL

NOVEMBER 10, 2019: ORDINANCE EFFECTIVE

FEBRUARY 1, 2020: CRIMINAL PENALTIES EFFECTIVE

What does the ordinance actually do?

The ordinance makes it a misdemeanor to camp or sleep in the public right-of-way, such as a sidewalk or street, downtown and in all residential areas if space is available at the Courtyard Homeless Resource Center or another nonprofit service provider. If all beds and spaces are full at the Courtyard and shelters, then the ordinance will not be enforced from that time until 6 a.m. the following day.

Why is this ordinance needed?

- This is a health and safety issue for the public and homeless individuals and families.
- The ordinance was designed to help direct people to the city's Courtyard Homeless Resource Center and other existing nonprofits to connect those in need to services and help break the cycle of homelessness.
- By helping get the homeless off the street and into shelters, it will help the homeless and protect the health and safety of the entire community.
 - Homeless individuals generally lack access to primary and mental health care and/or basic facilities designed to reduce public health risks, such as bathrooms and refrigerators.
- Loitering, panhandling, encampments, increased trash from food and other waste create blight and public health hazards in neighborhoods all over the valley.

- The city has always demonstrated compassion for the needs of the growing homeless population, understanding the public safety of everyone is a top priority.

Why any penalties?

- While the ordinance is applicable to all citizens, it is not aimed at criminalizing homelessness, but certain behaviors.
 - Arrests/citations are discretionary for officers who will use the ordinance as a tool.
 - Enforcement is the last resort. The goal is to help the homeless get into available beds so they can be helped.
 - Officers enforce only as a last resort when someone is resistant to assistance and resources, and their actions pose a public safety or health concern.

What if the homeless are in a wheelchair, or not breaking the law, etc?

The exceptions to this ordinance include:

- If the person violating the ordinance moves out of the area in a reasonable time
- If the individual is having a medical emergency
- If the individual uses a wheelchair or similar device
- If the individual is properly using an outdoor patio, chair or bus bench
- Protected speech at a public event or meeting
- If the ordinance is suspended due to lack of beds

How will officers know if there are beds available?

- Officers will call dispatch, which will have up to date information from the city on whether beds are available.