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At the base of Rutherford Hill, for example, a yurt village for 40 migrant workers — inspired by the domed tents of Mongolian nomads — was recently erected by the county in a remote lakeside picnic area.

"In Mexico, we sleep in the meadows," said Juan Chavez, 36, a camp chef from Michoacan. "You have to sleep where the work is."

Off the Silverado Trail, where semis bearing grapes barrel down oak allées, a 60-bed camp made of rammed earth and called the Stonebridge Farm Workers Center is rising on eight acres donated by the Joseph Phelps Vineyards. The \$3.2 million center, financed by the state, the county and the Napa Valley Vintners Association, is the first of possibly five new camps in the valley.

The construction can be traced to a striking political shift. Last spring, in a move some say is a national model, county residents approved Measure L, which loosened long-sacrosanct zoning restrictions against development on agricultural land to permit the building of farmworker housing. The measure calls for up to five camps to provide temporary shelter for up to 300 farmworkers. This month, a majority of the valley's 1,900 vineyard owners, representing some 44,400 acres, voted to tax themselves \$7.76 per acre to help pay for and operate the new housing.

The demand for worker housing is in many ways a distinctly Napa problem. While 75 percent of California wine grapes are picked by machine, roughly the same percentage in the valley is picked by hand. Workers here brave porch floors for hourly wages that on average are 9 percent higher than elsewhere in the state: up to \$100 on a good picking day.

A study by the University of California at Davis found that the number of beds for farmworkers fell from 400 in the 1980's to 250 in the 1990's. The county has 176 beds in four public camps, including the yurt village, managed by the nonprofit California Human Development Corporation; seven camps with about 60 beds are privately owned.

The harvest season extends from mid-August, when the fields are heavy with sauvignon blanc and grapes to use for champagne, to late October, when the late-ripening cabernet grapes crisscross the hills at improbable vertical angles. Increasingly, migrant workers like Salvador Servin, 62, a resident of the Calistoga Farm Worker Center, the county's oldest camp, arrive early in the season. Mr. Servin can make \$12.50 an hour during the harvest, paying \$10 a day for a room shared with two others and three meals. During the September and October peak, a typical worker picks for four to five hours a day, in the cooler weather of early morning, said Philip Martin, a professor of agricultural economics at the University of California at Davis.

The Calistoga camp opens Jan. 16 and can be full by March 1. "Then I have to send them away," said Angel Calderon, 50, the site manager, who sends money home to Timbinal in Guanajuato. "If the other camps are full, I tell them to go to the church," he said. "These people need to eat, they need to rest, to take a shower, to do laundry. It's very, very hard."

Increasingly, demand for workers extends beyond the harvest. It

reached a critical point two years ago, when phylloxera led to the replanting of Napa's vineyards.

Most vintners replanted at higher density, with about 1,200 vines per acre rather than 500 to 600. "Now there were more vines to prune, more sophisticated and complex trellising techniques, more hand-suckering and leaf-pulling," said Tom Shelton, president and chief executive of Phelps Vineyards. "More vines equal more labor. It's not just a

A place to call home, but forget the wine cellar.

harvest issue anymore."

As grape acreage rose, the housing for pickers became scarce. Rising land values, corporate ownership and, some say, more housing regulations led to the closing of camps.

Image has also been a factor, said Ruben Oropeza, the county environmental enforcement officer, whose father was a manager of a migrant camp. "You're building a winery for tourism," he said. "So why would you want a little Tijuana next to it?" Some of the 18 private camps that have closed in recent years have been subsumed by wineries. One is now a gym for a wealthy family, Mr. Oropeza said. Another, which formerly housed 60 workers, is "a pala-

tial house you could put on the front page of Sunset magazine."

The housing shortage, Professor Martín said, was a sharp contrast to "the nice, pretty little valley with the Mercedes pulling up."

Msr. John Brenkel, the pastor of St. Helena Roman Catholic Church and a leading housing advocate, said, "Here in the valley we've practiced economic apartheid," adding, "It behooves us to level the playing field."

The new Stonebridge center, which will have a communal garden and a soccer field, is expected to be finished by next harvest. Rosa Segura, chairwoman of the county's Migrant Farmworker Housing Committee, said that the passage of Measure L was a major improvement but that the real challenge was to get more land donated for new camps. "There will always be overcrowding," she said, "and landlords who seize the opportunity to put 10 men in a one-bedroom apartment."

Meanwhile, there are stopgap measures like the yurt village, which was moved this year from Yountville, about a mile from the celebrated French Laundry restaurant, to a wooded site near Lake Hennessey.

The 10 yurts, tents on wooden platforms housing four men each, were paid for by \$130,000 in private donations. Ilene Jacobs, director of litigation for California Rural Legal Assistance, a nonprofit organization, said the yurts sent the wrong message. "It's one thing for vacationers on the Oregon coast," she said. "It's another thing to say it's adequate housing for farmworkers."