



Temporary Homeless Camps

(Proposed Revisions to TMC 13.06.635 Temporary Use)

BACKGROUND

In 2010, the Washington Legislature passed [Ch. 175 \(ESHB 1956\)](#), codified as [RCW 36.01.290](#) which granted broad authority to religious organizations to host temporary homeless camps for individuals experiencing homelessness on property owned or controlled by such organizations. It prohibits local governments from enacting an ordinance or regulation that imposes conditions other than those necessary to protect the public health and safety and that do not substantially burden the decisions or actions of a religious organization with respect to the provision of temporary homeless camps. It also prohibits the imposition of permit fees in excess of the actual costs associated with the review and approval of the required permit applications for temporary homeless camps.

It is the intent of the City of Tacoma to regulate temporary homeless camps to protect public health and safety for such camps within the City that are associated with a religious organization as provided for in RCW 36.01.290. There is organized interest in the community to address homelessness and to provide options for persons in this life situation.

Within the scope of state law, there are still some significant standards that are at the discretion of the local jurisdictions. Some of these issues include:

- number of people permitted in the camp
- length of time the camp may operate
- number of camps permitted at any one time in the city
- restrictions for demographic of persons allowed in the camp (background checks)

****These are some of the areas we are interested in getting your feedback****

This city must consider numerous measures to protect the health and safety of persons in the camp, neighboring land uses and the surrounding community.

APPROACH

A set of regulations to address the temporary homeless camps and associated issues will be developed through extensive outreach efforts, with proposed amendments to the Tacoma Municipal Code, Section 13.06.635 Temporary Uses, to be adopted by the City Council.

There are a number of non-governmental organizations and governmental agencies in the Greater Tacoma/Pierce County area that have been engaged for some time assisting the homeless. City staff will tap into the experience and expertise of these groups and the public-at-large by holding a number of public meetings to elicit feedback and to hear concerns regarding the operation of temporary homeless camps in the City.

Some of the community based agencies, organizations and groups that staff plans to consult with include: Tent City Tacoma, Associated Ministries, Metropolitan Development Council, Catholic Community Services, Comprehensive Life Resources, Ministerial Alliance, Tacoma-Pierce County Coalition to End Homelessness,. The Tacoma Community Council and the Cross District Association will also be given presentations, with the expectation that smaller sub-groups will want to hear additional presentations and give their input.

Within the City, the Neighborhoods and Community Services Department, the Tacoma Police and Fire Departments and the Tacoma/Pierce County Health Department will be consulted regarding public safety and health considerations for the operation of a temporary homeless camp.

Since the state law addressing homeless camps was enacted, numerous jurisdictions across the state have already adopted land use regulations to control the permitting and operation of temporary homeless camps. Staff will also be looking at the experience of other jurisdictions in determining best practices and effective approaches.

Based on the feedback from the community meetings, consultation with City public safety and health agencies and the experience of other cities, a set of regulations will be drafted for consideration by the Planning Commission as an amendment to the Tacoma Municipal Code Section 13.06.635 for Temporary Uses. The Commission will then present its Code amendment recommendation to the City Council for final review and action. At appropriate junctures throughout the review process, periodic updates will also be provided to, and feedback solicited from, the City Council’s Infrastructure, Planning and Sustainability Committee and Neighborhoods and Housing Committee.

REVIEW SCHEDULE (TENTATIVE)

Date	Event	
September 2013 – February 2014	Public Outreach	
September 11, 2013	Human Services Committee, TMB Rm 148	COMPLETED
September 17	Cross District Neighborhood Business Council	COMPLETED
September 18	Planning Commission	
September 26, 10 am	TPD ALL CLO Meeting (invite TFD and THD)	
September 26, 6 pm	Community Council, Rm 16, TMB North	
October 7	Neighborhood and Housing Committee	
October 10	Coalition to End Homelessness Meeting	
October 16	Planning Commission	
November 6	Planning Commission	
November 20	Planning Commission – set a public hearing date	
December 2	Neighborhoods and Housing Committee	
December 18	Planning Commission Public Hearing	
January 15, 2014	Planning Commission	
February 5	Planning Commission Recommendation	
February 11	City Council – Set a public hearing date	
February 12	Infrastructure, Planning and Sustainability Committee	
February 17	Neighborhoods and Housing Committee	
February 25	City Council – Study Session and Public Hearing	
March 4	City Council – First reading of ordinance	
March 11, 2014	City Council – Final reading of ordinance	