CITY OF TACOMA

TEMPORARY HOMELESS CAMP
PERMIT PROCESS
Proposed Amendments to TMC 13.05 and 13.06.635 - Temporary Uses

John W. Harrington, Jr.
Principal Planner
Planning and Development Services Dept.

Planning Commission Meeting
November 20, 2013
Background

- 2010 state law authorizes religious organizations to host temporary homeless camps (RCW 36.01.290)
  - May locate on church owned or controlled property

- Cities may impose conditions that protect the public health and safety
  - A number of camp characteristics and operating standards may be determined by the city
Background (cont’d)

- Discretionary regulations examples
  - Camp size
  - Duration
  - Number of camps
  - Frequency of use of same property for camps
  - Resident make-up
  - Camp setbacks from residential uses
  - Parking
  - Transit access nearby
Approach

❖ Conduct Public Outreach
  - Community based agencies
    • Religious organizations
    • Organizations working with the homeless
    • Neighborhood and business groups
    • City commissions

❖ Coordinate with SME public agencies
  - Interdepartmental Team (Police, Fire, Health, Environ Services, Public Works, Power, Water, Solid Waste, N&C Services, PDS)
  - Talk with other cities SMEs/visit active camp
Approach (cont’d)

- Benchmark regulations from other cities
  - Comparative spreadsheet
    - 11 cities
    - Wide range of requirements
    - Varying review processes/notice reqmt’s
Public Outreach Findings

- Common Questions/Concerns
  - Human Services
    - What is the need for tent camps?
    - Is this a long term or short term solution?
    - Tent camps are least desired temporary housing and not suited for all
    - Need to provide services in camps
    - No children in the camps
    - Mental illness
Public Outreach Findings

- Common Questions/Concerns
  - Coordination
    - Need for temporary camps to be planned and coordinated by religious organizations
    - Timeframe. Extensions allowed?
    - Recurrence in same neighborhood
    - Minimum camp area
    - Move time/transition to new camp
Public Outreach Findings

❖ Common Questions/Concerns
  - Regulations
    - Timeframe
    - Recurrence
    - Number of residents
    - Homeless food station in S. Tacoma years ago turned into an unregulated homeless camp and was a terrible situation
Public Outreach Findings

- Common Questions/Concerns
  - Neighborhood
    - Fencing
    - Setbacks (fire requirements)
    - Recurrence
    - Number of residents
    - Traffic/transit
    - Camps can be more welcome if they are seen doing something positive (cleanup)
SME Health/Safety

- Camp Quixote/ Tent City 4 observations
  - Camp setup
  - Resident leaders

- City Agencies
  - Health
  - Fire
  - Solid Waste
  - Safety/Legal
  - Other agencies – standard existing regs/ops
Staff Recommendations

- Max occupancy: 100 on single large hard surface site or two 50 resident sites
- Min camp area: 7,500 sf for first 25 residents; 15,000 sf for 26-50 residents; 30,000 sf for 100 residents*
- Max time on ground: 93 days
- Min time to return to site or neighborhood: 2 years; 1 year for hard surface site
- No warrant or background checks req’d
Staff Recommendations

- Trash pick-up paid for by sponsor church
- Minimum age: 18 years
- 6-foot sight obscuring perimeter fence, may also be constructed of heavy weather-resistant fabric
- 14-day public notice
Remaining Issues

- Parking scalable (2 per 25 residents?)
- Rodent control required?
- Time to process application – 30 days
- Adjust timeframe for non-residential areas - 180 days
- Calculation of timeframes (start to start)
- Warrant and background checks required?
- Shower facilities requirement
- Tent separation (10 ft too much?)
Tent City 4 – City of Sammamish

Tent spacing, perimeter fence and boardwalk

14,000 sf living area
4,000 sf support area
78 residents

Mary Queen of Peace Church
Operated by SHARE/WHEEL
Mobile shower/Laundry facility/Latrines
Other Support Facilities

Food service/Pantry

No kitchen operations
Microwave meals and hot beverages

Food eaten in community/rec tent
No food in sleeping tents
Next Steps

Next week: Trip to Tent City

Next week: Trip to Tent City 3

Dec 2: Neighborhoods and Housing Committee

Dec 18: Planning Commission Meeting/Draft Review

Jan 15, 2014: Planning Commission Public Hearing

Feb 5: Planning Commission Review

Feb 19: Planning Commission recommendation

Feb-Apr: City Council consideration
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