

Tacoma Emergency Micro-Shelters at S 69th and Proctor Street

Frequently Asked Questions

Updated July 7, 2021

This document provides consolidated responses to community questions received about the shelter site being established at S 69th and Proctor Street.

If you have additional questions about the project or emergency sheltering strategy in Tacoma, please contact us at (253) 591-5000 or shelters@cityoftacoma.org.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PLANNING

- **What was the planning process for the site and at what point did neighbors receive notification?**

City staff reviewed more than 1,100 City owned and controlled properties to find options to locate additional temporary sheltering sites. Sites were evaluated based on current and future availability, site, topography, and access to services and transportation. A list of ten locations was shared with City Council on [March 30, 2021 at Study Session](#) and two sites, S. 36th and Madison and S. 69th and Proctor Street were selected for staff to conduct further assessment on and reach out to neighbors. The same week that Council provided this direction, staff consulted immediate neighbors and stakeholders, including South Tacoma Neighborhood Council to gather feedback on the proposed site services and locations. Read the

A recording of the community meeting is available on [our webpage](#) for those unable to attend and additional questions and comments can be directed to staff by email at shelters@cityoftacoma.org or by phone (253) 591-5000.

- **How can the community access list of properties that were considered?**

A list of the top ten properties recommended to Council can be found [here](#). If you would like more information please submit [a public disclosure request](#) specifying the information you'd like to receive.

- **What specific decisions and approvals is City Council providing in order for this site to be established?**

City Council authorized the Public Health State of Emergency on Homelessness ([Ordinance 28430](#)) and may approve funding contracts with selected operators once they are identified.

- **Does the City own the property at S 69th and Proctor or will it need to be returned to another property owner at some point in time?**

The City of Tacoma controls the property as trustee to for the Local Improvement District (LID) fund. The LID at previous property owner at S. 69th and Proctor was initiated the LID to fund certain improvements on or nearby their property, such as sidewalks and sewers. After the previous property owner failed to make payments to the LID under the agreement, the City foreclosed on the property and

is now trustee on behalf of the LID fund. In order to secure permanent ownership and control of the property, the City can chose to pay the LID balance of approximately \$1.4 million, which would fulfill the lien held by the LID.

COMMUNITY HEALTH AND SAFETY

- **How are you going to protect the vulnerable neighbors in the surrounding area?**

The City is confident that the S. 69th and Proctor temporary shelter site will be a well-run community asset and the site location will not put vulnerable community members at an additional risk of being impacted by crime. The site will be fenced and 24-hour security will be provided by the contracted service provider. Neighbors will be encouraged to stay connected about community safety concerns through the Community Advisory Committee that will be established upon the site opening and existing neighborhood block watch groups.

Looking at 911 calls for service surrounding our 6th and Orchard site, we have seen a decrease in calls when comparing activity in the five months before and after the shelter opened. At E 60th and McKinley, overall calls for service have increased modestly and the highest increases have been for medical aid, hang up calls, and welfare checks.

- **How will this site impact my property value and taxes?**

Property valuation and taxes are set by the Pierce County Assessor's office. In other neighborhoods in Tacoma where the City has established TEMS sites we have not seen a negative impact on property values, which correlates to property taxes.

- **If my property value declines, I plan to seek compensation from the City. How do I begin this process?**

A resident may choose to file a claim for damages within the applicable statute of limitations. More information can be obtained by contacting the City Clerk's Office at (253) 591-5505 or downloading a [Damages Form and Instructions](#).

- **How will panhandling be addressed?**

Panhandling is a protected First Amendment right and is typically not directly associated with micro shelter village locations or the Stability Site at 1421 Puyallup Ave. Unless subjects are blocking traffic, a danger to themselves or others, or engaged in aggressive panhandling, officers will not take action. For concerns about panhandling, please contact your Tacoma Police's non-emergency line at (253) 789-4721.

The site operator also conducts perimeter checks and staffs the site 24-hours daily to identify and report any police related issues.

- **Will police patrols increase in the area?**

Tacoma Police will continue to patrol and monitor the various micro-shelter sites and adjacent neighborhoods and business districts.

- **What is the city's liability coverage for homeless residents living on city property / sanctioned sites? Is there coverage if residents are injured on the sites?**

The City is self-insured for up to \$5 million for general liability, so if the City is found negligent the claim would be covered. In addition to the City's self-insurance, all contracted partners are required to have general commercial liability insurance sufficient to cover potential regarding program operations or the site. In the case of TEMS sites, the operator has up to \$1 million in general commercial liability, per occurrence, as well as coverage for automobile liability, workers compensation and employers liability and employee theft. All insurance coverage is verified prior to beginning operations. This means that if the site operator or the City was found negligent, the claim should be covered.

- **Is the City liable for illegal activity of residents moved to and living on city property? What if residents are injured on the City' owned property?**

Liability would depend on the details of the situation. A claim would be covered if the City is found negligent and financially responsible for payment regardless of whether or not the incident took place on City owned property.

- **What support does the City have available for any public safety impacts the site may have on the surrounding neighborhood?**

The City offers a variety of programs and services for neighborhoods concerned with public safety, including offering Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) assessments to residents and businesses, providing Rapid Graffiti Removal on key corridors, and offering City staff and Community Liaison support to assist with resolving issues. For support, please contact shelters@cityoftacoma.org or submit a specific request to TacomaFirst311.

SITE IDENTIFICATION AND ESTABLISHMENT

- **When will the site open and how long will it operate?**

The planning process is underway and we anticipate that services may be able to start in fall of 2021. We currently anticipate services being in place through 2023.

- **Why locate in South Tacoma where it has been deemed by the Tacoma Pierce Health Department to be one of the most unhealthy places to live in all of Pierce County?**

According to [Tacoma's Equity index](#), this neighborhood has a "moderate" score in areas of "livability" and "environmental health." The property criteria that the City used to evaluate properties included all properties that were owned and controlled by the City that were vacant land at least 7,500 square feet with decent topography (such as no extreme slopes). Sites were evaluated based on adjacency to waterways, access to transportation and services, and community impact. This TEMS location will be the fourth that the City has established since 2019 and the first in South Tacoma or Council District 5. TEMS locations have been established in the North End, Hilltop and Eastside of Tacoma and all operated successfully.

- **Why didn't the City choose to put this site in a different area where there is more community need?**

Unauthorized encampments exist throughout our community. The City's [encampment response map](#) indicates that there are encampment locations in the immediate vicinity to the site and individuals experiencing homelessness reside throughout our city. The City supports shelter locations throughout the community and encourages property owners interested in siting shelter on their property to contact shelters@cityoftacoma.org or (253) 591-5000.

SHELTERING STRATEGY

- **With so many people experiencing homelessness in our community, why is the City investing so many resources into temporary sheltering instead of permanent structures?**

The most cost effective strategy for providing services to individuals experiencing homelessness is to pursue permanent supportive housing and other housing options, which is why the City is pursuing these actions in the [Affordable Housing Action Strategy](#); however, temporary and emergency shelters and supporting our community partners in shelter expansion efforts provides immediate relief to our residents living outdoors in unsafe conditions.

- **What is City leadership doing to reduce transient homelessness from other cities?**

The City recognizes homelessness is a regional issue and will take a regional, coordinated approach. We continue to work with our neighboring jurisdictions and engage with local, state and federal leaders to help generate innovative solutions through [the Continuum of Care](#).

We also recognize that most individuals experiencing homelessness had their last known address in Pierce County, according to the [2020 point-in-time count](#). Based on this most recent survey, only 11% of people experiencing homelessness identified their last zip code as outside Pierce County or Washington state.

- **What mechanism will be in placed to ensure we are serving our community, rather than individuals that have relocated from other areas?**

Our most recent Point-in-Time count data, most individuals experiencing homelessness in our community are from our community. Those who are not still impact community health and safety by residing in unauthorized encampments.

- **Does the loitering and homeless activity tend to increase around temporary shelter sites?**

We have not seen a significant increase in the immediate vicinity of either of the other micro-shelter sites in Tacoma. More details on encampment activity over time can be seen on our [encampment response map](#). If loitering or area homelessness activity does increase, LIHI partners with City staff to address concerns and provide appropriate resources to the area. In addition, residents are able to bring their concerns to the monthly Community Advisory Committee, which are available to the public and include opportunities for residents to raise concerns for a collaborative community response, including other neighbors, LIHI, City staff, and Tacoma Police.

- **Did the city consider buying or leasing a closed or underutilized hotel?**

The City does provide support the use of hotel vouchers in certain cases. Some City funded community providers currently utilize this option, when appropriate.

- **Can new buildings built within Tacoma city-limits be required to reserve spaces for low-income residents?**

The City currently offers a 12-year multi-family tax exemption (MFTE) incentive to encourage developers to build affordable housing. Tacoma's MFTE program provides a tax incentive to encourage development of a minimum of 4 new multifamily units to be located within one of 17 designated mixed use centers. The 12 year tax exemption requires at least 20% affordable units. The City is pursuing multiple options under the [Affordable Housing Action Strategy](#) to increase affordable housing stock including a new project, [Home in Tacoma](#), which focuses on increasing affordability by creating new housing types in Tacoma neighborhoods.

ENCAMPMENT RESPONSE AND REMOVAL

- **How will removals be done of unauthorized encampments? What happens if the encampments are on private property compared to on public property?**

The City inspects and removes unauthorized encampments on a routine basis based on complaints received and the conditions of the encampment. We generally do not perform encampment cleanups on private property. Instead, the City will follow the Tacoma Municipal Code to work with private property owners to ensure encampments are abated. At this time, we are also following guidance from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) about [COVID-19 safety and encampment removal](#). Learn more about our response to encampment removals on [our website](#).

- **What happens if individuals residing in unauthorized encampment reject the homeless outreach team's offers for services?**

Individuals experiencing homelessness are not required to accept supportive services. Encampments on public property may still be cleaned after 72-hours' notice even if individuals chose not to accept services and the encampment removal falls within [COVID-19 guidance from the CDC](#). The 9th Circuit Court of Appeals also ruled in 2019 in the [case of Martin v. Boise](#) that cities could not prohibit people from camping in public places without readily available safe sheltering alternatives.

- **Where can people who are living in their vehicles safely and legally park?**

Per Tacoma municipal Code, vehicles parked in the public right-of-way must be moved at least one mile every 72-hours. Pierce County, faith based organizations, non-profits and the Pierce County Coalition to End Homelessness are partnering to increase safe parking options throughout the county through the Safe Sites for All program. To find currently available safe parking locations, contact the program coordinator at colin@i2-strategies.com or (253) 348-4596.

SITE OPERATIONS:

- **Who will operate and manage the Tacoma Emergency Micro Shelter Site?**

[Low Income Housing Institute](#) will operate and oversee the day-to-day management of the site and provide 24-hour a day staffing. Staff includes a Special Projects Manager who manages the site, Case Manager who provide social services and help participants obtain housing, employment, health care, and other services, and Site Organizers who provide security, facilities support, and community organizing.

The Low Income Housing Institute (LIHI) is a nonprofit housing and service organization. LIHI owns and manages 2,300 units of housing in 65 buildings throughout the Puget Sound region. LIHI supports 12 tiny house villages, one in Tacoma, two in Olympia, and nine in Seattle, and has consulted on the development and operation of others across the county, state and country.

The villages provide stability, safety, and community to 1,000 residents annually including single adults, couples, seniors, veterans, families, and people with pets. LIHI also operates three Urban Rest Stops in Seattle, providing showers, bathrooms, and laundry service to around 500 people experiencing homelessness per day.

- **Who will the site serve?**

The site will have 70 units for people experiencing homelessness. Those served include individuals, couples, veterans, seniors, students, and people with pets. All residents must be adults age 18 and over.

- **How will LIHI ensure that site participants are good neighbors?**

Participants will be required to sign and agree to a Code of Conduct and expected to follow behavioral expectations including a zero tolerance toward violence. Participants are connected with case managers. Individuals who cannot abide by this Code of Conduct will not be admitted into the program or may be asked to leave the community for a better suited shelter.

- **Who do I call if I have a question or concern?**

Once the site opens, LIHI will have a staff person on-site 24-hours every day with phone and email contact. The contact information to the village will be available soon on LIHI's website (www.lihi.org). In the meantime, you can reach out to John Brown with LIHI at john.brown@lihi.org or (206) 945-2201.

- **What happens if there is a problem?**

LIHI is committed to being a good neighbor. LIHI staff will be available 24-hours a day and can respond to inquiries from both participants and community members. The staff will also perform perimeter checks, organize trash cleanups, and respond to the community's inquiries and requests.

- **How can I help?**

Community generosity and volunteerism plays a significant role in the success of sites, both in the set up of a site and the support of participants through donations of meals and services. There will be multiple volunteer work parties to set up the site which will include painting, construction, and beautification. If you are interested in volunteering or donating please email tinyhouses@lihi.org.

- **How do I give input?**

LIHI will establish a Community Advisory Committee (CAC) that will address questions and concerns, provide advisory input, and monitor the success of the site and residents. Members of the CAC will include nearby neighborhood stakeholders, including immediate neighbors, community, faith and educational leaders, businesses, service providers and others. The CAC will meet monthly and meeting minutes will be publicly posted. If interested, have a question, or wish to receive an application, please contact Josh Castle with LIHI at josh.castle@lihi.org or (206) 334-0508.

- **What is the timeline for site operations?**

The site construction will be occurring in July and August 2021, with the site fully operational by mid-September. The contract with LIHI to operate the site will end December 2023.

- **Will the City have insurance to cover liability if criminal issues or dangerous issues arise?**

All City contracted service providers are required to carry general commercial liability insurance and possibly additional coverages, depending on the nature of the services provided. Specific insurance is evaluated at the time of contracting with the shelter operator. Staff review liability risks with the contractor to identify and mitigate possible issues prior to implementing any new programming or shelter sites.

- **How are potential residents identified?**

Referrals are primarily made from the homeless outreach team and in coordination with other local shelter providers who are working to find placements for people currently sleeping outdoors. Partner providers, such as the homeless outreach team, discuss the program with potential clients to see if the program will be a good fit for their needs. Then when a unit become available, those clients are then notified for placement.

- **How much will the site cost?**

We anticipate the site to cost approximately \$500k for infrastructure set-up and the operations will cost approximately \$700-\$800k per year. Operational costs include full-time site management, supportive services, meals, utilities and more.

- **Are tents allowed on site?**

No tent camping is available. All residents are assigned micro-shelters.

- **What is the current success rate at other TEMS locations and how will it increase with the opening of this location?**

Of the two TEMS sites currently operating in Tacoma, the success rate of exists to permanent housing is 20.5%. The opening of this location will allow more people to leave unauthorized encampments for safer sheltering and stabilize in order to find permanent housing. TEMS site vacancy is very low. As vacancies occur, they are immediately filled. Demand for residency at the TEMS sites far exceeds current availability. This site will allow us to help more people exit street homelessness.

- **Will there be more than one staff person available?**

Due to the increased size of the TEM site compared to other locations in Tacoma, staffing will also increase in order to support resident needs and site operations for all staff shifts.

- **How will TEMS residents be able to access services given the distance from services such as grocery stores and health care?**

Case management services will be provided on site. LIHI will also provide three meals per day on site. LIHI will work with residents on an individual basis to address other needs they may have and either arrange for transportation to those services or have them brought on-site.

- **What are the community expectations for TEMS site residents? Are they expected to help keep the neighborhood clean?**

Residents are expected to agree to and abide by a Code of Conduct that includes doing chores and no disruption to neighbors or loitering in the neighborhood. Residents may participate in activities such as litter pick up or beautification in the neighborhood. Residents and staff often form community partnerships with local organizations to participate in community building activities. If community members are interested in engaging with residents on community building activities, they may contact Josh Castle at LIHI at josh.castle@lihi.org or (206) 334-0508.

- **How are background checks used at the TEMS site? What type of offenses would disqualify someone from residency?**

All prospective residents need to submit to a background check and a sex offender registry check as a condition of staying at the site. Serious offenses like murder, sex-related offenses, and others disqualify persons from residency.

- **How long are residents able to stay?**

There is no time limit on how long a resident can stay during the period the site is open. Residents stay as long as needed in order to gain stability and take the appropriate steps on the path to housing. LIHI case management staff work with residents to transition them into housing or another situation that meets their needs as quickly as possible.

- **What is the policy for entering and leaving the premise for residents and visitors?**

There is one main entrance/exit and an emergency exit only to be used in cases of an emergency. Residents at this time are encouraged to shelter in place to avoid exposure to COVID-19 for themselves and other residents. At this time, to avoid exposure to COVID-19, visitors are not permitted on the site. As restrictions related to COVID-19 are lifted, visitors are required to sign in and out at the front office.

- **If residents exit the TEMS program without housing, how does LIHI support them in their transition so that they do not camp in the neighborhood?**

As much as possible, and when appropriate, LIHI case management staff will continue to stay in touch and work with residents who exit the program without housing or another form of shelter for as long as the resident who exited is able and willing to engage. LIHI assists residents exiting for any reason with transportation.

- **Where will LIHI refer individuals experiencing homelessness they are unable to serve, such as families with children?**

Residents are referred from the City of Tacoma's Homeless Outreach Team and local providers. They are the first point of contact and they may direct families with children to other resources.

- **What services and amenities are available on-site to residents?**

The site has a communal kitchen and restrooms, showers and laundry. Each micro-shelter unit is equipped with heat and electricity.

On site case management services help residents obtain housing, employment, education, health care, or other services.

- **How is the Code of Conduct enforced? Are drug tests done to help enforce drug and alcohol policies?**

LIHI staff enforce the Code of Conduct through progressive discipline and a multi-step disciplinary approach. There is no tolerance for serious violations such as violence. Residents who are in serious violation of the Code of Conduct may need to exit the program and be transferred to another shelter option that better meets their needs. There are occasions when drug tests may be appropriate, and are most often conducted on a case by case basis.

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- **What parking is available to residents on site?**

A parking area will be available on site, if a resident has long term vehicle storage needs LIHI will work with that resident to arrange for vehicle storage off-site.

- **How are the shelters heated?**

Each unit comes with its own individual electric heater that maintains a comfortable indoor temperature.

- **Where will the residents go after December 2023 when the site closed? What will the site be used for afterward?**

As the City has done with other TEMS site relocations, prior to an anticipated closure we will stop accepting new residents to ensure smooth transition plans for those living at the site to secure either permanent housing or other secure sheltering. It has not been determined how the site will be used after the TEMS operation is completed.

- **How will the TEMS site partner with the schools that are nearby?**

City staff have directly connected LIHI staff with school representatives. Unlike the TEMS site at 6th and Orchard, this site will not serve minors so partnership at this site will focus on neighborhood needs rather than connection to services for site residents.

- **Will there be pet waste bags provided to residents?**

Yes, pet waste supplies are provided by LIHI.

- **What is included in the Code of Conduct for residents?**

The full Code of Conduct can be viewed [here](#).

- **Will COVID-19 vaccinations be mandatory?**

Vaccinations are not mandatory, however, if residents are eligible and interested in receiving a vaccination, LIHI helps connect them to available opportunities for vaccination.

- **Do residents have access to bus passes?**

Yes, all residents are offered bus passes.

- **Are computers available for use?**

There is often access to computers at the case management office. LIHI staff work with residents to get their compute/online needs met on-site.

- **What is included for site security?**

The site provides staff management/security 24-hours daily. Residents with concerns about activity are able to contact the site phone, which will be made available once the site is established. In addition, there will be limited entrance with a curfew in place. The perimeter is fully fenced and there are security cameras on-site.