



Tacoma Pierce County Coalition to End Homelessness

<https://pchomeless.org/> - info@pchomeless.org

Should the Coalition support the creation of large safe sites, if the opportunity to create them happens?

Group Discussion Summary • Tacoma Pierce County Coalition to End Homelessness • 8.19.2

“Oh hell, what do mine eyes with grief behold?”

— Gary Snyder, *Milton by Firelight*

The general answer from the discussion groups is a qualified “Yes,” although broad concern exists regarding safety and manageability of large sites.

- It depends on how it is done seems to be part of our answer.
- Needs to be done right and we should be in the conversation.
- Unit costs come down by building more in one place.
- There are more people to assist concentrated in one spot.
- The more sites, the better. The faster we move people out of homelessness, the better. Too long in homelessness often results in loss of hope.
- We should embrace any opportunity to increase shelter; having a home base is far better than being on the street.
- We need safe sites because many car campers are families trying to stay together. There is a lack of family shelters and the recent feedback I received is that the one we have isn't necessarily safe.
- There are many women who camp in their cars, too due to personal safety issues.
- Discussion of the hidden costs of a large site that might mitigate savings from economies of scale. Issues with substance use and mental health management for 28 people at FOB are daunting. What happens with 200-300? Needs to be adequately resourced with adequate staffing to provide 24/7 crisis management.
- Do smaller encampments, are bigger sites safe? Do we want them? Combination?
- Larger sites are generally more violent. While large sites are needed, smaller is preferable.
- Concern that large sites poorly done can be more like an internment camp than a healing community.
- Self-managed? How supporting – garbage/sewer, services/supports?
- Larger sites are ok, but with wrap around services and assistance in making plans for the future.
- Sanctioned encampments need to foster sense of ownership and community to be healing, regardless of the size.
- Needs to be subgroups building community and implementing ownership.
- Must be organized with common spaces and resident involvement.
- Need sites for RVs and cars but do not know the optimal size for these.
- We all agreed that moving people around does not work and lastly, the people who are needing safe sites should have a say so in what happens and what would be helpful.



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- We need one large site in the county, services spread out over the county and in Tacoma, more sites modeled after the Veterans Village.
- Need sites for specific populations, note that recently unhoused people are families, elderly (ha!), young adults.
- County is looking for support for Community First Village and coming at that topic through the back door instead of being honest.
- Need a diversity of sizes, spreading out and offering options around the county instead of centering only in Tacoma.
- Talked about how the barracks model allows for different floors or rooms that focus on different needs.
- Should be modeling with more specific populations in mind.
- Need sites for specific populations, note that recently unhoused people are families, elderly, young adults.
- Need to address impacts on nearby neighbors and be mindful of what nearby neighbors want and will allow.
- City ordinances – can you call it a shelter? Stabilization? City building/permitting issues.
- Was this for structures or encampments? Infrastructure issues – sewer connections, paving, etc.
- Need to encourage direct community outreach.
- How can things be done more quickly? With urgency!

Notable News: Trump supports moving homeless people to camps in outlying areas.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/08/16/trump-speeches-extreme-agenda-2024-bid/>