

DRAFT

As shelter capacity has increased, the City of Bellingham has moved to bring to a close the protest encampment in front of City Hall and on the Library lawn. The protesters key concern was that those who were unsheltered had a safe place to go. This concern was addressed by the City through a series of coordinated initiatives designed to provided significantly more emergency housing choices for our communities unsheltered residents. These initiatives include:

- Establishing a emergency encampment at Civic Field in partnership with Homes Now!, a local not-for-profit that operates a similar encampment called Unity Village at Post Point in Fairhaven. This encampment will house up to 28 people in modular tiny houses that are being provided by Whatcom County. The encampment will operate through April 1, 2021. Homes Now! screens potential residents, does background checks in conjunction with the Bellingham Police Department and prohibits alcohol and illegal drug use within the encampment. This encampment will be relocated to a different longer-term site after April 1.
- Working with Road2Home (R2H) and the Low Income Housing Institute (LIHI) to establish a new longer-term tiny house village to accommodate from 30-40 people. R2H/LIHI successfully responded to a City-issued Request for Proposal (RFP). This encampment is anticipated to come online in Spring, 2021.
- Support the Light House Mission Ministries (LMM) Base Camp Shelter as it implements a readmission plan that will ensure that returning guests are COVID free. Currently, Base Camp has about 90 spaces available for additional guests. Should need increase, LMM has partnered with Christ The King Church to staff the former Drop-In Center to accommodate another 40 people on an as-needed basis.

Implementing these initiatives will add 230 to 240 more shelter spaces which will be more than adequate to accommodate the approximately 100 unsheltered individuals who have participated in the protest.

The City had hoped to work with the organizers of the protest to create an additional 25 spaces using modular tiny houses that were offered by Whatcom County. However, the organizers were not able to agree on applying a standard municipal code condition which prohibits the use of alcohol and illegal drugs by residents of a tiny house encampment. Absent agreement on this issue, the City reluctantly needed to move forward with other initiatives.

The City has asked Base Camp staff and the Homeless Outreach team to assist in helping those who were camping at City Hall and the Library to transition to a shelter or a tiny house encampment. The City will collect, tag and retain any unidentified belongings with the hope of being able to return them to their owners.