

## Tent City 4 (TC4) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

(Borrowed from the City of Redmond web site)

### **What is Tent City?**

Tent City 4 is a self-governed homeless encampment modeled after similar encampments that have operated in Seattle for many years, moving to the Eastside in the spring of 2004. Tent City allows up to 100 adult residents. Children are not permitted.

### **Who sponsors Tent City?**

Tent City 4 (TC4) is sponsored and managed by the non-profit organizations Seattle Housing and Resource Effort (SHARE) and Women's Housing Equality and Enhancement League (WHEEL). SHARE/WHEEL operates 15 fixed site shelters and two Tent City locations. SHARE/WHEEL manages 350 indoor shelter beds in the Seattle area, making it the largest shelter-providing organization in the Pacific Northwest. SHARE/WHEEL has been operating fixed site shelters for 15 years and operating Tent Cities for five years.

### **Who are the people living in Tent City 4?**

Homeless adults: single men, women and couples. Children are not allowed in Tent City. Their numbers vary, but the average is from 60 to the maximum allowed 100.

### **How many Tent City residents are employed?**

The percentage varies with the TC4 population. Many of the residents are employed, either permanently or temporarily. Tent City residents will most likely be seen at the bus stop very early in the morning in order to be at Labor Ready by 5:30am to get day-labor jobs. Other residents are in educational programs to improve job skills. There are a few people with disabilities that prevent them from getting a job; many of those are on waiting lists for permanent disability housing.

### **Has there been an increase in crime associated with Tent City?**

There is no correlation between Tent City and any crime rates rising in the areas where Tent Cities are located.

### **What presence will the police have at the site?**

The City's goal is to ensure public safety for all of our citizens. We will apply city resources to properly monitor and respond to issues. Redmond police officers will make regular, routine visits to the Tent City site so that they are familiar with the residents and the routines of camp.

### **How does Tent City operate?**

Tent City 4 has historically maintained its commitment to self-police and self-manage its residents in accordance with its Code of Conduct that prohibits alcohol, drugs, weapons, fighting abuse of any kind, littering or disturbing neighbors. All residents must sign an agreement to abide by this code of conduct and failure to do so can be cause for immediate expulsion. Residents form an Executive Committee that is responsible for site security, resident identification and donations management.

### **What happens when an individual is rejected or when a resident is required to leave Tent City because they have violated the Code of Conduct?**

If the permit is approved, the City of Redmond will require that the encampment take all reasonable and legal steps to obtain verifiable identification from prospective encampment residents and use the identification to obtain sex offender and warrant checks from the Redmond Police Department. If an individual who applies for admittance to Tent City has an active warrant or a match on the sex offender check, the encampment will immediately contact the Redmond Police Department. If a resident is required to leave the encampment, the individual will be given a bus ticket, escorted to the transit center and placed on a bus to Seattle where there are more resources available. If, in the opinion of the encampment, any rejected/ejected individual poses a potential threat to the community, the police will be contacted immediately.

### **How does Tent City handle security?**

Tent City 4 is in a fenced area, with a single entry/exit point that is staffed by members of the Tent City Executive Committee and two security workers patrol inside and outside of camp 24 hours per day. Potential residents must have, or obtain, a photo ID. With the help of the Redmond Police Department, a background check will be performed for each applicant. The applicant's name will be checked against the Washington Criminal Information Center (WACIC) and the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) for outstanding warrants and sex offender status. All Tent City 4 residents must agree to abide by a code of conduct which includes rules that make the area a drug-alcohol-and weapon-free zone.

**What happens to residents who violate the Tent City Code of Conduct?**

Illegal activities are referred to law enforcement. In fact, the police drop by Tent City at unannounced intervals through the day and night. They get to know the Tent City residents and work together with them to maintain a peaceful camp. The Code of Conduct includes consequences for other violations. Repeated or serious offenses will result in the resident being barred from Tent City. There is no incidence of violations in previous communities

**Does Tent City pose a threat to its neighbors or to school children?**

According to Sergeant John Urquhart, spokesman for the King County Sheriff's office, "Tent City has not presented any significant increase in crime or increased service demands in any of the areas they've located in King County or unincorporated King County. As far as we're concerned, they've been good neighbors. They are welcome anywhere in our jurisdictions."

**Has a Tent City ever been located in a residential area or near schools?**

Yes. Because the host is usually a church, Tent Cities have normally been in residential neighborhoods. On the Eastside, Tent City 4 has now been located near or beside schools in about half of its nine sites over the past two years. School officials have not reported any incidents of Tent City residents having contact with schools or their children, except to lessen the amount of litter in the area. Furthermore, according to area police reports, during the entire history of all Tent Cities, not a single child or other neighbor has been harmed by any Tent City resident.

**Are neighborhood schools and children safe from possible intruders?**

Schools already have procedures in place to deal with unauthorized persons in their buildings and on their grounds. For specific information, contact the schools directly.

**Has there been an increase in crime where Tent Cities have been located?**

According to the police in King County, Seattle, Shoreline, Tukwila, Bothell, Kirkland, Bellevue and Woodinville, there has been no measurable increase of crime in neighborhoods anywhere near any Tent City. On May 21, 2004, the Seattle Times published an independent investigation which found that SHARE/WHEEL's Tent Cities do not affect crime rates.

**How is transportation for residents handled?**

SHARE/WHEEL provides two bus tickets per day so that TC4 residents can get to their jobs, to job interviews, and to medical appointments. When bus service is reduced (on weekends and holidays), taxi scrip is available. Also, typically, a regular "shuttle service" manned by host/resident volunteers, will operate on Sundays. Church and resident volunteers are on an evening stand-by rotation to bring any later-bus-arrivals back to Tent City.

**Does Tent City 4 have toilet and shower facilities?**

TC4 has portable toilets that are serviced three times per week. A portable shower on a trailer is transported to the site. Drainage from the shower and sinks is piped into the sewer system at the church. The plumbing setup is inspected before and during the stay by city inspectors to ensure public health and environmental conditions are maintained.

**What about garbage and laundry?**

TC4's garbage dumpsters are emptied twice a week. Residents perform litter patrol of TC4 and surrounding areas. Volunteers will help remove recyclables regularly. Blankets and sleeping bags are laundered once a week at Everett Overall Laundry free of charge. Personal laundry is handled by each resident, usually at a laundromat.

**How does Tent City get hot meals?**

Usually a hot dinner is provided by a church or other charitable organization. Other food is donated, but refrigeration facilities are limited. TC4 includes a kitchen with a microwave oven for food preparation, but there are no electrical burners or open flames allowed. The Host Congregation is not expected to, but may choose to provide meals or any assistance they deem necessary for the well-being of the Tent City residents. Over the past two years, more than 50 religious and secular organizations have served at least 35,000 hot suppers at Tent City, for an estimated value of over \$92,000.

**Where does Tent City get blankets, food and other necessities?**

Many tents, blankets and other supplies, including food and clothing, are donated by community support from local businesses, parishioners from the host church and other church congregations, and by residents of the surrounding neighborhood.

**What measures are proposed to ensure protection of public health and safety of local neighbors as well as temporary residents of any proposed Tent City?**

Public Health - Seattle & King County provides environmental health-related services to Tent Cities in order to promote a safe and healthy living environment for the residents of Tent City and the surrounding neighborhoods. A Public Health

nurse with the Health Care for the Homeless Network provides health-related education and consultation to Tent City residents and host organizations, including information on how to link Tent City residents to community health care services. The nurse makes periodic on-site visits to Tent City to assess overall health conditions, and provides follow-up technical assistance as needed. Public Health Environmental Health inspectors are available to consult on issues relating to toilet facilities, garbage disposal, portable water, hygiene and hand washing, and safe food handling.

**Are open fires allowed? Is fire prevention equipment available on site?**

No open fires are allowed at a Tent City site. Fire extinguishers are on site and posted according to the directives of the local fire departments. The Redmond Fire department is welcome to visit Tent City at any time to monitor safety conditions.

**What is Redmond doing about homelessness in the region?**

The City of Redmond is actively involved in developing longer-term solutions to the need for low-income and transitional housing. Since 1994 Redmond has contributed over \$1.1 million toward development or preservation of 89 of 130 transitional housing units in the region. Transitional facilities in Redmond provide on-site skills training for formerly homeless families and individuals, and they report a greater than 90% success rate in transitioning homeless families to permanent housing. In addition, the City has a long history of providing funding to local human service agencies. These resources support a range of services to youth, adults and families who are already homeless as well as efforts to prevent individuals and families from becoming homeless. Finally, King County has adopted a Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness. Redmond has endorsed the goals of this plan and is involved in its implementation through ARCH (A Regional Coalition for Housing), a consortium of Eastside cities.