

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

## Background

### 1. 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 to live in Tent City.

### 2. 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 approximately 15 years and operating Tent Cities for approximately 10 years.

### 3. How is SHARE/WHEEL funded?

SHARE/WHEEL is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, tax-exempt, public charity. SHARE/WHEEL receives about 80% of its funding from the City of Seattle, through contracts for the management of its indoor shelter facilities in Seattle. Its Tent City 4 shelter on the Eastside is not funded by any government funds: It is funded by donations only.

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

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

### 5. 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.

### 6. What is being done to address homelessness in the region?

Many groups have come together to create the Committee to End Homelessness in King County (CEHKC), which is a broad coalition of government, faith communities, nonprofits, the business community and homeless and formerly homeless people who are working together to implement a "10-Year Plan to End Homelessness" in King County. For more information on the committee, call 206-263-9085 or go to their web site at [cehkc.org](http://cehkc.org).

## Security Questions

### 1. 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. A FAQ sheet from the City of Redmond asks the question, "Does Tent City pose a threat to its neighbors or to school children?" and answers the question this way, "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.'" <http://www.redmond.gov/tentcity/faqs.asp>

### 2. What was the police coverage at previous Tent City locations?

Generally, law enforcement has made regular daily contact with Tent City. Unscheduled visits are made several times a day. This is the model followed by the King County Sheriff's officers (under contract with the city of Woodinville) at the previous Woodinville downtown site and also the site at Woodinville Unitarian Universalist Church. In testifying before the Woodinville City Council (May 2006), Chief Kent Baxter told the City Council that this arrangement had been successful for Tent City 4 and the local residents.

### **3. 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.

Security for TC4 is provided under the SHARE/WHEEL procedures. There are two (2) security on staff from TC4 that are present 24 hours/day, seven days/week. There is only one entrance to the camp (Northwest corner) as shown on the map indicating the TC4 camp location. The TC4 security workers will check in all visitors at the camp's sole entrance. TC4 security will patrol the grounds of the camp and neighborhood utilizing public right-of-ways only. TC4 residents are prohibited from accessing private property. All United States citizens are allowed access to public right-of way. We will listen to neighborhood comments at the Public Meeting on Wednesday, June 16<sup>th</sup>. Historically the King County Sheriff's department has also made regular patrol stops at TC4 when it was in this area and has indicated it expects to continue this practice.

As stated in the TC4 Code of Conduct, applicants are carefully screened. They are required to provide valid identification. Sex offenders and arrest warrant checks are conducted on persons waiting to enter the encampment. Those who do not comply or are found to violate TC4 standards are denied residency and are escorted to the nearest bus stop. We understand that these measures have been adequate to maintain security in the neighborhood.

### **4. 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, King County 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 King County Sheriff's 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 King County Sheriff's 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.

### **5. 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 King County Sheriff's 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.

### **6. Are there background checks on Tent City residents?**

The Tent City application states that Tent City residents are required to have valid picture identification with all prospective residents checked for warrants and sex offender status by the King County Sheriff's Department. Tent City states that people with active warrants are not allowed to stay at Tent City. Tent City also reports that Police will be notified immediately of anyone rejected due to warrant status or that has registered sex offender status.

### **7. 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.

### **8. 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.

## School Questions

### 1. 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."

### 2. 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.

### 3. 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.

## Logistics Questions

### 1. How is transportation for residents handled?

The transportation plan as submitted is acceptable to SHARE/WHEEL and TC4 and is identical to that submitted by the Woodinville Unitarian Universalist Church on Woodinville Duvall road, approximately 0.6 miles North of BCUMC. TC4 residents used the same bus routes (232, 251 and 311) that are available for the BCUMC site. Since there was/is no bus service on Sundays, Woodinville Unitarian Universalist Church and SHARE/WHEEL arranged carpools on Sundays before church, after church, at 1:00 PM and at 5 PM to the nearest operational bus stop. Individual TC4 campers were allotted one of the spots on the four shuttle runs. We intend to follow a similar schedule after consulting with TC4 and SHARE/WHEEL based on the needs of the current TC4 residents. SHARE/WHEEL/TC4 also has the capability to utilize taxi script when it is necessary.

### 2. 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 septic 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.

### 3. What measures are proposed to handle refuse and human waste on proposed sites?

Tent City reports that a dumpster would be provided for the handling of refuse and would be regularly collected. Tent City states that residents are forbidden to litter the camp or the surrounding neighborhood. Tent City says that it conducts regular patrols to monitor adjacent streets and sidewalks to ensure they are kept clean. Anecdotal reports from other cities indicate that previous neighbors have commented on the cleanliness of their streets during the tenure of Tent City, due to these regular patrols. Tent City states that it would provide well maintained, portable toilets sufficient to the needs of up to 100 residents. Hand washing stations would be available adjacent to these toilets. Public Health staff members have monitored these conditions in other hosting locations.

### 4. What about laundry?

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.

### 5. 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.

## **6. 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.

## **7. Will there be adequate parking?**

TC4 will take up approximately 40 parking spaces at BCUMC. This will leave 69 parking spaces for religious services, either by BCUMC or Congregation Kol Ami (A reformed Jewish congregation that shares space with BCUMC). In addition, the approved building plans also allow for 22 parking spaces behind the building. This area is not paved or currently striped for parking, but can be used for overflow parking as required. As shown on final approved drawings for Bear Creek United Methodist church, 91 potential parking spaces plus 6 handicapped spaces will remain available.

The average BCUMC church attendance averages approximately 120 individuals, thus providing more than adequate parking spaces.

If the attendance figure of 300 – 400 (estimated attendance from the construction permit) are utilized, Title 21A.18.030 would require a total 80 parking spaces. Thus, church parking requirements will not be impacted.

Our co-habitant, Congregation Kol Ami, is aware and is part of the church steering committee. Congregation Kol Ami has made plans for additional off-site parking on the Jewish High Holy days such as Rosh Hosanna on Sept. 9<sup>th</sup>.

The Microsoft Connector, utilizes up to 50 parking spaces during week-days. However, these spaces are only used between 6:00 AM and 8:00 PM on weekdays, not including holidays. They do not impact weekend religious services. Kol Ami's High Holy Days fall during the week this year and on those days our lease with Microsoft has exempted those days and reserved them for Kol Ami's needs. Microsoft has been informed of our intent to host TC4 and the Microsoft Connector Parking will not be impacted.

## **8. Can your septic system handle the additional discharge?**

Sewage (human waste) will be handled through the use of portable sanitary toilets provided by and maintained through SHARE/WHEEL.

"Gray water" resulting from individual showers will be routed into the BCUMC septic system. It is estimated that 30-40 showers are taken by TC4 residents daily. The use of showers is controlled by a TC4 sign-up system. If DDES Health/Septic deems necessary, a maximum number of shower per day can be written into an agreement between BCUMC and TC4. Please see below:

The BCUMC Septic and Storm water plans have been reviewed by David Jensen PE, the designer of the Septic System (currently Jensen Engineering Inc). System capacity calculations that will be submitted as part of our Septic/Health Permit indicate that the addition of calculated TC4 "gray water" volumes will not negatively impact our Septic System. The anticipated combined load will cause the system to operate at approximately 63% of the system capacity. Furthermore, if found to be necessary by DDES/Septic Permit application, alarm points (audible and visual) can be set at 80% which would alert BCUMC and result in a reduction of "gray water" input thus protecting the environment and the BCUMC septic system.

Storm water run-off and treatment has also been reviewed. It is anticipated that it will not be impacted by TC4 as they will be located on the paved area of the current parking lot and the Storm Water System as designed is adequate to handle any additional water flows.

BCUMC has commissioned a review of the Septic System operation/controls/alarm by Jerry Murphy, Active Septic Solutions, a licensed septic installer and maintenance firm. Maintenance by Active Septic Solutions on an annual basis, as required by King County will be performed by Active Septic Solutions.

## **9. How will you deal with lighting issues?**

BCUMC will comply with the requirement to have parking lights off after 10:00 PM nightly. Only minimal nighttime lighting for the security tent will be present. We do not expect the amount of light from the security tent (located near the entrance to TC4 and well away from the community) to provide a negative impact on the surrounding neighborhood.

## Health/Safety Questions

### **1. 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.

### **2. 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. Redmond Fire department is welcome to visit Tent City at any time to monitor safety conditions.

### **3. What will you do about food preparation?**

Food preparation for TC4 is provided by the greater community. Daily food preparation for TC4 using the BCUMC kitchen will not occur. Occasional meals may be prepared by BCUMC using the existing BCUMC kitchen to support the scheduled meal arrangements. All Health Department rules and conditions will be observed. Please see <http://tentcity4.info> for Meal Support information.

## BCUMC Member Questions

### **1. Does Counseling Services know about this? What is their reaction?**

Yes Samaritan Counseling knows and they are glad to receive requests for counseling appointments.

### **2. Does Best Beginnings know about this? What is their reaction?**

Yes, Best Beginnings is aware of this and has determined that for the period of time that TC4 is at BCUMC, it will hold its classes at a different site.

### **3. Does AA know about this? What is their reaction?**

Yes, and they are planning for potential increase in participation in their sessions.

### **4. Does Kol Ami know about this? What is their reaction?**

Yes, they have a representative on the TC4 Steering committee and will be assisting in volunteer efforts.

### **5. Does Microsoft [parking] know about this? What is their reaction?**

Yes, they have been informed and are working with us to ensure allotted spaces are still available

### **6. What do we have to agree to do when we're hosting TC4?**

Basically, we agree to provide a location for their tents, etc. as well as access to electricity and water. Other than that, we can choose to provide more services (eg meals, transportation, etc.) or not.

## **7. Are the residents going to be participating in our events (eg. VBS, church services, etc.)**

TC4 residents will be invited to appropriate Bear Creek and Kol Ami events. The choice to participate will be the TC4 resident's decision.

## **8. What's this costing us .... Thought we already had money problems**

We are currently finalizing a budget, but it is estimated that the cost for hosting will be approximately \$8,500. Other churches in the area have indicated that they will donate some money and \$1,000 from the Missions Committee budget has been earmarked for TC4 expenses. Additionally, we are considering a fundraiser.

## **9. Wow, this seems to be going so fast ... why? Isn't it better to have more advanced planning?**

TC4 was scheduled to be on Mercer Island from July 24 – Oct 23. A lawsuit was brought against Mercer Island City Council alleging they did not follow their own permitting process when TC4 was hosted by Mercer Island United Methodist Church with the support of the Mercer Island Association of Churches. The court ruled in favor of the city. Those suing pursued an appeal which again was found in favor of the city. However, those suing have not yet exhausted their legal options and the Mercer Island City Council felt compelled to suspend its permitting process until the suit is finalized. This meant in the early April TC4 (which is now at Lake Washington UMC) was without place to move after 90 days (temporary use permits are limited to 90 days and so TC must move every 90 days). Because of the length of the permitting process this created an emergency for them which was not of their doing.

Northshore UCC has hosted twice and Woodinville Unitarian has previously hosted three times. There is a significant cost (estimated around \$8,500 for water, power, connections, transportation, food, etc.) to host. This time the Interfaith Council turned to Bear Creek UMC.

- Early April TC4 is told that their host site for July 24-Oct 23 on Mercer Island has to cancel because the Mercer Island City Council has temporarily suspended their temporary housing permit process.
- Around April 8 SHARE/WHEEL approaches Woodinville Unitarian Universalist and then Wooden Cross Lutheran to be host sites. The leadership of these congregations refer it to the Northshore Interfaith Council.
- April 13 –Northshore Interfaith Council meets to consider if one of the congregations would be the host site beginning July 24. Bear Creek UMC is asked by the council to consider hosting because
  - Access to bus pickups
  - Size of grounds
  - Previous experience with TC4 serving meals
  - And cost sharing
  - Bear Creek agrees to take a request to host before its Administrative Council.
- April 13 – Bear Creek UMC Board of Trustees approves hosting of Tent City 4 during the months of July to October 2010
- April 20 – The Bear Creek Administrative Council meets with TC4 and SHARE/WHEEL representatives. After the TC4 folks excuse themselves the Administrative Council decides to recommend to an All Church Conference that Bear Creek host TC4 beginning July 24.
- April 25 – An All Church Conference meets, hears the request to host and votes to be a host.
- April 28 – Bear Creek UMC notifies its tenants of the decision and begins discussions with them.
- May 17 – An Interfaith Steering Committee is formed and we are ready to begin the permitting process with King County which will include an open meeting(s) with our neighbors and tenants.
- June 2 – Mailing to neighbors sent
- June 6 – Door-to-door delivery of notification of meeting and sign placed on Avondale announcing meeting
- June 16 – At 7:00 p.m. there is an informational meeting for Q&A. All neighbors and any other curious or concerned folks are invited.

## **10. What has been the reaction of the neighbors?**

There have been both positive and negative reactions. We are holding an Informational Meeting on June 16 to hear/respond to neighborhood questions.

## **11. If a neighbor contacts me/asks me something, how do I respond?**

Suggest that they email any questions to [TC4@bcumc.org](mailto:TC4@bcumc.org).

## How can I volunteer?

### **1. How can I serve a meal?**

Follow the link from the TC4 page on the [bcumc.org](http://bcumc.org) website.

### **2. How can I volunteer in general?**

Look for opportunities that will be posted on the TC4 page on the [bcumc.org](http://bcumc.org) website

### **3. I want to donate something ... what can I donate?**

Look for opportunities that will be posted on the TC4 page on the [bcumc.org](http://bcumc.org) website. Donations will be accounted for separate from all other BCUMC funds should there be a balance in the account at the end of TC4's tenure at BCUMC, the balance will be forwarded to St. John Vianney Parish in Kirkland which is the next hosting site.

## Other

### **1. Where can I get answers to my questions?**

Email any questions to [TC4@bcumc.org](mailto:TC4@bcumc.org) and/or look on the BCUMC.org website. This site also has links to other sites that discuss TC4.

### **2. Can I come to Tent City 4 to see it first hand?**

Yes, Tent City 4 is open to visitors 24/7. TC4 is currently hosted by Lake Washington UMC ([www.lwumc.org](http://www.lwumc.org)) until July 24. Visits are encouraged and complete tours can be given during the day and early evening.