

**DRAFT
PROPOSAL
FOR
SAFE CAMPING & PARKING**



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	BACKGROUND.....	1
1.1.	Purpose of this Document.....	1
1.2.	About Homes NOW	1
1.3.	Project Need.....	1
2.	PROPOSED PROJECT	2
2.1.	Project Description.....	2
2.2.	Site Location.....	3
2.3.	Project Funding.....	3
2.4.	Insurance	3
2.5.	Operations and Management.....	3

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Handbook

1. BACKGROUND

1.1. Purpose of this Document

This document is a proposal for a safe camping and parking site for the homeless community in Whatcom County. **Homes NOW is seeking to partner with churches or other religious organizations who are willing to provide land for this project.** *Homes NOW would fund the project and provide volunteers to set up and manage the site.* The church or religious organization would provide the land for a mutually agreed upon period of time.

1.2. About Homes NOW

Homes NOW is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization made entirely of volunteers working together to offer affordable housing options for the homeless in Bellingham and Whatcom County. Homes NOW supports the Housing First model to house homeless people immediately. The goal is for each person to have a sense of home and community.

Homes NOW previously worked with Lummi Nation to build two tiny homes in June and July 2017, which temporarily housed 8 people transitioning to permanent housing. On average, occupancy is 2 to 3 months before moving into permanent housing.

In 2017, Homes NOW assisted 25 people into housing by eliminating barriers. Homes NOW provided: telephone access, avenues for reconnecting family members, assistance with rental applications for those having difficulty reading and/or writing, direction for people entering detox programs, and the stability of an organized permitted camp site at City Hall for 18 days.

1.3. Project Need

As of 2018, there are over 800 homeless people in Whatcom County. Approximately half of the homeless people in Whatcom County are unsheltered on a given night. Many homeless people are forced to illegally camp on public or private property or sleep in their cars.

Because many homeless people have to camp illegally, they are often forced to move, resulting in instability and loss of personal belongings. Homeless people also lack access to basic human necessities, including bathrooms, showers, drinking water, cooking facilities, garbage services, etc. Many homeless people are forced to carry all of their belongings with them at all times, which often prevents them from being able to seek employment.

The proposed safe camping and parking project provides a safe legal place for our homeless neighbors to live. This project will give access to basic human necessities, such as bathroom and kitchen facilities, garbage/recycling service, and a sense of safety and community. This project will also serve as a central location for service providers to meet with residents.

2. PROPOSED PROJECT

2.1. Project Description

The proposed project is a temporary safe camping and parking site for homeless people in Whatcom County. **The proposed project will consist tents and/or safe parking sites.** The exact number of tents and safe parking sites will depend on the space available at the specific location. The site would serve between 10 to 25 people. This project will provide residents with a secure, stable location to live and store their belongings.

The site will be serviced by portable toilets and handwashing stations. The mobile shower truck built by Homes NOW will provide access to showers for residents. The site will include two large community tents for kitchen and dining areas.

The site will be surrounded by a 6-foot tall chain link fence for the security of the residents. The fence will have one 10-foot wide main gate to serve as the entrance. An intake building, a storage container for donations, and dumpsters and recycling bins will be located near the main entrance.



Typical Layout for a Safe Camping and Parking Site

2.2. Site Location

The safe camping and parking site will be located at an existing church or religious organization in Whatcom County. **Ideally, the site will be located on an existing paved lot with access to electricity.** *The site should be located on a WTA bus line.* Since the facility includes portable toilets, handwashing stations, and a mobile shower unit, water and sewer access is not required.

2.3. Project Funding

Homes NOW is 100% funded by donations and operated by volunteers. *Homes NOW is not requesting any funding from the religious organization.*

2.4. Insurance

Liability insurance will be provided by Farmers Insurance.

2.5. Operations and Management

Children: No children under the age of 18 are allowed to stay overnight at the site, unless accompanied by a parent or guardian. If a child under the age of 18 without a parent or guardian present attempts to stay at the site, Homes NOW will immediately contact Child Protective Services and will actively seek alternative shelter for the child.

Code of Conduct: A copy of the Handbook is provided in Appendix A. The Handbook includes a written code of conduct that provides for the health, safety, and welfare of the site residents. The code of conduct also mitigates impacts to neighbors and the wider community. The Handbook and code of conduct will be posted on site.

Operations Plan: The Handbook also contains an operations plan that addresses site management, site maintenance, and provision of human and social services.

Compliance with Laws and Regulations: Homes NOW will ensure compliance with Washington State laws and regulations and the Whatcom County Health Department's regulations. Commercial services will provide bottled potable water, portable toilets, portable showers, and handwashing stations.

24-Hour Contact Person: Homes NOW will designate points of contact and provide contact information (24-hour accessible phone contact) to residents and the sponsoring church. At least one designated point of contact will be on duty at all times. The names and numbers of on-duty points of contact will be posted on-site daily.

Identification: Homes NOW will attempt to obtain a copy of a government-issued valid photo ID that includes full name and date of birth from the prospective resident. The ID will be used to obtain sex offender and warrant checks from appropriate agencies. Homes NOW will keep a current log of names and dates of all people who reside or stay overnight at the facility. This log will be made available upon request to law enforcement agencies. Persons who have active

warrants or who are required to register as sex offenders are prohibited from the site. If a prospective resident does not have verifiable ID, Homes NOW will assist them in obtaining ID prior to move-in.

Active Warrants/Sex Offender Checks: Homes NOW will immediately contact the Whatcom County Sheriff's Office if someone is rejected or ejected from the site when the reason for rejection or ejection is an active warrant or a match on a sex offender check, or if the person is a potential threat to the community.

Coordination with Service Providers: Homes NOW will cooperate with other service providers and providers of shelters for homeless persons within the County and will inquire about the availability of existing resources with these providers.

Appendix A

Unity Village Handbook