



A Safe Stay Community in your Neighborhood  
Toolkit for Neighborhood Associations

## INTRODUCTION

The City of Vancouver is facing a crisis in the number of people who are living unsheltered in our community. As one strategy to address this crisis, the City is planning to provide Safe Stay Communities in several neighborhoods in Vancouver. The plan calls for up to three sites in the next year. One of the locations for a Safe Stay Community has been identified in or near your neighborhood, located on city owned property at:

11400 NE 51<sup>st</sup> Circle

This toolkit is created to help you answer questions from your neighbors and provide you with some resources to address issues around the Safe Stay Community that may come up.

The City appreciates our partnership with the neighborhood associations and will continue to work with the associations and the neighbors as the program progresses.

**INFORMATION** – to help answer questions you may receive:

- There is a broad concern about homelessness in Vancouver. Many of us see some of our most vulnerable residents living unsheltered enduring extreme weather situations and needing support and stabilization as they seek a pathway forward for their lives.
- There are a variety of reasons why people might find themselves living unsheltered. Some people are experiencing homelessness because of a lack of affordable housing or employment security, while others struggle with mental illness and substance abuse, or have other factors in their lives that have resulted in homelessness.
- In addition to concerns about the unsheltered people living in Vancouver, there are concerns about the impact that homelessness is having on livability in our community. Our neighbors' concerns about safety, trash, waste, fire hazards and more are real and the City shares those concerns.
- The City is working as a partner alongside Clark County, local service providers, neighborhoods and community leaders to continue to address the crisis of homelessness in our community.

Clark County oversees implementation of the local [Homeless Action Plan](#), which guides policy, funding and the practices of local service providers who make up our region's homeless crisis response system. Vancouver's plan supports implementation of the County's Homeless Action Plan. While both are aimed at helping individuals experiencing homelessness, Vancouver's plan also addresses the impacts of the homelessness crisis on the broader Vancouver community.

Strategies in Vancouver's plan aim to address:

- Community safety
  - Health and sanitation for the entire Vancouver community, including unhoused residents
  - Access to physical, mental and behavioral health services for individuals living without shelter
  - Lack of safe places for people to live as they work on housing, employment and other services.
- To address the immediate challenges of homelessness, the City of Vancouver is pursuing three approaches at the same time:
    - 1) **Establish Safe Stay Communities for the most vulnerable.** City Council recently endorsed a plan to pilot a temporary Safe Stay Community program to address the most immediate needs. We anticipate the temporary program will facilitate up to three sites in 2021-2022, providing support to approximately a quarter of the estimated unsheltered population in Vancouver.
    - 2) **Expand permanent bridge shelter capacity.** Through a collaboration between the City of Vancouver, Clark County and the Vancouver Housing Authority, Clark County is opening the first expansion of shelter capacity in decades with Bertha Cain Baugh Place—the conversion of an existing motel into a new 65 bed bridge shelter, in the VanMall neighborhood.
    - 3) **Increase the supply of income-based housing.** Affordable and income-based housing continues as a long-term priority for the City. The Affordable Housing Fund passed by voters in 2016 has delivered more than 470 affordable housing units and prevented 796 households from falling into homelessness. In 2020, the City Council passed a new 1/10% sales tax dedicated to affordable housing and services for the most vulnerable such as veterans, seniors, youth, domestic violence survivors and people with disabilities or behavioral health disabilities.
  - There may be ways that we as neighbors can come alongside the people who are living in the Safe Stay Communities and help. The neighborhood association can contact the onsite service provider to establish a relationship and come up with a plan that would be the most effective for everyone in our neighborhood.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### What are the criteria the City is using for selecting sites for the Safe Stay Communities?

The guidelines for identifying potential locations for the Safe Stay Communities include:

- Publicly owned land will be the first options looked at,
- Dispersing Safe Stay Communities equitably throughout the city,
- Availability of public transit, and
- Assessing residential areas with heightened economic vulnerability.
- Non-supported campsites will not be allowed within 1,000 feet of a Safe Stay Community.

**Why is there a Safe Stay Community in my neighborhood?**

The criteria (above) was applied to dozens of publicly owned properties in the city of Vancouver. An area in your neighborhood fit the criteria and the location was prioritized. The Safe Stay Community in your neighborhood will not be the only site in Vancouver. There will initially be three sites developed to help meet the needs of our community's unsheltered.

**How big will the Safe Stay Communities be?**

Each site will accommodate up to 20 individual sites and a maximum of 40 people.

**How will the Safe Stay Communities be managed? How will basic needs be met?**

The sites will be fenced. Each shelter will have electricity. Trash, sanitation and hygiene services will be provided at each site. The sites will be managed 24/7 by a nonprofit organization contracted as the on-site service provider for that location. The organization managing this site will be Outsider's Inn.

**What are the qualifications of Outsider's Inn?**

Outsiders Inn staff are experts in their own experiences. Most of the staff identify as a person in recovery from mental health, substance use, or homelessness. They have certifications in peer support counseling and professional recovery coaching, and they engage in continual training around best-practices. They have specialized skillsets in bridging gaps, building trust and rapport that are the starting points of recovery.

**What are the criteria for people to live in the Safe Stay Community?**

They are looking for residents of Vancouver without safe and stable housing, who are willing to follow a code of conduct and desire a process of change through which they can improve their health and wellness, live self-directed lives, and strive to reach their full potential. The criteria will be low-barrier, but a code of conduct agreement is required, with a wellness and recovery-focused stay, and housing-focused exits.

**Will there be behavior expectations of the people who are living at the Safe Stay Community?**

There will be a code of conduct developed and each resident will be expected to follow it.

**How long will the Safe Stay Communities be up and running?**

It is the intention for the Safe Stay Communities to be temporary, in place for up to three years. They will not be permanent housing.

**Can I expect an increase of crime in my neighborhood because a Safe Stay Community is here?**

Not necessarily. There are many factors that can contribute to an increase of crime in a neighborhood. There may be a perception that crime will increase around these sites, but it is not a foregone conclusion. To view reported crimes in your neighborhood, visit VPDs interactive crime map at [Crime Map | City of Vancouver Washington](#).

**Is it legal for people to live unsheltered in Vancouver?**

Yes it is. In a legal decision that has been upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court (Martin v. Boise, 2019), homeless persons cannot be punished for sleeping outside on public property when there is an absence of adequate alternatives such as shelter space. In Vancouver and Clark County, there is insufficient shelter to house all individuals experiencing homelessness. Consequently, camping in the city—within certain limits—is legal.

**Can I notify the City about unsupported campsites?**

Yes, you can use the free MyVancouver mobile and desktop application to report an active or abandoned campsite to the City's Homeless Assistance & Resources Team (HART). Visit this webpage to use the desktop version of MyVancouver or download the free mobile app: <https://www.cityofvancouver.us/community/page/myvancouver>(External link).

The HART Team will provide outreach, assessments, and referrals to the appropriate services for individuals experiencing homelessness. In addition, the team serves as part of the community's crisis response system, with a focus on homelessness-related street and encampment crises. The team includes City of Vancouver staff from the City Manager's Office, Vancouver Police Department, Public Works Department, and City Attorney's Office.

**As neighbors, how can we help?**

There may be ways that we as neighbors can come alongside the people who are living in the Safe Stay Communities and help. We can start by contacting the onsite service provider ([outpost@outsidersinn.org](mailto:outpost@outsidersinn.org)) to establish a relationship and come up with a plan that would be the most effective for everyone in our neighborhood.

For more Frequently Asked Questions related to Homelessness in Vancouver visit [Homelessness FAQ | City of Vancouver Washington](#).

**RESOURCES/CONTACTS FOR MORE INFORMATION**

**Onsite Service Provider – Outsider's Inn**

Adam Kravitz

**Phone:** 360-830-6647

**Email:** [outpost@outsidersinn.org](mailto:outpost@outsidersinn.org)

**Adult Mobile Crisis Intervention 1-800-626-8137**

24/7 Speak with a trained phone crisis worker for access and referral to AMCI. For more information about the AMCI see [adult mobile crisis intervention 2021.pdf \(cityofvancouver.us\)](#).

**Outreach worker 360-839-9964**

Outsider's Inn – works one-on-one with individuals to complete assessments, help them access services, and provide assistance to move individuals into housing stability.

**Homelessness Assistance & Resources Team (HART)**

**Mobile app:** Use the free <https://www.cityofvancouver.us/community/page/myvancouver> to report concerns to the HART team or ask questions related to homelessness in Vancouver.

**Email:** [HARTteam@cityofvancouver.us](mailto:HARTteam@cityofvancouver.us)

**Voicemail:** 360-487-8626

Provides outreach, assessments, and referrals to the appropriate services for individuals experiencing homelessness. In addition, the team serves as part of the community's crisis response system, with a focus on homelessness-related street and encampment crises. The team includes City of Vancouver staff from the City Manager's Office, Vancouver Police Department, Public Works Department, and City Attorney's Office.

**Talkin' Trash** - To report litter or other issues on public property, please contact the City Public Works Operations Dispatch line at (360) 487-8177, or <https://www.cityofvancouver.us/publicworks/webform/service-requests-public-works>.

Talkin' Trash is a partnership between Share and the City of Vancouver. It is a program that employs people experiencing homelessness to help address litter in the community. In addition to helping their community, the Talkin' Trash crew receives work experience and training to help in the transition from homelessness.

The program's crew includes six community cleaners, on-call cleaners, and one supervisor. The crew works 9 a.m. – 5:30 p.m., Monday – Friday cleaning up litter and waste throughout the City. The crew has a weekly route and adds extra stops as requests for service are received. The crew removes litter, but they do not remove camps or personal belongings.

**MyVancouver App** - Visit this webpage to use the desktop version of MyVancouver or download the free mobile app at <https://www.cityofvancouver.us/community/page/myvancouver>

MyVancouver app is a free mobile app that provides smart device users with a direct, convenient line of communication with City employees to solve non-emergency issues and stay in-the-know on City events and resources.

- Report an issue, ask a question, or find resources related to homelessness in Vancouver.
- Report non-emergency issues, such as potholes, graffiti, sign damage or streetlight outages quickly and easily.
- Include a photo and GPS location.
- View and track the status of a request or view other reported issues in a particular area of the city.
- Access other online City services, such as paying for parking ticket, permit payments, as well as other City related news and information.

**Code Compliance Report Form** – for code issues on private property.  
[File a Code Compliance Complaint | City of Vancouver Washington](#)

**Public Works Service Request Form** – for issues on public property (on city streets, in Parks, at city facilities, etc.)  
[Service Requests - Public Works | City of Vancouver Washington](#)

**Neighborhood Police Officer**

Officer Brian Schaffer

Email: [Brian.Schaffer@cityofvancouver.us](mailto:Brian.Schaffer@cityofvancouver.us)

Phone: 360-487-7540

For an interactive crime map visit [Crime Map | City of Vancouver Washington](#).