

TEMS June 4, 2020 T-Town Hall

Participant Questions and Answers

This document contains a consolidated list of questions asked by attendees at the virtual meeting and responses from the City and Low-Income Housing Institute (LIHI). Original question formats as submitted by attendees can be viewed at www.cityoftacoma.org/authorizedencampments.

- **When will construction at the site begin?**

Construction at the site began the week of June 8, 2020.

- **Why has the TEMS site implementation begun before meaningful outreach to the neighborhood and an opportunity to give feedback about the suitability of the location?**

The City of Tacoma is operating under two public health related State of Emergency orders, one regarding homelessness and the other regarding COVID-19. Both of these orders call for steps to take swift, immediate action to mitigate their respective public health and safety risks

- **How does the TEMS model differ from existing shelters in Tacoma?**

The TEMS model is non-congregate housing, meaning that each resident or pair of individuals, such as a couple, has their own separate shelter rather than sleeping in a shared room. Residents at TEMS keep their same shelter during their entire stay and are able to be on-site 24-hours a day, which differs from traditional shelter models.

- **How was the location of the site selected? Will there be other sites in other parts of the City, like the North End? Who has been involved in planning the site location?**

The site was selected because the City was able to make an agreement for use with the property owner and the site had access to necessary facilities to re-locate the existing micro-shelters and expand capacity for individuals experiencing homelessness. The City is partnering with faith based organizations, community non-profits and government agencies to find capacity in our community for new sites throughout the City. As sites are proposed or identified by staff and community partners, the City assesses their suitability and proceeds wherever possible. So far, these partnerships have resulted in the establishment of three temporary shelters. If someone would like to suggest a location they may submit an email to shelters@cityoftacoma.org call 253-591-5119.

- **What community engagement has taken place when setting up the new TEMS site?**

Area residents were mailed a post card invitation to the June 4 virtual T-Town hall and provided additional contact information to route questions and concerns. Staff also connected personally by phone or in-person with immediate neighbors of the site to answer questions and listen and respond to concerns. Residents are encouraged to stay engaged with the site by joining the Community Advisory Committee (CAC), which is a group of stakeholders who support site operations and community involvement. Applications and meeting information for the CAC can be found at www.cityoftacoma.org/authorizedencampments. All CAC meetings are open to the public and there is a period at all meetings for open public comment.

- **How will the City invest in the neighborhood to make it better for everyone, specifically, what steps will be taken to ensure public safety with the implementation of TEMS?**

The TEMS site will be staffed 24-hours a day, be fully fenced and have site security cameras. The Low Income Housing Institute (LIHI) also engages in regular trash pick-ups in the nearby area to keep the neighborhood clean.

- **What has the involvement of City Council been in the selection and approval of the TEMS site?**

City Council approved the agreement with the Tacoma Housing Authority for the use of the site and the funding agreement with the LIHI is forthcoming for Council approval.

- **How do the client outcomes at the 802 MLK Jr Way TEMS site compare against other shelter models?**

As of May 2020, 32% of TEMS site residents who exited the program left for permanent housing. The average exits to permanent housing for all other City funded shelter providers combined was 16.5% for the same time period. The City, current TEMS residents, and neighbors agree that the TEMS model provides additional stability to residents and neighbors by operating 24/7, which is one way it differs from many other shelters in the community. Allowing residents to have designated space and not require them to leave during the day adds stability for residents to focus on moving into housing and accessing other necessary services.

- **What opportunities do neighboring residents and the community at large have to give input on the TEMS site?**

Neighboring residents are encouraged to become members of the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) or attend and participate in the monthly meetings. CAC meetings provide an opportunity for ongoing collaboration between TEMS staff, TEMS residents, neighboring residents, City staff and police. Neighbors may also contact the City directly at shelters@cityoftacoma.org or by calling (253) 591-5119.

- **What other sites were considered for a new TEMS locations?**

The site at 623 E. 60th was the only identified feasible option to relocate the existing TEMS site at 802 MLK Jr Way under the required timeline. If community members have additional sites they would like the City to consider they may email shelters@cityoftacoma.org or call (253) 591-5119.

- **How has community engagement about the TEMS project changed in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic? What efforts were taken to involve the neighborhood in the selection of the location and implementation of the project?**

Selection and set-up of emergency shelter sites happen quickly due to the nature of the emergency; for example, the 8th and MLK site was identified and implemented in 41 days. There were changes in community outreach due to COVID-19, staff have not been able to conduct door-to-door outreach to have one-on-one conversations in-person with neighbors to notify them about the TEMS site and discuss in-person their questions and concerns. Rather, we relied on mailers and the virtual town hall for the direct engagement and notification.

If community members have future sites they would like to suggest, they are invited to contact shelters@cityoftacoma.org or call (253) 591-5119.

- **What assurances can the City provide to the Eastside community that this site is truly temporary?**

The lease agreement with the Tacoma Housing Authority (THA) for use of the property is valid until December 31, 2021. At that point the micro-shelter site will be removed and the property returned to THA for their use.

- **Due to COVID-19, what can the community expect in response to 3-1-1 requests related to the site? Are response times delayed or are there services that may have previously been available to the community cancelled?**

City response to 3-1-1 requests may vary based on the COVID pandemic. Residents submitting requests can expect to be notified of an accurate timeline and response from the City as requests are made.

- **What parking is available to residents on site?**

A parking area will be available on site, if a resident has long term vehicle storage needs LIHI will work with that resident to arrange for vehicle storage off-site.

- **What support does the City have available for any public safety impacts the site may have on the surrounding neighborhood?**

The City offers a variety of programs and services for neighborhoods concerned with public safety, including offering Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) assessments to residents and businesses, providing Rapid Graffiti Removal on key corridors, and offering City staff and Community Liaison support to assist with resolving issues. For support, please contact shelters@cityoftacoma.org or submit a specific request to TacomaFirst311.

- **It seems there is significant community fear about the TEMS site based on stereotypes about individuals experiencing homelessness. Based on the City's experience with the TEMS site at 802 MLK Jr Way, how has the community expectation differed from the reality?**

Before implementing the TEMS site at 802 MLK Jr Way, neighboring residents shared significant concerns about the site drawing more individuals experiencing homelessness to the area to loiter or set-up unauthorized encampments. Based on neighbor feedback at the existing CAC and from other residents, the site has had relatively few actual issues and has not resulted in increased loitering or new encampments in the area. Emergency Police and Fire calls for service to the site have been minimal, as well and not created a significant change in activity to the neighborhood.

- **How much will the TEMS site cost in 2020 and 2021? Will Tacoma Housing Authority be paying any of these costs?**

The total cost of the site set-up and operations, including the expanded capacity from 35 to 65 individuals is approximately \$1 million for 2020. Anticipated operations costs for 2021 are approximately \$700,000. Tacoma Housing Authority will not be paying any costs related to site improvements or site operations.

- **Will the same shelters from the TEMS MLK Site be transitioned to the new site or used elsewhere?**

The shelters currently located at the TEMS MLK site will be transitioned to the new location.

- **How can faith-based and non-profit organizations partner with the City to identify new potential shelter sites?**

Please contact the City at shelters@cityoftacoma.org or (253) 591- 5119 to discuss any potential shelter sites or availability to partner.

- **What is the City doing to evaluate less costly, alternate models for shelter like tent cities and sanctioned encampments?**

The most cost effective strategy for providing services to individuals experiencing homelessness is to pursue permanent supportive housing and other housing options, rather than a temporary or overnight shelter. While this is the most cost effective strategy, the lead time to create such units is significant, often taking several years to implement. The City is pursuing actions in the Affordable Housing Action Strategy to increase permanent supportive housing units available in our community. Meanwhile, we are creating temporary and emergency shelters and supporting our community partners in shelter expansion efforts provides immediate relief to our residents living outdoors in unsafe conditions.

- **Has the soil at the TEMS location been tested for possible contamination since it used to be the location of an old lumber mill?**

The project has been issued a site development permit which includes review of planned soil displacement and management of storm water run-off. Any materials identified as hazardous during grading will be addressed as needed. The permit number for the project is SDEV20-0190. [Permit information can be accessed at www.tacomapermits.org](http://www.tacomapermits.org).

- **How has COVID-19 impacted homelessness and homeless services in our community?**

Our community shelter providers have been extremely swift and effective in working with the Pierce County Health Department to respond to COVID-19 and adapt their operations to keep program participants, staff and volunteers safe. The most significant impact has been the requirement for six feet of physical distance, which has required shelters to physically adapt their spaces and modify program capacity; this has resulted in an even increased need for shelter space. TEMS provides non-congregate sheltering, which is most appropriate for COVID-19 safety response and expansion of available shelter beds will assist our traditional shelter providers in meeting ongoing capacity needs.

- **How will TEMS residents at 60th and McKinley be able to access services given the distance from services such as grocery stores and health care?**

Case management services will be provided on site. LIHI will also provide three meals per day on site. LIHI will work with residents on an individual basis to address other needs they may have and either arrange for transportation to those services or have them brought on-site.

- **How can individuals experiencing homelessness become residents of the micro-shelters?**

Residents of the current site at 8th and MLK will be offered the opportunity to make a transition to the site at E. 60th and McKinley. Other individuals experiencing homelessness may be referred to the site by the City of Tacoma's Homeless Outreach Team and local providers.

- **How long are residents able to stay?**

There is no time limit on how long a resident can stay during the period the site is open. Residents stay as long as needed in order to gain stability and take the appropriate steps on the path to housing. LIHI case management staff work with residents to transition them into housing or another situation that meets their needs as quickly as possible.

- **How can local residents support the TEMS site?**

Local residents can donate items or food. Please email Eric Davis at eric.davis@lihi.org if interested or to receive a desired donations wish list.

- **What are the community expectations for TEMS site residents? Are they expected to help keep the neighborhood clean?**

Residents are expected to agree to and abide by a Code of Conduct that includes doing chores and no disruption to neighbors or loitering in the neighborhood. Residents may participate in activities such as litter pick up or beautification in the neighborhood. Residents and staff often form community partnerships with local organizations to participate in community building activities. If community members are interested in engaging with residents on community building activities, they may contact Josh Castle at LIHI at josh.castle@lihi.org or (206) 334-0508.

- **How are background checks used at the TEMS site? What type of offenses would disqualify someone from residency?**

All prospective residents need to submit to a background check and a sex offender registry check as a condition of staying at the site. Serious offenses like murder, sex-related offenses, and others disqualify persons from residency.

- **What is the policy for entering and leaving the premise for residents and visitors?**

There is one main entrance/exit and an emergency exit only to be used in cases of an emergency. Residents at this time are encouraged to shelter in place to avoid exposure to COVID-19 for themselves and other residents. At this time, to avoid exposure to COVID-19, visitors are not permitted on the site. As restrictions related to COVID-19 are lifted, visitors are required to sign in and out at the front office.

- **How is the Code of Conduct enforced? Are drug tests done to help enforce drug and alcohol policies?**

LIHI staff enforce the Code of Conduct through progressive discipline and a multi-step disciplinary approach. There is no tolerance for serious violations such as violence. Residents who are in serious violation of the Code of Conduct may need to exit the program and be transferred to another shelter option that better meets their needs. There are occasions when drug tests may be appropriate, and are most often conducted on a case by case basis.

- **Is LIHI a public, non-profit or private corporation?**

LIHI is non-profit 501c(3) corporation. More information about LIHI is available at www.lihi.org.

- **If residents exit the TEMS program without housing, how does LIHI support them in their transition so that they do not camp in the neighborhood?**

As much as possible, and when appropriate, LIHI case management staff will continue to stay in touch and work with residents who exit the program without housing or another form of shelter for as long as the resident who exited is able and willing to engage. LIHI assists residents exiting for any reason with transportation.

- **How can community organizations partner with LIHI to support the TEMS site?**

Community organizations can donate services, items or food. Please email Eric Davis at eric.davis@lihi.org if interested or to receive a desired donations wish list. Monetary donations can go to www.lihi.org and a comment can be included to direct donation to a specific site like TEMS.

- **Where will LIHI refer individuals experiencing homelessness they are unable to serve, such as families with children?**

Residents are referred from the City of Tacoma's Homeless Outreach Team and local providers. They are the first point of contact and they may direct families with children to other resources.

- **What happens when individuals exit the program without permanent housing?**

Residents could exit the program into another form of long-term housing, such as transitional housing, or into another form of shelter that better meets their needs, or may re-enter homelessness. Residents may also leave the program on their own and not share their outcome or destination. As much as possible, and when appropriate, LIHI case management staff will continue to stay in touch and work with residents who exit the program without housing or another form of shelter for as long as the resident who exited is able and willing to engage. LIHI assists residents exiting for any reason with transportation.

- **What services and amenities are available on-site to residents?**

The site has a communal kitchen and restrooms, showers and laundry. Each micro-shelter unit is equipped with heat and electricity.

On site case management services help residents obtain housing, employment, education, health care, or other services.