

Tent City Background Information



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SHARE/WHEEL

SHARE (Seattle Housing and Resource Effort) is a non-profit organization of homeless and formerly homeless men and women working to improve conditions for homeless people and to eliminate homelessness. In addition to Tent City3, they currently operate 15 self-managed church based shelters, a storage locker program, and a "SHARE2" program (in which members of their shelter community are hired to supervise downtown and Winter Response shelters in exchange for a room in a shared house).

WHEEL (Women's Housing, Equality, and Enhancement League) is a non-profit and non-hierarchical group of homeless and formerly homeless women working on ending homelessness, increasing safety and shelter space, and giving voice and leadership to homeless women. WHEEL is the sister organization to SHARE. Both WHEEL and SHARE provide self-managed shelters for homeless people. Three of these shelters are for women only.

SHARE has a 12-year track record of successful programs. Both SHARE and WHEEL have partnered many times with community groups, service agencies, City of Seattle, King County, and Federal agencies.

SHARE/WHEEL'S RATIONAL FOR TENT CITY

The need: There are over 7,000 homeless people in Seattle each night, and the 2002 One Night Homeless Street Count identified 2040 people sleeping outside on the night it was conducted in October, a 22% increase over 2001 when comparing similar count areas. Some of these people are "squatting" in abandoned buildings and some live in their cars, but every night hundreds of people including women and children are sleeping outdoors. It is illegal to sleep in parks or on other public land. It is dangerous to sleep on the streets or in alleys. When people can camp together, they can put together more resources such as Porta-Potties, hand washing stations, food and coffee, and can support each other, watch out for each other's safety and possessions. Those who work can safely leave their belongings in camp and know that they will be safe. SHARE/WHEEL believes that the operation of homeless camps is necessary until there is enough housing for everyone and enough shelter to meet emergency needs, and that encampment is an urgent piece of the continuum of care—a bottom-rung entry level into the system for people who are otherwise in complete isolation.

Why Tents rather than abandoned buildings or indoor shelter: SHARE/WHEEL develops many kinds of indoor shelter, including a Bunkhouse, which was an abandoned building that was renovated. These types of projects, however, take a lot of time and effort to open. The process of using an abandoned building for shelter is as long and complex as opening any other kind of indoors shelter. Buildings apparently empty and unused aren't always abandoned. They usually have an owner who intends eventual development or sale, and is not always willing to let homeless people use the property in the meantime. Even if the building is actually abandoned, obtaining clear legal use of the building usually involves some sort of payment, if only back taxes. To be a legal shelter, a building needs to be made structurally sound, cleaned, provided with heat and running water and enough toilets for the number of people staying there. It also has to be insured.

HISTORY OF TENT CITY IN SEATTLE

Historical Background

During summer 1990 Seattle hosted the International Goodwill Games. In an effort to assert themselves in a positive way, a group of homeless people planned a "Goodwill Gathering" in Myrtle Edwards Park. This was the beginning of Seattle Housing and Resource Effort (SHARE).

The first Tent City (Thanksgiving 1990 – Spring 1991)

On Thanksgiving 1990, SHARE erected a Tent City on a parking lot behind the **Kingdome** (where Safeco Field is now). On the first day there were 2 tents and 12 people, but by the end of the week 125 people were living there in 15 tents and cars, and the City had begun providing portable toilets to service the encampment. The tents of this first Tent City were taken down when Mayor Rice helped to establish an emergency shelter for 100 people at the **Bus Barn** across from Seattle Center (now a parking lot). The issue was resolved further in spring 1991 when SHARE, the Church Council of Greater Seattle, and Fremont Public Association formed the Low Income Housing Institute (LIHI) which bought the **Aloha Inn** on Aurora Ave. This facility became a transitional home for 50 people, many of whom had been residents of the original Tent City. In addition, SHARE organized overflow shelters to pick up slack when the Bus Barn shelter was then closed.

Tent City2 (June 10th 1998 – July 6th 1998)

In March 1998 Mayor Paul Schell held a Housing Summit at Seattle Center. SHARE/WHEEL set up tents on Seattle Center grounds to promote the idea of emergency shelter and provide a "model encampment" for the thousands of homeless people on the streets. The Mayor met with SHARE/WHEEL regularly following the Housing Summit in March in an effort to evaluate potential sites for such an encampment and to find solutions to the urgent needs for more shelter. The possible idea of using cargo containers as shelters was brought up at this time. For 2 weeks the Mayor explored options for more shelter with the Port of Seattle and in other City-owned space.

Between November 1997 and January 1998 three homeless women were murdered by a serial killer operating in the "Jungle", the wooded west side of Beacon Hill above I-5 where dozens of homeless people camped out. Tensions over this sharp rise in the murder of homeless women was another factor leading to the start up of Tent City2.

On June 2nd 1998, only days after receiving a letter from SHARE/WHEEL about their intent to set up a model encampment, Mayor Schell announced his goal to get all homeless women and children off the streets by Christmas, and proposed \$500,000 in emergency funding.

On the morning of June 10th 1998, after giving SHARE/WHEEL several days notice, the City did a sweep of the "Jungle". SHARE/WHEEL met with Mayor Schell that afternoon, announcing plans to erect a new Tent City at the **Beacon Hill Reservoir** and asking the City for its support. The Mayor's office agreed not to arrest campers at the new location right away. That night about 25 people slept in 2 army tents at "Tent City2". Tent City2 continued to grow by 7-10 people per day and to run peacefully. On June 15th staff from the Mayor's office visited the camp and met with SHARE/WHEEL, homeless residents, and the Department of Housing and Health Services. SHARE/WHEEL again stated their position that clean safe encampments are a necessity until there is enough housing for everyone. Several alternate encampment locations were suggested by SHARE/WHEEL and they offered to make a six-month trial run, subject to an independent citizen review at the end to decide on continuation of the project. Some surrounding community members were responding with donations while others complained about the encampment. At this stage the Mayor considered the encampment a temporary measure, however Operation Nightwatch began referring homeless people to Tent City2. At this stage the population neared 50 people in 12 tents.

By June 19th the City said that further trespass would not be tolerated and that if the tents weren't removed voluntarily the Seattle Police Department would remove them. The Mayor made an offer to open the 50-bed Municipal Building Winter Response Shelter three months early, under the operation of DESC. The residents of Tent City2 voted to abide by the Mayor's decision and take down the tents on Thursday June 25th, with time to arrange alternative shelter for everyone. By this point there were 70 people occupying 29 tents on the slopes off Spokane Street. Community Service Officers visited the encampment on the evening of June 24th to hand out vouchers for hotel rooms, however 12 women, 2 families, and all the men had nowhere to go in the morning when police came. The tents were driven to a shelter in south Seattle, and 20 people marched to the Jungle where police were waiting to confront them.

SHARE/WHEEL was informed that the Municipal Building could only be opened immediately if further plans to camp outside were dropped.

Even after confrontations with police SHARE/WHEEL set up Tent City2 again, this time on the slopes below Beacon Hill's **Jose Rizal Park**, opposite Pacific Medical Center. This camp accommodated 70 people from June 28th-July 6th when the camp was bulldozed and the people who stayed were arrested.

Talks with the Beacon Hill community and with the Mayor's Office continued in an effort to determine how to permanently provide clean, safe conditions for the thousands of homeless people who were left sleeping outside and at risk. Many residents of the Beacon Hill neighborhood were friendly and supportive to the campers, visiting and bringing contributions to the camp. Others were anxious, expressing concerns over public safety and anger over the suddenness of the process. SHARE/WHEEL put out printed information on the camp and its plans, and worked to set up meetings with community members. Camp residents visited both the North Beacon Hill Community Council and the South Beacon Hill Community Council.

On July 13th 1998, after a very positive neighborhood meeting, the North Beacon Hill Community Council requested a proposal from SHARE/WHEEL for a sanctioned encampment on Beacon Hill. A proposal was submitted and was discussed at a Community Council meeting at Asa Mercer High School on August 11th. At that meeting, however, there was a great deal of opposition from homeowners. SHARE/WHEEL offered to meet again for as long as it would take to answer the concerns of the neighbors, but the President of the Community Council declined to pursue the proposal.

Tent City3 (March 31st 2000-present)

Seattle's Winter Response Shelters close each year on April 1st. In 2000 this meant a loss of 130 shelter beds. Since homelessness is dangerous even without severe weather conditions, SHARE/WHEEL spoke at City Council hearings and wrote to and met with City officials well before March 31st 2000 to let them know that unless other provisions were made for those 130 people, they would set up a Tent City to keep them safe. SHARE/WHEEL requested that if a Tent City was set up on private land with the consent of the owners, City Attorney Mark Sidran and the Seattle Police Department would not take legal action against the campers.

On March 31st 2000 First Things First held a rally in front of the Municipal Building advocating for A Roof Over Every Bed: shelter for everyone, an increase in affordable housing, and services with dignity. Following this rally SHARE/WHEEL set up a Tent City on vacant land owned by King Vn, Inc., at Martin Luther King Way South and Charleston, in south Seattle. The neighbors and the landowners had not been notified ahead of time but were notified within hours of the camp's arrival. The property was owned by a group of businessmen who, after seeing that the campers were cleaning up the area, removing brambles, and patrolling for undesirable behavior in the underbrush, expressed willingness to have Tent City stay there indefinitely.

On July 16th 2000 Tent City was invited to El Centro de la Raza, a Latino community center on Beacon Hill. In August, El Centro extended its invitation to January 16, 2001. El Centro applied for a six-month Temporary Use Permit, and in the public comment period DCLU received over 370 letters supporting the camp and only 18 against. Further information about this process is contained below in the section "City of Seattle Consent Decree Agreement with Tent City3"

This Tent City has continued to operate since that time, moving to a wide variety of different host sites and churches throughout the City of Seattle and beyond (see section "Tent City3 Locations").

TENT CITIES IN OTHER PARTS OF THE COUNTRY

There have been successful tent cities and unsuccessful ones in numerous other cities. Many successful ones have been self-managed. One example is Dignity Village in Portland Oregon. More information on Dignity Village is available at <http://outofthedoors.org/>.

TENT CITY3 LOCATIONS

Requirements for site: Church or privately owned land, at least 20x30 yards.

Many churches and community groups throughout Seattle and beyond have hosted and supported Tent City3. Some have hosted Tent City3 on more than one occasion.

March 31st 2000 – September 2nd 2001

1. King Vn, Inc., vacant lot
2. Coleman School I-90 LID
3. Shower of Blessings, 9501 Rainier Ave S
4. All Saints Episcopal, 5150 South Cloverdale Place
5. Rainier Avenue Free Methodist, 5900 Rainier Ave S
6. Star Bethel Missionary Baptist, 5922 Rainier Ave S
7. Crown Hill United Methodist, 8500 14th Ave NW
8. St Marks Episcopal Cathedral, 1245 10th Ave E, Capitol Hill
9. Northgate Baptist, 10510 Stone Ave N
10. Seattle Advent Christian Church
11. Star Bethel Missionary Baptist, 5922 Rainier Ave S
12. El Centro de la Raza, 2524 16th Ave S, North Beacon Hill
13. Martin Luther King Jr. Park, Mount Baker
14. St Marks Episcopal Cathedral, 1245 10th Ave E, Capitol Hill
15. Riverton Park United Methodist, 3118 S 140th St, Tukwila
16. Trinity United Methodist Church, 6512 23rd Ave NW, Ballard
17. St Thérèse Catholic Church, 3416 East Marion Street

September 2nd 2001 – Present:

September 2 nd – September 31 st 2001	Dunlap Baptist Church, 8445 Rainier Ave S
September 31 st – November 11 th 2001	Church by the Side of the Road, S 148 th & Pacific Hwy, Tukwila
November 11 th 2001 – January 5 th 2002	Haller Lake United Methodist, 13055 1 st Ave NE
January 5 th 2002 – February 18 th 2002	Riverton Park United Methodist, 3118 S 140 th St, Tukwila
February 18 th 2002 – March 29 th 2002	North Seattle Church of the Nazarene, 13130 5 th Ave NE
March 29 th 2002 – May 11 th 2002	Trinity United Methodist Church, 6512 23 rd Ave NW, Ballard
May 11 th 2002 – June 30 th 2002	Lake City Christian Church, 1933 NE 125 th St
June 30 th 2002 – July 31 st 2002	St Marks Episcopal Cathedral, 1245 10 th Ave E, Capitol Hill
July 31 st 2002 – September 1 st 2002	Haller Lake United Methodist, 13055 1 st Ave NE
Sept 1 st 2002 – November 3 rd 2002	Church by the Side of the Road, S 148 th & Pacific Hwy, Tukwila
November 3 rd 2002 – January 3 rd 2003	Highline United Methodist Church, 13015 1 st Ave S, Burien
January 3 rd 2003 – January 20 th 2003	(Undetermined)
January 20 th 2003 – April 20 th 2003	El Centro de la Raza

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Community Meetings: In accordance with the Consent Decree signed with the City of Seattle on March 13th 2002, SHARE/WHEEL along with each upcoming host site holds a community meeting at or near the encampment site during which they explain the proposed encampment, state its proposed duration, and answer questions about the proposal. SHARE/WHEEL also engaged in this sort of community

notification for Tent City at every location where they were hosted prior to the Consent Decree. A copy of the informational flyer for the community meeting prior to Tent City3's move to Lake City Christian Church May 11th 2002 is attached as a sample of the information provided to communities.

Communications: Beginning in November 2001 Tent City3 residents began producing a regular newsletter entitled the "Tent City3 Tattler". This newsletter is also a fundraising effort in support of Tent City3. A copy of the first issue is attached as a sample.

Tent City3 Hosts: On October 18th 2001 a meeting was held at St Thérèse Catholic Church bringing together representatives of many of the past Tent City3 host organizations. Experiences with Tent City3, successful activities, recommendations, and future steps were all discussed at this meeting. A copy of the notes from the meeting is attached.

Neighborhood Relations: In order to protect their own reputation and to continue to be a positive addition to their host neighborhoods, Tent City3 members do regular litter cleanups, and work to discourage any illegal activity such as aggressive panhandling or public drinking in the neighborhood, beyond just the Tent City grounds. Tent City3 has traditionally had good relations with their neighbors. As an example, DCLU received over 300 letters of support for the Tent City3 six month Temporary Use Permit application in 2001 while Tent City3 was hosted at El Centro de la Raza on Beacon Hill. Twenty-six of those letters came from immediate neighbors.

CAPACITY & OCCUPANCY

Since March 13th 2002 when the Consent Decree was signed between the City of Seattle and SHARE/WHEEL, the maximum number of residents allowed at the Tent City3 encampment is 100. At some of the host locations fewer people can be accommodated. The daily average occupancy is generally around 75%, depending on a number of factors such as time of the month and proximity of the site to the city center.

About a third of the residents of Tent City3 are couples or families. One reason for this is that there are no shelters where couples without children can sleep together, and a limited number of shelters where families can stay together. There are about a dozen more single women. Many of the women at Tent City say they feel safer in the tents than in shelters. Other comments are that there is more privacy, and better ventilation in tents than shelters. At least half of the residents are working full-time, and many of the rest are working part time or in an educational program. The residents are diverse in age, race, creed, cultural background, and sexual preference.

Most people do not stay at the camp indefinitely, they move on to better options. New people in need move or are referred to Tent City3 to stay safe and warm until they too can find better options. The average length of stay at Tent City3 is about six weeks.

CODE OF CONDUCT

Tent City3 is a clean and quiet community that provides its own 24-hour security, and picks up litter throughout the host neighborhoods. The encampment has established a Code of Conduct under which it operates. A copy of the Tent City3 Code of Conduct is attached. At times these standard rules are adapted if a particular neighborhood or host site requires special rules.

A short summary of the standard rules is:

- Zero tolerance for drugs, alcohol, weapons, violence, or abusive behavior, physical or verbal.
- Everyone in camp participates in the governance and maintenance of the camp. Each resident must attend at least one organizational meeting a week and do one maintenance chore a day.

- Everyone is responsible for the operation and reputation of the whole camp. If the camp or anyone in the camp creates a negative impact on the neighborhood, the camp must correct the situation. If the camp cannot correct the situation, they will leave.

This is the same model SHARE/WHEEL has used at their indoor shelters for over ten years.

REPORTING AND SOLVING PROBLEMS WITH TENT CITY3

If members of the community have any problems with or complaints about Tent City3 as a whole or any resident, they are to report it to SHARE/WHEEL at (206) 448-7889, PO Box 2548 Seattle WA 98111. SHARE/WHEEL has made a commitment everywhere they operate a shelter, including Tent City3, that if a pattern of problems disrupts the neighborhood and cannot be resolved, they will move. For ten years they have been honorable in keeping that commitment.

SHARE/WHEEL has created a 3 step process for reporting and solving problems with Tent City3. A copy of this policy is attached.

CITY OF SEATTLE CONSENT DECREE AGREEMENT WITH TENT CITY3

On March 13th 2002 SHARE/WHEEL and the Seattle City Attorney's Office signed a settlement agreement entailing that the City no longer prosecute churches and social-service agencies who host Tent City3, and that Tent City3 agree to numerous conditions on how the encampment will be run. A copy of the Consent Decree & Press Release is attached.

Background: While Tent City3 was hosted at El Centro in spring 2001 they applied for a six-month Temporary Use Permit. After a 4-month review period the Department of Construction and Land Use (DCLU) denied the permit application. Four months later, the City Hearing Examiner ruled that although Tent City was not materially detrimental to persons or property, it was not "in the spirit of the Land Use Code". SHARE/WHEEL then appealed to King County Superior Court. Meanwhile \$14,000+ in fines were levied against El Centro de la Raza during Tent City3's 6-month stay there.

In March 2001 Tent City3 had moved to Trinity Lutheran Church in Ballard, and the Department of Construction and Land Use (DCLU) issued a Notice of Violation, demanding that the church evict the encampment within two weeks. After the Church publicly refused to do this, more than 300 citizens contacted the Mayor's Office to protest the City's action. The Mayor's Office then promised not to fine Trinity, and indicated they would not act to fine a church for hosting Tent City again.

On September 27th 2001, Judge Thomas Jefferson Majhan ruled that DCLU's permit denial for Tent City3 was "not supported by the evidence". After the ruling, the fines against El Centro de le Raza were dismissed.

Until a city has enough indoor shelter for everyone, judges appear reluctant to convict a homeless person for sleeping outside. City officials are torn between not wanting to grant official approval to a tent city and not wanting to make life any harder for homeless people. The agreement between the City and Tent City3 came in response to these concerns.

FUTURE PLANS

SHARE/WHEEL does not want to operate Tent City forever. Their position is that there will no longer be a need for Tent City when there is 100% housing and shelter for every child, woman, and man in Seattle. Providing shelter and housing for the people currently staying in Tent City3 is not enough. Until there is shelter and housing for everyone, there will be people willing to stay out in tents to keep the village together for those who need it for survival.

BUDGET

The yearly expenses for Tent City3 are about \$54,000. So far Tent City3 has basically managed to cover its costs from year to year. The major expenses for Tent City3 are sanicans, garbage disposal, bus tickets, moving costs, and onsite supplies, as shown below:

<u>Tent City3—Monthly Budget (2001)</u>		<u>Tent City3—Yearly Expenses (2002 Draft)</u>	
Port-a-Potties	\$1,400	Bus Tickets	\$22,000
Trash Removal	\$1,000	Sanicans	\$16,800
Truck Rental (moving)	\$500	Vehicle Rental (moving)	\$700
Supplies	\$600	Garbage	\$5,000
Bus Tickets	<u>\$1,000</u>	Dump fees	\$700
	\$4,500/month	Phone	\$1,200
		Supplies	\$3,000
Total Yearly Budget	\$54,000/year	Postage	\$1,500
		Miscellaneous	<u>\$3,000</u>
			\$53,900/year

<u>Tent City3—Yearly Revenue (2002 Draft)</u>	
FEMA	\$10,000
Individual Donations*	\$13,900
Fundraisers**	\$20,000
Grants	<u>\$10,000</u>
	\$53,900

* Numerous large contributions from unsolicited donors have helped to sustain Tent City3. In addition many individual donors and supporters also help to provide tents, blankets, food, clothing, and other supplies. The University Methodist Temple's Friday Feast brings a hot meal to Tent City every Friday night, and Food Not Bombs brings a hot meal out to Tent City every Sunday night. Many other groups and individuals provide meals and ready-to-go-food on an occasional basis.

** Tent City residents work to raise funds through a variety of events, and through the production of their newsletter the "Tent City Tattler". Host organization sometimes sponsor benefit events during Tent City3's stay. Some Tent City3 Fund Raisers during the past year have included:

December 16th 2001—Holiday Swags & Wreaths Sale, Haller Lake United Methodist Church
May 25-27th 2002—3rd Annual Memorial Day Weekend Car Wash, Lake City Christian Church
June 15-16th 2002—Father's Day Car Wash, Lake City Christian Church
July 20th 2002—Tent City3 Car Wash, St Marks Episcopal Cathedral

SOME TENT CITY3 EVENTS

April 1st 2001—1st Anniversary Celebration of Tent City3, Trinity United Methodist Church, Ballard.
February 9th 2002—Grand Opening of Petter Goldstine's photo exhibit on the Tent City3 Campaign at the Independent Media Center.
April 6th 2002—2nd Anniversary BBQ for Tent City3, Trinity United Methodist Church, Ballard.
July 14th 2002—Tent City3 Open House, St Marks Cathedral, Capitol Hill.
September 2002—Boeing Employee Community Fund awarded SHARE \$35,000 in emergency funding for the rest of 2002.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON TENT CITY

Contact the SHARE office:

Phone (206) 448-7889 Fax (206) 448-2389

PO Box 2548 Seattle WA 98111-2548

Or visit the website <http://www.insideshare.org/about.html>

ATTACHMENTS:

Sample Public Meeting notification (for Lake City Christian Church)

Newsletter "Tent City3 Tattler" (No. 1, 11/01)

Notes from Meeting of Tent City Churches (10/18/01)

Tent City3 Code of Conduct

Policy for reporting and solving problems with Tent City3

Consent Decree & Press Release

Selection of News Articles about Tent City