

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Why would the City or community spend time and money on this?**

In October 2015, the Eugene City Council formally recognized, via Council resolution, the housing and homelessness situation in Eugene as a crisis. Eugene and the surrounding community face a severe lack of housing for people with low or extremely low income. Over 1,000 people in Lane County sleep without nightly shelter. While the City works with partners on long-term solutions, like preventing homelessness, supporting human services and increasing access to housing and good-paying jobs, programs like the rest stops, car camping, and providing other forms of basic shelter are needed to increase health and safety for those who are homeless as well as for those who are housed. These programs are not only successful at providing unhoused people with stability and better opportunities for taking steps out of homelessness, but they also reduce the impacts of unsanctioned camping on our environment and neighborhoods.

### **What is the difference between a rest stop, car camping, and other programs like Dusk to Dawn and tiny home villages?**

- **Car camping**, or sleeping overnight in vehicles in designated areas, has been permitted for nearly two decades and allows up to six vehicles to be used for sleeping at a site owned or leased by a religious institution, business or public entity. The definition of vehicles has been expanded over the years to include car, tent, camper, trailer, and Conestoga hut. Sanitary facilities and garbage disposal services must be provided. Although not required, most sites in Eugene are managed by St. Vincent de Paul, who provides screening and placement of participants in the program as well as portable restrooms and trash service at no cost to the property owner. St. Vincent's currently manages over 70 spots at 43 addresses in Eugene and Springfield.
- The **Rest Stop** Program was established in 2013 to provide additional temporary emergency shelter options for the unhoused. It allows up to 20 people to camp in tents or Conestoga huts at a designated site that must be approved by the Eugene City Council. The City enters into an agreement with an operator to oversee the site. The operator is then responsible for providing sanitary facilities, garbage disposal services, placement and screening of residents, onsite management of each site, a liaison to work with nearby neighbors to address any concerns, and support and assistance to residents to help them transition to permanent housing. Sites are fenced, and while residents typically leave the site during the day, they are able to leave their belongings at the site.
- The **Dusk to Dawn** Program was established in 2015 and provides overnight emergency shelter to unhoused members of the community. Dusk to Dawn sites are for overnight sleeping only, so residents come with their belongings in the evening and leave with their belongings the following morning. Dusk to Dawn sites must be approved by City Council.
- **Tiny home villages** can take different forms and follow different processes to establish. Opportunity Village Eugene (OVE) consists of basic small bungalows and Conestoga huts for sleeping, and shared community infrastructure such as showers, restrooms, kitchen, laundry area, and heated communal yurt for meeting space and computer access. OVE was permitted on industrial land under a Conditional Use Permit filed and approved through the City's Planning Department. The non-profit organization who operates OVE is also establishing a more permanent tiny home village in which each unit will be considered a permanent dwelling with its own kitchenette and bathroom. For this project, the organization purchased the property, and the project is permitted as multi-family housing.
- **All sites** have rules and policies that govern behavior and conduct to help ensure that sites are clean and orderly and that people participating in the program are good neighbors.

### **What does the screening or vetting process of applicants to these programs involve?**

- Potential residents must submit an application to be considered. Applicants are expected to check in periodically in order to stay on the wait list.
- Once an application is reviewed, operators invite the applicant in for an intake and interview process, during which the operator inquires about the applicant's background including criminal and behavioral history; employment and housing status; his or her individual needs and challenges in finding housing; and his or her strengths and abilities to contribute, follow rules, and abide by the structure of the program. The interview and intake process is in-depth and meant to gauge whether the applicant will be a successful member of a rest stop or car camping site, can work well with others, and be a good neighbor.
- Some operators also utilize Service Point, the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), in order to learn which social services the applicant is accessing and how often. This provides operators with a better picture of the applicant and what their activities and needs may be.
- Some operators or sites also require that residents recovering from or struggling with addiction be actively enrolled in treatment in order to stay. Operators may also conduct a criminal background check or a urine analysis for an applicant or resident at any time. Refusal to comply can result in a 24-hour eviction from the site.
- Once the vetting process is complete and an applicant is accepted, he or she is required to engage in an orientation process to learn more about the program and its structure, meet fellow residents, and acknowledge that they understand all rules and protocols.
- Operators are focused on potential behavioral problems and how likely it appears that the applicant will be able to adjust to the requirements of a rest stop or car camping site. This entails a devoted amount of time spent on evaluating, assessing and monitoring a person and their individual challenges and needs both before approving them as a resident and within the first month probationary period.

### **What are Conestoga huts?**

Conestoga huts are inexpensive and simple-to-build shelters for temporary emergency shelter. The hut uses minimal materials to provide durable shelters that are well suited to the Pacific Northwest climate, emphasizing keeping people dry and secure. The founders of Community Supported Shelters (CSS), a non-profit organization that operates rest stops in Eugene and also builds the Conestoga huts, developed the original design. Erik de Buhr of CSS recently published a book titled "How to Build a Conestoga Hut." The non-profit continues to build the huts for unhoused people to use for shelter across the community. You can find more information and view photos of the huts at <http://communitysupportedshelters.org/conestoga-huts>. Conestoga huts can be used at both rest stops and car camping sites.

### **Would a rest stop offer shelter to the people who are living without housing in the neighborhood already?**

Anyone experiencing homelessness can apply to stay at a Rest Stop and will be considered if willing and able to follow the rules of the rest stop. Rest stop operators or community members may be able to help encourage someone who sleeps in the nearby neighborhood to apply and help them see the benefits of entering into the program.

**Who monitors and makes sure campers follow rest stop rules?**

The City enters into an agreement with a non-profit organization or entity to supervise an individual rest stop site. This non-profit is responsible for providing or arranging for the supervision of the site at all times. Each site has one or more site managers who make sure all rules are followed. Both the City and non-profit work with neighbors to address any issues that may arise.

**When campers aren't there, will they be roaming around my neighborhood?**

Residents are expected to use their time at rest stops to stabilize and connect with social service providers who can help them get into housing. While residents are expected to be off the site during the day in order to carry out this work, they are expected to leave the area around the rest stop unless accessing a service nearby and to take a path into and out of the rest stop that is least invasive to the neighborhood. Rest stop operators, managers, and residents work hard to minimize impacts to the neighborhood and be good neighbors.

**Won't a rest stop make more people come into my neighborhood?**

Rest stops can often have the opposite effect. While the residents of the rest stop will be there, the success of the site depends upon the peace, health and safety of the area and the rest stops being good neighbors, so site managers and residents work hard to maintain and promote these qualities in the site and surrounding area. In addition, rest stop rules limit the number of visitors to the site and prohibit overnight visitors.

**Won't crime go up in my neighborhood?**

Police reports indicate that neighborhoods where rest stops have been located have experienced no noticeable increase in crime in those neighborhoods. A study by a University of Oregon Community Planning Workshop found that the majority of nearby residents and businesses were generally supportive of the program, experienced little to no negative impacts from it and continued to feel that their neighborhoods were safe.

**Won't my property value go down?**

We cannot speculate on whether a property's value will increase or decrease in the future or the reasons that that may happen, and we have no data or reports of property values increasing or decreasing due to the siting of a rest stop nearby.

**What are the costs of operating a rest stop?**

- The costs for operating a rest stop vary, but an estimate that includes two portable toilets, trash service, water, fuel, and program oversight and counseling is about \$900/month, or \$10,800/year for one rest stop. This does not include office supplies or shop space, transportation expenses, additional program coordination costs, or insurance costs. In addition, site set up can cost over \$8,000.
- The Eugene City Council approved \$25,000 to the Rest Stop Program in the Fiscal Year 2017 Supplemental Budget 1 process. This is the first time the City has designated funding to the program.
- The non-profit organizations who run the rest stops are responsible for the costs of their operations.

### **How long do people stay?**

- Resident stays vary depending on where each resident is on their journey to permanent housing. Some stay as little as one month, while others stay several months to over a year.
- Community Supported Shelters, which operates four rest stops, implements a 10-month program, where residents have one month of probation during which they create an individualized plan for how they will make progress over the following months. Then they have six months to implement their plan, with the possibility of a three-month extension.
- Due to the training and knowledge necessary for managing a site, site managers can stay a year or longer.
- In 2015, 80% of rest stop residents stayed for six months or less.

### **Where do people move to after leaving?**

Some residents move into permanent housing, such as a rental house or apartment, public housing, Section 8 housing, permanent supportive housing, or permanent situations with family or friends. Some residents move into a form of temporary housing, such as transitional housing for the homeless, an inpatient drug or alcohol treatment facility, or a temporary situation with family or friends. And some who leave rest stops remain homeless.

- Of those who departed Rest Stops in 2015, 44 transitioned into permanent housing (including 27 to a rental house or apartment), 43 transitioned to temporary housing, and 44 remained homeless.

### **Why would I want a rest stop in my neighborhood?**

- Rest stops have proven effective at helping people who are experiencing homelessness find stability, support, community, independence, services, and housing.
- Rest stops have proven to be good neighbors.
- Rest stop residents also perform community service projects in parks and neighborhoods.
- The current housing, homelessness, and poverty issues we face are community issues, and they require the entire community to contribute to the solution. Having a rest stop nearby gives each neighborhood a chance to interact with, learn from, and possibly offer assistance to help better the lives of their fellow community members.

### **What are some ways that I can help?**

- You can volunteer your time or donate money to one of the non-profits who operate rest stops or to any of the social service providers in the area. (There is a Social Services List on the Links page of this handbook.)
- You can talk to your neighbors, friends, family, schools, businesses, and churches about the issue to raise awareness or find out if there are ways they could help through land for sites, in-kind donations, or financial contributions.
- You can contact your public officials to provide input on your concerns, ideas and suggestions. Visit [www.eugene-or.gov](http://www.eugene-or.gov) to find your City Councilor.

### **Who do I talk to if I have concerns or questions?**

You may contact Regan Watjus, Policy Analyst in the City Manager's Office, at (541) 682-8442 or [Regan.S.Watjus@ci.eugene.or.us](mailto:Regan.S.Watjus@ci.eugene.or.us) if you have questions or concerns.