

Hosting Tent City 3 at UUC: Frequently Asked Questions

1. **What is Tent City 3 (TC3)?**

Tent City 3 (TC3) is a temporary tent shelter community operated by SHARE (Seattle Housing and Resource Effort) and WHEEL (Women's Housing, Equality and Enhancement League) that is sanctioned and partially funded by the City of Seattle. TC3 fills a need for temporary safe shelter for individuals, couples and families who cannot find affordable housing. The encampment moves every three months between different religious and educational institutions.

2. **How does TC3 differ from the other tent encampments I see on city streets and in public parks that are accompanied by crime, violence, drug use, and garbage?**

Contrary to what many associate with unsanctioned encampments, TC3 is a democratically organized and operated community with a strict code of conduct that prohibits alcohol, drugs, weapons, fighting, abuse of any kind, littering, panhandling or disturbing neighbors. Rule violators are removed from camp. Security workers are on duty 24 hours a day. Litter patrols are done on a daily basis. Trash removal and port-a-potties are provided by the city. Potential residents must apply for admittance, have a valid picture ID, and pass a background check for sex offender status or outstanding warrants. All residents must fulfill responsibilities that support the smooth running of the camp.

3. **Who are the TC3 residents?**

TC3 residents are a community of homeless individuals and families who have lost or are unable to find affordable housing and need a temporary place to live in Seattle where they and their belongings are safe while they work or access services that can help them improve their lives. Whereas most shelters separate men from women and children, TC3 allows couples and families to stay together. Many residents have jobs. Bus tickets are provided to each participant daily so residents can get to work or appointments. The number of campers in TC3 typically ranges from about 30 to 80.

4. **Why is Tent City 3 needed? Doesn't this just enable homelessness, or only provide a band aid when we need to get at the root causes?**

Over 13,000 people are sleeping unsheltered in King County, and there are not enough affordable units of housing for even a fraction of them. One can imagine how dangerous and scary it is to live outside and alone. Until there is enough housing for all those in need, tent encampments will be a fact of life in our city. TC3's system of safety, sobriety and nonviolence is better for both the campers and the nearby neighborhoods. Besides safety, it offers a modicum of privacy, 24-hour access, basic storage and the opportunity to get one's life back together and reenter the mainstream. We need to work to eliminate homelessness, but meanwhile there are people needing and asking for our help. A tragic number of

homeless people (191 in King County so far this year) die every year. By offering a safe place to live, Tent City 3 is saving lives.

5. Why is UUC considering hosting TC3? And why now?

As UUs we are called to uphold the inherent worth and dignity of every person. As part of our faith, UUC has a strong history of taking action on a number of urgent social justice issues, including offering housing to marginalized communities (persons with AIDS, refugees, persons with mental illness). Upon learning that TC3 needed a location for the three months starting in March 2023, lay leaders from UUC's Social Justice Steering Committee, along with teams engaged with Lake City Partners Ending Homelessness and Teen Feed, began to explore the possibility of UUC hosting during that period.

6. How will this impact parking at UUC? Will there be other impacts on our church community?

Based upon the number of TC3 residents, the church has planned to offer up to 29 spaces at the south end of the parking lot. Most church members who responded to our [parking survey](#) said they are happy to find alternative parking and/or commuting options so that those who need to park in the lot can. Area businesses have already offered up to 20 additional spaces for our use on Sundays. The camp will connect to UUC's water and electricity; other hosts have indicated the cost is negligible. The campers do not enter the church building unless invited; they have busy lives, have everything they need in the camp, and like to keep a low profile. There will be opportunities for church members to provide meals or supplies as needed. UUC's TC3 team will oversee communications with campers and neighbors, so that staff are not impacted.

7. Has there been outreach and communication with neighbors? Information about hosting TC3 was sent to 440 neighbors, along with outreach to Congregation Beth Shalom, the Northeast Branch of Seattle Public Library and some of the local businesses. UUC [hosted a neighborhood meeting on October 25th](#) attended by over 40 neighbors. It seemed that the initial concerns expressed by most neighbors were assuaged after learning more about TC3's structure, strict rules and safety record, and some attended to express support. Other neighbors shared their support for TC3 in advance of the meeting. Neighbors have been invited to follow-up at a special email address, and some have expressed concerns about possible impacts on the neighborhood, including noise and safety. The TC3 team is following up on questions and concerns.

8. What have been the experiences of other congregations that have hosted TC3?

UUC's exploration team has contacted 10 past host congregations. All have echoed that Tent City 3 is a safe, well-organized community, and all have hosted multiple times. [Experiences by other congregations hosting](#) Tent City 3 have been overwhelmingly positive.