



Frequently Asked Questions

When will the tent city be closed?

The City has been working closely with BC Housing to coordinate moving people from tent city in to temporary modular housing at the end of November. Moving will occur over a number of days, after which time the site will be cleaned up and secured.

Where are the occupants going?

Many tent city occupants will move to one of the sites where BC Housing is installing temporary modular housing. BC Housing purchased land at 250 Terminal Avenue for temporary units, and will build permanent supportive housing there. In addition, the City provided an unused portion of the public works yard at 2020 Labieux Road, on a temporary basis, for modular housing.

Is temporary modular housing the same as emergency shelters?

Emergency shelters typically allow people to stay overnight and for a limited number of nights, and are managed by trained staff or volunteers. Some shelters open only for extreme weather events or during winter months.

Temporary modular housing does not require that people move out during the day or after a specific period of time, and is managed by trained staff on a 24/7 basis. With support, many people are able to overcome the reasons they are homeless and move on to regular rental housing.

How will neighbours of the modular units be protected from the chaos and disorder of tent city residents?

Residents of the new temporary modular housing will be required to live by house rules. If they don't live by those rules, staff will intervene and if necessary remove residents from the site. Trained staff will be on site around the clock, every day and can control who comes and goes.

Will the residents of temporary modular housing be allowed to use drugs there?

Many homeless people struggle with addictions and use drugs whether they are living in a shelter, a tent city or in supportive housing. Supportive housing permits drug use so that substance users don't hide what they are doing and put themselves and others at risk of overdose or infection.

Used needles are easier to collect when people use drugs in a safe, controlled setting such as supportive housing rather than outdoors or in public places.

What has the City done to make the tent city safer?

Through a recent Supreme Court decision the City gained the ability to enforce fire safety measures on the site, remove vehicles, and apply a number of controls on who can live there including banning minors. In addition, BC Housing is paying for 24/7 security services at the site.

Is anyone helping the occupants on site?

Social service agencies have outreach workers and provide services nearby. A warming tent near the newly-installed gate near Seaspan's property allows service workers to meet with tent city occupants who need medical or social supports. The tent will remain in place until the occupants move into temporary housing and the camp is closed.

What can I do to help homeless people in Nanaimo?

Social service agencies in Nanaimo welcome your donations and have the experience and awareness to ensure your contributions are distributed fairly and effectively. There are many service agencies who support homelessness, a few include;

- Salvation Army (meal program, men's shelter),
- Aids Vancouver Island (health),
- Nanaimo Women's Centre (women),
- Island Crisis Care Society (women's shelter),
- Tillicum Lelum Friendship Centre (Aboriginal),
- United Way of Central Island (distribute funds equitably among services)
- Find more agencies on the [City website](#)

Recognizing the humanity of people experiencing homelessness is important and helps combat the stigma of poverty, mental illness and addiction. You can demonstrate your awareness and compassion in many ways, including communicating respectfully with people who are less sympathetic, countering misinformation within your social, business and professional networks, and staying informed.

What is the City doing about the tent city?

In addition to seeking court permission to evict the campers and enforce Fire Safety Orders, the City is working closely with BC Housing as they establish immediate and long-term housing solutions.

The City is collaborating with provincial agencies whose mandates include social services, public health, housing and public safety to minimize the impact of the tent city on vulnerable people and local residents and businesses.

Nanaimo Fire Rescue, Bylaw Enforcement and RCMP make regular and frequent visits to try to reduce threats to public safety and health in and around the camp.

Why does the City not enforce its bylaws?

Municipal governments facing tent cities have learned that writing bylaw infraction tickets to homeless people is not an effective way to stop encampments. Bylaw enforcement options include issuing a fine or seeking an order to the offender to cease their illegal behaviour. Typically homeless people do not have the means to pay fines and when they have no clear alternative housing options, courts are reluctant to impose penalties or force them to move.

How much is the City spending on the camp and why?

The City is currently playing for water, toilets, and fire safety services, and has incurred legal costs related to court proceedings for enforcement of the Fire Safety Order and to seek an injunction that would evict the campers. The full costs will be determined after negotiations with BC Housing. The cost of providing interim and long-term housing will be borne by BC Housing.

Will my taxes go up because of tent city?

The City has been able to absorb the costs of tent city through budget reallocations.

How long will this tent city be downtown?

The tent city will be closed as soon as BC Housing is able to open 170 units of temporary modular housing, expected to be in place near the end of November.

What do I do if I see something illegal happening in or near the encampment?

Public safety is the top priority. If you see something suspicious or to report a crime please call Nanaimo RCMP non-emergency line at 250-754-02345. To report an emergency or crime in progress please call 9-1-1.

What do I do if I find a needle or 'sharp'?

Please call Public Works at 250-758-5222 if you find a needle. They will dispose of ones on public property and will provide you with information on how to properly dispose of one if found on private property.

How will the City prevent future tent cities from popping up once this one is shut down?

Nanaimo is experiencing low vacancy rates and rising costs for rental homes as a result of factors within and outside of its control. At its September 17 meeting, Council adopted the Affordable Housing Strategy - focused on increasing the supply of rental housing - and the Action Plan to End Homelessness, which supports the affordable housing strategy.