

BEAVERTON, OR
Mayor Denny Doyle

Safe Parking Pilot Program

Beaverton, like many cities across the region, is facing rising homelessness – a problem recognized as having significant impacts on the individuals who experience it and on the larger community as well – along with insufficient access to affordable housing. While efforts are being made to address this issue, many people are only a missed paycheck or medical emergency away from losing their housing and becoming homeless. There are still hundreds of people experiencing homelessness on any given night in the county, and the Beaverton School District has the highest number of homeless students in Oregon.

Over the past few years, the City of Beaverton has invested in developing a variety of responses to rising homelessness. This includes establishing a severe weather shelter (there are currently no year-round shelters in Beaverton), providing social services funding, and supporting Family Promise of Beaverton, which offers transitional housing to families experiencing homelessness.

Beaverton officials see many positive outcomes as a result of these efforts, citing strong volunteer engagement, hundreds of individuals served, and increased community awareness. In addition, the city has established a permanent Community Services Program to continue to identify and explore additional programs and services for those who need them most.

In 2018, Community Services Program staff began developing a project plan for a Safe Parking Pilot Program. This was in response to community feedback, notably from area students, and direction from Mayor Denny Doyle and Beaverton City Council during public hearings on an ordinance banning overnight car camping in the public right-of-way. The ordinance, which passed in June 2018, was in response to complaints from neighbors and businesses in areas of the city experiencing a high concentration of vehicle campers.

In the following months, staff and community volunteers made site visits to learn about the City of Eugene's program and also researched other similar models in the region. Municipal code changes to remove barriers to businesses participation in the pilot program were identified and passed in fall 2018. A variety of non-profits, faith-based organizations, and community members were invited to identify potential host sites and ways to collaborate to make this program successful.

In April 2019, the Safe Parking Pilot Program launched to provide safe, legal car camping and support for families and individuals experiencing homelessness to transition into housing. Providing designated places for people to park while living in their vehicles helps families and individuals stabilize their lives and improve their chances of gaining access to services and employment. The program consists of host sites distributed throughout the city with three assigned parking spaces and onsite portable restrooms, storage, and garbage removal, as well as case management services. The city provides funding for a Safe Parking Manager and to cover operational costs.

Pilot Program guests are case-managed by Just Compassion of East Washington County, a non-profit organization that also operates Beaverton's Severe Weather Shelter. Just Compassion provides knowledge about case management, community resources, housing navigation, employment counseling, and mental health services that guests can access as part of the program. It also operates a day center that allows for people experiencing

homelessness and Safe Parking guests to visit and access services that address their basic needs, such as meals, showers, laundry and clothing.

The Beaverton Police Department (BPD) has been a critical partner in the pilot program, providing expertise and support in program design to ensure maximum safety for guests and program sites. They have provided compassionate outreach and referrals when they encounter individuals who may be a good fit for the program. Ongoing communication and coordination between BPD and Community Services staff during program operation has allowed staff to identify issues and work with all parties to proactively address concerns of guests as well as neighbors of the program sites.

Since the launch of the Safe Parking Pilot Program, two host sites have been in operation – one on city property to demonstrate city commitment – and both are at full capacity. To date, the program has served dozens of individuals and families, many of which have successfully transitioned into housing.

Public outreach to expand the number of host sites continues, as has community and neighborhood outreach to inform residents and community members about the project. Community response to the program remains mostly positive and a strong base of advocates dedicated to ongoing support for safe parking has been established. In addition, the City of Beaverton has been approached by several other jurisdictions and by media seeking to learn about its innovative approach to this complex issue. Officials report that the attention the program has received has created a platform for new partnerships and collaborations with the city. More details on the program are at www.BeavertonOregon.gov/SafeParking.

Additional information is available from Megan Cohen, Community Services Coordinator, at mcohen@BeavertonOregon.gov or 503-526-2584.