

12. HOMELESSNESS AND PUBLIC SAFETY ISSUES RELATED TO HOMELESS ENCAMPMENTS

Address the issues surrounding the regional nature of homelessness, and the relationship of encampments to public safety in the community.

Summary of Comments

None. This issue was raised by City Council at the August 12, 2014, meeting.

Council Direction of August 12, 2014

The Council requested a summary of city policies and actions related to homeless encampments, and the regional nature of the issue of homelessness.

Staff Analysis

A cooperative approach among several city departments addresses homeless encampments when they are identified. This includes police, code enforcement, parks and other staff programs.

Text of Public Hearing Draft

The Public Services Chapter of the Draft Comprehensive Plan includes the following text under the heading “Code Enforcement Promotes Neighborhood Livability”, which is then followed by related goals and policies:

Code Enforcement is a City program that allows citizens and others to report violations of city code relating to health, safety, and welfare on private property. The program will investigate, for example, complaints about noise, trash, graffiti, signs, abandoned vehicles, overgrown noxious weed, dangerous buildings, and encampments. As our communities grow, age, and become more dense, the program is becoming increasingly important to maintaining our high quality of life. The City expects that Code Enforcement will be collaborating even further in the future with Olympia’s Police, Fire, Public Works, Building, and Legal Departments as well as neighborhood associations, not-for-profit organizations, businesses and regional government agencies, such as Thurston County Animal Control.

The Public Services Chapter also contains another section, “Social Services Fulfill a Vital Need”, that include goals and policies related to social services, affordable housing, and homelessness. One of these policies specifically calls for a regional approach:

PS7.2 Take a regional approach with other jurisdictions so that support for a broad range of social services and resources, including shelter and housing, can be maximized.

Staff Proposed Clarification

Make the following change to the text under “Code Enforcement Promotes Neighborhood Livability” section of Public Services Chapter:

Code Enforcement is a City program that allows citizens and others to report violations of city code relating to health, safety, and welfare on private property. The program will investigate, for example, complaints about noise, trash, graffiti, signs, abandoned vehicles, overgrown noxious weed, dangerous buildings, and encampments. As our communities grow, age, and become more dense, the program is becoming increasingly important to maintaining public safety and our high quality of life...

Alternative

The Council could add an additional policy in the public services chapter to call for a continued inter-departmental approach, in cooperation with other organizations, to identifying and addressing homeless encampments.