

CITY OF SEATTLE

ORDINANCE \_\_\_\_\_

COUNCIL BILL \_\_\_\_\_

..title

AN ORDINANCE relating to City responses to people who are homeless living on public property; setting standards and procedures for remedying unsafe conditions and protecting the rights and property of homeless individuals.

..body

WHEREAS, neighborhoods and communities in the City of Seattle, both sheltered and unsheltered, are increasingly experiencing negative impacts from the crisis of homelessness; and

WHEREAS, the condition and/or location of outdoor living spaces or vehicles used as residences can raise public health and/or safety concerns to which the City must respond; and

WHEREAS, removing outdoor living spaces or impounding vehicles being used as residences when there is not sufficient adequate and accessible alternative housing exacerbates the hazards facing unsheltered individuals and fails to address neighborhood concerns;

WHEREAS, the long-term solution for homelessness is a “housing first” approach that provides sufficient adequate and accessible permanent housing for people who are homeless;

WHEREAS, finding permanent and sustainable housing for homeless individuals is a priority for the City, as is avoiding additional harm to those who are living unsheltered;

WHEREAS, homelessness is a public health crisis causing increased disease and premature death for people who are homeless;

**CB 118794 – Attachment A to Staff Memo Dated 9/27**

1 WHEREAS, the January 29, 2016, One Night Count found 2,942 individuals sleeping  
2 unsheltered in Seattle, an increase of 4.6 percent from the previous year and part of a 67  
3 percent increase in unsheltered homelessness in Seattle since 2011;

4  
5 WHEREAS, the City’s lack of sufficient adequate and accessible housing to accommodate the  
6 needs of all people experiencing homelessness has led to unauthorized outdoor living  
7 spaces in the City;

8 WHEREAS, in 2013, the City's Human Services Department found disproportionality of  
9 homelessness among people of color and other groups such as veterans and LGBTQ  
10 individuals;

11 WHEREAS, the City is committed to protecting the civil rights as well as the public health and  
12 safety of all people, including those experiencing homelessness;

13 WHEREAS, no person should suffer or be subject to unfair discrimination or arbitrary treatment  
14 based on housing status;

15 WHEREAS, in response to the increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness, the  
16 Mayor declared a Civil Emergency on Homelessness in November 2015 that called for  
17 federal and state assistance, as well as innovative and proactive strategies to assist those  
18 in need;

19 WHEREAS, shelter will continue to remain a critical and life-saving service, particularly during  
20 times of individual crisis or severe weather; and

21 WHEREAS, it is the intent of this body to provide clear procedures to ensure that the City can  
22 respond appropriately and adequately to needs of individuals as well as the health and

1 safety of all neighborhoods, and to emergency situations, without subjecting unsheltered  
2 individuals to greater hardships; NOW, THEREFORE,

3 **BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY OF SEATTLE AS FOLLOWS:**

4 Section 1. Definitions. The following definitions apply through this  
5 ordinance:

6 “Adequate and accessible housing” means, at a minimum, living space:

7 (1) Where a person has the right to reside and keep belongings on an ongoing,  
8 long-term basis at any time of day or night;

9 (2) That meets living standards commonly acceptable to society, and includes  
10 safety from other individuals, the elements, and exposure to disease or filth, room to move  
11 about, storage space for belongings, the ability to maintain current household composition,  
12 accommodation for physical or mental limitations, and access to hygiene facilities; and

13 (3) That is actually accessible to the individual who is or will be living in that  
14 space, including that the individual must not be barred as a result of criminal background,  
15 treatment status, ability to show identification, household composition, physical or mental  
16 limitations, or otherwise.

17 “City” means The City of Seattle and any of its contractors, agents, employees, or  
18 partners.

19 “Hazardous condition” means a condition that creates an imminent and likely public  
20 health or safety harm. The public health or safety harm must be created by the presence of  
21 a particular condition and not a generalized harm common to all who are unsheltered.

22 “Household” means a group of individuals who wish to live together because they are  
23 relatives, are in a family relationship, or for other reasons. A household includes pets.

1 ~~“Impoundment” means any action by the City to remove or tow a vehicle used as a~~  
2 ~~residence without the express approval of the vehicle’s owner.~~

3 “Outdoor living space” means any outdoor public space that homeless individual(s)  
4 use to live or sleep in, as evidenced by the presence of a sleeping bag, shelter, tarp, tent, bed,  
5 cardboard, metal sheeting, furniture, or other objects demonstrating an intent to live in the  
6 location for one or more days, whether or not continuously.

7 “Personal property” means any item which an individual owns and which might have  
8 value or use to that individual, regardless of whether the item is left unattended for temporary  
9 periods of time or whether it has monetary value. ~~Personal property includes vehicles.~~ This  
10 does not include weapons other than knives, contraband, items which pose an obvious health or  
11 safety risk, or are clearly contaminated in way which a reasonable person would conclude the  
12 items should not be stored with other property.

13 “Public space” means any area which is owned, leased, maintained, controlled, or  
14 managed by ~~a government or the City, and does not include Public Development Authorities,~~  
15 ~~privately owned land, public entity schools and colleges, the University of Washington, or the~~  
16 ~~Port of Seattle.~~

17 “Removal” means action to remove people, camps, structures, or personal property  
18 located at outdoor living spaces.

19 ~~“Specific public use” means a lawful designated and recognized function, including but~~  
20 ~~not limited to park use, schools, and recreational areas. The City shall establish by Director’s~~  
21 ~~rule the criteria for and a process by which the Department of Neighborhoods may define a~~  
22 ~~“specific public use” for a particular location, for purposes of designating an “unsuitable~~  
23 ~~location”.~~

1 “Specific public use” means lawful, appropriate use that benefits, assists, or is enjoyed by  
2 members of the public more than incidentally and occasionally.

3 “Unsafe location” means a ~~location~~public space that poses imminent danger of harm to  
4 individuals residing in that location or to the general public. The danger of harm must be  
5 created by the ~~presence~~existence of the specific outdoor living space ~~or vehicle used as a~~  
6 ~~residence~~at thethat particular location and not generalized danger of harm common to all who  
7 are unsheltered.

8 “Unsuitable location” means a ~~location~~public space that has a specific public use that is  
9 substantially impeded as a result of an outdoor living space ~~or vehicle used as a residence in~~  
10 ~~that location, and where the public lacks alternative means to accomplish the specific public~~  
11 ~~use. The City shall establish by rulemaking criteria for and a process by which the~~  
12 ~~Department of Neighborhoods may designate specific sites as unsuitable based on a showing~~  
13 ~~of need. Designations of unsuitability must leave ample nearby, public spaces that are not~~  
14 ~~unsafe or unsuitable~~in that location. Improved areas of City parks, including restored natural  
15 areas or natural areas actively undergoing restoration, and public sidewalks in front of houses  
16 and dwelling units are per se unsuitable. Sidewalks in commercial areas are prohibited to  
17 sitting and lying during certain hours under SMC 15.48.040. Examples of public space which  
18 may not be unsuitable for purposes of removal, depending on the circumstances, may include  
19 portions of greenbelts, portions of unimproved City lands, safe spaces under certain  
20 overpasses, bridges and structures, portions of surplus City property not currently subject to  
21 active use and those locations formally identified by the City of Seattle for use as temporary  
22 encampments.

23 Section 2. Community response line

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1 A. For the benefit of all City residents, the City has an interest in preventing the  
2 build-up of garbage, human waste, and other refuse at outdoor living spaces and other  
3 public spaces. The ~~City Customer Service Bureau~~[Reserved] shall serve as the coordinating  
4 entity for requests for clean-up and/or basic services.

5 B. The City shall investigate requests for a clean-up or a health and safety  
6 inspection including a site visit if adequate information is provided that there may be a  
7 legitimate concern about health and/or safety.

8 C. The City shall provide outreach, basic garbage, sanitation, and harm reduction  
9 services upon request at outdoor living spaces containing more than five individuals.

10 Section 3. Removal ~~and impoundment~~. The City may respond appropriately to  
11 emergency situations such as fires, crimes, or medical crises as it normally would outside  
12 outdoor living spaces. However, except as specified in Section 4 of this ordinance, the City  
13 may undertake a removal ~~or impoundment~~ action only when the City has satisfied the  
14 following conditions:

15 A. Adequate and accessible housing is available at the time of removal or  
16 ~~impoundment, or~~ at the time of voluntary departure, to any individuals whose persons;  
17 ~~and/or~~ personal possessions, ~~and/or vehicles~~ are being removed ~~or impounded~~.

18 B. The affected individuals have been engaged with sufficient individualized  
19 outreach over a period of not less than 30 days, to allow anyone interested to move  
20 voluntarily to adequate and accessible housing. Sufficient outreach involves, at a minimum:  
21 (1) making an individual assessment of each affected individual, which includes, but is not  
22 limited to, considerations of household composition; disability; mental illness or other  
23 mental or emotional capacity limitations; substance use or treatment status; geographic

1 needs, such as proximately to personal support, healthcare, employment and other  
2 geographic considerations; and ongoing support needs; (2) identifying and offering adequate  
3 and accessible housing based on this individual assessment; and (3) if an offer is accepted,  
4 providing assistance with both the administrative and logistical aspects of moving into the  
5 identified adequate and accessible housing. Outreach shall identify wherever possible where  
6 the individual is already working with service providers and coordinate with those efforts,  
7 and shall integrate with other City and King County data sharing projects to prevent  
8 avoidable duplication of data and effort.

9 C. The City has provided written notice meeting the following requirements:  
10

11 1. Notice must include the following information:

12 a. The specific date and time the anticipated removal ~~or impound~~ will  
13 take place, which must not be fewer than 30 days from the notice date;

14 b. Explanation of the actions that will be taken during the removal ~~or~~  
15 ~~impoundment~~ and how loss of personal property can be avoided;

16 c. Information about where personal property will be safeguarded if  
17 seized during the removal ~~or impoundment~~ and how it can be retrieved after removal ~~or~~  
18 ~~impoundment~~;

19 d. Contact information for the outreach organizations that will work  
20 with that site as specified in subsection 3.B of this ordinance; and

21 e. A statement that removal ~~or impoundment~~ will not occur in the  
22 absence of adequate and accessible housing for all affected individuals, and information  
23 about how the housing options can be accessed.

24 2. Notice must be provided in languages likely to be spoken by impacted

1 individuals, and through methods capable of being understood by persons with physical and  
2 mental disabilities.

3 3. Notice must be posted in a conspicuous location at the relevant outdoor  
4 living space ~~or on the relevant vehicle~~, as well as affixed to all tents and structures used for  
5 shelter at that location.

6 D. During a removal ~~or impoundment~~, the City will safeguard all personal  
7 property free of charge according to the following requirements:

8 1. For individuals present at the time of the removal ~~or impoundment~~ who  
9 have accepted the offer of an adequate and accessible housing but do not have the ability to  
10 transport their personal property, the City shall transport all personal property to the location  
11 of the accepted housing the day of the removal ~~or impoundment~~.

12 2. For individuals absent at the time of the removal ~~or impoundment~~, the  
13 City must document that those individuals had actual notice of the removal ~~or~~  
14 ~~impoundment~~.

15 3. For individuals absent at the time of removal ~~or impoundment~~, or  
16 present but who did not accept the offer of adequate and accessible housing and do not  
17 have the ability to transport their personal property, the City will safeguard all personal  
18 property as follows:

19 a. Personal property must be photographed and catalogued by location  
20 and with identifying details of the personal property prior to being put into storage. -Such  
21 information must be searchable by computer and by calling a City agent.

22 b. The location of the storage facility must be accessible by public  
23 transportation and accessible to those with disabilities.



1 c. Its operating hours must extend beyond normal business hours to  
2 accommodate those who work or have other obligations during midweek during normal  
3 business hours.

4 d. Photo identification shall not be required as a condition of retrieval.  
5

6 e. The City must post notice for 90 days at the location of the removal  
7 ~~or impoundment~~ with the location of the seized personal property and instructions for  
8 reclaiming such personal property.

9 f. Within 24 hours of the removal, a City agent or employee must  
10 return to the site and seek to inform individuals of how to retrieve their items.

11 g. After 90 days, the City may dispose of any unclaimed personal  
12 items provided ~~all the~~ all the requirements of subsections 3.D.3.a-f of this ordinance have  
13 been met.

14 Section 4. Hazards and unsafe or unsuitable conditions  
15

16 A. If an outdoor living space ~~or a vehicle used as a residence~~ is in an unsafe or  
17 unsuitable location, or creates or contains a hazardous condition, the City may undertake a  
18 removal ~~or impoundment~~ action if conducted in accordance with the procedures set forth in  
19 this Section.

20 B. Prior to conducting removal ~~or impoundment~~ actions based on unsafe or  
21 unsuitable locations, the City must do the following:

22 1. The City must inform all individuals staying at such location the reasons  
23 that it is unsafe or unsuitable at least 48 hours prior to any removal ~~or impoundment~~.

24 2. If an outdoor living space covers both safe or suitable and unsafe or

1 unsuitable locations, the City may only undertake removal ~~or impoundment~~ actions that are  
2 in the unsafe or unsuitable location.

3 3. The City must identify and make available to all affected individuals a  
4 nearby, alternative public space owned or controlled by the City to camp ~~or park~~ that is not  
5 unsafe or unsuitable.

6 4. The City must conduct sufficient individualized outreach.

7 C. Prior to conducting removal ~~or impoundment~~ actions based on a hazardous  
8 condition or hazardous conditions, the City must do the following:

9 1. For at least 72 hours, provide access to basic garbage, sanitation, and harm  
10 reduction services, including emptying receptacles and containers provided for refuse and  
11 disposal of sharps, as dictated by the nature of the hazardous condition.

12 2. Make reasonable efforts to identify the likely source of the hazardous  
13 condition and take action against only those responsible for creating the hazardous  
14 condition.

15 3. Provide a meaningful opportunity to cure the hazardous condition, including:  
16 (a) an effective cure notice of the specific conditions that create the hazardous condition and  
17 information on how that condition can be remedied; and (b) provision of necessary items,  
18 such as garbage bags and bins, rodent traps, intravenous needle receptacles, and/or portable  
19 toilets, among others, that would allow the individuals to cure the hazardous condition. -The  
20 City must allow individuals at least 72 hours to cure the hazardous condition before posting  
21 notice of removal ~~or impoundment~~, and shall not conduct removal ~~or impoundment~~ if the  
22 hazardous conditions have been cured.

1 4. Conduct site visits by City staff to: (a) inform all affected individuals prior to or  
2 during the cure period that the location has a hazardous condition and the actions needed to cure  
3 that condition; and (b) inform all affected individuals whether the hazardous condition has been  
4 remedied after the cure period or, if the hazardous condition has not been remedied after the cure  
5 period, the reason it has not been remedied.

6 D. Prior to removal ~~or impoundment~~, the City must provide written notice meeting the  
7 following requirements:

8 1. Notice must include the following information:

- 9 a. The specific date and time the removal ~~or impound~~ will take place;
- 10 i. The removal ~~or impound~~ may not take place fewer than 48 hours  
11 from the date of notice in the case of unsafe or unsuitable location;
- 12 ii. The removal ~~or impound~~ may not take place fewer than five  
13 days from the date of notice in the case of a hazardous condition;
- 14 b. Explanation of how the location of the outdoor living space ~~or vehicle~~ is  
15 unsafe and/or unsuitable, or the hazardous condition has not been remedied;
- 16 c. Explanation of the actions that will be taken during the removal ~~or~~  
17 ~~impoundment~~ and how loss of personal property can be avoided;
- 18 d. Information about where personal property will be safeguarded if seized  
19 during the removal ~~or impoundment~~ and how it can be retrieved after removal ~~or impoundment~~;
- 20 e. Clear directions to the alternative public space owned or controlled by  
21 the City;
- 22 f. Contact information for the outreach organizations that will work with  
23 that site as described in subsection 4.D. 4 of this ordinance; and

1 g. If available, a statement that adequate and accessible housing is  
2 available for all affected individuals.

3 2. Notice must be provided in languages likely to be spoken by impacted  
4 individuals, and through methods capable of being understood by persons with physical and  
5 mental disabilities.

6 3. Notice must be posted in a conspicuous location at the relevant outdoor living  
7 space ~~or on the relevant vehicle~~, as well as affixed to all tents and structures used for shelter at  
8 that location. The City will inform individuals of other available space in adequate and accessible  
9 housing, authorized encampments or in other public spaces where removal will not occur due to safety  
10 or unsuitability.

11 4. Sufficient individualized outreach must involve, at a minimum, the following  
12 actions:

13 a. Informing all affected individuals of the availability of the alternative  
14 public space owned or controlled by the City for the outdoor living space ~~or vehicle~~, or offering  
15 adequate and accessible housing; and

16 b. Offering assistance with both the administrative and logistical aspects  
17 of moving into the identified alternative public space owned or controlled by the City or  
18 adequate and accessible housing.

19 E. During a removal ~~or impoundment~~, the City will safeguard all personal property free  
20 of charge according to the following requirements:

21 1. For individuals present at the time of the removal ~~or impoundment~~ who do not  
22 have the ability to transport their personal property, the City shall transport all personal property  
23 to the alternative public space owned or controlled by the City.

1                   2. For individuals who are absent at the time of the removal ~~or impoundment~~ or  
2 who are present but who do not wish to move to the alternative public space owned or controlled  
3 by the City and do not have the ability to transport their personal property, the City will  
4 safeguard all personal property as follows:

5                   a. Personal property must be photographed and catalogued by location and  
6 with identifying details of the personal property prior to being put into storage. Such information  
7 must be searchable by computer and by calling a City agent.

8                   b. The location of the storage facility must be accessible by public  
9 transportation and accessible to those with disabilities.

10                  c. The location's operating hours must extend beyond normal business  
11 hours to accommodate those who work or have other obligations during midweek during normal  
12 business hours.

13                  d. Photo identification shall not be required as a condition of retrieval.

14                  e. The City must post notice for 90 days at the location of the removal ~~or~~  
15 ~~impoundment~~ with the location of the seized personal property and instructions for reclaiming  
16 such personal property.

17                  f. Within 24 hours of the removal, a City agent or employee must return to  
18 the site and seek to inform individuals of how to retrieve their items.

19                  g. After 90 days, the City may dispose of any unclaimed personal items  
20 provided all the requirements of subsections 4.E.2.a-f of this ordinance have been met.

21        \_\_\_\_\_ Section 5. Collaboration with other entities. The City will only direct, engage,  
22 cooperate, or contract with any other entity to engage in any removal ~~or impoundment action~~  
23 ~~in accordance with~~ action in accordance with this ordinance. The Mayor is directed to

1 negotiate with Washington State, King County, and any other relevant public landowning  
2 entities a Memoranda of Understanding establishing that City employees will assist other  
3 public entities in managing their properties within the City only in a manner consistent with  
4 the principles and requirements of this ordinance, and to ensure that regular inspection,  
5 maintenance, and scheduled or emergency repairs to roads, highways, and related  
6 infrastructure on other governmental and public entity-owned lands within the City of  
7 Seattle are carried out in a manner consistent with the principles set forth in this ordinance.

8 Section 6. Implementation and Advisory Committee

9 To ensure the ordinance meets the goals of protecting the public health, public safety, and civil  
10 rights of all people, including those experiencing homelessness, the City shall establish an  
11 Implementation and Advisory Committee (“Committee”).

12 A. The functions and duties of the Committee shall be to:

13 1. Advise the Mayor, Council, and relevant departments of concerns and issues  
14 with regard to City’s removal and impoundment actions, and provide recommendations,  
15 findings, or other reports as appropriate related to such concerns and issues; and

16 2. Review proposed implementation plans and guidelines, and provide comments  
17 regarding the same to department staff charged with contracting outreach workers, notice,  
18 storage, etc...

19 B. The Committee shall consist of 11 members. The Mayor shall appoint one member.  
20 Each Councilmember shall appoint one member and the Council collectively shall appoint one  
21 member. The members will be appointed to serve staggered three 3 year terms and may be  
22 reappointed to subsequent terms. Any vacancy in an unexpired term shall be filled in the same  
23 manner as the original appointment. A member whose term is ending may continue on an interim

1 basis as a member with voting rights until such time as a successor for that position has been  
2 appointed.

3 C. The Committee members should have current or recent (within the last five years)  
4 professional, personal, or research experience associated with provision of services to individuals  
5 experiencing homelessness, or with public health or public safety.

6 D. The Director of the Human Services Department and the Director of the Finance  
7 and Administrative Services Department shall assign at least one staff member to support the  
8 work of the Committee. A representative of various City Departments, including but not  
9 limited to the Office for Civil Rights, Parks and Recreation Department, Seattle Police  
10 Department, Department of Transportation, and/or the City Attorney’s Office, shall attend  
11 the committee meetings upon request of the Committee.

12 Section 7. Individuals Using Vehicles as Residences. The 2016 one night count of  
13 unsheltered homeless identified over 900 people using vehicles as residences. The  
14 unsheltered population living in vehicles faces similar instability to those who reside in  
15 outdoor living spaces. The Human Services and Public Health Committee and the Gender  
16 Equity Safe Communities and New Americans Committee of the Council intend to consider  
17 legislation in 2017 that would provide similar protections related to suitable locations to park  
18 vehicles used as residences and to standards for safeguarding personal property, including  
19 vehicles, which are removed from city property.

20 Section 8. Penalties. Failure by the City or any of its partners, agents, or contractors to  
21 follow the requirements of this ordinance shall result in a penalty paid by the City to each  
22 affected individual of \$250 per violation, in addition to any actual damages incurred. -The  
23 Seattle Office for Civil Rights shall be charged with the oversight, investigation, and

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1 enforcement of the provisions of this ordinance.

2 Section 89. This ordinance shall take effect and be in force 30 days after its approval  
3 by the Mayor, but if not approved and returned by the Mayor within ten days after  
4 presentation, it shall take effect as provided by Seattle Municipal Code Section 1.04.020. In  
5 keeping with the recognition that public camping as a substitute for permanent housing is  
6 detrimental to the health and safety of all, and that these measures are an interim response to  
7 a situation the City is expected to resolve through other policy measures, this ordinance shall  
8 expire two years after its effective date unless expressly extended by the City Council. The  
9 Mayor shall report to the Council every six months in the interim on implementation of this  
10 ordinance.

11 Passed by the City Council the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2016,  
12 and signed by me in open session in authentication of its passage this \_\_\_\_\_ day of  
13 \_\_\_\_\_, 2016.

14 \_\_\_\_\_  
15 President \_\_\_\_\_ of the City Council

16 Approved by me this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2016.

17 \_\_\_\_\_  
18 Edward B. Murray, Mayor

19 Filed by me this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2016.



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Monica Martinez Simmons, City Clerk

3 (Seal)

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