



ORDINANCE NO. 29064

1 BY REQUEST OF MAYOR WOODARDS, COUNCIL MEMBERS HINES,
2 RUMBAUGH AND SADALGE

3 AN ORDINANCE related to camping and storage of personal property on public
4 property, and amending Title 8 of the Tacoma Municipal Code, entitled
5 "Use of Public Property."

6 WHEREAS in 2022, the City Council adopted Second Amended Substitute
7 Ordinance No. 28831, which prohibited camping and the storage of personal
8 belongings in a 10-block radius around temporary shelters, as well as Aspen Court
9 (a City-permitted emergency and transitional housing facility), and all public
10 property within 200 feet of Tacoma's mapped rivers, waterways, creeks, streams,
11 and shorelines, and

12 WHEREAS, as the City of Tacoma expands more permanent shelter
13 capacity and housing pathways, temporary and emergency shelter sites are
14 concluding as planned, resulting in rapid changes to the City's prohibitions for
15 camping and the storage of personal belongings on public property established by
16 Second Amended Substitute Ordinance No. 28831, and

17 WHEREAS the planned closing of three shelters has left neighborhoods
18 across Hilltop and Downtown without any prohibitions for camping and storage of
19 personal belongings on public property, and

20 WHEREAS, specifically, as of July 31st, three shelters in Tacoma have
21 concluded operations and therefore no longer provide the 10-block community
22 buffer zones, including the Forging Path Community at 3561 South Pacific Avenue,
23 Alzheimer Memorial Family Shelter at 1121 South Alzheimer Street, and RISE
24 Freedom Project at 2135 Martin Luther King Jr. Way, and
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1 WHEREAS encampments are returning to areas where the City's
2 community buffer zones have been reduced, including some of Tacoma's lowest
3 opportunity neighborhoods, and
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5 WHEREAS unauthorized camping and storage of personal belongings on
6 public property impacts the surrounding community by creating public safety and
7 public health hazards, including heightened risk of fires, criminal activities, illegal
8 dumping, and sanitation issues, and
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10 WHEREAS camping activity also interferes with the rights of other members
11 of the public to use public areas for their intended purpose, and
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13 WHEREAS the community buffer zones established in Second Amended
14 Substitute Ordinance No. 28831 proved to be an effective way to address the
15 impacts of encampments, and
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17 WHEREAS since implementation began, the community buffer zones have
18 enabled the City to remove 776 encampments in prohibited areas, and
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20 WHEREAS the Homeless Engagement and Alternatives (HEAL) Team,
21 which has been fully staffed since September 2023, has also been able to offer
22 services to more than 3,300 people in prohibited areas since implementation
23 began, with a 64 percent acceptance rate, and
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25 WHEREAS acceptance rates for services have been consistently higher in
26 the prohibited areas than outside them, and
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28 WHEREAS updating the areas where camping and storing personal
29 belongings on public property is prohibited can help build on the progress initiated
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1 by Second Amended Substitute Ordinance No. 28831 and ensure that the City
2 meets its responsibility to keep public areas clean, sanitary, and accessible for all,
3 and
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5 WHEREAS, to do so, the following code updates are being proposed:

6 (1) Updating community buffer zones where camping and the storage of
7 personal belongings on public property are prohibited to include areas within 10
8 blocks of a temporary or emergency shelter in the Downtown Zone and within five
9 blocks outside of the Downtown Zone, within two blocks of a public school (K-12),
10 public park, or public library; and
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12 (2) Amending Tacoma Municipal Code ("TMC") 8.19.050 to stress that
13 individuals subject to enforcement under TMC 8.19.030 or Section 8.19.040, and
14 who are qualified, will be considered for referral to therapeutic court, and
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16 WHEREAS in 2023, the City launched two therapeutic courts, including a
17 Mental Health Court and a Community Court, that have now demonstrated
18 success, and
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20 WHEREAS City Council Members frequently receive complaints from local
21 business and community members about the negative impacts they experience
22 from encampments on public property, including concerns about safety and
23 unsanitary conditions, and
24

25 WHEREAS in addition, Council Member Hines has received input from
26 shelter providers requesting buffers around shelters locations, and



1 WHEREAS the City declared homelessness a public health emergency in
2 2017, and addressing concerns regarding the impact of encampments remains a
3 top priority for many residents, and
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5 WHEREAS the Pierce County Point-in-Time count data shows that the
6 number of people experiencing homelessness has risen annually since 2021, with
7 almost 3,000 people experiencing homelessness in Pierce County in 2025; Now,
8 Therefore,
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10 BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY OF TACOMA:

11 Section 1. That the City Council hereby adopts the Recitals of this
12 Ordinance as its formal legislative findings.

13 Section 2. That Title 8 of the Municipal Code, entitled "Public Safety",
14 relating to camping and storage of personal belongings on public property, is
15 hereby amended, as set forth in the attached Exhibit "A."
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1 Section 3. That the City Clerk, in consultation with the City Attorney, is
2 authorized to make necessary corrections to this ordinance, including, but not
3 limited to, the correction of scrivener's/clerical errors, references, ordinance
4 numbering, section/subsection numbers, and any references thereto.
5

6 Passed _____

7
8 _____
Mayor

9 Attest:
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11 _____
12 City Clerk

13 Approved as to form:
14

15 _____
16 Deputy City Attorney
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EXHIBIT "A"

CHAPTER 8.19 USE OF PUBLIC PROPERTY

8.19.020 Defined Terms.

As used in this Chapter, the following terms shall have the following definitions:

"Aspen Court" means a city permitted emergency and transitional housing facility located at 8620 South Hosmer Street.

"Camp" means to pitch, erect, or occupy Camp Facilities, or to use Camp Paraphernalia, or both, for the purpose of, or in such a way as will facilitate, remaining overnight. The term shall not include overnight use of Public Property by the City or the governmental entity that owns or has a property interest in such Public Property.

"Camp Facilities" means, without limitation, tents, huts, and temporary shelters.

"Camp Paraphernalia" means, without limitation, blankets, pillows, tarpaulins, cots, beds or bedding, sleeping bags, hammocks, non-City designated cooking facilities, and/or other similar equipment.

"City" means the City of Tacoma, Washington, the area within the territorial limits of the City.

"Emergency shelter" means a shelter permitted under Tacoma Municipal Code 13.06.080.

"Temporary Shelter" means a shelter permitted under Tacoma Municipal Code 13.06.080.

"Pier" means any pier, wharf, dock, float, gridiron, or other structure where watercraft may anchor or moor.

"Protected Waters" means all public property, within 200 feet of mapped Rivers, Waterways, Creeks, Streams, and the Puget Sound Shorelines, including but not limited to the Puyallup River, First Creek, Roosevelt Ditch, T Street Gulch, Clear Creek, Swan Creek, Squally Creek, the Thea Foss Waterway, the Middle Waterway, the St. Paul Waterway, the Blair Waterway, Wapato Creek, the Hylebos Waterway, Hylebos Creek, and the shorelines of Commencement Bay.

"Public Property" means all property in which the City or any other governmental entity has a property interest, including easements. The term includes, without limitation, all parks, Piers, Streets, trails, forests, park museums, pools, beaches, open spaces, public squares, public schools and associated athletic facilities, grounds around City or other publicly owned or leased buildings, including, but not limited to, parking lots, and any other property in which the City or any other governmental entity has a property interest of any type.

"Store" means to put aside, accumulate, or leave on Public Property for later use, or for safekeeping.



1 “Street” means, without limitation, any easements, highway, lane, road, street, right-of-way, boulevard,
2 alley, and all Public Property open as a matter of right to public vehicle travel or parking.

3 (Ord. 28831 Ex. A; passed Oct. 11, 2022)

4 **8.19.030 Unauthorized Use Of Public Property.**

5 Unless otherwise permitted by the Tacoma Municipal Code, it shall be unlawful for any person to Camp
6 within any Public Property that is within: ~~10 blocks of a Temporary Shelter and Aspen Court, as long as~~
7 ~~Aspen Court is permitted as emergency and transitional housing, provided that if the 10-block radius bisects~~
8 ~~a block or a public parcel, such as a park or a school, that the entire block or parcel shall be included in the~~
9 ~~prohibited area for camping; or within 200 feet of Protected Waters.;~~

8 A. 10 blocks of a Temporary or Emergency Shelter located in the “Downtown Zone”, which is
9 defined as the area north of South 38th Street, east of S. Union Street, west of the Puyallup River,
10 and south of Commencement Bay;

11 B. Five (5) blocks of a Temporary or Emergency Shelter located outside of the “Downtown Zone”;

12 C. Two (2) blocks of a public school serving grades kindergarten through 12th grade, public park, or
13 public library; or

14 D. Within 200 feet of Protected Waters.

15 In the event that any radius outlined in subsections A through D above bisects a block or a public parcel,
16 such as a park or a school, that the entire block or parcel shall be included in the prohibited area for camping.

17 (Ord. 28831 Ex. A; passed Oct. 11, 2022)

18 **8.19.040 Unauthorized Storage Of Personal Property On Public Property.**

19 It shall be unlawful for any person to Store personal property, including, without limitation, Camp Facilities
20 and Camp Paraphernalia, within any Public Property that is within: ~~10 blocks of a Temporary Shelter and~~
21 ~~Aspen Court, as long as Aspen Court is permitted as emergency and transitional housing, provided that if~~
22 ~~the 10-block radius bisects a block or a public parcel, such as a park or a school, that the entire block or~~
23 ~~parcel shall be included in the prohibited area for camping; or within 200 feet of Protected Waters.;~~

24 A. 10 blocks of a Temporary or Emergency Shelter located in the “Downtown Zone”, which is
25 defined as the area north of South 38th Street, east of S. Union Street, west of the Puyallup River,
26 and south of Commencement Bay;

27 B. Five (5) blocks of a Temporary or Emergency Shelter located outside of the “Downtown Zone”;

28 C. Two (2) blocks of a public school serving grades kindergarten through 12th grade, public park, or
29 public library; or

30 D. Within 200 feet of Protected Waters.

31 In the event that any radius outlined in subsections A through D above bisects a block or a public parcel,
32 such as a park or a school, that the entire block or parcel shall be included in the prohibited area for storage
33 of personal property.

34 (Ord. 28831 Ex. A; passed Oct. 11, 2022)



8.19.050 Penalty For Violations.

Violation of Section 8.19.030 or Section 8.19.040 of this Chapter is a misdemeanor offense and shall be punished upon conviction of such violation by a fine of not more than \$250, or by imprisonment not to exceed 30 days, or by both such fine and imprisonment. The City's intent is that individuals subject to enforcement under TMC 8.19.030 or Section 8.19.040 and who are qualified will be considered for referral to therapeutic court. ~~provided that, no less than two weeks prior to issuance of any infraction pursuant to this chapter, notice shall be posted at the location where camping or storage of personal belongings is occurring, so that the Tacoma Pierce County Coalition to End Homelessness can be notified and interested non-governmental organizations and mutual aid groups can offer assistance and resources as needed at this location; except that no posting of such notice, nor notice to any organization, is required when there is a reasonable belief there is significant risk to life, public health or safety, or property due to the camping or storage of personal belongings at this location as prohibited herein.~~

(Ord. 28831 Ex. A; passed Oct. 11, 2022)