



City of Tacoma

City Council Action Memorandum

TO: Hyun Kim, Interim City Manager
FROM: Council Member Sarah Rumbaugh and Senior Council Policy Analyst Lynda Foster
COPY: City Clerk and City Council
SUBJECT: **Resolution – Directing the City Manager to seek partnerships to create a new low-barrier shelter site – October 21, 2025**
DATE: October 15, 2025

SUMMARY AND PURPOSE:

A resolution directing the City Manager to seek a partnership with other agencies in order to identify a location for a low-barrier site and identify funding options for the low-barrier site at that location.

COUNCIL SPONSORS:

Council Member Sarah Rumbaugh.

BACKGROUND:

This Sponsor's Recommendation is Based On:

Despite funding constraints, the City remains deeply committed to connecting individuals experiencing homelessness to shelter and support services, focusing on sustainable solutions and pathways to permanent housing. The City recognizes the complexity and impact that homelessness and encampments have on communities. Which is why our response to homelessness and encampment removals includes investment in community resources including sheltering and food banks, outreach, and mental health services. The City's Homelessness Strategy includes low barrier shelter sites, and we appreciate the work of staff in constantly seeking opportunities and partnerships for increased shelter options. This request allows us to prioritize this effort in our homeless response with hopes in finding a more immediate solution.

The City of Tacoma sees the need for a regional solution to the issue of homelessness, that stretches far beyond Tacoma's borders. In 2025 during Pierce County's annual Homeless Point-in-Time (PIT) Count counted 2,955 people on streets and in our shelters – an 11% increase from last year. Approximately 50% of individuals who reported a zip code identified as residing in a Tacoma zip code, however at the same time 76% of sheltered individuals across the County were in shelters in the City of Tacoma. In Pierce County there is renewed interest in regional collaboration through the Unified Regional Approach to Homelessness, led by Pierce County and including 13 additional local jurisdictions. There is an opportunity to harness this energy and collaborate on providing the most needed shelter services for our community.

The proportion of people engaged through outreach who ultimately secure shelter placements has increased. Our outreach staff connected 8% of individuals into shelter in 2023 and 2024. The current placement rate for 2025 is 14%. There are a variety of reasons people do not accept services, including a lack of interest in currently available options as well as challenges with the restrictions in place on current sites. A low-barrier approach is intended to be more attractive to individuals in need of shelter. It prioritizes accessibility for those facing challenges like homelessness, mental health issues, or substance use disorders.

As of the end of July 2025, the City saw a reduction of 199 beds supported by City funds. This decrease occurred in June and July and included decommissioning the Forging Path site at 3561 Pacific Avenue, which had sheltered up to 135 individuals. Forging Path site was a low-barrier site. This low-barrier site not only provided safe spaces but have also demonstrably improved our communities and helped individuals move towards stability. Since opening, the Tacoma Police Department (TPD) Crime Dashboard showed a 38% total reduction in crimes in the surrounding area (¼ mile radius) compared to the year prior. It served 295 people, with 66 individuals successfully transitioning to permanent housing (as of May 26, 2025). While the City still maintains 100 low-barrier beds at the Stability Site, the Stability Site both has more requirements than Forging Path did and is not able to serve the same broad clientele.



Increased access to low-barrier sheltering options throughout the county would be a significant step in providing appropriate, responsive sheltering options to our homeless community.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT/ CUSTOMER RESEARCH:

January 30-31, 2025, Pierce County leaders, service providers, and volunteers surveyed people experiencing homelessness during the annual Homeless Point-in-Time (PIT) Count. They counted 2,955 people on streets and in our shelters – an 11% increase from last year. The PIT Count may provide useful information, but Pierce County also relies on data collected daily through their homeless management information system (HMIS) to provide a more clear, accurate picture on homelessness in our community. This data says that since 2015, the number of people experiencing homelessness in Pierce County has more than doubled, showing a 125% increase. According to the 2025 Point-in-Time Count, 76% of sheltered individuals across the County were in shelters in the City of Tacoma (1,159 of 1,522). As we seek to understand and meet the needs of homeless individuals throughout the County, we know we need more shelter beds and we need geographic disbursement of shelter options so Pierce County residents can receive services in the communities they call home.

2025 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Equity and Accessibility: *(Mandatory)*

According to the 2025 annual Homeless Point-in-Time (PIT) Count, 58%, a disproportionate amount of individuals experiencing homelessness, identified as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). There was also a substantial population with self-reported disabilities, including 27% reporting mental health disabilities, 20% reporting a physical disability, 19% reporting a chronic health condition, and 22% reporting substance abuse.

Livability: *Equity Index Score:* Moderate Opportunity

Improve health outcomes and reduce disparities, in alignment with the community health needs assessment and CHIP, for all Tacoma residents

Increase positive public perception of safety and overall quality of life.

Improve access and proximity by residents to diverse income levels and race/ethnicity to community facilities, services, infrastructure, and employment.

Explain how your legislation will affect the selected indicator(s).

An increase in low-barrier shelter sites is essential to connecting our region's unhoused community to vital services and take steps towards more stable housing solutions.

ALTERNATIVES:

Alternative(s)	Positive Impact(s)	Negative Impact(s)
1. Direct the City Manager to prioritize other shelter types	All shelter types are needed to support our community	Does not meet the needs of the most at-risk community
2. Take no action	Continue the Homelessness Strategy and participation in the Unified Regional Approach to Homelessness	There is an opportunity for Tacoma to take a lead in pursuing partnerships to meet immediate shelter needs

EVALUATION AND FOLLOW UP:

The City Manager should provide an update to the Tacoma City Council within 60 days.



STAFF/SPONSOR RECOMMENDATION:

The sponsors recommend adopting this resolution and setting clear priorities for the City Manager to seek partners to establish a new low-barrier shelter site in order to meet the needs of our community.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Work to seek partnerships and determine funding options can be incorporated into ongoing budgeted work. Although there is no immediate fiscal impact to adopting this resolution, additional the City Manager may identify a need for resources to open and operate a new low-barrier site.

What Funding is being used to support the expense?

N/A

Are the expenditures and revenues planned and budgeted in this biennium's current budget?

YES

Are there financial costs or other impacts of not implementing the legislation?

No

Will the legislation have an ongoing/recurring fiscal impact?

No

Will the legislation change the City's FTE/personnel counts?

No

ATTACHMENTS:

- Resolution