



COMMUNICATION  
leadership



## CITY OF BELLEVUE

In Partnership with the  
University of Washington

### SAFE PARKING LOTS OUTREACH

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RESERVED

for our  
SAFE PARKING GUESTS

7 PM to 7 AM





Livable City Year 2018–2019  
in partnership with  
City of Bellevue  
[www.washington.edu/livable-city-year/](http://www.washington.edu/livable-city-year/)

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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*Student researcher Victoria Pinheiro (right) with Project Lead Toni Pratt at Bellevue City Hall.*  
TERI THOMSON RANDALL

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## ABOUT LIVABLE CITY YEAR

The University of Washington's Livable City Year (LCY) initiative is a partnership between the university and one local government for one academic year. The program engages UW faculty and students across a broad range of disciplines to work on city-defined projects that promote local sustainability and livability goals. Each year hundreds of students work on high-priority projects, creating momentum on real-world challenges while serving and learning from communities. Partner cities benefit directly from bold and applied ideas that propel fresh thinking, improve livability for residents, and invigorate city staff. Focus areas include environmental sustainability; economic viability; population health; and social equity, inclusion and access. The program's 2018–2019 partner is the City of Bellevue; this follows partnerships with the City of Tacoma (2017–2018) and the City of Auburn (2016–2017).

LCY is modeled after the University of Oregon's Sustainable City Year Program, and is a member of the Educational Partnerships for Innovation in Communities Network (EPIC-N), an international network of institutions that have successfully adopted this new model for community innovation and change. For more information, contact the program at [uwlcyl@uw.edu](mailto:uwlcyl@uw.edu).



## ABOUT CITY OF BELLEVUE

Bellevue is the fifth largest city in Washington, with a population of more than 140,000. It's the high-tech and retail center of King County's Eastside, with more than 150,000 jobs and a skyline of gleaming high-rises. While business booms downtown, much of Bellevue retains a small-town feel, with thriving, woodsy neighborhoods and a vast network of green spaces, miles and miles of nature trails, public parks, and swim beaches. The community is known for its beautiful parks, top schools, and a vibrant economy. Bellevue is routinely ranked among the best mid-sized cities in the country.

The city spans more than 33 square miles between Lake Washington and Lake Sammamish and is a short drive from the Cascade Mountains. Bellevue prides itself on its diversity. Thirty-seven percent of its residents were born outside of the US and more than 50 percent of residents are people of color, making the city one of the most diverse in Washington state.

Bellevue is an emerging global city, home to some of the world's most innovative technology companies. It attracts top talent makers such as the University of Washington-Tsinghua University Global Innovation Exchange. Retail options abound in Bellevue and artists from around the country enter striking new works in the Bellwether arts festival. Bellevue's agrarian traditions are celebrated at popular seasonal fairs at the Kelsey Creek Farm Park.

Bellevue 2035, the City Council's 20-year vision for the city, outlines the city's commitment to its vision: "Bellevue welcomes the world. Our diversity is our strength. We embrace the future while respecting our past." Each project completed under the Livable City Year partnership ties to one of the plan's strategic areas and many directly support the three-year priorities identified by the council in 2018.



**BELLEVUE 2035:  
THE CITY WHERE YOU WANT TO BE**

*Safe Parking Lots Outreach* supports the *Achieving Human Potential* target area of the Bellevue City Council Vision Priorities and was sponsored by the Department of Development Services.



**ACHIEVING HUMAN POTENTIAL**

**Bellevue is a caring community where all residents enjoy a high quality of life.**  
People from around the world are welcomed by people from around the corner. People in Bellevue know that they are an important part of their community.

Our residents feel connected to each other and invested in their community. People connect to each other through a variety of organizations. Bellevue is an intellectual community that values education. We have an array of excellent educational opportunities for lifelong learning, from one of the nation's best K-12 school districts, to a variety of secondary and higher educational opportunities including technical and trades education, college, and graduate programs at a top international research university.

We enjoy access to high-level medical services that attract top providers from around the region. We serve our entire community regardless of address, ethnicity, age, or capability.

**BELLEVUE 2035:  
THE CITY WHERE YOU WANT TO BE**

*Bellevue welcomes the world. Our diversity is our strength.  
We embrace the future while respecting our past.*

The seven strategic target areas identified in the Bellevue City Council Vision Priorities are:



**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Bellevue business is global and local.



**TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY**

Transportation is both reliable and predictable. Mode choices are abundant and safe.



**HIGH QUALITY BUILT AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT**

From a livable high-rise urban environment to large wooded lots in an equestrian setting, people can find exactly where they want to live and work.



**BELLEVUE: GREAT PLACES WHERE YOU WANT TO BE**

Bellevue is a place to be inspired by culture, entertainment, and nature.



**REGIONAL LEADERSHIP AND INFLUENCE**

Bellevue will lead, catalyze, and partner with our neighbors throughout the region.



**ACHIEVING HUMAN POTENTIAL**

Bellevue is caring community where all residents enjoy a high quality life.



**HIGH PERFORMANCE GOVERNMENT**

People are attracted to live here because they see that city government is well managed.

For more information please visit: <https://bellevuewa.gov/city-government/city-council/council-vision>



# FOREWORD

In the winter of 2017, I was working at the University of Washington when Tent City, an organization that aids people experiencing homelessness, chose my building’s parking lot as a site for a temporary encampment. Emails were sent around to inform us about what to expect and how we could help. Some of my colleagues started up a collection of hand-warmers and fresh socks. Others petitioned to lock the door do the parking lot during the day and to require swipe-authorization for anyone entering the building. Both the empathetic and the wary among us stole curious glances out the window as tents went up and as a tall, chain-link fence was erected around the encampment. The fence was wrapped in cheerful UW-branded fence-blinds. Some of us wondered whether the blinds were intended to protect the privacy of the residents or to hide

them from view. I donated some nonperishables and smiled at some residents once, as we passed each other on the sidewalk, but despite being separated by no more than a wall and a fence for three months, that smile was the extent of our interaction. I passed the fence every day on my way to and from work.

So, when I heard about a project with Livable City Year to promote safe parking lots for people living out of their vehicles in Bellevue, I applied immediately. It was the last large-scale project I would undertake as a graduate student in the Communication Leadership program at the UW, and it was one of the most humbling and meaningful experiences of my graduate career. It is my sincere hope that this work contributes to the comfort and safety of some of our unhoused neighbors in Bellevue.



*Bellevue city staff and community members participate in the LCY final presentation, March 13, 2019, at Bellevue City Hall. TERI TOMSON RANDALL*

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Safe parking programs provide people who live in their vehicles a safe place to sleep and access to vital resources. Due to the legal leeway granted to religious organizations around the right to exercise the tenets of their faith (including service to the poor), religious organizations play a critical role in providing services for this population. Currently, few safe parking programs hold operations within Bellevue city limits. The goal for this project was to gather and synthesize information on best practices for safe parking programs hosted by religious organizations in comparable nearby communities. To produce a set of best practices, I conducted a short literature review to establish context; researched local, successful safe parking programs; attended a homeless encampment focus group at Bellevue City Hall; and explored the structure and stories behind five successful safe parking programs. I carried out this portion of my work by interviewing five safe parking program leaders, one social service provider, and two concerned Bellevue residents. I also met with three representatives of Bellevue Human Services. From the information and stories collected, I compiled a high-level data summary (Appendix A), this report, and three communications products, listed below:

- 1. **Safe Parking Start-Up Guide:** A 37-page printed booklet and digital file that summarizes key findings and describes the structure and logistics needed to establish a successful safe parking program. Woven into this communication product are the stories of the people who participate in these programs. A copy can be accessed at this URL: <http://bit.ly/SafeParkBellevue>
- 2. **Persuasive One-Pager:** A glossy, one-paged graphic that summarizes the need for safe parking programs and provides information on how to access the Safe Parking Start-Up Guide.
- 3. **Aggregated Code of Conduct:** A well-constructed code of conduct is the backbone of a successful program. I accessed and reviewed five codes and compiled an aggregated document that synthesizes the most useful and universal components to serve as a comprehensive template around which new programs can be oriented (Appendix B).

The City of Bellevue can use this information to gain buy-in from local religious organizations and empower them to create their own programs to serve people experiencing homelessness in Bellevue.



Student researcher Victoria Pinheiro (right) with Project Lead Toni Pratt at the final presentation at Bellevue City Hall. TERI THOMSON RANDALL



# INTRODUCTION

3,372

That's how many people in King County lived in their cars in 2018.

VICTORIA PINHEIRO

As of 2018, 3, 372 people in King County lived in their cars, a 46% increase from 2017 (All Home 2018). If you lined up all of their vehicles from end to end, the line would stretch for more than seven miles. These individuals make up about half of King County's unsheltered homeless population. The homelessness crisis in this region is growing as housing costs skyrocket and as the availability of affordable housing shrinks in the shadow of luxury high-rises (Stringfellow and Wagle 2018).

Other contributing causes include a lack of access to resources, such as mental-health and rehabilitation services, for individuals suffering from mental health issues and addiction. Individuals can become homeless due to a combination of factors; however, homelessness is often catalyzed by an unpredictable life event, like the loss of a job, the end of a relationship, or the onset of a debilitating illness (Ivey and Gilleland 2018).

## WHY DO PEOPLE END UP LIVING IN THEIR CARS?

King County's growing homeless population outpaces the growth of available shelters and this forces many people experiencing homelessness to live in their vehicles (Ivey and Gilleland 2018). Additionally, overcrowding and exposure to health risks at shelters deters some people from using them; this is especially the case for people who are newly-homeless and working to find stable housing (Skinner and Rankin 2016). Unhoused people who own vehicles are often precluded from living in shelters because shelters offer no place for people to store their cars (Skinner and Rankin 2016).

People living in their vehicles make up a unique subset of the population of people experiencing homelessness. According to King County's annual Point in Time Count of people experiencing homelessness, people who live in their vehicles are more likely to attribute their homelessness to the loss of a job, eviction, or to the end of a relationship. They are also less likely to have committed a crime than the homeless population at large (All Home 2018). This population also faces unique challenges: they are 14% less likely to access community-based resources and 28% more likely to have been asked to move along by law enforcement officials (All Home 2018).

People living in their vehicles are 14% less likely to access community-based resources and 28% more likely to have been asked to move along by law enforcement officials.

## People living in their cars worry about:



### Crime

People sleeping in their cars are often victims of theft, car break-ins, and even violence.



### Parking Violations

In Bellevue, cars can't be parked in public for more than 48 hours. Paying for tickets or dealing with an impounded car can be crippling.



### Basic Amenities

Bathrooms, showers, waste disposal, and places to store and prepare food are hard to find when living out of a car.

VICTORIA PINHEIRO

“The host’s first responsibility is to tell the new arrival this is a safe, welcoming place where they can be accepted and build some relationships. Many are ashamed and mistrustful.”

— Char Downes, Lake Washington United Methodist Church

## KEY ISSUES

### CRIME

Sleeping in a car is only marginally safer than sleeping out in the open. People sleeping in their cars are more exposed than those who sleep in secure homes. Moreover, people who live in their cars are often forced to park in unsafe public areas to avoid interactions with law enforcement. These people often fall victim to theft, car break-ins, and violence (O'Malley 2019).

### PARKING VIOLATIONS

In Bellevue, cars cannot be parked in public for more than 48 hours. Paying for tickets and dealing with towing fees and car impoundment can financially cripple and lead to criminalization of people experiencing homelessness. Tickets and fees often force people out of their cars and onto the streets. Unpaid parking violations can evolve into misdemeanor offenses, pulling people into the criminal justice system (Ivey and Gilleland 2018).

### BASIC AMENITIES

Cars are not designed to serve as permanent residences. People living in their vehicles rarely have access to bathrooms, showers, waste disposal, and places to store and prepare food. This makes it difficult for them to maintain basic hygiene, sanitary living conditions, and a sense of dignity. Community complaints about sanitation issues posed by people who live in their vehicles is one of the leading drivers of the criminalization of vehicle-residency, along with fears and stigmas associated with homelessness. Over the past 10 years, cities in the United States with laws that result in the criminalization of vehicle-residency have increased by 143% (Ivey and Gilleland 2018).



# THE SOLUTION

Safe parking programs can address many of the problems described previously. These programs designate public or private parking lots to provide safer, legal parking places for people living in their cars. Many safe parking programs form out of collaborative partnerships between host organizations and social service providers. The host organizations (i.e., parking lot owners) provide parking spaces and access to basic amenities, like portable toilets or indoor facilities. Service provider partners create individual housing action plans and provide access to community resources. Safe parking programs have been identified by case management agencies as a crucial service (Rey 2018). They provide much needed safety, peace, and dignity to people working towards stable housing, many of whom are homeless for the first time. Safe parking programs are not a permanent solution, but a stepping-stone for people on the path to stability.

Due to the legal leeway granted to religious organizations around the right to exercise the tenets of their faith (including service to the poor), faith communities play a critical role in providing services for people experiencing homelessness. According to the federal Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act, congregations are free to use their properties in this way to pursue their religious missions, so long as the services they provide do not pose public health or safety risks (RLUIPA 2000). Currently, there are few safe parking programs in the City of Bellevue. However, there are several successful programs operating nearby in King County.

Safe parking programs provide much needed safety, peace, and dignity to people working towards stable housing, many of whom are homeless for the first time.



Religious organizations play a critical role in providing services for people experiencing homelessness.  
LAKE WASHINGTON UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

## PROJECT OBJECTIVE

The objective of this project is to encourage religious organizations in Bellevue to host safe parking programs. The goal is to provide simple, user-friendly guidelines to help these organizations understand why safe parking programs are important for communities, who would utilize them, and how they can go about setting up their own program in an effective, empathetic way.

# SAFE PARKING PROGRAMS AND THE PEOPLE WHO USE THEM

The following sections outline the contents of the products I have created in greater detail than is possible in a printed communications product. Thus, the information below is compiled from the various interviews and meetings I arranged with subject matter experts and interested parties. Several, but not all, participants are quoted in this section.

## SAFE PARKING PROGRAM STRUCTURES

- Basic:** 1-2 parking spots, no services provided
- Low Impact:** 3-6 parking spots, access to outdoor tap, portable toilets provided
- High Impact:** 7+ parking spots, access to outdoor tap, portable toilets provided, links to social service providers
- Maximum Impact:** 7+ parking spots, access to outdoor tap, portable toilets provided, links to social service providers, establishment of “camp leadership” (2-3 vehicle owners who maintain peer safety, compliance with rules, and oversight of authorized camping)

## HOW DO SAFE PARKING PROGRAMS PROTECT PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN THEIR VEHICLES?

- **Safety in numbers:** People report feeling safer sleeping near other car campers. Outside of a designated safe parking lot, people living in their cars often seek out secluded areas to avoid interactions with law-enforcement. This places them in more vulnerable positions.
- **Trusted community:** As you will read later on in this report, most safe parking programs require screening and background checks for all guests. Thus, safe parking residents can rest assured that they are surrounded by a safe group of people.

- **Help is always available:** Most safe parking programs provide a 24-hour point of contact to their guests. This person can help resolve issues and act as a liaison between guests and other interested parties. Additionally, many programs work closely with law enforcement agencies to ensure the safety of their guests (read more on this topic in the Security section).

## WHO USES SAFE PARKING PROGRAMS?

People often use safe parking programs while they are on waiting lists for shelters or housing assistance. Most people who make use of safe parking programs have jobs and many have children and pets with them.

## SAFE PARKING STORIES

“Safe parking lots often get used the first night you’re homeless. We tend to be the landing spot for folks who have absolutely no idea how to deal with homelessness.”

– Karina O’Malley, Lake Washington United Methodist Church

“I had an older man in his late 60’s come, he was homeless for the first time. He was scared to death.”

– Sister Betty Schumacher, Saint Jude’s Catholic Church

“One woman came to us pregnant. She went to the hospital, had the baby, and came back and lived in her car with her newborn.”

– Karina O’Malley, Lake Washington United Methodist Church

“I have a family of five who’ve been here for two weeks. They lived up north, both parents were working, mom was even working on her master’s. Their building got sold and the new owner raised the rent so high they become homeless. The mom was a federal government worker and didn’t get paid during the shut down. So they came to us.”

– Sarah Davidson, Kent United Methodist Church



# METHODS



LCY student researcher and author Victoria Pinheiro gives her final presentation to city staff and community members TERI THOMSON RANDALL

To promote safe parking programs in Bellevue and provide a framework for their creation, I gathered and synthesized information about the elements of and best practices for safe parking programs hosted by religious organizations in comparable nearby communities. I carried out a short literature review to establish context; researched local, successful safe parking programs; attended a homeless encampment focus group at Bellevue City Hall; and explored the structure and stories behind five successful safe parking programs. I did so by interviewing five safe parking program leaders, one social service provider, and two concerned Bellevue residents. I also met with three representatives of Bellevue Human Services. Once complete in my research and interview process, I organized all data by category and program within an easy-to-reference table (Appendix A). I extracted common themes and presented the information and stories in the following products:

- 1. **Safe Parking Start-Up Guide:** A 37-page printed booklet and digital file that summarizes key findings and describes the structure and logistics needed to establish a successful safe parking program. Woven into this communication product are the stories of the people who participate in these programs. A copy can be accessed at this URL: <http://bit.ly/SafeParkBellevue>
- 2. **Persuasive One-Pager:** A glossy, one-paged graphic that summarizes the need for safe parking programs and provides information on how to access the Safe Parking Start-Up Guide.
- 3. **Aggregated Code of Conduct:** A well-constructed code of conduct is the backbone of a successful program. I accessed and reviewed five codes and compiled an aggregated document that synthesizes the most useful and universal components to serve as a comprehensive template around which new programs can be oriented (Appendix B).

The information I gathered will help the City of Bellevue promote safe parking programs to religious organizations and empower those organizations to create and manage successful programs.



The Safe Parking Start-up Guide booklet, created through this LCY project. VICTORIA PINHEIRO



# A SAFE PLACE TO SLEEP

By hosting a safe parking program, you could use empty space in your organization's parking lot to **help families get their lives back.**

2,314

That's how many people in King County lived in their cars as of 2017.

People living in their cars worry about:



#### Crime

People sleeping in their cars are often victims of theft, car break-ins, and even violence.



#### Parking Violations

In Bellevue, cars can't be parked in public for more than 48 hours. Paying for tickets or dealing with an impounded car can be crippling.



#### Basic Amenities

Bathrooms, showers, waste disposal, and places to store and prepare food are hard to find when living out of a car.

People who use these programs are often on waiting lists for shelters or housing assistance. Most have jobs and many have children with them.

**Your organization could provide the sanctuary they need to get back on track.**

## Safe, stable, and successful

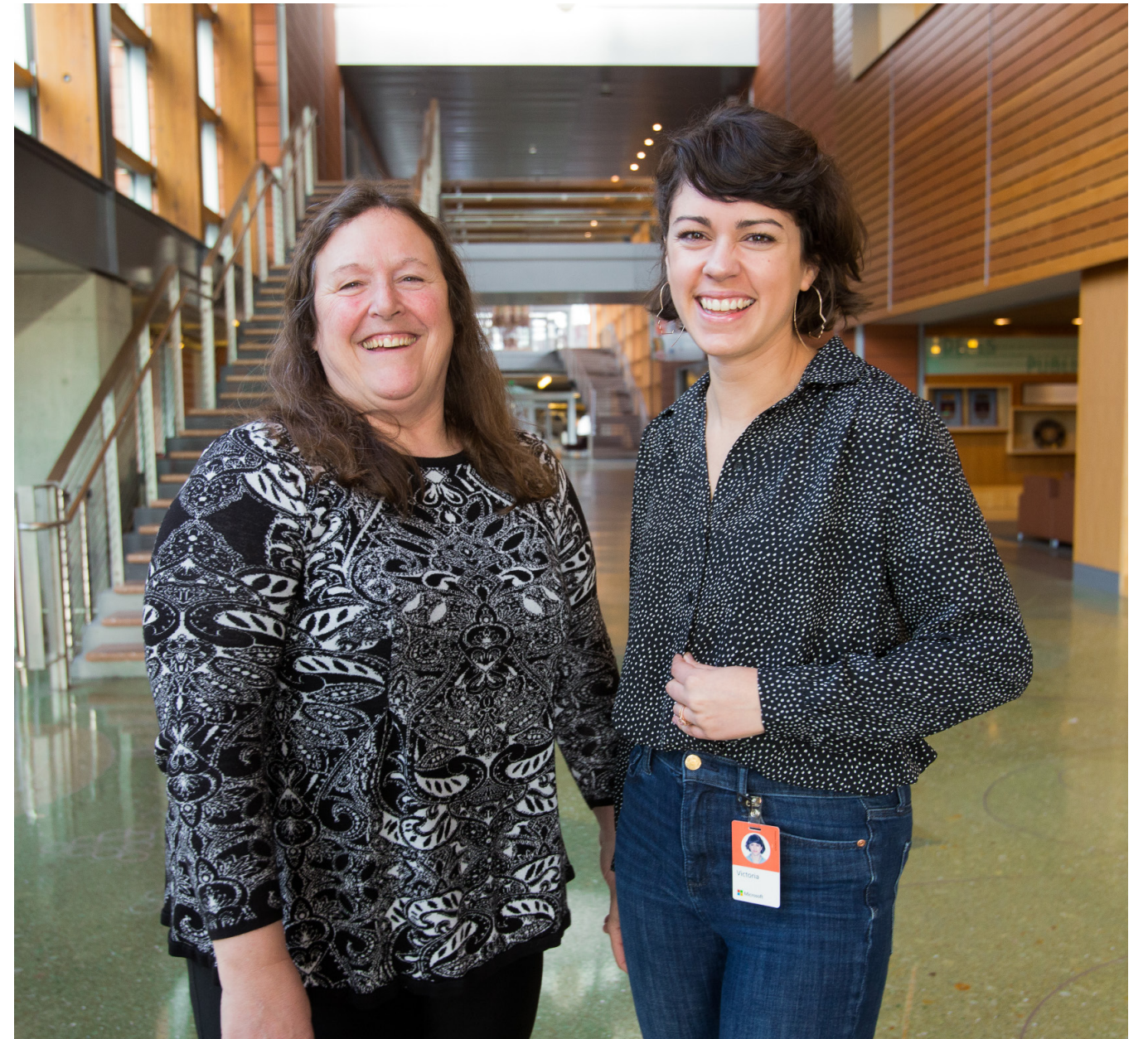
Safe parking programs are often a collaboration between faith organizations and social service providers. Faith organizations provide parking spaces and access to basic amenities like portable toilets or indoor facilities, while service providers create individual housing action plans and provide access to resources.



Host a Safe Parking Program. Change someone's life.

<http://bit.ly/SafeParkBellevue>

Persuasive one-pager VICTORIA PINHEIRO



LCY student researcher Victoria Pinheiro (right) with Bellevue's LCY Program Manager Nancy LaCombe (City Manager's Office) following the final presentation at Bellevue City Hall TERI THOMSON RANDALL



# STRATEGIES AND BEST PRACTICES

## GET PEOPLE ON BOARD

### FIRST: GET BUY-IN FROM YOUR CONGREGATION

- **Form a committee:** Explore safe parking program structure options and consider your organization's resource and staff availability while determining the best program structure.
- **Obtain support:** Present the proposal to church leadership and other organizations within the congregation (e.g., youth program leaders). Take their needs into consideration, amend the proposal if necessary, and obtain written approval.

### SECOND: CONSULT WITH LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT

Early engagement and consultation with local law enforcement helps to ensure the success and safety of safe parking programs in two ways:

- **Consensus and collaboration:** Sharing your program structure with law enforcement officials and inviting them to act as advocates and resources for the people making use of your program creates a collaborative relationship and fosters trust, which benefits everyone involved.
- **Insights and advice:** Law enforcement officials will be able to provide expert advice on measures to maintain the safety of guests and the surrounding community.

There are two models of law enforcement engagement applied in the context of safe parking programs: patrolling and non-patrolling. In the patrolling model, law enforcement officers have permission to come onto the property, patrol the lot, and evict trespassers. Many guests feel safer knowing that such patrols occur. However, norms should be discussed with law enforcement officers to ensure patrols serve the purpose of protecting guests, and not policing them. For example, obtrusive practices like shining lights into vehicles should be discouraged. In the non-patrolling model, law enforcement does not have permission to patrol properties. This model is often followed by programs that have had issues with law enforcement making use of obtrusive practices.

## THIRD: ENGAGE WITH THE IMMEDIATE COMMUNITY

Neighbors of safe parking programs are often curious and interested in helping. Many also have safety concerns and would like to be involved in the planning process. Here are the most common community concerns and easy ways to address them:

- **Fear of drugs and crime:** Perform background checks, obtain support from law enforcement, create a code of conduct and require guests to pledge to abide by it, and institute camp leadership.
- **Noise:** Most codes of conduct have quiet hours written into their rules and requirements. Quiet hours usually start at around 10:00 pm and end at 7:00 am.
- **Headlights shining into neighboring yards:** Many programs have lights-out rules that match the duration of quiet hours.
- **Litter and cleanliness:** Litter and cleanliness can be addressed by creating a waste-disposal plan and by listing cleanliness standards in the code of conduct.

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**"It's never about the specifics, people will find something to complain about. The piece of success I'd replicate is to give neighbors a point of contact. If they have a complaint, they need to feel heard."**

— Karina O'Malley, Lake Washington United Methodist Church

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# PERFORM COMMUNITY OUTREACH

- **Define community:** The first step to performing community outreach is to define the immediate community. Most programs consider homes within a two-block radius to fall within the boundaries of the immediate community. Others limit their outreach to residences which share a property line. It is not advised to engage in broad and highly publicized outreach beyond these small segments. Issues involving people experiencing homelessness tend to be polarizing, and this is why host organizations should keep the stakeholders to a minimum.
- **Host a small town hall:** At the beginning of a program, invite the immediate community to provide input on the code of conduct, security measures, and program structure. By exposing the community to the thorough and thoughtful planning process being executed by the host institution and by granting them a chance to weigh-in, host organizations can build trust, transparency, and a sense of partnership.
- **Letter to neighbors:** Instead of hosting a town hall, another option is to send or hand-deliver a letter explaining (not asking permission for) your program to the immediate community. Provide contact information so people can relay their concerns and ask for more information.

Addressing community concerns is a trust-building exercise. Meet any demands that are possible, regardless of whether or not they are necessary. This will reduce tensions and increase buy-in from the surrounding community.



Hosting a town hall meeting can help build trust, transparency, and a sense of partnership. ERIC ALLIX ROGERS



# CHOOSE THE RIGHT POPULATION FOR YOUR PROGRAM

Different programs serve different populations for the safety and security of the guests. When choosing the population for your program, consider what populations are served by surrounding organizations.

- **Women and families with children:** These programs serve single women and families with children. Families are defined as groups containing at least one adult and at least one child.
- **Men and couples:** These programs provide single men and couples without children a safe place to sleep. Because many services preferentially serve women and families with children, men and childless couples are often left with fewer options.

# DETERMINE DURATION OF STAY

Most programs set a maximum length of stay of 90 days, but many offer greater flexibility. The 90-day limit, while often not a hard rule, creates the expectation that living in a safe parking lot is a temporary solution. Exceptions to such a limit can be made on a case-by-case basis.

# SELECT PROGRAM HOURS

Many programs start small, acting as a night-only program and allowing only a few cars. The primary goal of such a program is simply to provide a safe place for people to sleep. By starting small, organizations can grow safe parking programs gradually as they learn the ins and outs of hosting and as they work out partnerships with social service organizations. When possible, 24-hour structures provide optimal benefits to guests. For example, one program leader explained how “moving the car in and out is hard when you’re low on gas or you break down. Some people have no other place to go” (O’Malley 2018). Furthermore, the constant need to shift and move around increases one’s sense of instability. By allowing for periods of overlap among guests and congregants, 24-hour programs can also engender a sense of community.



*A safe place for people who live in their vehicles.*  
LAKE WASHINGTON UNITED  
METHODIST CHURCH

# ESTABLISH SECURITY MEASURES

The safety of guests, congregants, and the surrounding community should be the top priority guiding organizers of safe parking programs. Here are some common measures which can be followed to ensure the safety of all parties:

- **24-hour contact person:** It is important that guests, neighbors, and other stakeholders have access to a 24-hour contact person who can help address issues as they arise. Having a responsive, empathic point of contact can also help alleviate tensions and make all parties feel safe and heard.
- **Background checks:** Several organizations include background checks as part of their entry requirements. Applicants with histories of violent crime, sexual abuse, child abuse, or domestic abuse should not be admitted. People with history of petty crimes and drug charges more than 2-3 years old are generally accepted without issue.
- **Authorized parking pass:** Most programs provide safe parking passes to guests. These make it easy to identify which vehicles belong to enrolled participants. These passes also help hosts and law enforcement track who has been screened.
- **Cameras:** Several organizations have installed security cameras at parking lot entrances.
- **No need for overnight guards:** Hired or volunteer overnight security is cost prohibitive and not at all necessary. None of the programs we consulted with use overnight security.

## ALLOW PERSONAL VEHICLES ONLY (NO RVs OR CAMPERS)

RVs and campers tend to create complications associated with chronic homelessness as opposed to transitional homelessness. Large vehicles are easier to live in long-term. Anecdotally speaking, the population of people living in these vehicles are often chronically homeless and might be less inclined to work towards a more stable housing situation. Moreover, should a large vehicle in poor condition be left abandoned in a safe parking lot, the costly burden of removal and disposal of the vehicle falls upon the host organization. Lastly, many organizations with safe parking programs stated that incidence of drug use and criminal behavior is higher among residents of RVs and campers.

## DESIGN AN INTAKE PROCESS

Along with being a logistical necessity for safe parking programs, the intake process is the first opportunity to connect with and make a difference in the life of an unhoused individual.

During the intake process, take the time to learn about each individual's situation and to connect them to the service providers that can help them formulate an action plan towards stable housing. This is also the time to prompt guests to sign consent forms for background checks. While guests fill out these forms, explain that the background checks are to ensure their safety. This is also a good time to ask if they know of anything that will come up on their background checks that they would like to talk about. Orient the guest to the property and to any amenities they may access. Walk the guest through the code of conduct before asking the person to sign. Lastly, issue an authorized guest parking pass. This pass should contain the guest's name, arrival and departure dates, and contact information for the safe parking host organization. This pass should be displayed in the guest's windshield to identify their car as part of the program.

## ESTABLISH A CODE OF CONDUCT

The code of conduct is the cornerstone of a successful safe parking program. It ensures an organized, effective program and creates a common sense of accountability among guests to adhere to the rules.

A detailed code of conduct that aggregates lessons learned from other successful programs can be found in Appendix B.

## DESIGNATE BATHROOMS AND SHOWERS

One crucial provision offered by safe parking programs is access to bathroom facilities. All programs provide portable toilets, some provide portable showers, and others allow partial building access to guests when the building is staffed. As a rule of thumb, one portable toilet should be provided for every seven cars. This ratio seems to work for most programs. Portable toilet facilities require maintenance, which can cost as little as \$125-150 a month per toilet. If possible, hosts should provide access to indoor bathrooms, sinks, and showers. This is because, as one program leader pointed out, "you just can't feel clean using a portable toilet" (O'Malley 2018). Access to indoor facilities grants people a sense of human dignity and comfort of being clean, which are difficult to achieve while living out of a car. Many programs allow guests access to facilities for an hour or two each morning and evening. Organizations without showers can contact the Bellevue Aquatic Center about offering shower scholarships for their guests.



Handmade signs at Newport Presbyterian Church convey a welcoming environment.  
VICTORIA PINHEIRO



## SET UP MONTHLY MEETINGS

Many safe parking programs host a mandatory monthly meeting that coincides with a community dinner. These meetings serve several purposes:

- **Assessing progress:** Service providers, case workers, and/or safe parking organizers can check in on action plan progress and connect guests to helpful resources.
- **Addressing community concerns:** Meetings provide an opportunity to make announcements, address issues, and introduce new guests to the community.
- **Engagement with congregation/surrounding community:** Often, congregants or neighbors will volunteer to cook meals or help organize monthly meetings. This is a great opportunity for them to meet, befriend, and learn about guests.

## PARTNER WITH SOCIAL SERVICE PROVIDERS

Social service organizations work with guests to create action plans and connect them to resources tailored to their needs, such as day centers, transportation assistance, and job support. Below are links and contacts to organizations that offer social services for safe parking program guests.

### SOCIAL SERVICE PROVIDERS FOR SAFE PARKING PROGRAMS IN BELLEVUE

Organization	Phone	Email
Congregations for the Homeless	(425) 289-4044	josht@cfhomeless.org
Sofia Way	(425) 463-6285	cynthia@sofiaway.org
Hope Link	(425) 869-6000	hopelink@hopelink.org
Catholic Community Services	(425) 679-0350	info@ccsww.org
IKRON	(425) 242-1713	ikrongreaterseattle@ikron.org



Monthly dinner meetings provide an opportunity to connect. OVERLAKE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

“We thought it was really important that they knew someone cared about them.”

— Sister Betty Schumacher, Saint Jude’s Catholic Church

# CONCLUSION

The drivers behind the homelessness crisis in King County are complex, but the prognosis is clear: as housing prices soar and affordable housing dwindles, people will continue to be pushed out of their homes. Many will have nowhere to turn but to their vehicles. Safe parking programs can provide safety and much needed resources to people experiencing homelessness and support them as they work to achieve a more stable housing situation.

By tapping into the expertise of people who have established safe parking programs and who have been running them for years, I was able to synthesize the data, knowledge, and stories necessary to educate and empower local religious organizations to provide this vital service in their communities. The communication products I've created tackle two main goals: to create a sense of empathy and community for people living in their vehicles and to provide a framework for religious organizations to help them. By interweaving stories and logistical information, my safe parking start-up guide is both an informative and persuasive product. It is my hope that the products of this project, combined with the efforts of the City of Bellevue, contribute to the establishment of more safe parking programs for people in need of them.



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# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A: HIGH-LEVEL DATA SUMMARY OF SAFE PARKING PROGRAM LOGISTICS

Church	City	Location	Number of Spots	Hours of Operation	Time Limit Policy	Population Served
Kent United Methodist Church	Kent	The lot is behind the church and set back far from the street. On the same block as an elementary school.	6	9:00pm - 8:00am	90 days	Men, women and families
Newport Presbyterian Church	Bellvue	On a cul-de-sac. "You don't drive by it unless you're lost."	6	7:00pm - 7:00am	90 days	Women and families
Lake Washington United Methodist Church	Kirkland	Residential area	50	24 Hour	90 days (but not enforced, some people have been there for years)	Women and families (defined as a group with at least one adult and one child)
Overlake Christian Church	Redmond	Industrial/business park area near a golf course	15	24 Hour	90 days (but can be extended up to a year with good reason)	Single men and couples
Saint Jude's Catholic Church	Redmond	Residential area	15	24 Hours	No time limit	Single men and couples

Church	Security Measures	Outside Service Providers	Bathrooms	Trash
Kent United Methodist Church	Cameras, background checks	United Gospel Mission, Camp Hope	One portable toilet. Permanent toilet available in nearby park	Dumpster and trash can
Newport Presbyterian Church	Church security gaurd does one walk-through a nigh to check for unauthorized cars.	Hope Link, Renton Ecumenical Association of Churches, Center of Hope, Sofia Way	One portable toilet. Access to an outdoor water tap (potable water).	Big garbage container
Lake Washington United Methodist Church	National and state background checks	Catholic Community Services, Hope Link, Friends of Use, Sofia Way	Bathrooms inside church when staffed, portable toilet when not staffed.	Large dumpster, compost and recycling
Overlake Christian Church	Background checks	Residents are required to meet with Kent Hay, Homeless Outreach Administrator for Redmond within two weeks of joining the program	Bathrooms inside church when staffed, portable toilet when not staffed.	Dumpster and recycling
Saint Jude's Catholic Church	Background checks	Guests are sent to Kent Hay	Two portable bathrooms	Dumpster and recycling



Church	Meals Provided?	Group Meeting	Other Amenities
Kent United Methodist Church	Once a month, they also provide a list of places nearby where guests can get free hot meals on various days of the week.	Once a month, dinner provided	No access to church.
Newport Presbyterian Church	None	None	No access to church (don't have the volunteers to support it yet). Small wooded area with a picnic table for guests to convene and relax.
Lake Washington United Methodist Church	Weekly community dinners	Once a month, dinner provided	Guests have mealtime access to kitchen, bathroom, and celebration-space when staffed by volunteers. Volunteers from LWUMC host them daily from 7 to 9am most mornings and from 7 to 9 pm every night.
Overlake Christian Church	Weekly dinners, doughnuts on sunday	Once a month, dinner provided	Locker rooms and showers available from 9:00AM - 4:00PM Monday through Thursday and from 11:00AM - 1:00PM on Saturday. Small conference room with a phone available for 30 minute increments Mon-Thurs from 9-4. Snack room with microwave, common areas and the kitchen (when staffed and reserved).
Saint Jude's Catholic Church	Weekly dinners	Once a month, dinner provided	The "Guest House" is a 10' x 12' shed that was purchased to provide a place for doing the intakes and for guests to have a place to get out of their vehicles. Has a table with six chairs, refrigerator, microwave, coffee maker, a toaster oven, a small file cabinet for supplies, and some toiletries for guests. Power is available for guests to charge their cell phones. Free Wifi.

Church	Relationship with Law Enforcement	Relationship with Community	Rules for entry
Kent United Methodist Church	There is a park down the road with a permanent bathroom, many of the guests spend their days there. This used to cause some conflicts with law enforcement, but now not so much. Sarah has developed a relationship with the police and they like having a safe place to send people who are sleeping in their cars/	Didn't do community outreach.	Must pass background check for violent, sexual or child-abuse crimes. Petty theft or drug-related crimes more than 2 years old are not a concern. Must agree to code of conduct.
Newport Presbyterian Church	Good relationship with law enforcement. Sat down with Bellevue PD early on. "Here is our format, does this sound good, can you be our backup if you need it?"	Drew a map around the church and picked 35 houses within a two block radius. Sent a letter outlining the program, not asking permission. Had no pushback, one person came to offer help.	Only accept guests referred to them by service providers, working with case worker. Must agree to code of conduct.
Lake Washington United Methodist Church	Good relationship with law enforcement. Police like having someplace to send people instead of telling them they must leave with no place to go.	In the beginning, did a townhall for their temporary encampment, which the parking program grew out of. Also sent around letters to all houses sharing a property line. When the encampment left, walked around to houses sharing a property line and gave out personal phone number and email. Having a 24 hours point of contact is key.	Code of conduct must pass background check.
Overlake Christian Church	In the beginning, had some pushback from a community resource officer who was worried they'd "bring the issues in Seattle to Redmond." Now the police work closely with Kent. "We have a great relationship with the police, they'd be here in an instant if we need them."	Didn't really do any. Only had pushback from business that were dealing with overflow parking, but resolved those issues.	Background check and screening.
Saint Jude's Catholic Church	Good relationship with law enforcement.	Posted letters to all residents in a two block radius. "We have one neighbor who gets upset, but he gets upset about everything."	Background check and screening.

Church	Nightly In-take Procedure/Sign-in procedure	Placards	Code of Conduct
Kent United Methodist Church	None	Yes	<a href="https://drive.google.com/open?id=11u9R8pKZhpiuJvIMJmkFRFd_PloYSk">https://drive.google.com/open?id=11u9R8pKZhpiuJvIMJmkFRFd_PloYSk</a>
Newport Presbyterian Church	Self-sign-in notebook for guests to record their comings and goings	Yes	<a href="https://drive.google.com/open?id=13XAHQITNC-EhtWwgNV5bXoxE_8p8_iU9">https://drive.google.com/open?id=13XAHQITNC-EhtWwgNV5bXoxE_8p8_iU9</a>
Lake Washington United Methodist Church	No nightly sign-in, informal survey of cars and guests performed weekly	Yes	<a href="https://drive.google.com/open?id=1lcbhEekSCZDVTQQHaw3N9nte7x2xAjKC">https://drive.google.com/open?id=1lcbhEekSCZDVTQQHaw3N9nte7x2xAjKC</a>
Overlake Christian Church	No nightly sign-in. When they notice new cars, they leave a note and people usually come and check in right away	No	<a href="https://drive.google.com/open?id=1lcbhEekSCZDVTQQHaw3N9nte7x2xAjKC">https://drive.google.com/open?id=1lcbhEekSCZDVTQQHaw3N9nte7x2xAjKC</a>
Saint Jude's Catholic Church	Had a nightly sign-in from 6-8 in the beginning, now finds there is no need since the population is more stable.	Yes	<a href="https://drive.google.com/open?id=1oytty4KMuVggrhtoqMeGMQsa9_i6SMJk">https://drive.google.com/open?id=1oytty4KMuVggrhtoqMeGMQsa9_i6SMJk</a>



## APPENDIX B: CODE OF CONDUCT TEMPLATE

### SAFE PARKING PROGRAM CODE OF CONDUCT

[INSERT PERSONALIZED WELCOME STATEMENT FROM CHURCH] In addition to finding a safe place to stay, we hope you will become part of our community by participating in any of the programs, ministries, or worship opportunities available. You're in no way required to participate, but this is our sincere invitation. We've established this Safe Parking Program to provide a safe place for [INSERT POPULATION SERVED HERE] with no place to stay except in their vehicles. In addition to a place to park, relax, and sleep overnight without fear of harassment or arrest for trespassing, we intend to offer you:

#### Dignity, community, respect, and accountability

For the safety and success of this program, we have established the following policies and rules. Failure to abide by them may result in a warning and possible parking restriction. Violation of rules 12-15 will result in your immediate removal from the program and from the church property. Adults must initial after each of the following to indicate that they have read, understood, and agreed to abide by these guidelines.

1. No alcohol, illegal drugs, or controlled substances are allowed on the property.
2. No weapons (especially firearms and knives) are allowed on the property, whether licensed, permitted, or otherwise.
3. No violence or verbal abuse will be tolerated. Degrading ethnic, racist, sexist, or homophobic remarks will not be tolerated.
4. No littering. Keep your area tidy and clean. Use the available trash receptacles. [Insert explanation of acceptable trash disposal procedure here.]
5. If your car leaks oil, please clean it up and resolve the issue. Kitty litter, dust pan, and broom are provided.
6. Respect the quiet hours of [insert time range]. Outside quiet hours, the volume of audio or video devices must not disturb neighbors.
7. [If night time only] Respect the safe parking hours of [insert time range]. Please do not arrive before or stay past the designated hours.
8. [If 24 hour] Do not leave your vehicle unattended for more than 48 hours. Cars left unattended for 7 days will be towed.

9. [If a length of stay limit exists] Guests may use the safe parking program for up to 90 days.
10. Only authorized guests may occupy the lot. Please do not invite friends or acquaintances.
11. Park only in designated area and only occupy one spot. When space allows, leave one parking spot open between neighboring vehicles to give your neighbors privacy.
12. [Insert explanation of available bathroom/shower options]. Keep facilities clean and tidy after use.
13. Accompany minor children when they exit your vehicle. You are responsible for their safety.
14. Respect and take care not to disturb the host property, congregation members, neighbors, and fellow guests.
15. You are required to attend the monthly community dinner where a hot meal will be provided. Parking community issues will be addressed. You will have the opportunity to check-in with service providers on your action plan.
16. You must be in compliance with Washington State law regarding driver's licenses, registration, and insurance. Cars must be operable. Repairs cannot be made in the parking lot.
17. You must display your safe parking pass in the windshield of your vehicle while parked.
18. No cooking and no open flames.
19. Smoke in designated areas only. Dispose of cigarette butts in provided containers.
20. Pets must be leashed or kept in vehicles. Pet waste must be placed in sealed/tied-off plastic bags and disposed of in trash receptacles.
21. No RVs, campers, or 5th wheels are permitted.

A copy of the [INSERT HOST RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION NAME HERE] safe parking code of conduct has been given to me, and I agree to abide by it. I understand that any violation of these rules may result in a warning or immediate suspension of my privileges to park at [INSERT HOST RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION NAME HERE] overnight.

I agree to hold [INSERT HOST RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION NAME HERE], the City of Bellevue, the agency that referred me to Safe Parking Program\_\_\_\_\_, their officers, agents, and employees, harmless from any injury to person or damage to property arising out of or in any way related to the use of the [INSERT HOST RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION NAME HERE], parking lot, building, and grounds.

**Your Information**

Printed name\_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date\_\_\_\_\_

Your Contact: Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_(text or voice)

Email \_\_\_\_\_

**Emergency Contact**

Name\_\_\_\_\_

Phone number/email\_\_\_\_\_

**Printed Names and Birthdates of all other persons staying with you in your vehicle.**

Your name \_\_\_\_\_ Birthdate\_\_\_\_\_

Additional person\_\_\_\_\_ Birthdate\_\_\_\_\_

Additional person\_\_\_\_\_ Birthdate\_\_\_\_\_

Additional person\_\_\_\_\_ Birthdate\_\_\_\_\_

Additional person\_\_\_\_\_ Birthdate\_\_\_\_\_

Any pets in the car\_\_\_\_\_

**Required Car Information**

Make of Car \_\_\_\_\_ Model \_\_\_\_\_ Color \_\_\_\_\_

License Plate Number\_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_