

Camp Hope news update – 12-7

Sheriff's Dec. 6 action at Camp Hope disappointing and harmful

With plans already underway to permanently close Camp Hope and move people to substantially better housing, Tuesday's unexpected arrival of numerous uniformed Spokane County Sheriff deputies and Spokane Police officers and mental health specialists to hand out fliers announcing the camp is being closed was unnecessary, confusing and harmful to residents living there.

As state agencies have shared for more than a year, there simply isn't enough shelter/housing available in Spokane to accommodate the now 416 people at Camp Hope. The city's own shelter locator website clearly shows there is not enough shelter and housing in Spokane to house everyone at Camp Hope at this point, including at the city's own Trent shelter.

The state has communicated regularly about the efforts of state agencies and local non-profit partners to transition the residents to safe, secure shelter and housing as part of the work to permanently close the encampment and improve things for both the encampment residents and the neighbors and businesses in the area – and good progress is being made (see updates below).

The use of scare tactics and arbitrary closure notices with incorrect information hinder the process already underway to close Camp Hope safely and humanely, and it increases the risk that encampment residents will instead choose to disperse to new sites within the city.

Catalyst project opens, begins taking in people from Camp Hope

The Catalyst project, run by Catholic Charities Eastern Washington with state funding, opens this week as a key milestone in closing the Camp Hope encampment.

The former hotel has been converted to a 24-hour fully staffed emergency supportive housing facility with space for at least 100 people. Approved Camp Hope residents begin entering the Catalyst program this week and will continue to do so in stages for the next couple of weeks to allow for a smooth transition.

In addition to emergency housing, Catalyst participants will receive case management, employment and behavioral health services, and will be connected to primary care and public benefits, all aimed at creating pathways to stable housing after their stay at Catalyst.

The Catalyst project received \$15 million through the state Department of Commerce as part of the Legislature- and Governor-approved [Right of Way Safety Initiative](#) to find substantially better housing for people living homeless on WSDOT rights of way. State agencies, WSDOT, Commerce and the Washington State Patrol, partner with local leaders and non-profits for outreach and housing in each of the five initial counties: Spokane, Snohomish, King, Thurston and Pierce. The Catalyst opening was celebrated Monday, Dec. 5, with a visit from Gov. Jay Inslee, Commerce Director Lisa Brown and

Secretary of Transportation Roger Millar. To learn more about Catalyst, visit the website <https://www.cceasternwa.org/catalyst>.

Camp Hope census numbers continue to decline

The latest census count at Camp Hope is **416 as of Dec. 5**, down from the previous 433 on Nov. 25. This summer more than 600 people were estimated to be living there and the first official census count on Nov. 4 was 467. In the last week 17 people have moved out of the encampment and total, since Nov. 4, 51 people have moved from Camp Hope as part of the long-term plan to close the encampment.

It's important to note the 416 census number is as of Monday Dec. 5, and as such still includes individuals at the encampment who will enter the new Catalyst transitional housing program during the next few weeks. All told, Catalyst has capacity to serve about 100 participants at a time, so overall encampment numbers will drop again in coming weeks.

New state-funded projects announced for Spokane

Commerce last week announced several other projects had received funding as part of the work to close Camp Hope, bringing the total of temporary and permanent housing created/underway to 376 beds, including 50 supported with Housing and Urban Development vouchers. The new funding awards are nearly \$5 million; they bring the total spent in Spokane to almost \$24 million. The newly funded projects are:

- **Trent Resource Assistance Center (city shelter run by the Salvation Army)** – \$500,000 (bringing the total funding committed to the city shelter to \$2 million)
- **Diversion (Spokane County United Way)** – \$150,000
- **Shared supported housing** – \$1.76 million (nonprofits Empire Health Foundation/Spokane Low Income Housing Consortium)
- **Outpatient 22-hour detox** – \$620,000 (nonprofits Empire Health Foundation /Spokane Low Income Housing Consortium)
- **Hope House** – \$490,000 in two separate contracts with the city and Empire Health Foundation.
- **Rapid Rehousing** – \$1.3 million in two separate contracts with the city and Empire Health Foundation

Read more about the Commerce funding announcement online:

<https://www.commerce.wa.gov/uncategorized/commerce-makes-final-right-of-way-safety-initiative-funding-awards-to-city-and-nonprofit-proposals-in-latest-step-toward-closing-camp-hope/>

Ongoing assistance at Camp Hope

In addition to numerous local charitable efforts bringing food, clothing and other assistance to people living at Camp Hope and ongoing non-profit outreach, fellow state agencies also are assisting as part of the overall efforts to close the encampment.

The Department of Social and Health Services [Mobile Community Services Office](#) truck will be at the Trent shelter assisting Camp Hope residents there this week on Tuesday and Friday. To date they've assisted a total of 161 people, including providing EBT food assistance cards and other services.

The state departments of Health and Licensing have helped encampment residents replace lost or damaged identification needed for housing, applying for jobs and other day-to-day activities. A total of 106 birth certificates and 400 identification cards have been issued.

Housing availability key closing encampment

Spokane's homeless need extends beyond Camp Hope and will ultimately determine the timing of closing the site. There simply isn't enough housing to meet either the encampment or overall need at this time:

- City's February point-in-time count: 1,757 people experiencing homelessness in Spokane County; 823 living outside.
- State comprehensive data (including info from several assistance systems): Over 5,200 people experiencing homelessness (either in a shelter or unsheltered) in Spokane County.
- The city's own shelter tracker, <https://sheltermespokane.org/>, regularly shows many of Spokane's shelters already near or at capacity and none with the ability to house everyone at Camp Hope.

Hotline for East Central residents/businesses

A 24/7 hotline – 509-666-9902 – for East Central businesses and neighborhood residents will be answered by Camp Hope staff, who can respond to the neighborhood concerns.

Sign-up for future email updates

If you would like to receive regular communication about what's happening at Camp Hope, please sign up for our email

listserv: https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/WADOT/subscriber/new?topic_id=WADOT_706