

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION

Safe Parking Pilot Program for Homelessness Response

Bianca Siegl, Assistant Director Citywide Programs and Policies, 452-4382
Nicolas Quijano, Homelessness Outreach Program Manager, 452-4105
City Manager's Office

DIRECTION NEEDED FROM COUNCIL**INFORMATION
ONLY**

Staff is providing an update on the development of the City's Safe Parking program, following City Council's direction on July 11, 2022 to develop a detailed implementation plan, legal analysis, cost estimate, and budget proposal for said program. No action is sought from Council.

RECOMMENDATION

N/A

BACKGROUND & ANALYSIS**Program Development Background**

At the July 11, 2022 City Council meeting, the City Council directed staff to develop a detailed implementation plan, legal analysis, cost estimate, and budget proposal to support a safe parking pilot program. This program will implement 2021-2023 Council Priority #17, "Explore a safe parking program for homelessness response".

Homeless Outreach Program (HOP) staff have worked closely with peers in other jurisdictions, local homelessness service providers, regional agencies including staff from KCRHA and their Vehicle Residency Policy Workgroup, and existing safe parking operators to evaluate best practices and develop an implementation framework. Parks, Utilities, and Finance and Assessment Management staff assisted HOP staff in identifying potential City-owned host locations. Staff met with and conducted surveys with individuals currently residing in vehicles, and worked with Parks, Bellevue Police Department, and local shelter outreach staff to identify as many individuals residing in their vehicles as possible.

The adopted 2023-2024 Budget includes funding for Safe Parking. The proposed program structure and process was developed with input from the City Attorney's Office. This report contains a summary of proposed program components and an implementation timeline.

Implementation plan*Location*

After careful evaluation of City-owned properties, staff have identified a portion of the Lincoln Center parking lot for the Safe Parking Pilot. An ideal Safe Parking Program offers residents access to running water (for showering, laundry and hydration), electricity (for work, school and personal needs) kitchen facilities (for safely storing and preparing food), transit access, and a relatively secluded, quiet, and private location to park one's vehicle. Following relocation of the temporary men's shelter currently

located on this property, the Lincoln Center property offers these features without requiring the City to use additional funds to lease or purchase another facility or significantly modify property. The site also has a history of providing an interim location for successful homelessness services uses, and the pilot safe parking program is an appropriate interim use of the property. The City has proactively reached out to business and property owners in the neighborhood surrounding the Lincoln Center to inform them of the City's intent, to address any concerns, and to consider any feedback.

Operator Procurement and Program Facilitation

The City will release a Request for Proposals in January to seek a program partner to operate the pilot safe parking program. Staff have been reaching out to a number of community organizations to generate interest in the proposed program. Staffing shortages are impacting many community service providers, and similar safe parking programs in Seattle and Vancouver have encountered difficulties finding applicants with the staff capacity to facilitate their programs. The proposed program facilities, structure, and funding are being developed to support successful operations given these known industry challenges. Following a successful procurement process, staff anticipates the operational contract to be presented to the Council in spring 2023, with program launch to be expedited following contract approval. The selected operator will be responsible for all program services described below.

Population Served and Services Provided

The Safe Parking program will serve individuals living in their vehicles, such as RVs and passenger vehicles, and be open to vehicle residents regardless of age, gender, or family status. On-site services offered by contracted program staff will focus on helping vehicle residents to achieve permanent housing, including employment and education assistance, help navigating housing systems, obtaining documentation of identity and overcoming medical or mental health barriers. Additional program elements may include client assistance funds to help clients overcome basic barriers, like helping a client to pay for a state identification card so that they can apply for work.

The City-funded safe parking program and homelessness outreach program staff will also support the development of other private safe parking sites and help to support the clients within those sites. As discussed in the July 11, 2022 City Council memo, religious organizations have the authority to facilitate safe parking programs on their property,. Previous City of Bellevue work on Safe Parking concluded that the City should offer support to religious organizations in launching Safe Parking programs. The City-funded program will offer the same array of outreach services offered to individuals residing on the City-owned safe parking lot to those residing on safe parking facilities owned or controlled by religious organizations.

Safety

The program operator will develop a safety plan in coordination with City stakeholders that will address the safety needs of program participants, the surrounding community, and on-site staff. Details that the City will require will include a plan for 24/7 availability of staff, identifying the level of need with regard to on-site security staff, installing fencing or other privacy barriers as needed, establishing clear lines of communication with law enforcement, a plan for helping clients dealing with mental or medical health crises, and regular communication with City of Bellevue staff to report on ongoing security needs.

Program Evaluation

City staff, in collaboration with the program operator, will use the following metrics to evaluate the Safe Parking program and inform decisions about potential program adjustments both when considering renewal and throughout the duration of the program. The program operator will be required to collect and report program evaluation data to the City on a regular basis.

Demographic Information:

- Age • Gender • Race • Household size

Participant Outcomes:

- Employment status at start and end of program • Total income at program enrollment and exit
- Percentage of participants that increase overall income during time in program • Housing status at exit • Referrals and services received while served in program • Feedback from participants about the quality and effectiveness of program services and facilities

Program Performance:

- Total number of households served • Average length of stay • Vehicles served by type (RVs, vans, passenger vehicles)

Safety

- Number of calls to law enforcement • Program exits for safety concerns or rules violation • Number of emergency calls for mental and medical health concerns

Cost Estimate

Staff estimates program costs for the first year will be approximately as follows:

Staffing	\$320,000
<i>Details: One program manager, six additional program staff at competitive market rate</i>	
Operating Costs	\$30,000
<i>Details: Utility, internet, security, sanitation fees</i>	
Client assistance	\$30,000
<i>Details: Direct assistance for documentation of identity, housing application fees, job readiness assistance, emergency cold weather support</i>	
Administrative	\$57,000
<i>Details: Organizational fees for oversight of program</i>	
Total	\$437,000

A majority of the funding for this program would support hiring and retaining quality staff at competitive market rate. Having quality staff consistently present and available for program needs will help to ensure that the program is able to successfully support clients and engage with the surrounding community.

A benefit of placing the program at the Lincoln Center is that many of the costs that would accompany a safe parking program (site acquisition, purchase or installation of facilities, etc.) would be mitigated by

the resources already on site. Funds could instead be dedicated to the resources to staff a program sufficiently to see how well it operates within the continuum of services offered in Bellevue, without committing to the acquisition of property (like a mobile shower trailer) that the City may not have interest in possessing or managing long term.

Project Timeline

City staff plan for the safe parking pilot to launch in spring of 2023. Key steps in the process will include identifying and contracting with a program operator and preparing Lincoln Center to host the pilot, including completing any land use requirements for use of the property as a safe parking site. Key dates are outlined in the below table.

Key Step	Date
City releases request for proposal to solicit safe parking program operator	January 2023
City selects program operator	February 2023
Program operator signs Lincoln Center lease and contract	March 2023
City staff complete land use and environmental review processes	Q1 2023
Congregations for the Homeless vacates Lincoln Center property	Q1 2023
City Council approves contract and lease, City staff begin identifying participants	April 2023
Safe Parking Pilot Program opens	Q2 2023

POLICY & FISCAL IMPACTS

Policy Impact

This program would implement Council Priority #17, “explore a safe parking program for homelessness response”. Further, it is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan policies to support an intentional local community response to homelessness with supportive services provided to families, youth, and single adults (HS-18).

Fiscal Impact

The City Manager’s Adopted 2023-2024 Budget includes an allocation of \$450,000 for the safe parking program each year.

OPTIONS

N/A

ATTACHMENTS

N/A

AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL LIBRARY

July 11, 2022 Safe Parking Memo, prepared by Bianca Siegl

“Alternatives for Providing Vehicle Residency Safe Parking and Support Services” – memo issued to City Council prepared by Nancy LaCombe, June 2022