



Department of Planning & Community & Economic Development

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FAQ's Regarding the Dairy Drive Campground Site – September 2021

1. What is happening on Dairy Drive?

The City is preparing a parcel of land for temporary use as a campground for persons in our community who are experiencing homelessness and not using the shelter system.

This action takes place in a broader context. Since the beginning of the pandemic, the City's response to increased homelessness has been robust. The City has replaced the facility that serves single men, creating a safer, temporary shelter while a search is underway for a site on which to build a permanent, purpose-built men's shelter. The City also helped The Salvation Army create a new location for families experiencing homelessness and to expand capacity at the women's shelter. The City facilitated development of a second Tiny House Village, and remains committed to further expanding that model. New resources have been devoted to expand outreach services supporting people experiencing homelessness across the City.

2. What specific location are we talking about?

The address is 3202 Dairy Drive – the property at the corner of Dairy Drive and Prairie Dock Drive – directly across the street from the Fire Station 14.

3. Who owns the property?

The property is owned by the City of Madison. It was purchased as a possible site for a fire station. Fire Station 14 was ultimately built across the street from this site.

4. What is the City doing there?

The City is improving the site to use as a temporary sheltered campground for people experiencing homelessness. Its users will not stay in tents, but rather in sturdier, more climate controlled structures — with electricity. Learn more about these structures here: <https://www.facebook.com/PalletShelter/>.

Running water, toilets and showers will also be provided on site.

5. Why are we doing this?

This action is occurring because there are approximately 60 people that have not yet been placed in housing, and they are currently living in unsafe and unsanitary conditions with limited access to adequate water or bathroom facilities and, in some cases, at risk of violence. With winter on the horizon, traditionally more campers seek shelter, but for those remaining, these conditions are likely to get worse. Although there are volunteers and outreach workers available to assist this population, the lack of organized facilities makes it very difficult for them to provide needed services. The planned campground at Dairy Drive will provide temporary shelter and increased safety for up to 30 individuals that will agree to live within the community agreements established there.

6. What kind of improvements will be made?

The City will purchase and assemble 30 small, modular housing structures that campers will use instead of tents. It will also move a small building to the site that will house 6 toilet/sink/shower compartments, and provide space for a small meeting room. That building will be connected to public water and sanitary sewer services at the site. The site will be lit and electricity will be provided to each of the 30 housing structures. A paved fire lane will be installed and there will be space provided for trash receptacles, grills and picnic tables. All aspects of the site plan, and all site improvements, are subject to review and approval by City building inspectors and must meet relevant building and safety codes. It will be a State licensed campground and subject to State regulations pertaining to that use.

7. Why was this site selected?

The City has tried to identify non-park properties that it owns or can purchase, and that can safely accommodate people in our community who are experiencing unsheltered homelessness. This is one of at least 2 sites expected to be used for this purpose.

8. How many people will use the Dairy Drive site?

The property will be limited to use by no more than 30 campers.

9. Who will stay there?

The Dairy Drive site will be available to persons who are unsheltered. The living structures are small and intended to accommodate single individuals, not families.

10. Why can't the City place people in apartments?

There are ongoing efforts to connect people with permanent housing and those will continue. However, a chronic shortage of affordable housing in Madison and Dane County continues to make it difficult for many to find housing. The sheltered campgrounds, like the congregate shelter facilities, intend to provide safe, short-term places for people to stay until they are able to get housing.

11. Why can't people use the shelters?

Madison's shelter system serves many people in our community who are homeless, but it does not work for everybody. For example, the shelters are not able to accommodate couples without children. They also don't work well for persons who have difficulty being around large groups of people, many of whom have extensive trauma histories and/or may be in crisis.

12. There have been reports of problems at the homeless encampment at Reindahl Park. Isn't this just moving those problems to a new location?

The Dairy Drive site is being set up to avoid many of the problems that have plagued locations like the one at Reindahl Park. For example, there will be a limit of 30 people who can use the campground. The Dairy Drive site will provide much safer and more humane conditions than those at Reindahl, which is not equipped to function as a campsite. The Dairy Drive site will have bathroom and shower facilities and access to electric power. People will stay in heated structures, not tents, and there will be staff on site much of the day to provide property management, case management and other essential social services to campground users.

13. What kinds of services will be provided?

City staff are working with non-profit partners to develop plans for staffing at the campground. The goal is to have staff available who can assist, or connect campground users to resources related to mental health wellness, substance abuse treatment and housing searches, as well as meeting daily living needs. Staff will also be responsible for managing and maintaining the property. While there will be a regular staff presence at the site much of the day, staff will not be on-site 24 hours a day, seven days a week. However, information will be made available describing how to reach staff.

14. Is this arrangement being exempted from zoning or other requirements that other developments must meet?

Under recent changes made to the City's zoning ordinances, licensed campgrounds will be permitted uses. Previously, they were not. However, any proposed campground, including at the Dairy Drive site, will require the property be rezoned, following established procedures for such requests. The campground will need to be licensed by the State and must comply with all relevant building code and licensing regulations. In August, the Common Council passed a resolution that affected this project in two ways. First, it exempted the Dairy Drive campground from review by the City's Urban Design Commission. Keep in mind this is not a permanent arrangement and the site changes will be modest. Second, the Council authorized City staff to proceed with site improvements before the rezoning process is completed.

15. How long will people use this site?

The Dairy Drive campground is not intended to be permanent, nor is it intended for use as permanent housing. Rather, its purpose is to offer a safe and dignified place to stay, where someone who is without housing might get help connecting to housing resources and related services. As people leave the site, it is likely others who need temporary shelter will replace them. We do not yet know how long the campsite will operate; it could remain for up to two years. Part of that decision will likely hinge on how successful the arrangement is in meeting needs in our community.

16. How will people get to the site?

We expect some people who use the campground will have their own vehicles. There is on-street parking available, however, people will not be allowed to live in their cars on the street. The property is about a five-minute walk from a bus stop. Help with transportation, including bus passes, is being considered. Space will also be provided on-site for bicycles for those who choose to bike.

17. Who do I contact if issues arise at the campground?

The City is working to identify one or more service providers who will support campground users and help manage the property. Once identified, those agencies will serve as primary contacts for neighbors. As always, for emergencies, people should call 911 or contact the Madison Police Department.

18. How much will this cost and how is it being paid for?

City staff are in the midst of developing plans, both for site improvements and operations. Preliminary estimates suggest it will cost about \$900,000 for physical improvements, which include climate controlled structures, a building for bathrooms and showers. About half of these improvements, including the structures, should be re-usable when this campground closes. Operational plans include paying for on-site staffing to assist campers with housing searches and other needs.

19. When can we expect the campground to start being used?

Preparations for the campground are a work in progress. Site improvements should be completed by late-October. The shelter structures are expected to be installed by mid-November and ready for occupancy sometime in early December.

20. What can I do to help?

As the campsite's opening approaches, the City and service provider(s) will be able share more about specific needs and asks. Donations of food and other items may be requested but they are generally most helpful, and less wasteful, if handled in a coordinated fashion.