

3 Issues to Address:

1. Emergency Winter Shelter / 24-hour Warming Center
2. Encampment Cleanups
3. Long-Term Solutions

1. Emergency Winter Shelter / 24-hour Warming Center

1.1. Problem

- Winter conditions are dangerous, unsheltered and unhoused individuals need a place to go, Des Moines currently has no emergency winter shelter or overnight warming centers
 - Last year, Luis Mendoza Sandoval died outside Forest Library due to exposure to the cold
 - This year there have been reports of serious injury, leading to permanent disability, and potentially fatal incidents due to exposure to the cold
- CISS cannot be our only solution
 - Significant number of unhoused individuals will not go to CISS under any circumstances, including severe weather
 - Certain barriers still exist at CISS for unhoused individuals, even those who would otherwise be allowed in
 - Reports of inconsistency between weather amnesty exceptions and actual acceptance at the door
 - Pets with no carriers
 - Crowded conditions
 - No beds or cots, sleeping in the lobby
 - Need a zero-barrier emergency shelter for severe weather days, without the rules and regulations, and other issues present at CISS

1.2. What Are Other Cities Doing?

1.2.1. Similar Population

- Aurora, IL - Pop: 180,542 - (Jan 10, 2022):
 - 24-hour Warming Center at Aurora Transportation Center
 - Covid-19 health screening, masks required, social distancing

- Spacious, accessible bathrooms, hand sanitizing stations, vending machines. City provides water and snacks.
- City staff or security guards onsite
- Activated based on temperature thresholds
- <https://thevoice.us/aurora-to-reopen-24-hour-warming-center/>
- Spokane, WA - 228,989 - (Dec 26, 2021):
 - Spokane Convention Center, 24-hour low-barrier warming shelter
 - Guardians Foundation & City Departments
 - 24-hour soup kitchen, dozens of sleeping mats
 - Drugs & alcohol prohibited, metal detector, violent individuals turned away (find them help they need)
 - Trained employees
 - <https://www.spokesman.com/stories/2021/dec/26/warming-center-opens-noon-on-sunday-ahead-of-subze/>

1.2.2. Large Cities

- Portland, OR - 652,503 - (Dec 31, 2021):
 - Four Centers: convention center, community centers, high school
 - Cots or mats + sleeping bags
 - Volunteers
 - <https://www.kxl.com/warming-shelters-re-open-during-cold-snap/>
 - Severe Weather Shelters
 - 25 degrees or below
 - Inch or more of snow
 - Overnight temps below 32, inch of driving rain
 - Severe wind chills, extreme temperature fluctuations, etc
 - <https://www.multco.us/care-when-its-cold/severe-weather-and-homelessness>
- Seattle, WA - 737,015 - (Dec 29, 2021)
 - Three emergency shelters:
 - Seattle City Hall, 24 hours, meals provided
 - Seattle Center Exhibition Hall, overnight, Salvation Army
 - Covid safety & screening protocols, added air filtration
 - <https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/warming-shelters-open-during-cold-weather/AJGQT4FRZRANTAGCWY5GS2K3BI/>

1.2.3. Small Cities/Towns

- Rochester, NH - 32,492 - (Dec 28, 2017)
 - Temporary 24-hour warming shelter, Rochester Community Center
 - Cots, bathrooms, no food unless donated
 - Partnering agencies staff using volunteers
 - <https://www.fosters.com/story/news/2017/12/29/groups-partner-on-24-hour-warming-shelter/16720814007/>
- City of Edinburg - Library
- NW Indiana
 - Chesterton City Hall - 24 hours
 - Crown Point Civic Center - 24 hours
 - Gary Metro Center - 24 hours
 - Griffith Central Fire Station - after 7pm until conditions subside
 - Hobart Fire Station Community Room - 24 hours
 - Lake Station Fire Department - 24 hours
 - <https://www.townplanner.com/schererville/in/event/local-events-warming-centers-warming-shelters-emergency-shelters/warming-shelters-in-northwest-indiana/435224/>

1.3. Solution

1.3.1. Prepare an Emergency Winter Shelter / 24 Hour Warming Center

- Guidelines
 - NO barriers
 - Full autonomy, people are responsible for themselves
 - NO intake or sign in
 - NO questions asked
 - Deal with conflict as you would in any other public space
 - Needs to be room to distance, different areas/rooms
- Potential Location(s)
 - Community Centers
 - Libraries
 - Churches
 - Schools
 - DART Central Station
 - Capitol Square
 - YMCA
 - City Buildings - MSC, City Hall
 - Polk County River Place
 - Convention Centers

- Private Universities - DMU, Drake, Grandview
- Transportation
 - Free DART rides
- Communication
 - Neighborhood Services - postings at camps
 - Postings Downtown
 - Postings at warming centers
 - Communication through service providers
- Staffing Needs
 - City Staff
 - Volunteers
 - Janitorial
- Resources/Services
 - Cots, blankets, pillows
 - Food
 - Bathrooms
 - Hygiene Products
 - Masks
 - Charging stations
 - Safe Injection Site / Sharps Disposal
 - Pets
 - provide carriers, leashes, separate rooms....
 - partner w/ arl? Pet daycare
- Trigger
 - Temp/Windchill - below 32
 - Extreme Weather - transportation restricted, seek shelter
- Funding
 - ARPA
 - Any discretionary funds?
 - Find a permanent funding source - budget, county

2. Encampment Cleanups

2.1. Extreme Weather & Covid

2.1.1. Camps destroyed before extreme weather

- 6 clean ups in the beginning of December
 - Most were considered “emergency” cleanups, but camps were destroyed with no 10 day notice, or possibility of appeal process
 - One clean up was the day before the second derecho

2.1.2. CDC Guidelines - Covid:

Considerations for encampments

- If individual housing options are not available, allow people who are living unsheltered or in encampments to remain where they are.
 - Clearing encampments can cause people to disperse throughout the community and break connections with service providers. This increases the potential for infectious disease spread.
- Encourage people staying in encampments to set up their tents/sleeping quarters with at least 12 feet x 12 feet of space per individual.
 - If an encampment is not able to provide sufficient space for each person, allow people to remain where they are but help decompress the encampment by linking those at increased risk for severe illness to individual rooms or safe shelter.
- Work together with other community organizations and offices to improve sanitation in encampments.
- Ensure nearby restroom facilities have functional water taps, are stocked with hand hygiene materials (soap, drying materials) and bath tissue, and remain open to people experiencing homelessness 24 hours per day.
- If toilets or handwashing facilities are not available nearby, assist with providing access to portable latrines with handwashing facilities for encampments of more than 10 people. These facilities should be equipped with hand sanitizer (containing at least 60% alcohol).

2.2. It's Us: DSM Homeless Community Statement & Demands

Press release It's Us put out on the June 6th, 2021 eviction that displaced over 27 people. It states:

We strongly condemn the city of Des Moines' most recent attempt to remove us from our camps by the use of weaponized encroachment codes, threat of force, and arrest. These methods are used to make it next to impossible to fight our displacement, or to appeal the removal in the court system. The city plays with our lives with absolute power.

We are tired, many of us have had to move multiple times in the last few months due to previous displacements of this kind. When the city does this, they destroy any semblance of normalcy or safety we've been able to develop, and our ability to get our feet underneath us is dramatically decreased. We are not treated by the city government with the respect all humans are due, we are treated as a "problem" to be "dealt with." Often citing CISS as the answer to the problems perpetuated by the city; carceral, unhygienic, and overcrowded conditions worsen our chances of suffering from Covid-19 and make the shelter not an option for many of us.

We demand the respect we are due and the peace to better our own lives. The city has given us a ten day notice to remove ourselves and our belongings from our camps, beginning June 6th we are at risk of losing everything.

We demand an immediate halt to this, and all future evictions of houseless camps in the Des Moines area.

"Law demands an obedience to what it claims is legal. By doing so, it displaces responsibility for its violence. In other words, the violence that law requires to enforce the relations that law claims are just must always be called something other than violence."

Demands:

1. Immediately stop all camp evictions
2. Provide designated camping areas for the unhoused, close to bus lines and service outreach centers
3. Provide basic sanitation and trash services to camps

2.3. Proposals

- 2.3.1. Policy: No encroachment cleanups during an extreme weather designation, or in the immediate days before when forecasted
 - Any complaints received during this time should be used as a tip for outreach from neighborhood services
 - Instead of inspection and cleanup, provide information about emergency warming shelter, postings
- 2.3.2. Moratorium on encroachment cleanups during pandemic - follow cdc guidelines
- 2.3.3. End encroachment cleanups on encampments
 - Focus time & resources on long-term housing solutions
 - Develop trauma-informed mediation process or crisis response that respects to self-determination of need to replace complaint based cleanup response
 - Change city code & department policies to allow encroachments on public land when inhabited

3. Long-Term Solutions

3.1. Emergency Winter & Extreme Weather Shelter

- Develop a permanent emergency winter & extreme weather shelter plan with Polk County Emergency Management
- Be ready to implement on short notice by next winter

3.2. Encampments

- Provide multiple designated camping areas, close to bus lines and service access centers
 - Develop plan with residents of the camps
- Provide basic sanitation and trash services to camps
- Allow camping on all public land / create a zoning designation

3.3. Shelters

- Create and accountability process for shelters the city partners with or recommends to ensure humane & quality treatment of residents
 - Seek input from unsheltered individuals, current & former clients on needs, humanity, and conditions of the shelter

3.4. Housing for All

- Make a commitment as a city to decommmodify housing, and provide free public housing for all

- Create a plan to achieve this