

1 **2021 RES-223**

2 **Providing a Staff Team Report on Potential Camping and Car Camping Options for**
3 **People Experiencing Homelessness**

4 Dane County has prioritized safe sheltering and eviction prevention throughout the COVID-19
5 pandemic. The County committed funds from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic
6 Security Act (“CARES”) Act to eviction prevention and has partnered with Tenant Resource
7 Center and Urban Triage to administer Emergency Rent Assistance program funds allocated to
8 the County through federal COVID relief legislation. The County funded Occupy Madison to
9 support the creation of 28 tinier houses for people who had been living outside in 2020 to
10 prevent them from having to live outside during the cold winter months. The County has also
11 funded expanded housing navigation and launched a rapid rehousing program to provide more
12 stable housing options to people experiencing homelessness. The County has funded a hotel
13 sheltering program for families due to the capacity limitations at the family shelter and for
14 individuals who are especially vulnerable to serious illness if infected by COVID-19 (“vulnerable
15 population”) and not sufficiently protected in congregate shelter facilities. At its peak, the hotel
16 sheltering program provided safe shelter to approximately 300 households.

17 As of September 3, 2021, there are 616 individuals on the coordinated entry list in Dane County
18 who are currently experiencing homelessness and almost half of those persons, 290 people, are
19 experiencing chronic homelessness. Racial disparities are significant. Black, Indigenous and
20 People of Color (BIPOC) make up most of the people on the coordinated entry list and 277
21 people (45%) identify as Black. 177 people are seniors (55 and over), 43 are veterans, and 43
22 are youth (18-24 yrs old) on the list. As of August, 11, 2021, the average length of time of
23 individuals on the list waiting for a housing placement is 470 days.

24 Some of the people who had been in the hotels and who are on the coordinated entry list were
25 previously living in encampments, including but not limited to McPike Park and Reindahl Park in
26 the City of Madison. For much of the pandemic, the City of Madison followed CDC [guidance](#) to
27 leave encampments in place. The City of Madison also authorized temporary permitted
28 encampments in a few locations. One of those temporary permanent encampments (TPE) was
29 at Reindahl Park. While the authorization for the TPE expired, the City of Madison, through
30 direction by the Common Council, is allowing the encampment to remain in place while the City
31 pursues alternatives to the Reindahl site. Outreach staff have estimated that as of early August,
32 2021, they have connected with approximately 125 people who are currently living outside in
33 encampments. The actual number of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness and living
34 outside or in cars is expected to be higher.

35 In July, 2012, in response to a request from the Dane County Board, Madison-area Urban
36 Ministry (now known as Just Dane), issued a report to the Dane County Board on alternative
37 sites for Occupy Madison. Occupy Madison had been operating an encampment in an
38 abandoned car lot on East Washington Ave. The Report provided immediate, intermediate, and
39 long term “responses and strategies to address needs and gaps in services”. One of the
40 immediate responses and strategies was related to car-camping. The report recommended the
41 following to the County Board over 9 years ago:

42 Establish car camping sites or parking spots for those living in their cars:

- 43 1. Identify spots on county owned property, businesses and faith communities
44 parking lots;
45 2. Follow other successful car camping models from around the United States.
46 Examples include Santa Barbara, CA, Eugene, OR, Portland, OR, Los Angeles,
47 CA;
48 3. Create a registration process for those who would like to camp in the available
49 car camping spots;
50 4. Develop a community outreach program to engage neighbors and address
51 concerns regarding car camping in the neighborhood.

52 **NOW THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Department of Human Services, in
53 collaboration with necessary departments and staff, prepare a report on implementation of
54 lawful camping and car-camping options in Dane County as first recommended to the County
55 Board in July 2012. The report shall be presented to the Health and Human Needs Committee
56 no later than 60 days after the adoption of this resolution.