Temporary Shelter Regulations – Key Points

See BMC Chapter 20.15 for more information

1. Definitions:
   • "Managing agency" means an organization identified as the manager of a temporary or long-term shelter that has the capacity to organize and manage a shelter. Managing agencies are limited to religious organizations, nonprofit agencies and governmental entities. A group of homeless residents is not considered a managing agency. A managing agency may be the same entity as the sponsor.

   • "Sponsor" means an organization that:
     a. Invites a temporary homeless shelter to reside on land they own or lease; and
     b. Is a State of Washington registered not-for-profit corporation and federally recognized tax exempt 501(c)(3) organization or a governmental entity; or
     c. Is recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as exempt from federal income taxes as a religious organization that expresses its religious mission, in part, by organizing living accommodations for the homeless.

   • "Temporary building encampment" means a temporary homeless shelter in a building or other permanent structure with overnight sleeping accommodations for the homeless, as approved by the director, on a site provided or arranged for by a sponsor with services provided by a sponsor and supervised by a managing agency. This definition includes low-barrier shelters and other similar uses.

   • "Temporary homeless shelter" or "temporary shelter" means a shelter providing temporary housing accommodations that includes a sponsor and managing agency, the primary purpose of which is to provide temporary shelter for people experiencing homelessness in general or for specific populations of the homeless. Temporary shelters include temporary building encampments, temporary safe parking areas, temporary tent encampments, and temporary tiny house encampments. For the purpose of this ordinance, temporary homeless shelters are the same as temporary encampments as defined in RCW 35.21.915.

   • "Temporary safe parking area" means a temporary homeless shelter for a group of people living in their vehicles, as approved by the director, on a site provided or arranged for by a sponsor with services provided by a sponsor and supervised by a managing agency. This definition does not include recreational vehicles.
• "Temporary tent encampment" means a temporary homeless shelter for a group of people that is composed of tents or other temporary structures, as approved by the director, on a site provided or arranged for by a sponsor with services provided by a sponsor and supervised by a managing agency.

• "Temporary tiny house encampment" means a temporary homeless shelter for a group of people living in purpose-built tiny houses for people experiencing homelessness, as approved by the director, on a site provided or arranged for by a sponsor with services provided by a sponsor and supervised by a managing agency. Temporary tiny houses for the homeless are between 100 - 300 square feet and easily constructed and moved to various locations. They are not dwelling units and, as such, are not required to meet building codes.

2. **Permit type:** Type II per BMC - Temporary use permit. See BMC 20.15 for modified review timeframes.

3. **Number of people allowed:**
   a. The maximum number of people allowed at one time in a single temporary safe parking area, temporary tent encampment or temporary tiny house encampment is 100 people. Multiple locations may be permitted, but the aggregate of people in these three shelter types can’t exceed 300.
   b. No more than 300 people Citywide are allowed in no more than four temporary building encampments.

4. **Where allowed:**
   a. Temporary safe parking areas, temporary tent encampments, and temporary tiny house encampments are permitted in any zoning district.
   b. Temporary building encampments are permitted in Industrial zones, commercial and industrial areas within Urban Village zones, and Commercial zones where hotels and motels are permitted. These zoning restrictions do not apply to temporary building encampments on sites owned or controlled by religious organizations.

5. **Number of beds:** No more than one bed per 35 square feet of floor area is permitted in temporary building encampments.

6. **Timeframes:**
   a. Temporary safe parking areas and temporary tent encampments may be approved for up to 90 days. One 90-day extension may be granted.
   b. Temporary tiny house encampments may be approved for between 90 days and up to two years. Extensions totaling up to two years may be granted.
   c. Temporary building encampments may be approved for up to five years. Extensions totaling up to five years may be granted.

7. **Exemptions:** Confidential shelters and temporary accommodations for homeless individuals and families located within a church building and accessory in nature to the primary religious use of the church building do not require a temporary shelter permit.