



Oppose the Warming Center Closure to Avoid More Deaths

AN OPEN LETTER VIA EMAIL on FEB. 22, 2021

To: Shon Sylvia, Executive Director of Metro Parks Tacoma
Carrie Prudente Holden, President and CEO of the South Puget Sound Boys and Girls Club

CC: Victoria Woodards, Mayor of the City of Tacoma

Ms. Holden and Mr. Sylvia:

At the end of this month, the warming shelter currently operating at the Eastside Community Center on Portland Avenue and E. 56th Street is set to close, displacing dozens of individuals who have been counting on this shelter for life-sustaining protection from winter weather, along with meals and other essential services and support.

This closure represents a failure of both the City of Tacoma to keep its word regarding the continued operations of the warming shelter through the month of March, and a failure of the community to protect our most vulnerable neighbors.

Tacoma Housing Now, together with the undersigned community partners, call upon both of you to demand the City of Tacoma makes good on their promise to shelter unhoused individuals currently residing at this location through March, and to direct your staff to avoid making preparations to evict and displace them until the City of Tacoma makes a commitment to locate other suitable replacement shelter that will stay open at least through March as promised.

THN and the leaders of other community organizations deeply respect the need for affordable, high quality childcare especially for the children of essential workers, and recognize the vital role the Boys and Girls Club and Metro Parks play in providing this service and others to the community. It is not our desire to displace or harm the families who depend on such care and the programs offered by your organizations. Rather, THN takes the strong position that our community should **not have to choose**



between childcare and housing our neighbors. We are faced with this terrible choice because the City of Tacoma has failed to act to address the needs facing our community and to provide meaningful solutions to the lack of housing and shelter facing Tacoma residents.

Ms. Holden and Mr. Sylvia, your next actions must be aligned with supporting and sustaining every member of our community, and we look to you now to make choices that will protect both the children served by your respective programs and our unhoused neighbors. You must demand the City of Tacoma make good on their promise to keep the warming shelter open, whether in this location or another. Regardless of the city’s response you must not allow our unhoused neighbors to be displaced, resulting in their suffering and additional deaths this winter. Should the City of Tacoma fail to provide other suitable replacement shelter, you must not cause the closure of the warming center at the end of February—rather, we call on you to provide funding and programming for operating safe, affordable and high quality childcare in another of your many facilities, so that no child of an essential worker or unhoused neighbor suffers the consequences of the city’s short-sighted actions in renegeing on their commitment to keep the warming shelter open.

A growing number of community members share our concerns and commitments, and have joined us in signing this letter below.

In solidarity,

Tacoma Housing Now

Name, Organization

Name, Organization

Name, Organization

Name, Organization

Name, Organization

Name, Organization

Name, Organization

Name, Organization

Name, Organization