



NEWS RELEASE

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City of Eugene adjusts urban camping response

In order to support community health during the COVID-19 pandemic, the City of Eugene has temporarily adjusted its enforcement process around prohibited camping in order to help people maintain recommended physical distancing while reducing the need to move around the community. These adjustments align with recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control, Oregon Health Authority, and Lane County Public Health.

The City continues to work with Lane County and partners in the community to find safe places for unhoused community members, including the newly established microsites, additional Rest Stops, overnight car camping sites and in existing shelters. However, it is still the case that many people experiencing homelessness are residing in Eugene's parks, natural areas, and right of way areas for the time being.

The City has developed criteria aimed at balancing the need for places to sleep with the public health crisis that requires adequate physical distancing to protect community members' health and well-being. These criteria set parameters around location of camps, safety and cleanliness, acceptable behaviors and impacts to neighbors, the environment, and city infrastructure. Further, there are locations in Eugene's parks, natural areas, and the rights of ways that are not acceptable for camping at any scale due to unmitigable impacts on the environment, neighborhoods and the usability of parks and public infrastructure such as streets.

The criteria described below may be refined as we work through these new processes, coordinate with community partners and respond to community feedback.

Urban Camping in Parks and Open Spaces

There are locations in Eugene's parks and natural areas that are not acceptable for camping at any scale due to unmitigable impacts on the environment, neighborhoods, and the usability of parks.

Where camping is **not** allowed in the parks system

- All parks designated as neighborhood parks (For details <http://www.eugene-or.gov/327/Parks-and-natural-areas>).

- Riparian areas such as along the Willamette River and Amazon Creek. Wetlands such as Delta Ponds and the West Eugene Wetlands.
- Sensitive natural areas such as the Whilamut Natural Area.
- The City's vegetated stormwater facilities that are designed to filter and clean water.
- Within 300 feet of playgrounds, sports courts, park shelters, picnic shelters and City of Eugene Rest Stop and microsite locations.
- Within 50 feet of private property.

How we respond

Campers in these areas are issued a 24-hour notice of cleanup which requires they vacate the area.

COVID-19 public health criteria for temporary camping in parks

Outside of areas where camping is not allowed, a temporary camp needs to meet these criteria:

- Camp site supports public health and safety by following physical distancing guidelines:
 - Tents are 12 feet apart from individuals not in the camper's pod
 - It is possible for the public to reasonably maintain six feet of distance from the person camping and their property at all times.
- Camp maintains public access to sidewalks, paths, transit stations, restrooms or building entrances.
- Camp maintains clean and healthy spaces with no significant garbage or debris.
- Camp is safe with no evidence of conspicuous drug use: uncapped, used hypodermic needles or other paraphernalia that could be a health hazard to other community members are not permitted.
- There are no Eugene Police Department verified reports of criminal behavior.
- Camp site is not negatively impacting properties adjacent to parks.
 - Examples include blocking sidewalks, loud noise, aggressive dogs, threatening behavior, public indecency.
- Camp site is not negatively affecting nearby business activities.
 - Examples include blocking sidewalks, loud noise, aggressive dogs, threatening behavior, public indecency.
- Camp site is not disturbing vegetation.
- Camp site is not damaging or preventing maintenance of park infrastructure.

How we respond

The City provides a 48-hour warning notice to camps that do not meet the above criteria and are in temporarily allowed areas of Eugene's parks and natural areas. The notice provides clear information about what needs to be corrected to meet accepted criteria. City staff visit the site no sooner than 48 hours later. If the site is in compliance, the camp site will be allowed to remain. If the criteria have not been met, the camp will be given a 24-hour notice of cleanup and cleanup will occur no sooner than 24 hours later.

New Oregon Department of Transportation Rules

The Parks and Open Space Division cares for several areas owned by the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) such as Washington Jefferson Park. While this park was built on ODOT land, Parks has cared for it just like any other park in the system for decades. In the fall of 2020, a growing encampment on the site at 1st and Jefferson and 1st and Washington led to a review of our policies and intergovernmental agreements. In particular, because of differences in how ODOT and the City address

camping violations, the City worked with ODOT over several weeks to revise our previous agreement in order to manage the area in a way that is in line with their jurisdiction.

Currently, for lands like Washington Jefferson Park that Parks leases from ODOT, all park rules and policies apply except for the City's 24-hour camp posting procedures. In these locations the City must follow ODOT's camp posting requirements which allow for cleanup of belongings no sooner than 10 days and no later than 19 days from the date the site is posted for cleanup. There are some exceptions that would allow for cleanup within 24 hours but those are reserved for severe situations.

[How to Report Concerns](#)

If community members have specific non-emergency campsite concerns, these can be reported online through Park Watch (eugene-or.gov/parkwatch) or by calling 541-682-4800 – Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Urban Camping in the Right-of-Way

The City of Eugene has also adjusted its procedures for closing and cleaning camps in the rights of way. Staff have developed a process to help evaluate locations of camps, safety and cleanliness, acceptable behaviors, and the impacts to neighbors, environment, and city infrastructure to help determine when camps may be able to remain in place.

[COVID-19 public health criteria for temporary camping in rights-of-way](#)

[Criteria for where camping may remain](#)

- Camp site is not blocking access in ROW to public and private properties
- Camp site is not blocking sidewalks and/or other pedestrian ways (5' minimum clear space required under ADA regulations)
- Camp site is not established on road surfaces (public safety hazard)
- Camp site is not in a right of way planting strip – if property owner has filed a complaint for people trespassing. ([Ordinance No. 20618](#))
- Camp or its associated materials are not creating a hazard to traffic or to users of the sidewalk.
- There are no Eugene Police Department verified reports of criminal behavior.

[How we respond](#)

The City provides a 48-hour warning notice to camps that do not meet the above criteria and are in the rights of way. The notice provides clear information about what needs to be corrected to meet accepted criteria. City staff visit the site no sooner than 48 hours later. If the site is in compliance, the camp site will be allowed to remain. If the criteria has not been met, the camp will be given a 24-hour notice of cleanup and cleanup will occur no sooner than 24 hours later.

[How to Report Concerns](#)

If community members have specific non-emergency campsite concerns, these can be reported by calling Eugene Public Works at 541-682-4800 – Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

New Rest Stops and Microsites

In response to the growing need for safe places for homeless individuals to sleep and the ongoing challenges posed by COVID-19 in the community, the Eugene City Council approved the establishment of five new Rest Stop sites at its meeting on Sept. 30, 2020. Rest Stops are designated, managed sites that

provide transitional shelter to 15-20 individuals experiencing homelessness. The new Rest Stops will provide safe spaces for 75 to 100 people and will be located across five different City Council wards:

- Skinner City Farm (Washington St. and W. 1st, Ward 7) open
- Empire Pond (Hwy. 99 and Empire Park Dr., Ward 6)
- Westmoreland Park (North side of 18th Ave., Ward 1)
- Parking Lot 9 off Leo Harris Pkwy. (Leo Harris Pkwy. and Walnut Dr., Ward 4)
- Bertelsen Road & W. 7th Ave. (Ward 8)

The City is also supporting smaller designated sites called microsites where up to 6 Conestoga Huts or Pallet Shelters provide transitional shelter to people experiencing homelessness. The new microsites are located at:

- 2190 Polk St. parking lot (opening March 2021)
- Bethel & Roosevelt (opening January 2021)
- Peace Presbyterian Church (opening January 2021)

For overall questions about the City's efforts around homelessness including our response during the COVID-19 pandemic, please visit www.eugene-or.gov/Homelessness.

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