

SEATTLE, February 17, 2020 — The American Institute of Architects (AIA) Seattle Chapter endorses [Seattle Council Bill 119656](#), which would allow more transitional homeless encampments throughout the city and give organizations hosting encampments the ability to renew their permits indefinitely.

Transitional encampments, many of which in Seattle are tiny house villages, provide on-site access to hygiene facilities, electricity, secure places to store belongings, meals, bus passes, and case management. In addition to being a more dignified alternative to “basic shelter,” sanctioned encampments are also spaces where residents can build community ties and form much-needed support systems. Unlike other forms of shelter where space is provisional and contingent upon any number of factors, tiny houses are a stable, reliable place to live, a place that many call “home.”

Transitional encampments and tiny house villages are highly sought after by people who are living unsheltered and for good reason: according to the Low Income Housing Institute (the organization that operates many of the tiny house villages) and King County’s Homeless Management Information System, transitional encampments have some of the highest rates of exit to permanent housing, frequently on par with or better than those of enhanced shelter.

Last October, AIA Seattle released a [Policy Statement on Homelessness](#) calling for the City to allocate more funding and surplus land to temporary encampments and enhanced shelters. In that statement we also encourage lawmakers to allow longer permit periods for transitional encampments in order to increase stability for residents and reduce operational costs.

Council Bill 119656 would address these points and, along with the \$2 million that was allocated to transitional encampments in the last City budget, will give many more people experiencing homelessness a safe, secure, and dignified place to live while transitioning into permanent housing.

“Shelter is a basic human need, but housing is a human right. As architects, we understand that a home is more than just protection from the elements; it’s a place to feel safe, to take care of oneself, to connect with other people. It’s the foundation of life. Everyone deserves that stability,” said Emily Darling, co-chair of AIA Seattle’s Committee on Homelessness. “While we acknowledge that tiny houses aren’t a permanent housing solution, we also have seen the positive impact the villages have had on the people in them as well as the communities around them. They are literally a life changing opportunity for people experiencing homelessness and are clearly something the city should be supporting.”

Many of AIA Seattle’s members have volunteered their time and effort at tiny house villages, tent encampments, and homeless shelters over the years. They have helped build tiny houses and have often provided pro bono architectural services. Many of our members have seen first-hand the positive effects that transitional encampments can have on peoples’ lives and have witnessed how encampments can win over the support of skeptical communities.

AIA Seattle believes that allowing more sanctioned encampments will benefit all of the residents of Seattle, especially the most vulnerable among us, and we urge City Council members to pass Council Bill 119656 when it comes before them tomorrow.