

Association of Faith Communities
532 Center Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

SAFE SPACES PARKING PROGRAM

Mission Statement

The mission of the Association of Faith Communities (AFC) Santa Cruz County is to coordinate the efforts of our members in their collective ministries to people who are homeless, living in poverty or who are in economic need and to assist our members in enhancing the effectiveness of our individual and combined efforts. One of the objectives within that mission is to create new resources to meet the needs of those of our friends and neighbors who find themselves in unsafe and unsheltered circumstances. To meet that need, the AFC has created the **SAFE SPACES PARKING PROGRAM**.

Assessing the Need

We believe that safe, even temporary, shelter is one of the most pressing needs in our community. According to the 2011 Homeless Census and Survey more than 2,100 people are unsheltered in Santa Cruz County every night. Of those, **22% reside in motor vehicles**, an increase of **more than 31%** over the number reported just two years ago. It is estimated that more than **300 recreational vehicles, vans and automobiles** serve as the primary home for families who see this option as the only way to keep the family unit together in the absence of affordable housing. Most of these vehicles are forced by circumstances to park overnight on city or county streets in violation of local ordinance. This is the problem and the need.

Although parking for the purpose of overnight camping on a public thoroughfare is unlawful in all local jurisdictions, parking a **vehicle overnight on private church grounds** is not.

The relevant local ordinances are the following:

- The Santa Cruz Municipal Code 636.020 permits the parking of **up to three (3) recreational vehicles** on church grounds with the consent of the owner.
- Santa Cruz County Code Section 10.16.060 permits recreational vehicle camping on private grounds “with the consent of the owner ...”
- City of Capitola Municipal Code Section 9.48.030 permits recreational vehicle camping: upon application, the city council may issue, or conditionally issue, temporary permits for camping upon private property when satisfactory evidence is presented to the council that’s (1) state parks, motels, hotels, or established camp grounds are not a feasible alternative for the applicant; (2) arrangements have been made to ensure that waste and trash will not be discharged in connection with the camping activities, except into appropriate sewage or trash disposal facilities; and (3) the activity will not subject the neighbors to excessive noise or unpleasant visual effects.
- City of Scots Valley Municipal Code Section 7.12.140 prohibits overnight camping in any city park or on any city owned property. No person shall arrange bedding or shelter in any city park or on any city owned property for the purpose of camping overnight but **does not otherwise prohibit camping on private property.**

This brief overview of the current ordinances controlling **overnight parking** is presented to provide the members of our local faith community with a working knowledge of the legal limitations to this program. The question of how we can meet the need for **safe, temporary parking spaces** is the subject of the next section of this proposal.

Identifying the Process and Procedures

The AFC understands that every faith based organization is responsible not only to its membership and the community at-large, but also to its immediate neighbors. To insure that all questions are answered and each concern is addressed, we have created a process through which we hope to make participation in our **Safe Spaces Parking Program** both easy and ultimately successful.

It is our hope that the process and procedures we have designed will accomplish this goal. So what will that process look like? Here’s what we envision.

Step One:

Each faith-based organization which expresses interest in participating in the **Safe Spaces Parking Program** will be contacted by a member (or members) of the Safe Spaces Parking Program Committee (the "Committee"). The member will conduct meetings with church leaders, interested members of the congregation along with members of neighborhood groups and law enforcement. These meetings will be an opportunity to discuss each and every concern that may be raised by the proposed program.

Step Two:

The program will be strictly limited to **overnight parking** only. Each organization will have the absolute right to determine the hours during which any overnight parking may be allowed and the area in which it will be permitted.

Step Three:

The Committee will consult with the participating faith community to formulate a basic Safe Spaces Parking Program Checklist. At a minimum, those persons wishing to park overnight must meet the following criteria: (1) maximum occupancy for any applicant vehicle must not exceed (a) more than two adults or (b) more than two adult parents and two minor children; (2) vehicle owner must possess a valid California Operator's Permit; and (3) the vehicle in which they will **park overnight** on church property must have valid, current registration. Priority for available overnight parking space will be given to those applicants with vehicles which are by definition self-contained, i.e., have a fully functional waste collection and grey water systems.

Step Four:

A member or members of the Committee will meet with each applicant and review all eligibility criteria as well as generally describe the location and proposed terms and conditions of the permission to park overnight. (The Committee is at present considering the creation of a "parking pass" of some sort to identify those vehicles with express permission to park overnight).

Step Five:

One member of the Committee will conduct a monthly meeting with a representative of the participating faith community to discuss any concerns which may arise during the course of the program.

Goals

Of course, the general goal of the **Safe Spaces Parking Program** is to create more **temporary and safe living space** for our homeless citizens. However, the AFC understands that how this program is regulated and administered as a practical matter will require the good will and cooperation of all the parties involved.

That having been said, our goal is to create a program that is “transitional” and that will help to bridge the divide between homelessness and the dream of permanent housing. A **temporary safe** space, even if only for the night, may be the “leg up” than many homeless people need to help them prepare for a better and more productive next day.

We ask you to prayerfully consider joining in this effort that we believe can be a gift and a blessing given mutually between our faith communities and our neighbors in need.

Sincerely,

Association of Faith Communities