Dear Sammamish City Council and Planning Commission,

We write to you in our capacities both as citizens of Sammamish and of the wider plateau community, but also as religious leaders responsible to and for the faith communities entrusted to our care. We write to convey to you our deep gratitude and appreciation for the City of Sammamish, for its gifted and dedicated leaders, and for the many positive and mutually enriching opportunities we and our faith communities have had over the years to collaborate with the city on projects that serve the common good. We also write to convey our hopes and desires, as well as our concerns, regarding the ordinances on homeless encampments that are presently being drafted and considered for the City of Sammamish.

We wanted you to be aware of what an extremely positive experience it has been for our faith communities to work with, and to help, the homeless men and women of Tent City IV who have been hosted by two of the churches here on the plateau in recent months, first at Mary, Queen of Peace Catholic Church, and presently at Faith United Methodist Church. While the two communities just mentioned served as the host sites for Tent City IV, the hosting effort was supported and assisted by a much wider representation from throughout Sammamish and the surrounding civic community, including elected and appointed representatives from our city government and public services. In addition to the enlivening and galvanizing effect that these experiences have had on our faith communities who aided the effort, working with Tent City IV also served as a rallying point that brought together people of good will from schools, organizations and neighborhoods from throughout the plateau area, and even beyond.

This broad and multi-faceted collaboration on the part of so many individuals, families, institutions and organizations was and is something that in our estimation reflects what is best about the City of Sammamish and its citizens, namely our compassion, our willingness (eagerness even) to work for the common good, and our readiness to serve. Yes, we all want safe neighborhoods and a good quality of life for ourselves and our families. But we believe that our citizens also want us to be known as a civic community that cares, that serves, and that reaches out to help. And we believe that these goals can be accomplished without mutual detriment or threat.

For the many individuals, groups and communities that pitched in to help, hosting Tent City IV brought forth a sense of deep pride in our larger plateau community, and a profound and tangible sense of togetherness and accomplishment. We strongly believe that future opportunities to work with homeless encampments will likewise prove a blessing for both our homeless citizens and for our civic community, and it is our fervent hope and desire that the forthcoming ordinances will in no way hinder or obstruct such opportunities from taking place.

As citizens and as religious leaders, we too want ordinances that are prudent and reasonable in helping to ensure the safety and dignity of all our citizens, including those who are homeless. But we also want to avoid ordinances that are overly restrictive, and that go beyond what federal and state law allows in constraining or hindering faith communities from carrying out the work they are morally obliged and spiritually compelled to offer to the homeless. With this in mind, we
offer the attached list that identifies those elements in the initial draft of the ordinances that we feel are overly restrictive and unreasonably limiting, and that will not survive challenge in a court of law should such a challenge arise.

In closing, we offer once again our gratitude to you for all the work you are doing on behalf of our civic community, and we pledge our sincere and persistent efforts to do our part to assist you and to work with you for the benefit of all our citizens.

Respectfully,

[Signatures]

1121 228th Ave. SE Sammamish, WA 98075
Homeless Encampment Ordinance

We appreciate the thoughtfulness of the City in the recent draft, there are items worth further consideration. They are as follows:

- 21A70.010 (3) The natural disaster clause in this is resolved later in the draft. However, it may be wise to consider how the use of church facilities may be of service quickly in the event of a disaster for housing, food, etc. The nature of such disasters dictate that speedy decisions are a must.
- 21A.70.195 (1) Is it possible for the use of public or privately owned land might provide a better alternative?
  - (2) (a) Under duration and frequency, there has been discussion of asking the local municipalities to consider a four months stay, allowing for less moves for the encampment each year, and therefore reducing the total number of host sites needed in the region. The “Minority report” of the Planning Commission made such a recommendation. This provision makes a great deal of sense and makes for one less move per year for the residents, and reduces the number of encampments needed in the region each year.
  - (2) (b) (not more frequent than 18 months in the same site) While this seems more restrictive, it is one that churches can support, in that the neighbors and host site need to have a similar timeframe to recover, assess and prepare.
  - (2) (d) There is an understanding among the Sammamish religious leaders that the City also needs to marshal its resources, and that there are real staffing issues to consider. The two encampment limit in 365 days is worth consideration in light of this reality.
  - (3) Which “other agencies” are the subject of this reference?
  - (4) (a) (i) While at first glance, the requirement that homeowners must be notified, the city staff has said they would assist in providing the mailing list, and the sponsor would not be held responsible if the County’s records are not accurate.
  - (4) (a) (ii) The change in this section is appropriate. Schools in the vicinity should be notified. The change in language allows for the notification without giving directors what would amount to “veto” power. What is the standard for “security provisions”?
  - (4) (a) (iii) The process of collecting comments from phone given verbally and accurately transcribing them would be large burden for a hosting community. Most churches would be willing to make copies available that have been submitted in writing before the community meeting.
  - (4) (d) Regarding warrant checks. We recognize that this is to ensure that the agreement of warrant checks are done as proposed by the managing agency (in this case, SHARE); the timing of this (7 days prior to a move) will be cumbersome at a time when the members of the encampment are needed most to ready of the move. Since SHARE is not generally on site, this task must be completed by the encampment security team. The requirement that the Sponsor verify that the log is being kept is a new item, and the details of how this is to be done, and how this is to be reported are not defined.
Comments on Sammamish Ordinance

21A.70.195 (2c) No more than one Homeless Encampment may be located in the City at any time.

Response: The reason for this item is likely the result of both available city resources, particularly law enforcement, and concern of the neighborhood surrounding the encampment. As resident size grows, however, the potential for problems within the encampment grows as well. The recent experience at Faith United Methodist Church has been extremely positive with no problems of significance. The limited “footprint” at Faith allowing for a maximum of 42 residents is a big reason for this. We would suggest a revision of this item to:

(2c – revised) No more than one Homeless Encampment of up to 100 residents or two encampments of up to 50 residents each may be located in the City at any time.

(Note: having fewer residents also makes the possibility of hosting available to more churches having fewer resources.)

21A.70.195 (2d) No more than two homeless encampments within the city limits shall be allowed in a 365 day period.

Response: If the city is willing to modify (2c) as suggested above, then this item should also be modified as follows:
(2d – revised) No more than two encampments of up to 100 residents or four encampments of up to 50 residents shall be allowed within the city limits in a 365 day period.

21A.70.195 (4d) Warrant and sex offender checks. Managing Agencies shall obtain warrant and sex offender checks from the King County Sheriff’s Office for all Homeless Encampment Residents.

Response: We do not require warrant and sex offender checks on new neighbors before they can move into our neighborhoods. To require such checks of tent city residents (who have undergone such checks before being initially admitted to a tent city) is discriminatory and in all likelihood illegal. That being said, concern on the part of some neighbors, church members, and preschool and other educational institution parents to the potential encampment could be at least partially alleviated through warrant and sex offender checks. With this in mind we would suggest the following revision:

(4d – revised) We recommend that the sponsoring agencies request and work with the Managing Agencies to obtain voluntary warrant and sex offender checks for all Homeless Encampment residents at least 7 days prior to their movement into the encampment under a new permit. Required policy for new residents (potentially) moving into the encampment during the permitting period, including contact with the City of Sammamish police department, will remain unchanged. The Managing Agency will be responsible for verifying that “required” warrant and sex offender checks occur.