

The University of Washington is hosting a homeless camp

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An organized tent city community for the homeless will be hosted by the University of Washington for the next three months.

The community — Tent City 3, the oldest homeless encampment in King County — can support up to 99 people on the Seattle university's W35 parking lot. The residents moved in on Saturday and will remain on campus through mid-March, to "largely coincide with the 2017 winter quarter."

TC3's temporary move arose from the efforts of the Tent City Collective, a group of students and community members committed to helping the growing number of homeless families and individuals in Seattle. As of the most recent count in January, 4,505 King County residents were homeless, up 19% from the year prior. In November of 2015, Mayor Ed Murray declared a civil emergency as a result of the homeless crisis.

In March, university president Ana Mari Cauce asked the college community whether it would be interested in hosting a community like TC3 for the winter quarter. The response of nearly 1,000 people favored the idea by a 2-to-1 margin.

"Our educational mission and role as a public university call us to find innovative ways to teach, learn and serve," Cauce said in a statement. "It is my firm belief as a teacher, a scholar who has studied these issues, and a citizen of our community that hosting Tent City 3 is wholly consistent with our mission."

TC3 has a strict code of conduct against weapons, violence, drugs and alcohol, Cauce said, and has been previously hosted by Seattle University and Seattle Pacific University. The project is being implemented on permit from the City of Seattle.

"I recognize some of you may still have concerns and trepidation," Cauce's statement said. "That is fair and expected. I only ask that we approach hosting with open minds and take this opportunity to learn from the experiences of our neighbors."

Jillian Vandiveer is a Brooklyn College student and a USA TODAY College digital producer.