

HOMELESSNESS

Tents around The ARCHES Project may stand until camping ban starts

Salem's code enforcer said the camp "had improved," by Tuesday. Some campers had left and others helped haul away more than 1,000 pounds of trash, he said.

By Troy Brynelson — Salem Reporter
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Tents line the boulevard next to The ARCHES Project in downtown, where homeless residents have congregated in recent weeks. (Troy Brynson/Salem Reporter)

A homeless camp in downtown Salem that appeared close to being broken up could remain standing until the city's new camping ban goes into effect.

Campers encircling The ARCHES Project, a homeless services provider, have hauled away more than 1,000 pounds of garbage in the last two days and some campers have left altogether, according to Brady Rogers, Salem's code enforcement officer.

The city has also given six portable toilets and two handwashing stations to the site, and staff at the nonprofit have agreed to empty the dumpster daily, Rogers said. Currently, he said, the camp is less of a health hazard than it was a week ago.

"Don't get me wrong — (conditions are) still bad," Rogers said. "It's still bad, but it's improved."

About 30 tents are staked close together and near busy streets. The camp is bounded by the northeast Commercial, Front and Union streets. City officials stated

Monday night that it could be considered a nuisance to be dismantled.

Rogers stated he expects the cost of the toilets and handwashing stations to cost the city around \$500.

The camp will have to come down at least by Dec. 16, when a citywide ban on tents and other dwellings on public property starts. Rogers said he expects to visit there at least once more this week.

"The barometer is between my ears. I'll know if it's getting worse," he said.

If the camp lasts that long, it's possible the campers will have a new place to move. After Salem City Council approved the ban Monday, they also set in motion a plan to find city-owned property to be used as an impromptu campground.

Jimmy Jones, who oversees the nonprofit, said he's hopeful conditions remain up to par in the coming days.

"We are going to do what we can to wait this out, keep this site clean, and sanitary," Jones said in a statement to Salem Reporter. "Camping ban will take effect in two weeks and we will let that solve the issue."

When asked how the potential city-owned campsite factored into his decision, Rogers said he hoped "there's a smooth transition from the state we're in right now to the way things will exist when the ordinance comes into play."

Have a tip? Contact reporter Troy Brynelson at 503-575-9930, troy@salemreporter.com or @TroyWB.