

Following the meeting at Sunrise Financial Services on Thursday, June 3<sup>rd</sup> I allowed the weekend for additional questions to be sent via comments on the B-town Facebook page as well as via direct Facebook messages and direct email. Monday, June 7<sup>th</sup>, I began researching answers to the questions the community was asking. While some of the questions are not directly quoted in the summary below, I do believe that all of the questions are addressed in some way.

It is notable that the information in red was provided by the City of Burien via a document that was publicly published and available since April 2021. After reviewing this document in detail, follow-up questions were established based on what I found to be missing or vague information in the initial Q & A document.

The information noted in purple are paraphrased responses based on a conversation with the Director of DESC, Daniel Malone which took place on Tuesday, June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

A complete list of sources is available at the end of this document.

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## QUESTIONS FOR DESC

*Where do DESC tenants get their money?*

*How is their rent paid?*

*Is it taken directly out of their government funding?*

*Do they write a check to DESC every month?*

DESC has stated that DESC Burien is intended to serve individuals experiencing long-term homelessness who also have disabilities. This population of people often make 0-15% of Area Median Income. The most common income source is from disability such as SSI. Tenants receive other income from other sources such as the supplemental nutritional assistance program (food stamps). In DESC's most recent lease-up, 25% of new tenants came in with no income. Part of DESC's work is to assist clients in obtaining income they are eligible for. **1, page 11**

### **FOLLOW UP QUESTION TO DESC 06/08/2021: Are these wages garnished from their income checks?**

Collection of rent varies somewhat, in some cases tenants have a protective payee assigned to manage their finances. In those cases, the protective payee receives the check and pays rent and other bills. A lot of tenants manage their own money and are required to pay their own rent.

Late fees are not charged, if someone does not pay their rent it is typically due to a larger underlying issue (physical or mental health). Staff follows up repetitively and connects tenants to additional resources to address both unpaid rent and underlying concerns. DESC is extremely reluctant to evict due to non-paid rent.

The staff works individually with people to make sure rent is paid, there are circumstances in which DESC can insist on someone obtaining a protective payee to ensure rent is paid if repeat non-payment has occurred. **4**

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*What notifications were sent out to the local businesses regarding this proposal?*

*Do you have a list of businesses that were notified, educated on the project and also documented acknowledgement?*

Notifications were sent in February 2021 to 1000 addresses provided by City of Burien. **2**

*Are there any local businesses in support of this project?*

A letter was written and published to B-town blog on 03/22/2021 that 66 community members signed. Their names are published on the blog as well, uncertain if any are business owners. **3**

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*Why is DESC choosing Burien now?*

In Burien we see a community with unmet needs among the population group DESC serves, and a community with a stated intent to address affordable housing needs. We seek sites that are appropriate to our program and building needs. This means looking for properties in places where people live and where zoning supports the sort of multi-unit properties we create. The site at 801 SW 150th St is suited to our tenants as it is near a transit hub and features easy access to groceries and other amenities. DESC entered into a purchase and sale agreement in the summer of 2020 and intends to close on the property in August of 2021.

Furthermore, with the City of Burien's Affordable Housing Demonstration Program (which DESC applied for in the fall of 2020), we know we are joining a community of shared values, one that supports equity and housing. **1, page 13**

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*Is there a way to give Burien homeless priority?*

DESC published the following statement through B-town blog: "The future tenants will likely already be residing in Burien, but without safe and secure housing.

Our understanding is this is not possible due to the King County Coordinated Entry program – does DESC know something we don't?

Will there be outreach to the local homeless population to sign them up for the Coordinated Entry Program?

What other focused efforts will be made to lessen the Burien homeless population?

What will be done proactively? How will this actually get homeless off the street of Burien? What are the logistics? How will it work?

Number of homeless in Burien. The City of Burien Human Services Manager estimates that over 120 are experiencing homelessness at any given time in Burien. Of these, 60-75 are known by name and actively engage with through LEAD and CoLead. The 120 estimate may be low, however. On the morning of January 24, 2020, the One Night Count estimated there were 11,751 people experiencing homelessness. Approximately 47% of these individuals were unsheltered. In Southwest King County, 1,937 people were experiencing homelessness, both sheltered and unsheltered. **1, page 19**

DESC intends to work with local organizations to target and outreach individuals already experiencing homelessness in Burien. These individuals will apply for DESC Burien units through King County's Coordinated Entry for All program. DESC Burien will house single adults experiencing chronic homelessness, which means people homeless for one year or longer and living with a disability. Tenants will have incomes less than 30% of the area median income (AMI). At least 25 units will be reserved for veterans experiencing chronic homelessness. Since supportive housing is a specialized resource with built-in robust supports, DESC selects applicants who need this type of housing to be successful. King County has affirmed that new supportive housing programs should be established to meet the needs of people already in a given community. **1, page 22**

King County officials have stated publicly that they intend for new supportive housing projects to serve the needs of the local area. We will work with our King County contacts to confirm whether this is documented somewhere in their policies. **1, page 23**

**FOLLOW UP QUESTION TO DESC 06/08/2021: Continued confusion about how this will be possible with Coordinated Entry for All. Will you be taking those 60-75 people and specifically offering them a place in the Burien location? Or suggesting they will be offered a place eventually because DESC is now developing so many additional locations?**

DESC is regularly involved with King County and the Coordinated Entry for All program since DESC is a large provider or permanent supportive housing within the county. DESC has the same goal as Burien community and wants to try to

prioritize Burien homeless population. They believe they can help navigate the Coordinated Entry system the following ways:

- Work with LEAD and CoLEAD to ensure all Burien homeless get signed up for CEA, through outreach by DESC staff and other Burien organization
- Going out of their way to educate the homeless population on what CEA is and how they could benefit
- Accurate assessment of a persons needs when they register for CEA, DESC can facilitate this
- DESC has access to a number of supportive housing facilities and often attend meetings or are notified if vacant housing is available and are able to make recommendations for specific people
- The CEA program does include a “matching” process based on an individuals needs and preferences, one of the factors is a “geographic preference marker”
- There have been Burien homeless who have denied supportive housing in the past because they do not want to leave Burien
- Between the marching process and LEAD/CoLEAD tracking Burien homeless needs, DESC is hoping to “match” a portion of Burien individuals to the 95 units available at the Burien facility
- DESC has begun conversations with King County about a portion of CEA that is set aside for Direct Placement, for example 25% of the units must be first offered to the local homeless
- Sometimes the system does get bogged down for whatever reason and due to the nature of their funding, DESC cannot allow apartments cannot stay vacant long so as the operator, DESC has the ability to choose someone from outside of CEA if they can prove they are in fact eligible
- King County is in the process of expanding their homeless outreach with the creation of the Regional Homelessness Authority – new group up and coming, they may be the ones who are able to make this Direct Placement edit to CEA 4

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*What is the average age of their tenants? How long do they live under DESC’s care?*

For the vast majority of people, their DESC apartment is a permanent home until they pass away or need a higher level of care. The high cost of market rate housing and low income levels of our tenant. 1, page 23

**FOLLOW UP QUESTION TO DESC 06/08/2021: Do you have an average age of DESC tenants? What is the average length they stay?**

The average age a tenant enters a DESC facility is early to mid fifties. The average length of a tenants stay is heavily effected by how long the DESC facility has been operational, the average at this time including the new buildings (some of which have only been operational for 2 years) is roughly 6 years. DESCs oldest building has been in operation 27 years and average length of stay at that specific building is over 9 years, which is longer than the average within general rental housing with competitive rental prices.

It is typical doe DESC tenants to stay at their facility until they need further care which often leads to their end of life. It’s normal to see decreased life expectancy for individuals who have been homeless for prolonged periods, typically their life expectancy is early 60s if they get housed at some point. And for those who never receive housing it is even earlier. 4

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*Will current emergency services be over-worked or stretched thin?*

*Will emergency services be needed more with the addition of a DESC facility?*

*Are there additional emergency services available from the County or DESC?*

When looking at the number of emergency calls coming from a program that serves people formerly experiencing chronic homelessness, it is important to note that evidence shows that when people experiencing chronic homelessness are housed, emergency calls decrease for this group of people. So while more calls may be coming from a particular address, a net decrease in police and fire calls overall is a likely outcome. 1, page 10

DESC's tenants live with complex conditions sometimes resulting in personal crises, especially medical emergencies. We attempt to minimize these events by being attentive to what is going on with our tenants and bringing services to them. Given the disability profiles of our tenants, it's true that 911 calls are more likely in our building than an average apartment building.

Examples of what might happen include a DESC tenant calling 911 to report an issue that either isn't real or isn't an emergency. Partnerships with police and fire allow us to ensure we keep these calls down. Studies on DESC and other supportive housing programs have shown that crisis events and 911 calls decrease once people go into supportive housing compared to when those people were on the streets, so the overall burden on crisis response systems in Burien will go down. **1, page 27**

We do not know of availability of funds of this type. However, DESC hopes to reduce the need for emergency services by simply being in the neighborhood. Individuals who are housed are less likely to utilize emergency services and less likely to create disturbances that necessitate 911 calls. **1, page 27**

**FOLLOW-UP QUESTION TO DESC 06/08/2021: DESC eluded that emergency service calls actually decrease when the homeless are housed. Are there any statistics tracking the number of unhoused homeless related calls before and after a DESC was added to a neighborhood?**

DESC has examined crisis calls, police involvement and arrests. However, tracking statistics specific to a several block neighborhood has been challenging since all of their facilities have been in Seattle up to this point. There are studies which show that crisis situations decrease based on the individual once they are housed. **4**

**In the off chance the Burien facility has an increased need for emergency services, is there a plan in place? Has this happened in past facilities and how has it been handled? For example – Renton?**

DESC has a 24/7 backup support system for all of their programs to help as needed, this back up support includes the following:

- Additional staffing
- In a crisis situation, additional guidance via phone or physical back up as needed
- After hours support individually available to tenants

DESC also proactively provide the following:

- They enroll tenants as needed into behavioral health system and give them after hours resources so they can problem-solve or talk through scenarios
- DESC operates a Mobile Crisis team that is county wide, this team can be summoned by first responders or other parts of the crisis system like the after-hours phone lines, etc **4**

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*What standards are tenants held to?*

*Can we see a copy of the lease agreement?*

*Is there a three strike you're out system?*

*What precautions are taken to decrease burglarizing, vandalism, public drug use and dealing?*

*Is there a policy in place if a local resident or business member has a conflict or is a victim of a tenant mishap?*

When tenants move in, they sign an addendum to the lease called the Good Neighbor Policy. This policy prohibits problematic behaviors such as loitering around local businesses. Should a business suspect that an individual exhibiting concerning behavior lives at the DESC Burien building, they may call the front desk at any time day or night for a response.

DESC's stance is to check on the situation as quickly as possible, and to reinforce expectations if the person is a DESC tenant. In the event the person does not reside in the DESC Burien building, we would do our best to help resolve the matter. **1, page 27**

**FOLLOW-UP QUESTION TO DESC 06/08/2021: “Reinforce expectations”? What does this mean? What if they are a repeat offender? How would you recommend local businesses and residents differentiate whether a DESC employee can resolve the issue or if emergency services are needed?**

Repeat offenders can usually be convinced to follow the guidelines with repetitive structure and mental/ behavioral health resources. The ultimate consequence is eviction if things are not controlled, but historically they have had success getting people to understand the parameters.

Example: At the Columbia City facility a tenant who had cognitive challenges, would pan handle in front of a restaurant repetitively. Eventually DESC was able to work with him so he would sell newspapers in the same spot instead of panhandling. There are scenarios where they have to be stern and follow-up regularly to ensure guidelines are followed. **4**

**How may I obtain a copy of the Good Neighbor agreement?**

DESC with information to obtain the Good Neighbor agreement – but it was noted that the agreement will be specific to the Burien facility and often specific neighborhoods and boundaries that are documented within each agreement. **4**

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*Are back-ground checks required prior to approving a tenant? What histories are permitted? Is it public knowledge?*

DESC does not exclude individuals with criminal backgrounds from its housing programs. We find that people with long histories of homelessness may have criminal records that reflect the difficulties of life lived on the street. In many cases, past violent behavior stems from lack of connection to behavioral health resources. That said, our tenants are some of the most vulnerable individuals in the community, which makes them much more likely to be a victim of violence than a perpetrator. The lease that tenants sign upon move-in clearly identifies violence as cause for lease termination. **1, page 28**

**FOLLOW-UP QUESTION TO DESC 06/08/2021: Are any special precautions taken for tenants with records of sexual assault or child preying? Are they held to the same notification standards as other sexual offenders?**

It is rare for DESC to have tenants with these convictions and does not have any examples when community notifications were necessary. It was noted that DESC does not feel children are at risk with the demographic of their tenants. **4**

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*What is the eviction process?*

*Are evicted tenants asked to go with next of kin? Back to a shelter near their address of origin? Is it possible to create something of this nature?*

The eviction rate is fairly low, the current published rate on DESC’s site is: 14 evictions out of 1200. Typically, evictions are a result of someone being problematic or violent with other tenants and after multiple approaches the behavior cannot be overcome. In these situations, the evicted tenant would have shown dangerous or scary behavior that could not be regulated properly, but it was noted that these situations usually occur within the building. When someone is evicted, DESC does their best to arrange shelter placement, or talk with them about other options that could work. There are also cases in which this behavior lands the evicted tenant in jail. Desc does due diligence to help with follow-up resources in some way. **4**

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*Are there any regulations on the harm-reduction policy?*

*What is the strategy to encourage rehabilitation?*

*It is currently illegal to pass out drugs and paraphernalia in Burien, how does this play into DESCs harm reduction philosophy? Is passing of drugs reported or monitored within DESCs facilities?*

*Will DESC become a safe injection site?*

No, DESC Burien will not run a Safe Injection Site. This will be a housing development only. 1. Page 28  
Drug use is simply not permitted in our programs. However, many DESC clients are living with substance use challenges and many struggle with this. We take an open and honest approach with our tenants about this topic. Much like substance use in the broader community, many addictions play out in private. We work to connect people to treatment. Some people have substance use issues that can impact the broader community, which leads us to treating those behaviors as lease enforcement issues.

Throughout all our work with people living with substance use issues, we use an approach called harm reduction. This is a practical approach that acknowledges risky behavior, like drug use, exists in our world. Instead of demanding risky behavior simply cease (often with little effect), harm reduction attempts to reduce the dangers associated with the risky behavior. This can take many forms, but most well-known are provision of clean needles and access to condoms.

A common societal belief exists that the only path to recovery from substance use is immediate and total abstinence and/or a tough love approach. While this approach works for some people, others have not been successful and have worsening outcomes over time. This means that other approaches are required if we hope to meet the treatment needs in our community.

DESC has partnered with the University of Washington on several studies and we have not seen any support for the idea that our harm reduction approach leads to increase substance use or a worsening of substance use outcomes. In study after study we have found the opposite: harm reduction is associated with reduced drug use, reduced harm and – at the community level – reduced need for publicly funded services. 1, page 28-29

**FOLLOW-UP QUESTION TO DESC 06/08/2021: Can you provide additional details on the harm reduction philosophy and what the guidelines are? How is handled when tenants are seen with drugs and paraphernalia in common spaces within the facility? Are any proactive measures taken to ensure there are not increased littering of needles?**

DESC treats the presence of drug use as a health issue and encourages them to utilize the resources available to make good choices for themselves. Drug dealing and facilitating drug sales is strictly prohibited. DESC is usually able to keep drug distribution to a minimum by managing the flow of guests/ visitors in and out of the building. They provide tenants with sharps containers and educate them about using them and why it is important. Tossing used syringes irresponsibly is discouraged and alternatives are provided. 4

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*How will you ensure there is adequate parking for residents and staff members?*

A requirement of the next step in the development process (Administrative Design Review) is to demonstrate sufficient parking will be provided on site. The applicable code section is BMC 19.20, Parking and Circulation. Developments may prepare a parking demand study to match the parking demand specifically to the use of the development. DESC has stated they have hired a professional parking/traffic engineer that has preliminarily indicated that sufficient parking will be available on-site. DESC has stated that residents do not own cars and employees are provided METRO bus passes and therefore minimal on-site parking is needed. DESC will have between 15-20 staff working at this location splitting into three different shifts and spreading over a 7-day work week. Therefore, not all staff will be on site at the same time. The busiest times would have 6-7 staff on-site. A desired feature of this site is its location to transit such and the transit center, existing bus routes and the forthcoming H-Line.

We have yet to review the parking demand analysis because that is a part of the land use application review and approval process/administrative design review. This question was raised early in the process and in both the preapplication meeting and the request for additional information letter in December of last year. 1, page 3

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*How will loss of tax revenue be replaced?*

Unfortunately, State Law (RCW 82.32.330) specifically prohibits the City of Burien from sharing information regarding the amount of sales made by a business and the amount of sales tax reported to the City. Through its relocation program, DESC will work with Burien staff to re-locate existing businesses to new locations within Burien with the hope of retaining the businesses and resultant sales taxes. DESC notes that the organization will pay sales tax on the building construction costs and other related costs, and tenants and staff will be spending money in Burien where purchases are subject to sales tax. **1, page 6**

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*DESC stated in the Q&A they keep detailed track of their residents and facilities – can you provide any statistics documenting previous success?*

*What community can we look at with proven statistics?*

*What community has been documented and proven a proposal of this nature can actually remove homeless from their own streets?*

The DESC facility in Columbia City is a comparable location. No statistics were cited, but it was noted the community was skeptical when DESC joined, but as time has passed they have seen the improvements of the neighborhood and have begun developing closer and closer to the DESC facility without concern in the past couple of years. **4**

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*The Burien Q&A references DESC ability to connect tenants to resources – what are the specifics of this plan? How are tenants encouraged to seek additional rehabilitation for both substance and mental illness since DESCs services are based on voluntary participation?*

DESC tries get involved in peoples lives as much as they will allow, to educate them and provide the resources to help facilitate a better life for themselves. **4**

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*Other DESC facilities have adjacent clinics, the Burien proposal does not include this, will there be pre-emptive agreements with local hospitals and clinics?*

DESC has medical services at least on a part time basis in all facilities, Burien will be the same. The medical staff is not typically mental or behavioral health focused, but the nurses are accustomed to playing many different roles. This is combination with outside resources and relationships typically provides sufficient medical help. DESC is also working to expand the medical resources specifically operated by DESC and hopes to have access to additional resources by the time the Burien facility is operational. **4**

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*Are you able to make any comments about what happened last year in the City of Renton?*

The Renton DESC location was not supportive housing, it was an emergency shelter. DESC expressed concerns to King County at the onset of the COVID outbreak because an existing Seattle shelter was housing individuals in a homeless shelter that consisted of bunk beds and shared living spaces. The Health Officer for King County agreed that this was unsafe and an emergency solution was needed. Very little time was available to go through any kind of planning or engagement with the community. There were some conversations with City of Renton officials in the days before, but ultimately the move had to be made very quickly. They moved the existing shelter all at once to the Renton hotel with 233 units which was a large facility even for DESC.

There have been concerns stated by neighbors, some specific to homeless from that facility and some from general Renton homeless. There has been some problematic behavior and there has been a higher turnover rate than usual. DESC has been filling vacant beds with referrals from City of Renton and the Police Department.

King County found and leased the property and because it was done during a state of emergency some of the normal proposal process was skipped, and no end date was able to be provided. The City of Renton felt they had no say and their zoning rights were violated, which has led to the now legal action being taken. **4**

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*Sources:*

1. City of Burien website, DESC Housing Demonstration Project Q & A

[https://www.burienwa.gov/UserFiles/Servers/Server\\_11045935/File/Business/Building%20&%20Construction/Planning%20Initiatives/DESC%20Burien%20Supportive%20Housing%20FAQs%20-%20Updated%203.30.21.pdf](https://www.burienwa.gov/UserFiles/Servers/Server_11045935/File/Business/Building%20&%20Construction/Planning%20Initiatives/DESC%20Burien%20Supportive%20Housing%20FAQs%20-%20Updated%203.30.21.pdf)

2. City of Burien website, DESC Burien Supportive Housing Neighborhood Outreach Report

[https://www.burienwa.gov/UserFiles/Servers/Server\\_11045935/File/Business/Building%20&%20Construction/Planning%20Initiatives/Attachment%202%20-%20DESC%20Burien%20Neighborhood%20Outreach%20Report%20-%20Updated%203-30-21.pdf](https://www.burienwa.gov/UserFiles/Servers/Server_11045935/File/Business/Building%20&%20Construction/Planning%20Initiatives/Attachment%202%20-%20DESC%20Burien%20Neighborhood%20Outreach%20Report%20-%20Updated%203-30-21.pdf)

3. B-town Blog website, Letter to the Editor 03/22/2021

<https://b-townblog.com/2021/03/22/letter-65-community-members-show-support-for-new-desc-burien-housing-project/>

4. Phone Conversation with DESC Director – Daniel Malone 06/08/2021