

CITY OF RENTON FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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City of Renton Contacts

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City of Renton issues Finding of City Code Violations to King County's Renton Red Lion Inn De-Intensification Shelter

County is given until August 9 to relocate to a legally permitted location

RENTON, WA – The City of Renton today sent a Finding of Violation to King County and others who operate and manage the de-intensification shelter at the Red Lion Inn. After two months of working with King County to try and reach agreement on many issues related to the shelter, the City is giving the county and operators until August 9 to relocate to a legally permitted location.

“King County must respect City of Renton zoning codes and despite months of trying to find a path forward, Renton will take action to enforce our laws – just like we would do with any other land use violator,” said Mayor Armondo Pavone.

“The City of Renton has done its part to support this shelter, the local community, and those experiencing homelessness during this difficult time,” said Ruth Pérez, Renton City Council president.

The health threat of COVID-19 for those experiencing homelessness prompted King County and the Seattle-based Downtown Emergency Service Center (DESC) to open a deintensification shelter at the Renton Red Lion Inn in April. It did so without applying for permits or applying for a business license.

The mayor and city council have tried for more than two months to reach a memorandum of understanding with King County and DESC to define a timetable and transition plan for the shelter's relocation, so that residents can get the long-term service they need, so that county taxpayers don't incur the high costs of an expensive and temporary solution, and so that Renton citizens and businesses can be relieved of extraordinary impacts the shelter has brought to the city.

“King County established the Renton Red Lion shelter without regard for city zoning, licensing, and permitting requirements and without first coordinating its placement with Renton,” said Pavone. “The City has asked King County for clear guidelines for the shelter's temporary operation, but the county has been unwilling to commit to any specific timetable to relocate the shelter. We want King County and DESC to focus resources and relocate the shelter to a new location (or split into multiple locations) where it can be lawfully located and commit to a timeline to make the more permanent move.”

DESC does not want to return to its previous downtown Seattle location, but there is no transition plan to find more permanent housing for the DESC shelter residents. That is unfair to the shelter residents who need safe and secure housing with intervention services for the long-term. Locating these residents in violation of local zoning without a concrete plan for long-term housing puts them at risk. It is just as unfair to neighborhoods and businesses around the shelter that would like to work with the City on economic revitalization and

recovery from the economic impacts of COVID-19, but have instead had to spend tens of thousands of dollars in the midst of a pandemic on security, building repairs, litter and drug-needle cleanup, and more.

Pérez added, “Renton supports compassionate, innovative, and inclusive measures to address issues of homelessness and we have a representative on the Governing Board of the new Regional Homelessness Authority. Renton is actively working with other governments, service providers, non-profits, and faith communities to implement cooperative regional solutions to both homelessness and the COVID-19 emergency that continues to threaten lives and our economy.”

The DESC shelter residents have extraordinary needs including mental health, medical assistance, substance abuse counseling and other daily services. It’s a King County and DESC responsibility to provide those on-site services but the impacts on Renton first responder resources, nearby businesses, and the South Renton neighborhood is overwhelming. No single entity or location in Renton has required anywhere near the same level of first responder resources as the unpermitted and unlicensed DESC shelter brought to Renton in April 2020. It is also the largest shelter of its kind in the area and located in a city with less than five percent of the total population of King County.

Renton has remained a community that serves people in need and has avoided a “not in my backyard” attitude toward solving regional issues. Renton is one of the most diverse cities in King County, with communities of color comprising 54 percent of our population. It actively partners with [REACH](#) (Renton Ecumenical Association of Churches) to manage the Center of Hope Shelter and is aggressively pursuing more locations for temporary housing, shelter, and feeding programs within the city limits. Renton first responders and community resources are stretched beyond their limits, and the city doesn’t have the resources and infrastructure to respond continually to and around one shelter that occupies a fraction of our city and houses more than double the number of people (235) as any other emergency shelter established by King County.

“Renton is doing its part during this time of crisis,” said Pavone. “Now, King County and DESC need to prioritize plans for a more permanent, safe, and sustainable location of the shelter residents. The shelter residents deserve compassion and a plan beyond this emergency location. Renton first responders, businesses, and residents deserve a reprieve from the unsustainable and disproportional impacts created by this unpermitted shelter.”

About the City of Renton

The City of Renton, Washington, with a population of 105,500 (2020), is located on the southeast shore of Lake Washington, just south of Seattle. Renton's strong economic base, diverse marketplace and favorable business climate have attracted the attention of nationally recognized companies that are providing employees and their families an outstanding quality of life. Renton is the home of Boeing, PACCAR, IKEA, the Seattle Seahawks, and the eternal resting place of Jimi Hendrix. More information can be found on our [website](#), [news releases](#), or [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Nextdoor](#) pages.

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