



TASC Survey Report 2009

Prepared by Renee McBeth with the support of members of the
Temporary Autonomous Shelter Collective (TASC)

Introduction

The Temporary Autonomous Shelter Collective (TASC) is a group of homeless, unstably housed and housed individuals who are determined to take collective action on homelessness by ensuring that all residents on Coast Salish can live with dignity, autonomy and respect. TASC was formed to explore the possibility of creating user-run communities of temporary shelters, often called "tent cities".

Many members of TASC are organizers with the Committee to End Homelessness. We wanted to take collective action on Judge Ross' BC Superior Court "Tent City" ruling in October, 2009, on the constitutional right of homeless people to erect shelters in the absence of sufficient shelter beds. We began to research "tent cities" and found that user-designed and user-run communities of temporary shelters have proven to be successful short-term solutions to housing crises in many communities throughout the United States. Residents report that "tent cities" provide safety, comfort, dignity and support for people who can't access shelters or have different needs. We found that "tent cities" can be low cost, immediately applicable and safe measures that we can all take to provide temporary shelter.

While we were excited about the prospects of facilitating the process of creating a user-run "tent city" in Victoria, we had to begin by seeing if there was a need and a desire within our communities. Our first step was to get the opinions of those who matter most – those who would be interested in living in a community of tents or small shelters. We decided that the best and most inclusive way to hear what people had to say would be to informally interview members of the street community with a basic, simple and flexible survey as a guide. The survey was distributed to people who self-identify as homeless or living in an unstable housing situation in order to find out if they saw a need for a "tent city", and to see what shape such a community would take. We will use the results of the survey to help ensure that the project is guided by the visions, interests and needs of the communities it will serve.

A team of volunteers and practicum students attended briefing sessions and distributed the survey within the street community from February until April 2009. We also tried to reach people who are homeless or unstably housed but who don't access downtown services by creating an on-line version of the survey.

Our humble, grassroots survey collected the reflections and opinions of 116 street-involved individuals. This report summarizes the results of our survey.

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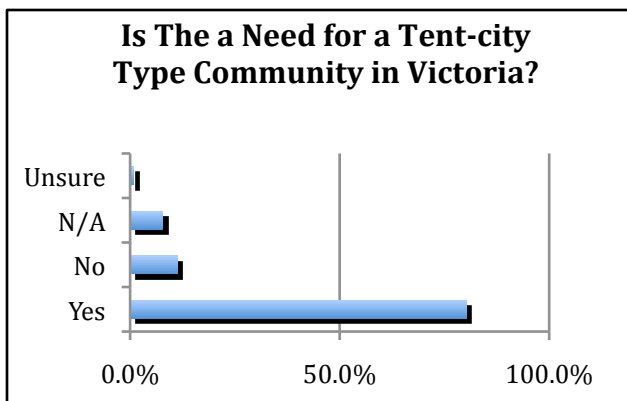
Acknowledgements

The Temporary Autonomous Shelter Collective (TASC) would like to acknowledge and thank the people who took the time to answer our survey. TASC would also like to acknowledge the hard work of all the collective members and volunteers who worked on bringing the survey to the streets. There are too many names to mention – you know who you are!

Key Findings

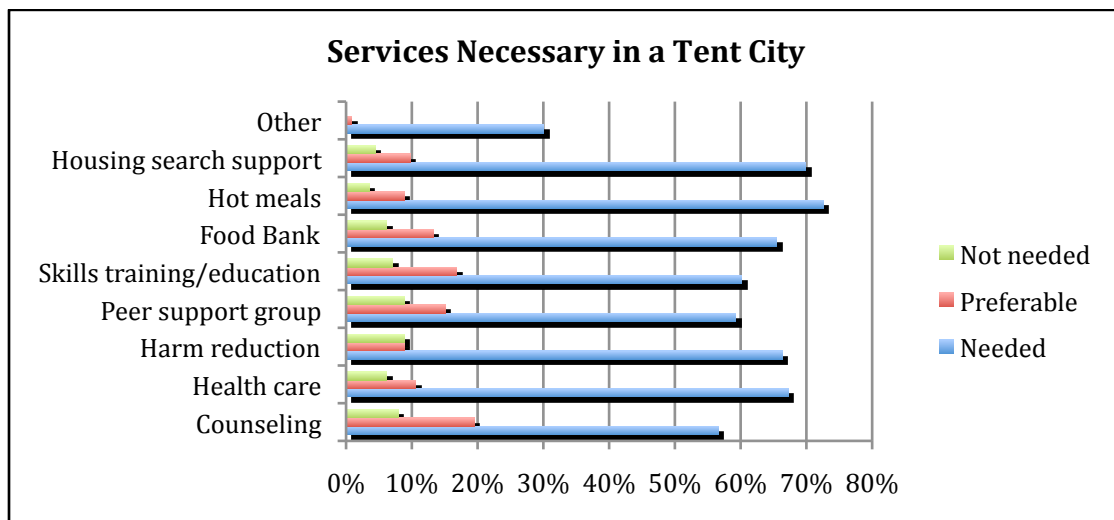
1. Need and Support for a Tent City

The TASC Survey 2009 collected the reflections and opinions of 116 street-involved individuals, of which 87 stated that they are homeless or unstably housed. Of those interviewed, 56 people considered themselves to be unemployed, 33 were working, 16 were students and 21 others chose not to answer or did not fit in the categories provided, including those who were on disability or retired.¹



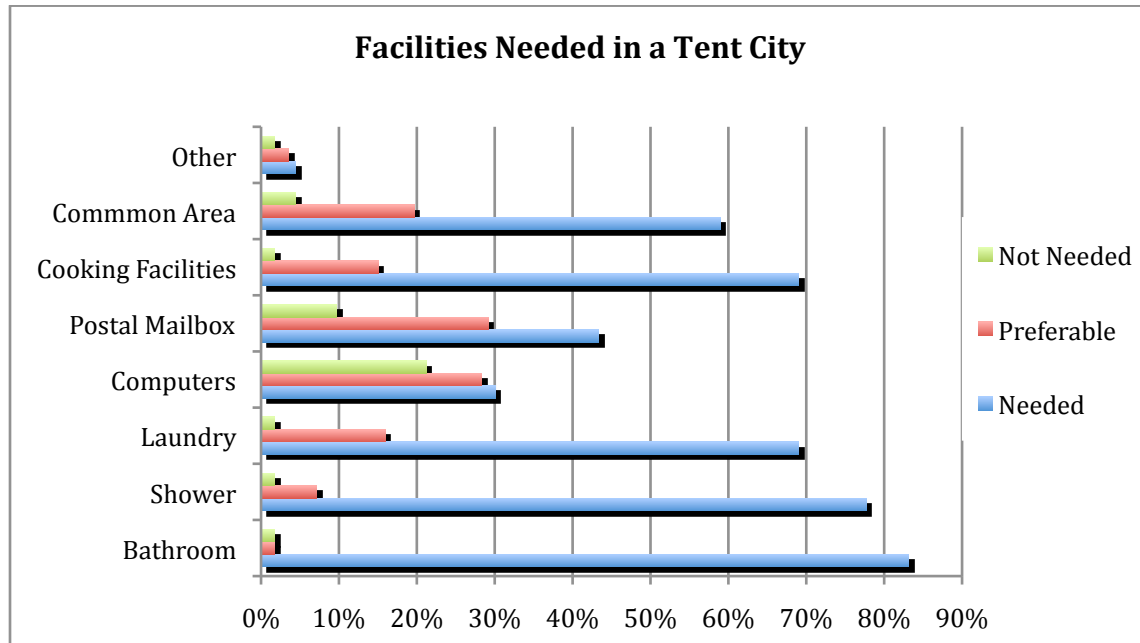
65% of respondents had heard of or experienced living in a tent city. The vast majority of people surveyed, around 80%, stated there is a need for a tent city in Victoria, 83% said that they would support a tent city in Victoria and 55% said they would take an active role in setting up and running the community.

2. Services and Facilities



¹ Please note that respondents had the option to choose more than one answer to this question.

The survey also asked folks what services and facilities would be “needed”, “preferable” or “not needed”. The majority of respondents reported that all of the services listed in the survey were necessary. The most important service was hot meals, which was followed by – in order of priority – housing search support, health care, harm reduction services, a food bank, skills training peer support groups and counseling.



There was more variation in the importance of different facilities than services.² The most important facility according to the large majority of those surveyed was bathrooms, followed by showers, cooking facilities, laundry and a common area.

3. Best Type of Shelter for a Tent-City

Given the choice between a tent or a portable shack, 45% of respondents said they would be willing to live in a tent, but only 24% said this was the best type of shelter for a tent-city. A larger number, 42%, said that the best type of shelter for a tent-city would be some kind of portable shack.

4. Important Qualities of a Tent-City

4.1 Privacy

Privacy and personal safety came up as the most significant qualities of a tent-city in Victoria, with most respondents saying that it was “important” or “very important”

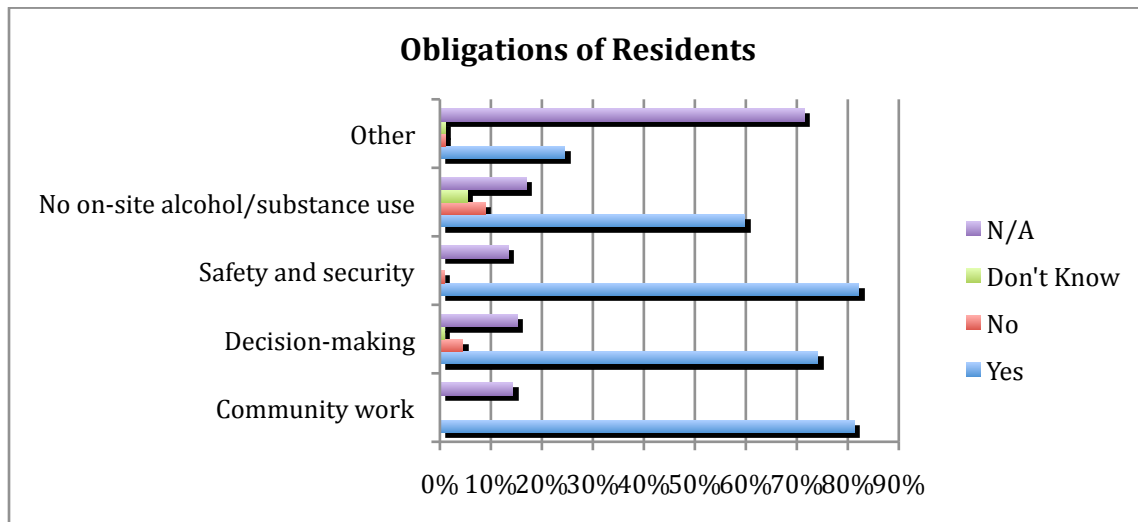
² To simplify this chart, the number of people who chose not the answer this question (“n/a”) is not shown.

to have private shelter (77%), a private shelter to share (75%) and a place where possessions can be securely locked (83%).

4.2 Pets

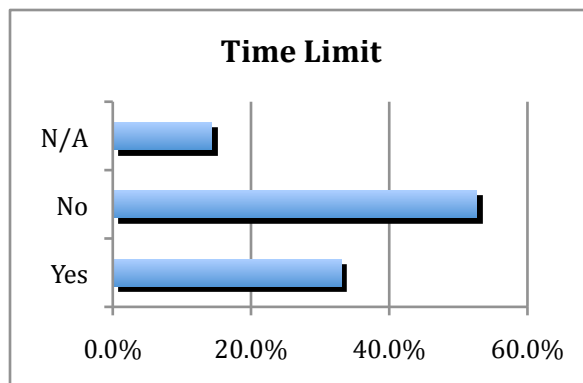
More than half of the people surveyed –around 66% - stated that pets should be allowed.

4.3 Obligations

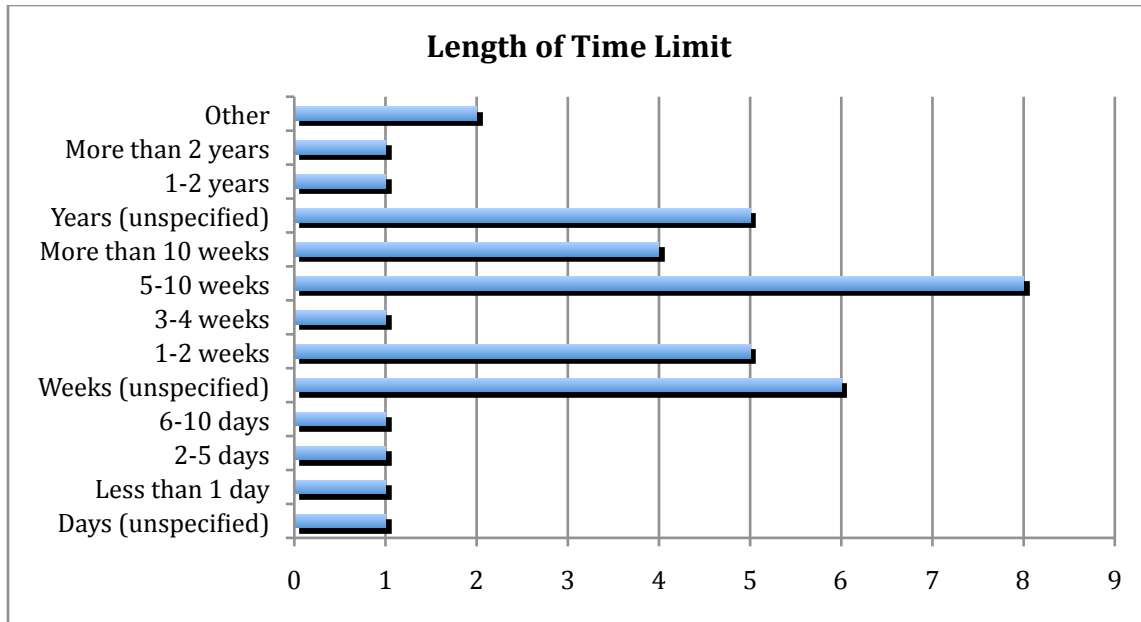


Generally folks reported that members of the tent-city community should have an obligation to contribute to safety and security, community work and decision-making within the community. Most also felt that residents should avoid alcohol and substance use while on-site.

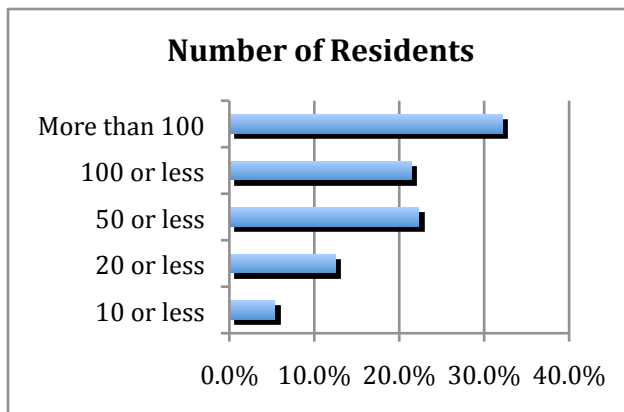
4.4 Time Limit



About half of the people surveyed (53%) said that there should not be a limit on the length of time people can stay in the community, 14% chose not to answer and 33% said there should be a time limit. The following chart shows the time limits proposed by respondents.



4.5 Number of Residents



When asked how many residents the community should allow, 32% answered 100 or more, 21% answered 100 or less, 22% answered 50 or less and 18% answered 20 or less.

4.6 Location

Generally the responses indicated that it would be preferable to have a tent city close to downtown, as most respondents (61) said they would be willing to live in a community that is within a half hour walk from downtown.³ A slightly lower number (51) would be willing to live in a community that is directly in the downtown area. While 42 people said they would be willing to live in a community that is within a half hour bus ride from downtown, 37 would be willing to live in a community within an hour walk from downtown and 22 would be willing to live within an hour bus ride from downtown.

³ Please note that respondents had the option to choose more than one answer to this question.

Conclusion

Overall, the survey indicates that there is broad support for the creation of a tent city-type community and provides information on how community members envision a tent city in Victoria. We hope that the information gathered in this survey will assist community organizers in the creation of collaborative, user designed and governed projects as immediate short-term solutions to housing crises in their communities.

Appendix: Temporary Autonomous Shelters Committee (TASC) Survey 2009

Temporary Autonomous Shelters Committee (TASC) Survey 2009

- **WHO WE ARE: Homeless and housed community members who are ready to make change happen!**

We are a group of homeless and housed individuals working to create a community of self-contained shelters , or a “tent city”, in the Victoria region. This would be a user-run community. We are not formally working with any service provision agency in Victoria at this time and are not receiving any funding. All our interviewers are volunteers.

- **WHY WE'RE ASKING YOU THESE QUESTIONS: We need your voice!**

You are invited to participate in an informal survey conducted by the Temporary Autonomous Shelter Committee (TASC). The purpose of this survey is to find out whether people who consider themselves to be either homeless or living in an unstable housing situation are interested in a “tent city” type community. The results of the survey will help ensure that our work is guided by the interests, desires and needs of the people who would be living in this community. Although we hope to make your visions a reality, right we are only collecting the information needed to build momentum for a future “tent city” type community.

We are not collecting names or information from anyone who completes the survey, except on a purely voluntary basis. Provided names will be separated from survey responses. The survey results will be publically available at <http://tentcity.wikidot.com/>. The survey is designed to be an informal consultation tool. If you agree to voluntarily participate in this project, your participation will consist of filling out this 15 minute survey either alone or with one of our volunteers. Feel free to take more time, stop at any point or ask us to destroy your completed survey afterwards.

Ready to continue? Would you prefer to fill this out yourself or go through the questions together?

If you would like to go do the survey alone, check the line or box that best reflects your answer.

SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. Have you already been interviewed by someone wearing a sticker like this?

Yes

No

If you answered no, please continue

2. Would you consider yourself either homeless, or in an unstable housing situation?

Yes

No

If you answered yes, please continue

3. Have you heard of or experienced living in a tent city before?

Yes

No

4. Is there a need for a tent-city type community in Victoria?

Yes

No

5. Would you support this type of community in the Victoria Region?

Yes

No

If you answered yes to questions 4 and/or 5, please continue to the next page

6. Would these be important for a "tent city" type community to have?

	Very important	Important	Neutral	Unimportant	Very unimportant
The privacy of your own shelter	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A private shelter that can be shared with several people you choose to live with (such as spouses, friends or family)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A place where your possessions can be securely locked	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A place where your pet(s) are allowed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. What type of temporary shelter would you be willing to live in? (You can check more than one option)

Tent Portable shack Other (Please explain) _____

8. What type of shelter would you like best?

Tent Portable shack Other (Please explain) _____

9. Should the length of time that people stay in the community be limited?

Yes No

a. If you answered yes, how long should the length of stay be?

Days How many? _____ Weeks How many? _____ Years How many? _____

10. Would you be willing to live in a community that is: (You can check as many answers as you want)

Downtown Within a half hour bus ride from downtown
 Within a half hour walk from downtown Within an hour bus ride from downtown
 Within an hour walk from downtown

11. How many residents should the community allow?

10 or less 50 or less More than 100
 20 or less 100 or less

12. Are the services below needed, preferable or would be good, or not needed?

	Needed	Preferable/Would be good	Not needed
Counseling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Health care	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Harm reduction	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Peer support groups	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Skills training/education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Food bank	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hot meals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Housing search support	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

13. Are the facilities listed below needed, preferable or would be good, or not needed?

	Needed	Preferable/Good	Not needed
Bathroom	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Shower	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Laundry	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Computers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Postal mailbox	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cooking facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Common area	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

14. What do you think the obligations of residents of the community should be?

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Community work (cleaning, garbage collection, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Participation in community decision-making	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensuring the safety and security of community residents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No on-site alcohol and substance use	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

15. Are you a:

- A student
- A Worker
- Unemployed

16. Are you willing to take an active role in setting-up and running the community?

- Yes
- No

a. If so, what would your role be? _____

b. Do you have any skills that you would be willing to dedicate? _____

Is there anything else you would like to share?

Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions. Your contribution is very valuable to us.



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Want to get involved?

Leave us your contact info and we will get in touch with you. After we record the answers to your survey, we will cut this page and record the information separately. If you don't want your name or contact info in this survey, email us at victentcity@gmail.com or give us a call at (250) 472-4386

Your name:

Your email:

Your phone number:

Other ways to reach you: