



# Vehicle Camping at Religious Institutions

## Benton County Code Chapter 40



### Growing challenges

The number of individuals experiencing homelessness in Benton County has increased more than 95% since 2015.

The 2022 Point in Time count report\* estimates that there are over 700 unhoused people in the Linn, Benton and Lincoln tri-county region with about 300 unhoused people in Benton County.

There are members of our rural communities that have vehicles as their primary shelter and no fixed place to safely and legally park.



### Safe and Stable Options

- Enables Religious Institutions within the unincorporated areas of Benton County to provide safe and legal places for people to sleep in vehicles, campers, trailers, or micro-shelters.
- Establishes minimum standards including provision of basic sanitary facilities for guests and onsite parking and siting standards to reduce impacts to adjacent properties and uses.
- Provides an additional tool for rural communities to provide a safe and stable means to shelter for those experiencing crises.

\*The Point-in-Time (PIT) count is an annual count of sheltered and unsheltered people experiencing homelessness on a single night in January. The PIT count serves as an estimate and an exact count is never possible. The federally designated timeframe for the 2022 PIT count unpredictably occurred during a COVID Omicron surge. Shelters utilized for the count were operating with decreased capacities per state guidance and there were challenges to organize sufficient outreach teams to conduct the PIT.

# Rural Options



\*Example of Micro-Shelters



- Benton County Code Chapter 40 allows for religious institutions in unincorporated areas (outside city limits) of Benton County to **host no more than three vehicles** for vehicle camping at each registered site.
- A "vehicle" includes a licensed and operable automobile, camper travel trailer or recreational vehicle. A "vehicle" also includes a rigid-wall, readily transportable temporary **sleeping unit exempt from building code and consistent with minimum guidelines issued by the County.**
- To host vehicle camping, religious institutions must register and comply with the standards of Chapter 40.
- The organization, supervision, and maintenance of a vehicle camping location is **solely the responsibility of the religious institution.**