

Indigent Housing – A Proposal

RCW 19.27.042

Conditions:

- a. Limited to existing buildings
- b. Under the administration of a non-profit organization
- c. Authorized for 5 years (subject to renewal)
- d. Poses no threat to human life, safety, or health

Discussion: Item “d” above proposes the greatest concern; how to deal with the provisions specified therein. Let us consider the following:

An existing building that is weather-tight, stable, and able to be heated in a safe manner, could meet all of the stated provisions. The overriding question should be: “ Does the building provide a greater threat to life, safety or health than no building at all?”

I envision....

1. a safety inspection by an engineer to determine structural stability only, not earthquake resistance or other typical code design parameters.
2. Verification that the building is weather-tight and dry.
3. Heating systems functionality as reviewed by a mechanical engineer to include adequate provisions for ventilation.

In short, the structure would need to be “safer and healthier” for indigent people than an alternative of having no shelter at all! If we go beyond these basic parameters we make it even more difficult to house indigent peoples, especially if code requirements come into play. To avoid this it appears to be the desire of the legislature to allow **minimum standards for compliance**. This appears to be precisely the rationale behind this particular RCW designed to take effect in 2026. This renewed pressure to adopt specific standards to a bill already effective in 1992 shows urgency and necessity to quite frankly, allow more structures to be utilized for indigent people in the future than we have in the past.