

Responses to Homelessness in Four Western United States Cities

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DESIGNATED ENCAMPMENTS

Project: *Seattle Housing and Resource Efforts*

Location: Seattle, Washington

Overall population: 3,939,363 (Seattle/Tacoma/Bellevue)

Estimated population unsheltered: 5,228 (2019 PIT Count)

Project established: In the 1990's, Seattle's Sanctioned Tent Camps (with tents and restrooms) were established on land owned by local churches and managed by the nonprofit SHARE/WHEEL, organizations consisting of homeless and formerly homeless men and women. The City of Seattle is the first in the country to offer public land and funding to support permitted encampments, many of which have transitioned into Tiny Homes Villages. Eight villages, classified by HUD as Enhanced Shelters, now exist throughout the city, and more are planned for areas outside Seattle.



Project managed by and legal landlord: SHARE/WHEEL, selected by the city, continues to operate sanctioned camps with the Low-Income Housing Institute (LIHI) as fiscal agent. Local churches provide the land.

Serving: Single adults experiencing homelessness who (before the Seattle Sanctioned Tent Camps) lived in greenbelts, on the streets, in cars and in hazardous situations. Today, eight sanctioned camps remain on church property, each with approximately 100 residents. Navigation Center and First Presbyterian Shelter provide 175 additional safe spaces, including storage, with 24-hour case management, for the most vulnerable people experiencing chronic homelessness.

Key rules: In the past, city permits required that camps move every six months. The current ordinance allows camps to remain in the same location for two years. No time limit for residents of sanctioned tent camps. No fees at Tent Camps.

Governance model: Self-governed and self-managed with staff oversight. Paid staff do not vote on camp decisions. The encampment's self-managed governance structure offers residents a way to positively contribute to day-to-day operations and community engagement efforts while building individual confidence and leadership skills.

Facilities: Varies for individual tent camps; all camps are required to provide access to restrooms and trash removal.

Programs provided: Service-enriched case management and supportive services and access to services. Health care is provided by the nonprofit, Healthcare for the Homeless.

Further evaluation would be beneficial to determine potential changes in the level of case management as the make-up of permitted encampments shifts to serve more people who have been living unsheltered for long periods of time.

Impact on the community: The Seattle Sanctioned Tent Camps reported in 2016, 85 (26%) of the

individuals who left the encampments moved into permanent housing and 41 (13%) entered a transitional housing program. Overall, neighboring communities have responded positively. No significant increase in crime when a permitted encampment moves in.

Data collection contributes to success of the programs. LIHI collects data through King County's Coordinated Entry for All (CEA) program. Of the 403 adults served during 2016, 93 (23%) reported a history of domestic violence. 15 of those were part of a family with children. 31 survivors reported they were fleeing a domestic violence situation at the time.

Crime and Safety: Has 24-hour security shifts, with each adult participating. Seattle Police Department data shows no significant increase in crime because of the project. There is some evidence of increased numbers of people who come to the camps in search of a safe place to stay.

Challenges: At tent camps, staff turnover led to challenges for residents in receiving consistent access to case managers. Many tent camp residents who stay for short periods may not interact with staff, and therefore are not captured in the HMIS data system. High caseload levels make it difficult for case managers to effectively work with individuals to create housing plans. Outreach workers and SPD officers who work with the city's Navigation Team need better access to trauma-informed care and other training. Budget and program resources restrictions and limitations. Data collection process had some limitations. Since this was a new program with no previous experience or model as a guide, disconnected communication and miscommunication sometimes occurred. Changes were made to improve communication channels, especially clarity of roles, expectations and procedures.

Successes: City of Seattle staff: In addition to successful outcomes in efforts to end homelessness, partnering with a non-profit organization with lots of experience in low-income housing contributed greatly to the success of this project.

Information Source: Planner/Liaison, Seattle Human Services Department, and Director of Advocacy and Community Engagement, Low-Income Housing Institute

Another project worth mentioning: The City of Eugene enacted a "Rest Stop Ordinance" overnight sleeping program, and legal parking for RVs in designated areas on public and private land. Sanctioned camps are sponsored by churches throughout Eugene. City ordinances require that churches provide bathrooms and trash removal.

Information source: Project Director of Square One Villages

TINY HOMES VILLAGES

Project: *Quixote Village in Olympia, Washington*

Location: In an industrial area near downtown Olympia owned by Thurston County.

Overall population: 174,363 (Olympia/Lacey/Tumwater region)

Estimated population unsheltered: 319 (2019 PIT Count), 800 to 1,000 (estimated locally)

Project established: 2013 (evolved from a legal tent camp developed in 2007). Has grown to include two additional Tiny Homes villages for veterans experiencing homelessness.



Serving: Single adults experiencing chronic homelessness with 30 tiny home units.

Project managed by and legal landlord: Panza, a non-profit doing business as Quixote Communities. Thurston County leases the land to Panza for \$1 per year on a 41-year lease.

Staff includes: Three full-time and one part-time staff.

Total capital to start project: \$3.05 million including land valued at \$333K and pre-development expenses. Each tiny home costs \$19,000.

Funding sources: Village receives 25 project vouchers from local Housing Authority. Many services were donated. Additional funding came from the State Department of Commerce's Housing Trust Fund, Federal Community Development Block Grant, Thurston County funding from state document recording fees, and major donors including Nisqually and Chehalis tribes, the Boeing Employees fund, Medina Foundation, and the Community Foundation of South Puget Sound. *Breakdown of amounts available upon request.*

Legal and environmental issues: Lawsuit filed by downtown businesses against Tent City inspired the project to evolve to a Tiny Homes Village. No other legal or environmental problems were encountered by the project. Permitting and building code regulations were and are followed.

Individual facilities on-site: Each tiny home includes electricity, running water, a twin bed with linens and a pillow, a ½ bathroom, closet, table, stool, intercom phone, WIFI, heat, windows, a porch and storage space.

Communal facilities on-site include: Showers, a full kitchen with pots/pans, dishes, and utensils, dry food storage and several refrigerators, a common living room area, large dining room, and a library.

Governance model: Self-governing model. Staff works with Resident Council (an elected body of residents) and its elected Village Life Committee to select new residents.

Programs provided: Case management, peer mentorship and support, connection to community resources, drug and alcohol recovery support, and permission to have pets and vehicles on-site.

Key rules: Residents sign lease agreement with Panza. Rules and policies are developed, in a cooperative effort, by the Resident Council and Panza together. All residents meet with the Resident Council once a week. It is a drug and alcohol-free village.

Key policies: No time limit for how long an individual can stay. Residents pay 30% of their income. Residents with no income and no voucher pay no rent.

Overall project goal: To have those in need gain a new footing in their lives through tiny house communal living.

Challenges: Lack of funding for maintaining the Village. Most maintenance is done either in-house by staff or with volunteers. Sometimes licensed contractors are needed, mostly for electrical and plumbing, due to funding source requirements.

Successes: In the past two years, 90% of Quixote Village residents have moved to another form of permanent housing.

Impact on the community: "This work is a commitment and one that can immediately show its value in alleviating the suffering of those experiencing homelessness in the community, but any other value that the community is placing on the project is likely going to be one that takes time to demonstrate. Patience is vitally important." --Quixote Village Program Manager

Information source: Program Manager of Quixote Village

Project: *Opportunity Village in Eugene, Oregon*

Location: In an industrial area on one acre of city owned land.

Overall population: 168,916

Estimated population unsheltered: 1,633 to 2,165 unsheltered (2019 PIT Count)

Project established: Opportunity Village evolved following the eviction of a legal tent city in 2011. In 2012, the City of Eugene passed a resolution to identify a site for individuals experiencing homelessness to live. A space was chosen, and Opportunity Village, a tiny homes community based on the Dignity Village, Portland model was built in 2013.

Serving: Adults, including singles and couples experiencing homelessness with 30 tiny homes units.

Project managed by and legal landlord: Square One, a non-profit formed in 2012. The City of Eugene leases the property to Square One for \$1 per year. The city continues to renew the lease and reports no issues or concerns.

Staff includes: Part-time project coordinator

Total capital to start project: \$98,000. Each tiny house costs up to \$4,000.

Funding sources: Funding was raised through grass roots efforts and many volunteers. Source notes it was easy to raise money through private donations once the first home was built with volunteer labor. The city pays nothing for operation and maintenance of the Village.

Legal and environmental issues: Source notes legal issues in Eugene's unsanctioned camps. No legal problems at Opportunity Village. No environmental concerns. Permitting followed land use process.

Individual facilities on-site: Each tiny home unit is 80-square-feet with furniture, electricity, and heat.

Communal facilities on-site include: Trash pickup and recycling, access to shared kitchens, restrooms and showers, a community room/shared living room with computers available.

Governance model: Self-governed and self-managed model with Square One staff oversight and management to ensure the project meets its agreement with the city.

Programs provided: Ability to have pets and vehicles on-site. Support for residents to work on their own plans to obtain permanent housing.

Key policies: Resident committee approves new residents and enforces policies. No time limit for how long an individual can stay. Average stay is one year. Residents renew community agreement every six months and are required to set goals and work toward achieving them. Residents pay \$35 per month per person.

Overall project goal: A Tiny Homes Village community that provides a safe space for people experiencing homelessness to sleep, keep their belongings, participate in a village community, and receive supports to help them stabilize and transition into permanent housing.

Impact on the community: Opportunity Village has fulfilled its goal of creating a more inclusive model. The collaboration between self-government and non-profit oversight has proven successful. Oversight is needed to support self-government model. Two additional Tiny Homes Villages were built, including Hope Village in Medford, Oregon, operated by the non-profit Rogue Retreat, and a Veterans Village in Clackamas County.

Information source: Project Director, Square One Villages



Project: Tiny Homes Villages in Seattle, Washington

Location: In eight neighborhoods throughout the city

Overall population: 3,939,363 (Seattle/Tacoma/Bellevue)

Estimated population unsheltered: 5,228 unsheltered (2019 PIT Count)

Project established: In 2012, the first Tiny Homes Village was built. This evolved from the tent cities established in Seattle in the 1990's that remain today, hosted by local churches. Tiny Homes Villages were built on land owned by the city, other agencies (ex. utility companies), and private companies.



Serving: 300+ individuals with 270 units in eight villages. Four villages allow families, couples and youth. Four allow singles only.

Project managed by and legal landlord: Low-Income Housing Institute (LIHI), a non-profit organization that contracts with the Seattle Human Services Department. LIHI secured funding and permits for Villages, coordinated construction, and recruited volunteers.

Staff includes: Varies by community

Total capital to start project: \$250,000 to 300,000—less if people donate and build homes.

Total annual cost: During 2016, the City of Seattle contributed \$559,600 of a total budget of \$755,000 for the operations and case management budget for three Villages. Cost per person exited from the program in 2016 is \$2,310; the city's investment is \$1,711 per person exiting. Total program cost per individual exiting the program to permanent housing is \$8,888; \$6,584 is the City of Seattle's investment.

Funding sources: City of Seattle contracts with the Low-Income Housing Institute, which led the effort to raise funds to construct the tiny houses, reaching out to hundreds of donors and volunteers, including the Seattle Police Department and Human Services Department, which funds LIHI for operations and services.

Legal and environmental issues: Source reports that insurance and legal representation are essential. In all villages, a code of conduct emphasizes harmony and the smooth operation of each village. Residents sign waivers, agreeing not to sue the city or LIHI. A clear agreement is also essential.

Individual facilities on-site: Each tiny house unit is 100 square-feet with locks, heat, insulation, electricity, and storage.

Communal facilities on-site include: Trash pickup and recycling, access to restrooms and showers, and a community kitchen.

Governance model: Self-governed and self-managed model in collaboration with LIHI. A democratic decision-making model gives each member an equal vote.

Programs provided: Case management and access to services and resources, including childcare, transportation (including school transportation for children), health care (including mental health and substance abuse programs), vocational training and education, legal services. Permission to have pets and vehicles on-site. No time limit for how long an individual can stay but residents are required to follow rules and make progress toward finding permanent housing, employment, and accessing services. No fees for residents.

Overall project goal: To offer an interim, temporary solution for homeless individuals with access to case management and supportive services.

Challenges: While not everyone was supportive of the project, community members were all provided detailed information on the management plan and code of conduct and were invited to serve on a

community advisory committee.

Successes: Empirical evidence and experience shows more people find permanent housing through this model.

Impact on the community: Partner agency staff report increased neighborhood resident engagement and support, including donations, enjoyable community interactions and other positive experiences, relationship building, involvement by neighborhood faith communities, and increased understanding of homelessness and poverty in their neighborhoods. Village residents participate in their communities through neighborhood cleanup efforts and safety walks.

Crime and Safety: Has 24-hour security shifts, with each adult participating. Seattle Police Department data shows no significant increase in crime because of the project.

Recommendations: Engage many different groups and individuals to work on various aspects of this project. This includes ordinance and land use experts, police, government, the faith community, the Department of Neighborhoods, non-profits, and service providers. Work closely with the community, especially people with lived experience, to design and implement the programs. Self-management works well with additional staffing from a contracted agency for oversight. Be sure to offer adequate resources, including designing for people who need support for physical (ex. hospital discharges) and mental health issues.

Information Source: Planner/Liaison, Seattle Human Services Department, and Director of Advocacy and Community Engagement, Low-Income Housing Institute

Project: Dignity Village in Portland, Oregon

Location: On two acres of city-owned land in an industrial park 10 miles from downtown, near a river, a wildlife refuge, and the airport.

Overall Population: 657,100

Estimated population unsheltered: 2,869 in Multnomah County (2019 PIT Count)

Project established: Dignity Village began as a tent campground and transitioned into the nation's first Tiny Homes Village in 2000. Now there are over seven additional villages in Portland, based on Dignity Village model.

Serving: 45 tiny home structures house 50 – 70 single adults. Many more rely on Dignity's day services.

Project managed by/legal landlord: Dignity Village is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Village is democratically operated through an annually elected membership council (See Governance Model).

Staff Includes: One full-time staff

Total Capital to start project: Unknown. Organizers accessed donated materials and established relationships with non-profit recyclers, community organizations and religious groups. Villagers, if able, built their own structures and found free materials. A grass roots campaign eventually led to the city offering property at no cost.

Total annual cost: \$30,000. Includes garbage/recycling, WIFI/cable/phone, water, electricity, portable toilet servicing, miscellaneous expenses, and liability insurance.

Funding sources: As a non-profit organization, Dignity Village funds itself through a combination of donations from individuals and organizations, grants, the village's collectively run small businesses, and the \$50 monthly insurance fee paid by residents.

Legal and environmental issues: Primary challenges involved identifying an existing law to support the



model and battling stereotypes about homeless people. Founders used existing laws from the Great Depression era which granted the city permission to set up shanty towns. Popular support eventually overcame opposition, and the city granted a contract for the use of the site near the airport. As a non-profit, Dignity village is required to maintain liability insurance, paid for by resident fees, and accepts all liability. There have been no claims in the Village's 20-year history. The city has encountered no legal problems related to Dignity Village.

Exhaust and noise pollution from military jets has caused lung and hearing problems for long-term residents. Rats have been an issue due to the nearby river. Waste management can be a problem for people with hoarding behaviors. Flooding, intense heat and high-water usage result from being located on a tarmac instead of soil or gravel.

Individual facilities on-site: Each structure is made from recycled materials and includes gas heat and solar electricity.

Communal Facilities on-site include: Operational buildings include kitchen with running water, a large meeting/social hall, living room, two offices, donations processing center, storage area, greenhouse, guest shelter, showers, computer lab, recycling facility, and four portable toilets. Village also includes outdoor common spaces, garden beds and a security shack. Garbage/recycling is provided, as well as mail service, a shared phone and WIFI.

Governance model: Dignity Village is an autonomous, self-governed, self-managed, low-barrier transitional community. It is a 501(c)(3) non-profit collectively and democratically managed by residents through an annually elected council and the membership body with established bylaws and policies. A full-time program specialist, funded by Mulnomah County and contracted through the non-profit JOIN, offers added support and training and acts as liaison and advocate for Village residents. JOIN works in partnership with the council to provide additional social service support but is not involved with Village management.

Programs provided: Non-profit JOIN provides social service support and access to community resources.

Key Policies: Pets and vehicles are allowed, but no camping in vehicles. No time limit for residents. All residents pay \$50 per month to cover liability insurance costs.

Overall Project Goal: To create an autonomous, self-governed, self-managed, democratic community based on advocacy, grass roots organizing, community partnerships, and sustainability.

Challenges: Funding for social services, including shelters and shelter staff, is inadequate. There is a 47,000-household shortage of affordable housing, resulting in longer shelter stays. Housing wait lists are 10 – 15 years long. Mental health supports are also failing in Portland. Because traditional shelters deny shelter to people with behavioral disabilities, many with severe mental illness end up at Dignity village due to its remote location. The village currently has no mental health specialists.

Successes: The Village has a 20-year history of successfully running itself. Average length of stay is the same or better than at shelters using other models.

Suggestions and Advice: Stay true to your model structure. Social service agencies can work most successfully in partnership with instead of having power over villages. A community can regulate its own behavior more effectively than outsiders with misperceptions such as economic class and racial bias. Employ dedicated mental health, housing and addiction support workers. Addiction support workers must have a harm reduction lens rather than abstinence only to successfully engage with houseless people. Provide land closer to homeless resources and services and neighborhoods where low-income people's natural family support networks are likely to be located.

Do not build structures smaller than 10x12. Provide a small storage shed so residents can avoid using expensive private facilities to store their belongings.

Information Source: Dignity Village Program Specialist