

## Fact Sheet

# THE PROMISE OF TINY HOME VILLAGES IN JEFFERSON COUNTY

The problem of homelessness is acute, complex and persistent. Tiny home villages have emerged as a promising new approach to solving this problem. This information sheet discusses what tiny home villages are and why they offer a more effective and affordable solution to homelessness.

## THE TINY HOME VILLAGE MODEL

A tiny home village is a self-managed community of formerly homeless people, supported by a non-profit service provider, living in tiny shelters or tiny homes.

**Temporary villages** are comprised of tiny shelters, just shy of 100 sf. Each shelter has electricity, insulation, a heater, and a lock on the door. Bathrooms, laundry and kitchens are communal. The length of stay in temporary villages may be limited.

**Permanent villages** are comprised of tiny homes permitted for long-term occupancy. Each house includes a bathroom and kitchen. In addition to paying rent, residents help assume much of the responsibility of managing the village.

## WHY VILLAGES ARE NEEDED

The lack of affordable housing is the principal driver of homelessness. But homelessness, in turn, robs those who experience it of much more.

Living in a village provides for:

- Safety – Being able to protect yourself, your family, and your possessions by locking your door greatly reduces the stress of being homeless. Villages also maintain security by checking people into and out of the village.
- Stability – Access to showers, laundry, and a kitchen enables homeless people to find work, maintain a job, attend school, and improve their health. Being able to maintain social distancing during COVID is also vital.
- Structure – Villages adopt community agreements, for example, drug and alcohol prohibition, which all residents must honor in order to stay.
- Support – Help with obtaining identification, getting a Social Security card, accessing mental health services, or signing up for public assistance, Social Security, or VA benefits is made possible.
- Self-management – Performing chores like security watch, picking up garbage, or cleaning the community kitchen fosters a sense of community and responsibility.

## WHY VILLAGES WORK

Tiny Home Villages have proven to be a rapid, cost-effective response with better outcomes than traditional shelters. Clustering tiny homes in a village setting offers a number of social and economic advantages. Villages are a community-based

Bringing tiny home villages to Jefferson County will take a community.  
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solution, where neighbors come together to share resources and make decisions about how their community is run. Neighbors form advisory councils. This is in contrast to the vertical organization of traditional homeless shelters where help is only handed down.

In Seattle in 2019, the evidence shows that 37% of temporary tiny home village residents moved on to permanent housing compared with 4% from basic emergency shelters.

## **WHY VILLAGES COST LESS**

Temporary villages are among the most cost-effective ways to provide housing services to the homeless. Opportunity Village in Eugene, OR, a self-managed temporary village, costs just \$5 per bed per night to operate.

Often the community covers the cost of building the tiny shelters or homes through donations and volunteer hours. The Low Income Housing Institute (LIHI) in Seattle, which operates a dozen tiny villages with plans to expand to forty, estimates that shelters cost an average of \$2500 in materials. Creating a temporary village takes six to twelve months. By contrast, traditional shelters often take years to establish, adding to the costs.

The alternative to no shelters is to disperse the homeless to the wider community. This increases the cost to local government of policing and jailing.

## **WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN HERE IN JEFFERSON COUNTY**

1. Compile an inventory of sites, both private and public, that could be prepared quickly for a village. Work with public officials to get these locations approved.
2. Conduct outreach to neighborhoods surrounding the proposed village.
3. Bring in water, sewer, and electrical connections to the sites.
4. Raise funds to construct the tiny shelters or houses, reaching out to donors and volunteers and lead work parties to build the houses or shelters.
5. Apply for permits and develop the management and staffing plans.

## **Learn More**

30 minute video on Oregon's Square One Villages:

<https://tinyhouseexpedition.com/inspiring-low-cost-self-managed-tiny-home-village-for-formerly-homeless/>

18 minute video on Remarkable Tiny Home Village for Formerly Homeless in Austin:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=xBJxvJ5hw0c&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xBJxvJ5hw0c&feature=youtu.be)

Article on LIHI temporary villages <https://shelterforce.org/2019/03/15/tiny-house-villages-in-seattle-an-efficient-response-to-our-homelessness-crisis/>

Article comparing Seattle's with San Francisco's approach to providing shelter <https://sfpublicpress.org/while-s-f-resists-seattle-embraces-regulated-homeless-camps/>

Tiny House Villages, A Community-Based Solution to a Complex Problem

<https://www.squareonevillages.org/intro-problem>

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