# VILLAGE RESEARCH & HOW-TO GUIDE

PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY
HOMELESSNESS RESEARCH & ACTION COLLABORATIVE

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## Research Team:

Todd Ferry, Dr. Greg Townley, Dr. Marisa Zapata

Emily Leickly, Holly Brott, Dr. Lauren Everett, Dr. Katricia Stewart

## Design/Graphics Team:

Jung Choothian, Marta Petteni, Todd Ferry, Mckinsey Carroll

## Comic Artists:

Steve Teare (Village Stories)

Jung Choothian (Portraits)

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For questions, please contact: Todd Ferry (rtf@pdx.edu)

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# Authors

**Todd Ferry** is Associate Director and Senior Research Associate at the Center for Public Interest Design (CPID) within the Portland State University School of Architecture. He holds a Master of Architecture from the University of Texas at Austin, and a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy from the University of Georgia. Before pursuing a career in architecture, Todd worked for nearly a decade with nonprofit organizations serving vulnerable populations. His current work investigates how new architecture typologies can support traditionally underserved communities through radically participatory processes and seeks to develop innovative tools and models of engagement to aid in this effort. Todd's primary focus areas include Housing Insecurity and Homelessness, Mobile Placemaking /Mobile Urbanism, and Innovative Approaches to Sustainable Design. He has been involved in the design and creation of several pod villages in the Portland region. Todd is a Co-Founder of PSU's Homelessness Research & Action Collaborative (HRAC) where he leads the center's alternative shelter initiatives.

**Dr. Greg Townley** is an Associate Professor of Community Psychology at Portland State University and co-founder of PSU's Homelessness Research & Action Collaborative. He received his Ph.D. in Clinical-Community Psychology from the University of South Carolina, his M.A. in Psychology from the University of South Carolina, and B.A.s in Psychology and Africana Studies from North Carolina State University. Dr. Townley's research examines community inclusion and supportive housing of individuals experiencing serious mental illnesses and homelessness. Central to Dr. Townley's work is the promotion of positive, reciprocal relationships between academic and community stakeholders. He collaborates with numerous local service providers and advocacy groups, including Cascadia Behavioral Healthcare, Central City Concern, Street Roots, and p:ear to address homelessness, supportive housing, alternative first response programs, and community attitudes about homelessness and mental illness.

**Dr. Marisa Zapata** is an Associate Professor of land-use planning and Director of the Homelessness Research & Action Collaborative at Portland State University.  She received her Ph.D. in Regional Planning from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, her M.U.P. in Urban Planning from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and B.A. in anthropology from Rice University. As an educator, scholar, and planner, Dr. Zapata is committed to achieving spatially based social justice by preparing planners to act in the face of the uncertain and inequitable futures we face. She believes how we use land reflects our social and cultural values. Dr. Zapata's research explores three main questions: 1) How can we plan across deeply embedded cultural differences to produce just and sustainable places? 2) How can planners prepare places to act in the face of the multiple futures that may unfold in a given place? and 3) What are the most effective institutional arrangements between governments and civic society to collaborate regionally? She is especially concerned about equitable planning for uncertain futures in highly diverse communities.



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# Introduction

The village model is an increasingly popular form of alternative shelter being explored by organizations, activists, and municipalities around the country. Portland's Dignity Village is the country's first and longest running village, serving as a touchstone for community dialogue in Oregon around the subject of supporting people experiencing homelessness since 2000. More recently, the region has seen the rapid increase in alternative shelters informed by or following the village model, sparked by a state of emergency declaration on housing and homelessness in Portland in 2015, and further accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. As the model continues to grow and morph with each iteration, the research team at Portland State University's Homelessness Research and Action Collaborative (HRAC) wanted to know if the village model was working as intended, whom was it serving, and what lessons could be learned to improve future village efforts based on insights from those with personal experience living in, working at, or designing for a village. This document is the outcome of a multi-year research project to answer these questions. There is currently very limited research on villages and much still to be explored, but this effort hopes to make a significant contribution to the understanding of villages by comparing six different villages in the Portland Metro region with varying degrees of infrastructure, management or governance structures, operating support, and origins.

**Research Methodology**

The work presented in this report relies on the direct input from those with experience designing, supporting, managing, and/or living in or near the villages.

Collectively, our research included interviews and surveys with:

- 42 villagers
- 9 village support staff
- 7 village designers/architects
- 6 village creators/builders
- 16 neighbors of villages
- 2,065 Portlanders who responded to an anonymous survey about homelessness and villages, 436 of whom reported living near a village

All research activities were reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board at Portland State University. Below, we outline our specific approach for recruiting and interviewing members of each group and briefly discuss how data were analyzed and incorporated into the report.

***Villagers***

Beginning in late summer 2020 and lasting through late spring 2021, we attended community meetings, made announcements, and distributed flyers at each of the six villages to recruit villagers to participate in this project. We described the research purpose and process and asked people who were interested to provide us with contact information so we could follow up with them to schedule interviews. All villagers were invited to participate, with the aim of recruiting at least half of the current village occupants, which we were able to achieve at most sites.

We first administered a survey that included a variety of questions about housing history, pod quality, experiences with others in the village and the broader neighborhood, transportation, health, basic needs, and life satisfaction. We consulted with people with personal and/or professional experience with homelessness and housing when developing the survey; and we also pilot tested it in an earlier study on the experiences of villagers (Leickly, Townley, Ferry, and Petteni, in press). We then completed semi-structured qualitative interviews where villagers could talk more freely about their experiences. Surveys and interviews with villagers were conducted in-person when possible, or over the phone or via video conferencing when not. The interviews were in-depth and extensive, lasting an average of 1.5 to 2 hours with each villager. Villagers were compensated with $30 for their time.

***Village staff, designers, and creators***

Village staff, designers, and creators were contacted via phone or email and invited to participate in an interview about their experiences designing, supporting, or working at each village. We sought equal representation across villages (i.e., three to four staff, designers, and/or creators per village). Questions focused on design features of villages, including spatial and site considerations; staffing and governance structures; and villager outcomes, including the number of villagers who have transitioned to permanent housing. Interviews lasted 1 to 3 hours and occurred via phone or video conferencing. Participants were offered $25 for their time.

***Village neighbors***

We used a variety of approaches to collect information from neighbors about their attitudes toward and experiences with villages. First, we recruited people living near each of the villages through targeted invitations (e.g., emailing people who have been active in neighborhood association meetings and community conversations about villages) and posts on neighborhood-specific social media (e.g., Neighborhood Facebook and Nextdoor pages). We were especially focused on the following three different groups of neighbors and worked to achieve balance between these perspectives: 1) people who have always been proponents of the village model; 2) people who maintain concerns about some aspects of villages; and 3) people who have changed their mind over time in either direction. Interviews with neighbors occurred via phone or video conferencing and lasted around 1 hour. Individuals received $25 for their time participating in the interview.

Second, we developed an anonymous online survey assessing neighbors' experiences with, knowledge of, and attitudes toward homelessness and homeless services, including villages. The survey was conducted on Qualtrics, an online survey platform; and anonymized links were distributed via social media (e.g., Facebook and Twitter), neighborhood association list-servs, and electronic newsletters sent by the city and county.

The only requirements for participation were being at least 18 years old and living in the City of Portland. The survey took most respondents 5 to 10 minutes to complete.

Finally, given concerns about property values commonly voiced by neighbors of villages and other programs serving people experiencing homelessness, we consulted with a finance and real estate analyst in order to assess the impact of villages on the prices of single and multi-family properties in the neighborhoods surrounding the villages. CoStar, which has the most comprehensive database of real estate data throughout the US, as well as other databases and geospatial techniques were used to conduct property value analysis.

**Key Takeaways**

Following data collection, surveys were analyzed using SPSS statistical software, while interviews were professionally transcribed and analyzed using thematic coding techniques. Findings are summarized throughout the document, with the first section summarizing findings from the villager research; and the second section featuring recommendations based on findings from villagers, village staff, and neighbors. We created the how-to-guide to be as usable, concise, and applicable as possible, which meant in some cases needing to exclude some additional data on villager outcomes, neighbor experiences, and contextual factors (e.g., how villages operated during the COVID-19 pandemic). We look forward to continuing to unpack these findings and share them in scholarly papers and presentations in the future. For now, some key takeaways from our research, which will be described in more detail in the pages to come, include the following:

1. Villagers were largely satisfied or very satisfied with their pod as a place to live (86% expressed being satisfied or very satisfied).

2. Most (69%) were satisfied or very satisfied with their village as a place to live.

3. And most (79%) were satisfied or very satisfied with their neighborhood as a place to live.

4. Food insecurity remains a major problem at villages, with 45% of villagers reporting being food insecure. This suggests that while villages are helping some individuals meet their basic needs for food, there is still a need to ensure that everyone has access to food.

5. Villages have disproportionately served White people (particularly White men) and need to institute more mechanisms to support people of color. This disparity is reflected in our research, with only 17% of the villagers we interviewed identifying as Black, Indigenous, or other People of Color (BIPOC) despite the most recent Point-in-Time count for Multnomah County reporting that 40% of those who were unsheltered were people of color. We also found that BIPOC villagers reported lower levels of belonging and acceptance within their villages compared to White villagers.



6. The feeling of having a voice and influence over the social and physical aspects of the village had major impacts on villager satisfaction, but it was not necessarily contingent upon full self governance. The majority of villagers (69%) said that they should share in decision making at the village, while 26% said that only villagers should determine what happens in the village.

7. Concerns about villages among neighbors diminished over time. That is, most neighbors who reported concerns (e.g., decreased property value, increased crime) when they first learned of villages being located in their neighborhood reported no longer having those concerns after living near the village.

8. Size, cost, infrastructure, and governance structures vary widely across villages, and there is very limited knowledge sharing between villages.

9. The vast majority of stakeholders feel that the ideal number for a village is between 20 and 30 people. This range was offered for a variety of reasons that included community cohesion, impacts on internal work shifts at self-governed villages, staff to villager ratio, and efficiencies and limitations related to the physical infrastructure of a village.

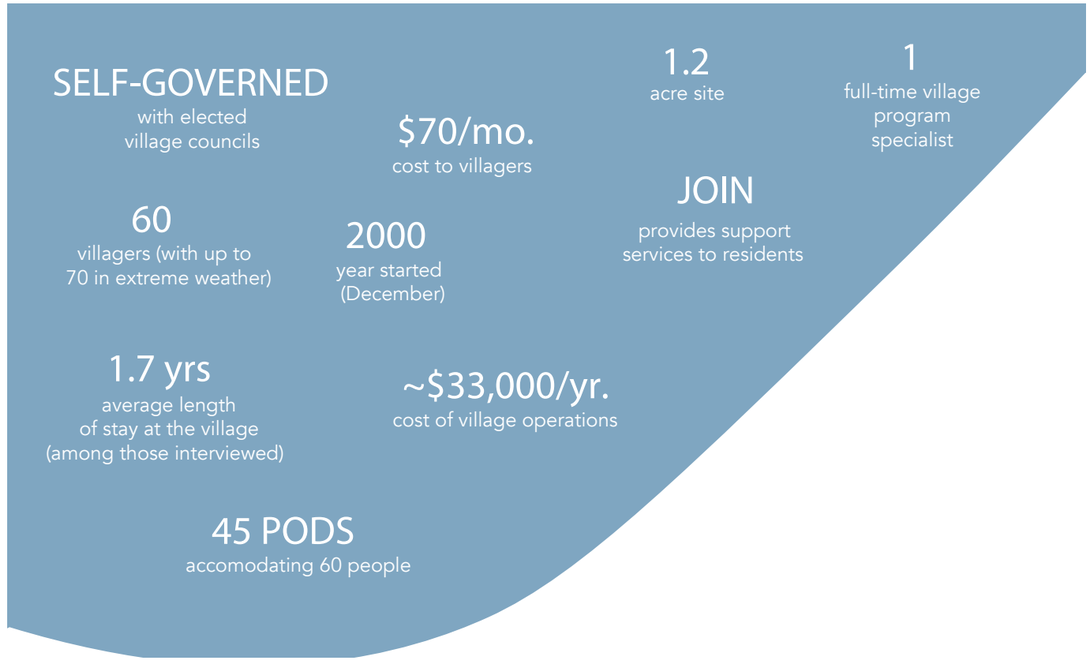
10. Key unexplored opportunities for future villages include: Integrating villages into emergency preparedness plans, designing villages to better support parents, creating a city-level village liaison position, designing villages around activities and interests, and leveraging village investment toward the creation of affordable housing.

**Final Note**

The design of this document aims to provide an accessible and nuanced picture of villages through a profile of each village, results of surveys with villagers, a how-to-guide of best practices for the creation of future villages, and portraits of stakeholders involved in village efforts. While unable to fully capture the full story of each village or list each stakeholder, it endeavors to respectfully acknowledge the work of countless people engaged in the act of village-making and learn from these efforts. This document is not intended to be read as advocacy for or against the creation of new villages, but aims to provide a critical understanding of the village model toward better outcomes for those deciding to undertake the creation or support of future villages. The solution to homelessness is permanent housing and supportive services. While we collectively strive toward providing permanent housing for all, we hope that this document will contribute to dialogue and efforts aimed at supporting our neighbors experiencing homelessness in the near-term.

# Dignity Village

*Image credit: Mark Lakeman*




# Dignity Village

## [Village Profile]



Dignity Village is the oldest and longest running tiny house (or pod) village in the country, established in 2000. It is a self-governed community that is home to about 60 villagers at any given time, and has helped countless other individuals experiencing homelessness over the years. From aesthetic and governance concepts, to the application of the term village to this context, Dignity Village provided an example of a new form of alternative shelter that still informs activism, advocacy, and shelter responses in Portland and around the country. Critically, it was created by people experiencing homelessness, with support from allies ranging from designers and developers to preachers and artists.

Dignity Village's origins are rooted in creative activism sparked by the "Out of Doorways" campaign initiated by the nonprofit and weekly street newspaper Street Roots following a legal ruling to end camping bans in Portland. The campaign called for the establishment of a sanctioned "tent city" in response to a lack of shelter in the city. A small group of houseless activists including Ibrahim Mubarak and Jack Tafari set up Camp Dignity next to the Broadway Bridge in late 2000. This action set off the first of several stand-offs with police that forced them to move. The group highlighted this displacement through a "shopping cart parade," in which they moved together with their belongings through the city to a new site as they also attracted new members to their community. Through a series of moves to locations by the Willamette River and city bridges and subsequent parades following their removal, they gained local and national attention. These activists brought the issue of "sweeps" to the forefront, and demonstrated that people were being displaced with nowhere else to go.

With this increased attention and newly found support from Portlanders eager to assist their efforts, the group was able to establish Camp Dignity under the Fremont Bridge, hosting a safe space for around 80 people in tents for 9 months. During this time, the group and allies planned for next steps and worked on establishing a vision for what an intentional community might look like. As they planned for this community using possibilities like Dignity City and Dignity Town, they landed on the name Dignity Village to communicate a level of aspiration

*"Once on the current site, we reached habitation at the village immediately through tents on pallets...I started to build this thing in the center with interesting notable characters from Portland's culture showing up in a big push to build this community building in the middle, which took the form of a big donut with a perimeter of doors, but tilted and cut to receive sunlight and fill the space with warmth passively. So, that was the initial structure interpenetrated by our tower just to create a community space out of the wind and rain. And then once we started this construction phase, we gathered mountains of reclaimed materials and other people showed up with tools to help. I would say we built for five years straight. There were all these different parts and pieces and initiatives, but the village literally built itself from almost nothing. And this is one of the most wonderful things about it. And when people ask me, "What will it take to do a village?" I'm like, "Well, it's between zero and the highest imaginable number, but it's possible to do this."*

*- Mark Lakeman, Architect and Dignity Village Co-Designer*

that went far beyond basic shelter. This coincided with the creation of The City Repair Project and its founders' advocacy for revillaging neighborhoods for community and environmental health.

In preparation for establishing a more permanent community, the group formed Dignity Village as a certified 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. Camp Dignity split into 3 groups, with one group "temporarily" moving onto city-owned land in the Sunderland neighborhood while a more long-term site could be identified. This site was the only one of the three Camp Dignity factions that persisted, and with the help of local architects, builders, and volunteers, established itself as a community with individual sleeping pods, gardens, and gathering structures.

In its early years the village faced ongoing threats of displacement, but persisted each time with support from allies. It was entirely self-funded, with site costs covered by the Larson Legacy in the early years (essentially renting the land from the City). Some of its early organizers note that a turning point for the village was when a local right wing radio personality contacted the Oregon Land Use Board of Appeals in part of a public campaign to shut down the village. Rather than resulting in the displacement of the village, it ultimately forced those in the city who were quietly supporting the village to publicly advocate for the village, with activists and bureau representatives galvanized by a shared distaste for the bullying attempts. As a result, in 2004 the Portland City Council granted campground status to the village, making it the country's first city-sanctioned village and creating the structural mechanisms for this type of community to legally exist in the city.

The campground designation of the village opened up a lot of opportunities for the types of structures and amenities that could support the village. The main rules given to the designers and organizers supporting the village, like architect Mark Lakeman and developer Eli Spevak, were to not create structures that were code compliant to standard building typology (so as not to trigger build-

Displacement of Camp Dignity & Organizing for Shopping Cart Parade

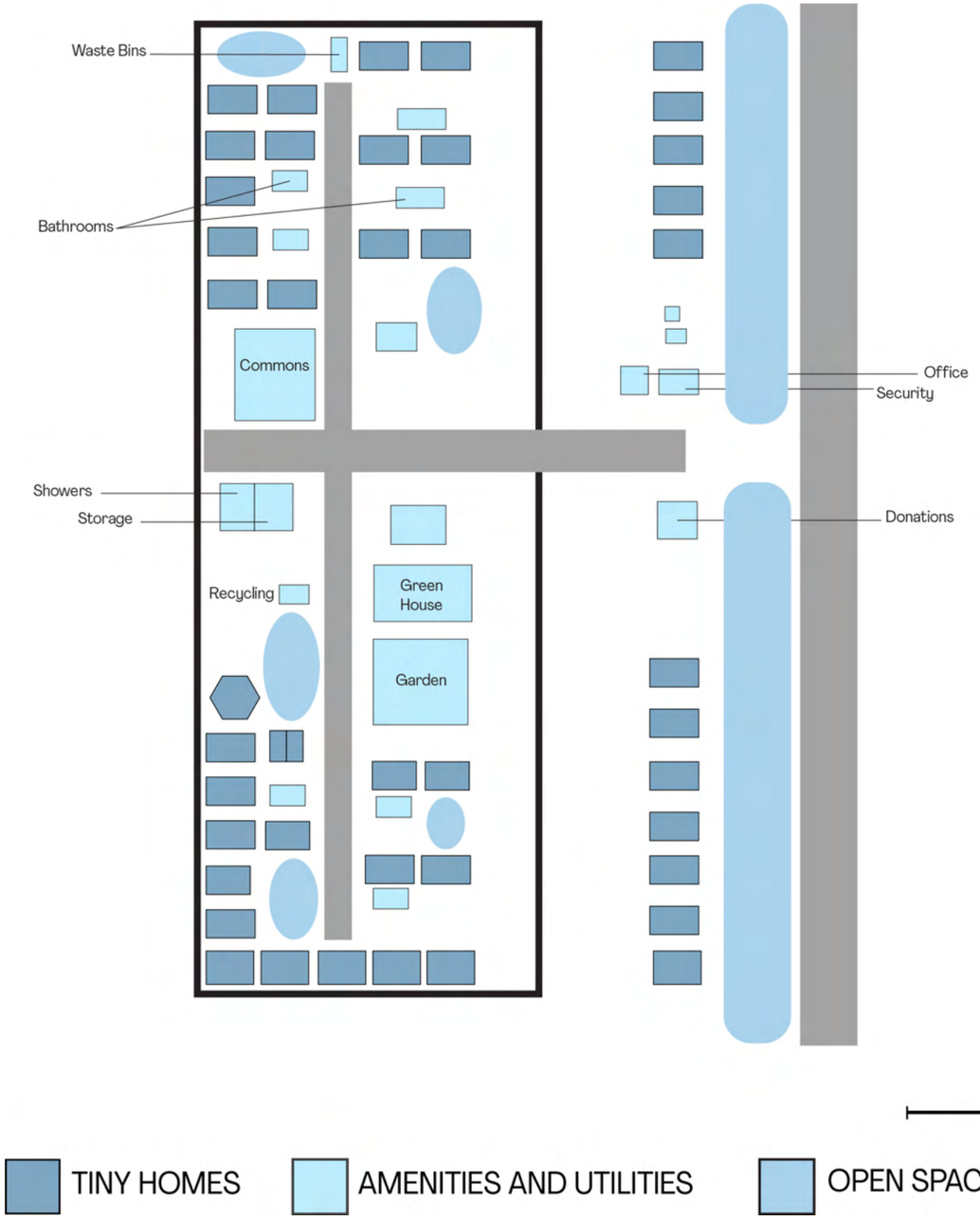
*Image credit: Mark Lakeman*

ing codes), and the structures needed to be movable. What constitutes movable is a big question (with some savvy villagers noting that forklifts exist that are capable of moving pretty massive objects), but the mandate to keep structures outside of building code required keeping the pods modest in size, with pods ranging in size between 96 and 240 square feet.

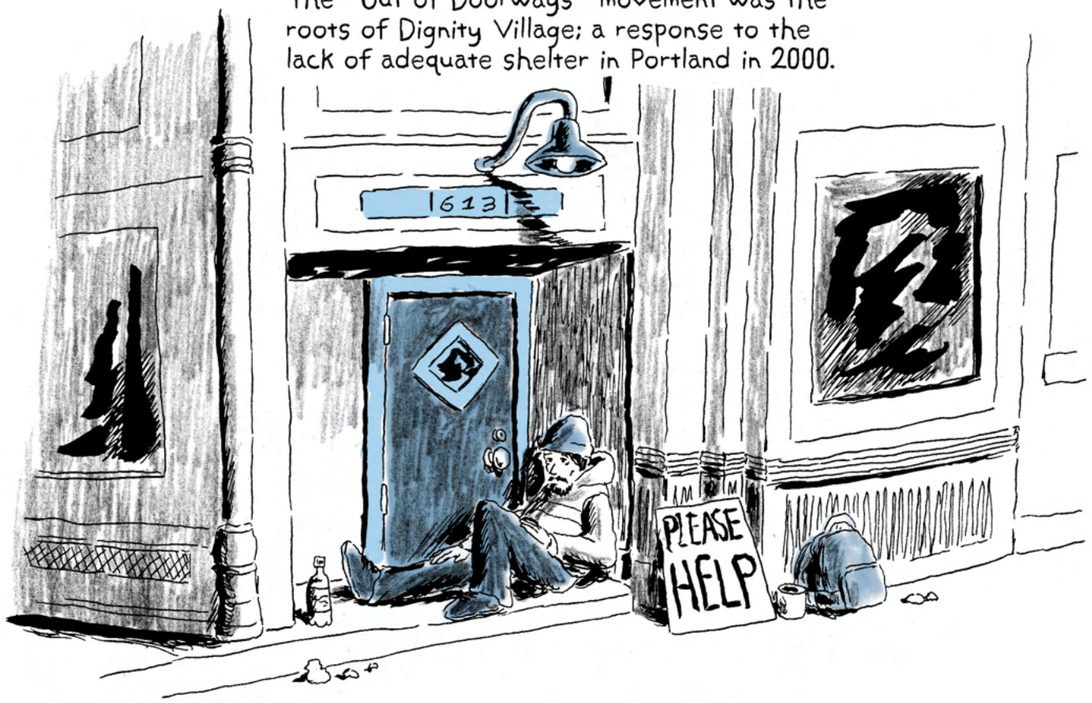
Concepts of democratic self-governance were baked into the village by its founders, and Dignity Village still runs as a self-governed village today. Site utilities are limited, with portable toilets, limited electricity, and propane canisters serving as a power source for pod heat, cooking, and water heaters, but the village remains largely self-reliant. Monthly dues for villagers (around $70/mo.) cover the village's costs of approximately $33,000 per year. The village has had a full-time Program Support Specialist from nonprofit JOIN since 2014, funded from outside sources. This position was originally created to help support the village with some of its struggles to meet its contractual obligations with the City. The Program Support Specialist has evolved to help provide connections to resources and offer neutral recommendations on everything from nonprofit operations to conflict resolution. The position has influence but no vote in village decisions in the interest of supporting villager agency and maintaining trust with villagers. The Program Support Specialist plays a key role as a village advocate and liaison in handling external conflict, such as political, social, or bureaucratic threats to the village.

The nature of the village's location makes it unlikely for one to stumble across the site, with neighbors including a yard waste recycling facility, a prison, a country club, and the outer runways of the Portland airport. This remoteness has surely contributed to the village's longevity, with political pressures from neighbors of other burgeoning villages nearly always resulting in displacement. The isolated site does come with challenges, and cars are required by many villagers since nearly half of villagers have jobs outside the village.

Dignity Village continues to serve as a model for self-governed villages and alternative shelter. Some of the founding members of Dignity Village went on to advocate for the village model in other places and advocate for other models of shelter and services for people experiencing homelessness. Notably, Dignity Village co-founder Ibrahim Mubarak co-founded the houseless advocacy nonprofit Right 2 Survive and co-founded the innovative "rest area" model of Right 2 Dream Too. Individuals that found their footing at Dignity Village after experiencing homelessness went on to form new communities and advocate for villages, including many of the founders of the Village Coalition and Hazelnut Grove, which helped usher in a new period of village creation in Portland informed by Dignity Village's principles and community won through years of activism.



The "Out of Doorways" movement was the roots of Dignity Village; a response to the lack of adequate shelter in Portland in 2000.




The first Camp Dignity was set up by eight houseless activists, but it was soon broken up by police.

The activists staged a shopping cart parade through Portland to highlight the shelter crisis.

This sparked a cycle: a series of displacements met with a series of activist parades.

Street Roots became a sponsor and promoter of the group's cause. A village was set up under Fremont Bridge with over 80 campers.

Dignity Village became a certified 501(c)3 nonprofit organization and in 2004 became Portland's first city-sanctioned tiny house village. It is considered by many to be the longest-running village of its kind, and it has inspired similar villages across the country and internationally.

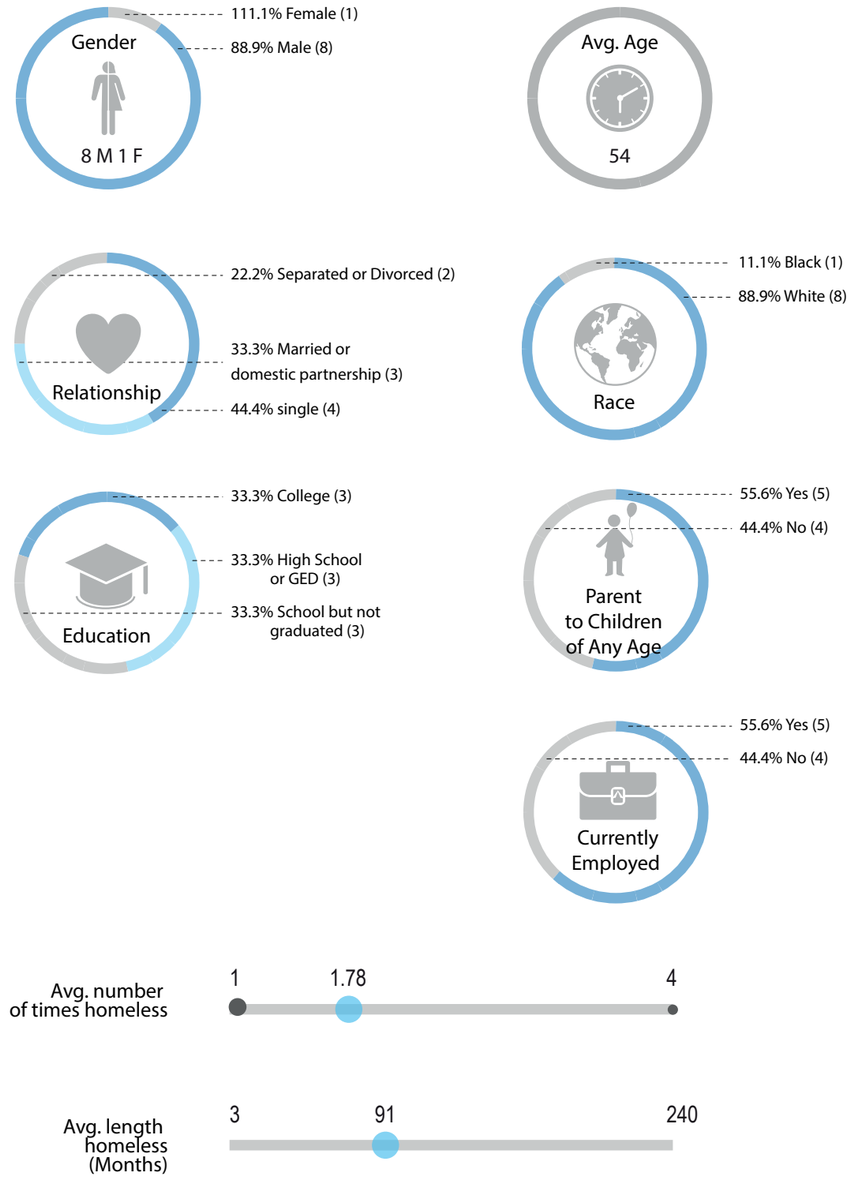
*At each village, all current villagers were invited to participate in a survey and interview. The findings in the following pages represent only those villagers who elected to participate and not the entire population of the village.*

# Dignity Village

## [Villager Interview Results]



## RESIDENTS
## DEMOGRAPHICS



## RESIDENCE AT VILLAGE

Avg. Time lived in village (Months)

3 | 45 | 136

## PODS

### POD TYPE

POP-OUT POD

0% (0)

CATALYST POD

0% (0)

SAFE POD

0% (0)

CONDO POD

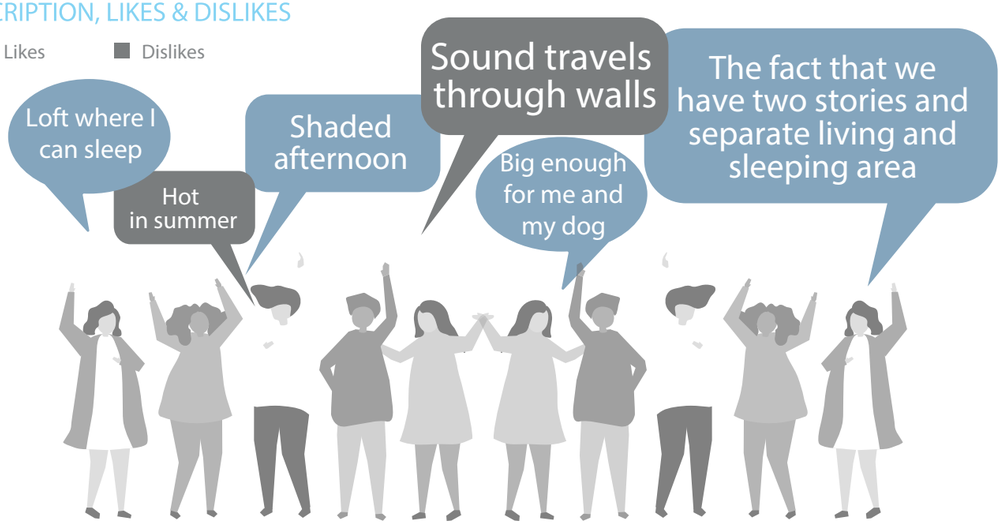
0% (0)

OTHER POD

100% (9)

### POD DESCRIPTION, LIKES & DISLIKES

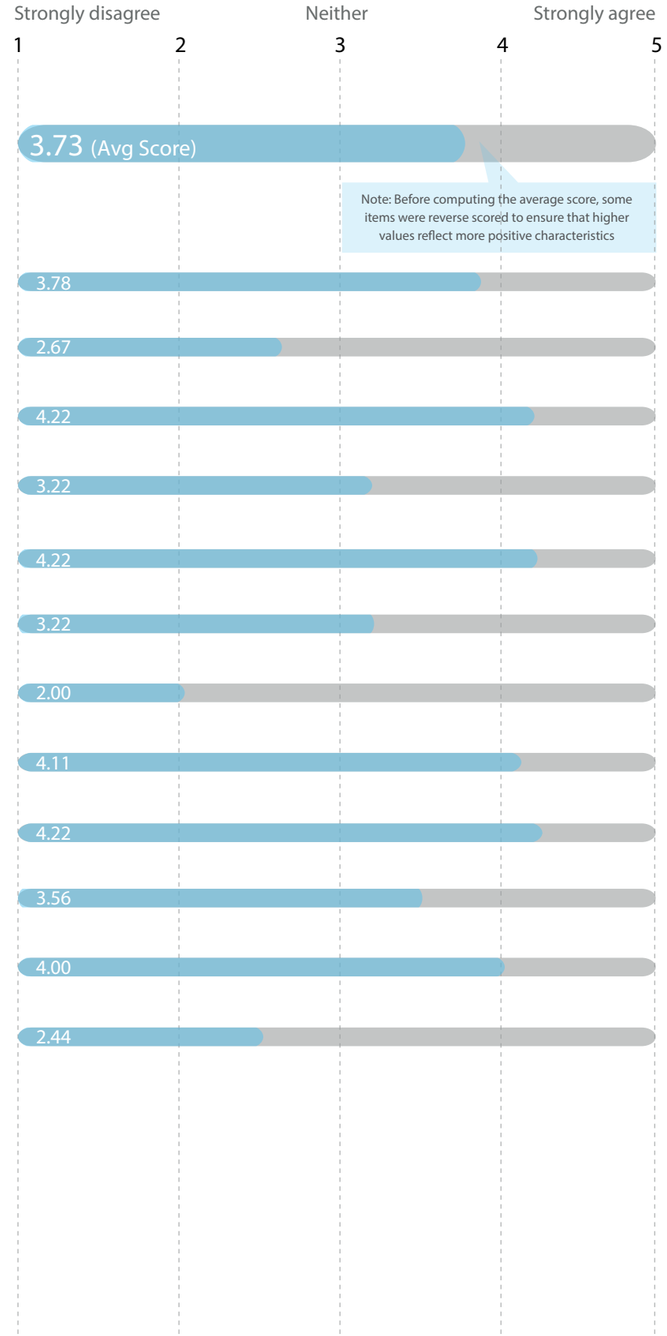
Likes Dislikes






## POD QUALITY

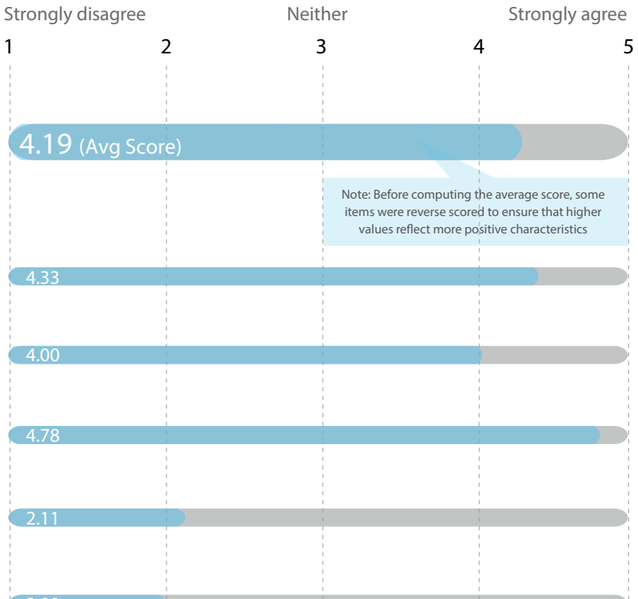
Pod Quality



# VILLAGE

## VILLAGE SOCIAL CLIMATE

Village Social Climate

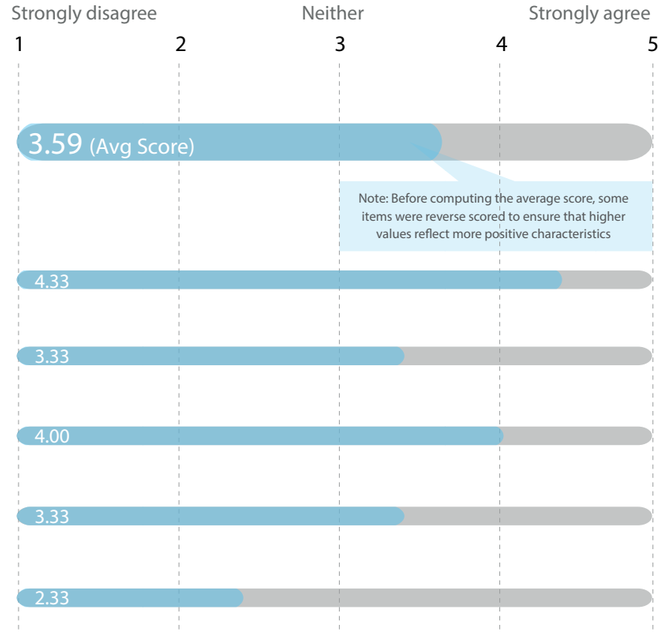



1. I feel like part of this village, like I belong here.
2. I know the rules in this village, and I can fit in with them.
3. I feel safe in the village.
4. Sometimes I feel unwelcome in the village because of my ethnicity and my cultural background.
5. There are other aspects of who I am that make me feel unwelcome in the village
6. People in the village are friendly to everybody no matter what the person's skin color or ethnic
7. People in my village treat me as an equal.



# VILLAGE SENSE OF COMMUNITY

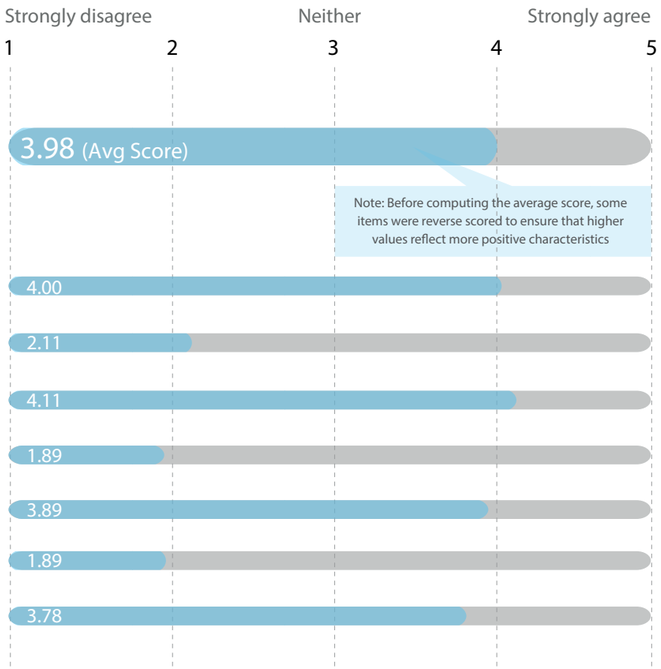
Village Sense of Community




1. I think this village is a good place for me to live
2. Other residents and I want the same things from the village
3. I feel at home in the village
4. I care about what other villagers think of my actions
5. I have no influence over what this village is like
6. If there is a problem in the village people who live there can get it solve
7. I feel a strong sense of community in this village
8. People in this village generally don't get along with each other

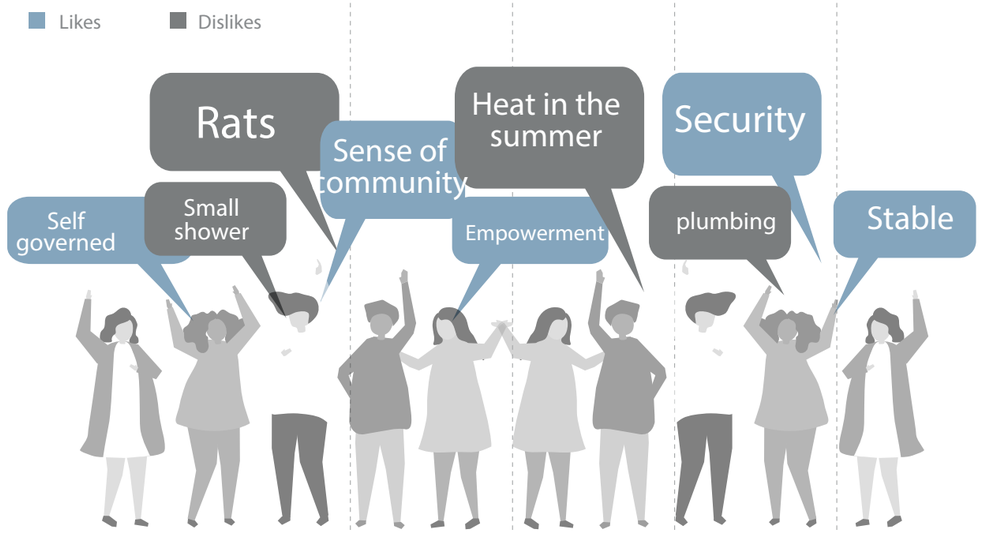
## VILLAGE RESIDENT SCALE

Village Neighbor Scale




1. I can count on a neighbor/ villager for help when I need it.
2. There is no one in my village with whom I'm close.
3. If I needed it, another villager would help me get to an appoint-
4. Other villagers and I argue a lot
5. If I needed someone to talk to about a problem, I could talk with another villager
6. Villagers complain about me or my pod
7. Overall, how satisfied are you with your relationship with other villagers

## VILLAGE DESCRIPTION, LIKES & DISLIKES

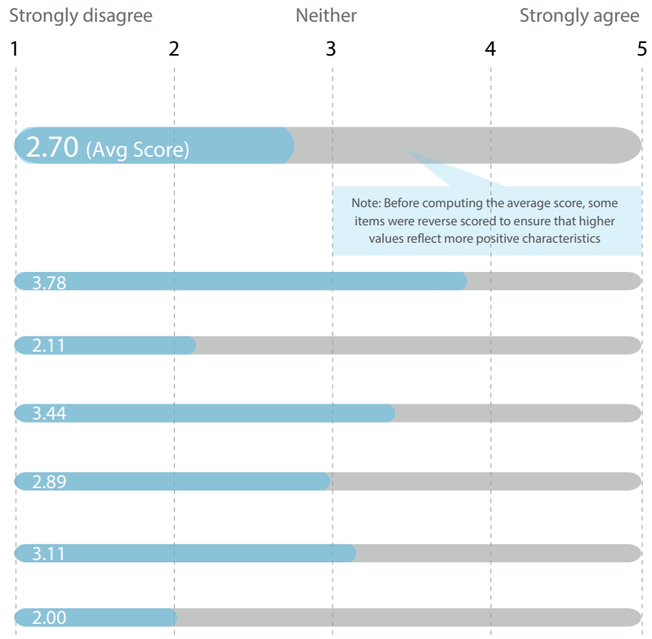





## NEIGHBORHOOD

## NEIGHBORHOOD QUALITY

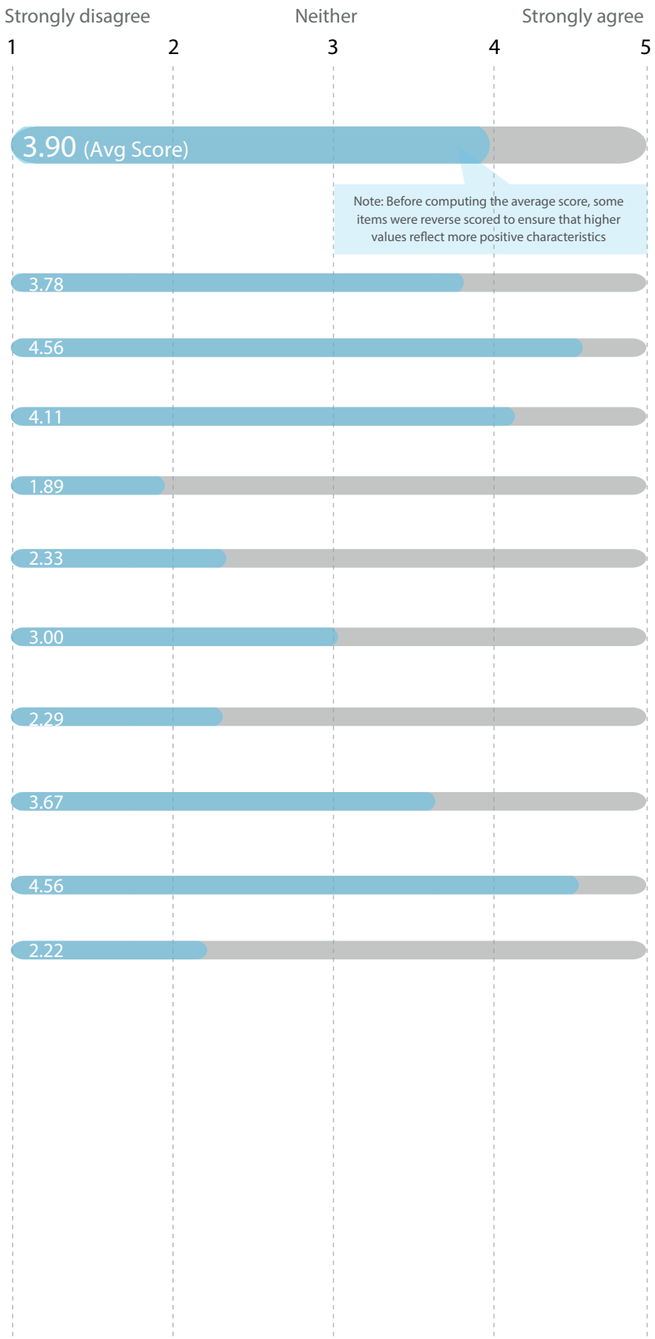
Neighborhood Quality




1. It is easy to get transportation in my neighborhood
2. The air quality in my part of the neighborhood is good
3. Crime is a problem in my neighborhood
4. I can get the things that I need from stores in my neighborhood (food, clothes, supplies)
5. I have a hard time getting health care services in my neighborhood
6. My neighborhood looks nice
7. There is too much noise in my neighborhood
8. I have good sidewalks in my neighborhood
9. There is a lot of traffic on the streets in my neighborhood
10. There are nice parks in my neighborhood

## NEIGHBORHOOD SOCIAL CLIMATE

Neighborhood Social Climate

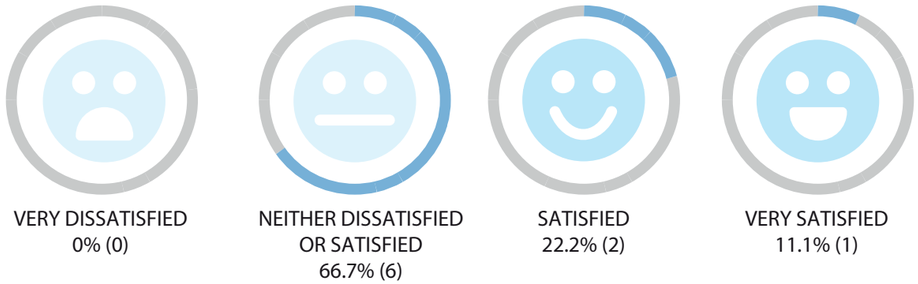





## RESIDENTIAL SATISFACTION

1. "How satisfied are you with your pod as a place to live?"

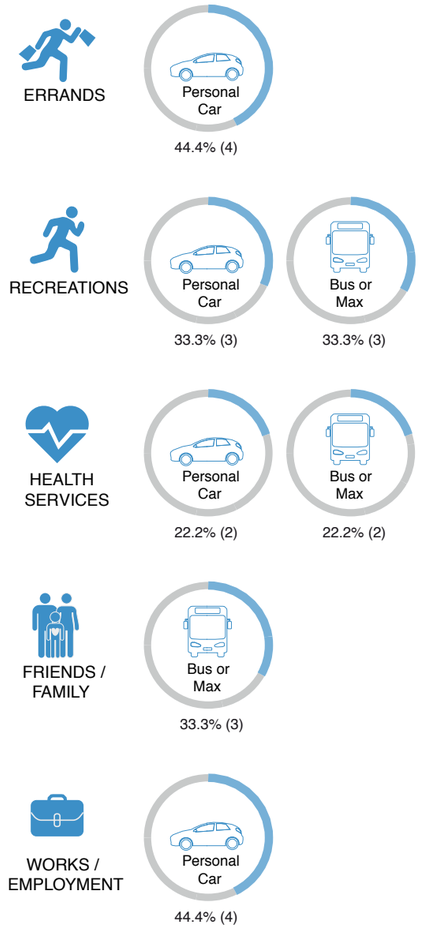
2. "How satisfied are you with your neighborhood as a place to live?"




3. "How long do you want to live in the Village? And why?"

## TRANSPORTATION

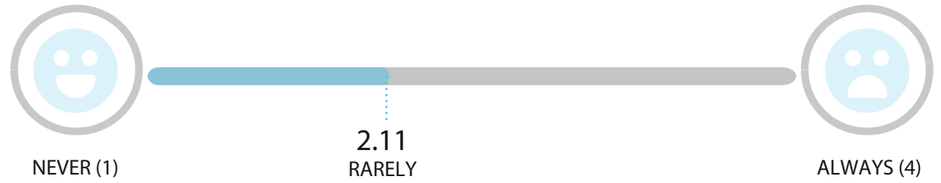
1. Most commonly used transportation methods in the past month.






## LIFE SATISFACTION AND STRESS

1. How often do you feel lonely on a scale of 1 (never) to 4 (always)?
On average residents said:




2. How much did your physical health interfere with daily activities in the last month?
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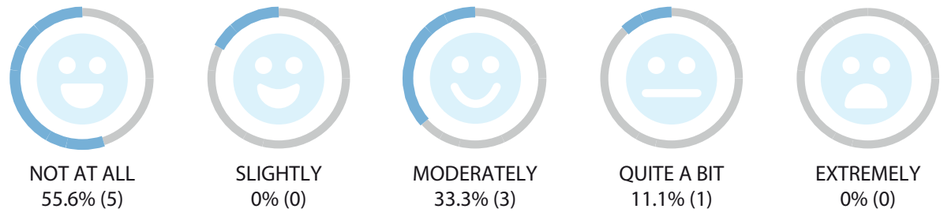


3. How much did your emotional health interfere with daily activities in the last month?
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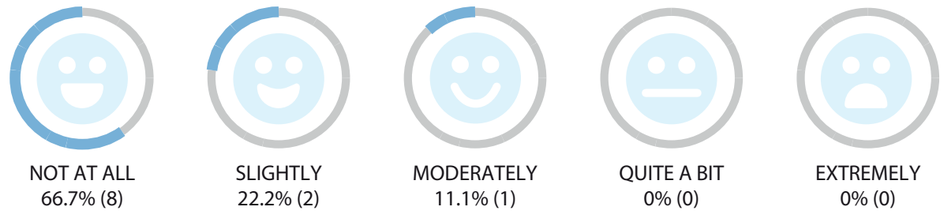
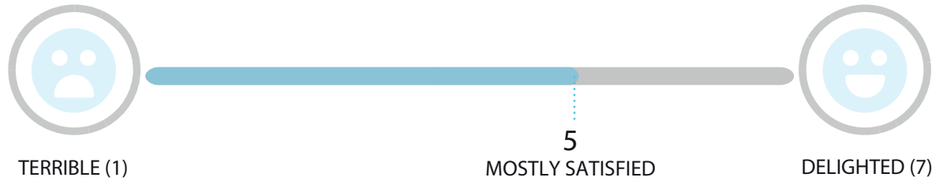
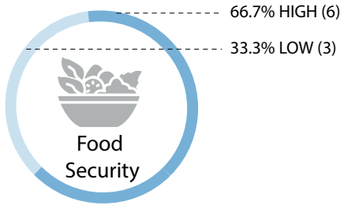
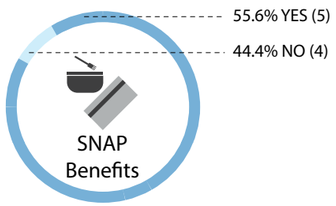


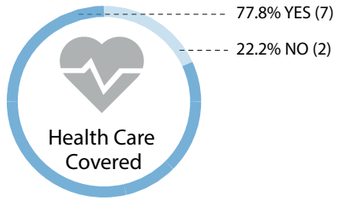

4. How do you feel about your life overall right now?
The average response from residents on a scale of 1 (terrible) to 7 (delighted) was:

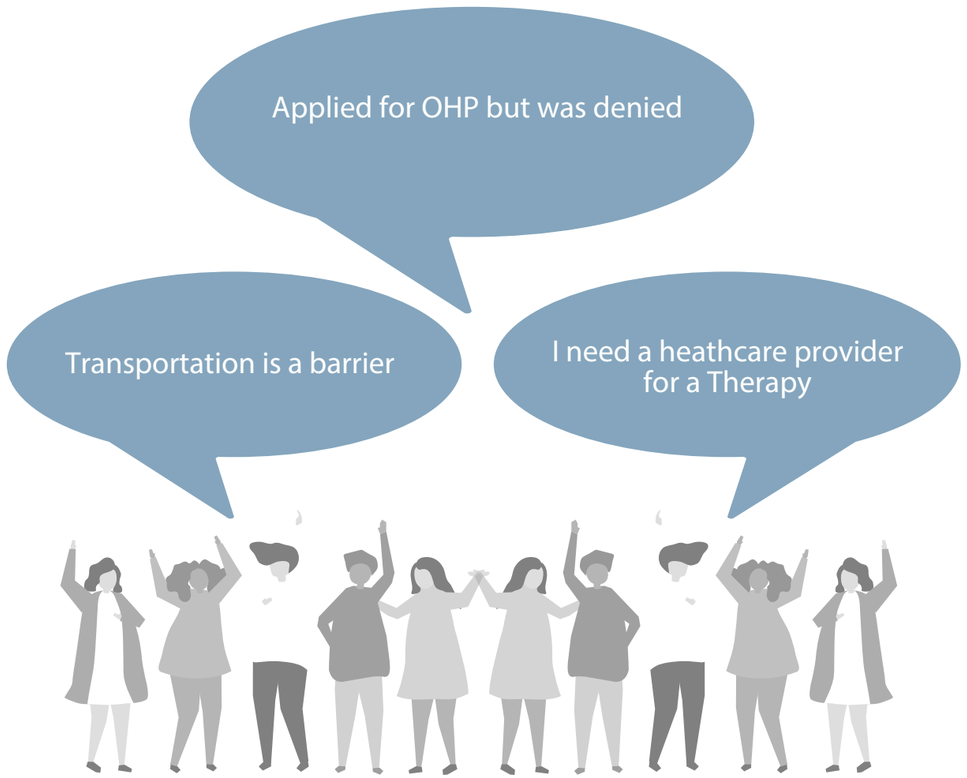


## HEALTH AND BASIC NEEDS





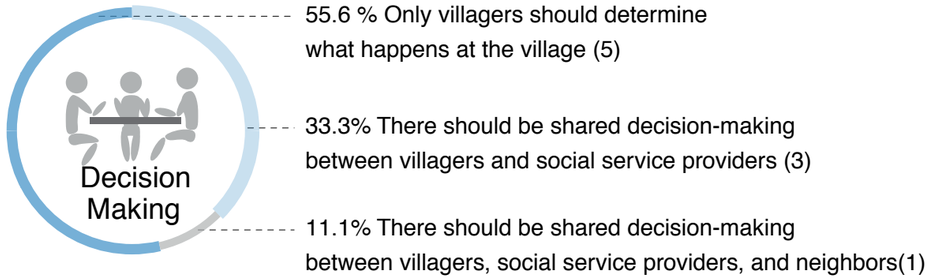

## Governance and Decision Making

1. When the village has group meetings, what are the most important elements to help facilitate a productive meeting?

Elements ranked from most important to least important

| (1= most important, 6= least important) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Adequate space to meet indoors | 2 (22.2%) | 6 (66.7%) | 1 (11.1%) | - | - | - |
| Adequate space to meet outdoors | 1 (11.1%) | 3 (33.3%) | 5 (55.6%) | - | - | - |
| Outside (non-villager) facilitators | - | - | - | 2 (22.2%) | 3 (33.3%) | 4 (44.4%) |
| Established rules for the meeting | 6 (66.7%) | - | 1 (11.1%) | 1 (11.1%) | - | 1 (11.1%) |
| Comfortable seating | - | - | - | 6 (66.7%) | 3 (33.3%) | - |
| Food/Drinks provided at meeting | - | - | 2 (22.2%) | - | 3 (33.3%) | 4 (44.4%) |

2. How much decision-making power should village residents have?



## Villager Experiences and Recommendations

I mean, they've got the food delivery here, donations. They were able to provide me with work at the market. I really didn't have to go anywhere to do anything. I mean, yeah. I mean, work was served here, dishes were served here. The bonding with people, relationships, were here. People were here, and it was safe. Yeah. It is a place where you can find the best of yourself or the worst of yourself, because everything is right here, if you really need it or want it.

Once again, that sense of empowerment. We're the ones to make that decision. We're the ones who have to follow through with that decision. If we don't want the Village ran a certain way, then we will go back before membership and we will bring it before another vote.

Knowing that if there's an issue, there's a whole community of people that will help solve it helps me feel safe.

Well, regardless of what anybody might think is a good idea, you're going to have to deal with not in my back yard, right? And then if you can satisfy that and have public transit access then you've done it.

Actually, what would really be helpful is actual indoor plumbing and instead of using the porta-lets...Especially in the winter time...That's a little cold, little cold to sit down.

# Hazelnut Grove

*Students and Architects learning from villagers*

SELF-GOVERNED
with advisory council

$50-$75/mo.
dues per villager

~$20,000/yr
for village operations

SANCTIONED
with limited support from the City

.85
acre site

2015
year opened

OFF-GRID
Portable toilets, solar power, generators, propane, water barrels

25 SLEEPING PODS
8'x8' - 8'x16' (from 64 to 128 sq ft)

# Hazelnut Grove

## [Village Profile]



Hazelnut Grove is a self-governed village in North Portland with around 25 villagers when at full capacity. Like Dignity Village, Hazelnut Grove grew out of activism and was able to make headway due to the City of Portland declaring a state of emergency on housing and homelessness in 2015. An existing tent camp was threatened with displacement on the site of the current Hazelnut Grove on a wooded parcel of land owned by the Oregon Department of Transportation alongside a busy road. To advocates for the houseless community, this represented backwards thinking by the city; How can they recognize the severity of the homelessness crisis through the declaration of a state of emergency, while continuing "sweeps" of communities with nowhere to go?

Advocates called for the City to allow the camp to remain in place. Houseless activists who had been camping outside of City Hall for months as part of a public vigil for houseless folks that died unsheltered in Portland joined the encampment. Some of these activists and Hazelnut Grove founders including Raven Justice, Meg Garcia, Bob Brimmer, Joe Bennie, and Jose Serega worked with the community to help prevent a sweep and support a vision for creating a village in the spirit of Dignity Village and Opportunity Village (est. 2013) in Eugene, Oregon. Activist and housing advocate Vahid Brown worked with the group on a plan for avoiding sweeps and founding a village. A turning point in the standoff with the City was a video made by Brown directed at then-Mayor Charlie Hales calling out the hypocrisy of the planned sweep in light of the recently declared state of emergency, and the video went locally viral. Finding a sympathetic ear with the mayor's chief of staff, Josh Alpert, the community began talking with the City about possibilities.

Having a direct line to city government with a solutions-oriented approach was instrumental in creating a fruitful path forward for the village. Alpert would host meetings at City Hall where the folks forming Hazelnut Grove would be invited, and they would all show up. The ask of the village organizers was simple: don't displace us, provide the minimum of support needed to allow us to organize a community on this site, including portable toilets. By October of 2015 those requests had been granted, and the following year the city also provided a perimeter

*"There was a lot of organic grassroots solidarity that was established for the Grove early on that was hugely significant in its success materially, politically, and culturally. While the right-wing news in Portland likes to portray Hazelnut Grove as a mess, its more positive reputation has a lot to do with that organizing work that established broader ally networks that really recognize that they're in charge. It is a group of people living without a paternalistic infantilizing relationship with a social service agency, or a state, or city jurisdiction. They put up a fight with the city, they won, and they've established their own little community and, without any money, they built their own houses, and have their own shower and kitchen. All of the things that the grove has done, they've done on their own. People experiencing homelessness have achieved those objectives through their own activities with partnerships and support from their advocates."*

*- Vahid Brown, Co-founder and Organizer of Hazelnut Grove*

fence, trash cans, and a shipping container for storage.

The village was founded on ideals of self-governance and five community-generated rules: no violence, no theft, no abuse or discriminatory language, no open alcohol or drug use in common areas, and no disrespect of yourself or others. An evolution of a community of tents, to tents on pallets, to sleeping pods developed organically over the first few years of the village and in stages. Pods were built using donated materials from Portland's ReBuilding Center by villagers and volunteers.

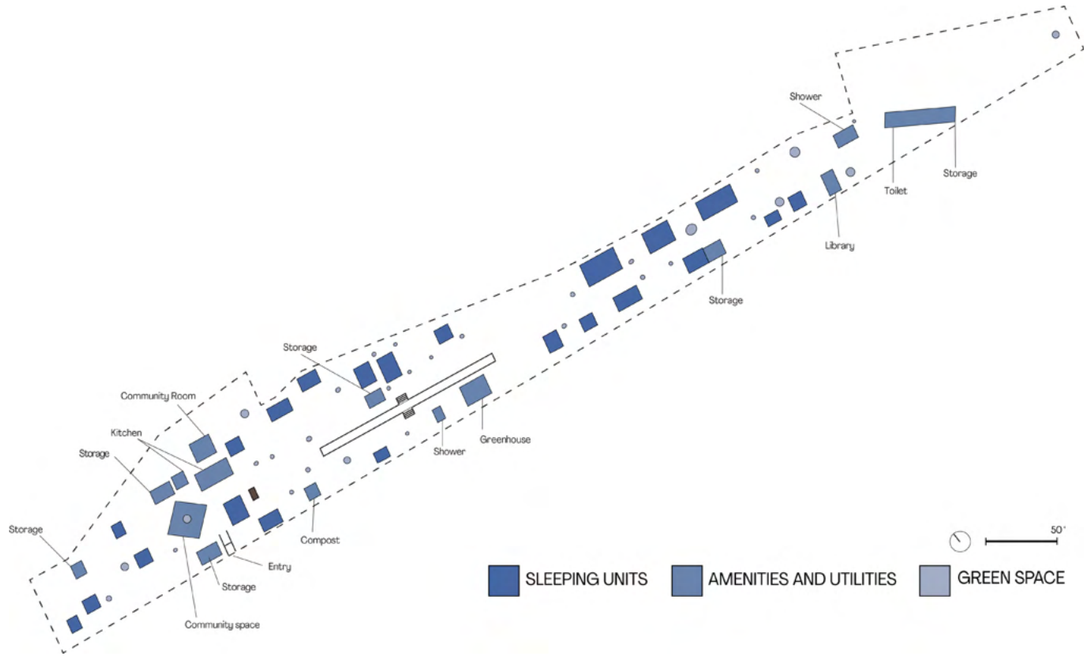
While the construction of the pods happened gradually over time, the establishment of the village as a community with shared agreements and common goals happened extremely quickly. Much of this speed was due to the need to reach an agreement with the City quickly to avoid displacement, and was also likely due to a reprioritization of policies in the wake of the state of emergency on homelessness. However, this timeframe alienated some neighbors who felt that they should have been invited to participate in the process with the City. It is unclear whether this would have created better relationships but, while Hazelnut Grove has some strong advocates and allies in their immediate neighborhood, there is a vocal faction of neighbors who have publicly called on the City to remove the village since its inception.

*Founders of Hazelnut Grove organizing on the site of the future village*

*Image credit: Vahid Brown*

In spite of periodic statements from the City threatening to remove Hazelnut Grove, it continues to function as a largely self-sufficient community. It is supported by a volunteer steering committee made up of housed allies chosen by the village, who offer support such as general assembly facilitation, connection to needed resources, and conflict resolution between villagers. Various volunteers have supported Hazelnut Grove with adding amenities, though the site remains fully off-grid, with no water, sewer, or electricity on site. Solar panels provide modest electrical output for charging phones and using lights, with donated propane utilized for most of the village's heating and cooking needs. Potable water remains the biggest challenge to village life at the Grove, with the chore of refilling and hauling large water bottles for drinking and showering constituting a significant amount of the work shifts assigned to villagers.

A confluence of factors allowed Hazelnut Grove to come into being in 2015, and many of those same factors in conjunction with advocacy and leadership of Grovers supported the creation of several other villages in Portland that would mark a new era of village building in the region. As key organizers and early members of the Village Coalition, Hazelnut Grove served as advisors on the POD Initiative, which resulted in the Kenton Women's Village. The nonprofit Cascadia Clusters hired three Grovers as their first set of paid trainees to build Agape Village using their expertise as villagers and growing skill as carpenters. The community life at the St. Johns Village benefited greatly from having 7 of its original 19 residents join the village from Hazelnut Grove, opting for the improved facilities and services available at the new village. In these ways and more, the emergence of Hazelnut Grove sparked the current village movement that continues to this day.



In 2015, after the city threatened the original Hazelnut Grove site with displacement, campers from other locations joined the site in solidarity and with a vision of a stronger community.

The city agreed to Hazelnut Grove's survival, and contributed a security fence, trash services and portable toilets.

The system of tents was slowly converted to a collection of sturdier pods.

Solar panels, gardens, a shower pod, and a communal space were added to the growing village.

Members started to see themselves as part of a strong community, and to view Hazelnut Grove as a living organism.

In spite of ongoing threats of displacement by the City, Hazelnut Grove continues to build its community internally and support unsheltered individuals experiencing homelessness in the broader community.

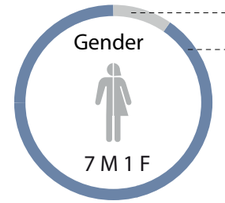
*At each village, all current villagers were invited to participate in a survey and interview. The findings in the following pages represent only those villagers who elected to participate and not the entire population of the village.*

# Hazelnut Grove

## [Villager Interview Results]

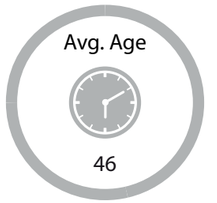


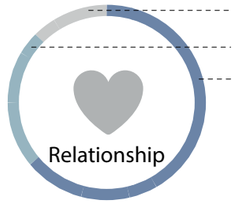
## RESIDENTS
### DEMOGRAPHICS




12.5% Female (1)

87.5% Male (7)

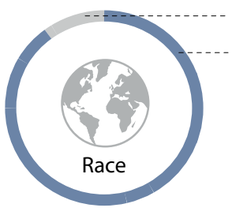



12.5% in a relationship (1)

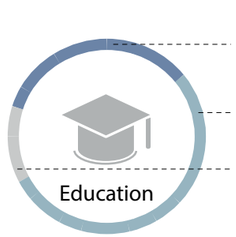
25% Married or domestic partnership (2)

62.5% single (5)




12.5% Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander (1)

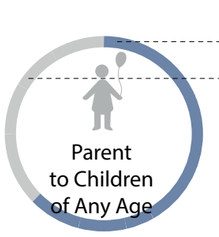
87.5% White (7)




37.5% College (3) [1 with Master's]

50% High School or GED (4)

12.5% School but not graduated (1)




62.5% Yes (5)

37.5% No (3)

62.5% Yes (5)

Avg. number of times homeless

1 — 2.83 — 7

Avg. length homeless (Months)

9 — 82 — 144

## RESIDENCE AT VILLAGE

Avg. Time lived in village (Months)

## PODS

### POD TYPE

0% (0)

0% (0)

0% (0)

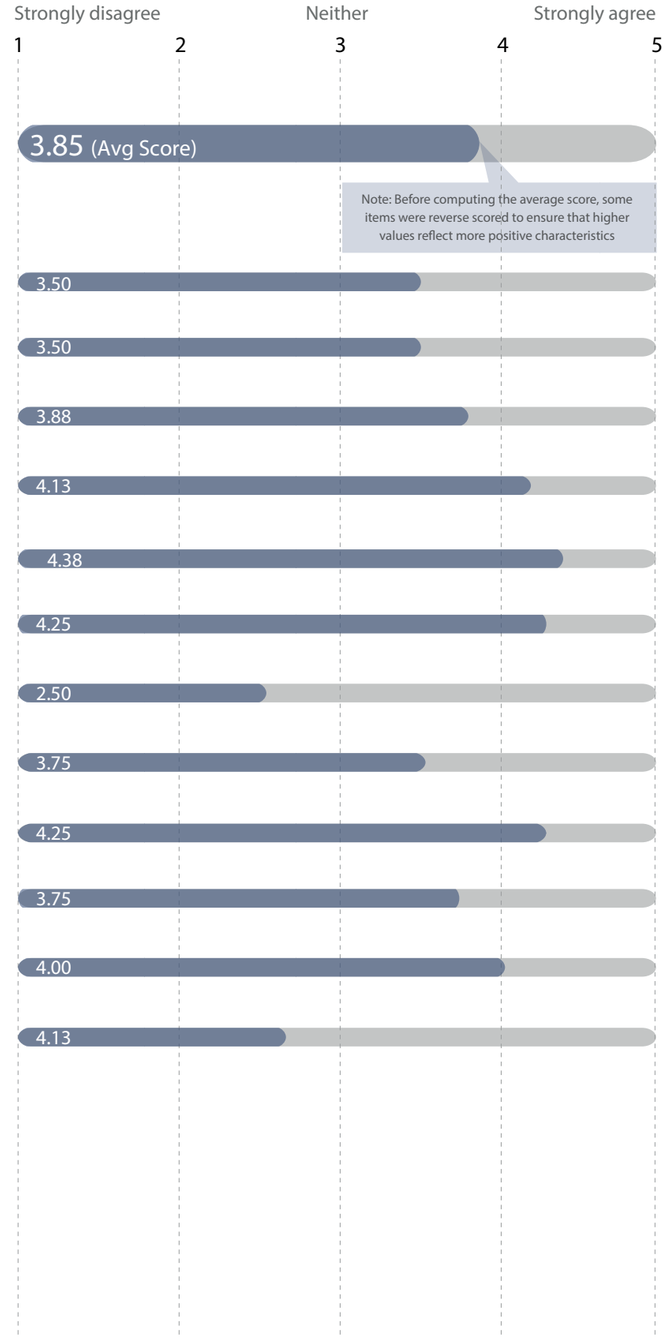
0% (0)

100% (8)

### POD DESCRIPTION, LIKES & DISLIKES

## POD QUALITY

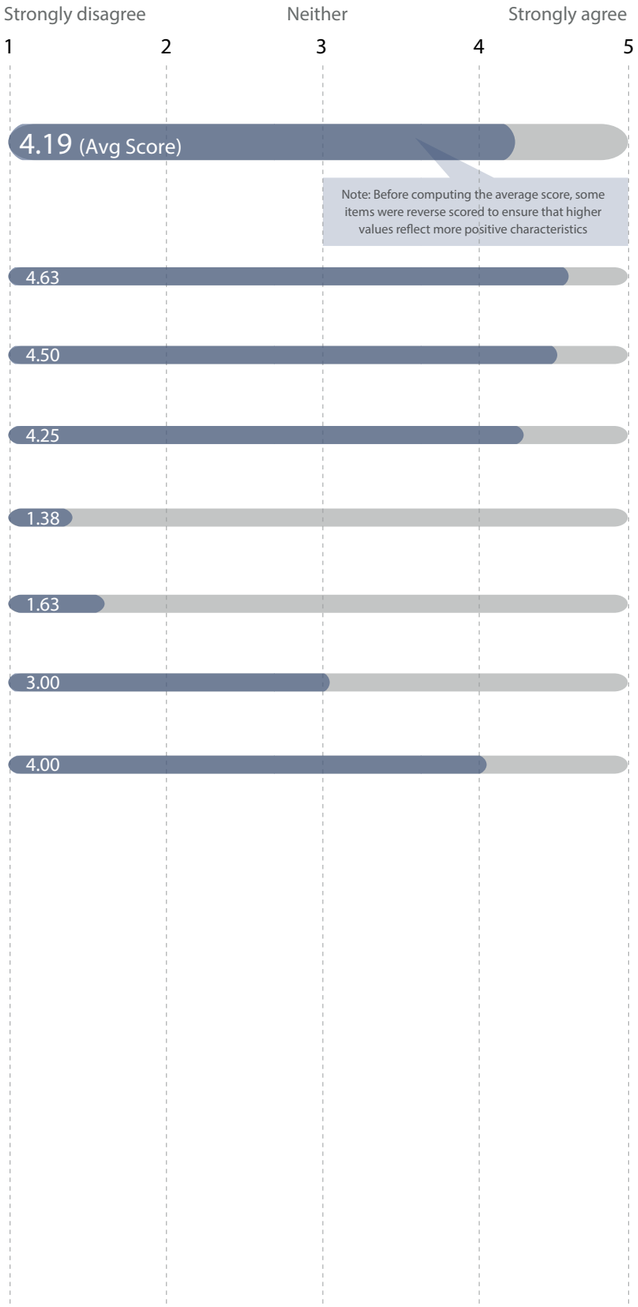
Pod Quality



# VILLAGE

## VILLAGE SOCIAL CLIMATE

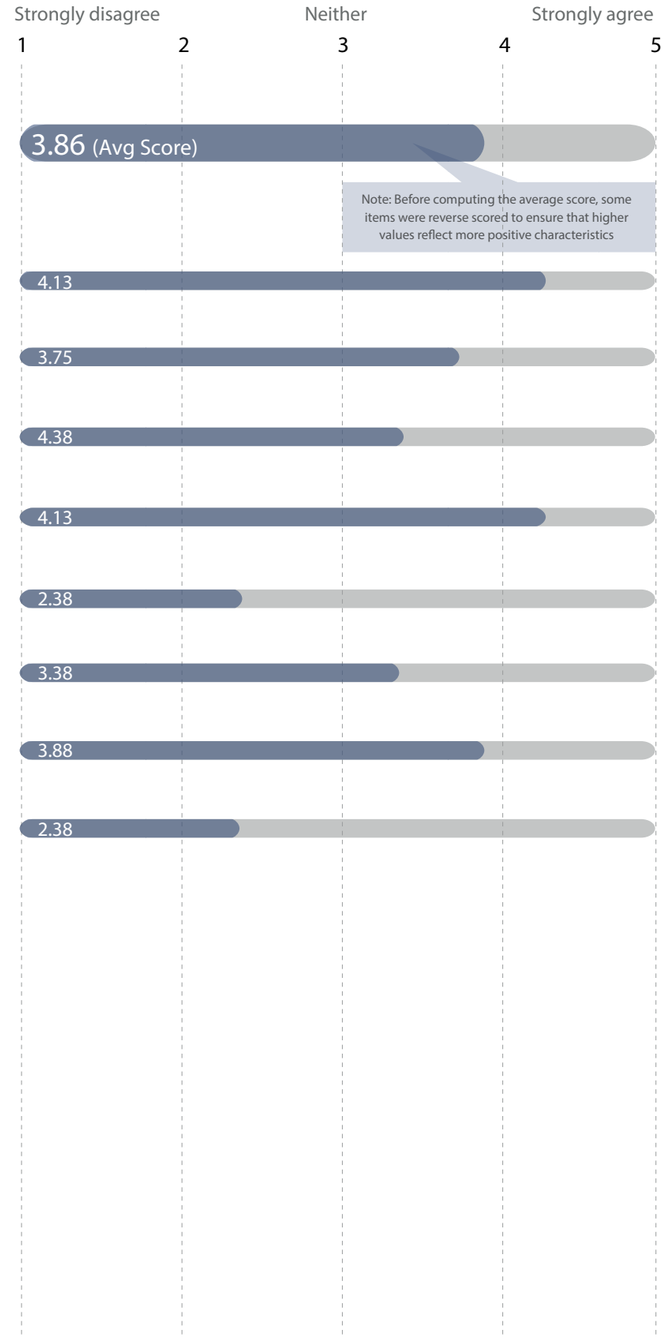
Village Social Climate





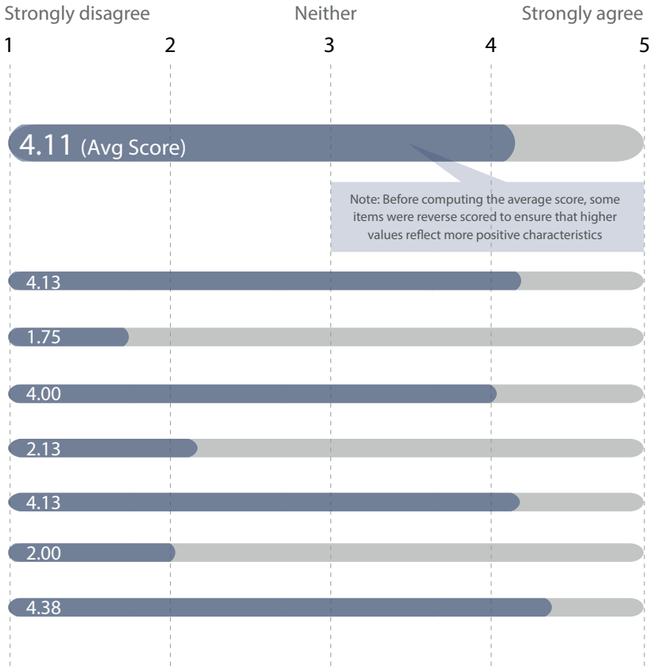

# VILLAGE SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Village Sense of Community

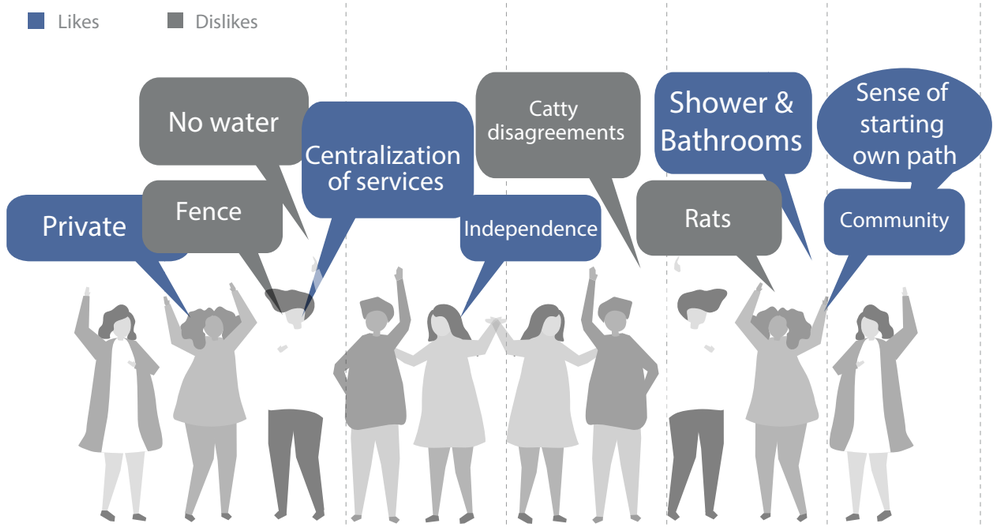


## VILLAGE RESIDENT SCALE

Village Neighbor Scale




## VILLAGE DESCRIPTION, LIKES & DISLIKES

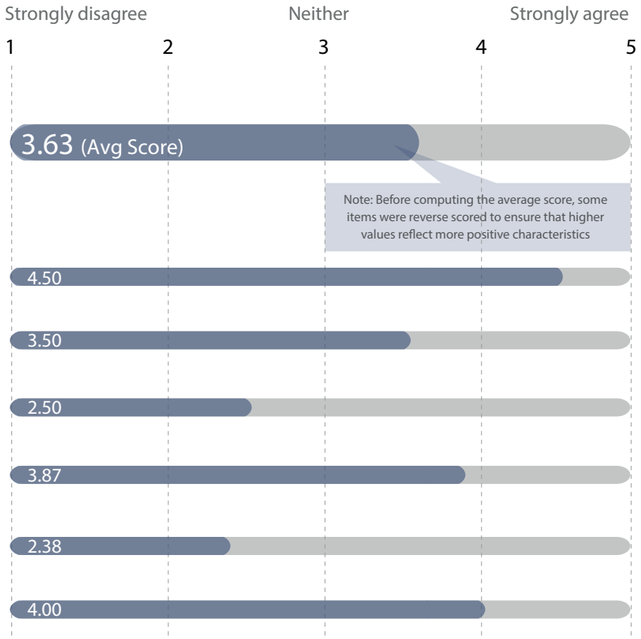





## NEIGHBORHOOD

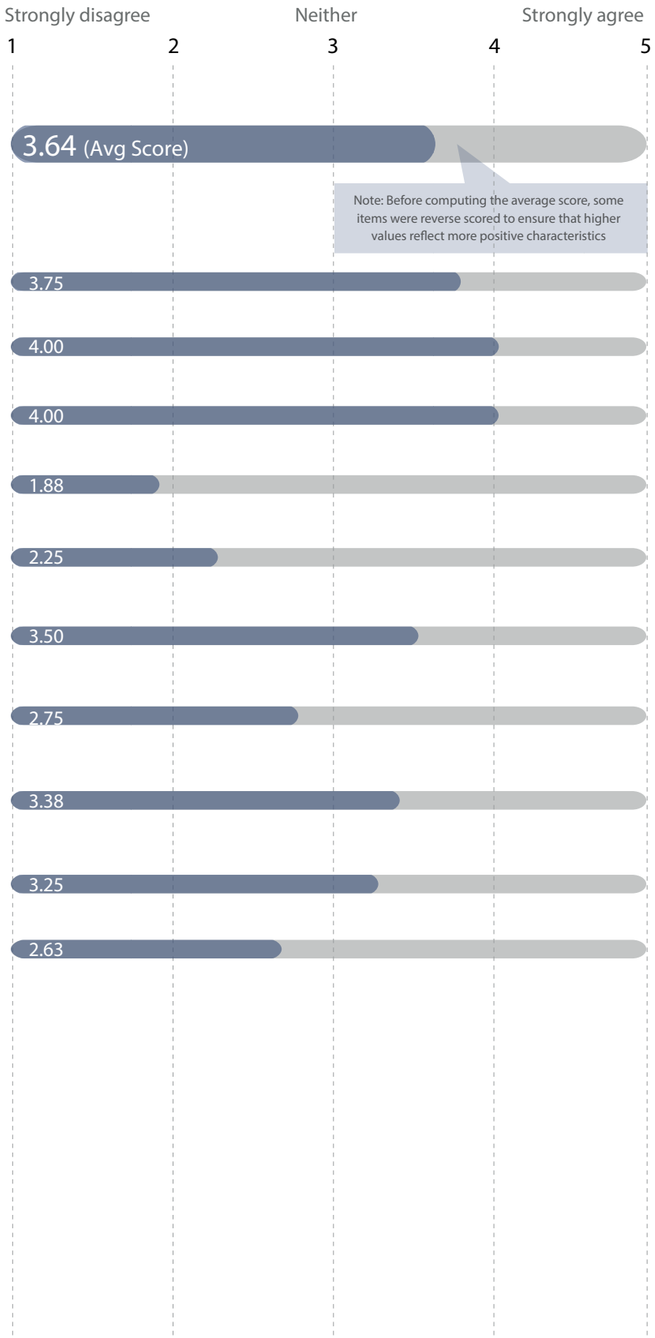
## NEIGHBORHOOD QUALITY

Neighborhood Quality



## NEIGHBORHOOD SOCIAL CLIMATE

Neighborhood Social Climate






## RESIDENTIAL SATISFACTION

1. "How satisfied are you with your pod as a place to live?"

VERY DISSATISFIED
0% (0)

NEITHER DISSATISFIED OR SATISFIED
25% (2)

SATISFIED
37.5% (3)

VERY SATISFIED
37.5% (3)

2. "How satisfied are you with your neighborhood as a place to live?"

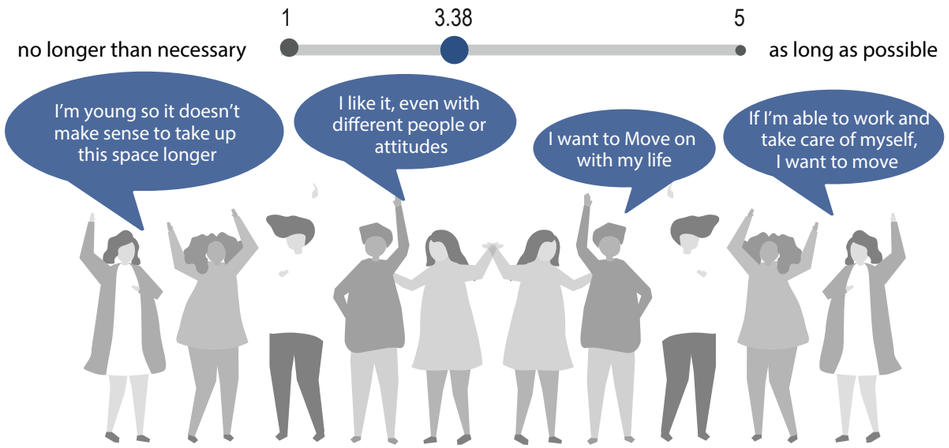
VERY DISSATISFIED
0% (0)

NEITHER DISSATISFIED OR SATISFIED
12.5% (1)

SATISFIED
50% (4)

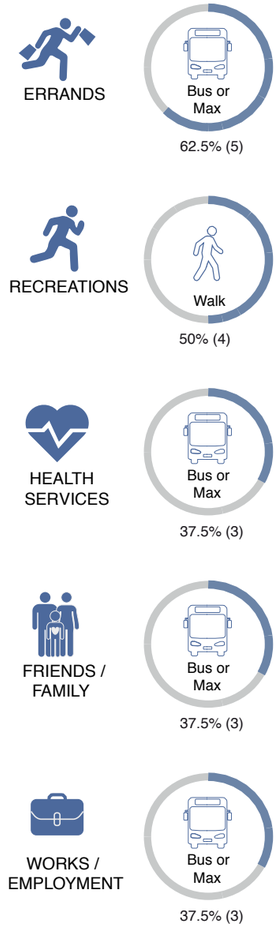
VERY SATISFIED
37.5% (3)

3. "How long do you want to live in the Village? And why?"



## TRANSPORTATION

1. Most commonly used transportation methods in the past month.

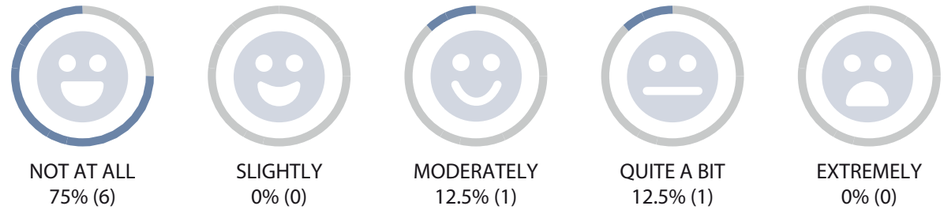





## LIFE SATISFACTION AND STRESS

1. How often do you feel lonely on a scale of 1 (never) to 4 (always)?
On average residents said:

2. How much did your physical health interfere with daily activities in the last month?
The average response from residents on a scale of 1 to 5 was:




3. How much did your emotional health interfere with daily activities in the last month?
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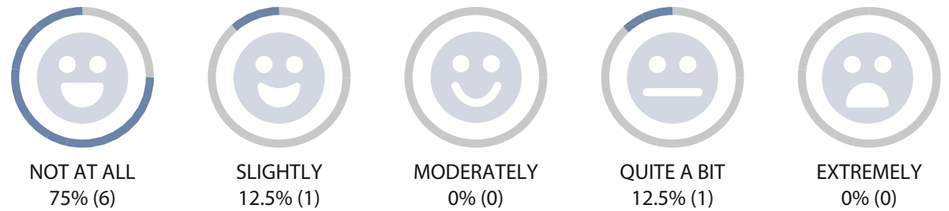
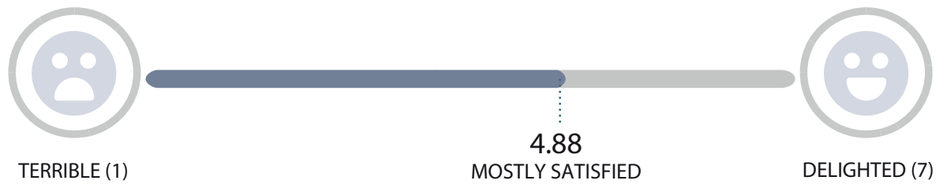
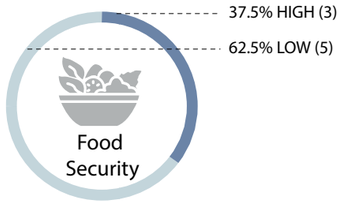
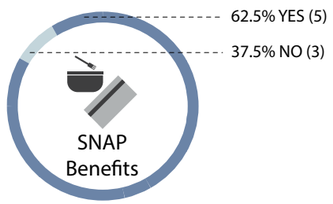


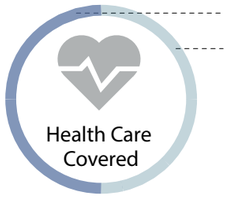

4. How do you feel about your life overall right now?
The average response from residents on a scale of 1 (terrible) to 7 (delighted) was:

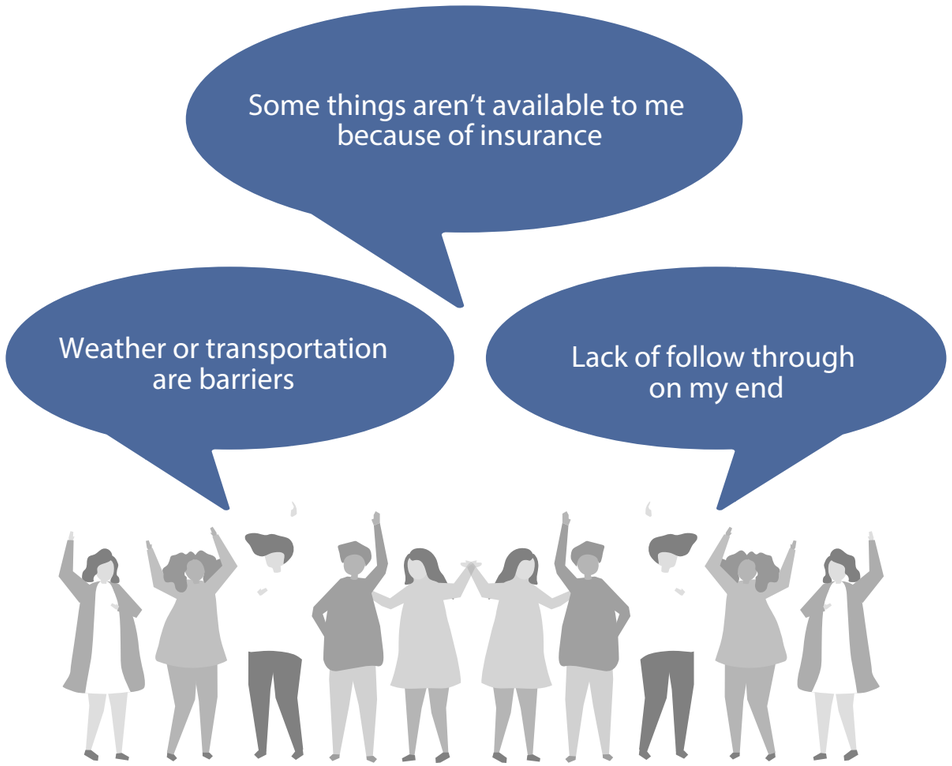


## HEALTH AND BASIC NEEDS





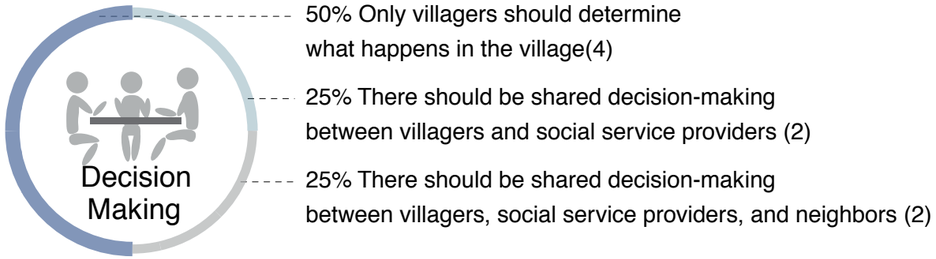

## Governance and Decision Making

1. When the village has group meetings, what are the most important elements to help facilitate a productive meeting?

Elements ranked from most important to least important

| (1= most important, 6= least important) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Adequate space to meet indoors | - | 3 (37.5%) | - | 1 (12.5%) | 2 (25%) | 2 (25%) |
| Adequate space to meet outdoors | 3 (37.5%) | 1 (12.5%) | 2 (25%) | - | 1 (12.5%) | 1 (12.5%) |
| Outside (non-villager) facilitators | - | 2 (25%) | 1 (12.5%) | 2 (25%) | 2 (25%) | 1 (12.5%) |
| Established rules for the meeting | 3 (37.5%) | - | 1 (12.5%) | 1 (12.5%) | - | 3 (37.5%) |
| Comfortable seating | - | 1 (12.5%) | 3 (37.5%) | 3 (37.5%) | 1 (12.5%) | - |
| Food/Drinks provided at meeting | 2 (25%) | 1 (12.5%) | 1 (12.5%) | 1 (12.5%) | 2 (25%) | 1 (12.5%) |

2. How much decision-making power should village residents have?



## Villager Experiences and Recommendations

Everything's accessible. But they've made me feel welcome because of my disability, they didn't tell me you can't be here. They've helped me, so I appreciate that.

The best is like when we've got our kitchen up and running really well, it hasn't been. There's like a solid three and a half year period where everybody was on pitching into the kitchen and making sure that there were huge meals for everybody every night, and that was awesome. Just the sense of comradery that it brings is really cool.

"It was really disheartening to hear all the people in the neighborhood board association meetings that I went to just called for our remove just based on stereotypes of what you should expect from having a homeless camp in your community or whatever… And most of them I 'd never seen their faces down here once."

Don't wait for somebody to tell you to do something. If you see something that you can fix, get down and do it. It's your home, consider it that. You don't want to have that, well, then you're in the wrong place.

"The sense that if anything gets really crazy the community is pretty good at breaking it up and trying to deescalate. The communal watching, I guess. As soon as there's an external threat, it's immediate. We're a super organism and we've got each other's backs."

Being here is good for me because it gives me a place that I can bring people, my friends that don't have something like this. It gives them a place that's warm. And that's why I do what I can to actually stay here. So I can bring friends that are in the same place I am. And I know they will be safe here.

# Kenton Women's Village

Image credit: Mark Stein

# Kenton Women's Village

## [Village Profile]



The Kenton Women's Village is a 20-person village in North Portland, and represents the region's first city-sponsored village. The village is funded by the Joint Office of Homeless Services and managed by Catholic Charities. The Kenton Women's Village is the result of a concerted advocacy effort that brought together designers, houseless advocates, and service providers aimed at challenging the City to take an active role in directly supporting the creation and operation of villages for the sake of improving village amenities and expanding shelter options for people experiencing homelessness.

The village is the outcome of an effort in 2016-2017 called the Partners On Dwelling (POD) Initiative first conceived within the Village Coalition, a newly formed village advocacy organization. Members of PSU's Center for Public Interest Design (CPID) were being asked for pod designs for use at Hazelnut Grove and other newly forming villages. Rather than concentrate on the design of pods, the CPID suggested a process that would both result in a series of new pod prototypes, but also open up dialogue with the public about the City's role in supporting village efforts.

In October of 2016 the POD Initiative organizers kicked off the effort publicly with an open design charrette that brought together architects, service providers, and those with lived experience with homelessness together to design new visions for pods and villages. Architects were convened by the CPID and context was provided to the group by POD Initiative collaborators that included residents of Hazelnut Grove and architect Mark Lakeman who had been involved in the creation of Dignity Village and similar initiatives. Fourteen design teams emerged from the charette committing to design and construct a pod within 2 months, when the pods would be displayed in downtown Portland. This strong showing and commitment from a wide range of stakeholders inspired the mayor's office (then Charlie Hales) to provide $2,000 to each design team for pod materials. While many of the pods created ended up costing more than this amount, it represented a significant change in the City's relationship to villages and, crucially, would ultimately make them the owners of 14 pods that would need a home.

Following a series of workshops and public events, including an exhibit of the pod designs and a press conference at City Hall, the 14 pods were displayed in downtown Portland in the city's North Park Blocks for three weeks. Portlanders were invited to visit the pod in an attempt to advance conversation around what a village could be and what it might mean in their neighborhood. The event wasn't an abstract idea of pods, but a demonstration of these specific pods and a call to use them to provide necessary shelter and create a village. The time between the initial POD Initiative Charrette and the exhibit of the pods downtown was only about two months. The speed of the initiative intentionally responded to the urgency of the issue and demonstrated the ability to create this type of shelter quickly. Learning from the efforts of Dignity Village and Hazelnut Grove, the POD Initiative was an activist movement aimed at changing public perceptions around homelessness and inviting

*"Watching the Kenton Women's Village grow from a series of vacant pods to a community with compassion and heart solidified my core belief that architecture and design can address the immediate social and environmental concerns of our times. Learning this as a graduate student and applying the designs that I envisioned to real world design-build efforts, gave me the tools to move into a career inspired by the opportunity to create new models of community-based design. At the core of the success in the creation of the Kenton Women's Village was the community itself. After various design charettes, build days and a crucial neighborhood vote, the support of the neighbors proved to be invaluable to the acceptance of such a transformational project."*

*- Lisa Patterson, Co-Designer of the Kenton Women's Village (1.0)*

in a broader range of stakeholders, particularly challenging the architecture profession to get involved as active participants in the issue of addressing homelessness.

The initiative gained momentum toward a village with the leadership of Mayor Hales' Houseless Policy Advisor, Ben Mauro, who began advocating for the project and exploring potential sites. While an available site in the Kenton neighborhood was identified when the pods were completed in December 2016, the partners embarking on this effort did not want to simply drop a village into a community unprepared to welcome it into their neighborhood. The village was intended to serve as a yearlong pilot project that could be extended and/or replicated in other neighborhoods throughout Portland if successful. With this in mind, the organizing team offered to give the neighborhood an opportunity to work with the project partners and ultimately vote on whether to allow the village to move forward in their neighborhood before any action was taken. After an intensive community engagement process led by CPID and PSU School of Architecture students, the Kenton neighborhood took a vote in the spring of 2017 that resulted in a decision in favor of the village with a margin of over 2 to 1. (One year later when the village asked for an extension to remain in place for another year while a permanent site was identified, the vote was nearly unanimous with a 119 to 3 vote in favor of keeping the village in Kenton). The village opened in June of 2017 with 14 pods and off-grid facilities, including a kitchen, showers, covered outdoor gathering space, a sink room, and portable toilets.

In its first 16 months in operation on the original site, Kenton Women's Village transitioned 23 women into permanent housing. A more permanent site to host an upgraded village (often called Kenton Women's Village 2.0 to distinguish it from the pilot project) was identified just a block away on

*Placemaking at the original site of the Kenton Women's Village*

*Image credit: NashCO*

land owned by the Bureau of Environmental Services. Learning from the successes and failures of the original village, the new site would host improved pods with electrical hook-ups and integrated radiant heating panels, while the common facilities would provide water, sewer, and electricity, with additional amenities like a laundry room. The organizing group for the new village included SRG Partnership, the Center for Public Interest Design, Home Builders Foundation, Andersen Construction Foundation, Catholic Charities, LMC Construction, and the Joint Office of Homeless Services. In order to build the new pods and replace older prototypes that were less successful, the organizing partners worked with the construction community through the launch of the POD Build Challenge.

The challenge invited local construction firms to build and donate a pod based on three designs that were evaluated by villagers and village managers to be the most loved and suitable for the needs of the village. Construction firms were encouraged to be creative, think sustainably, and advance the designs through use of material, storage, and amenities. The new village opened in 2019 with 20 pods, with 8 additional pods created through the POD Build Challenge going to the Clackamas County Veterans Village. One year later, a new 680 square foot common building was added to the site with a kitchen, bathrooms, showers, laundry room, and living room. (The building was not in place at the time of HRAC's interviews with villagers at the Kenton Women's Village). Organizational partnerships, pro bono professional services, and creative collaborations with the construction community, brought the capital costs of the project down to approximately $420,000 (from what would otherwise have been around $850,000).

The Kenton Women's Village introduced a new level of government involvement, social service support, and public investment. With Catholic Charities providing two full-time village managers and one part-time peer support specialist, the village has high rates of access to social services and transition to permanent housing relative to the number of pods at the village, but also high operating costs. The village had originally been conceived of as a self-governed village, lightly supported along the lines of Dignity Village. However, with public funding and expectations for residents to transition to permanent housing, most of the social infrastructure of self-governance has been eliminated. In this way, the Kenton Women's Village has served as both a reference point for an alternative shelter model to be considered by municipalities, and as a cautionary tale by some village advocates who believe that a village must include at least some elements of community decision-making to meet the definition of a village. Just as the pods and site utilities have continued to evolve, it is likely that the operations of the Kenton Women's Village will evolve as well as the project continues. More recent villages like the Clackamas County Veterans Village and St. Johns Village that were inspired by the Kenton Women's Village model might suggest where that evolution could be headed.

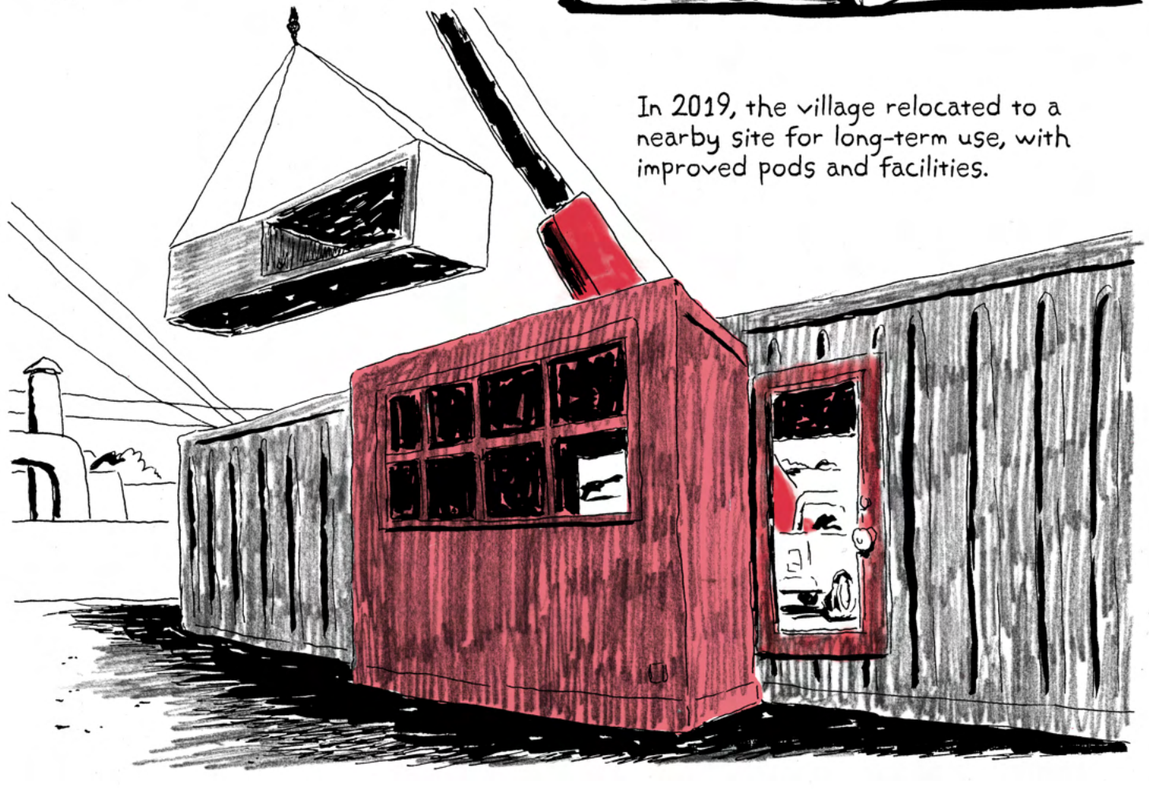
In collaboration with the Village Coalition in 2016, PSU's Center for Public Interest Design brought together designers, villagers and advocates, and city officials to discuss designs for a new village for women.

Designers displayed their pod designs at City Hall and the actual prototype pods in downtown Portland, hoping to inspire funding and support from the city government.

Forming partnerships with the Joint Office of Homeless Services, Catholic Charities, and the Kenton Neighborhood Association, the 14 pods and common facilities were installed by design teams in the Kenton neighborhood.

The Village officially opened in 2017 as a pilot project and represented the first city-sponsored village of its kind.

In 2019, the village relocated to a nearby site for long-term use, with improved pods and facilities.



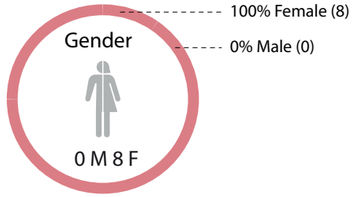
*At each village, all current villagers were invited to participate in a survey and interview. The findings in the following pages represent only those villagers who elected to participate and not the entire population of the village.*

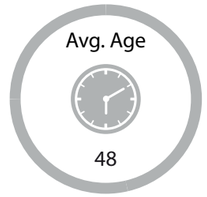
# Kenton Women's Village

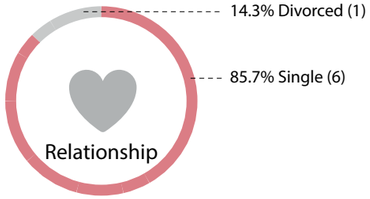
## [Villager Interview Results]

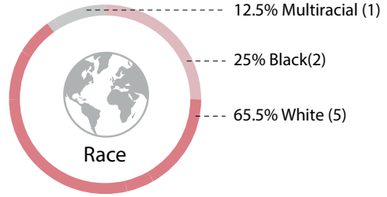


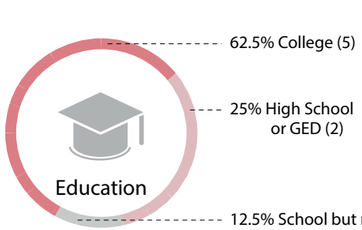
## RESIDENTS
### DEMOGRAPHICS

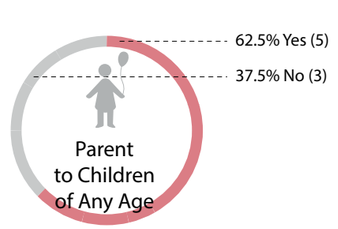


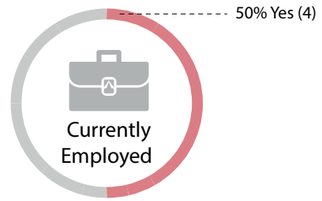



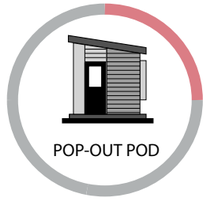
## RESIDENCE AT VILLAGE

Avg. Time lived in village (Months)

2 — 7.5 — 20

## PODS

### POD TYPE




25% (2)

37.5% (3)

25% (2)

12.5% (1)

0% (0)

### POD DESCRIPTION, LIKES & DISLIKES

Likes Dislikes

## POD QUALITY

Pod Quality

Strongly disagree — Neither — Strongly agree

1 2 3 4 5

3.63 (Avg Score)

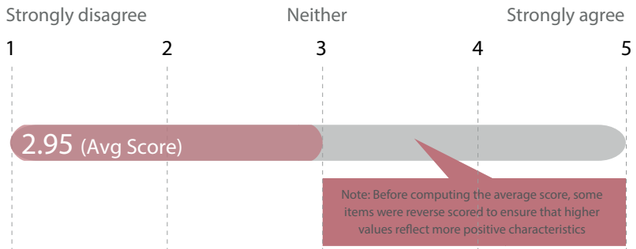
Note: Before computing the average score, some items were reverse scored to ensure that higher values reflect more positive characteristics

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. I have enough space in my pod. | 3.88 |
| 2. My pod is usually a comfortable temperature | 3.75 |
| 3. My pod looks nice | 4.13 |
| 4. There is enough space between my pod and my neighbors' pod | 2.38 |
| 5. The common facilities are easily accessible | 3.75 |
| 6. I like the common facilities | 3.25 |
| 7. I have problems with privacy where I live | 4.00 |
| 8. The floors, ceilings, and walls in my pod are in good condition | 4.25 |
| 9. The windows in my pod are in good condition | 4.38 |
| 10. I have access to working appliances at the village | 3.63 |
| 11. The locks on the doors and windows in my pod work well | 4.13 |
| 12. There are problems with the electrical system in my pod. | 2.00 |

# VILLAGE

## VILLAGE SOCIAL CLIMATE

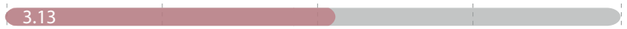
Village Social Climate



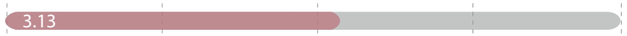

1. I feel like part of this village, like I belong here.

2. I know the rules in this village, and I can fit in with them.

3. I feel safe in the village.




4. Sometimes I feel unwelcome in the village because of my ethnicity and my cultural background.



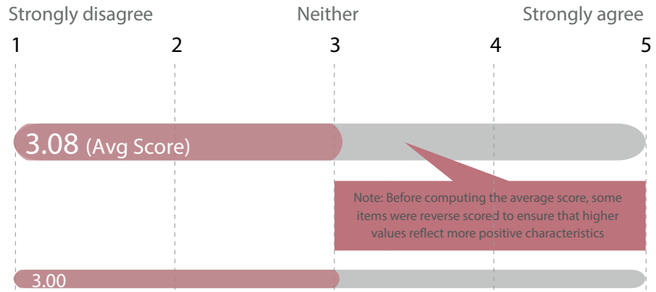

5. There are other aspects of who I am that make me feel unwelcome in the village

6. People in the village are friendly to everybody no matter what the person's skin color or ethnic

7. People in my village treat me as an equal.

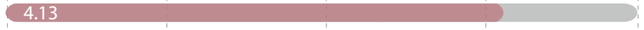
# VILLAGE SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Village Sense of Community

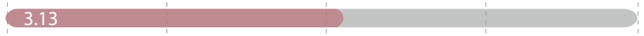



1. I think this village is a good place for me to live

2. Other residents and I want the same things from the village

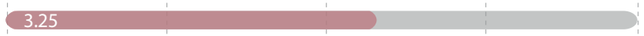



3. I feel at home in the village




4. I care about what other villagers think of my actions

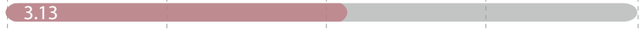
5. I have no influence over what this village is like




6. If there is a problem in the village people who live there can get it solve

7. I feel a strong sense of community in this village

8. People in this village generally don't get along with each other



## VILLAGE RESIDENT SCALE

Village Neighbor Scale

Strongly disagree — Neither — Strongly agree

1 2 3 4 5

3.61 (Avg Score)

Note: Before computing the average score, some items were reverse scored to ensure that higher values reflect more positive characteristics

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. I can count on a neighbor/ villager for help when I need it. | 4.00 |
| 2. There is no one in my village with whom I'm close. | 2.38 |
| 3. If I needed it, another villager would help me get to an appoint- | 3.38 |
| 4. Other villagers and I argue a lot | 2.38 |
| 5. If I needed someone to talk to about a problem, I could talk with another villager | 4.13 |
| 6. Villagers complain about me or my pod | 2.75 |
| 7. Overall, how satisfied are you with your relationship with other villagers | 3.25 |

## VILLAGE DESCRIPTION, LIKES & DISLIKES

Likes Dislikes

## NEIGHBORHOOD

### NEIGHBORHOOD QUALITY

Neighborhood Quality

Strongly disagree — Neither — Strongly agree

1 2 3 4 5

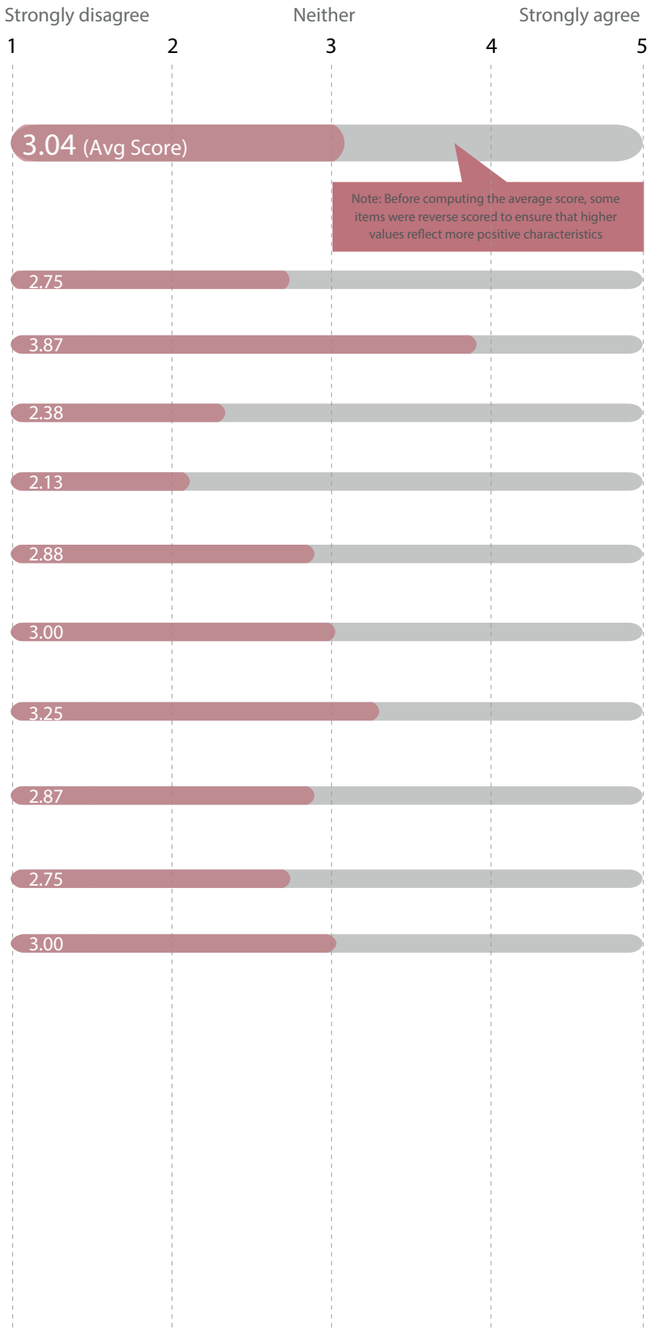
2.60 (Avg Score)

Note: Before computing the average score, some items were reverse scored to ensure that higher values reflect more positive characteristics

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. It is easy to get transportation in my neighborhood | 3.00 |
| 2. The air quality in my part of the neighborhood is good | 2.13 |
| 3. Crime is a problem in my neigh- borhood | 4.25 |
| 4. I can get the things that I need from stores in my neighborhood (food, clothes, supplies) | 3.75 |
| 5. I have a hard time getting health care services in my neighborhood | 3.50 |
| 6. My neighborhood looks nice | 2.88 |
| 7. There is too much noise in my neighborhood | 4.63 |
| 8. I have good sidewalks in my neighborhood | 3.50 |
| 9. There is a lot of traffic on the streets in my neighborhood | 4.75 |
| 10. There are nice parks in my neighborhood | 3.88 |

## NEIGHBORHOOD SOCIAL CLIMATE

Neighborhood Social Climate



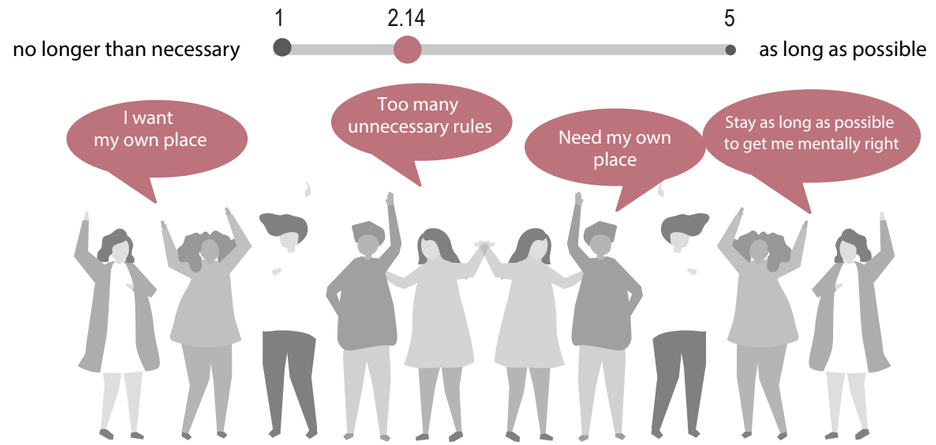



## RESIDENTIAL SATISFACTION

1. "How satisfied are you with your pod as a place to live?"

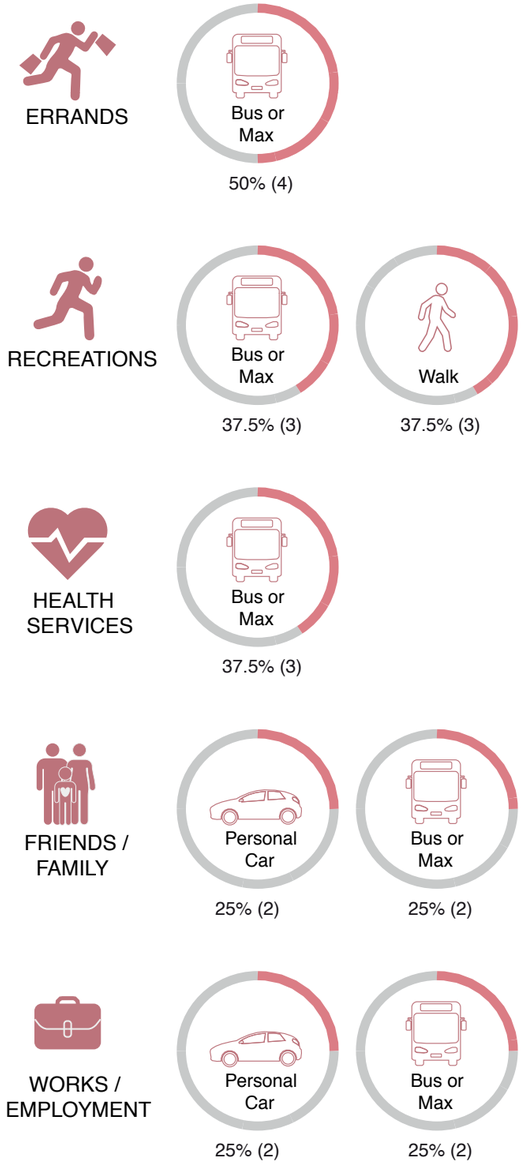
2. "How satisfied are you with your neighborhood as a place to live?"

3. "How long do you want to live in the Village? And why?"



## TRANSPORTATION

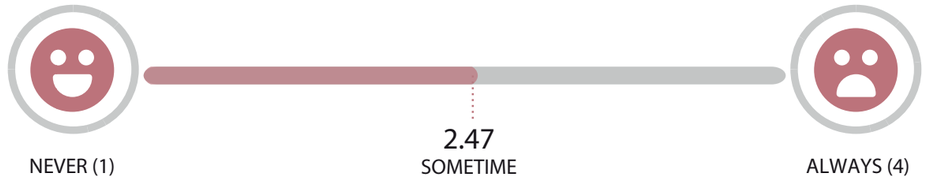
1. Most commonly used transportation methods in the past month.



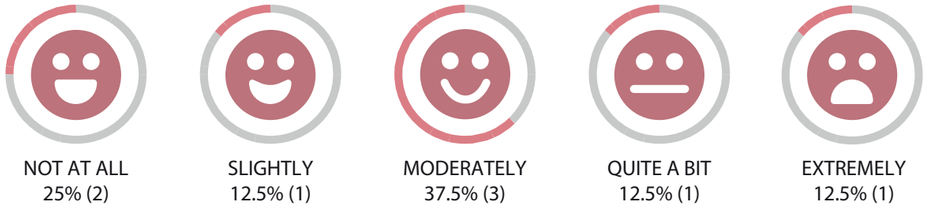



## LIFE SATISFACTION AND STRESS

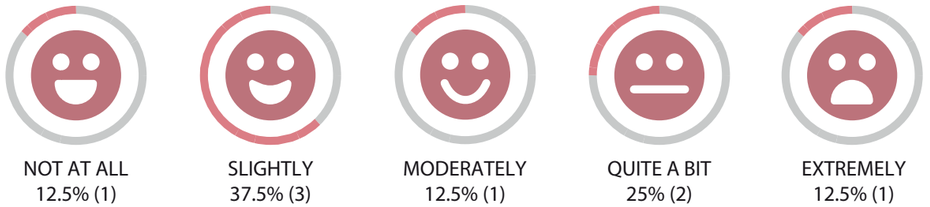
1. How often do you feel lonely on a scale of 1 (never) to 4 (always)?
On average residents said:



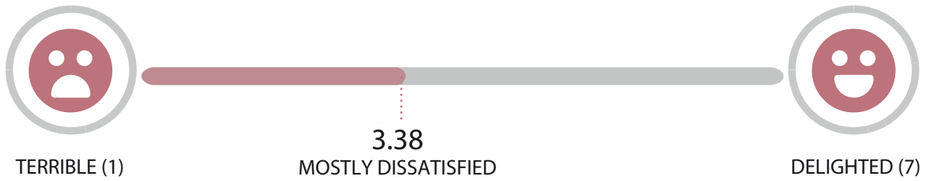

2. How much did your physical health interfere with daily activities in the last month?
The average response from residents on a scale of 1 to 5 was:



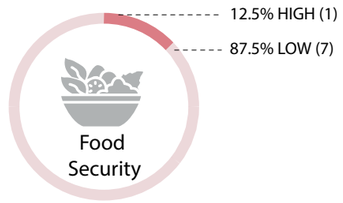

3. How much did your emotional health interfere with daily activities in the last month?
The average response from residents on a scale of 1 to 5 was:

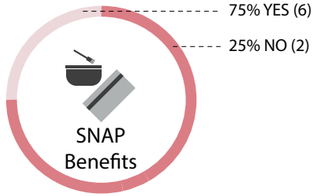


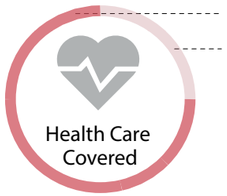

4. How do you feel about your life overall right now?
The average response from residents on a scale of 1 (terrible) to 7 (delighted) was:

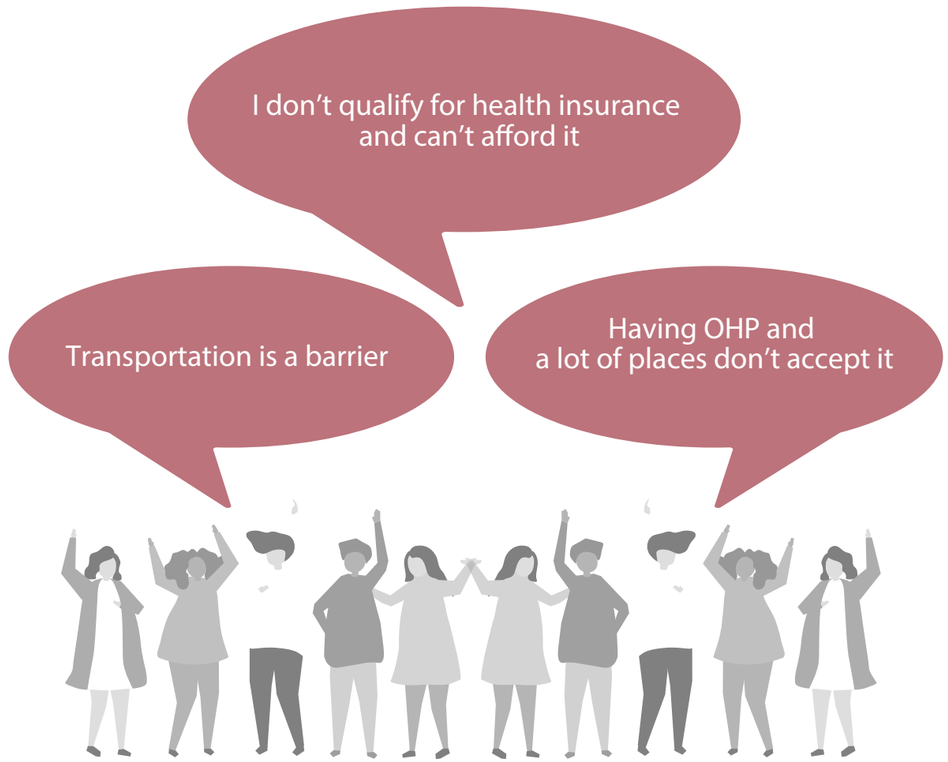


## HEALTH AND BASIC NEEDS





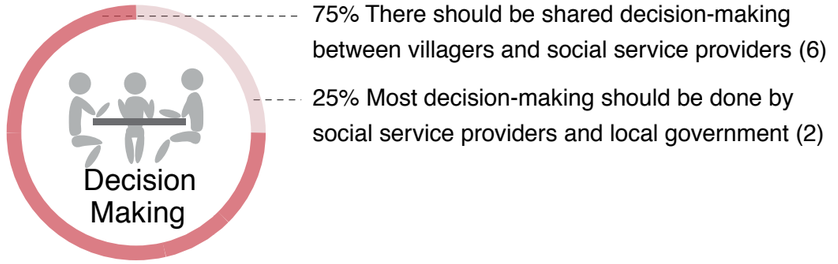

## Governance and Decision Making

1. When the village has group meetings, what are the most important elements to help facilitate a productive meeting?

Elements ranked from most important to least important

| (1= most important, 6= least important) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Adequate space to meet indoors | 2 (28.6%) | - | 2 (28.6%) | 2 (28.6%) | 1 (14.3%) | - |
| Adequate space to meet outdoors | - | 1 (14.3%) | 2 (28.6%) | 1 (14.3%) | 3 (42.9%) | - |
| Outside (non-villager) facilitators | 2 (28.6%) | - | 1 (14.3%) | 1 (14.3%) | 1 (14.3%) | 2 (28.6%) |
| Established rules for the meeting | 3 (42.9%) | 2 (28.6%) | - | 1 (14.3%) | - | 1 (14.3%) |
| Comfortable seating | - | 3 (42.9%) | 1 (14.3%) | 2 (28.6%) | 1 (14.3%) | - |
| Food/Drinks provided at meeting | - | 1 (14.3%) | 1 (14.3%) | - | 1 (14.3%) | 4 (57.1%) |

2. How much decision-making power should village residents have?



## Villager Experiences and Recommendations*

It would be nice to have a patch of nice grass

Having pavement, or pavers, or something, just yeah – the gravel is hard

I definitely just think the facilities need to be more, more appropriately designed for the amount of people that are here, and just larger, you know and more accessible, like to, especially people with handicaps, or disabilities

A nice big kitchen that we can all fit in, you know, not all fit in but all be comfortable in

More shaded areas. More seating areas. And a place for animals to walk.

A community space I think is important. I think they should definitely have a room where you can sit and hang out, or there's tables and chairs so if you want to do things

It's difficult to hang things. There's a couple of pegs you can hang your clothes on. And some people don't even have that in their pods. I think also creating a space underneath the bed would allow women to put things in waterproof, bug proof containers, and slide it underneath the bed, keep it out of the way, off the floor. But the way the pods are built now, it's a built-in, next to the wall bed structure made out of wood, and it's attached to the wall. So, it's very difficult to get underneath there, especially if you're disabled, and you can't bend down, and get stuff in, and out. But if they stopped making the pods that way, and just left a space for a twin bed, or a full size bed with a steel frame that could be moved. With space underneath, it would make things more accessible.

**The interviews at the Kenton Women's Village took place before the arrival and installation of a new and larger common building.*

# Clackamas County Veterans Village

Image credit: Communitecture

FREE
for residents

FUNDED
by Clackamas County

1.2
acre site

26
people transitioned into permanent housing in the village's first 2 years

~$750,000
initial cost to build village

2018
Year opened (October)

2
full-time staff

MANAGED
by Do Good Multnomah
(w/ community council of villagers)

26 PODS
(space for 30 total) 8'x12'
96 sq ft

# Clackamas County Veterans Village

## [Village Profile]



The Clackamas County Veterans Village is a transitional shelter community for 25-30 veterans. The village is located in an industrial area of the city of Clackamas, is funded by Clackamas County, and is Managed by Do Good Multnomah. The development of the village is the result of a unique collaboration between Clackamas County, Communitecture, the Center for Public Interest Design (CPID), City Repair, the Village Coalition, Lease Crutcher Lewis, Portland State University School of Architecture, Catholic Charities, partners in the City of Portland and Multnomah County, and others.

Immediately following the creation of the Kenton Women's Village in June of 2017, Clackamas County Health, Housing, and Human Services saw an opportunity to apply limited funding it had reserved to serve veterans experiencing homelessness toward a project type like a village that they hoped would have greater impact. While the Kenton Women's Village (KWV) was able to benefit from Multnomah County's state of emergency on housing and homelessness, neighboring Clackamas County did not have the same declaration and would be pursuing the village as a fully code-compliant development. Many of the organizers of the Clackamas County Veterans Village (CCVV) were instrumental in the creation of the KWV, and this offered a new opportunity to more closely consider how a village's infrastructure and components might be viewed within the context of traditional construction, development, and permitting processes. The strategy for creating and funding the pods was anything but traditional, however.

At the time of the village's creation, the preferred pod by villagers of the 14 different prototypes at the Kenton Women's Village was the S.A.F.E. Pod by SRG Partnership. The pod utilizes 21 trusses of the same size for its roof and wall framing, each truss made from just two 2x4s. The pod's walls push outward to the peak of the truss, creating a more open feeling. With rigid insulation on the outside of the framing, the form offers the possibility for shelves, storage, and furniture to be built into the depth of the wall. With an interest in creating a the pods inexpensively and quickly, village organizers from the CPID coordinated with the the PSU School of Architecture who agreed to incorporate the creation of the trusses as part of the school's annual Diversion De-

*"It was wonderful having a front row seat to the incredibly unique process that resulted in the Clackamas County Veterans Village as part of the design team. In addition to working on site design and coordination efforts, I had the great opportunity to join PSU's Diversion Design-Build team to utilize 690 of the SAFE pod trusses to build the Treeline Stage for the Pickathon Music Festival. Once disassembled, the trusses moved to Oregon City to become the first 15 SAFE pods to compose the Veterans Village. Since then, the village has taught us a lot about building spaces that feel safe, welcoming, and inclusive to vulnerable groups. But to me, most importantly, it demonstrated the power of design to lead creative processes able to minimize negative environmental impacts and maximize positive social ones."*

*- Marta Petteni, Co-Designer of CCVV & Diversion Design-Build team member*

sign-Build Studio course in which students and faculty create a temporary stage for the Pickathon Music Festival. Using this process and funding offered through the City of Portland, hundreds of trusses were used to create the 2017 Treeline Stage for the festival, and a structural skeleton of a S.A.F.E. Pod was constructed at the festival to inform concert-goers about the purpose of the stage and invite them into conversation about the village movement.

Once the stage was deconstructed, the trusses were moved to a site within Clackamas County (required for building inspection) to begin the construction of the pods. The village is designed to accommodate 30 pods, but the team planned to create just 15 for the first phase of the village in the interest of production time, initial budget, and allowing the village community to grow at a rate conducive to fostering a positive community atmosphere. Communitecture, the village's architect of record, adapted the S.A.F.E. Pod design to meet code requirements, and a contractor from Born and Raised Construction was brought on site to oversee the building of the pods by volunteer labor. City Repair, a nonprofit focused on placemaking through community and volunteer efforts, managed the volunteer outreach and coordination (as well as liability aspects of volunteer construction) for the project.

In designing the residential areas of the village, Communitecture and CPID designers arranged the sleeping pods into clusters, following recommendations developed by

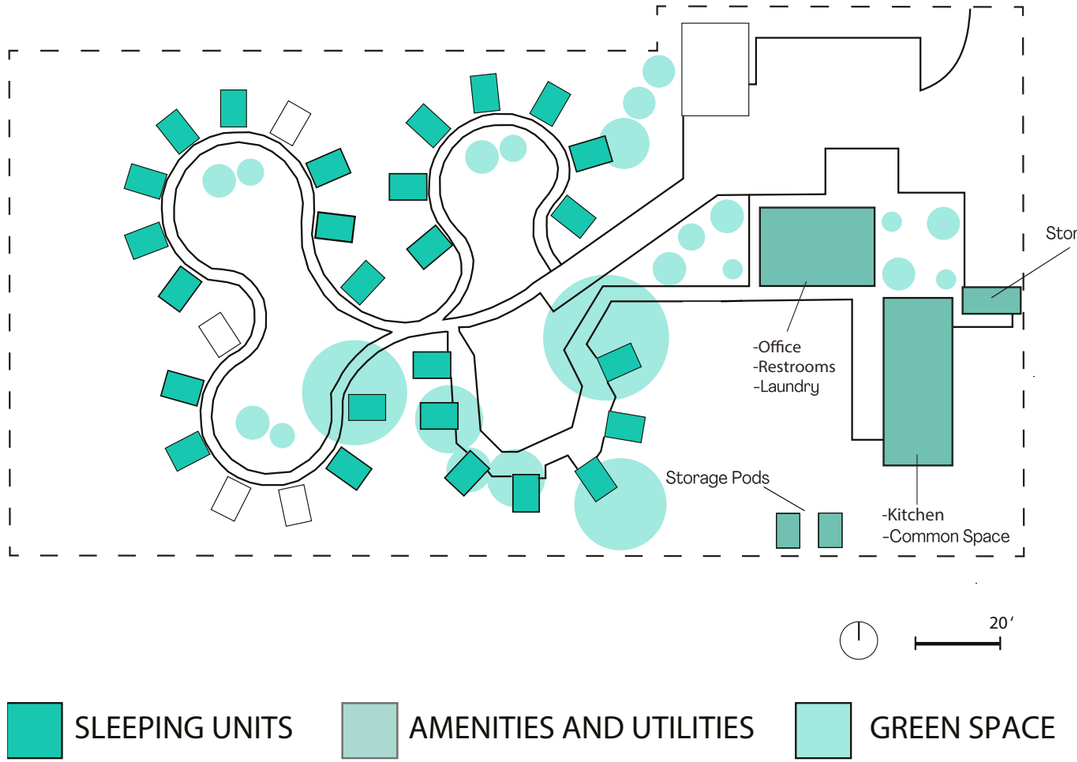
*The 2017 Treeline Pickathon made of Pod Trusses*

*Image credit: PSU School of Architecture*

a PSU graduate architecture student whose thesis had focused on designing veterans housing. The common facilities are made from stick-built modular buildings and include a large kitchen, bathrooms and showers, laundry, a TV lounge and meeting space where veterans can talk with their caseworkers and other service providers. The Clackamas County Veterans Village opened in the fall of 2018 with 15 sleeping pods and has begun adding more toward the goal of 30 total (the village is currently at 26 pods at the time of this writing).

Initially, the pods were off-grid, with full utilities provided in the common facilities. Each of the four pod clusters has a street light with electrical outlets, and during particularly cold weather the village found it had to run electrical cords to the pods to power space heaters. As a result, the pods were later hooked up to electrical power and outfitted with radiant heating panels similar to those used at the Kenton Women's Village. The sleeping pods come with a bed, interior storage space, operable windows, a porch with a built-in seat, electricity, lighting, and heat. The ground cover and pods in one of the pod clusters were designed to meet ADA standards, and this cluster is located in nearest proximity to the common buildings.

The Clackamas County Veterans Village is a managed village with two full-time village managers. While staff makes all major decisions regarding operations and rules, there is a community council made up of elected villagers at CCVV that allows villagers to make decisions around certain aspects of village life. The village site is isolated and presents challenges for villagers to access services and public transportation, and even resulting in several village applicants choosing not to join the village because of its location. However, some services are brought to the village, and a food pantry specifically for veterans is located in close proximity, and this has proven to be an extremely helpful resource for villagers. The village was created for veterans based on funding designated for this group available at the time, but the village model seems to serve this population well, with villagers noting that their military experience prepared them well for communal living and somewhat austere living conditions.



Inspired by the success of Kenton Women's Village, Clackamas County Health, Housing, and Human Services pursued the development of a pod village.

PSU's School of Architecture provided an innovative way to reuse the SAFE pod trusses. A temporary stage installation was erected by students in the Diversion Design-Build Studio.

This stage hosted performances during the Pickathon Music Festival, and was made up of materials that would be utilized in the pods.

Volunteers helped construct the pods and were managed by an on-site contractor.

The village opened in the fall of 2018 with 15 pods with plans to build more over time, and they are currently up to 25 pods.

Though the shared experience of PTSD can lead to some interpersonal challenges between villagers, their skills and experience with close-quarters military life help to form a strong community at Clackamas.

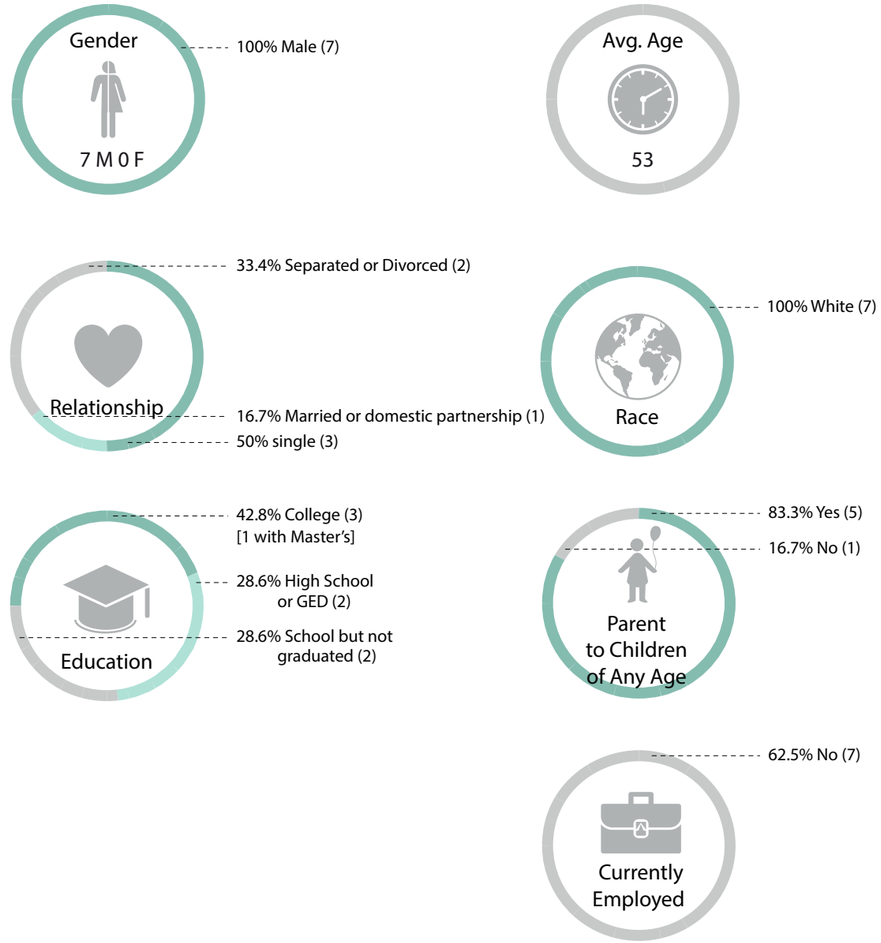
*At each village, all current villagers were invited to participate in a survey and interview. The findings in the following pages represent only those villagers who elected to participate and not the entire population of the village.*

# Clackamas County Veterans Village

## [Villager Interview Results]



## RESIDENTS
### DEMOGRAPHICS



## RESIDENCE AT VILLAGE

Avg. Time lived in village (Months)

1 — 8 — 15

## PODS

### POD TYPE

42.9% (3)

0% (0)

57.1% (4)

0% (0)

100% (8)

### POD DESCRIPTION, LIKES & DISLIKES

Likes Dislikes

## POD QUALITY

Pod Quality

Strongly disagree — Neither — Strongly agree

1 2 3 4 5

4.4 (Avg Score)

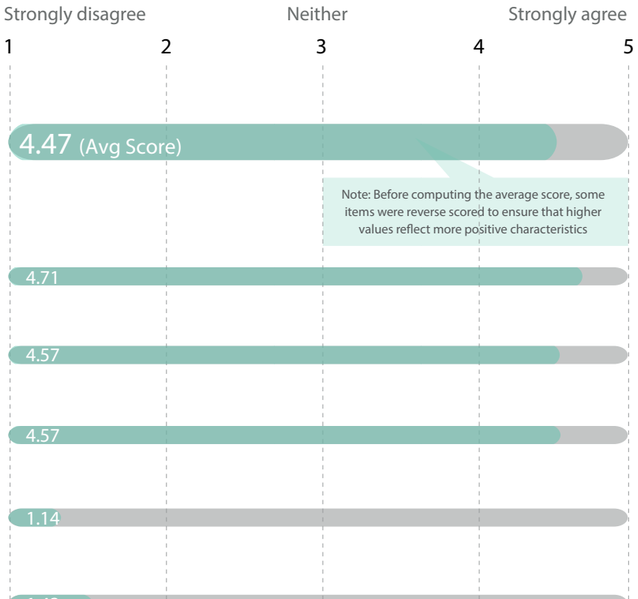
Note: Before computing the average score, some items were reverse scored to ensure that higher values reflect more positive characteristics

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. I have enough space in my pod. | 4.57 |
| 2. My pod is usually a comfortable temperature | 4.57 |
| 3. My pod looks nice | 4.71 |
| 4. There is enough space between my pod and my neighbors' pod | 3.86 |
| 5. The common facilities are easily accessible | 3.71 |
| 6. I like the common facilities | 4.57 |
| 7. I have problems with privacy where I live | 1.71 |
| 8. The floors, ceilings, and walls in my pod are in good condition | 4.29 |
| 9. The windows in my pod are in good condition | 4.43 |
| 10. I have access to working appliances at the village | 4.57 |
| 11. The locks on the doors and windows in my pod work well | 4.86 |
| 12. There are problems with the electrical system in my pod. | 1.57 |

# VILLAGE

## VILLAGE SOCIAL CLIMATE

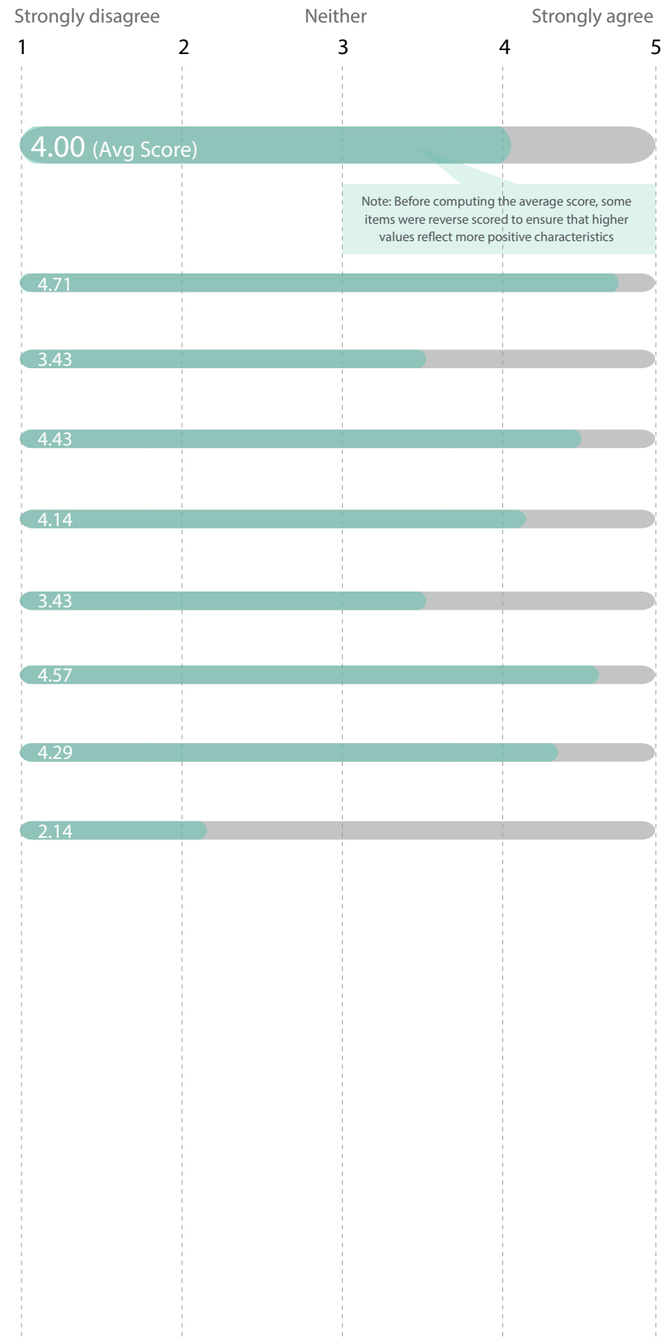
Village Social Climate





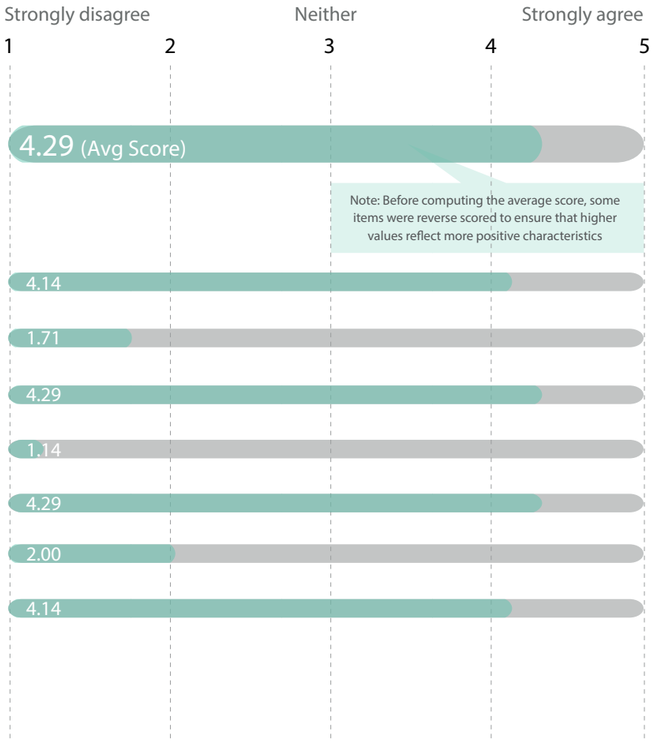

## VILLAGE SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Village Sense of Community



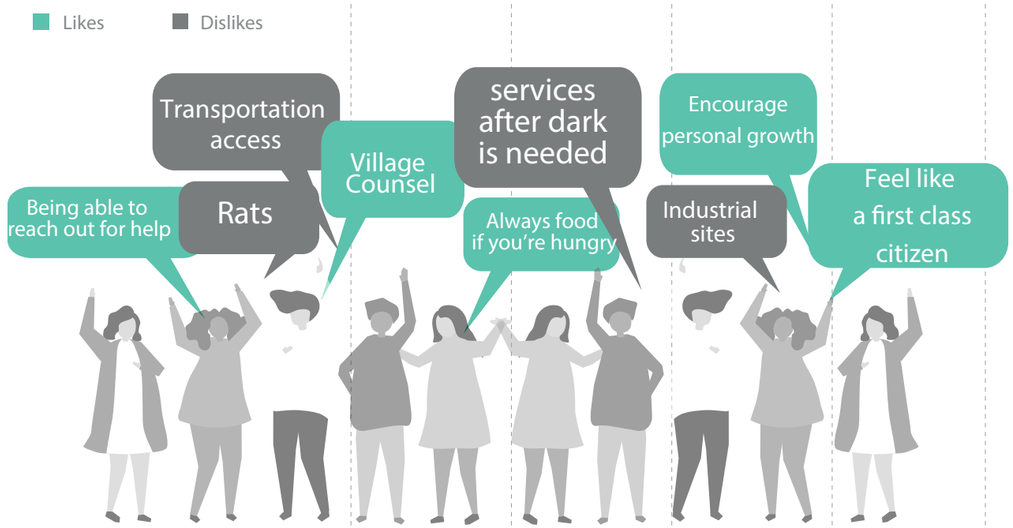
## VILLAGE RESIDENT SCALE

Village Neighbor Scale




| | |
|---|---|
| 1. I can count on a neighbor/ villager for help when I need it. | 4.14 |
| 2. There is no one in my village with whom I'm close. | 1.71 |
| 3. If I needed it, another villager would help me get to an appoint- | 4.29 |
| 4. Other villagers and I argue a lot | 1.14 |
| 5. If I needed someone to talk to about a problem, I could talk with another villager | 4.29 |
| 6. Villagers complain about me or my pod | 2.00 |
| 7. Overall, how satisfied are you with your relationship with other villagers | 4.14 |

## VILLAGE DESCRIPTION, LIKES & DISLIKES

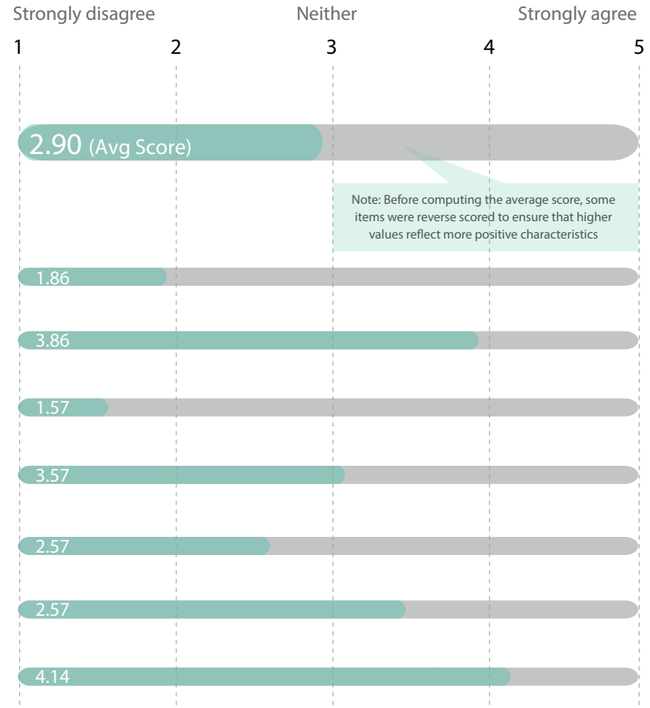





## NEIGHBORHOOD

## NEIGHBORHOOD QUALITY

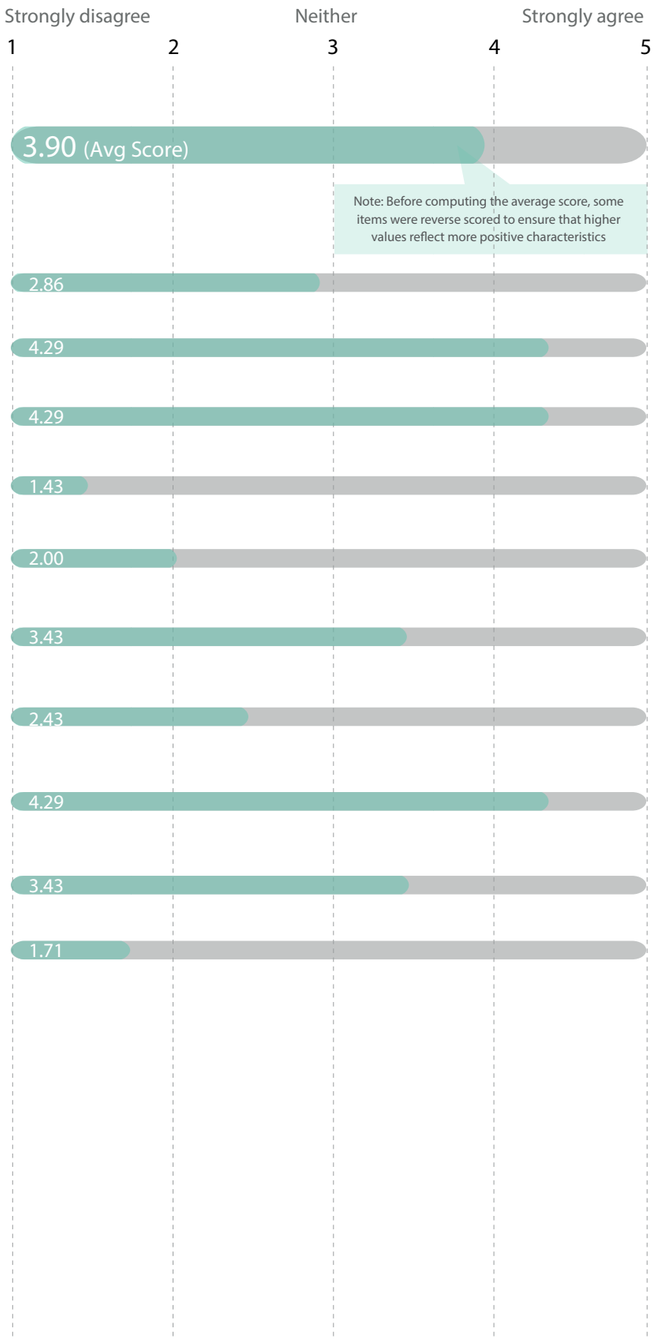
Neighborhood Quality




| | |
|---|---|
| 1. It is easy to get transportation in my neighborhood | 1.86 |
| 2. The air quality in my part of the neighborhood is good | 3.86 |
| 3. Crime is a problem in my neigh- borhood | 1.57 |
| 4. I can get the things that I need from stores in my neighborhood (food, clothes, supplies) | 3.57 |
| 5. I have a hard time getting health care services in my neighborhood | 2.57 |
| 6. My neighborhood looks nice | 2.57 |
| 7. There is too much noise in my neighborhood | 4.14 |
| 8. I have good sidewalks in my neighborhood | 2.29 |
| 9. There is a lot of traffic on the streets in my neighborhood | 3.86 |
| 10. There are nice parks in my neighborhood | 3.14 |

## NEIGHBORHOOD SOCIAL CLIMATE

Neighborhood Social Climate




1. I feel like part of this neighborhood, like I belong here.
2. I know my way around this neighborhood.
3. I feel safe in the neighborhood
4. Sometimes I feel unwelcome in the neighborhood because of my race or ethnicity
5. There are other aspects of who I am (e.g., sexual orientation, ability, gender, veteran status, religion) that make me feel unwelcome in the neighborhood
6. People in my neighborhood are friendly to everybody no matter what the person's skin color or ethnic background.
7. Police treat people differently in my neighborhood based on the color of their skin
8. People in my neighborhood treat me as an equal
9. People in my neighborhood know my housing status (i.e., that I live in the village)
10. Sometimes I feel unwelcome in my neighborhood because of my housing status (i.e., that I live in the



## RESIDENTIAL SATISFACTION

1. "How satisfied are you with your pod as a place to live?"

VERY DISSATISFIED
0% (0)

NEITHER DISSATISFIED OR SATISFIED
0% (0)

SATISFIED
14.3% (1)

VERY SATISFIED
85.7% (6)

2. "How satisfied are you with your neighborhood as a place to live?"

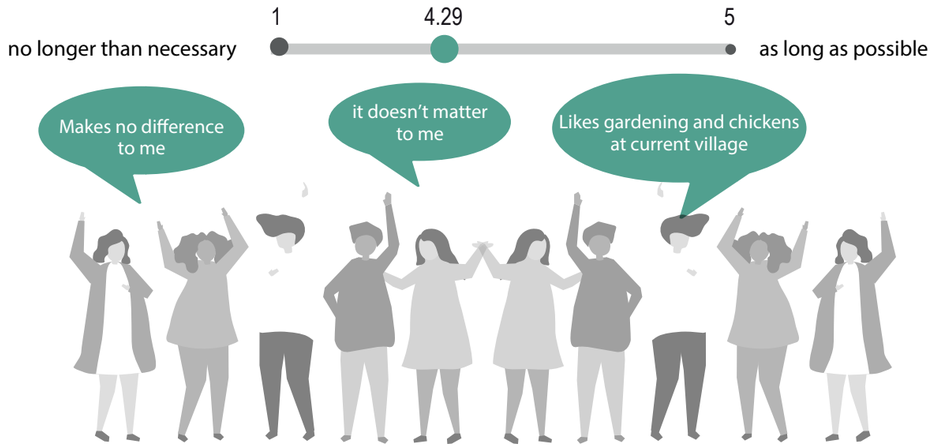
VERY DISSATISFIED
28.6% (2)

NEITHER DISSATISFIED OR SATISFIED
28.6% (2)

SATISFIED
28.6% (2)

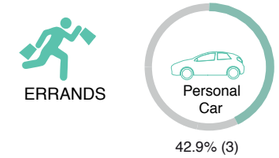
VERY SATISFIED
14.2% (1)

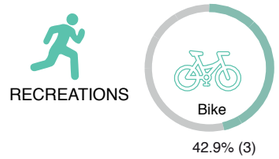
3. "How long do you want to live in the Village? And why?"

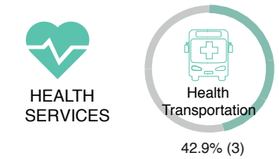


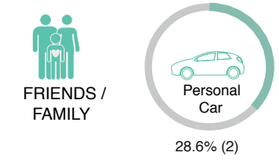
## TRANSPORTATION

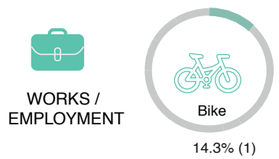
1. Most commonly used transportation methods in the past month.



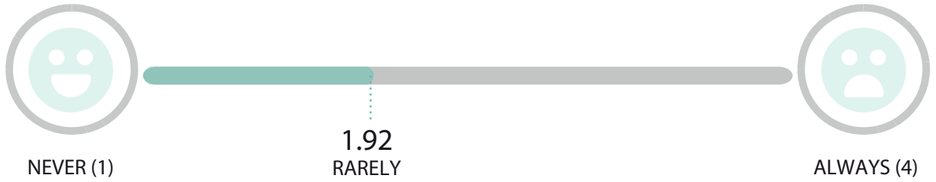



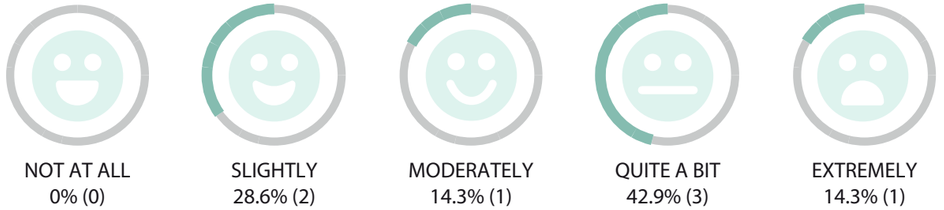



## LIFE SATISFACTION AND STRESS

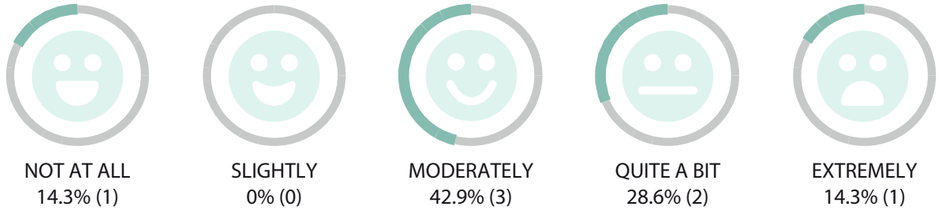
1. How often do you feel lonely on a scale of 1 (never) to 4 (always)?
On average residents said:




2. How much did your physical health interfere with daily activities in the last month?
The average response from residents on a scale of 1 to 5 was:

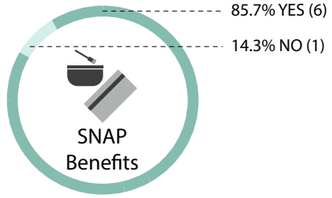


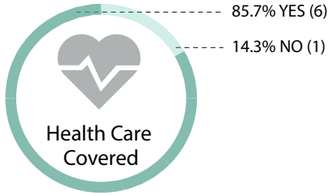

3. How much did your emotional health interfere with daily activities in the last month?
The average response from residents on a scale of 1 to 5 was:




4. How do you feel about your life overall right now?
The average response from residents on a scale of 1 (terrible) to 7 (delighted) was:

## HEALTH AND BASIC NEEDS



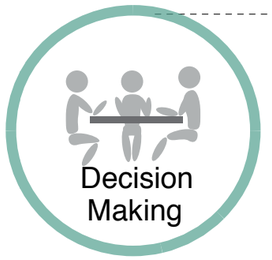
## Governance and Decision Making

1. When the village has group meetings, what are the most important elements to help facilitate a productive meeting?

Elements ranked from most important to least important

| (1= most important, 6= least important) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Adequate space to meet indoors | 1 (16.7%) | 3 (50%) | 1 (16.7%) | 1 (16.7%) | - | - |
| Adequate space to meet outdoors | - | 1 (16.7%) | 3 (50%) | 1 (16.7%) | 1 (16.7%) | - |
| Outside (non-villager) facilitators | - | 1 (16.7%) | - | 4 (66.7%) | - | 1 (16.7%) |
| Established rules for the meeting | 4 (66.7%) | - | 2 (33.3%) | - | - | - |
| Comfortable seating | 1 (16.7%) | - | - | - | 5 (83.3%) | - |
| Food/Drinks provided at meeting | - | 1 (16.7%) | - | - | - | 5 (83.3%) |

2. How much decision-making power should village residents have?



And the good part is people cook something, they will share it with you. I try to get everybody together by grilling when it's outside.

It's not hard to live here, it's really not. It's actually a very nice place. It's a good place. If you're trying to recover or recuperate from something, it's an ideal place for that and they'll help you all they can.

I have a voice at the meetings, if I ever choose to use it. If I have a concern and I bring it up to one of the service providers, it's generally ... I generally won't say anything unless I feel like it's getting out of hand. Of course, by the time I feel it's been getting out of hand, they're already aware of it and have already taken appropriate measures to correct it. In that aspect, yeah, I have a voice and I'm free to exercise that, whether it be at the weekly meetings, or if I want to go when there's a service provider here and spend 15 or 20 minutes talking to them about it.

"It's kind of the experience of actually owning your own house individual-like, so you get a little bit of your dignity back—a lot of your dignity back. It makes you feel like you're part of something bigger than just worrying about yourself. You got other people that
you get friendships with and you want to help because you know they've been though some stuff also, whether PTSD from military experience or what not."

More livable, that is inside accessibility to bathrooms, because there's 60 yards, that's too far. Some of these guys have bladder issues.

# Agape Village

**$75**
per month
participation fee
(not yet enacted)

**CO-GOVERNED**
between villagers and staff

**HEALTHCARE**
partnership with
Providence Health

**15 PODS**
8' x 12' (96 sq ft) built by
Cascadia Cluster +
Volunteers

**~$18,000**
cost per pod (built by paid
houseless trainees through
Cascadia Clusters)

**2019**
Year opened
(December)

**~1.5**
acres within
11 acre site

**1 FULL-TIME**
support staff
(outreach coordinator)

**SOLAR PANELS**
on pods

# Agape Village

## [Village Profile]



Agape Village is a community for people experiencing homelessness located at the base of Kelly Butte in Southeast Portland on the property of the Portland Central Nazarene Church. The village is capable of hosting up to 15 people. The site was previously a quarry and remained largely vacant until church leadership and nonprofit partners decided to build a village to serve the houseless community.

Beginning in late 2017, a group called Faith Leaders on Homelessness began discussing the village model in collaboration with the Village Coalition. The idea for a transitional housing village was conceived by the church as a humanitarian response to the influx of people experiencing homelessness seeking shelter on their grounds and in the surrounding area. Leadership at the Portland Central Nazarene Church recognized the underutilized land they held adjacent to the church as a potential site for a village and they hoped the effort could also serve as a model for other faith-based organizations.

From the onset of the village efforts, the church and project organizers brought together stakeholders to seek input on the village design, as well as the creation of community agreements and governance structures. Students and faculty at PSU's Center for Public Interest Design supported the village with site plans and pod designs based on stakeholder feedback. This steering committee included people experiencing homelessness that camped on or near the village site. A horseshoe configuration for the site was chosen by the stakeholders with the intention of strengthening a sense of community, providing clear sight lines for security, and creating a large open space for common activities. The site design also takes into account 10' spacing between pods, accessibility for emergency/construction vehicles, and preservation of views.

The village was built with nonprofit Cascadia Clusters leading the development. As part of Cascadia Clusters' model, the pods were constructed by members of the houseless community who earn an income and learn the construction trade through the process. In this case, the construction crew consisted of several villagers from Hazelnut Grove who were also able to apply their expertise of life in a village to the project. Another one of Cascadia Clusters' innovations is

*"When I was in seminary I ended up serving as a chaplain at a rescue mission in Kansas City and later started a women's shelter in Prineville, Oregon, so homelessness work was not totally foreign to me. I feel like a rescue mission setting is like triage whereas a village has the opportunity to offer more support and help. Mission type work meets an immediate need for those on the street and a village isn't going to fit everyone, so I think that there's a real need for both."*

*—Matt Huff, pastor, Portland Central Nazarene Church, Agape Village organizer*

the creation of a portable "Maker Village" which they use to house the builders and provide a tool shop on the site. Once a project is complete, the Maker Village is relocated to help seed another future village in Portland. Volunteers from groups like Tivnu were also instrumental in the construction of the pods. The "Condo Pod" was designed specifically for the needs of Agape Village and provided the basis for the 15 pods built on site. Led by CPID student Melissa Mulder-Wright, the design features a sleeping loft, floor-level living space, flexibility of use, and an attached 'garage' at the rear of the pod (under the loft). This design was further developed by Cascadia Clusters to meet the needs of the village and include solar-powered charging and light stations.

Agape Village was completed in late 2019, so it only had a few short months of operating before the COVID-19 pandemic upended plans. While the village has 15 pods, the number of villagers has not risen above 7 (through 2021). The village benefits from its proximity to the church and occasional access to the bathrooms, kitchen, and gathering areas, but issues around water, sewer, and power specifically for the village have been a challenge. To other faith-based organizations considering a village, the village operators recommend creating the common facilities first and letting the pods grow over time, as opposed to the other way around. Currently, Agape Village has a shared barbecue and sink which serve as the communal kitchen, portable toilets, a fire pit, and an indoor gathering space with a television operated with a generator.

The village has one (ultimately) full-time Outreach Coordinator with an office at the church whose time is paid for by both the church and a partnership with Union Gospel Mission. Agape village could be considered co-governed. The villagers have regular general assemblies where they can make significant decisions about the village, but the

*Volunteers and Cascadia Clusters building pods*
*Image credit: Agape Village*

church ultimately has the final say on big picture things related to the village. Their numbers have also been too small for an elected village council deciding that it would be counterproductive to have a village council of 4 people in a village of 6 people total.

One particularly unique aspect of Agape Village's model is its partnership with Providence Health. Providence built two pods at the village dedicated for participants in their Better Outcomes thru Bridges (BOB) program. To get into one of those pods, a potential villager has to go through Providence, but then join the village with no distinction between them and the rest of the community. Providence provides ongoing case management and peer support for those two individuals, as well as providing additional support for anybody else in the village that needs assistance with things like connection to services, help clarifying medical information, or other aid. Prior to COVID there was a Providence case manager or peer support specialist that came to the village for about 8-12 hours a week, spread over several days.

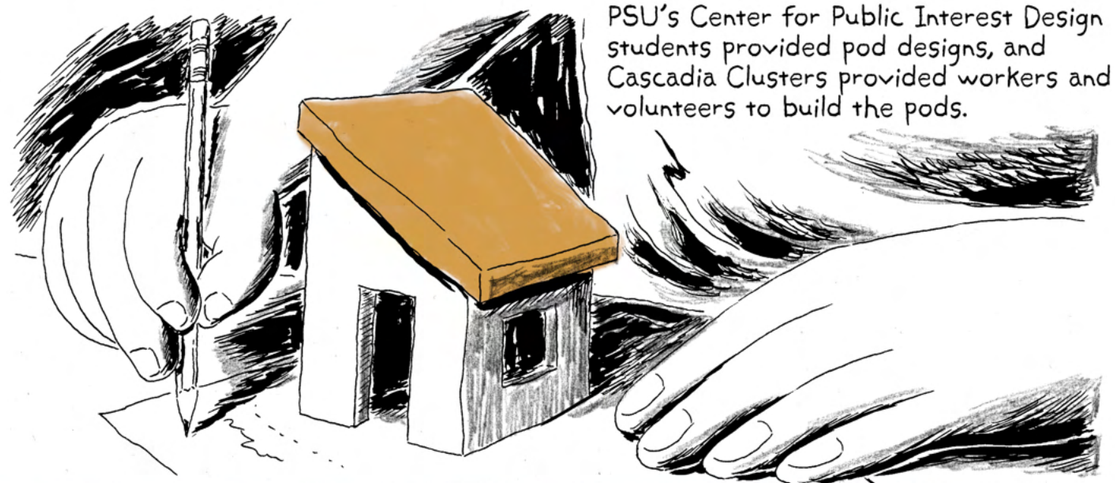
Agape Village has relied on developing mission-driven partnerships with other organizations to support its development and operations that are otherwise funded through private donations. Eventually the village plans to charge dues to the villagers ($75/mo.), but has yet to enact this policy in recognition of the unique challenges presented by the pandemic. Agape Village is developing a village model that may be useful to others as faith-based organizations are increasingly called to become more active participants in efforts to address homelessness.

The Faith Leaders on Homelessness collaborated with the Village Coalition to discuss new space for a village in 2017.

Leadership at the Portland Central Nazarene Church offered an underutilized section of their property as a potential location for a village.

The church and other partner organizations formed the nonprofit Agape Village.

People experiencing homelessness were invited by the organization to join the Agape Village Board and asked to help develop next steps.



PSU's Center for Public Interest Design students provided pod designs, and Cascadia Clusters provided workers and volunteers to build the pods.

The village, complete with 15 pods, opened at the end of 2019.

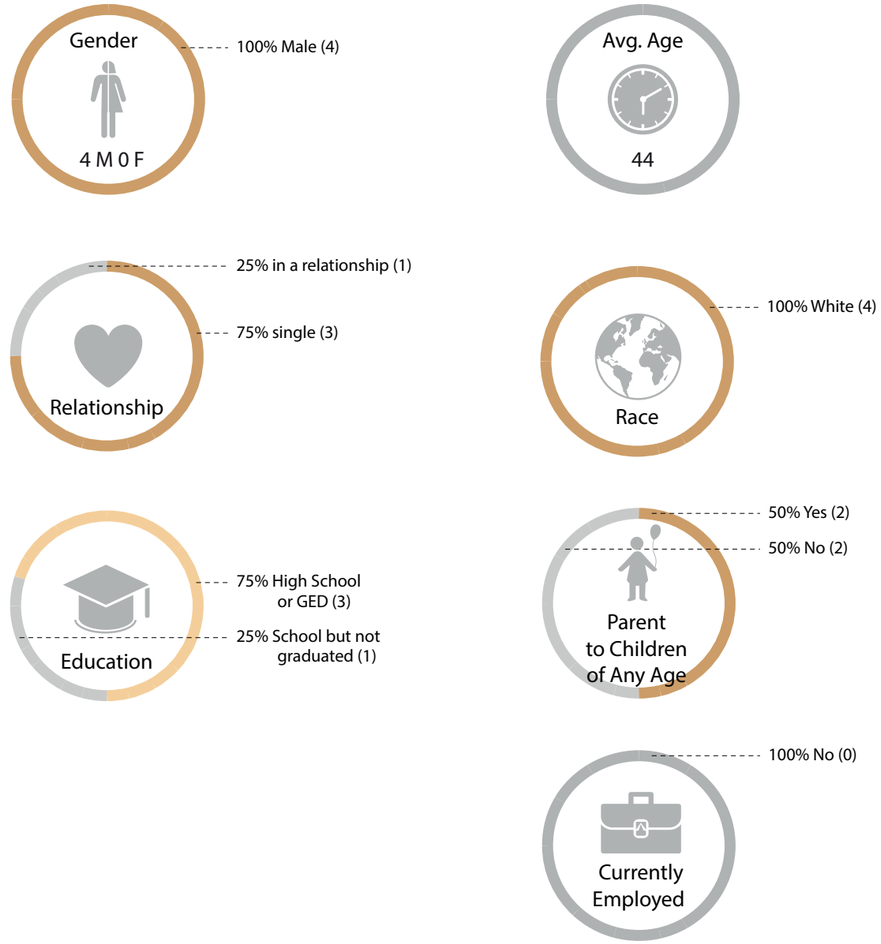
*At each village, all current villagers were invited to participate in a survey and interview. The findings in the following pages represent only those villagers who elected to participate and not the entire population of the village.*

# Agape Village

## [Villager Interview Results]



## RESIDENTS
### DEMOGRAPHICS



## RESIDENCE AT VILLAGE

Avg. Time lived in village (Months)

0 — 6.5 — 11

## PODS

### POD TYPE

POP-OUT POD

0% (0)

CATALYST POD

0% (0)

SAFE POD

0% (0)

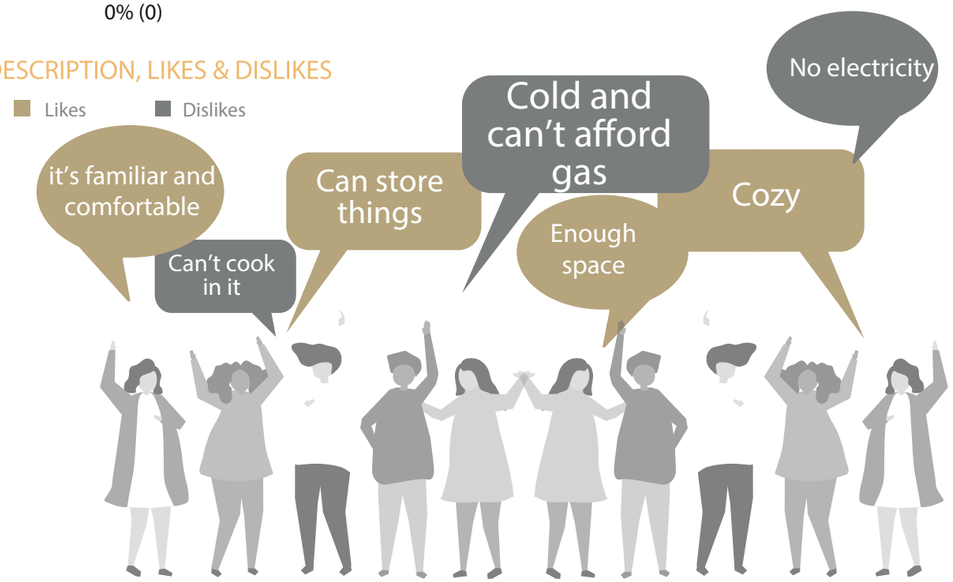
CONDO POD

100% (4)

OTHER POD

0% (0)

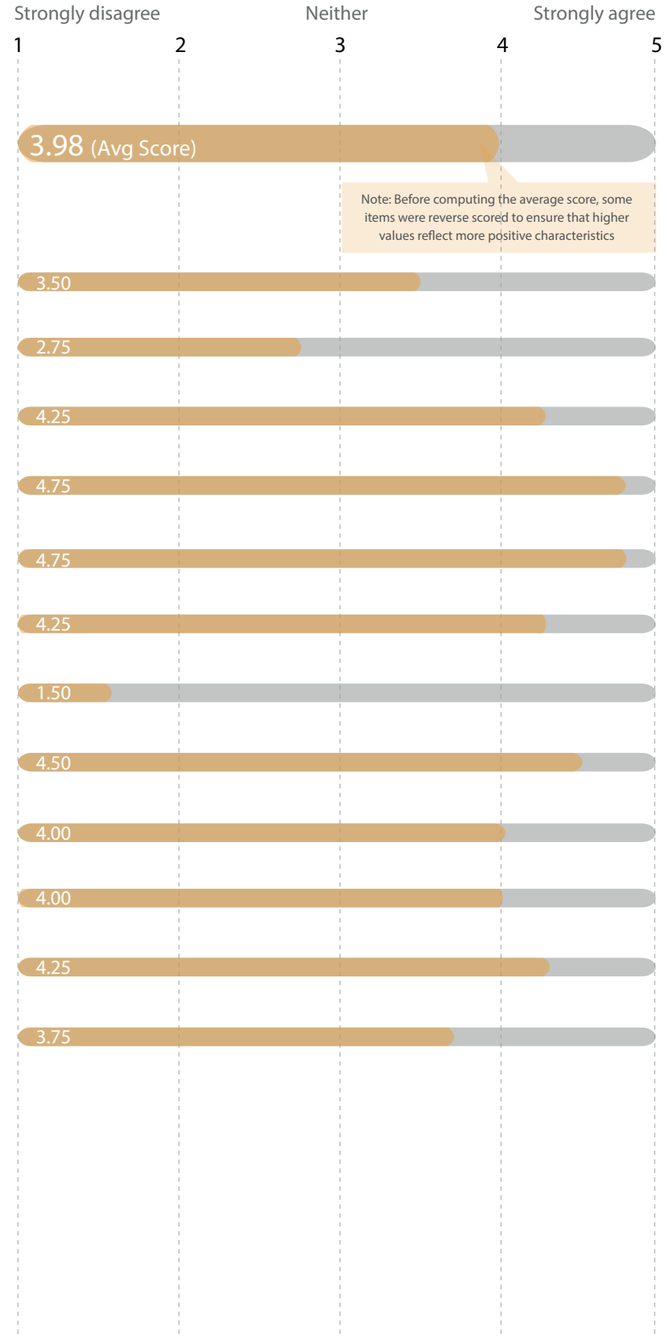
### POD DESCRIPTION, LIKES & DISLIKES






## POD QUALITY

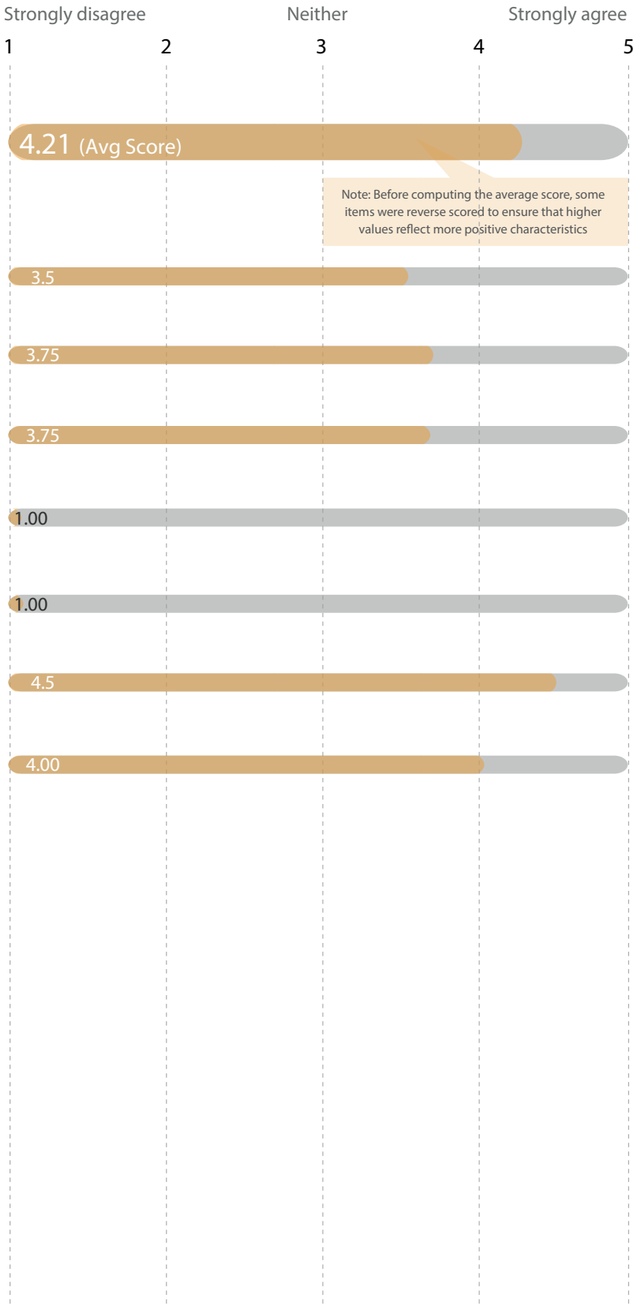
Pod Quality



# VILLAGE

## VILLAGE SOCIAL CLIMATE

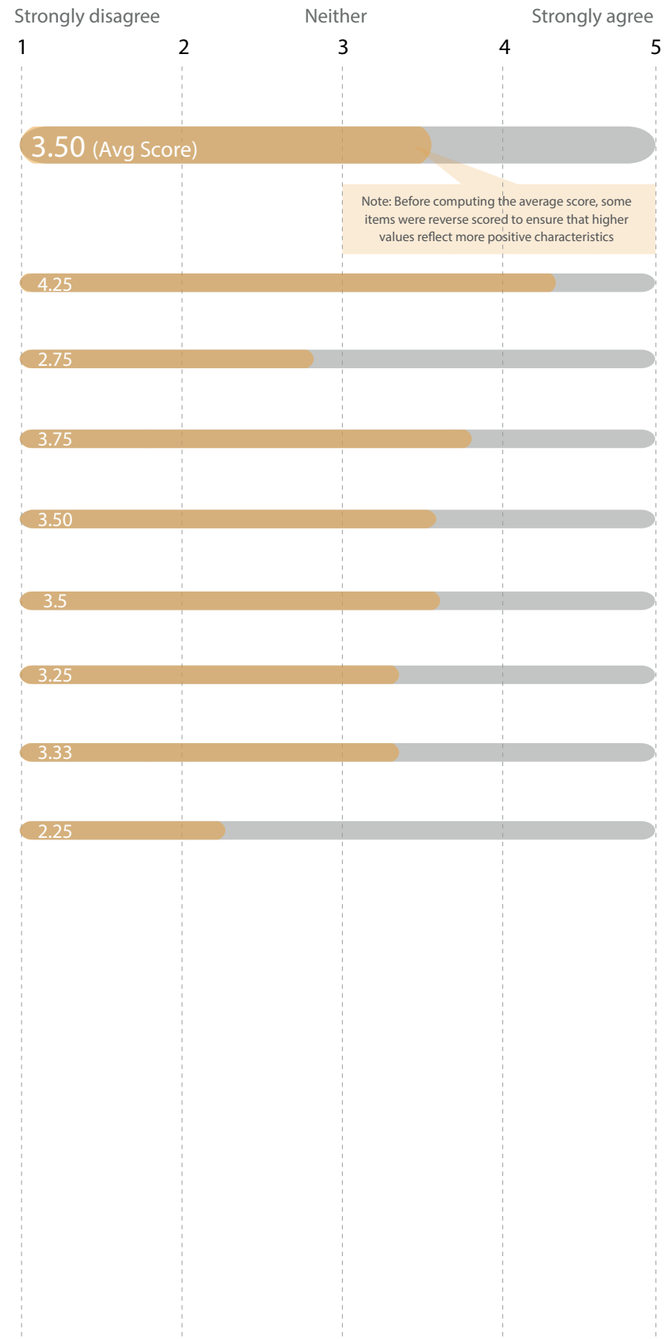
Village Social Climate





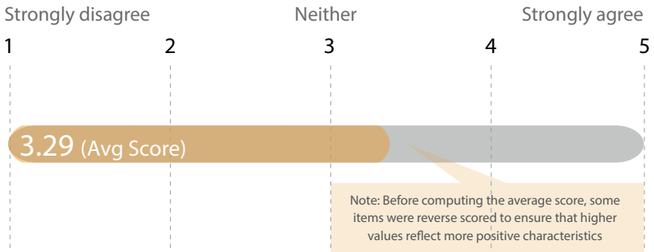

# VILLAGE SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Village Sense of Community



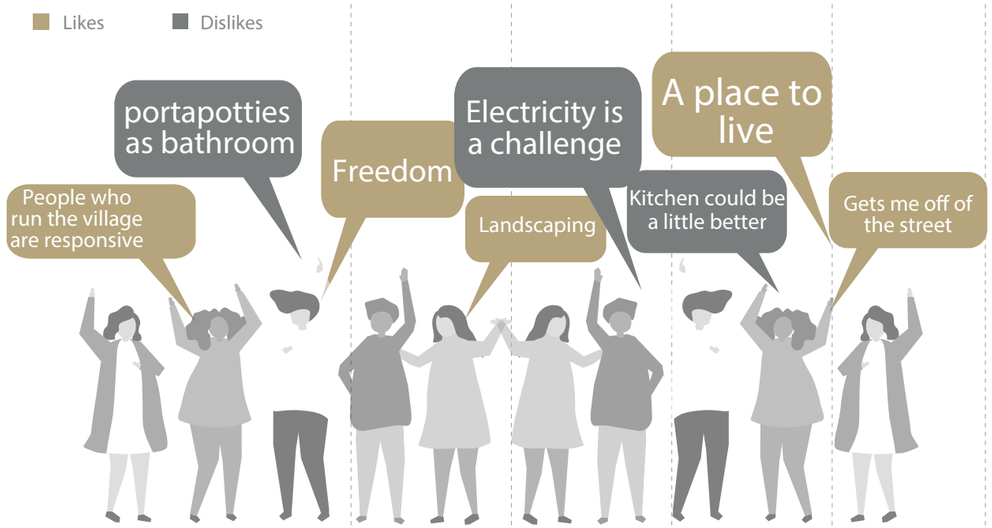
## VILLAGE RESIDENT SCALE

Village Neighbor Scale




1. I can count on a neighbor/ villager for help when I need it. — 3.50
2. There is no one in my village with whom I'm close. — 3.25
3. If I needed it, another villager would help me get to an appoint- — 2.50
4. Other villagers and I argue a lot — 2.00
5. If I needed someone to talk to about a problem, I could talk with another villager — 2.50
6. Villagers complain about me or my pod — 1.25
7. Overall, how satisfied are you with your relationship with other villagers — 3.00

## VILLAGE DESCRIPTION, LIKES & DISLIKES

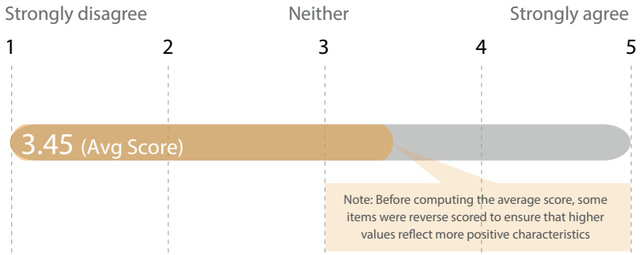





## NEIGHBORHOOD

## NEIGHBORHOOD QUALITY

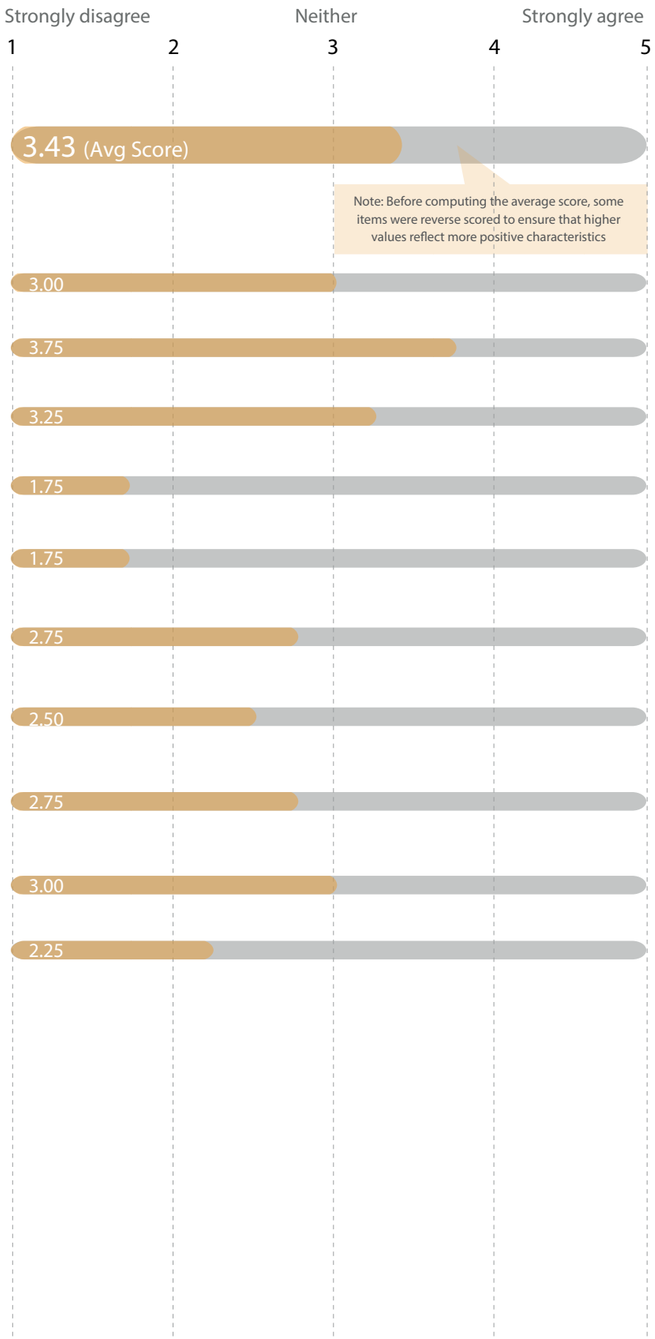
Neighborhood Quality




1. It is easy to get transportation in my neighborhood — 4.25
2. The air quality in my part of the neighborhood is good — 4.00
3. Crime is a problem in my neigh- borhood — 3.75
4. I can get the things that I need from stores in my neighborhood (food, clothes, supplies) — 4.25
5. I have a hard time getting health care services in my neighborhood — 1.50
6. My neighborhood looks nice — 3.00
7. There is too much noise in my neighborhood — 2.75
8. I have good sidewalks in my neighborhood — 3.75
9. There is a lot of traffic on the streets in my neighborhood — 4.00
10. There are nice parks in my neighborhood — 3.25

## NEIGHBORHOOD SOCIAL CLIMATE

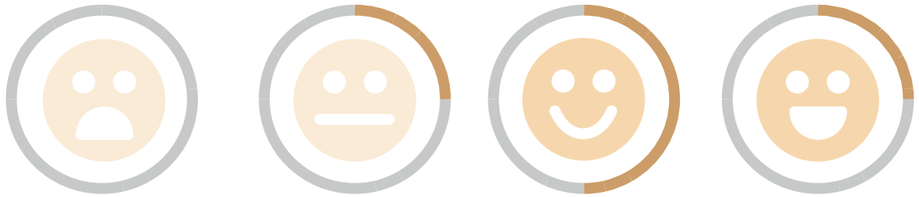
Neighborhood Social Climate



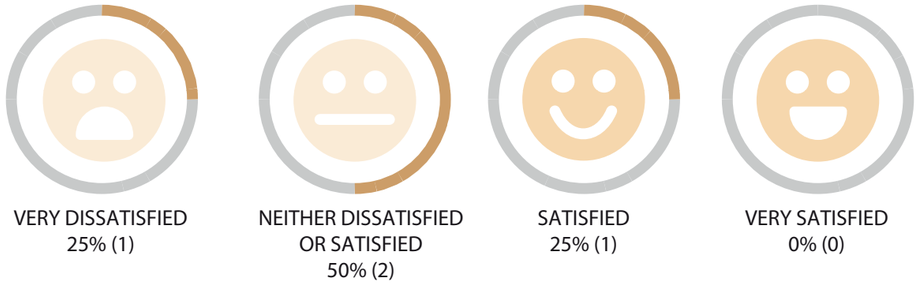



## RESIDENTIAL SATISFACTION

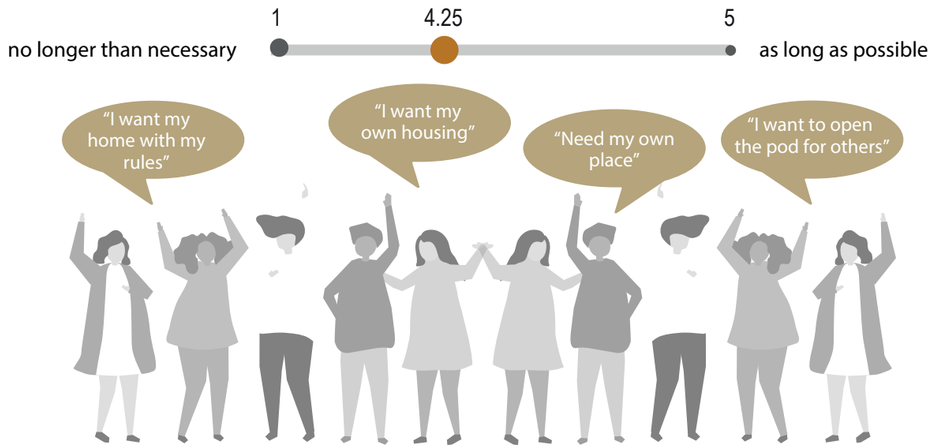
1. "How satisfied are you with your pod as a place to live?"




2. "How satisfied are you with your neighborhood as a place to live?"

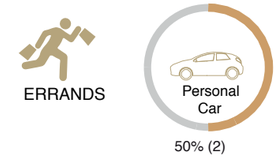


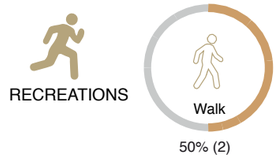

3. "How long do you want to live in the Village? And why?"

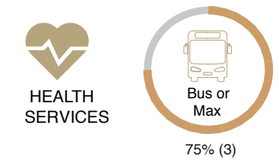


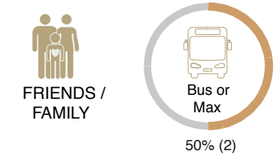
## TRANSPORTATION

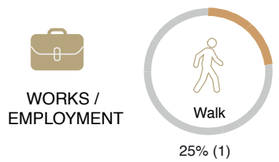
1. Most commonly used transportation methods in the past month.



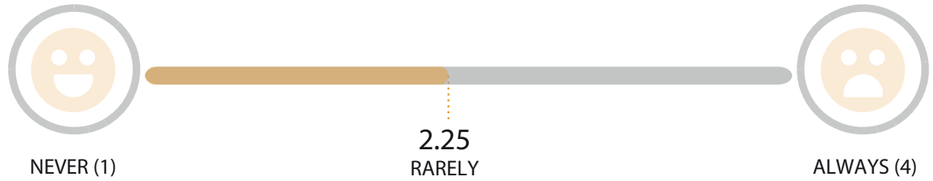



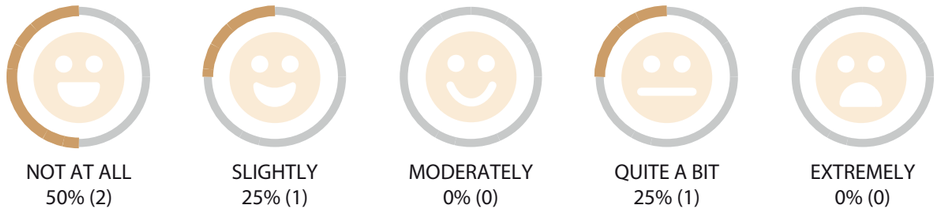



## LIFE SATISFACTION AND STRESS

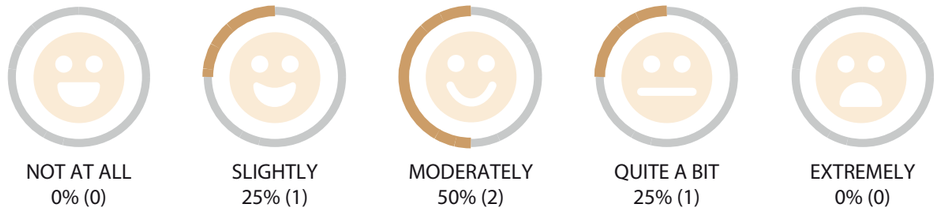
1. How often do you feel lonely on a scale of 1 (never) to 4 (always)?
On average residents said:



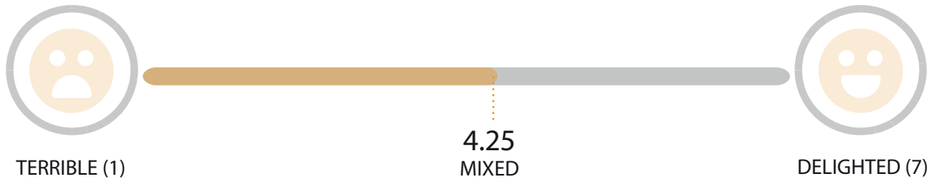

2. How much did your physical health interfere with daily activities in the last month?
The average response from residents on a scale of 1 to 5 was:




3. How much did your emotional health interfere with daily activities in the last month?
The average response from residents on a scale of 1 to 5 was:



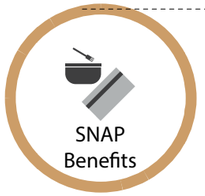

4. How do you feel about your life overall right now?
The average response from residents on a scale of 1 (terrible) to 7 (delighted) was:



## HEALTH AND BASIC NEEDS

25% HIGH (1)

75% LOW (3)




100% YES (4)

100% YES (4)

Travel and time are barriers

Change my meds. My doc is my psychiatrist. I'm trying to decide how to have effective medication, not take another one. It's not the best for my liver

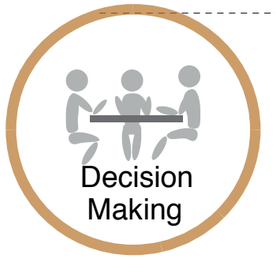
## Governance and Decision Making

1. When the village has group meetings, what are the most important elements to help facilitate a productive meeting?

Elements ranked from most important to least important

| (1= most important, 6= least important) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Adequate space to meet indoors | 1 (100%) | - | - | - | - | - |
| Adequate space to meet outdoors | - | 1 (25%) | 1 (25%) | - | 1 (25%) | 1 (25%) |
| Outside (non-villager) facilitators | - | 1 (25%) | 1 (25%) | 2 (50%) | - | - |
| Established rules for the meeting | - | 2 (50%) | - | 2 (50%) | - | - |
| Comfortable seating | - | - | 2 (50%) | - | 2 (50%) | - |
| Food/Drinks provided at meeting | - | - | - | - | 1 (25%) | 3 (75%) |

2. How much decision-making power should village residents have?




100% There should be shared decision-making between villagers and social service providers (4)

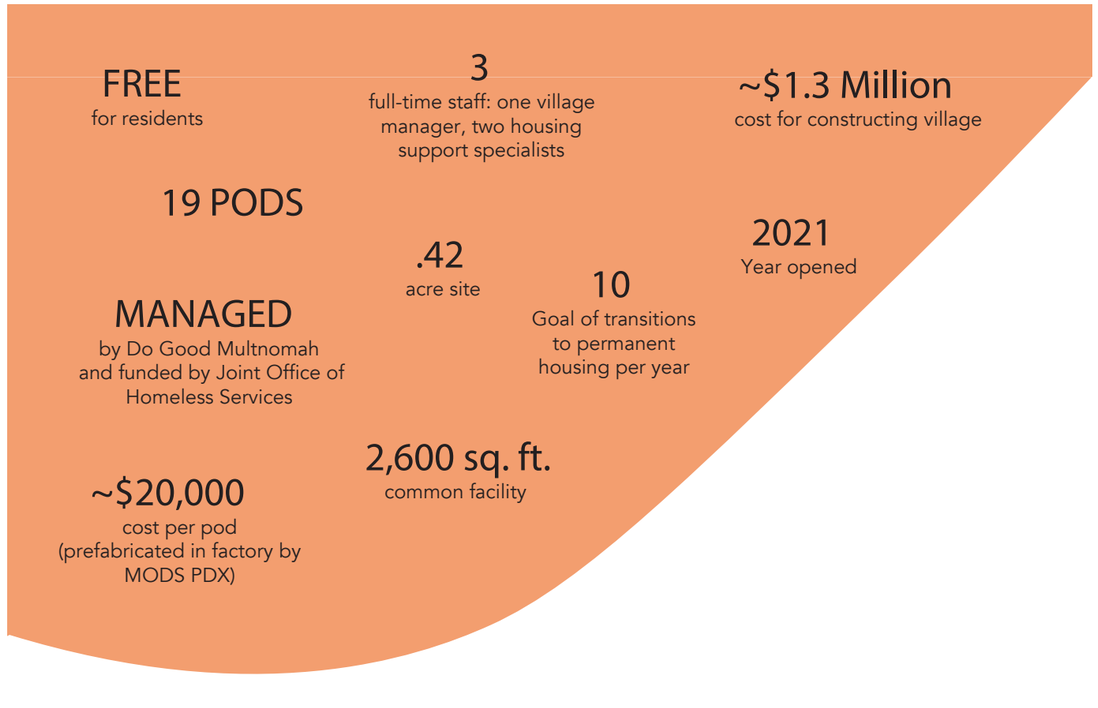
Just like filling out an application for an apartment. You give the application, they do a back-ground check. If you pass that you get in. The way I look at it, it's a 50/50 chance. You either get it or you don't. And I'm glad I did.

I mean, yeah, you got to be sober. There's no drugs or alcohol on the property. And they do random UAs and stuff like that where if you're using, I'm not really sure, but I think if you're using and you're caught using, you're either... If you're caught here using, I think you're kicked out. But if not, if you're not caught here, but have dirty UAs, they ask you to leave for a couple of days and come back when your UA's clean and stuff like that. But at the same time, they pretty much give everybody a chance.

I mean, I think the pods are a good size. I mean, all you really need is a bed and a place to keep your stuff. I think if they had bigger common areas where if we had more... So because you don't always just want to be in your room. It's like you want to get out and do something. So if they had a common area where they had like, I don't know. This sounds silly, but maybe games or TVs or something like that, just where you can interact with others.

I mean, the staff do most of the decision making. I mean, we do have our say and we're allowed to speak for ourselves and what we think. But when it comes down to it, it's mainly up to the staff and the facilities.

# St. Johns Village




# St. Johns Village

## [Village Profile]



The St. Johns Village is a managed village with capacity for 19 people. It marks the second time that the Joint Office of Homeless Services has been actively involved in developing and funding a village. As one of Portland's most recent villages, it represents a next step in terms of the quality of amenities and size of investment in village infrastructure, but it emerged from rocky beginnings.

The Joint Office of Homeless Services (JOHS) began pursuing options to fund another village in 2018 that could host the residents of Hazelnut Grove, allowing the site of Hazelnut Grove to be cleared in response to pressure from neighbors and the different city departments concerned about the village. Villagers at Hazelnut Grove were split about whether they were willing to relocate, but the promise of utilities and improved facilities was compelling enough to continue to engage in discussions with the City. A site several neighborhoods north of Hazelnut Grove in St. Johns was identified as a potential option for the village and a public meeting was set up to discuss the project with neighbors. Opposition to the plan was immediate and opponents attempted to rally their neighbors against the project, often utilizing dehumanizing language and stereotypes to describe people experiencing homelessness and the behavior they feared would be associated with their presence. The neighborhood meeting and related social media discussions were dominated by conflict and hostility, but it catalyzed a group in favor of supporting the village, and the group St. Johns Welcomes the Village Coalition was formed.

As explorations of the site continued, it was deemed infeasible for a village project. However, The St. Johns Welcomes the Village Coalition (SJWVC) was still hosting outreach meetings and eager to explore options for how the neighborhood could host a village. They ultimately received a generous offer from Pastors David Libby and Janel Hovde at St. Johns Church to build the village on a parcel of church land. Like Agape Village, the church leadership saw addressing homelessness as a moral obligation, and providing space for a village could be a substantial and tangible contribution.

Members of a St. Johns based design firm, Convergence Architecture, were part of the SJWVC and offered their services pro bono

*"In early 2019, St. Johns Center for Opportunity had put together a houseless outreach team and a houseless action team. By about April or May the group involved started growing and formed the St. Johns Welcomes the Village Coalition. It was a loose coalition of friends and neighbors interested in advocating for houseless neighbors and specifically focused on the proposed village. If you wanted to be in the St. Johns Welcomes the Village Coalition, you had to sign a letter of support for the village. I believe we had well over 400 people who signed a letter of support and were members. Especially when we needed the advocacy out there, we were able to quickly get information out to people that were in favor of the village, and I think it helped turn the tide a bit. We were able to show up at neighborhood meetings in large numbers to vote for things supporting houseless neighbors and to bring a positive message and visible backing for the village."*

*- Adam Robins, Project Manager, Convergence Architecture, & SJWVC Member*

to design the village. Opposition continued as plans for the village advanced, but tensions gradually eased as time went on. Unfortunately, vandalism to the pods and site during development delayed the project slightly, but marked the end of significant conflict between the village and the neighborhood, which has largely come to accept the village.

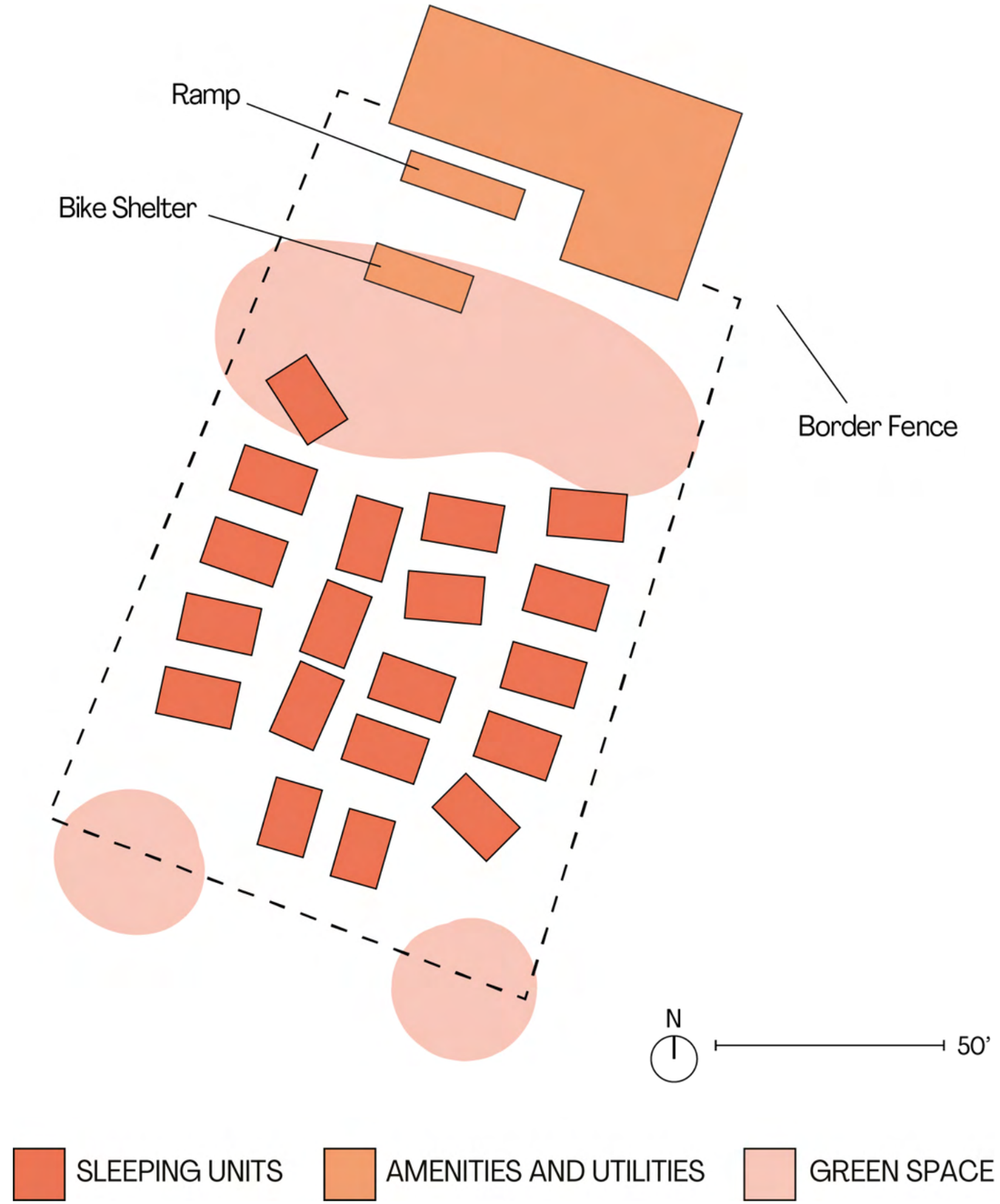
Convergence used principles from trauma-informed design, biophilic design, and accessible design as primary drivers for the buildings and site in order to best serve the future residents' needs. The pods at the St. Johns Village utilized a design by PSU CPID / School of Architecture students used at several other villages for all 19 pods. The pods and the common facilities were fabricated by ModsPDX. The common building is made of four modular components joined together on site, resulting in a large facility of around 2,600 square feet containing bathrooms, kitchen, laundry, living room, and office space. The design team wanted to eliminate or reduce wait time for access to various facilities, so they placed the three toilets into separate rooms, did the same with the building's three showers, and created a bank of sinks in the hallway. The common facility has a large living room, which can also serve as a welcome area for guests, as access to the pod section of the site is accessed through the building by non-residents (villagers can also use a separate gated entry for more direct access to their pods). The quality of the

*Yard sign in support of St. Johns Village torn in half by village opponent(s)*
*Image credit: Greg Townley*

common facilities and pods and construction methods contributed to an estimated $1.3 million to build the village.

St. Johns Village is managed by Do Good Multnomah, which also operates the Clackamas County Veterans Village. While the village is managed, it has benefited from having seven of its original residents join the village from the self-governed Hazelnut Grove. By all accounts, these villagers have been instrumental in establishing a camaraderie at the village, facilitating productive group discussions, and sharing insights about village life.





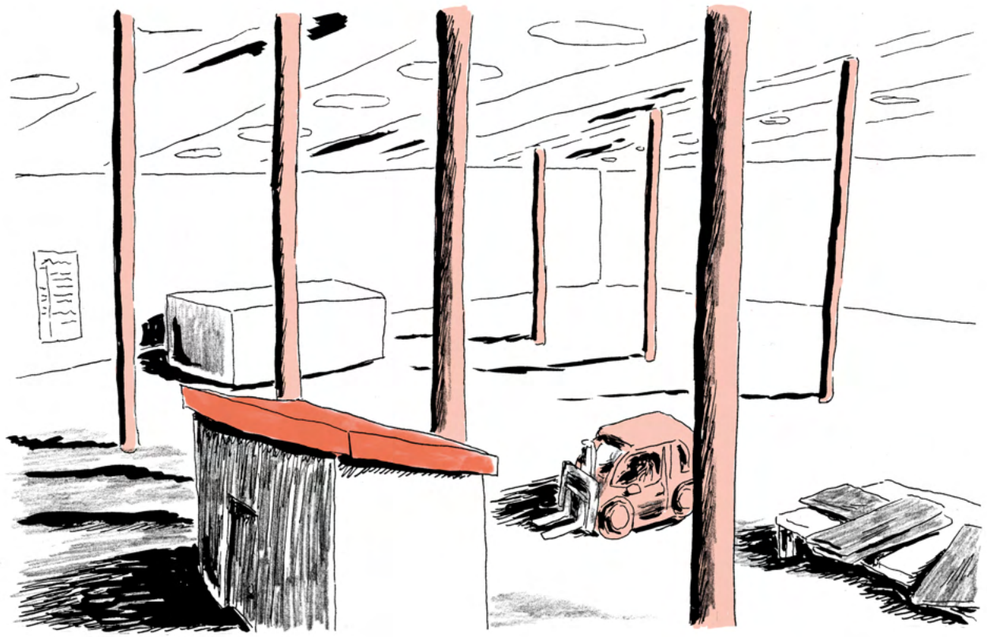
The Joint Office of Homeless Services looked for a new site for residents of Hazelnut Grove.

The Joint Office helped set up plans for a village in the St. Johns neighborhood.

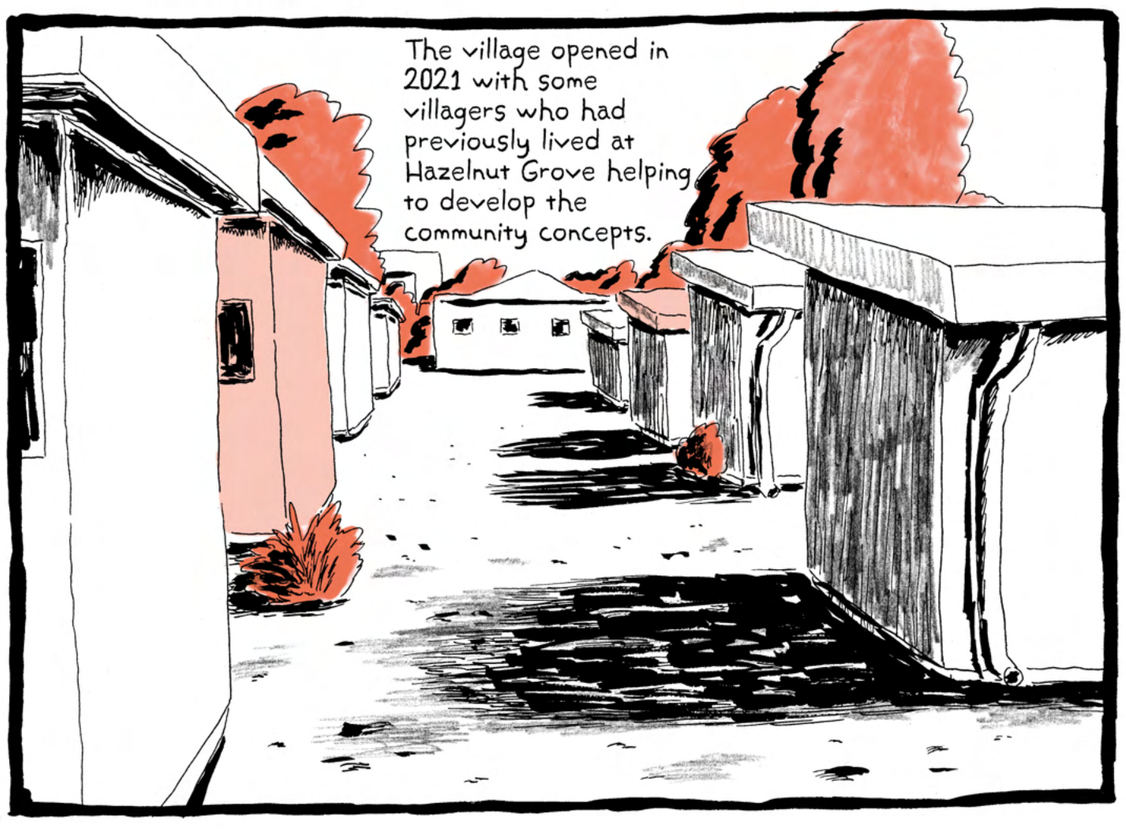
The plans were met with both activist support and activist protest.

St. Johns Christian Church offered land for the development of a village.

With City sponsorship and the assistance of Convergence Architecture, the pods and facilities were produced by Mods PDX in their factory in a short time.



The village opened in 2021 with some villagers who had previously lived at Hazelnut Grove helping to develop the community concepts.



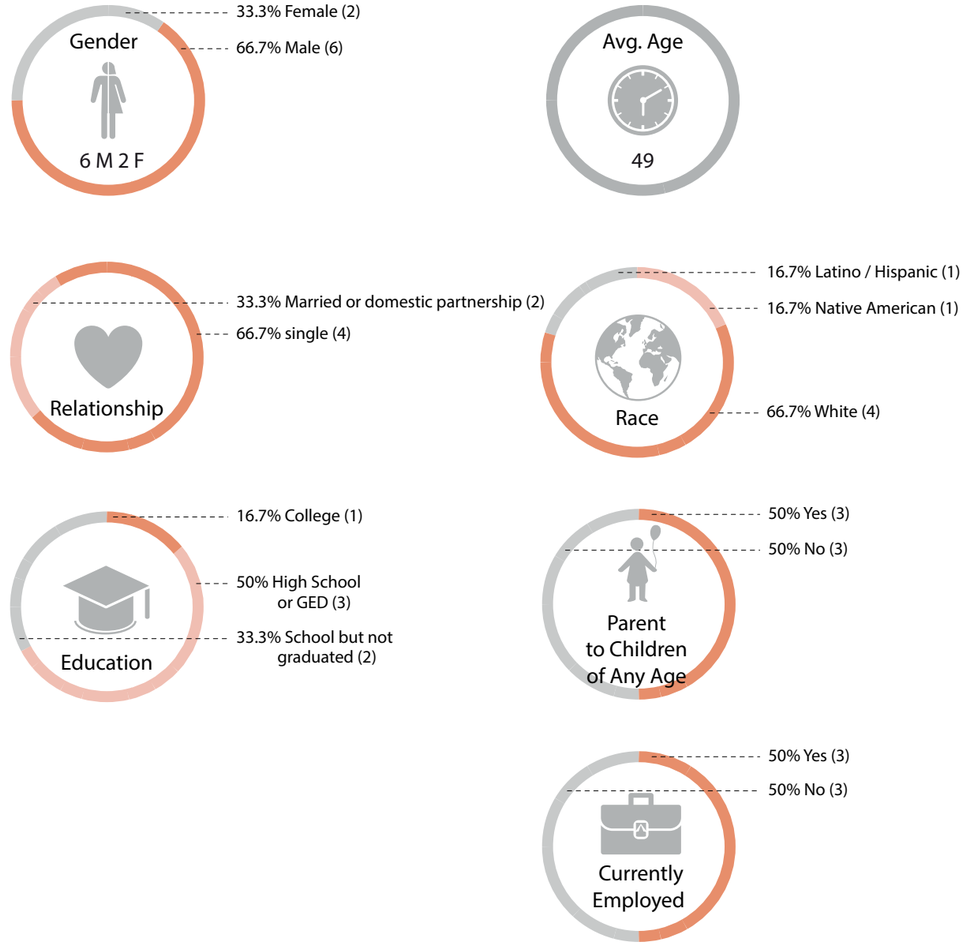
*At each village, all current villagers were invited to participate in a survey and interview. The findings in the following pages represent only those villagers who elected to participate and not the entire population of the village.*

# St. Johns Village

## [Villager Interview Results]

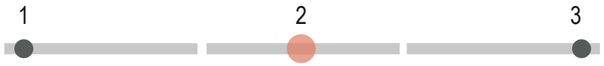


## RESIDENTS
### DEMOGRAPHICS



## RESIDENCE AT VILLAGE

Avg. Time lived in village (Months)




## PODS

### POD TYPE

83.3% (5)

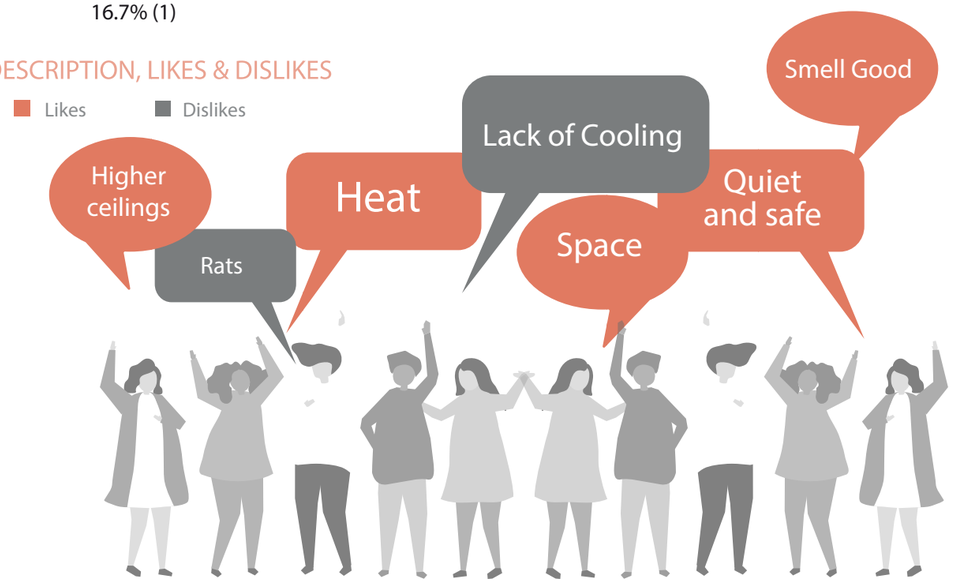
0% (0)

0% (0)

0% (0)

16.7% (1)

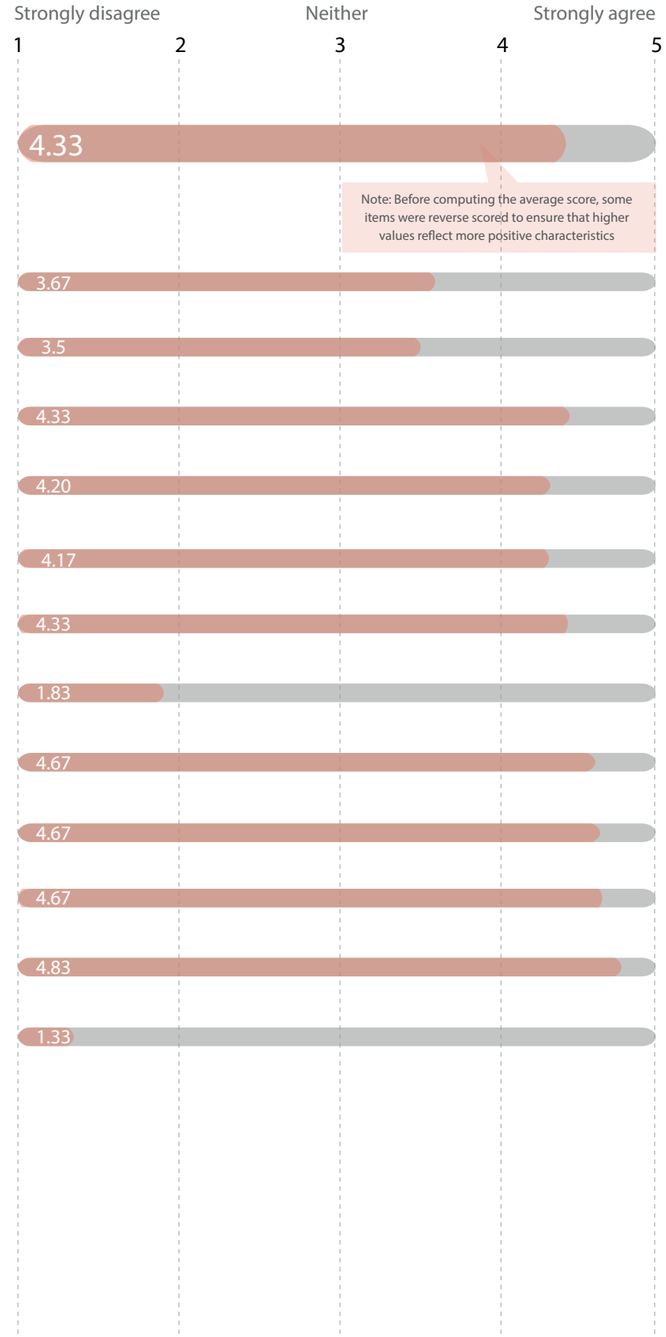
### POD DESCRIPTION, LIKES & DISLIKES






## POD QUALITY

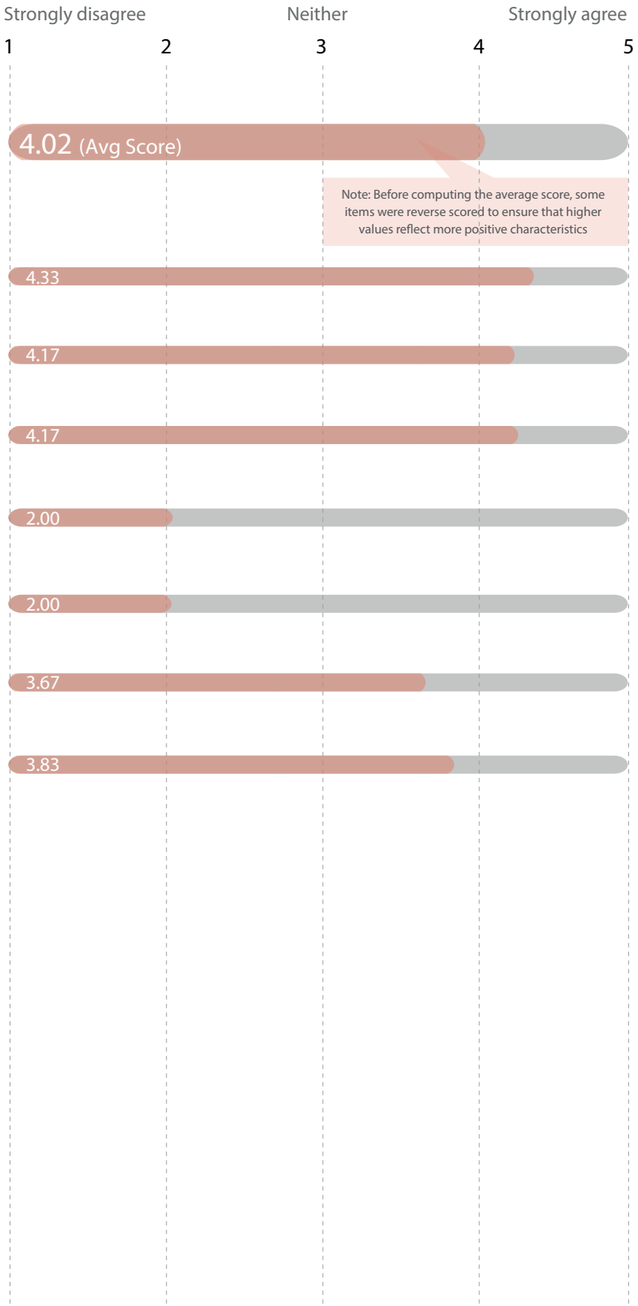
Pod Quality



# VILLAGE

## VILLAGE SOCIAL CLIMATE

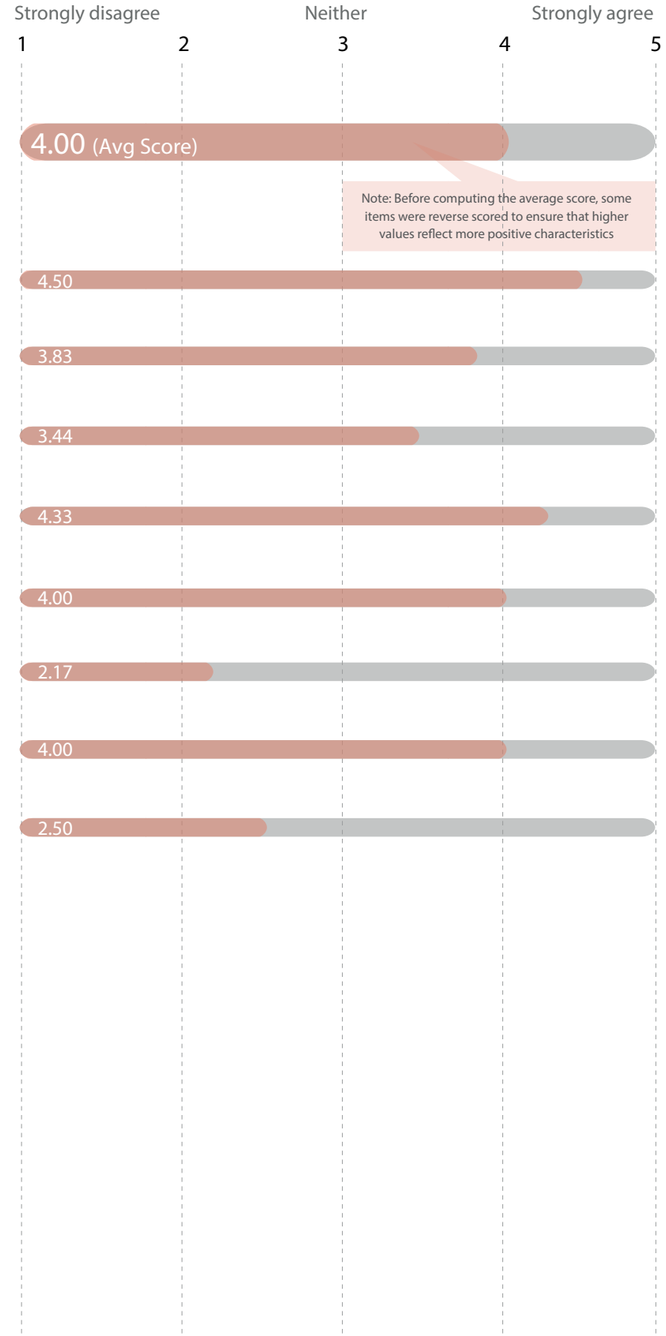
Village Social Climate





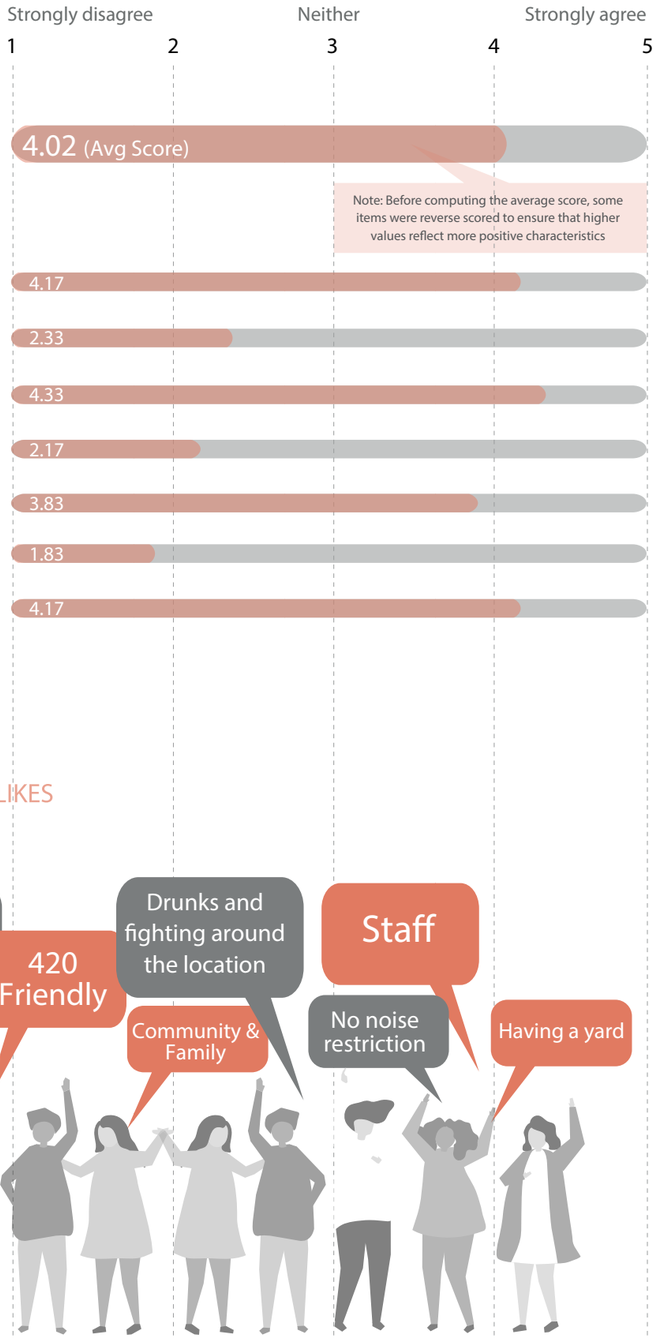

# VILLAGE SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Village Sense of Community



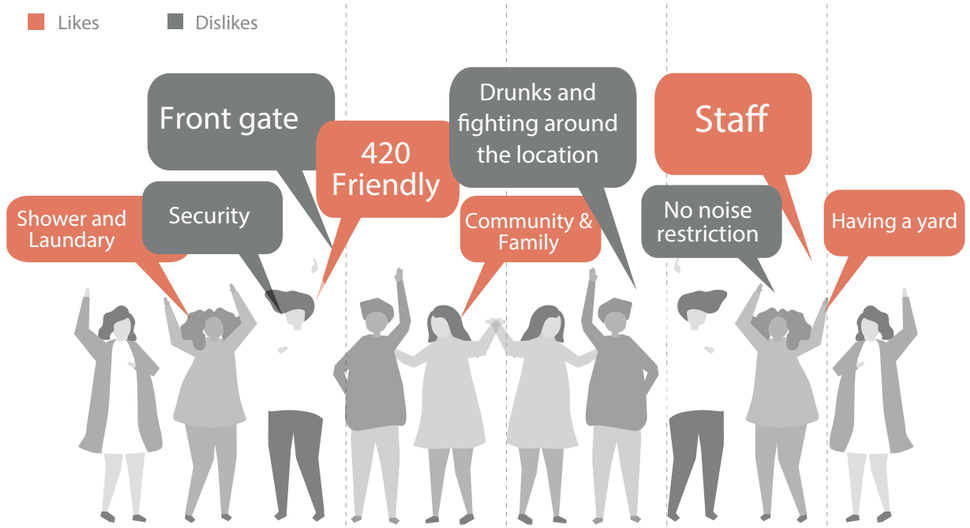
## VILLAGE RESIDENT SCALE

Village Neighbor Scale




1. I can count on a neighbor/ villager for help when I need it.
2. There is no one in my village with whom I'm close.
3. If I needed it, another villager would help me get to an appoint-
4. Other villagers and I argue a lot
5. If I needed someone to talk to about a problem, I could talk with another villager
6. Villagers complain about me or my pod
7. Overall, how satisfied are you with your relationship with other villagers

## VILLAGE DESCRIPTION, LIKES & DISLIKES

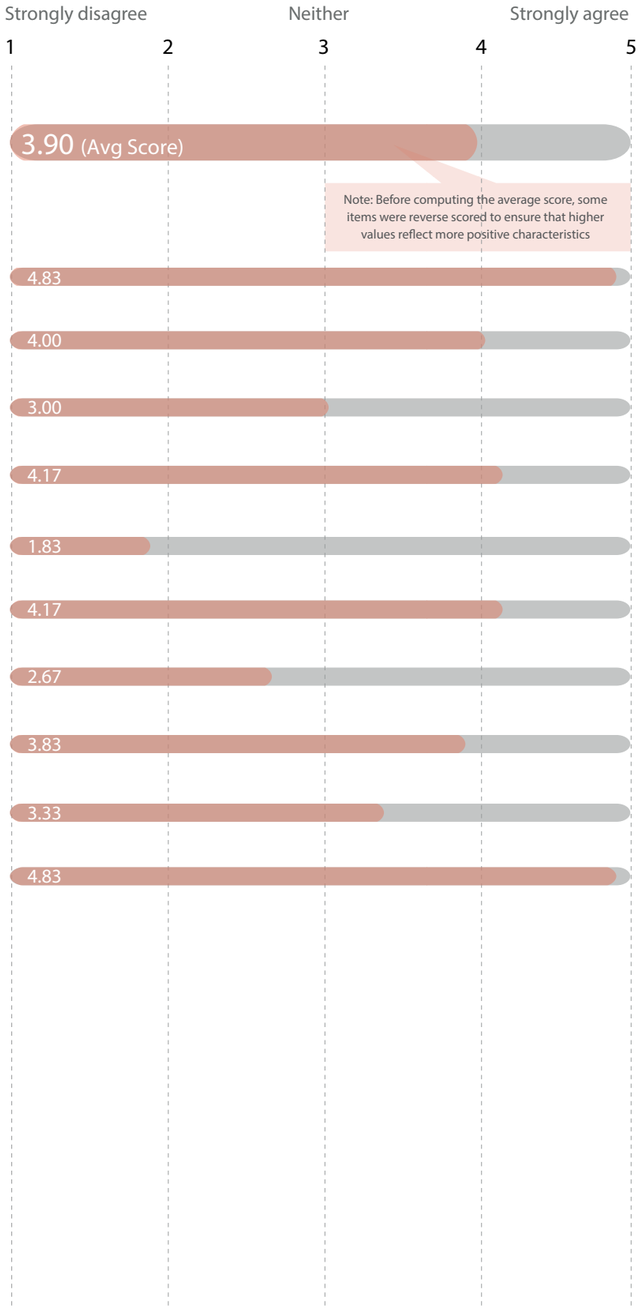





## NEIGHBORHOOD

## NEIGHBORHOOD QUALITY

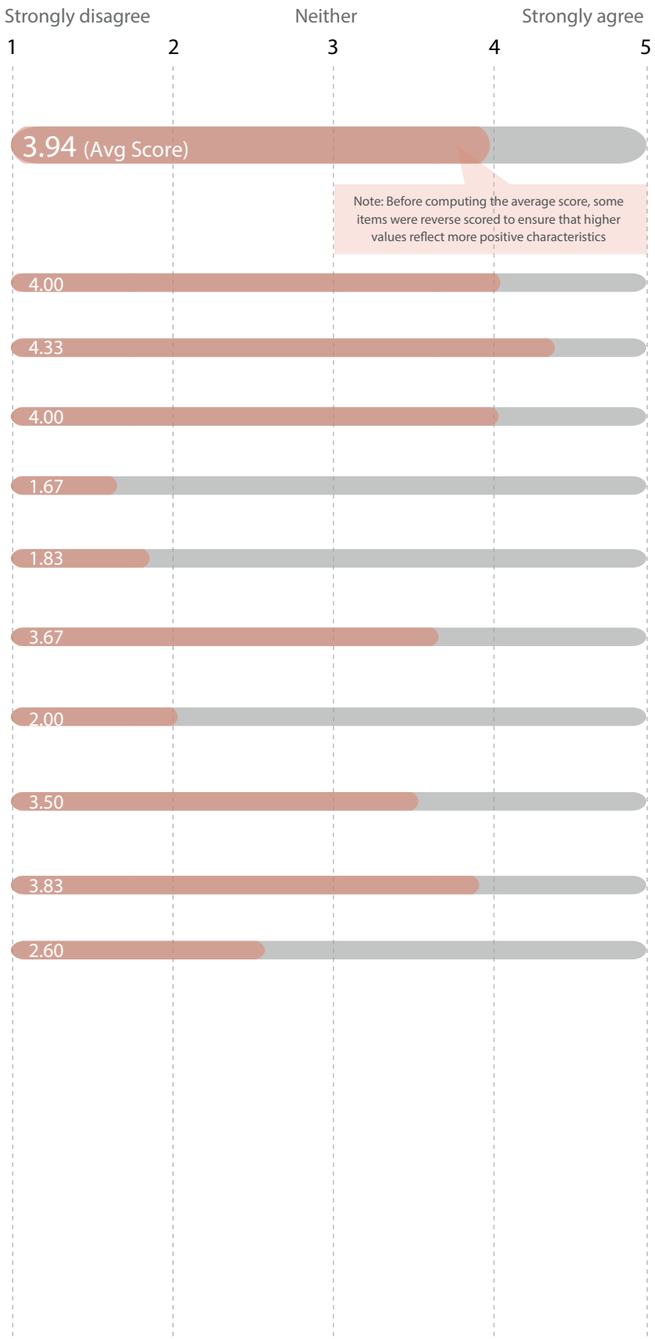
Neighborhood Quality




1. It is easy to get transportation in my neighborhood
2. The air quality in my part of the neighborhood is good
3. Crime is a problem in my neigh-borhood
4. I can get the things that I need from stores in my neighborhood (food, clothes, supplies)
5. I have a hard time getting health care services in my neighborhood
6. My neighborhood looks nice
7. There is too much noise in my neighborhood
8. I have good sidewalks in my neighborhood
9. There is a lot of traffic on the streets in my neighborhood
10. There are nice parks in my neighborhood

## NEIGHBORHOOD SOCIAL CLIMATE

Neighborhood Social Climate

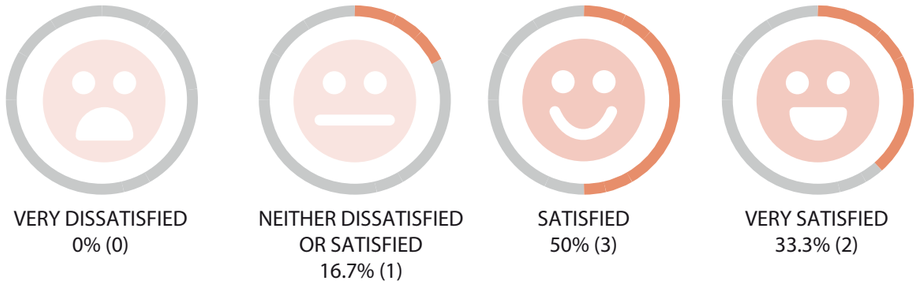





## RESIDENTIAL SATISFACTION

1. "How satisfied are you with your pod as a place to live?"

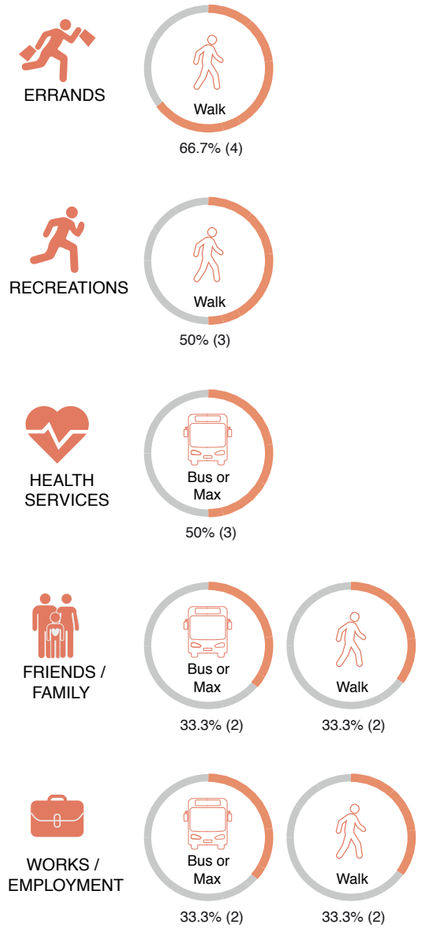
2. "How satisfied are you with your neighborhood as a place to live?"




3. "How long do you want to live in the Village? And why?"

## TRANSPORTATION

1. Most commonly used transportation methods in the past month.

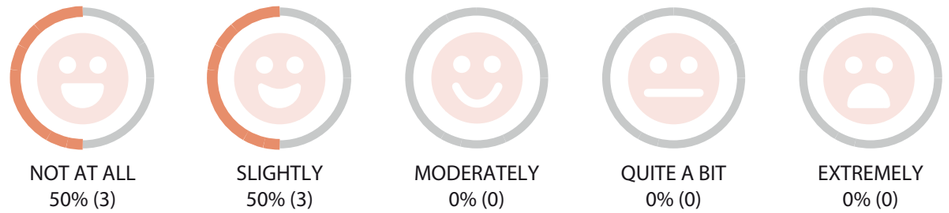




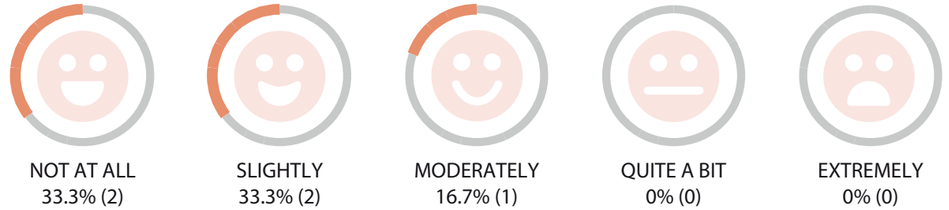

## LIFE SATISFACTION AND STRESS

1. How often do you feel lonely on a scale of 1 (never) to 4 (always)?
On average residents said:

2. How much did your physical health interfere with daily activities in the last month?
The average response from residents on a scale of 1 to 5 was:

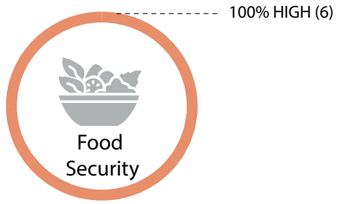



3. How much did your emotional health interfere with daily activities in the last month?
The average response from residents on a scale of 1 to 5 was:

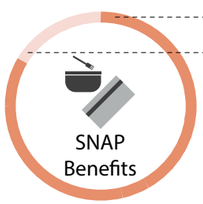



4. How do you feel about your life overall right now?
The average response from residents on a scale of 1 (terrible) to 7 (delighted) was:

## HEALTH AND BASIC NEEDS

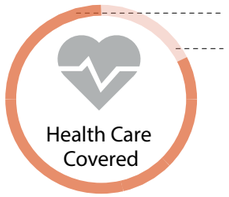



100% HIGH (6)




83.3% YES (5)

16.7% NO (1)




83.3% YES (5)

16.7% NO (1)

Cigna never dropped me from insurance after I got fired which has interfered with OPH access. Technology is a barrier. I'm computer illiterate.

Transportation is a barrier

Appointment making, dental care barriers— have had to prioritize other needs instead of taking care of things

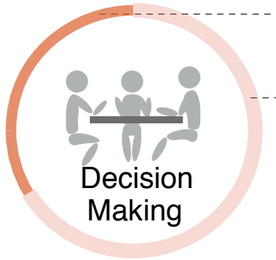
## Governance and Decision Making

1. When the village has group meetings, what are the most important elements to help facilitate a productive meeting?

Elements ranked from most important to least important

| (1= most important, 6= least important) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Adequate space to meet indoors | 4 (66.7%) | - | - | - | - | 2 (33.3%) |
| Adequate space to meet outdoors | - | 2 (33.3%) | 2 (33.3%) | 1 (16.7%) | 1 (16.7%) | - |
| Outside (non-villager) facilitators | 1 (16.7%) | - | - | - | 3 (50%) | 2 (33.3%) |
| Established rules for the meeting | - | 3 (50%) | 1 (16.7%) | 1 (16.7%) | 1 (16.7%) | - |
| Comfortable seating | - | - | 3 (50%) | 1 (16.7%) | - | 2 (33.3%) |
| Food/Drinks provided at meeting | 1 (16.7%) | 1 (16.7%) | - | 1 (16.7%) | 1 (16.7%) | 2 (33.3%) |

2. How much decision-making power should village residents have?




33.3% Only villagers should determine what happens at the village (2)

66.7% There should be shared decision-making between villagers and social service providers (4)

We have a fence that's surrounds all around, the perimeter of the village. And there's a gate code that you have to put in to get into the gate, and only villagers are allowed to do that. So other than that, guests need to check in through the office. And so, it's a space that is ours, and I like that. I like that not just anybody can come in here. In fact, with the transitioning because we have that defense around the perimeter, even though it's right in the heart of St. John, where I grew up, and not too far from where I camped, you feel safe as soon as you pass the gate. It's just your own private little, "Ah," away from the headache that was out there.

Because they're not wanting to change who I am or what I'm doing. For example, there are people that drink. As long as it doesn't interfere with the rules set in the village itself, they're not requiring them to go to treatment. So I think that that helps, because if they can comply with rules and expectations set for the village itself, and it doesn't interfere with that, then that's not a problem. That's not a reason to be denied housing, and I think that that's great.

Like what kind of games do we want in there. That would be a community decision. Another one, all the dog people met with one of the staff people about creating an off street area for them out here.

I have as much say as anyone… at shelters, I don't have that say at all.

# How-to Guide for the Creation of Villages

## Citation

Ferry, R.T., Townley, G., Zapata, M. (2022). *Village Research and How-To Guide*. Portland State University.

## Acknowledgements

This project was made possible by generous funding from Meyer Memorial Trust. Thank you to the many village managers, designers, builders, activists, and service-providers who gave their time to this project. Finally, we would like to offer our deepest gratitude to the villagers who lent their expertise and invaluable insight to this effort. We are so grateful for your time and have learned from you immeasurably. Thank you.

For questions, please contact: Todd Ferry (rtf@pdx.edu)

Portland State Homelessness Research & Action Collaborative

meyer MEMORIAL TRUST



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**Village Portraits** (by Jung Choothian)

# Introduction

This How-To Guide for the creation of alternative shelters called villages is the outcome of a multi-year study by Portland State University's Homelessness Research & Action Collaborative on the village model, funded by the Meyer Memorial Trust. It is one component of a larger document which contains profiles of villages, research results, and portraits of individuals involved in some aspect of villages. The six Portland-area villages included in this study were Dignity Village (2000), Hazelnut Grove (2015), Kenton Women's Village (2017/2019), Clackamas County Veterans Village (2018), Agape Village (2019), and the St. Johns Village (2021). The work presented here relies on the direct input from those with experience designing, supporting, managing, and/or living in or near the villages.

Collectively, our research included interviews and surveys with:

- 42 villagers
- 9 village support staff
- 7 village designers/architects
- 6 village creators/builders
- 16 neighbors of villages
- 2,065 Portlanders who responded to an anonymous survey about homelessness and villages, 436 of whom reported living near a village

While the village model can be found in various forms in cities across the country, this guide limits recommendations to information that was directly collected from this study. For example, a village may employ a range of individual sleeping unit types (RVs, conestoga huts, tents, tiny houses on wheels, etc.), but this guide focuses on "sleeping pods," as it is the primary unit used across all villages within the study.

Our goal is not that this guide will directly lead to an increase in the number of villages but, rather, will serve as a useful resource toward a better understanding of the village model and improved outcomes for future villages. The solution to homelessness is permanent housing and supportive services. As the village model continues to grow in prevalence, we hope that future village efforts will be considered within the context of their role toward achieving permanent and dignified housing for all.

# What Is a Village?



## What Is a Village?

Established in 2001, Portland's Dignity Village presented a new model for addressing homelessness and coined the term "village" to refer to this new typology. With a spectrum of other initiatives forming under the village title, the term's use to reference alternative shelter communities in the Portland region has both served as a crucial mechanism for discussing the tiny house/pod typology, and caused persistent confusion as to what this term encompasses. Is an intentional tent encampment a village? How about a cluster of RVs with shared amenities?

In its origin as a protest movement, Dignity Village operated for quite some time under the name Camp Dignity, which itself grew out of the Out of the Doorways campaign. While the switch to the term "village" remains uncertain, it is likely that the language was influenced by Mark Lakeman as he began supporting the effort. Lakeman and the newly formed City Repair Project were advocating for the "re-villaging" of neighborhoods with an emphasis on community, localization, integrating living and working, and environmental sustainability. The term was effective in helping to change perceptions about the community from negative associations with encampments and helped bolster the aspirations of the efforts' leaders by encompassing the goals to accomplish with this community what the city of Portland was failing to live up to for housed Portlanders, such as creating eco-friendly neighborhoods with high rates of community participation, and low crime rates.

Once established, the term "village" continued to be employed for similar reasons, as well as a shorthand way of describing the village's intention now that Dignity Village had created a prototype that Portlanders could recognize. The term village operates within a spectrum (formal/informal, managed/self-governed, sanctioned/unsanctioned, etc.) and remains flexible to serve people experiencing homelessness, but key features identified as essential components by those most closely involved include:

- Non-congregate, safe and private shelter/quarters off the street that provides for the use of shared common facilities.
- Sense of community that includes shared agreements on communal behavior and commitments to the whole.
- The ability for the villagers to have some agency over their social and physical environment (with self-governance seen as essential by some in the movement to meet the definition of village).

*When considering a village or other type of alternative shelter model, the first step is to work with people with lived experience and preferably those with experience at villages to discuss ideas before moving any farther. Ideally, the team is invited by houseless community members to help implement their vision rather than housed people inviting houseless community members to help them.*

*"To me, a village is an essential human habitat, and it's the ultimate expression of participatory culture. It's really what we mean by democracy. And what we know for sure about the best villages in the world is that they have the lowest crime rates, which is obviously an expression of the highest rates of participation that you will find. It is also the integration of the government. They are the government, they are the police, they are the fire department. They make all their decisions. And then it's the best aspects of place-based culture that we aspire to."*

*–Mark Lakeman is an architect and activist who was involved in the creation of Dignity Village, Clackamas County Veterans Village, and others.*

These elements are foundational to the creation of a village, though amenities and other physical components supporting these values and addressing essential human needs are understood to be critical components of a village. These include shared facilities such as bathrooms/portable toilets, a kitchen/food preparation area(s), access to water, security elements like fencing, and a space to comfortably gather as a community. In the Portland region, emerging villages now feature 15–30 sleeping pods, a shared kitchen, laundry facility, bathrooms and showers, community room, and gardens. Because villages may manifest on a spectrum of formal development and/or phased creation, the specific types of amenities and level of associated infrastructure depend deeply on what type of village is being created.

*"I think a village is any space where people can stay in dignity. Whether or not it's really fancy, a complete city setup situation, or just a simple platform with a tent on it. Any grouping like that that adheres to a strict self-imposed code of conduct, rules of enforcement kind of deal. And a community that generally cooperates together to achieve securing safety for themselves and whomever they may be able to help."*

*—Bob Brimmer, village builder, organizer, and resident*



*"The tiny houses are an easy visual indicator of a village, but I certainly think that it goes beyond that. I think there's a level of self-management and shared community cooperation that needs to happen because it is more of a grassroots and collective undertaking than a shelter with a typical overseeing organization. I think having an expectation that there is an actual contract that people enter into that they will participate in the running of the village is really important. Building all of the social systems to make sure that people are brought into the idea of the village. And on the flip side, the village, as an organization, works to make sure that all people are able to participate in a meaningful way with any accommodations that are necessary. I think there's a radical inclusivity that is inherent in the village model."*

*—Katie Mays, former program support specialist at Dignity Village through JOIN*

## Why a Village & Why Not a Village?

A village is often desired by those seeking community-based alternatives to congregate shelter models that require sleeping in shared spaces with little to no privacy. They have been described by many who have lived there as a place to heal, build community, and prepare for a transition to permanent housing from a position of greater empowerment. Villages emerged as a typology won through activism by people experiencing homelessness advocating for safer and more dignified spaces for houseless individuals in the city. The village model has since evolved to include a wide range of stakeholders and funding mechanisms. The creation of villages is able to welcome countless stakeholders that would otherwise be unable to contribute to the effort of addressing homelessness, and the aggregated nature of the components of villages allows for a significant portion of a village's capital costs to be supported through pro bono work and donations.* Also, because the elements of villages are designed to be mobile and have minimal foundation requirements, they have

*People of color are disproportionately represented in the houseless community and should be well served by the village model. Including people of color in positions of leadership on the village organizing team is a productive first step toward this goal.*

the opportunity to take advantage of underutilized land where other development may not be possible. This is critical because the foundational recognition that providing permanent housing is the ultimate solution to addressing homelessness should guide public investment decisions. Finally, villages can be phased over time and can grow slowly or quickly as needed.

While villages have the potential to be transformative, they are labor-intensive endeavors that require thoughtful planning to be successful. As villages now often receive public funding, the expectation for village infrastructure and development has increased significantly, running the risk of diverting resources from permanent housing solutions. Villages are often desired by those seeking more safe and humane alternatives to congregate shelter, without careful attention to community building and villager empowerment. A new village project risks perpetuating issues that make traditional shelter undesirable.

## What kind of team is needed to create a village?

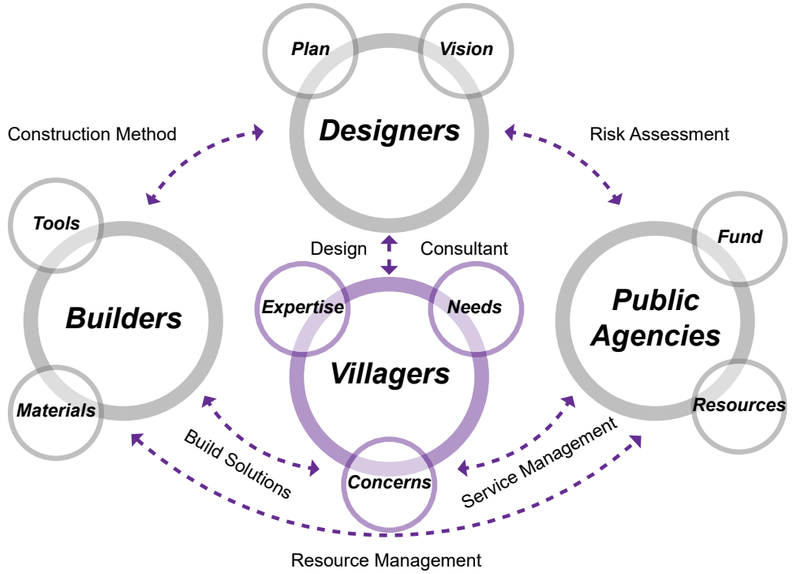
One of the most significant advantages of the village model is that it is able to empower people to directly address homelessness who might otherwise not be able to contribute to the issue.

What kind of team is needed to create a village is really dependent upon what type of village an organizing group would like to pursue. Once a group begins to organize toward a village, it is likely that they are already forming around shared resources, experiences, or advocacy, but crucial questions that should be examined early on in the process include:

- Who will the village be serving?
- Will it be a self-governed, managed, or hybrid-operated village?
- Is the village intended to be temporary, semi-permanent, or permanent?
- Is the aim to create transitional housing/shelter or long-term housing/shelter?
- How will the creation of the village be funded?

Based on Portland's case study villages, the following team members will be critical to ensuring success in the development of a village. Note that any of these roles may and should include people with lived experience with homelessness.

**Advocates/Activists**. In Poxrtland, a group of advocates for the village model called the Village Coalition was crucial in promoting, advising on, and supporting the creation of Portland's villages in recent years. This group was particularly effective because it brought together a large range of community stakeholders, but centered those members who were experiencing homelessness, who made up at least half of the organization's leadership and membership in its early years.




**Designers/Architects**. Whether pods and shared structures at villages are built by villagers themselves or fully fabricated in a workshop, a thoughtful architect/designer can help to ensure that the structures are safe, durable, and designed to take advantage of passive or active systems, while keeping the experience of the occupant(s) central to the design considerations. Partners in architecture and related professions working on villages in Portland have also been able to leverage their relationships with builders, permitting officials, and building systems engineers toward more efficient processes and outcomes (often provided pro bono). Designers should endeavor to include individuals with lived experience at villages on the design team and support them to become co-designers of the village. Their expertise is invaluable to the development of this unique building typology and they should be compensated for their insight.

**Builders**. Similar to architects, builders are able to bring a lot more than construction skills to a village project (though this is obviously vital). In Portland, the construction community has contributed significant building materials, construction equipment, and services to villages. In some cases, in-kind contributions from builders have covered about half of a village's overall costs.

**Nonprofit Partner(s)**. Most villages in Portland have relationships with nonprofit part-

EX

*At Kenton Women's Village 2.0, 21 different contractor teams participated in the "Pod Build Challenge" to customize, build, and donate a pod to the village based on three possible designs provided by partnering architecture teams. This eliminated the cost of the pods from that effort all together and built a larger coalition of stakeholders supporting the village.*

ners ranging from offering consultations to full village management. Public funding for villages is often contingent upon having nonprofit oversight. Regardless of the exact role they will play, nonprofit partners should be brought in as soon as possible to understand the goals of the organizing group and to make clear the expectations on their end. When village organizers hope for (and promise) one type of village social structure but the nonprofit village managers feel limited to only be able to deliver a different model, it can lead to frustration and disappointment from stakeholders.

**Municipal Partners**. Inviting partners from local government into the development process risks bringing the bureaucracy (and bureaucratic thinking) that they represent into the process as well. However, the creation of each of Portland's villages was dependent upon an advocate within the government. These individuals knew how to creatively maneuver around the system, utilize the system, and/or challenge the system toward the goal shared by both the government and community of addressing homelessness. Inviting these strategic partners into meetings early on can help to build relationships and bring in knowledge of challenges, opportunities, and political pathways to success.

**Neighbors**. Once determined where the site of the future village will be, an effort should be made to invite neighbors into the organizing process. There will almost certainly be some opposition to the creation of a village in any neighborhood. While neighbors shouldn't have the right to choose to exclude people experiencing homelessness

*Kenton Women's Village*

*Agape Village*

*Hazelnut Grove Village*



### *Example: AfroVillage*

*Include on-the-ground houseless advocates in the process of identifying a site. In a recent collaboration on the AfroVillage Movement (an effort to create safe and meaningful spaces for African Americans experiencing homelessness), members of the Homelessness Research and Action Collaborative (HRAC) were able to see a remarkable example of the value in this. Founder of the AfroVillage, Laquida Landford, had a site in mind for establishing one of the AfroVillage's initiatives. In order to expand potential site options for the effort, partners at the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability worked with Geographic Information Systems (GIS) specialists on staff to generate a list of 1,600 possible sites. Once desired factors were plugged in by the group to narrow down and sort sites, the only remaining site that matched every criteria in the entire city was the site that Laquida had identified at the beginning of the process. While the tool for site selection generated by the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability (BPS) continues to be extremely valuable in the consideration and discussion of options that support this project, those with deep knowledge of place, homelessness, and the community should never be underestimated.*

from their community (just as you wouldn't allow them to prevent a development proposed for a protected class), their intimate knowledge of the area can help make a project significantly more successful. A thoughtful process can also turn those opposed to the village into some of its strongest advocates.

**Placemaking Organizations**. Organizations focused on strengthening the connections between people and places bring a sense of community, dignity, and life to villages. This is particularly important when recognizing that most villagers are sited on unideal locations ranging from parking lots to industrial sites. Placemaking organizations can convene a process that converts a village site from one that looks like a utilitarian shelter to one that supports life and well-being.

## Where Should We Site the Village?

Villages that utilize the pod model are uniquely designed to have a very light footprint, requiring very minimal foundations (if any). They also consist of many small components designed for mobility. This allows them to take advantage of underutilized land for short- and long-term opportunities. In many cases, villages in Portland are sited on land that is not allowable for other types of development. For example, Hazelnut Grove is located on a strip of land along a major road controlled by the Oregon Department of Transportation. Kenton Women's Village 2.0 is on a parcel of land owned by Portland's

Bureau of Environmental Services (BES) that can't host buildings with foundations. Agape Village is on an elevated site near the base of a butte adjacent to a major reservoir. In each case, the site is able to host a village where housing/shelter would otherwise not likely be able to exist. But even land that is developable but underutilized is worth exploring in some cases. Before it was moved to the BES site, Kenton Women's Village was temporarily located (18 months) on land slated for future housing while funding for the development was being procured.

Villages are generally not restricted to one type of site over another based on land use. However, Portland's Bureau of Development Services' recommendation has been to use a campground designation (Transitional Campgrounds) for the village, listed as either Short-Term Housing in Detached Sleeping Rooms or Group Living in Detached Sleeping Rooms. More recently, zoning code changes have seen the inclusion of "Outdoor Shelter" as an option alongside Emergency Shelter and Mass Shelter, expanding options for villages in Portland. Village architecture and site layout share a lot in common with campgrounds that can be easily understood, and the state of Oregon has expanded the number of campground designations available in a given area to specifically accommodate the expansion of villages and similar alternative shelter models.

Land held by churches is increasingly explored by village advocates in the site identification process. Many religious institutions have significant landholdings, and providing shelter and community for people experiencing homelessness often aligns with the organization's values. If they are already providing social services like a food pantry, a collaboration with a church on a village project offers an opportunity to build on existing relationships with the houseless community already in the area and create a village with them. Agape Village, located next to (and supported by) Portland Central Church of the Nazarene invited people experiencing homelessness around the site of the future village to be part of the advisory council on the creation of the village.

At least one area of the site should be able to access utilities for a common facility with electricity, water, and sewer connection. There are certainly villages that have operated off the grid using generators, water delivery, and porta potties, but the ongoing costs and coordination can create challenges to long-term success of the village (particularly when it comes to water).

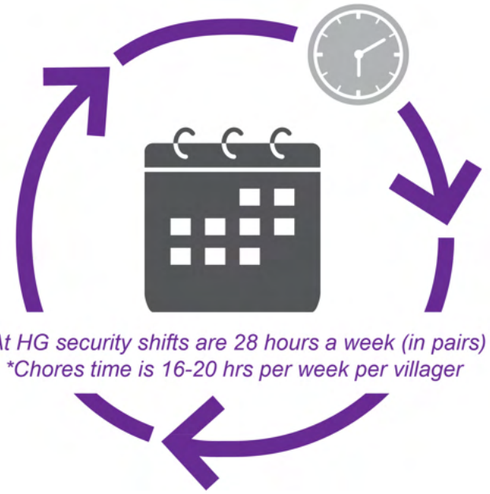
Other considerations that were most important to villagers in our study include:

- Proximity to services and transit. (Villages that are more isolated reported candidates choosing not to join the village for fear of not being able to access the services and community they most value).
- Quiet surroundings are highly valued in a site. This is not surprising when many cite the advantages of living in a village as a place to heal and plan their next steps. In spite of this, most villages are in areas adjacent to noisy traffic or industrial processes. This prompts people to spend more time in their pods, which can impact the quality of the village community.
- Easy access to utilities (which should provide more services like multiple bathrooms for villagers)
- The site has to be private enough to protect residents but accessible enough for the villagers to reach outside help and services
- Accessibility for people with disabilities

*Village advocates largely understand that the solution to homelessness is affordable, permanent housing for all. With this recognition, land that would be desirable for affordable housing should be reserved for these purposes.*



## *Number of Villagers in Relation to Governance and Security Structure at Hazelnut Grove*




Based on governance, shift for chores, and security shifts (that often happen in pairs), 20 to 30 is the ideal number of villagers per village.

- Enough space for villagers to have privacy and for placing shared service facilities
- In case of micro-entreprise and emergency, part of the site may need to be accessible for public

## How Many Villagers?

A site's constraints often determine the maximum number of residents that a village can host, but there are other factors that need to be considered. When speaking with villagers, village support staff, and designers, 20 to 30 (with 20 to 25 preferred) seemed to consistently be the recommended number of villagers, but there were different and overlapping reasons for this range.

Architects involved in village design note a relationship between the ability to have an

efficient common facility with bathrooms, a communal kitchen, laundry, group meetings, etc., for 20 to 25 people. Once the group becomes significantly larger, the square footage and infrastructure requirements impact the ability to create an economical building with a modest footprint. Given that most village common facilities are prefabricated/ modular designed with the ability to move in the future if needed, these impacts are particularly substantial on this type of project.

Village managers and support staff regularly cite the 20 to 25 person range as a manageable number for case workers and a close-knit community. With the goal of helping villagers transition to permanent housing, staff suggests that this is the maximum number to be able to build meaningful relationships and provide ongoing support to each villager.

Individuals at self-governed villages offer a different perspective on why they recommend villages of this size. These villages rely on self-organizing around work shifts for smooth village operations. This requires a community small enough to allow everyone to have a voice and participate in the functioning of the village, but large enough so that work can be distributed among the villagers. At Hazelnut Grove, for example, there is an expectation that every villager works about 16 to 20 hours per week on village operations. From overnight security shifts in pairs, to cooking/kitchen duty, a village with 20 to 30 people allows for the community to maintain itself without becoming overly burdensome on the individuals.
If village organizers decide that they would like to create a village with significantly more people but still foster a strong community, then they should consider growing the village in phases. A first phase of 20 to 25 people can be used to establish a strong village culture and governance structure that may be able to grow with incremental expansion to a village the size of Dignity Village that hosts 60 residents. A village of this size would likely need additional facilities with expansion, which could be incorporated into the project's long-term planning.



*"I think, in the Portland area, I've come to think of the village as a spectrum of things. I think what makes something a village is a place where people experiencing homelessness have private safety off the streets. Also, they have amongst one another a community that takes upon itself community functions, or as a community takes on shared living situation functions, whether those be chores, or advocacy, or security, that people do things on behalf of the shared living community, as a regular course of their living there, and that that's what defines it as a community. I think those are the minimum defining features of the village. And then, that could include tents on platforms, like Hazelnut Grove started, or it could include fully plumbed, heated, electrified, small homes."*

*–Vahid Brown, village activist, Hazelnut Grove co-founder and organizer*

# Pod Design



Villages across the country utilize a range of micro-dwelling units from "conestoga huts" and bike trailer shelter, to RVs and tiny houses on wheels. Some village advocates argue that a village can happen anywhere, including in motels or apartment buildings as long as there are non-congregate units and the principles of community and agency are incorporated into the model. However, the villages within HRAC's study all utilize sleeping pods, so they will be the focus within this guide. Pods have also emerged as the dominant unit typology at villages for good reason. Perhaps most significantly, pods have become the architectural vernacular for villages because they are a product of the activist origins of villages themselves at Dignity Village and elsewhere. While many pods are now designed by architects and built by professional builders, they are still able to be built with found material and constructed by individuals without too much technical skill required, if necessary. This allows the spectrum of villages to continue to be created, from fully self-governed to municipally funded and managed.

Overwhelmingly, the most appreciated aspect of pods noted by villagers is the "lockable door and feeling of security and privacy" they provide. The experience of unsheltered homelessness (which is defined as living in a place not meant for human habitation such as cars, parks, sidewalks, abandoned buildings, and on the street, according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development) where personal safety is a constant concern takes a significant physical, mental,

## Micro-Dwelling Typologies

**TENT**

A portable shelter made of fabric, supported by one or more poles and stretched tight by cords or loops attached to pegs driven into the ground.

**RV**

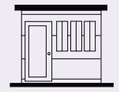
A recreation vehicle equipped with typical amenities which usually include a kitchen, a bathroom, and one or more sleeping areas

**BIKE POD**

A specially equipped bicycle with a trailer as a portable dwelling.

**TINY HOME**

Generally a small house, typically sized under 600 square feet. Most tiny homes are built on trailers instead of standard foundations.



**ADU**

An accessory dwelling unit (ADU) is created on a lot with a primary house. The second unit is created auxiliary to, and is smaller than, the main dwelling.

**SLEEPING POD**

An extremely minimal form of dwelling. They are not typically plumbed or wired for electricity, and with their proposed footprint can lifted by forklift and moved by truck.

**DETACHED BDRM**

A small freestanding addition to an existing house. It cannot be rented out as a standalone apartment nor can it be built to function as one.

**CONESTOGA HUT**

A hard-shelled, minimally insulated tent-like structure that is a quick shelter option for individuals and couples.

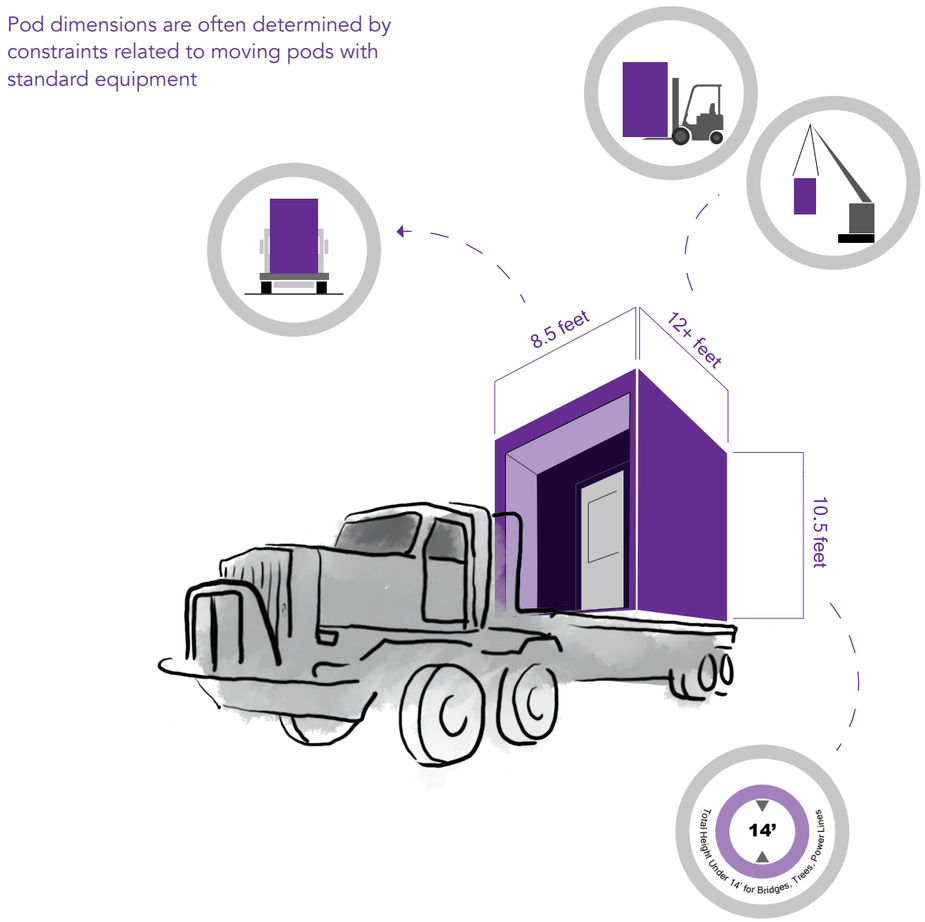
**TRAILER**

A typically portable dwelling unit that is sometimes used as permanent housing. FEMA often uses these "mobile homes" in post-disaster relief efforts.

**STUDIO APT**

A small apartment which combines, many times but not always, the living room, bedroom, and kitchen into a single room.

*Image credit: PSU Arch480 (Ferry), Matt Carr & Makaveli Gresham*




and emotional toll. Having a secure space to rest and heal is critical to enabling people to begin taking steps toward permanent housing. Following a sense of safety, villagers cited "a place to keep belongings," "a place to rest," and the "pride" that accompanies having a place of one's own as what they most appreciated about having a pod.

Dislikes of pods noted by villagers included thermal discomfort, problems with electricity when relying on solar panels alone, and issues around storage and space. These complaints varied between villages largely based on the utilities and amenities available, but pod design requires special consideration to ensure that they are healthy and meaningful places to inhabit.

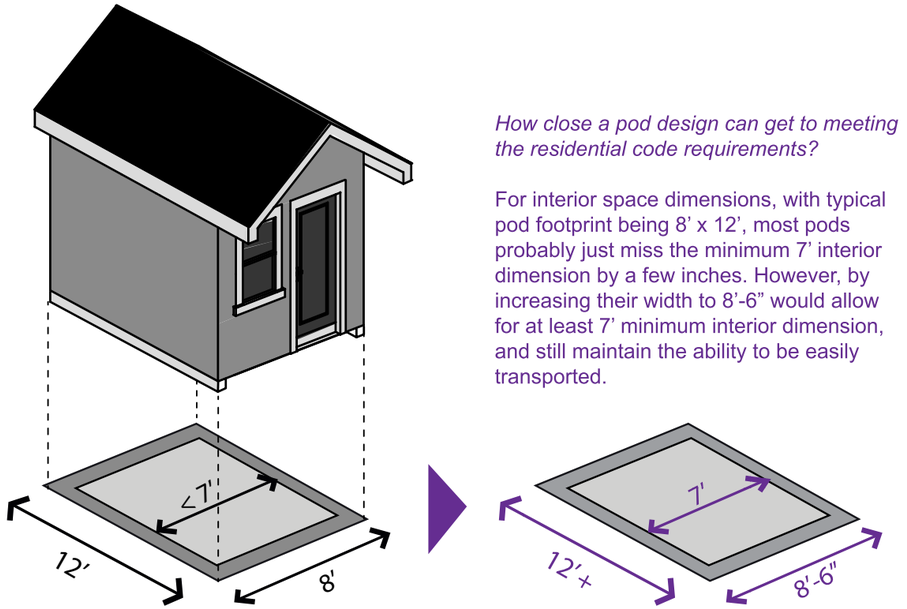
The term "pod" evolved as a way to distinguish village units from other micro-dwelling typologies that have certain characteristics and associated building requirements that aren't applicable to pods. At their most basic, pods are generally insulated wood-framed structures under 200 square feet built on pressure-treated skids (4x4 or 4x6), with limited to no utilities. Recently, pods in Portland have been equipped with electrical outlets, lighting, and radiant ceiling panels for heat, but all other utilities and amenities are shared in centralized common areas.

Pod dimensions vary, but the average pod size across Portland's villages is about 8 feet W x 12 feet L x 10 feet H. This size corresponds to common material dimensions (for example, sheet goods like plywood are 4x8 feet) and tend to be limited to what can be easily moved using a standard forklift and a compact flatbed truck. A flatbed truck can move an object that is 8 feet 6 inches wide down the road without needing special permits that can become quite costly and logistically difficult. With a height limitation of 13 feet 6 inches for transportation, a maximum pod height of 10 feet 6 inches can still be moved on a flatbed truck with a common bed/deck height of 3 feet. The length has the most flexibility to grow longer if desired (and larger pods would definitely be preferred by most villagers). However, 12 feet seems to approach the maximum dimension that is still manageable using standard forklifts. Those responsible for moving the pods should be consulted during design as the length and corresponding weight of the pod increases. Depending on the location, truck cranes may be used as well, but weight is still a factor. If transporting is not an issue, pods can be built up to 200 square feet in most places, and now up to 240 sq. ft. in Portland.

Maximizing the overall dimensions of a pod

### *Example: SERA Pod Designs*

*SERA Architecture has explored several interesting approaches to pod design that challenge conventional approaches to pod size and mobility. As part of the POD Initiative, the firm developed an 8'x12' design that had a hinged porch and porch roof, allowing it to be easily transported but maximize interior and exterior space for its future residents. In a collaboration with the Portland Art Museum for the [Plywood] POD Initiative, the firm prototyped a pod design built with a CNC router in 4'x8' modules assembled on-site, allowing the small modules to be moved more easily. In a collaboration with the Blanchett House, SERA also designed the largest pods in the region at approximately 200 square feet. (If mobility is not an issue, a pod can be built up to 200 square feet before triggering building codes that would increase the expense and site work considerably).*




*How close a pod design can get to meeting the residential code requirements?*

For interior space dimensions, with typical pod footprint being 8' x 12', most pods probably just miss the minimum 7' interior dimension by a few inches. However, by increasing their width to 8'-6" would allow for at least 7' minimum interior dimension, and still maintain the ability to be easily transported.

to be 8 feet 6 inches W x 12' feet L x 10 feet 6 inches H while still allowing for mobility has a few advantages in addition to more space for its resident. By utilizing a width of 8 feet 6 inches, it is easier to achieve an interior width of 7 feet or more, which is difficult to do at 8 feet wide given the thickness of the overall wall assembly. Aiming for a 7 foot interior width is significant because it opens up possibilities for how the pods might be permitted, if necessary or used in another application in the future. Within Section R304 of the residential building code, two items are particularly worth paying attention to during the design of a pod:

- R304.1 Minimum area. Habitable rooms shall have a floor area of not less than 70 square feet.
- R304.2 Minimum dimensions. Habitable rooms shall be not less than 7 feet in any horizontal dimension.

The closer that pods can approach to fully meeting building code, the more options will be available to the design and development team when it comes to getting the project permitted. For Clackamas County Veterans Village, the county decided to approach the village as a typical development with the goal meeting permitting and code requirements through approved alternative means and methods. The pods, for example, were each individually inspected and permitted, which was a scheduling, cost, and design challenge. One particular obstacle was regarding foundation requirements for the 8 feet x 12 inch pods. After reviewing

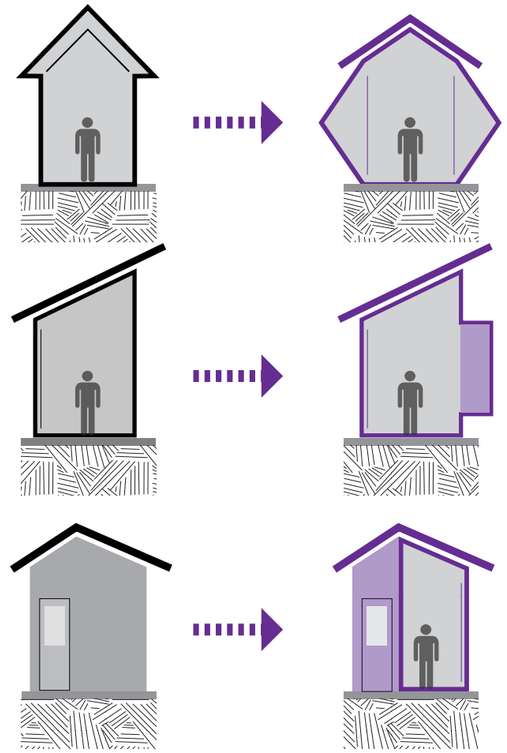


options such as removable helical anchors, which were very expensive to buy and install, or sauna tube foundations, the project's structural engineer found the solution in the American Wood Council's design guidelines. It was determined that a trench of compacted gravel underneath the pods' wood skids would create sufficient friction to meet both wind and seismic forces. It was significantly cheaper than alternatives and left a lighter touch on the site. Ideally, the trench (and skids) would be on all four sides of the pods for increased friction, but the two skids in the long direction was determined sufficient in this case, which is important to allow forklifts to access the underside of the pods. This solution also helped with concerns of potential radon under the units because the gravel also supports airflow through the gravel trench which spans outside and underneath the pod.

There have been dozens of pod types used in villages around the Portland region. While boxy pod designs can maximize interior square footage and volume, these pods are more often disliked by villagers. One important finding that emerged in our study is that boxy forms often bring up institutional triggers for a population more likely to have experienced incarceration or other circumstances where space was utilitarian and confining. Additionally, a straightforward rectangular pod is more likely to draw comparisons to a shed by those who would live in it. There are reports from village support staff of village candidates declining admission to a village if their pod option felt too institutional and, at villages with a variety of pods, villagers clamor to move into the more formally distinct pods when there is a vacancy. Whenever possible, it is recommended that pod designers aim to "break the box" to create forms that feel welcoming and distinct.

A group organizing a village will need to determine whether the pods should be standardized or unique. In the study, whether each pod in a village was the same type of pod or whether each pod was different didn't seem to have much of an impact on villager satisfaction with their own pod. However, the ability to personalize and rearrange the interior of their pods was significant. While

Breaking the Box



Standardization or diversity between pod types is less significant on villager satisfaction than the ability to adapt, rearrange, and/or customize the interior of the pod to meet their needs.

built-in storage and thoughtful arrangement of the overall volume is extremely important, designers should consider opportunities for villagers to rearrange the space to meet their needs. For example, every pod at St. Johns Village is the same style but, through villager creativity, there are several layouts which help to divide the space to best suit the individual's needs.

Considerations for accessibility within the pod should be accommodated for. Mobility issues were commonly reported by villagers and, while things like built-in storage in the pods was greatly appreciated, under-the-bed storage was commonly cited as a frustration when it was designed without supporting elements like drawers. In addition to providing equal access to villagers with a spectrum of mobility needs, centering accessibility as a design value will also likely serve more villagers in general, as the

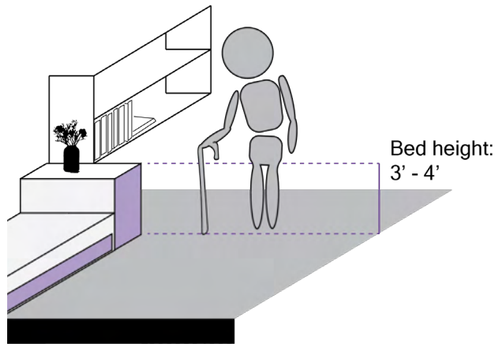


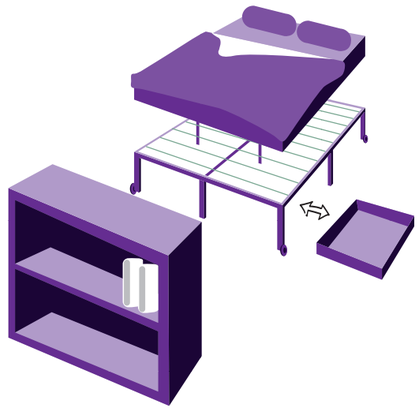
EX

## *Example: Custom Pods with Standardized Elements*

*When the organizing team creating Kenton Women's Village 2.0 was considering pods for the new village, they decided to use a hybrid approach between standardized pods and custom pods. The team chose three pod designs to make up the 20 pods in the village, but the architects specified the same windows, doors, and hardware in each of the pods (just in a different configuration in each pod type) to allow for easier maintenance by the village staff. And while there were only three types of pods, volunteers from the construction community offering to build and donate one of the pods were free to use whatever materials they wanted. This allowed for the construction teams to take advantage of materials they may have had left over from other jobs and resulted in a village of unique pods with shared forms.*

number of older adults experiencing homelessness is greatly increasing. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) design guidelines can be very instructive, and pod designers should endeavor to include an unobstructed 5 foot turning radius within the pod, an entry door with a minimum clear width of 32 feet (requiring the door to be larger, likely 34 inches to 36 inches), and a bed height at 20 inches to 23 inches to the top of the mattress. Accessible entry into the pod and appropriate ground cover are some of the most lacking features at current villages, and they will be discussed in a later section covering site design.



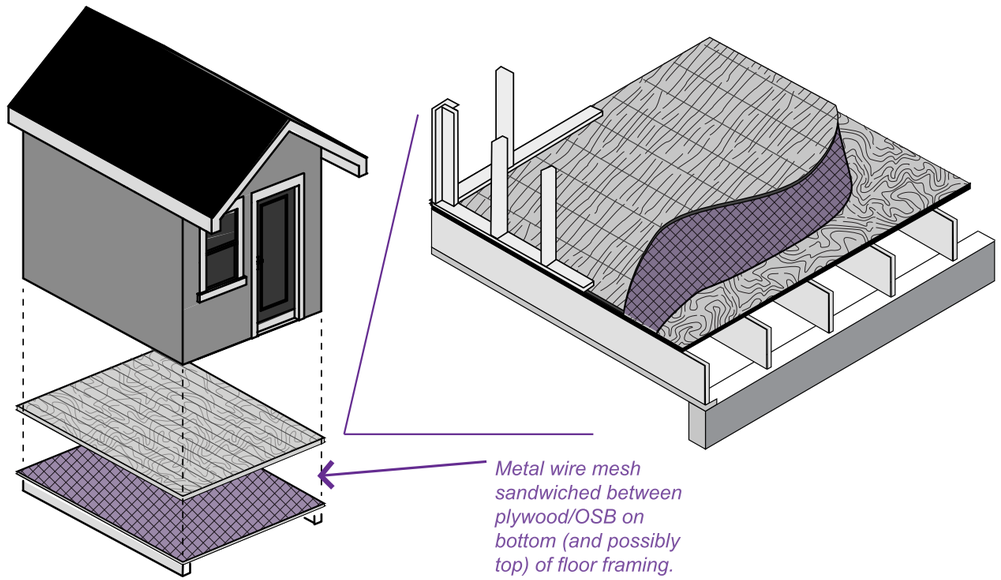
Designing with mobility issues and accessibility in mind from bed and shelf height, to under bed storage.

Lofts are a debated issue among pod designers with implications to the pod's accessibility and utility. Lofts are not currently viewed favorably by organizations involved in permitting villages, such as Portland's Bureau of Development Services, though they may be done under certain circumstances. Villagers with pods supporting lofts appreciated them for a range of reasons from providing a favored space for a pet cat to a warmer sleeping spot in the winter to more usable square footage. However, in several villages, a majority of villagers reported mobility issues and lofts would not be usable as a bed space, or even short-term storage, for these individuals. The mobility concerns with pods being moved on a flatbed truck limit the height to dimensions that would make it difficult to create a successful loft space. If lofts are desired by a team organizing a village, consider treating them as a piece of furniture that can be removed if needed, rather than a built-in element.

The Condo Pod designed for Agape Village by Center for Public Interest Design student Melissa-Mulder Wright and developed by nonprofit Cascadian Clusters utilizes a loft design. An important innovation in this design is space for storage accessed from outside of the pod (a mini garage) situated underneath the loft.

In addition to pod recommendations concerning dimensions, form, and accessibility, the following guidelines should be incorporated into the design goals:

- Pods should have a minimum of two operable windows for cross ventilation, though more fixed or operable windows are certainly welcome. The door may contain one of the operable windows, and it is recommended that one of the operable window (not in the door) is large enough to serve as an egress window.
- For thermal comfort, pods should be well-insulated with a tight envelope to control indoor air quality and temperature. Batt insulation is the most likely insulation method used with stud construction, and the size of studs (width of the wall) determines potential R-value. Given the need to keep the units light and efficient, 2x4 framing is ideal for the pods, which limits the R-value to 13 or 15 using common insulation. For increased insulation (particularly important when a heat source is not provided), batt insulation may be combined with exterior rigid foam insulation which, in addition to adding R-value, can reduce air leaks and prevent thermal-bridging.
- Given a pod's small volume, the utmost attention should be paid to using healthy building materials and furnishings that limit off-gassing, including the use of low/no-VOC paint.
- Combination door locks are strongly recommended. Because of concerns about security, traditional locks would ideally be changed with each person transitioning out of a pod and that can expend a lot of time and money. Additionally, if a resident loses a key, it is much easier to get them access to the unit with a combination door lock.
- If the pod is being moved, it will likely have straps tightly cinched over the roof and around the walls. Materials and details need to be considered for their durability during transportation and not just during the structure's normal life cycle.
- A wire mesh / hardware cloth barrier should be included in the floor assembly sandwiched between the bottom of the floor joists and the plywood on the underside of the assembly to prevent rodent penetration.




While pod design should continue to evolve, the following pod exmples may provide a good starting point. They have received positive feedback from villagers and some have been tested at multiple villages.

*Recent city-run encampments in Portland (often described as villages depending upon one's definition) have employed plastic shelter/pod projects for their ease of assembly, ability to be throroughly cleaned, and claims of durability. While the six villages within this study feature stick frame pods/units, the fiberglass reinforced plastic shelters were discussed by some village stakeholders involved in the study. There was shared understanding of the need to explore scalable solutions like this to homelessness given the size of the problem. However, concerns around these units include a heavily institutional experience within the units, difficulty in adapting, repairing, or personalizing the units as appropriate for a specific village's circumstances, and reinforcing public perceptions around institutional sheltering because of deficits as opposed to projecting the image of a community of individuals striving toward something better.*

## *Example: Pop-Out Pod*

*The prototype for the Pop-Out Pod was designed and built in 2017 by Portland State University students in Todd Ferry's architecture design studio. These students conducted research and interviews to understand how existing pods were performing at Kenton Women's Village and in other villages to determine how to improve upon previous pod designs. The pod that they developed was rooted in the qualities of comfort, storage, performance, and beauty. Pop-outs help break the feeling of being in a box, a crucial factor in such a small space. The pop-outs also provide important storage lacking in most other pod designs. The design calls for an operable window in the door, a fixed vertical window on the tall wall to maximize light, and a large operable window within one of the pop-outs for ideal light and ventilation. The pod features a small covered porch, with recommendations for extending the porch with detached stairs that double as seating space. To promote a sense of separate space and to maximize room within the pod, much of the twin bed is tucked into a nook created next to the porch. This pod has been replicated over two dozen times with adaptations by various builders, creating a catalogue of approaches for finishes and layouts. The Pop-Out Pod is featured at Kenton Women's Village 2.0, Clackamas County Veterans Village, and at St. Johns Village.*

## *Example: SAFE Pod*

*The SAFE Pod grew out of the first POD Initiative charrette, or an intense period of collaborative design working toward a common solution, in the fall of 2016 in which architects from across Portland sat down to learn from villagers at Hazelnut Grove and others with lived experience with homelessness to explore new pod and village concepts. Designed by architects at SRG Partnership, the SAFE Pod utilizes a single-sized small gable truss for both the roof and walls designed to limit waste and maximize the material of just two 2x4s required for each truss. Because the walls push out at the peak of the truss, the pod feels much less confining, which is complemented by clerestory windows (windows installed at or near the roofline) along the long dimension of the pod. Built-in storage and desk elements are incorporated into the wall space without infringing on the room. The covered porch space also benefits from the truss walls, offering an enclosed and reclined bench seating on both sides of the porch. The SAFE Pod was viewed very favorably in the post-occupancy evaluation period of the first Kenton Women's Village and became the primary unit for Clackamas County Veterans Village, and was again utilized for several units at Kenton Women's Village 2.0.*

There may be a perceived efficiency with providing single pods for **couples** to accommodate more people at a village on a smaller site. However, even if villagers choose to share a pod most of the time, most villagers and village support staff that had experience with couples at villages recommended that each villager have their own pod. In the event that there is turbulence in the relationship (which happens to every couple at some point), then this decreases the likelihood that the conflict will impact the village culture and well-being of other villagers. If there is a significant desire to increase the number of villagers by having couples share pods, then it is recommended to at least reserve an unoccupied pod or two for use in the event that one member of the couple ever needs to utilize the space.

A village accommodating couples with individual pods could strategically place the couples' pods next to one another or design pods to be adjoining.

*"It's better for them to have their own pods, even in the house, the couples have their own space in there in a normal house setting that they can go away from each other and be able to calm down and not constantly be at each other's throats. Something I was actually thinking about yesterday was how that is for couples that are out on the streets, they constantly have to be around each other. So there's no way to defuse tension if you're getting on each other's nerves. So having a separate helps a lot in that regard."*

*—Villager on the need for couples to have separate pods*

*"I wouldn't still be in the village if I couldn't sleep with my wife. You know, if we couldn't sleep together, that's one of the easiest parts about the village is that you can sleep with your significant other. My dog sleeps with us too. They would have a separate place for all of us to go if we were at that traditional shelter downtown, you know what I mean? So you wouldn't get the camaraderie that we have here in the village and being able to be with your spouse."*

*—Villager on importance of accommodating couples at villages*

*"It's up to the couple. Me and my wife share a unit. There's another couple, well, two other couples here that share units, but then there's also several couples over the last few years that have separate structures. So, it depends on their space needs."*

*—Villager on choice for couples*

# Common Facilities



The common facilities at villages play an essential role in supporting community life and providing essential needs like a place to cook, shower, and use the bathroom. They are also a place to gather for group meetings (referred to as general assembly at self-governed villages) and to host space for meetings between villagers and service providers or peer-support specialists. They are usually the most expensive element of a village, and require the most coordination. Typical spaces that should be considered at common facilities include kitchen(s), dining area(s), laundry room, bathrooms, gathering area, and office/meeting space. These programs may be centralized in one structure or distributed between multiple smaller buildings. In addition to providing useful, dignified, and welcoming spaces/amenities, the design of the facilities needs to be approached with an understanding of how to support community building and decrease the potential for conflicts between those sharing the space.

## Kitchens

Cooking areas at villages span from a shared grill or gas stove to entire kitchens. Kitchen areas are central to community life at a village, and also are a common source of tension between villagers. Conflicts over food are particularly intense because of experiences with past and ongoing food insecurity among villagers. In fact, 45 percent of villagers interviewed were experiencing food insecurity at the time, with 33 percent reporting very low food security. Organizing groups creating a village should endeavor to address ongoing access to food for villagers.

Within kitchen facilities, room and outlets for multiple refrigerators is highly recommended. Because rodents can be an issue in villages and space in pods is limited, efforts should also be made to provide dedicated and secure dry food storage space for each villager within the kitchen area. While a complete kitchen with multiple sinks, stoves and ovens, and counter space is extremely valuable, microwaves and coffee makers are the most commonly used items in many village kitchens, so counter space and outlets for several of each should be accommodated.

Villages with galley kitchens greatly limit the number of villagers who can use the kitchen

> *"The best is like when we've got our kitchen up and running really well and it hasn't been. There's like a solid three-and-a-half-year period where everybody was on pitching into the kitchen and making sure that there were huge meals for everybody every night, and that was awesome. Just the sense of comradery that it brings is really cool."*
>
> *–Villager, Hazelnut Grove*

at the same time, and villagers note this as a point of conflict. Space to allow movement through the kitchen to access and prepare food by a significant number of people at once should be endeavored.

## Bathroom/Showers

Having access to bathroom facilities can be transformative for people experiencing homelessness. Twenty-four-hour access to toilets, showers, and sinks is lacking in the public realm, and is truly loved in the village setting, though there are a range of bathroom types and utilities present at Portland's villages. There is a strong preference for plumbed toilets in villages, with a significant exception. At moments in their history where installing bathroom facilities hooked up to utilities was an option at Dignity Village, the community opted to stick with portable toilets. The self-governed village anticipated that the interpersonal conflicts that would arise from the cleaning and maintenance of the bathrooms by the villagers was not worth the benefits. They ultimately chose to continue using portable toilets and keep costs reasonable by owning the toilet units to avoid ongoing rental fees, only paying for the units to be regularly serviced.

Code for minimum plumbing facilities per person can vary based on the type of occupancy designation pursued, but one toilet per 15 people is generally considered the absolute minimum. At both Kenton Women's Village and St. Johns Village there are about three toilets per 20 people, and this ratio seems to work well. In Kenton Women's Village, two of the toilets are part of full ADA-compliant bathrooms, and one is a half-bath. The architects of St. Johns Village took a more flexible approach, which separates each toilet into its own room with a shared handwashing area. By having toilets, showers, and sinks in separate rooms it allows many more people to use the facilities at the same time.

Designers of common facilities should consider including hand dryers in the bathrooms. Village managers have reported issues with ordering, stocking, and cleaning up paper hand towels.

## Laundry

Laundry facilities are often viewed as an optional addition for common facilities by village creators, but should be seen as essential. While partnerships with local laundromats have been moderately successful for some villages, the coordination and transportation involved can be time-consuming and challenging. These partnerships and/or "laundry days" also don't offer much flexibility for villagers whose schedules may prevent them from participating. Perhaps most notably, laundry facilities in Portland should be included in villages because they are crucial for maintaining the sleeping pods and the health of the villagers. Wet clothes resulting from Portland's weather can result in mold and condensation in the pods if there is no way for villagers to easily and regularly wash and dry clothes.

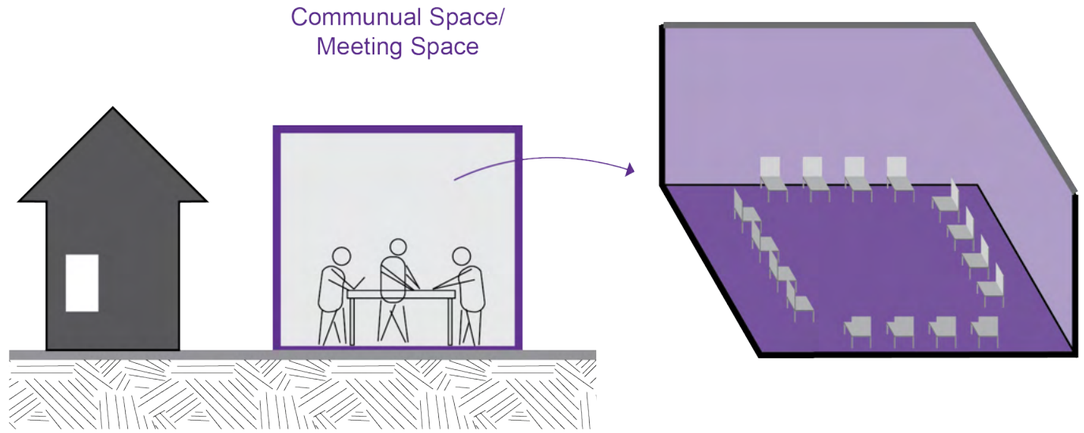
When the Center for Public Interest Design was conducting post-occupancy evaluations on the first Kenton Women's Village they were initially confused by reports of mold from leaks in a couple of the pods as no penetrations in the structures could be found. After spending time on-site in rainy weather, it became clear that the moisture issues in the pods weren't the results of leaks. Rather, the nature of the village model requires people to walk outdoors many times a day to access the amenities on-site. In Portland, this means that people's clothes will get wet, which are then brought back into the pod. Without access to laundry facilities, wet clothes can accumulate and sit for long periods of time. At the end of the pilot period of the Kenton Women's Village, laundry facilities were determined to be a necessity and incorporated into the new common facility when the village moved to its new site.

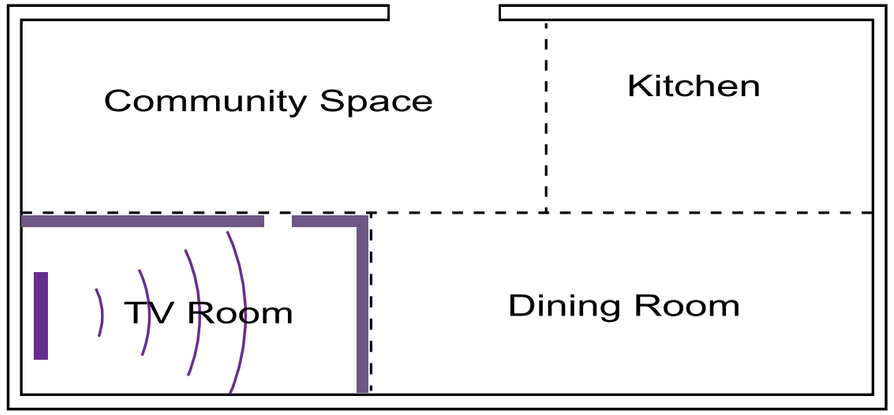
## Gathering Space / Living Room

While villages vary greatly in their governance/management structures, group meetings where all villagers and support staff are essential. An indoor area that can accommodate a group meeting where villagers can face one another should be incorporated

*Avoid creating shared/congregate toilet and/or shower rooms. It is space efficient in plan but undermines the feeling of safety and dignity available in the village model. Villages with congregate showers report that the shower room ends up only being used by one person at a time anyway, so it is ultimately inefficient in terms of both space and cost.*

Indoor space that can be adapted to accommodate community discussions and decision-making is crucial for successful general assemblies.






into plans for common facilities. Of course, the majority of the time, this space can also serve as a village's living and/or dining room when meetings are not being held.

Comfort should also be considered when designing the common facility. As with any successful gathering space, a range of seating/posture options for comfort and accessibility should be included. This is particularly important because the size of pods greatly limit the options for comfortably positioning the body within the unit. While most pods at villages have a heat source, the common facility may be the only place for cooling down in extreme heat. Mini-split air conditioners are a likely choice because they are a ductless and more affordable alternative to centralized air units. Acoustic comfort is also extremely important and needs to address outside noise like vehicle traffic and industrial clatter, as well as inside noise such as clanging pots or a loud television.

Just as in a house, televisions are an important part of life in a village. Issues arise when they are not planned for, such as unwelcome noise in the common areas that disturb other activities, isolation of villagers if viewing is limited to individual pods, and/or expense if off-grid power sources like a generator are required to run televisions. While they needn't be the primary design driver of the common facilities, village designers should plan for a space for television with these things in mind. Whole-village viewings of programs seem to be uncommon, and when this happens it is often in the form of a movie night or sports event viewed outside with a projector. A dedicated space for several villagers (four to six) to comfortably watch television in an area that is relatively acoustically isolated so as not to disturb or prevent other activities in the common facilities will help support a range of activities in the building.

## Office Space

Office space for village support staff, peer support specialists, or meetings with outside service providers is needed at villages.



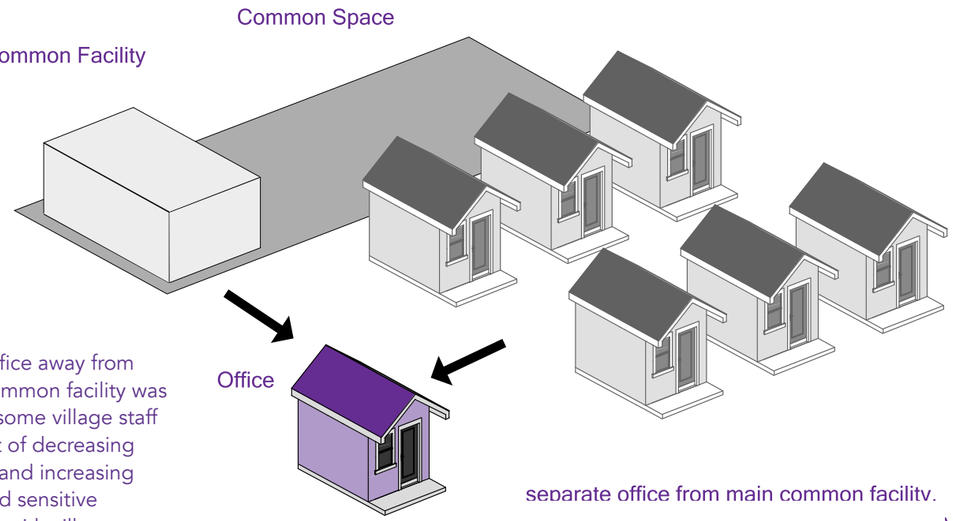
In some cases, office space is integrated into the common facility, and in other instances additional pods are used as office space. In any case, office/meeting spaces need to allow for private conversations when necessary. It may be advantageous to place offices next to the main entrance to preserve the privacy of villagers when outside support workers visit the village to meet with staff or villagers.

## Prefabricated Common Buildings

Like pods, village common facilities are designed with mobility in mind to allow for a village to take advantage of land unable to be developed with traditional buildings, and most villages are seen as temporary in nature. Prefabricated buildings have several key advantages that make them ideal for villages including:

- They are built off-site, which can result in a significantly shorter construction period for the village.
- Prefabricated buildings often require much less significant foundations than site-built construction.
- They are permitted by the state rather than a local municipality, allowing them to move to other sites within the state.
- Because a prefabricated common facility is permitted by the state, a proven design can be easily reproduced using the original permit approval.

**Shipping containers** are common features at villages, sometimes used for storage, and sometimes to host facilities. Reusing a ship-




A separate office away from the shared common facility was preferred by some village staff in the interest of decreasing interruptions and increasing privacy around sensitive conversations with villagers.

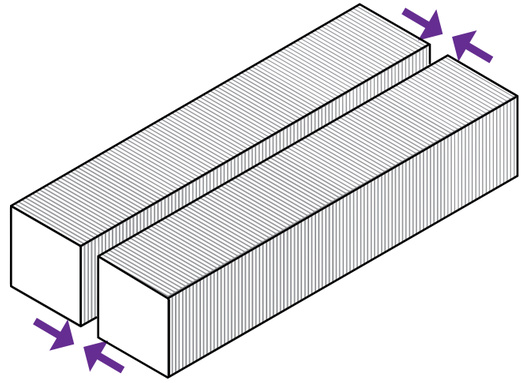
separate office from main common facility.

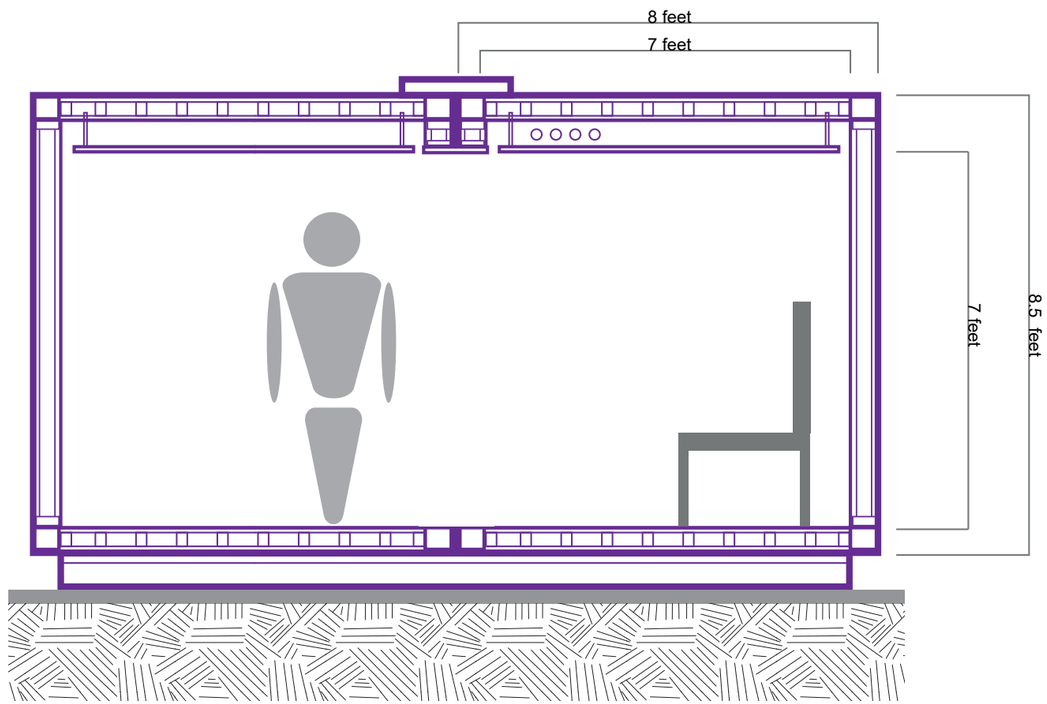
ping container for a common facility often allows for a more affordable building. They also have an advantage when it comes to accessibility, as their steel frame allows them to sit closer to the ground with very minimal foundation, site work, and ramping required. However, responses from villagers make clear that facilities made from shipping containers need to be designed as pairs, as single-unit containers are too narrow to be occupied comfortably by more than one villager at a time. Kenton Women's Village contains both types of shipping container buildings. While an existing kitchen unit from the original Kenton Women's Village pilot project aims to lessen its tight quarters with a large concession window that opens to a common space, the villagers still feel that this single-unit building (8 feet x 20 feet) is too tight to comfortably access or cook alongside more than one or two others at a time. The new Kenton Women's Village common facility is viewed much more favorably, made of two larger 40 foot shipping containers paired together with an additional 3 foot "pop-out" in the main gathering area, for a total width of 19 feet in some areas.

Like shipping container buildings, stick-frame **modular buildings** offer significant advantages for permitting, light foundations, and adaptability. While modular dimensions also correspond to ease of transportation, there is often more flexibility of design offered with their typical widths of 14', lengths of up to 60', and taller possible ceiling heights. One disadvantage to modular buildings is the raised height off the ground required because of the wood framing. This means longer ramps to reach the height of the door, which takes up significant site space and is less user friendly. St Johns Village addressed this issue with their modular common building by placing it on a pit set foundation (a type of foundation set in the ground), which lowers the building entry much closer to the ground than other modular buildings.



Shipping containers largely limit architectural form and dimensions, but offer several significant advantages in terms of cost, mobility, and accessibility.





# Additional Village Amenities

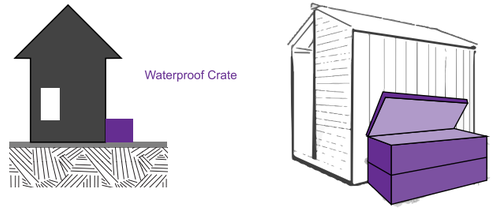


In addition to the essential elements provided within the common facilities, there are a range of additional amenities that can improve life at a village.

**Storage** outside of what is included in pods and the common facilities is the most frequently noted amenity of significance or desire by villagers and village support staff alike. For villagers, space for long-term storage of their belongings outside of their pods can free up precious square footage in their already-tight living quarters. Storage is also an important part of preparing for a transition to permanent housing. Residents accumulate essential items like clothes and kitchen utensils, and they also have items of personal value that can't fit into pods when they join a village. This need for storage should be addressed with on or off-site longer-term storage options whenever possible. Storage space for villagers to store more frequently used items adjacent to their pods is also highly desired and lacking in most villages. Something as simple as a waterproof deck box for each pod would provide villagers with the means to store common items better left outside of a pod like folding chairs, rain gear, personal gardening equipment, and more.

Village support staff note that the wider community sees villages as ideal places to donate clothes, canned goods, and home items, but there needs to be a plan for accepting and storing these **donations**. Often villages will use vacant or older pods for this purpose. Hazelnut Grove utilizes a shipping container provided by the city of Portland for personal and donation storage, and have run successful programs of distributing donations they receive at the village to help the unsheltered community in the surrounding areas. Because villages are one of the most visible responses to homelessness in the area, they will likely continue to be approached with donations, and the intake, storage, and distribution of donations should be discussed during the village design process.

Storage for gardening equipment should also be considered as **gardens** are among the most popular amenities at villages. Not only do they beautify a village, gardens can be used to address issues around privacy by serving as natural barriers, decrease food insecurity, and offer mental and physical health benefits associated with gardening. Some villagers discussed a desire to explore gar-



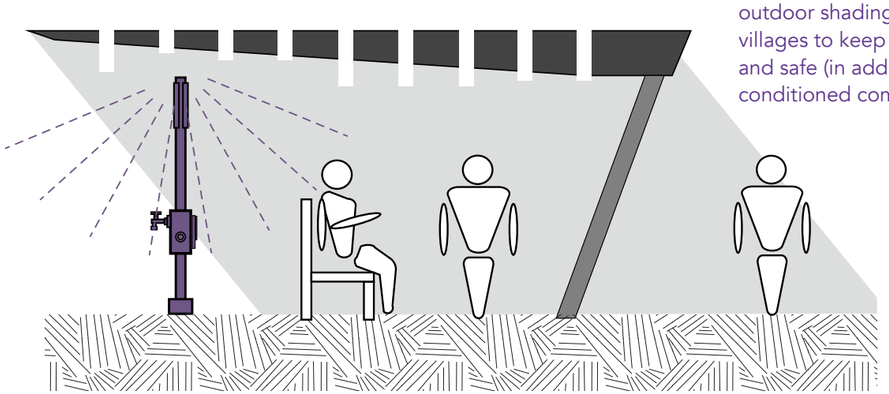
dening as a potential source of micro-enterprise at the village, though the current sites available to villages likely wouldn't be able to host activity at that scale. One thing to consider for village designers is to explore neighboring sites to host a community garden if the village site is not large enough to accommodate gardens.

Ideas for villages being designed around a shared interest or activity have come up periodically throughout recent village design processes. Those advocating for this model argue that shared interests and activities gather people around assets rather than a perceived deficit (poverty/homelessness), which is more likely to promote a positive environment outcome. When villagers were asked about this idea, gardening/farming was overwhelmingly the most noted interest/activity that they expressed interest in as an organizing element for future villages, followed by art and music.

A **greenhouse** allows year-round gardening opportunities and an additional space to be indoors at the village aside from one's pod or the common facility. Dignity Village has a greenhouse that is greatly loved. In extreme weather conditions, their greenhouse also serves as a bunkhouse to provide shelter for an additional 10 people who would otherwise remain unsheltered. This kind of flexible use of space can be explored at the beginning of the village design process and allow amenities like a greenhouse to avoid being lost in the final village outcome due to a perception of them being non-essential.

**Fire pits** for gathering, warming, and cooking are a valuable amenity at villages. They should be placed a minimum of 10' away from any structures whenever possible. One alternative to fire pits that have yet to be pursued at villages are rocket mass heaters.

A **rocket mass heater** utilizes an enclosed and highly efficient combustion chamber to burn wood. The container top (often a repurposed oil drum) can be used to heat a coffee or tea pot. The heat created in the chamber is exhausted through metal ducting passing through a thermal mass that can serve as a long bench. The thermal mass (often cob or brick) will release radiant heat long after the fire goes out and the bench continues to provide warmth. Rocket mass heaters may be located indoors or outdoors, but some see enclosed/covered spaces that are not otherwise heated or cooled, like greenhouses, as ideal settings.



As incidents of extreme heat continue to increase in the Pacific Northwest and elsewhere, more misting stations and increased outdoor shading may be useful for villages to keep villagers comfortable and safe (in addition to air-conditioned common facilities).



*"Oh, we've got dogs and cats. I don't see a problem with it. I've got one particular friend that, if it weren't for his little pooch, he'd probably be dead by now."*

*"I think it's a good thing. There's a dog here. There are people that need pets, and how they communicate with them, and they do, and they help them. Those pets need to be able to be, I guess, under their owner's control, or at least listen to them."*

*"I like it. 99.99 percent of the people dig them (pets). Let me put it this way, I filled a bowl of dog food five days ago, and it's just at halfway. Everybody feeds the dogs treats."*

*—Villagers were overwhelmingly supportive of pets, both being able to have their own pets in the village and enjoying being around other villagers' pets. They talked about the therapeutic and safety benefits of having animals around. Some added that it was important pets be under the owner's control, and be cleaned up after, but were still supportive.*

About half of villagers interviewed owned bicycles and used them as a primary means of transportation, so **bike shelters** should be considered. St. Johns Village included a bike shelter that villagers find highly useful and keeps bikes off the village's pathways and out of the pod areas. Bike trailers are very common and useful for villagers for things like shopping, traveling with a pet, or bottle/can collection and return. A bike shelter design should acknowledge this reality and be designed for both bicycles and bike trailers.

A **library** is often mentioned when considering possible amenities for villages. Villages often contain voracious readers, so a place to store, find, and read quality books would be hugely valuable. Hazelnut Grove has had a beautiful and beloved library pod since its inception, which has also served as a guest room when needed. A library space that also

includes Wi-Fi and/or computer access if it is not available in the common facilities or elsewhere would give the library even more significance.

Consider accommodating a **maker space**. Clackamas County Veterans Village was conceived as a village where phase one of the village would include 15 built pods, common facilities, and a workshop. Residents and volunteers would then use the workshop to slowly build the additional 15 pods for the 30-person village over time under the direction of a contractor, while building skills that could lead to employment. This didn't work out due to a number of constraints, and many of those involved in running villages have expressed skepticism about the feasibility of this model. However, villagers have consistently advocated for space at villages for hobbies and micro-enterprise, whether a woodshop, craft room, bike shop, etc. While the villagers may decide the nature of the workshop or what is made, it may provide opportunities for the creation of elements that can improve the site such as furniture, shelving, curtains/blankets, etc. This could also be a space for people to make goods for potential sale (on- or off-site). One villager noted that even a can and bottle drop spot would be a promising addition at villages to support those who use recycling as income (perhaps incorporating a place for neighbors to bring their recyclables).

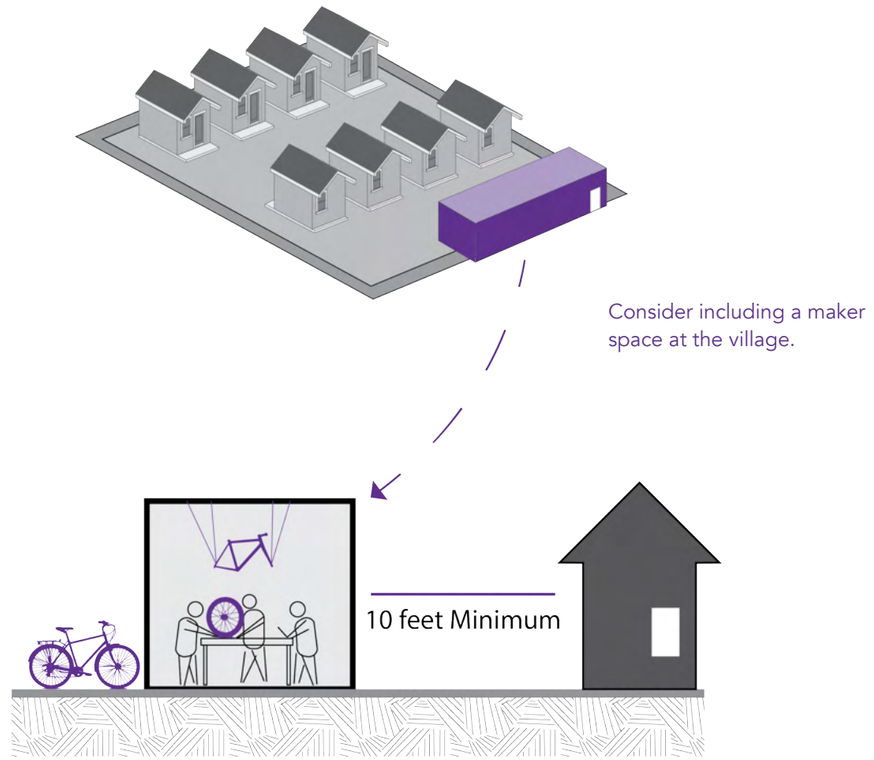
The ability to have animals is a common aspect of villages that residents point to as an important and celebrated distinction from most shelters and many other transitional housing models. While a village may be short on available space, the integration of a fenced **dog run area** should be considered if keeping dogs off-leash is undesirable. The absolute minimum dog run per Humane Society guidelines is 4 feet wide by 10 feet long and 6 feet tall for a single dog over 100 pounds, but larger is strongly recommended since that is insufficient space for meaningful exercise and there may be multiple dogs using it at once.

*As important as the amenities at a village are, the shared agreements and understandings of how those amenities get used, cleaned, and shared is equally important. Villagers whose village had fewer amenities (such as fewer or inconsistent showers) often expressed greater satisfaction with their facilities than those with "better" facilities if their village had a clear system for sharing facilities and maintenance responsibilities.*



*"We have a couple things we do that make money for the village. One is, we do get people to drop off cans and bottles to us. Most of those go to our pet fund, for people who can't afford pet food or pet care. We have firewood sales. We used to get free wood off Craigslist. Metro brings us any downed trees from the city, when we have room. We cut it, split it, stack it, season it, and sell it. We get donation drop-offs. Sometimes those donations are items that we really don't need here in the village, like grandma's fine china from 100 years ago. We'll put those on Craigslist, or OfferUp, or something like that. We also do metal recycling here at the village."*

*—Villager, Dignity Village*

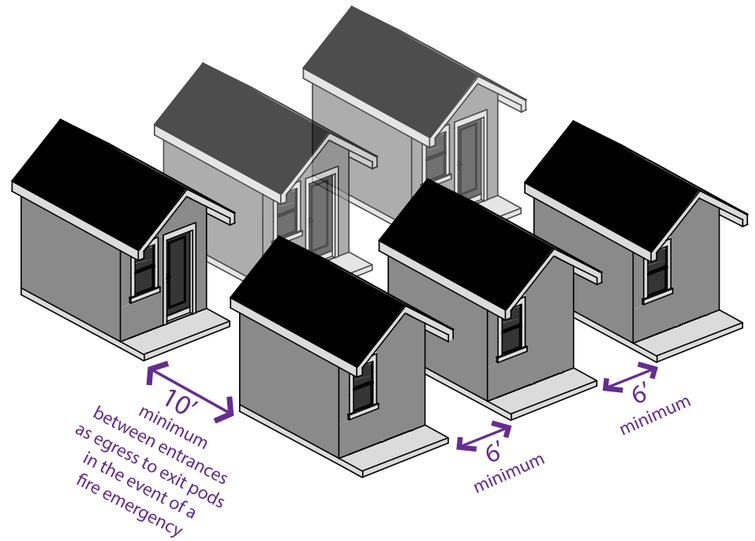


# Site Design

Every site is different, and often a village is sited in a location with challenges that have prevented permanent housing or other types of developments to be built. While the design of each site will need to navigate the conditions of its unique circumstance, there are some strategies that have proved effective at other villages that can inform future work.

Likely the largest design driver in the creation of a village is the number of pods/villagers being accommodated at a site. There is a balance between giving people adequate space between pods for the psychological benefits of having one's own space and the desire to maximize the number of people able to live in the village at one time. One key factor for **pod spacing**, and therefore number of pods at a given site, has been requirements by the local fire marshal. Spacing varies between villages based on different conditions, from 3' to 10'+ between pods, with a spacing of 10' generally considered preferred practice and allowable by the fire marshal. In order to maximize the number of pods on a small site while adhering to safety measures, the designers of St Johns Village maintained the 10' minimum spacing requirement between the front of pods to ensure safe egress in the event of a fire emergency but were able to reduce the spacing between pods to 6'. This strategy allowed for several more pods on the site than would otherwise have been possible if sticking with 10' between pods in all directions.

Site layouts that avoid using grids in favor of more organic organizations seem to be strongly preferred and can play a role



*"10 foot spacing between structures is the state code with campgrounds. We applied for and were granted a code appeal for reducing that to six feet in between the pods. The fire marshal granted that exception based on the contingency that all pathways must have 10 feet clear from pod to pod, so you can't have a pathway going in between the six foot spaced pods. This perspective is based on the understanding that the highest priority in an emergency is egress."*

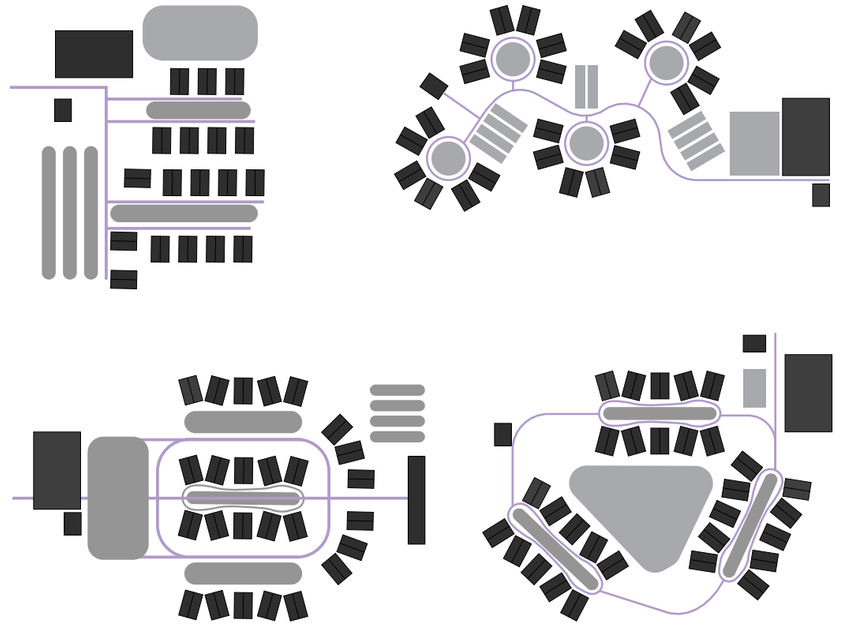
*—Joe Purkey (Convergence Architecture), lead architect of St. Johns Village*

in reducing feelings of claustrophobia on a cramped site. Villagers reported far less dissatisfaction with the closeness of their pods to their neighbors in villages with pod layouts and site strategies that were more **organic and less gridded** in nature. This seems to have a significantly greater impact on perceptions of proximity than actual spacing dimensions. St Johns Village has the densest layout of the villages studied with only 6' between pods, but a sensitive site strategy avoided the villagers feeling crowded. This outcome was likely aided by the use of a consistent pod type where the pods could be arranged so that windows never directly look into a neighbor's window – a risk present when a variety of pod types is used.

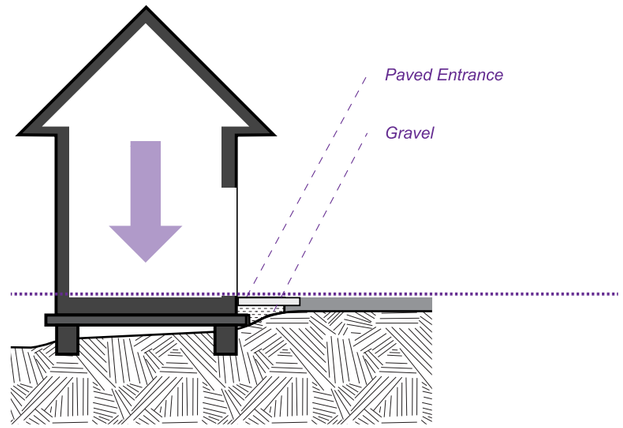
**Accessible paths and entries** must be considered from the very beginning of the site design process. There are a variety of strategies that can be used but existing conditions and choices for **ground cover** (asphalt, gravel, wood chips, grass, concrete, etc.) will lead a great deal of this decision-making. Sites that utilize former parking areas and begin with asphalt will likely have no issues with accessible pathways, but will need to accommodate ramps into the common buildings and pods as needed. Village sites largely comprised of dirt and gravel will have a more difficult time with meeting accessibility needs with site paths, but can raise the pathway or "sink" the pods below the pathway to allow for level entry (this has been done at parts of the Vets Village and throughout St. Johns Village). For undeveloped sites, gravel is likely to be the most desirable option for village pathways and outdoor gathering areas because it is inexpensive, radiates less heat than asphalt or concrete, and is permeable which avoids gathering pools of water (if the site is properly graded below). In these cases, **stabilized gravel** systems should be considered which will allow for the paths to be accessible for people that rely on a range of mobility devices. Considerations for stabilized gravel or paved paths may become particularly important if they are able to play a secondary role of meeting emergency access requirements if the site is large enough and/or far enough from



Organic/ non-gridded site plans resulted in greater satisfaction with villagers and reduced negative feelings about close proximity to neighboring pods.



For accessible entry into pods, paths may be raised and/or pads may be dug out for pods to be lowered.



## *Example: Clackamas County Veterans Village*

*With a cloverleaf layout, one of the four pod clusters at Clackamas County Veterans Village was designed with accessibility in mind. The pathway along that area is a concrete sidewalk and is raised to allow level entry of the pods, which themselves have been altered for increased interior dimensions. This pod cluster is closest to the common facility, which acknowledges the additional needs and challenges residents of those pods might face in accessing the village amenities, but also reduced the amount of paved area (and, therefore, cost) required at the village. The other paths are primarily gravel.*

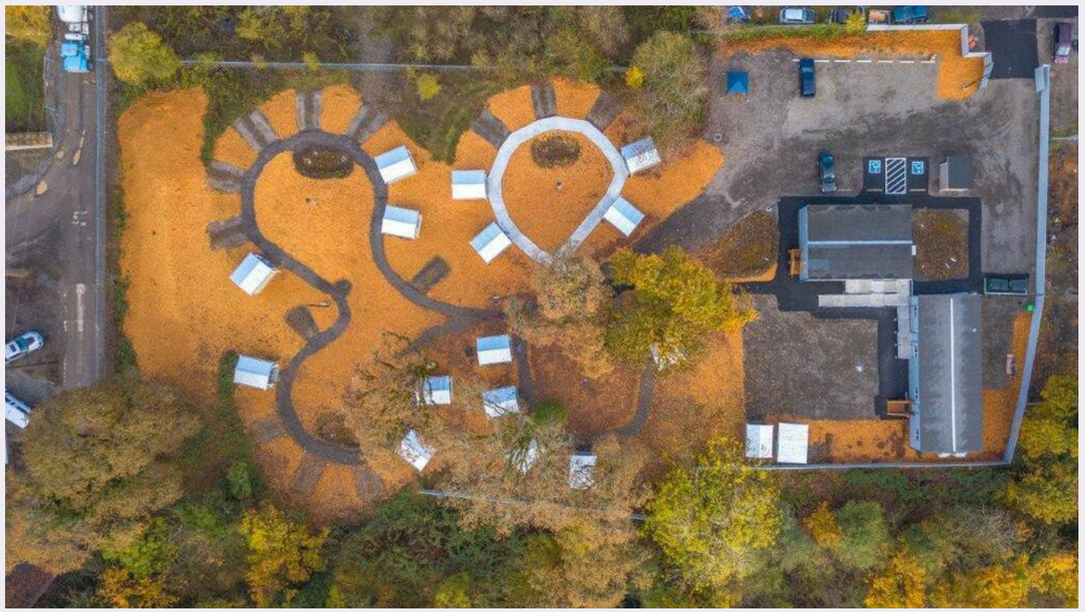
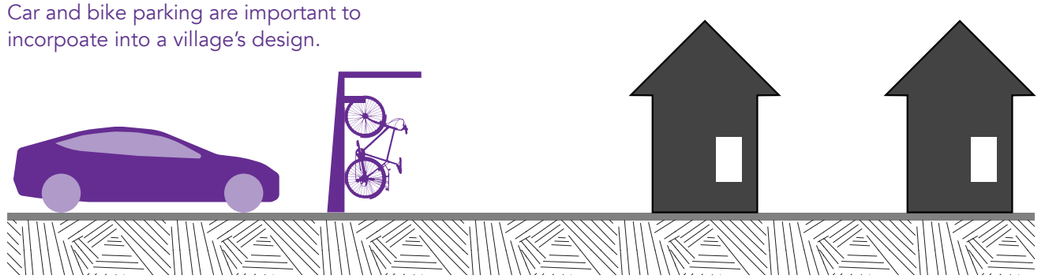


*Image credit: Communitecture*





Car and bike parking are important to incorpoate into a village's design.

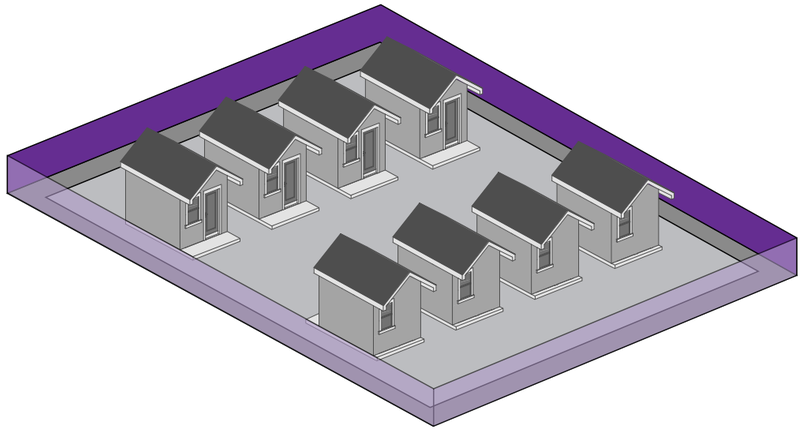
the road that fire truck and other **emergency vehicle access** needs to be accommodated within the village.

**Parking** is a commonly voiced concern of neighbors of any new development, and villages are no different. In addition to staff and visiting service providers, arrangements should be made for villager parking (on or nearby the site). About a third of villagers surveyed owned cars, and bikes are even more common. As with any development, proximity to public transportation and accommodations for sheltered and secure bike parking can help reduce the number of car parking spaces needed on-site.

**Fencing** helps keep the village safe, but chain-link fences can be too transparent when keeping in mind that the villagers should still be able to maintain privacy while moving between their pods and the common facilities. At Kenton Women's Village, privacy screening was added to the chain-link fencing since people were so interested in looking in. Hazelnut Grove found this solution as well and added various screening elements. A solid wood fence, like the one installed at St Johns Village, creates the necessary privacy without additional materials. Fencing is also an opportunity to consider a perimeter resource for those on the outside of the fence, from edible plants to lockers to art. The fence should stay below 7' in Portland to avoid the need for additional permitting (6' is a safe height in most places). When designing fencing that fully encloses a site, include at least two points of secure egress, preferably with crash bars to exit, with one serving as a private entry for village residents to easily come and go without the feeling of being surveilled.

From support services to maintenance workers to neighbors, villages receive a lot of visitors, so this should be taken into account with the site design. **An outdoor welcome area** at a village to host neighbors and visitors without imposing on the privacy of all of the villagers is ideal. A "**front door**" for the public that doesn't require entering the perimeter of the village as a whole has proven very successful at St. Johns Village where one door of the common facility can be entered without entering the fenced and pod section of the village.

Fencing



Portland's nonprofit and houseless led "rest area" Right to Dream Too reused old doors as a perimeter fence which allowed them to use the surfaces for art and public messaging, in addition to the privacy and security that they offered.

Incorporating art into a chain-link fence can serve as a powerful placemaking tool for a village. This Fence Art projecy in Lakewood, Colorado, by Yulia Avgustinovich transforms a simple chain-link fence by weaving vinyl tape through its mesh to create a unique design.

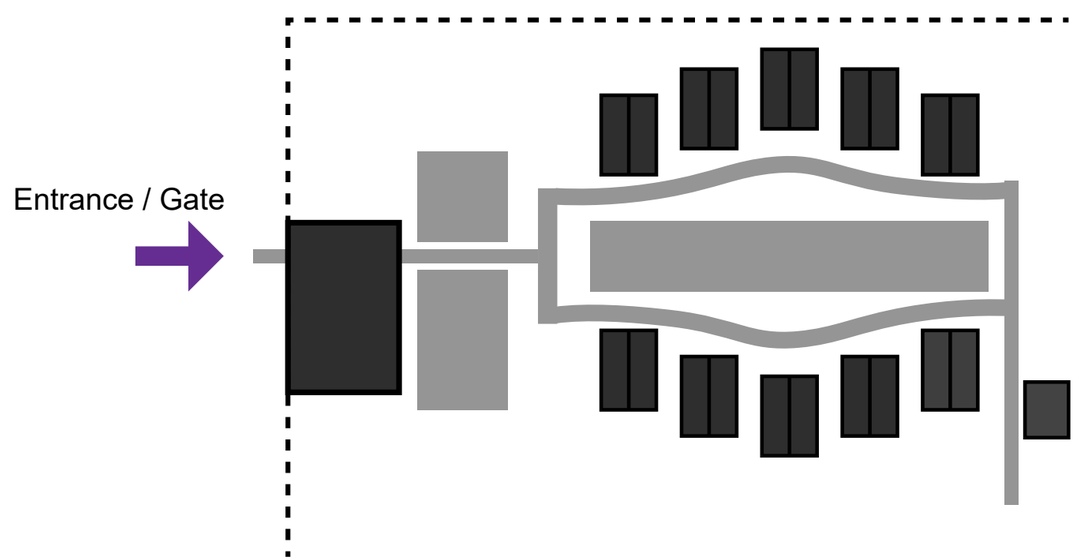
Utilizing greenery by growing plants or vines on/near the fence can create several benefits for a village such as increasd beauty, shade, increased privacy, graffiti deterent, and a potential surface for growing food.



*"We have a fence that surrounds all around the perimeter of the village. And there's a gate code that you have to put in to get into the gate, and only villagers are allowed to do that. So other than that, guests need to check in through the office. And so, it's a space that is ours, and I like that. I like that not just anybody can come in here. In fact, with the transitioning because we have that defense around the perimeter, even though it's right in the heart of St. Johns, where I grew up, and not too far from where I camped, you feel safe as soon as you pass the gate. It's just your own private little, "Ah," away from the headache that was out there."*

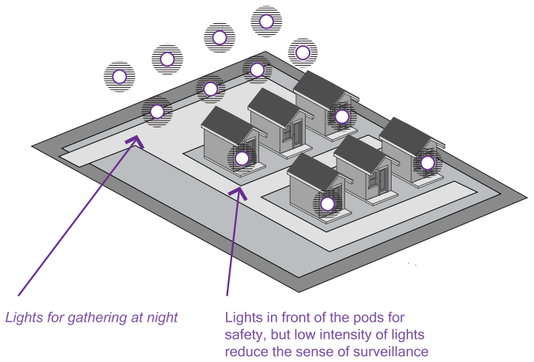
*—Villager, St. Johns Village*

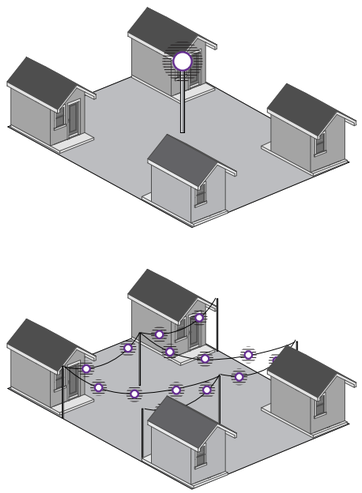
Providing a public entry or "front door" for the village through the common facility is one strategy for preserving privacy for villagers when they are in the residential/pod portion of the village.



**Site lighting** is important for supporting safety and community at the village. Village designers should endeavor to distribute lighting at comfortable levels around the village and avoid singular and strong sources of light which create a sense of institutional surveillance. Commercial-grade string-lights hung around the pathways and common areas at Kenton Women's Village meet safety and operating needs while creating a festive atmosphere that promotes evening gathering that is appreciated by the villagers.

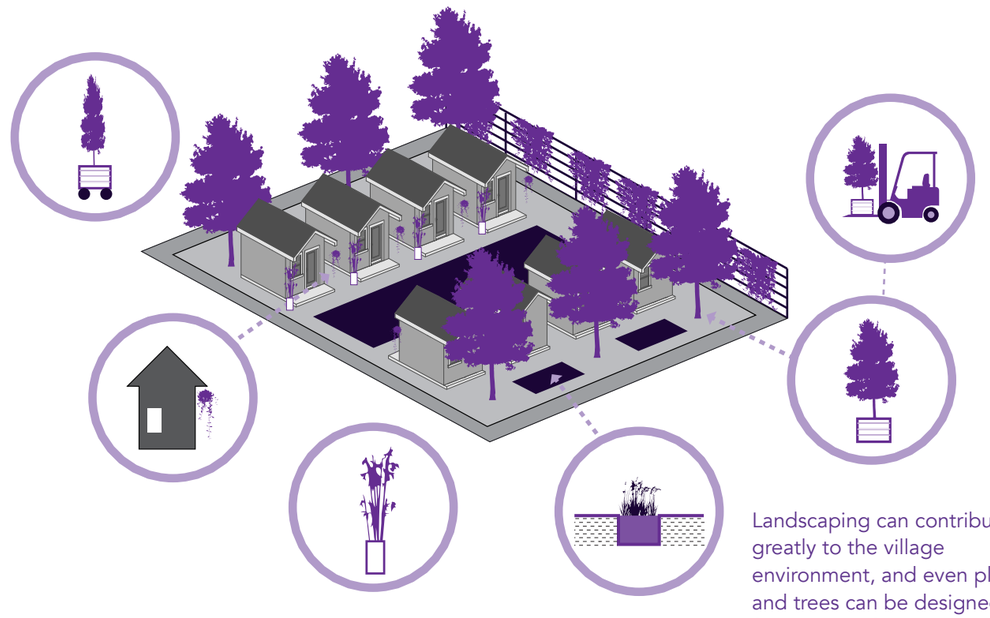
In addition to beautifying a village, strategic **landscaping** can serve as placemaking elements, provide privacy between areas within the site, support activities like gardening, provide shade in the summer months, support a healthy local ecosystem, and handle site water management among other things. Because village components are usually designed for mobility and with temporality of site in mind, landscape elements like trees that are not already on-site are often not considered in the site design. There are a variety of ways to incorporate these elements, including module components that can be moved regularly for changing spatial needs at the village, or less frequently in anticipation of a village needing to move to another location. While they cannot be moved, **bioswales** are a site feature that provide many  of the aforementioned benefits of thoughtful landscape design. At Clackamas County Veterans Village, bioswales placed within each cloverleaf of the pod arrangement and near the common facilities define pathways and handle all of the stormwater on-site. Because bioswales are concave and planted, they have the additional benefit of



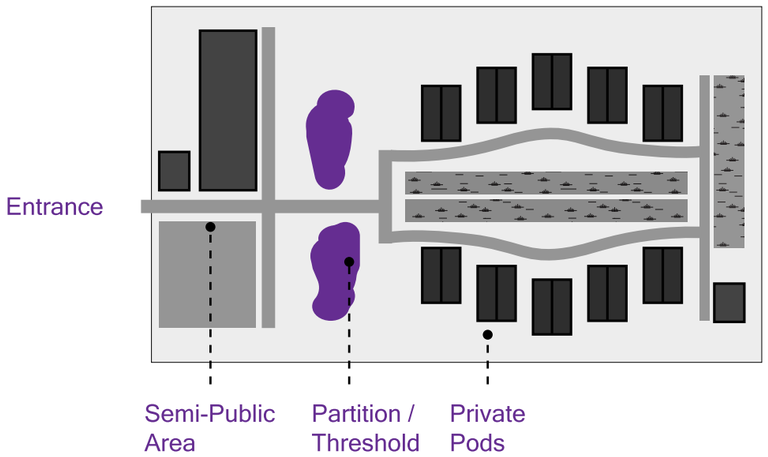



Site lighting strategies





Landscaping can contribute greatly to the village environment, and even plants and trees can be designed for mobility if necessary.

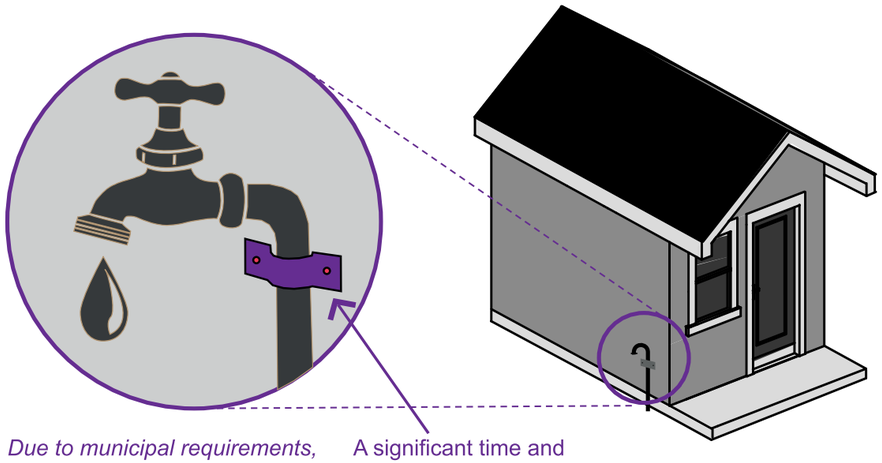



Landscaping elements like planted berms can support act as helpful ordering devices and thresholds to communicate which areas are public and which are private.

maintaining open areas, which avoids the temptation to over-program or collect clutter within open areas of a village.

**Yard hydrants** (freestanding water spigots) are a very useful site feature at several villages that help with everything from gardening and landscaping to cleaning and providing water for pets. During the design team's process at St. Johns Village, they identified a significant cost-savings measure related to these elements. Due to municipal requirements, free-standing units often trigger the installation of sitewide backflow prevention devices, which is likely overkill for this type of development and can be very expensive. If these spigots are attached to the outside of a pod or plumbed through the interior of a building, then these issues (and extra expenses) no longer apply. In this case, the team was able to run the vertical pipe along the outside of a pod and attach the spigot to its siding, ultimately saving a significant amount of time and cost to the project.

It may be useful to conceive of the distributed water access that yard hydrants offer in conjunction with an **auxiliary amenity station**. Based on villager feedback, auxiliary amenity stations for larger villages would be useful so that villagers don't have to walk all the way to the common facility for access to things like the internet, drinking water, extra outlets, bathrooms, or a handwashing sink. While this can by no means replace the common facility (or should factor into the determination of how many of each amenity the common facility hosts), it would be particularly useful if the village needs to grow to accommodate additional villagers in emergency situations. It also recognizes that proximity of pods to bathroom(s) is a major challenge that remains unaddressed in most villages. Some villages have found that for people living in pods the furthest away from bathrooms, people are often forced to urinate outside of their pod in the middle of the night—an understandable solution, particularly for those with mobility issues or with more frequent needs. If it is not possible to arrange the pods in close proximity to the bathroom, then a **second bathroom** (a porta potty at an absolute minimum) should be strategically placed to reduce the distance to the bathrooms for villagers.



*Due to municipal requirements, free-standing units trigger the installation of sitewide backflow prevention devices, which is overkill and very expensive. However...*

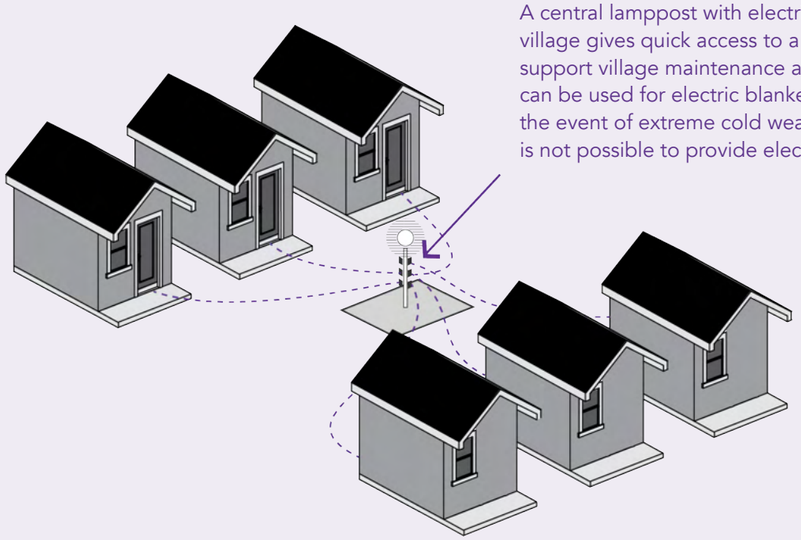
A significant time and cost-savings measure is to attach a **water spigot** to the outside of a pod.

> *"There's some of these guys that are in here that use crutches to get to and from... So, for them, a 60-yard fucking run to the pisser, and that's midway, that's a long way to go to the bathroom in the middle of the night under any condition...Some of these guys have bladder issues. And I know where they're coming from, because they'll go eat, they'll go lay down, get up, go poop, lay back down again, then have to go poop again, and then lay back down and then poop again. Okay, that's definitely something going on with the intestines and everything...but you can't expect somebody that's got a 10- or 12-inch shuffle, an old man shuffle, to make that kind of a trip."*
>
> *—Villager on the need for closer bathroms*

A ignificant number of villagers smoke and it should be planned for in the site design. Establishing rules preventing smoking or eliminating spaces for smoking is not likely to deter people from smoking. Rather, it will open up the potential for ongoing conflict and encourage smoking in unsafe spaces. Dedicated community spaces that **allow for smoking** should be comfortable and support positive socialization. A space that is outdoors for airflow but can be fully sheltered and provide comfort in rain and cold weather should be aimed for. While site designers will be tempted to move the smoking area(s) to the absolute furthest edges of the site, a balance must be struck between centralizing the smoking area to encourage its use and entirely separating the smoking space(s) to allow those wishing to avoid smoke to do so easily.

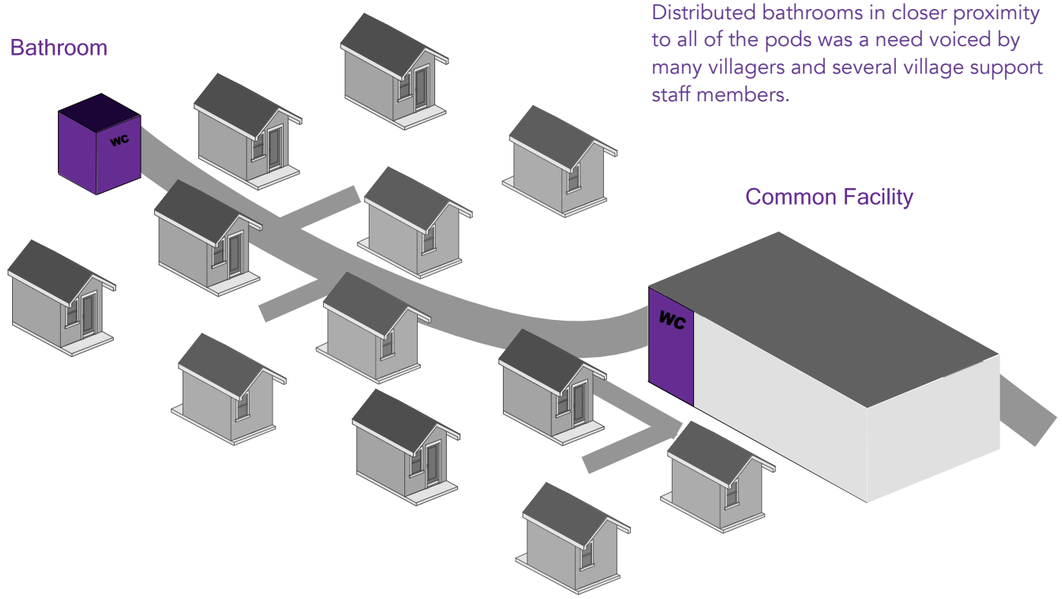
## *Example: Clackamas County Veterans Village*

*At Clackamas County Veterans Village the design team had learned from the villagers of the original Kenton Women's Village that staying warm in the winter was a challenge without electricity or heat in the pods. Propane heaters posed safety (fire and health) concerns for the village organizers, and other options weren't feasible in the village's early days. The team needed to install site lighting for safety, and each of the four pod clusters would receive a post lamp. The team advocated to have each of these poles include eight outlets—one for each pod. This would allow villagers quick access to a power source close to their pod for things like charging phones but, more critically, it would be possible to run extension cords to each pod for electric blankets or space heaters in the event of extreme cold weather. This served the village for over a year until power and radiant heaters were brought to each pod.*



A central lamppost with electric outlets in each village gives quick access to a power source to support village maintenance and yard operations. It can be used for electric blankets or space heaters in the event of extreme cold weather for pods where it is not possible to provide electricity and heat.

Given that a significant number of villagers smoke, a comfortable smoking area(s) should be provided at villages




Distributed bathrooms in closer proximity to all of the pods was a need voiced by many villagers and several village support staff members.

# Village Social Infrastructure



The physical infrastructure is just one component of a village. Setting up the conditions for a positive social infrastructure is equally, if not more, important. In fact, when citing their likes about villages, villagers overwhelmingly noted a "sense of community" and "social support" far more than the facilities. Dislikes about villages referenced physical aspects of the village and its location, but also largely centered on issues of interpersonal conflicts with other villagers and village management/staff.

Like any other program addressing homlessness, villages can't achieve everything for everyone, and people need to be sensitively matched with the system that works best for them. A major aspect of village life is being able to live and work within an active community with shared agreements for behavior and participation. Villages are largely low-barrier for entry, but still might not be a good fit for everyone. So, who does the village model work best for?

While acknowledging that a village setting would likely be better for most people than remaining unsheltered, villages seem to best serve those with a desire and ability (immediately or over time) to **participate in community**. This is helped immeasurably by **clearly communicating expectations** of life at a village to potential residents which, in addition to helping them make a choice about whether the village is the right place for them, has a significant impact on satisfaction at the village over time once admitted. To this end, Dignity Village has a policy where, in order to stay on the village waitlist, folks have to put in a certain number of volunteer hours at the village. This is done to allow for the village candidate to both get to know the community before moving in and get a sense of expectations for participating at the village.

Even the most highly staffed villages do not have support staff on-site around the clock, so those in need of round-the-clock care or substantial supportive services will likely not be best served at a village, particularly if there are barriers to participating in community. That said, those at villages note the need to find balance to support both the health of the community and the needs

*The social aspects of a village represent two of the three key elements defining a village.*

- *Non-congregate, safe and private shelter/quarters off the street that provides for the use of shared common facilities.*
- *Sense of community that includes shared agreements on communal behavior and commitments to the whole.*
- *The ability for the villagers to have some agency over their social and physical environment (with self-governance seen as essential by some to meet the definition of village).*

of the individual. In a village with a strong sense of community, those with capacity can support individuals with significant behavioral health issues, but the village community can struggle if there is not a careful balance of those with and without significant behavioral health issues. An experienced support staff member suggested maintaining a minimum 10:1 ratio of those without significant behavioral health issues to those with significant behavioral health issues. This ratio may flex in either direction depending on whether the village is managed, self-governed, or a hybrid of the two.

Even self-governed villages receive external assistance in the form of support staff or advisory board members, and managed villages have various numbers and structures for staffing. It is a good idea to have a sense of the **number of village staff** members needed and their roles from the outset of a village's design to determine everything from operating budget to office space required. In HRAC's research, village staff consistently felt understaffed across all villages and desired at least one more person than whatever their current numbers were. Pulling together the recommendations for ideal staff numbers and roles as expressed by those doing the work, two full-time staff seems to be the ideal number for self-governed villages, and three to four for managed villages. In any case, two full-time staff is the minimum recommended to serve the needs of villagers and to prevent burnout from one staff doing this challenging work alone. The value of having someone to discuss difficult issues with was identified as a critical need for village support staff.

Maintaining a maximum of one villager with significant behavioral health issues to every 10 villagers who are better able to live communally is recommended by those with deep experience supporting a village.

What exactly the village staff does may depend on a variety of factors, such as how the positions are funded (staff for self-governed villages comes from outside organizations), what the expectations for transitioning out of the village are, and the population being served. As a **baseline** informed by current village staff and villagers:

- Those involved in the creation of self-governed villages should advocate for two village support/program specialists.
- Groups developing managed villages should account for three or four staff members consisting of one or two primary village managers, one evening/weekend staff person, and one peer support specialist.

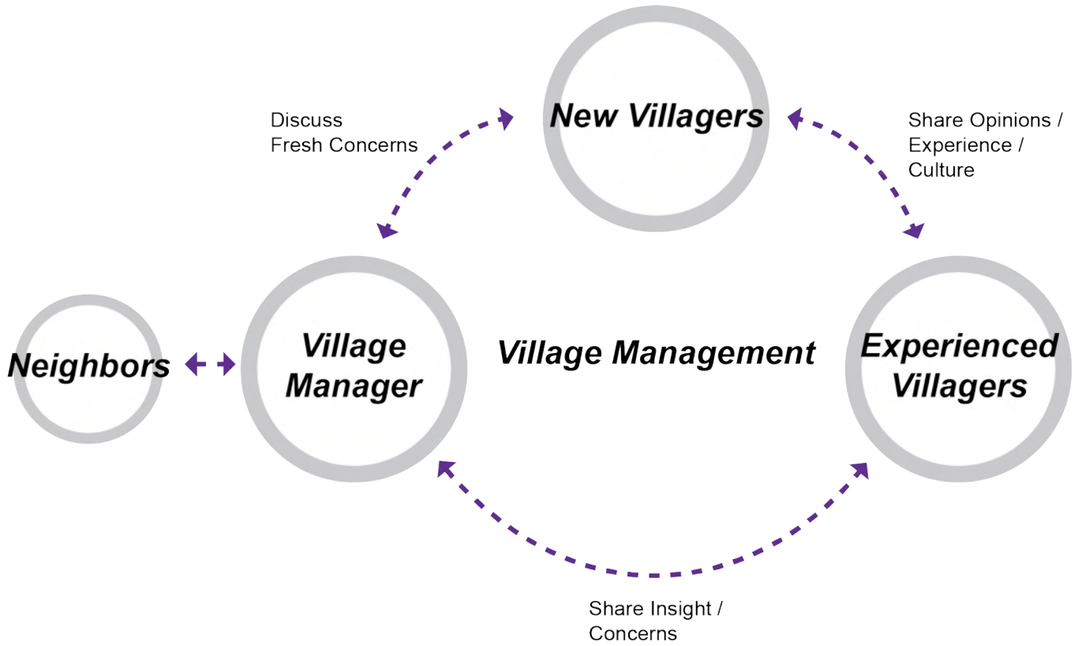


In both managed and self-governed villages, the **general assembly (GA)** is a crucial part of village life. These are typically held weekly and the whole village is expected to participate. GAs are a chance to make collective decisions, reaffirm community commitments, and address conflicts at the village. GAs include villagers, staff, and invited guests, though villagers may decide to open GAs to neighbors or others periodically. Successful GA meetings include collective agreements about the ground rules for the meeting, space for everyone to comfortably gather and face one another, and a designated facilitator.

Perhaps not surprisingly, villagers at self-governed villages are more likely to feel that only villagers should determine what happens at a village than those at managed villages. However, even among the self-governed villages there were significant numbers that believed **decision-making should be shared** between villagers and management (and sometimes neighbors), the clearly favored belief of villagers as a whole. Considerations for shared decision-making should be embedded from the onset of a village and co-created with villagers.

Whether at a self-governed village or a managed village, having a **voice** in the way the

General assemblies are a significant mechanism to ensure that villagers have a voice in village rules and operations




village functions is crucial for ensuring satisfaction among the villagers. This can range from complete self-governance of the village with an elected council to a fully managed system where the villagers feel heard by the village manager/operators and understand mechanisms to have their input influence village decisions. The Clackamas County Veterans Village is a managed village with the village staff making the majority of decisions. However, the village maintains a **community council** of villagers elected by the residents who facilitate conversation and make decisions around certain matters within their scope. The clarity of the distribution of decision-making and some ability to make decisions that impact the social and physical environment at the village seems satisfactory to both villagers and management.

Building a positive community culture at a village takes a long time (a negative one can be created in no time at all). Training should be provided to both village staff and villagers on these matters. Villages may also consider "**seeding**" **new villages with experienced villagers** (that choose this leadership role) who are also compensated for this expertise. They can attend to the social infrastructure of the village in a similar fashion as a building superintendent in an apartment building attends to the building's physical infrastructure. St. Johns Village was able to establish a community culture quickly because seven villagers from Hazelnut Grove were among the first villagers and supported a productive community atmosphere and group dialogue at meetings. Former Hazelnut Grove residents also reported satisfaction with the new village.

**Food security** seems to correspond significantly to villager satisfaction and village dynamics. Having a secure place to live and quality facilities to store and prepare food falls short of supporting villagers if food needs are not met. In fact, in villages where food insecurity was a significant issue, tensions and mistrust between villagers was much higher and conflict over food was mentioned frequently as a primary point of mistrust. Building in ways to provide food assistance to villagers as part of the village design will greatly benefit the village.

Rules on **drugs and alcohol** vary between villages, but usage is typically banned in all public spaces at the village (if not within the perimeter of the village itself). There is an argument made that informs some villages that if a housed person can use alcohol and recreational drugs in their own home (though not necessarily in public), then the same should apply to villagers. It is ultimately negative behavior that results from the use of drugs and alcohol that become punishable. Villages that ban substances at the village often do so in acknowledgement that present drugs and alcohol can interfere with the sobriety efforts of other villagers, because of requirements linked to some of the program funding, or because it was a decision made by the villagers themselves.

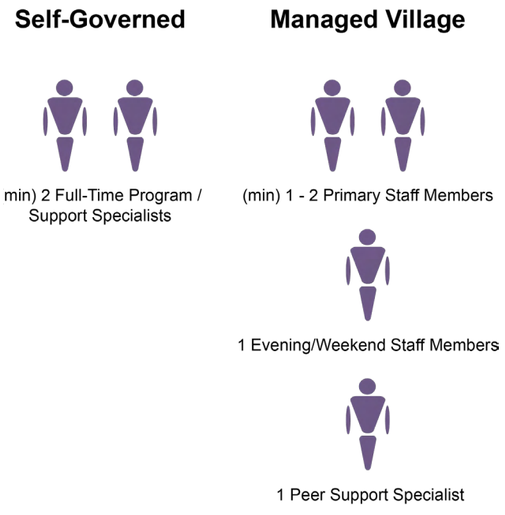
Occasionally people are asked/forced to leave a village, which is sometimes referred to as **exiting or offboarding**. Each village has its own set of rules, but behavior that is overtly violent is the most common cause for this across villages. While interpersonal

*"I love it about the village that it is so accommodating and that people of all different personality types and abilities are given leadership opportunities. And even though there's no formal leadership development, there is leadership development. It's a lot of learning by doing and a lot really organic mentorship that happens. The person who is the finance director has not been to accounting school, but he's doing that work because somebody who did it before him has passed on that knowledge. And it's all of these leadership skills and, I mean, they're doing nonprofit administration and doing very complicated tasks based on the each one teach one system, and they're doing it pretty well."*

*—Victory LaFara, village program specialist, JOIN, on self-governance at Dignity Village*

conflicts and heated arguments are to be expected with any group of people living together (particularly among those working through personal trauma and challenging circumstances), violence is usually not tolerated. Violence between villagers is almost always an escalation of ongoing tensions, so building in mechanisms for conflict resolution at a village is critical to avoid these situations. Having someone leave the village may remove an immediate threat to safety, but it may increase tensions among the community they leave behind, particularly if it is viewed as unfair. Having resources for potential places to find shelter ready in advance for people leaving the village is advised, as at the time of a person's exit the conflict may overshadow the ability to support that person with next steps.

Staffing Needed at Villages



*When establishing expectations for how long residents might be allowed to stay at the village, remember that in order to transition to permanent housing, they need an available place to transition into. In 2018, a regional government that serves Clackamas, Multnomah and Washington counties estimated that the greater Portland area is at least 48,000 affordable units short of what is needed. This needs to be recognized before unrealistic expectations are put on both the villagers and the village support staff that assist in identifying permanent housing opportunities. Most villages encourage a maximum one-year time frame at the village, but provide extensions as long as villagers continue to participate in programs aimed at transition preparation.*



*"Well it's probably become more casual in a lot of ways. Yeah. I mean well, still we have making sure we have a quorum for certain things. But other than when it comes to a new members, or potential new members, it's mostly we can just get together and have a conversation, and don't worry about structuring it or having an agenda, or at least less so now than before maybe. So things have become more casual, and people are able to work out more things just through conversation and not having to vote on things."*

*—Villager, Hazelnut Grove*

*"That sense of empowerment. We're the ones to make that decision. We're the ones who have to follow through with that decision. If we don't want the Village ran a certain way, then we will go back before membership and we will bring it before another vote."*

*—Villager, Dignity Village*

*"I have a voice at the meetings, if I ever choose to use it. If I have a concern and I bring it up to one of the service providers, it's generally ... I generally won't say anything unless I feel like it's getting out of hand. Of course, by the time I feel it's been getting out of hand, they're already aware of it and have already taken appropriate measures to correct it. In that aspect, yeah, I have a voice and I'm free to exercise that, whether it be at the weekly meetings, or if I want to go when there's a service provider here and spend 15 or 20 minutes talking to them about it."*

*—Villager, Clackamas County Veterans Village*

# Toward a More Equitable Village



### *Spotlight: Marisa Zapata*

*"For people of color, the importance of acceptance, and the concerns about discrimination dominated many survey questions. When asked 'What would make you feel more supported in community?' Native Americans listed 'fewer incidents of racial descrimination' almost as frequently as food. This is a clear message: 'I need to not be discriminated against at the same level as I need food for survival.' Belonging to the group and being accepted means survival, not only in terms of who gets resources but also in terms of acknowledging basic human dignity. Similarly, Black community members listed having more positive neighbor interactions almost as often as food in what would make them feel supported. For Black people, apprehension about racism was strongly tied to worries about moving back into housing. Racism from the property manager and living with people who were not Black were second and third only to losing housing itself. When we asked 'How do you know that a place or organization will understand your racial identity?' The most frequent answers included 'people who work there look like you,' 'you feel accepted for who you are,' and 'you do not experience racism or discrimination.' Latinos and Native Americans listed 'people who work there talk like you' even more frequently than the need for workers who look like them. Just as important for Native Americans was 'your concerns about how you are treated because of your race or ethnicity are acted on.'"*

*—Dr. Marisa Zapata, director of PSU's HRAC, from Op-Ed in Street Roots (12/2/2020) discussing a survey of 383 people to determine what do people experiencing homelessness actually need to live their lives fully and move into housing?*

People of color are disproportionately represented among those experiencing homelessness, but villages have overwhelmingly served white residents. BIPOC villagers also report lower levels of belonging and acceptance in their villages. In our research, BIPOC villagers were twice as likely to report feeling unwelcome in their villages because of their race or ethnicity compared to White villagers. The same systemic structures of racism and inequity need to be confronted and addressed in order to create villages that truly support people of color. Villages that have been more diverse and/or increased diversity over time to more equitably serve the houseless population with demographics of those reflected by the greater population of those experiencing homelessness suggest a few key strategies for future villages.

Villages whose founding **members/leader-**

**ship** include people of color have a much greater likelihood of creating and maintaining (at least for the first few years) a diverse village make-up. Villages with significant self-governance or co-governance rely on word-of-mouth recruitment, which may perpetuate biases and population identity. Hazelnut Grove has been more diverse and representative of the demographics of those experiencing homelessness in Portland than many other villages. Village organizers attribute this to the fact that BIPOC and transgender individuals were highly represented from the beginning among the original villagers and founders. For a community being built through word of mouth and social processes, this naturally attracted and included more individuals with historically marginalized identities that would feel safe and welcome at the village (let alone even know about it or receive invitations to visit). Also, supporting this demographic was one of Hazelnut Grove's five rules established by the villagers, which prohibits discriminatory speech and behavior. There is also a restorative justice mechanism within the village's self-governance rules that villagers may pursue if they feel they have been discriminated against. At a managed village run by a nonprofit organization, discrimination policies likely fall under the organization's general policies, which may apply to a wide range of housing, services, and communities not specific to the village model.

Villages that have **staff/support that are people of color** become more diverse following the onboarding of these key people. Individuals with lived experience with systemic discrimination within organizations such as those addressing homelessness are much more adept at identifying issues within the structures of their own organization. Of course, this requires a recognition of this crucial expertise and full support of the parent organization for this to be truly effective. Kenton Women's Village went from all white to consisting of 50 percent people of color when a Black woman joined the village management, and the intake process began to include race as a significant factor in their system for evaluating applicants.

Villages with management structures should create **new protocols** for potential candidates similar to a vulnerability index that considers race and identity as important factors on an assessment. With vouchers for housing and access to other services, individual vulnerabilities are often used for evaluation, as opposed to considering structural vulnerabilities in spite of significant research indicating that this should be a leading metric. Emphasizing individual vulnerabilities ends up prioritizing white people and leads to decreased opportunities for people of color. This is true of the intake process of villages as well.

**Strategic partnerships** with other nonprofits whose missions support people of color plays a major role in ensuring a more equitable village. These partnerships have the potential to lead to outcomes such as village referrals, insight into important organizational critiques around equity, and access to resources specifically for people of color. These outcomes help avoid the common response of villages as to why it is primarily serving a white population: that very few people of color have applied to join the village.

Including people of color on the **design team** in the village's earliest stages is another goal that village creators should aim for. Simply providing access to a village does not mean that the individual and shared space is culturally sensitive or a safe and welcoming atmosphere for people of color. While the architecture and other design professions remain woefully non-inclusive (at last count, there were only four registered architects who identified as Black in the entire state of Oregon), there is a growing number of emerging professionals and extremely talented architecture students who represent a range of backgrounds that can contribute their professional talents and invaluable insights from lived experience as part of a village design team. Design teams can and should also include stakeholders who are non-designers.

Finally, **villages created specifically for people of color** and other historically marginalized communities should be considered in order to promote a safe, culturally specific, and community-centric environment. Interest was expressed for these types of villages among some villagers. Portland's COVID-response Creating Conscious Communities with People Outside (C3PO) encampment/villages hosted both a BIPOC village and a LQBTQ+ village (though they were not included in the scope of HRAC's village research). The AfroVillage is an extremely promising movement led by LaQuida Landford centered on addressing the needs of unhoused individuals with a focus on racial disparities and inequalities, with emerging projects ranging from resource stations utilizing old light rail cars to alternative shelter that leads to home/land ownership serving Black communities.

*Villages designated for specific marginalized groups may be more vulnerable to becoming targets of outside hostility and violence. Additional attention to site design, building relationships with neighbors, and respecting the requests of the villagers that address comfort and safety will be needed. One example of such considerations that may be instructive involves the naming of Kenton Women's Village. The name for the project was determined by the organizing team before there was any village in place. It was useful to communicate to the public the intention of the village, as well as potential future villagers. However, the name has caused quite a few potential villagers to decide not to join the village specifically because having the word "women" in the title makes them feel unsafe. Women coming from domestic violence situations have said that it feels like a sign that tells predators that this is a good place to find targets.*

## Key Elements to Ensuring a More Equitable Village

**Diversity among a village's founders/leadership**

**People of color serving as village support staff**

**Intake protocols that include race as significant factor toward a person's vulnerability for experiencing homelessness**

**Close partnerships with organizations that specifically serve people of color**

**A diverse village design/ development team**



**LGBTQ+** individuals are also disproportionately represented among the population experiencing homelessness. The loss of one's social support due to discrimination, rejection, and alienation are major contributors to the beginning of homelessness for many, and LGBTQ+ youth account for particularly high numbers of youth homelessness. Finding safe spaces and an accepting community on and off the street can be extremely challenging for members of this community. Shelters may not be accepting or respectful of one's identity, and conflicts among other shelter users remain a potential source of conflict even when they are. Village organizers should build in strong antidiscimination policies and make these expectations clear to candidates considering joining the village. Villages dedicated to exclusively serving LGBTQ+ individuals should be considered in order to ensure the inclusion of spaces, programs, and services that are able to address the particular needs of this population.

*"We have a long history of living communally in chosen families because of the systematic breaks from our birth families/communities. Sylvia Rivera (the transwoman who threw the first molotov at Stonewall and best friend of Marsha P. Johnson who threw the first brick) created STAR House using a proto-village model that was grounded in drag mom culture and based first in a truck and then a squatted building. Traditional shelters are often religious and hire people with very bigoted views either unintentionally or aggressively. Many shelter policies and designs are hostile to LGBTQ+ people. Gendering spaces, not allowing privacy, cattle showers or bathrooms, separating people from their pets and partners, making queer people sleep in separate places or wear garments that clearly identify them to staff (supposedly for their own "safety"), etc. Villages are more aligned with the survival strategies that queer people make for ourselves and give them the autonomy to design the right fit for whatever that community is needing or organizing itself around."*

*—Victory LaFara, village program specialist, JOIN*

# Village Neighbors



Villages can provide an important alternative to congregate shelter support for people experiencing homelessness. When villages are located in neighborhoods where goods, services, and transit are available, residents have the opportunity to live stably and access support. Ideally, people living in villages will be able to move into permanent housing shortly, and their time in a resource rich neighborhood can help facilitate that.

Neighbors to villages, or proposed village sites, are key partners in creating and maintaining a village. Neighbors may form welcoming committees for future villagers, and work to educate their neighbors about what a village will actually be like. Some neighbors go one step further and become village model advocates where they go to other neighborhoods to encourage residents to welcome their own village.

Housed neighbors can also provide important avenues to village residents' integration to the larger community. This might look like neighbors pitching in to help build a village, or be as simple as saying nothing about the village. This could also include donating, attending on-going meetings, or waving and walking by.

Still, housed neighbors often raise concerns about villages coming to their neighborhoods. People working to site villages would benefit from understanding the knowledge, perceptions, and thinking of neighbors living next to the villages in this report. Ideally, this knowledge should help village proponents have greater and faster siting processes while also addressing the impacts of a new model of shelter. As a reminder, working with housed neighbors should not convey a message that they have a right to stop people experiencing homelessness from living in their neighborhood whether they become housed, or take up residence in a village.

## What people know about homelessness

Working with future neighbors often requires teaching people about homelessness. When asked what causes homelessness about 50% of people living near villages identified the lack of services and/or housing as part of the top three drivers.

> *"The thing I found that was really interesting about it is there was all of this anticipation about what it was going to be and what it wasn't going to be. In this absence of information, the people worked it up to being this really horrible thing, and they were angry about it. But then the second it opened, they couldn't stop people from wanting to be involved and wanting to help, to the point where people were dropping off furniture at the gate."*
>
> *-Village Neighbor*

While services were selected more often than housing, neighbors recognized that people needed supports and housing, offering an important starting point for education. Unfortunately neighbors also misidentified substance use as one of the top three causes of homelessness (62%). About a quarter of neighbors identified homelessness as a choice, indicating the need for more education about the main drivers.

Perhaps most reassuringly, neighbors do know what solves homelessness. 80% identified supportive services, and 60% identified housing as solutions to homelessness. These selections far exceeded shelter and alternative shelter options, and both services and housing were identified as the most effective solution.

Village proponents, and homelessness advocates, educators, and service providers should continue to work with housed neighbors to understand that the only way to end homelessness is through housing. Describing how villages can be a connection to services, including substance use disorder management, and provide stability that people need as they wait for housing, may help neighbors understand how their support fits into a larger ecosystem of support to solve homelessness.

## Involvement

The announcement of a village coming to a neighborhood draws a lot of initial reaction - some supportive of a village, and others opposed to its siting in the neighborhood. The debates can be intense with neighbors organizing "pro" and "anti" groups. In one neighborhood future village neighbors organized to vote out the neighborhood association representatives that worked to welcome a village.

*During the planning process for the original Kenton Women's Village, village organizers wanted to offer the neighborhood a chance to vote on whether to welcome the village into their community or not. While this approval was not required, as a pilot project seeking to prove the village model as an asset rather than a liability, it was important to the teem to seek community buy-in on the project. Over the course of several months, the group met with Kenton neighbors regularly, including through a series of participatory design workshops and charrettes, which are intense periods of collaborative design working toward a common solution. After a rigorous engagement process, the neighborhood felt ready to decide, voting to welcome the village into their community in a decisive vote of over two to one in favor. While this process deeply involved the neighborhood, a vote is absolutely not recommended for future village projects (or other developments to support people experiencing homelessness). While well intentioned, people should not have a say in who their neighbors are, and this becomes very evident if you imagine neighbors voting on whether to allow a building for a protected class (race, sex, age, etc.).*



*"The way that we started was with a good neighbor agreement...for a while the tone of the meetings was about us giving input on the rules for people to live in the village. I mean, I'll be really transparent. I was openly participating in that. I think I had the best intentions in mind, but it wasn't until I think I caught myself mid-sentence and I'm just like, 'Wait, what are you doing?' We were arguing about whether the women who lived there were going to be allowed to have guests. And there was high anxiety about them being allowed to have male guests and male guests after a certain period."*

*-Village Neighbor*

As discussed later, the anti-village voices may not be as prevalent as they appear. This means that local governments have the option of minimizing the impact of these opinions. Some people who were opposed to or not comfortable with a village opening in their neighborhood reported changing their minds. From this group, neighbors shared even becoming village advocates where they visit other neighborhoods where villages are under consideration and share their experiences.

After the opening of a village, about 20% of neighbors made a point of donating goods, and 18% drove or walked by the village intentionally. A much smaller set of people reported more substantive engagement such as visiting villages, or speaking out about them.

## Addressing concerns

One of the top concerns neighbors had before the village opened was behavior of the residents (44%). That dropped to 29% once the village opened, falling from the second concern to the fourth. Increases in trash and other waste remained the highest concern, falling only somewhat before and after the village opened. Communities should ensure villages are opened with adequate waste management support, and monitor whether people not living in the village begin using it as a place to deposit their waste.

The number of complaints, hostile meetings, and general pushback village siting receives may make it appear as though a neighborhood is united in its viewpoints. Yet, before the villages opened, 25% of neighbors had no concerns. After opening that number increased to 31% of residents. Before the village opened, 20% of neighbors had not heard of it, and 13% only learned of it when walking past the village. 43% percent of neighbors were most concerned about the well-being and safety of and for the villagers.

*"I went to the first meeting concerned about urban canopy, urban tree canopy. I had no interest in housing issues at all before that meeting. So just for the fact that it opened my mind to the existence of the problems and the existence of solutions and working on the problems, yes. That's how it changed me and I still, to this day, that's one of my interests."*

*-Village Neighbor*

After the village opened, a third of survey respondents were still concerned about the well-being of village residents. The outrage that some residents have does not capture the range of people's concerns.

Two common concerns raised by neighbors include property value decreases, and crime increases. In examining property value changes, in three of the four neighborhoods that are adjacent to residential homes there were no significant changes in property values. The fourth neighborhood did indicate that property values of the nearby residential properties to one of the villages did drop slightly in relation to the opening of the village. However, there are several other factors that could explain those changes. Further analysis over a longer period of time would help better explain this relationship.

After reviewing the various methods to analyze crime patterns, and examining crime data for the past several years, we could not find a way to robustly analyze criminal activity in relation to the presence of a village. The changes produced during the pandemic added to those analytical challenges.

## Communicating with Village Neighbors

Most residents reported hearing about the village for the first time through some form of electronic communication (58%). The communication channels include neighborhood association newsletters or social media, and other social media outlets. Surprisingly, 20% of residents learned about it after the fact. Communities should work to spread the word about a village coming to the neighborhood early, and before it is reported by the press or as gossip on social media. Given that people had not heard of the village ahead of time but received our survey indicates that there are communication channels not being utilized. Neighbors reported using Nextdoor, Facebook, or online news sources most often when finding out information about their neighborhood electronically. After Nextdoor, talking with neighbors or friends was the most common way of finding out about neighborhood information.



## Neighbors near Villages and Neighbors not near villages

Certain perceptions differ when we consider people living near villages and people not living near villages. A few stand out as noteworthy, as they may indicate changing beliefs when thinking about homelessness in neighbors' own "backyards," rather than homelessness in general. Neighbors living near villages identified the primary driver of homelessness as substance use at a higher rate than neighbors not living near villages (35% vs. 29%). In both cases, substance use was selected at a significantly higher rate as the primary driver despite people. At this juncture whether attitudinal differences are the result of a village opening is not known. Further research will help explain why these differences are present. In the meantime, village supporters should work to continue educating people about homelessness.

*"In that meeting I was like, what did I move into? These people are terrible human beings. I mean, I felt like, are we in the 1950s right now? I mean, people are using such disgusting language, 'these cockroaches' and 'them', and just totally talking about houseless individuals like they were just not human. It was terrible. It's so terrible…That meeting started off what could have potentially been a positive interaction with neighbors. I mean, it was vile. It was a disgusting meeting."*

*-Village Neighbor*

*"That's where even at the tiny home, the four walls, the roof and a locking door, even if it's just big enough to fit a bed and a little bit extra, I think is so empowering and brings back just basic dignity so they can start getting back to the habits of what the rest of us take for granted what it feels like to sleep in a bed."*

*-Village Neighbor*

# Considerations for Future Village Initiatives



The proliferation and range of villages in Portland and around the country suggests that this is no longer a radical or alternative solution, but an increasingly common option for shelter used by cities, nonprofit organizations, and/or individual communities. This increase provides the opportunity to explore how the village model can be better integrated into solutions to end homelessness and the obligation to iterate upon existing models to better serve villagers. There is no shortage of possibilities or ideas for new models of alternative shelter. PSU's School of Architecture has conducted several architectural design studios exploring this topic with students generating and answering speculative questions in this area for public exhibition, such as: What if a night market model were applied to houseless services? What if a village was a healing garden? What if transit stops transformed into micro-shelters at night? What if a village was a community food hub? While this type of visioning plays an important role to advance conversations around how alternative shelter and villages might be reconsidered within the urban fabric, the following concepts have emerged specifically from HRAC's research initiative on the village model, and are informed by those with direct experience creating, operating, and or/living in a village.

## City/Village Liaison

The six villages within HRAC's study were not in meaningful communication with one another. Those involved in village design and management lamented not knowing how other villages were addressing problems similar to their own. Having a dedicated person who can be the liaison between all of the villages and the city could allow for a more efficient use of resources and lead to better outcomes for villagers. Those involved in village support at a staff level are spread too thin in their job responsibilities to be able to take this initiative themselves, and may not feel empowered to do so in any case because of the organization that they work for. The city could play an important role by providing this person(s) as an advisor/consultant. It would be crucial to have this position be flexible to spend time at each village and connect with agencies that could offer support without having responsibilities shift to administrative tasks.

## Villages as a Phase Toward Permanent Housing

The solution to homelessness is housing (and supportive services), and there is concern among many that that villages and other types of alternative shelter are a distraction from the larger goal of creating more permanent, affordable housing. With adequate planning and creative thinking, city-sponsored villages could be designed to actually promote and incentivize permanent housing. The site of Kenton Women's Village during its pilot period has since become host to an innovative co-housing project for formerly houseless individuals led by Transition Projects and designed by Holst Architecture, accommodating 72 units. While these projects happened independently, it is easy to imagine how shared investment and infrastructure installation could benefit both projects and reduce overall costs for potential future housing. Villages planned on city-owned properties could also be partially funded through investments that bring upgrades like utilities and necessary site-work (sidewalks, curb cuts, etc.) to the site to improve future sale as a housing site, while benefiting the village in the immediate future.

*Image credit: Zach Putnam*

*Image credit: Holst Architecture*



EX

### *Example: AfroVillage Home*

*The AfroVillage Home is an innovative alternative shelter model based on equity and collective ownership that aims to address the systemic barriers that make place, safety, food, and economic opportunities less accessible to Portland's Black and Brown communities. Beginning as a shelter to serve the immediate needs of African-American individuals experiencing homelessness, the site will evolve into an expanded alternative shelter model equipped with common facilities, pods, and community gardens, before eventually transforming into permanent housing. This model, centered on empowerment, inclusion, and equity, will be phased in over stages in order to take the necessary time to thoughtfully engage the community that will be directly impacted by it. At the end of the process, Black collective ownership will be achieved: the ownership of the house and the land will be transferred from the city to its Black residents, allowing them to become owners and movement leaders within food systems, placemaking, and economic development.*

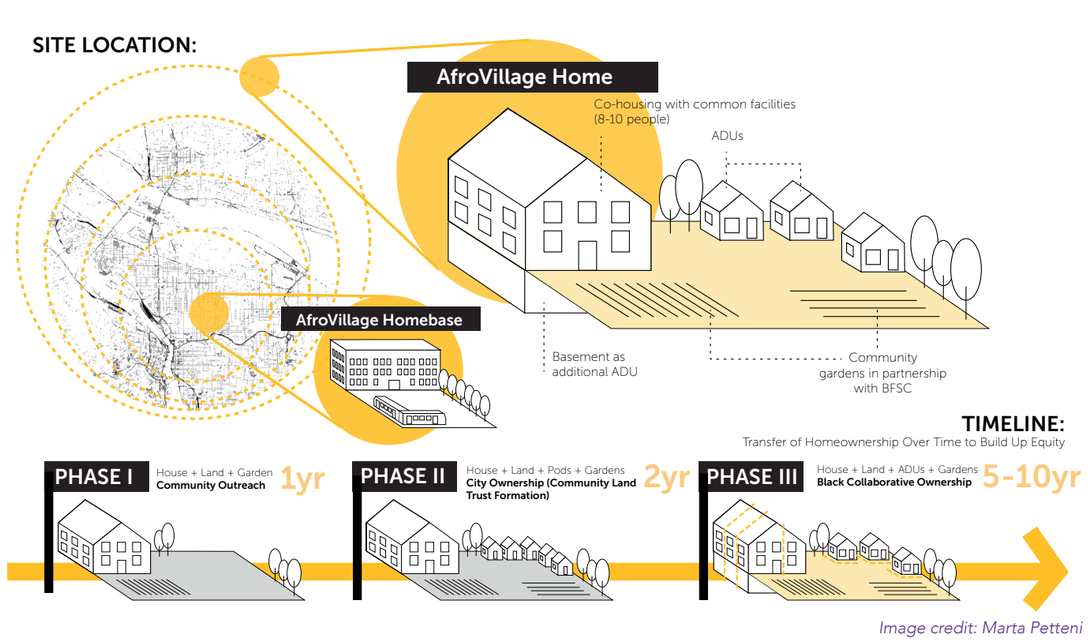
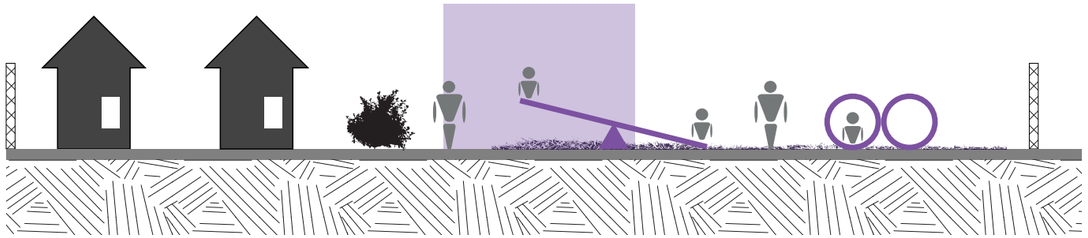



*Image credit: Marta Petteni*

## A Village for Parents

Villages have limited facilities and are low-barrier environments, making them less than ideal places for children. However, 19 percent of villagers surveyed had children under the age of 18 and a desire for family to visit. As villages become increasingly common forms of alternative shelter, it may be useful to design select villages to support family health and visitation. A village focused on serving parents of children under 18 may require additional background checks and involve incorporating spaces for children to play, rest, and gather when they visit their parents on a short-term basis.





## Villages Designed Around Activity/Interest

Responses to homelessness often begin from a perspective of deficit (addressing poverty and lack of housing), as opposed to the origins of the village model with Dignity Village and others that emphasized the assets of their coalition of activists to create a self-governed, ecologically minded community. Village creators should consider beginning with an asset-based approach, which may leverage the specific interests, skills, and humanity of the villagers. There are powerful examples of this approach in housing for older adults by groups such as ENGage, where thriving communities are not organized around a perceived shared deficit (old age and its associated health and lifestyle needs/impacts), but the assets of the group, such as artistic interest as is the case with the Burbank Senior Artists Colony. Villagers within HRAC's study largely supported the idea of villages created around interests or identity. A village focused on farming/gardening was their favorite concept followed by a village for those interested in art and music.

## Villages and Emergency Preparedness

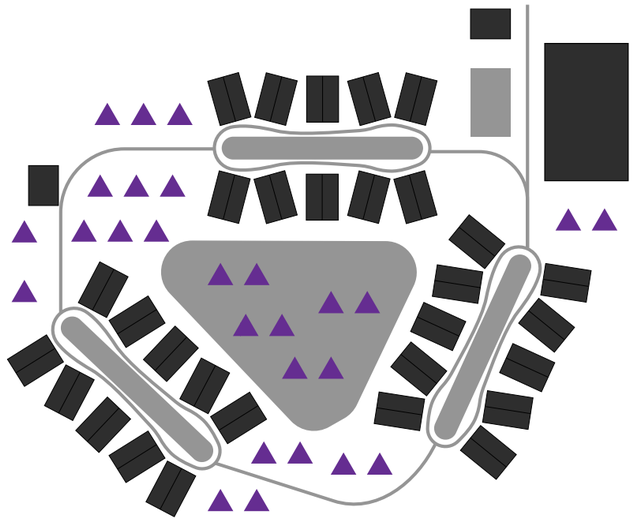
The village model began to grow quickly following Portland's state of emergency declaration on housing and homelessness in 2015, and they embody the mobility, speed of implementation, and efficiency of shared amenities found in other emergency response typologies. However, village creators have yet to explore how they can significantly

A plant lover at the Kenton Women's Village creates a vibrant living area around her pod.

Sign made by villagers at Hazelnut Grove from recycled tarps as part of an effort to place around the city. The project was led by an artist-in-residence who worked with the village, Wynde Dyer.

help prepare for other emergencies such as an earthquake when the number of people experiencing homelessness and in need of basic services will skyrocket. With thoughtful planning, villages could be designed to expand and accommodate significantly more people in the event of a disaster in such a way as to benefit villagers in the near term and communities surrounding villages in a potential emergency scenario. Self-governed villages already explore aspects of this concept to support people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in severe weather conditions. At Dignity Village, the community's greenhouse becomes a bunkhouse in extreme weather to host 10 or more additional people. At Hazelnut Grove, the shared library pod often hosts those in need of shelter for the night, and the village has also organized a means of distributing donations received at the village to those living unsheltered. If a village was developed with the need to accommodate unsheltered individuals in the event of extreme weather, a natural disaster, or a public health emergency as a primary design driver, villages could serve as important support structures for a city. If designed sensitively, villages could benefit from the extra resources when the village is not at emergency capacity but still function well when additional individuals temporarily expand the village numbers.

▲ **Emergency Camp**





*"Yeah, anybody is welcome in here from 8 a.m. to 10 at night. If you want a shower, though, it costs you $5. You're supposed to provide your own propane, but most of us will make sure you get a hot shower if there's anybody around to ask. Most of us will willingly let you borrow a tank for a couple of minutes."*

*—Villager, Dignity Village*

*"Being here is good for me because it gives me a place that I can bring people, my friends that don't have something like this. It gives them a place that's warm. And that's why I do what I can to actually stay here. So I can bring friends that are in the same place I am. And I know they will be safe here."*

*— Villager, Hazelnut Grove*

*"I mean, if somebody needs a shower and they're on the street, come on in. We'll set you in the shower room. Do you need somewhere to stay and we got an open place? We'll make it. We're not going to leave you on the street. If you need help, we're going to help the guy."*

*— Villager, Hazelnut Grove*

# Village Portraits

The following portraits were created by Jung Choothian. Jung is a graduate student at Portland State University in the Master of Urban Studies program, as well as the Graduate Certificate in Public Interest Design. He also holds a Master of Architecture from PSU. Jung created these portraits as part of a course by arrangement exploring participatory storytelling within the context of design. Village stakeholders were invited to have a portrait and quote included in this document and were collaborators in the creative process of the portraiture, choosing how they would like to be depicted.

# Victory

Villages are mutual aid communities, democratically operated and governed by villagers; I simply serve and support their cause.

Dignity refers to me as "the Village Bulldog" because I watch out for what impacts them and fiercely protect their rights and interests and relentlessly advocate for their needs.

My safest spaces are either gathered with friends, sitting on a rock in a creek, sitting in my stone circle fire pit, or sitting quietly deep inside the center of the Loughcrew passage tomb surrounded by those beautiful ancestral carvings

My life before has been traumatic and hard. But I have found strength, survival, and joy in sharing resources with other people. My life now is a lot more stable and comfortable than it has ever been. I am very grateful for the handouts and hand ups and shoulders that I've been given to get me here. Now I'm able to focus on helping the many others who are where I was.

I believe strongly that people should have control over their housing choices and be able to select from a broad range of housing options and supports as they transition out of homelessness. It has been an honor to talk with villagers about their experiences living in the six villages we included in this project. Learning from them about what works and what makes them feel supported has helped me better understand the village model and the role it plays in the array of housing and service options available to people. I appreciate that villagers trusted us with their stories, and I hope this work reflects the wisdom they shared so generously.

Grey Townley

Raven Justice "Feather"

I am all for outside support that helps people achieve their goals, but I'm not okay with anyone dictating how someone else lives. People who own houses don't have to deal with that and the same rights and privileges of homeowners should be extended to people in villages. I have lived in both a self-governed village and a managed village, and the self-governed model is much more supportive of a family setting and of my identities as a disabled, married, gay, multicultural, Native American person. This became even more evident when I was badly injured and had challenges with getting access for visitors to come help me due to rules at the managed village. - RavenWolf RisingPhoenix SchmickJustice "Feather"

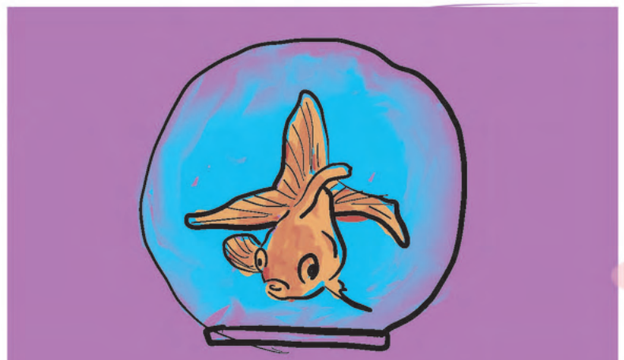
# LaQuida Landford

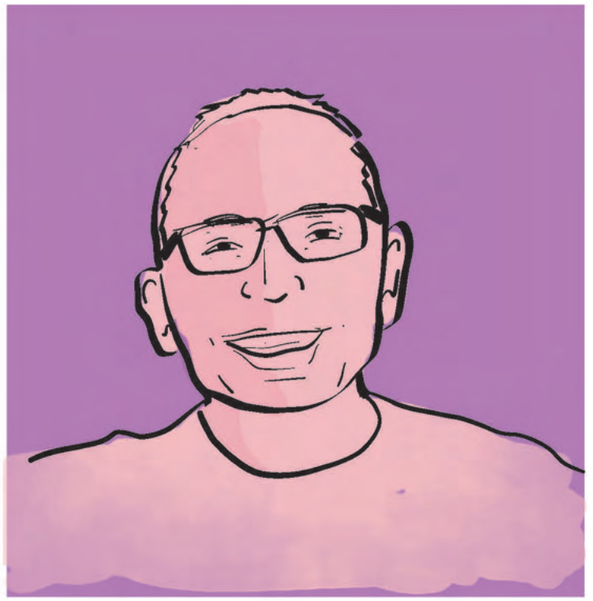
The AfroVillage is more than a physical space, it is a movement rooted in the vision of Portland community member and activist Laquida Landford. The movement focuses on addressing the needs of our most vulnerable population — unhoused individuals — with a focus on racial disparities and inequalities.

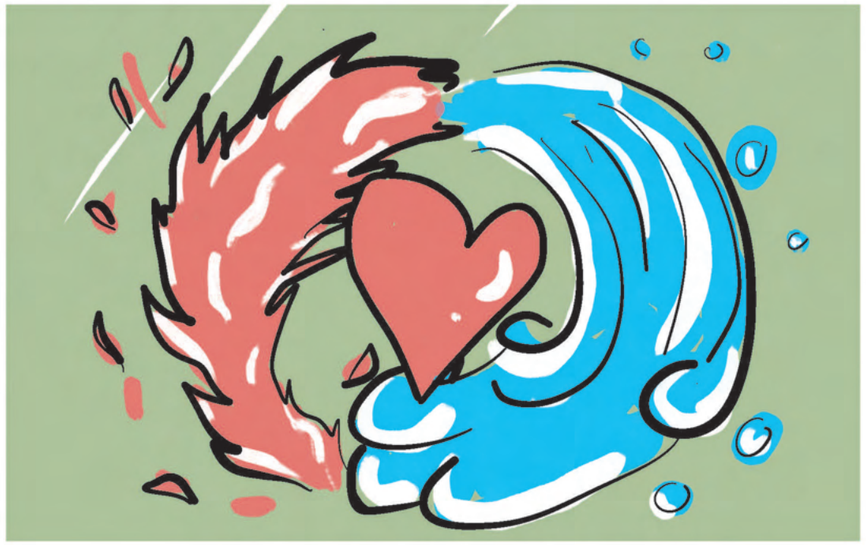
Laquida - “Q” - is a community health worker, community activist and organizer, and a community navigator with roots in Los Angeles and Belize. She serves on the Climate Friendly and Equitable Communities Rules Advisory Committee for the state of Oregon.

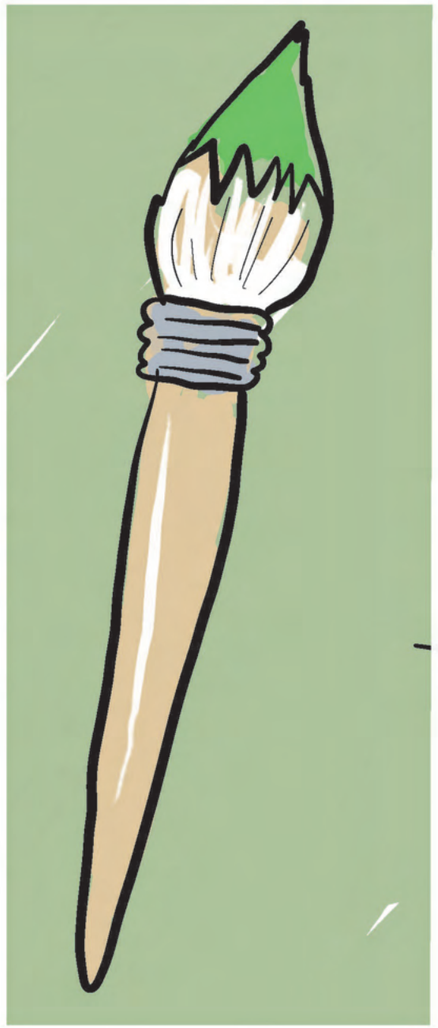
I am an old lady. I have lived a long life. I am a woman with many labels - a mom, a veteran, a professional driver, a tree hugger, and an activist. I found myself with a disability due to a number of conditions which left me on a fixed income. Between a fixed income and a high cost rent, I became unhoused. Later, I went to City Hall to join my friends to bring awareness to the growing problems of homeless people. We later left City Hall and started what is now known as Hazelnut Grove. We worked hard to be a strong community, to help each other build a village to accommodate us and others going through a homeless crisis. To fight the crisis, we need more “obtainable permanent housing” now.

Meg Garcia



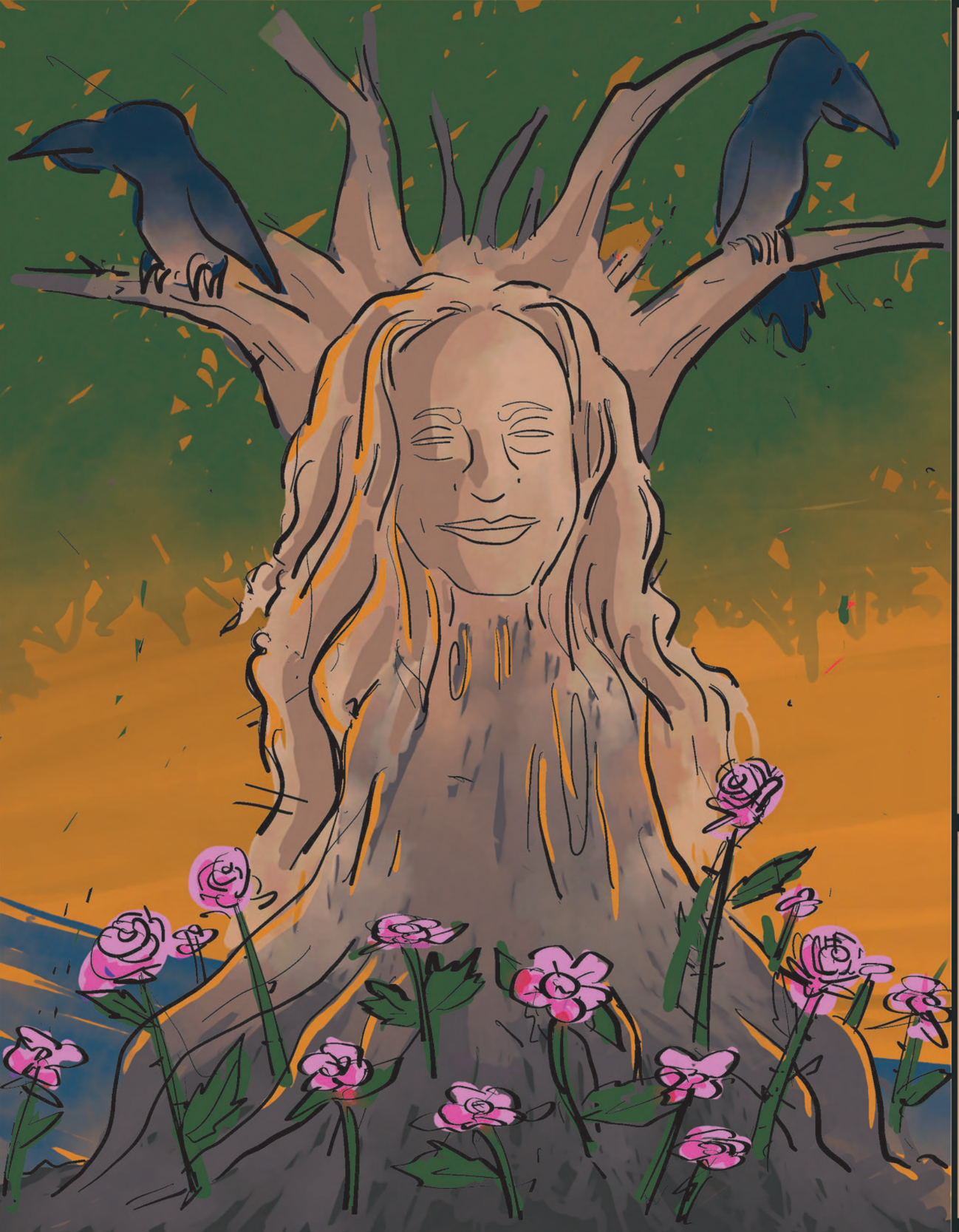






# Ptery Lieght

**After my time in Portland at the** villages, I went to Standing Rock and did a lot of learning and reflecting. I saw a lot of healing - children given leadership and responsibility from elders and everybody mattered. Just like I witnessed at Dignity Village, people circled up and made deep connections. It demonstrated that fire and water are important medicines - they are life and need to be shared and respected. At Hazelnut Grove we had a fire that fed people with its warmth and brought people together. At Dignity Village I learned to knit during the general assemblies so I wouldn't be part of conflict, but conflict is part of fire as well. At Hazelnut Grove, there is no water - but villagers holding the place of medicine people went and collected the water for everyone. Some people made fire, some people retrieved water, and others dealt with waste - composting and taking out trash. I am a fire starter but I have lots of wind. I am a gentle wind and I know that it takes sacrifice to feed a fire, and trees had to grow and sacrifice themselves to make that fire.

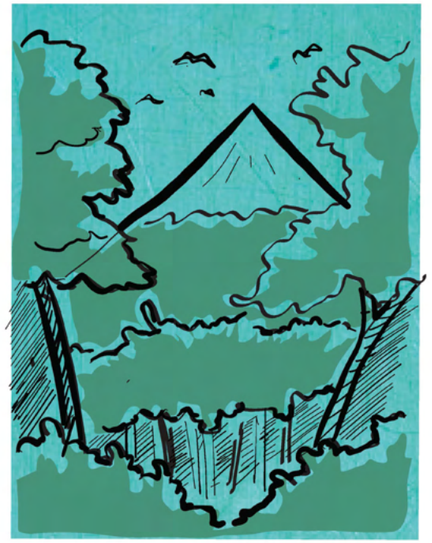


For about a decade now, I have lived in a few community houses that value intersectional justice and collective liberation for all beings. But despite our relative access to certain material resources, I find that the villagers are much more rooted in community principles than any of the housed community homes I lived in.

It's been humbling to realize that despite my best intentions to be a good housed ally, I consistently meet my own shadows of grief, savorism and classism in this work. Every time I am in relationship with villagers, I have another opportunity to deepen this practice.

To me, these villages are profoundly sacred sites of deep healing, transformation and radical futurisms. They deserve our humble support as we can learn so much about this world and how to live into our liberation if we choose to stay connected to those most actively resisting our violently oppressive society and rekindling our innate connection to each other,  to the land and to ourselves.

Ridhi D'Cruz



The fact that we need alternative shelter models like villages at all represents an astonishing failure of this country to acknowledge that housing is a human right and to provide permanent housing to all. Yet the village model was created by people experiencing homelessness and, when done thoughtfully, can result in a critical resource for people. Architects supporting a village effort will find that the work raises all of the most significant questions within architecture, from how to bring light, material richness, and thermal comfort into a space, to how we might strive to live as individuals and as part of a community. Architects can learn remarkable insights about design by collaborating with villagers who have become experts in these matters. Personally, I am profoundly grateful for the partnerships and friendships I have made through my work in this area.

Todd Ferry

Other 10 (+5) pods
are constructed in
Clackamas
x 15(+15)
tot.15 (+15) pods
(+15)
November
December