



## Frequently Asked Questions: St. Johns village project

April 23 village open house at St. Johns Christian Church

### WHAT IS THE PLAN FOR A VILLAGE-STYLE ALTERNATIVE SHELTER IN ST. JOHNS?

The City of Portland and Multnomah County's Joint Office of Homeless Services is working with Do Good Multnomah, a shelter and housing services provider, to partner with residents of Hazelnut Grove, an established, self-organized community of people experiencing homelessness, around the establishment of a transitional shelter village in St. Johns for roughly 20 people.

Hazelnut Grove residents would be among the first group in the new village, with people experiencing homelessness in St. Johns offered priority access to fill remaining spots and then fill spots as they open when residents move forward to permanent housing.

An alternative shelter is not a camp or a campsite. It is simply a shelter program that is not facility-based, i.e. not in a single building. Alternative shelters, structured as pod villages, have tiny homes or "pods" where guests stay. They share communal buildings that house shared services and amenities such as cooking and meeting spaces, social services office space and storage.

A St. Johns village would not resemble an unsanctioned campsite. It would have sleeping pods, plumbing, electricity, nonprofit support around housing outcomes, and security features.

In October, the Joint Office identified a site on North Roberts Avenue, near North Lombard Street, as one option for providing a legal, permitted alternative shelter, after reviewing more than 400 city-owned properties.

The Joint Office and partners in the work attended two community meetings in the fall to talk about the Roberts site. A "village fair" to further explore the project was convened at Wayfinding Academy in St. Johns in January 2019. A site survey was undertaken after that.

Then, this spring, while the review of the Roberts site was under way, congregants at the St. Johns Christian Church voted to offer land at 8005 N. Richmond Ave., via lease, as an alternative to the Roberts site.

The Richmond site is larger and appears to pose fewer design challenges than the Roberts site (neighbors have constructed encroaching driveways through the city-owned land, for example). And it is much closer to community amenities such as additional bus lines, the Library, grocery stores, food assistance locations, and the County's North Portland Health Clinic.

The Joint Office shared an update about the church vote with neighbors and neighborhood groups the next day, on April 8. St. Johns Christian Church is hosting an open house mixer with community members on April 23.

### WHAT IS HAZELNUT GROVE?

Hazelnut Grove is a village-style alternative shelter community that's been operating on city-owned land in the Overlook neighborhood — but without infrastructure like water, sewer and electricity, or a service provider partner— since 2015.

It serves roughly 15 single adults and people in couples. Hazelnut Grove has a board of advisers, including neighbors and community members who live outside the Grove. It is governed through general assembly meetings; those meetings are open to neighbors to attend.

Residents at Hazelnut Grove have been involved in community work in the Overlook neighborhood, including serving on the Overlook Neighborhood Association's board. Hazelnut Grove also has built enduring and supportive relationships with nearby neighbors in Overlook that would continue even after a move. Members also volunteer in the neighborhood and for the Oregon Food Bank.

Hazelnut Grove's current site operates with donations, with some facilities and logistical support — such as trash pickup — provided by the City of Portland. Like the city's three other alternative shelters, Hazelnut Grove's current site is on city land. But it has been operating without partnership from a service provider and formal city approval.

### **WHO WOULD STAY AT THE VILLAGE AND FOR HOW LONG?**

The village would serve couples and single adults 18 and older.

Pets would be allowed. Guests would be able to have a bed as long as they need, with the expectation that they are engaging with Do Good Multnomah and working toward permanent housing. We expect the village to accommodate about 20 adults.

Participants will stay at the site subject to participation agreements that set expectations for how they treat each other and how they conduct themselves in the surrounding area. Anyone unwilling or unable to abide by these agreements will not be able to stay at the site. Drinking alcohol and using illegal drugs will be not be permitted at the village.

### **WHAT WOULD A VILLAGE IN ST. JOHNS MEAN FOR PEOPLE IN NEED LOCALLY?**

A village in St. Johns would mean significant facilities improvements for residents at Hazelnut Grove while creating opportunities for folks in St. Johns to receive shelter and services while learning from the model of community support the Grove has built. Partnership with an established provider would also mean residents would receive transitional services to move forward to permanent housing.

Do Good Multnomah, besides operating a long-time Veterans shelter in Northeast Portland, has experience working with a village. It is working with Clackamas County to operate a village-style alternative shelter for Veterans.

Do Good also has experience offering transition services, rapid rehousing assistance and developing permanent housing. You can learn more about Do Good Multnomah at [dogoodmultnomah.org/](http://dogoodmultnomah.org/).

The closest site-design comparison is the Kenton Women's Village, which you can learn more about at [www.catholiccharitiesoregon.org/provide-shelter/kenton-womens-village/](http://www.catholiccharitiesoregon.org/provide-shelter/kenton-womens-village/).

### **WHAT'S THE TIMELINE? WHO WILL FUND AND OVERSEE THE PROGRAM?**

No matter the site, it will be months before a village opens in St. Johns. A firm date has not yet been established.

Construction/installation and ongoing services and facilities would be funded by the Joint Office of Homeless Services, which also funds those services at the Kenton Women's Village and would be

the agency ultimately accountable for the program. The village would also be subject to applicable city inspection standards.

### **HOW WILL A VILLAGE FIT WITHIN THE SERVICES ALREADY OFFERED BY PARTNERS IN A HOME FOR EVERYONE, OUR COMMUNITY'S STRATEGY FOR ADDRESSING HOMELESSNESS?**

After leading a dramatic expansion that doubled year-round shelter capacity in our community, partners in A Home for Everyone, including the City of Portland and Multnomah County, are now working to transform those temporary, emergency spaces into enduring, purpose-designed shelter opportunities that serve our ultimate goal of helping neighbors keep or return to housing.

Although this kind of alternative shelter will be set up on open space, with common areas and movable pods, expectations are no different than for any other traditional shelter.

Villages must provide safe and supportive environments for their guests and help them transition to permanent housing. They also must be good neighbors to those nearby.

Alternative shelter provides a sense of community, and it's another option for people who do not want, or struggle to succeed in, facility-based shelter and don't have access to permanent housing options. It also empowers participants by giving them a voice in how their sites are governed, and allows participants to engage with community members.

It's not meant as a replacement for programs like rent assistance, housing case management or facility-based shelter, all of which successfully help thousands of neighbors in our community every year.

### **HOW CAN NEIGHBORS IN ST. JOHNS CONTRIBUTE TO A SUCCESSFUL VILLAGE?**

Village residents would be expected to contribute to their new neighborhood like any other new arrival might — including volunteering and hosting community events, co-gardening space and offering to work with volunteers. Neighbors such as those working with the St. Johns Center for Opportunity are already stepping up to help connect villagers to those opportunities.

The Kenton Women's Village, as an example, has successfully integrated itself into the Kenton neighborhood and beyond, winning honors during the most recent St. Johns Parade for a float built by residents.

Next-door neighbors at one of our facility-based shelters, the Wy'east Shelter on SE 122nd Avenue, recently raised money and organized a welcoming party for shelter residents.

Do Good Multnomah, which operates a men's Veterans shelter in Northeast Portland, also has a track record of working with other tenants in the church complex it occupies, including a preschool. On Valentine's Day, students at the school presented the Veterans with heart-shaped pizzas.

### **HOW WOULD DO GOOD MULTNOMAH ADDRESS SAFETY CONCERNS?**

Like any good neighbor, and like any other social services provider, a village must be responsible for safe and effective property management that ensures safety for the guests of the village and the village's neighbors

A few examples that build from our experience from other sanctioned villages, such as the Kenton Women's Village, Dignity Village and Right 2 Dream Too:

- The village will have a fence and gate, with an office at the gate.

- Village management will provide a liaison to the neighborhood association and a 24/7 phone number — and will facilitate meetings with neighbors as needed.
- General assembly meetings will be open to the public.
- Most importantly, the village will engage the surrounding neighbors in community activities. Meeting each other and knowing one another individually helps everyone feel comfortable, safe and a part of the neighborhood.

With respect to concerns about people with certain criminal histories receiving services at sites near residential communities, we should be clear: If an individual's criminal history precludes them from being within a certain distance of a school, they wouldn't be allowed to live at this shelter. Just as they wouldn't be allowed to live in a nearby apartment, house or tent. Do Good Multnomah will also screen out predatory sex offenders directly.

Parole and probation officers, as they do throughout our community, enforce supervision terms that set those boundaries. And they will arrest those who violate them, again, whether they live in homes of their own or are sleeping in unsanctioned campsites.

As we have in other neighborhoods, we are committed to ensuring that the program succeeds, for its residents but also for the community. And in the unlikely event that problems arise that cannot be timely addressed, we will revisit the operator, the program model, and even the continued use of the site for this kind of village community.

Do Good Multnomah would also work to ensure there is no unsanctioned camping around the village location.

For further information, go to [ahomeforeveryone.net/news/stjohnsvillage](http://ahomeforeveryone.net/news/stjohnsvillage) or contact April Rohman, senior program specialist for adult shelter at the Joint Office, at [April.Rohman@multco.us](mailto:April.Rohman@multco.us).