



**MEMORANDUM**

**To:** Kurt Triplett, City Manager

**From:** Lynn Zwaagstra, Director  
Jen Boone, Human Services Manager  
Amanda Judd, Human Services Coordinator

**Date:** October 15, 2024

**Subject:** Overview of Tiny House Program Models

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends that the City Council reviews the following memorandum with an overview of tiny house program models. This information is provided as background for future Council policy conversations and direction related to the City’s response to homelessness.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- This memorandum responds to the Council’s adopted Resolution R-5631 Declaring the City’s Commitment to Addressing Homelessness and Authorizing the City Manager to Develop a Homelessness Continuum of Care Action Plan.
- As part of the development of the Homeless Continuum of Care Action Plan, staff is presenting Council with information on efforts and collaborations of other municipalities and non-profit organizations in the region to respond to homelessness.
- Through the information provided in this memorandum, the Council will learn about Tiny House Villages, including how they are established and operated, what services are provided, the staffing structure, operating costs, and program outcomes.
- Should Council wish to discuss the possibility of pursuing a Tiny House Village in Kirkland, staff can return to a future Council meeting to provide more Kirkland specific details and answer questions.

**BACKGROUND:**

Figure 1: Kirkland Homelessness Continuum of Care

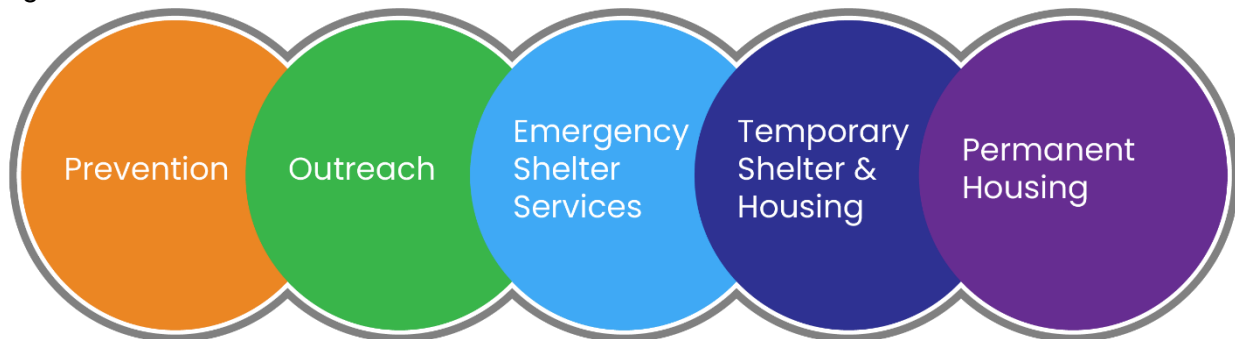


Figure 1 demonstrates the five overarching stages of Kirkland’s current Homelessness Continuum of Care. Tiny House Villages would be part of the Temporary Shelter and Housing response; however, Kirkland does not currently have any Tiny House Villages.

## **History of Tiny House Villages in the Region**

Low Income Housing Institute (LIHI) is the leading builder and operator of Tiny House Villages in the region. Incorporated in 1991 to create community resources for self-management and develop innovative housing solutions, LIHI develops, owns, and operates housing for the benefit of low-income, homeless, and formerly homeless people in Washington state and administers a range of supportive service programs to assist in maintaining stable housing and increasing self-sufficiency.

LIHI began building tiny house shelters in 2015 as a response to the homelessness crisis as a replacement for tents to be safer, weatherproof, and lockable. LIHI currently operates and/or supports 18 Tiny House Villages in Seattle, Tacoma, Olympia, Skyway, Tukwila, and Bellingham. LIHI is driven by the belief that tiny houses allow program participants to reclaim their dignity through finding a pathway to permanent housing, employment, and connection to supportive services.

## **Staff Tours of Pallet Homes in Vancouver, Washington**

A subset of the HART Team, Human Services staff, and City Manager's Office staff conducted a site visit to City of Vancouver, WA on September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023 to meet their HART Team and visit two tiny home 'safe stay' communities and one safe parking program. The goal was to learn about program operations, the siting process, and impact the programs have on supporting unhoused community members to achieve stable housing.

In 2021, Vancouver City Council approved a plan to create temporary, supportive Safe Stay Communities for those experiencing homelessness in Vancouver, Washington. The City of Vancouver has since brought four Safe Stay Communities online as of December 2023: The Outpost, Hope Village, 415 West, and Kiggins Village. Each temporary communities offers 20 two-person structures that offer shelters for up to 40 individuals. The City contracts with a nonprofit organization to provide 24/7 onsite management and services. Each community includes fencing for privacy, sanitation and hygiene services, and health services. In August 2022, the second Safe Stay Community, Hope Village released the following information in the annual report: 14 people transitioned to permanent housing, 39 people completed housing assessments, 17 people obtained identification documents, 8 people secured employment, 10 people were reunified with family, and 1 person received their high school diploma. The full report includes resources provided, demographic information, and Fire/EMS information.<sup>1</sup> Each site currently costs approximately \$1 million annually to support operations funded by Vancouver's Affordable Housing Sales Tax and Affordable Housing Fund.<sup>2</sup>

The City of Vancouver partnered with Pallet<sup>3</sup> to create the four Safe Stay Communities. Pallet is a public benefit corporation whose mission is to build supportive, interim shelter for displaced communities under a dignity lens. The cost to purchase a pallet depends on the size of shelter, add-ons, and assembly services. Pallet also provides hygiene units and community rooms, which allows for on-site services and amenities available to ensure privacy, community, and dignity. Estimated start-up costs for construction and purchase of 20 pallet homes, community room, and hygiene amenities costs approximately \$1 million. Attachment 2 includes Pallet's Price Sheet. A pallet can be assembled in under one hour, so a village can be constructed in a day once a site is secured, and a service provider is identified.

---

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.cityofvancouver.us/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/3515366029edd9caf7d479b9a7e8a3cb\\_SafeStay\\_HopeVillage\\_1Year\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.cityofvancouver.us/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/3515366029edd9caf7d479b9a7e8a3cb_SafeStay_HopeVillage_1Year_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cityofvancouver.us/economic-prosperity-and-housing/affordable-housing-fund/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://palletshelter.com/>

## **City Council and Staff Tours of Temple Miracle and Henderson Tiny House Villages**

Mayor Curtis, Deputy Mayor Arnold, and Councilmembers Black, Falcone, Sweet, and Tymczynsyn, and the City Manager, along with human services staff, toured two LIHI operated Tiny House Villages on June 10, 2024. A group of City staff from the City Manager's Office, Fire, Parks and Community Services, Planning and Building, Police, and Public Works toured one of the same sites on September 24, 2024. The purpose of touring the sites was to better understand how tiny house programs operate in the region and observe two sites that specialize in supporting different community needs. Participants visited one high acuity site serving individuals and couples and one site serving families, individuals, and couples. The remainder of this memorandum provides additional information about Tiny House Village operations and requirements, much of which was provided to Councilmembers during their tour.

### **DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS:**

#### **Operational Overview of Tiny House Villages**

Operations, design, and guidelines are streamlined for all of LIHI's Tiny House Villages and are highlighted below. Utilization and eligibility criteria vary by site to support specific community needs reflected by that site's partnerships, onsite services, and referral sources. For example, there are tiny house sites that prioritize families, women-identifying community members, BIPOC community members, and medically fragile and 55+ community members.<sup>4</sup> See Attachment 1 for visual examples of Tiny House Village components.

#### *Physical and Financial Footprint*

- A tiny house is approximately 8 feet x 12 feet and materials cost about \$5,000 per unit.
- The average cost to set up a village of 30 – 40 houses is \$700,000 – \$800,000 with average annual operating cost ranging between \$1,000,000 – \$1,500,000.
- Each tiny house has electricity, an overhead light, insulation, and a heater.
- Each Tiny House Village has a community kitchen; a hygiene trailer with restrooms, showers, and laundry facilities; staff offices; and a security pavilion.

#### *Rules and Guidelines*

- Alcohol and drugs are not allowed in any public spaces; weapons are not allowed anywhere on the property.
- Case management participation is required for all participants. If participants stop progressing in the program, case managers work with them to explore a more appropriate placement.
- Participants are required to accept long-term stable housing opportunities when they become available, if the housing opportunity is appropriate for their needs.
- Participants are screened for sex offenses.
- Pets are allowed as long as they become licensed and inoculated for rabies, and the pet's behavior is not disruptive or unsafe for other participants.
- These guidelines, including others, are part of LIHI's Code of Conduct that participants are required to review and agree to as part of their participation. Conduct infringements are managed with a progressive discipline model depending on severity.
- State and County landlord-tenant laws, including eviction laws, do not apply to Tiny House Villages.

#### *Staffing and Onsite Services*

- Case Managers are onsite working with participants to connect them to more long-term stable housing, employment, healthcare, education, and other wraparound services.

---

<sup>4</sup> Learn more about specific villages: <https://www.lihihousing.org/villages>

- Security staff, called Shelter Monitors, are onsite 24/7 and ensure participants comply with the Code of Conduct.
- If prioritizing high acuity participants who are chronically homeless with additional behavioral health needs, staffing levels are increased to ensure there are always at least two staff onsite.
- Staffing is the biggest operating cost. Staffing is necessary to support participants in working toward their housing, employment, and other goals, and to ensure the safety commitments made to the surrounding neighborhood where the site is hosted are met.
- All Seattle villages include a certified behavioral health specialist as part of a partnership with an area behavioral health service provider.

### *Length of Stay and Outcomes*

Tiny House Villages are not intended or designed to be permanent housing, but rather a temporary and safe opportunity for previously unsheltered individuals and families to reside while preparing for and identifying stable, long-term housing. LIHI reports the following outcomes:

- 65% of participants stay less than 6 months, 29% stay between 6 months to 2 years, and 6% stay more than two years.
- On average, 50-58% of participants exit to permanent housing. The return to homelessness rate is very low at 3-4%.
- The utilization rate of tiny houses is around 90-95%, meaning people experiencing homelessness rarely turn down a tiny house when available. This creates low vacancy rates, which are typically just the time it takes to turn a unit for the next occupant.

## **Property Sources, Partnerships, and Permitting for Tiny House Villages**

### *Property Sources*

There are multiple property sources used to host Tiny House Villages including properties owned by government entities, churches, and LIHI. The Cities of Seattle, Olympia, Tacoma, and Bellingham have placed tiny houses on city-owned properties, and in most instances, the city-owned property is leased to the operator of the Tiny House Village for a specified period of time. Both Sound Transit and the Port of Seattle have leased property to the City of Seattle for the use of temporary tiny house placement. Properties owned by churches are also common host sites for Tiny House Villages. Exemplifying the intended temporary nature of tiny houses, LIHI has built temporary Tiny House Villages on LIHI-owned property, with the long-term goal of developing the property for multi-family units to increase the overall inventory of permanent, affordable housing. For example, Othello Village, one of the first Tiny House Villages established in Seattle, was located on LIHI-owned property that is now being developed into permanent affordable housing.

### *Partnerships and Referral Sources*

The priority population served at each Tiny House Village, as well as referral sources, are determined by specific community needs and the property host and partnerships established for each site. Some examples include:

- Southend Village in Seattle's Rainier Beach neighborhood is operated by LIHI in partnership with Truevine of Holiness Missionary Baptist Church and Refugee Women's Alliance (ReWa). ReWa provides onsite case management, behavioral health services, early learning, and childcare. Referral sources for this site are community organizations with ties to Rainier Beach.
- TC Spirit Village in Seattle's Central District is operated by LIHI in partnership with The Christ Spirit Church, who also owns the property hosting the site. Prioritizing Indigenous and Black individuals who are underserved and over-represented in the homeless

population, referral partners include Seattle Indian Center, Urban League, Chief Seattle Club, The Christ Spirit Church (site host), and the City of Seattle's Homelessness Outreach and Provider Ecosystem (HOPE) Team.

#### *City of Seattle Tiny House Permitting Overview for Consideration*

- The City of Seattle exempts tiny houses from needing a building permit if under 120 square feet and if considered for indigent use.
- Tiny House Villages need to obtain plumbing and electrical permits from the City of Seattle. In most cases, this requires plumbing and electrical to be underground, however some sites have been able to work with the City for alternative solutions when undergrounding wasn't possible.
- The Seattle Municipal Code has additional regulations for authorized encampments on City property and on church property.

### **NEXT STEPS**

The background information about Tiny House Villages in this memorandum provides Council with details about how some government entities in the region are responding to unsheltered homelessness. Should Council wish to discuss the possibility of pursuing a Tiny House Village in Kirkland, staff can return to a future Council meeting to provide more Kirkland specific details and answer questions.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1 – Tiny House Village: Visual Examples of Components  
Attachment 2 – Pallet Price Sheet

Tiny House Village: Visual Examples of Components

Examples of village layouts:



Examples of customizing for communal areas, raised gardens, artistic and cultural expression, and diverse tiny house facades:





Examples of inside a Tiny House:



Examples of Tiny House Village community kitchens:





# Pallet® Price Sheet



## S2 Product

All units come with a lockable door and can accommodate a bed, desk, and shelving unit.

Shelter	Description	*Unit Price
S2 Sleeper (70 sq. ft.)	70 sq. ft. (6.5 m2) shelter with floor, roof, walls, lockable door, and windows (including one emergency egress window). Structural fiberglass reinforced panels with UV and fire protection additives. Equipped with kick plate, peephole, shelves, smoke/CO detectors, fire extinguisher, and electrical panel.	\$15,900
S2 Sleeper (120 sq. ft.)	120 sq. ft. (11.15 m2) shelter with floor, roof, walls, lockable door, and windows (including one emergency egress window). Structural fiberglass reinforced panels with UV and fire protection additives. Equipped with kick plate, peephole, shelves, smoke/CO detector, fire extinguisher, and electrical panel.	\$20,600
S2 EnSuite	120 sq. ft. (11.15 m2) ensuite unit with same components as 70 sq. ft. (6.5 m2) shelter. In this layout, 70 sq. ft. (6.5 m2) is designated living space and 50 sq. ft. (4.65 m2) is ensuite bathroom (shower, sink, and flushable toilet). Requires an electrical hookup and connections to sewer and water main or a tank system.	\$43,850

\* All products: Up to 155 mph sustained wind rating. 40 lb. per square foot snow load rating.

Add-ons	Description	*Unit Price
120V Electrical Kit	110V power panel with wall-mounted 2,750W heater, three 110V outlets, LED lighting, and hardwired smoke/CO detector with battery backup.	\$635
240V Electrical Kit	240V power panel with wall mounted 4,500W heater, three 110V outlets, LED lighting, and hardwired smoke/CO detector with battery backup.	\$725
A/C 8,000 120V with install kit	8,000 BTU Air Conditioning unit and installation kit.	\$600
Twin XL Bed Frame	Powder coated metal mattress foundation frame. 6'2"W x 4'5"D x 2'1"H (186.9 cm W x 134.6 cm D x 35.6 cm H)	\$150
Twin XL Mattress	High quality foam mattress with water resistant cover.	\$350
Desk	One-person desk.	\$335
Exterior Lighting	Outdoor-rated photocell light mounted to exterior front wall.	\$300
Digital Door Lock	Door lock allows keyless entry using a programmed security code.	\$135

## Assembly Services

Product is built in our factory and requires assembly in field. Assembly services are not included in unit price. Ordering agency required to assemble shelters or contract Pallet PBC to assemble product as an open market item indicated on quote and invoice.

S2 Sleeper Units					
1-3 Units	4-10 Units	11-60 Units	61-90 Units	91-120 Units	120+ Units
\$5,000 Flat Fee	\$1,500 ea.	\$1,100 ea.	\$1,000 ea.	\$900 ea.	\$800 ea.

S2 EnSuite					
1-10 Units	11-20 Units	21+ Units			
\$3,000 ea.	\$2,800 ea.	\$2,500 ea.			

## Hygiene Units

Unit	Description	*Unit Price
Two-Stall Hygiene	Two complete bathrooms (toilet, shower, sink) in a 100 sq. ft. (9.29 m2) structure. Requires an electrical hookup and connections to the sewer and water main or a tank system.	<b>\$44,995</b>
Accessible Hygiene+ Half Bath	One complete accessible bathroom plus a smaller half bath in a 100 sq. ft. (9.29 m2) structure. Requires an electrical hookup and connections to the sewer and water main or a tank system.	<b>\$44,995</b>
Laundry Room	A 100 sq. ft. (9.29 m2) structure with hookups for four complete washer/dryer stacks, utility sink, and folding table. Requires an electrical hookup and connections to the sewer and water main or a tank system. <b>(Washer/dryers not included)</b>	<b>\$39,999</b>

## Community Room

Shelter	Description	*Unit Price
Community 400	<p>Aluminum framed 400 sq. ft. (37.16 m2) shelter with structural floor, roof, walls, lockable doors, opening windows with screens. Made with highly durable composite panels. Requires a level concrete pad for assembly.</p> <p><b>Assembly Services when community room is part of a village build: \$9,000 each (Not included in UNIT PRICE)</b></p> <p><b>Assembly Services for a single community room build: \$15,600 (plus \$9,000 for each additional community room assembly at the same site) (Not included in UNIT PRICE)</b></p>	<b>\$39,999</b>

- \* Pallet assembly services include personnel, travel expenses, and tools for a Pallet team to assemble shelters onsite.
- \* Pallet is not responsible for site grading, leveling, staking to the ground, or utility connections to shelters.
- \* Fees are charged on a per-unit basis, and ranges are based on the number of units deployed.
- \* Shipping all units is dependent on location.
- \* All assembly prices are an estimate based on typical prevailing wage rates.
- \* All prices are in USD.