

CITY OF MINNEAPOLIS

# Comparative look at encampment approaches and recommendations

City Coordinator's Office  
September 12, 2018

## Report summary: Tent City, USA: The Growth of America's Homeless Encampments and How Communities are Responding

- National Law Center in Poverty and Homelessness studied the prevalence of encampments across the US, including a survey of cities in the US that had encampments: 207 responded in the affirmative with 37 reporting in the Midwest (25 in Northeast, 69 in South and 56 in the West).
- Study confirmed that encampments are in the rise in the US from 19 in 2007 to 274 in 2016 – an increase of 1,342%. By mid 2017 at time of report, there were already 255.
- Study followed 187 cities specifically since 2006 to review responses to growing encampment issues over time.


Encampments Reported

Year	Reports	% Increase Year over Year	% Increase from 2007
2007	19		
2008	29	53%	53%
2009	52	79%	174%
2010	67	29%	253%
2011	50	-25%	163%
2012	94	88%	395%
2013	112	19%	489%
2014	146	30%	668%
2015	204	40%	974%
2016	274	34%	1342%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1047</b>		

nlchp.org



# National trends (per National Law Center in Poverty and Homelessness study)

- Many encampments are medium to large: half of the stories that reported the size of encampments showed a size of 11-50 residents, and 17% of encampments had more than 100 residents.
  - Encampments are becoming semi-permanent features of cities: close to two-thirds of reports which recorded the time in existence of the encampments showed they had been there for more than 1 year, and more than one-quarter had been there for more than six years.
  - Most (three-quarters) are not sanctioned and under threat of eviction:
    - 4% were reported to be legal
    - 21% were reported to be semi-legal (tacitly sanctioned)
    - 35% were planned to be or already had been evicted, most often with no alternative housing identified for those being displaced
  - While the issue is growing across the nation, 80% of all encampments found in only 7 states with California being by far the state with the highest concentration (129 camps out of the 220 that comprise this 80% cluster; the next highest is Indiana with 26).
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# Relevant Hennepin County Data

Per Jan. 2018 Hennepin County Point In Time Count

## Relevant Hennepin County Data (per Jan. 2018 Hennepin County Point In Time (PIT) Count)

Shelter beds	Single beds: 843 Family shelter rooms: 123 Youth specific shelter beds: 75
Utilization rate	Average of 98% but varies depending on location
PIT Count Minneapolis	<u>Individuals:</u> Sheltered: emergency - 1884 transitional - 709 safe haven - 16 Unsheltered: 404 (5< age of 18)  <u>Households:</u> Sheltered: emergency - 1177 transitional - 439 safe haven - 16 Unsheltered: 368
Costs	Per Hennepin County, rough costs of operating a 50-bed shelter is \$500K Cost of outreach workers are approximately \$50K/worker

# Strategies to end homelessness are multi-faceted and varied to encompass short, mid and longer term objectives

In 2015, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness published “Ending Homelessness for People Living in Encampments: Advancing the Dialogue,” a guidance document which emphasizes constructive approaches to encampments focused on ending homelessness for those living in them, rather than sweeping them out of public view with no long-term solution. The guidance is geared towards thoughtful, permanent solutions which address the needs of those in the encampments, rather than a reactive response. The guidance also offers a helpful checklist for communities interested in constructive approaches to address homelessness in their communities, and identifies 4 key elements in any strategic approach:

- 1. Preparation and Adequate Time for Planning and Implementation:** Action plans should ensure that there is adequate time for strategizing, collaboration, outreach, engagement, and the identification of meaningful housing options. Adequate time is essential to achieve the primary objective of meeting the needs of each person and assisting them to end their homelessness.
- 2. Collaboration across Sectors and Systems:** Action plans should include collaboration between a cross-section of public and private agencies, neighbors, business owners, and governmental entities, based upon on where the encampment is located. The action plan should feature strong communication among a broad range of community service providers and managers of the permanent housing resources that are being utilized in order to maximize efficiency, align resources, and address system gaps.
- 3. Performance of Intensive and Persistent Outreach and Engagement:** Action plans should involve agencies that have strong outreach experience and demonstrated skills in engaging vulnerable and unsheltered people. Effective outreach is essential for effectively connecting people with coordinated assessment systems, resources, and housing options.
- 4. Provision of Low-Barrier Pathways to Permanent Housing:** Action plans should focus on providing people with clear, low-barrier pathways for accessing and attaining permanent housing opportunities and should not focus on relocating people to other encampment settings.

# Caution advised when considering “sanctioned encampments” or “safe zones”

Just recently (May 2018), the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness also published a policy paper titled *Caution is Needed When Considering “Sanctioned Encampments” or “Safe Zones.”* Appearing to shift away from more temporary measures, the Council provided some cautions when considering such encampments noting the following points:

- **Creating these environments may make it look and feel like the community is taking action to end homelessness on the surface—but, by themselves, they have little impact on reducing homelessness.** Ultimately, access to stable housing that people can afford, with the right level of services to help them succeed, is what ends homelessness. People staying within such settings are still unsheltered, still living outside, and remain homeless – and oftentimes, these settings are not providing them with a truly safe, healthy, and secure environment. It is also important to note that the intended target population may not decide to enter these settings. Additionally, if there is not adequate planning and resources devoted to help people exit these settings on a path out of homelessness, creating these settings alone does not reduce homelessness in communities.
- **Creating these environments can be costly in money, staff time, and effort.** Creating and then operating such settings typically requires significant funding, energy, and staff time from both public and private agencies devoted to locating and arranging for the use of sites, educating and engaging neighbors, addressing any permitting requirements, providing a secure and hygienic environment, setting up and maintaining any structures, providing adequate services and supports, and many other planning and operational details. It is critically important to discuss the opportunity costs of pursuing these efforts, and whether critical resources would be better focused on other strategic activities—or used directly for permanent housing and services interventions—that could have a greater impact on ending people’s homelessness.
- **These environments can prove difficult to manage and maintain.** For example, communities often find that temporary sheds (which are sometimes referred to as “tiny homes”) or other structures that may have been put up in these settings do not hold up over time and require significant upgrades and/or repairs. Maintaining a hygienic environment can prove challenging if there are not adequate sanitation facilities at the sites. And there often need to be significant investments into security to be able to ensure the safety and well-being of people staying in these settings, as many people may be vulnerable to victimization and such communities can become targets for illegal activities, such as drug sales and human trafficking.
- **Although often proposed as “temporary” approaches, these programs prove difficult to close once they open.** While a community may intend for these settings to be a temporary part of its response to homelessness, they can prove difficult to close, especially if there are not adequate plans and resources dedicated to helping people exit these settings and end their homelessness.

# Municipal responses vary...

Type of response	Cities
Ordinances, published procedures or informal practices	<p>30% (57 out of 187) fall into this category:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 43 had ordinances that specifically addressed encampments (mostly prohibiting them)</li> <li>• 6 cities were subject to judicial or consent decrees re: treatment of encampments</li> <li>• 14 had a published policy addressing encampments</li> </ul>
Enforcement of anti-camping laws/dissolution of camp	<p>A majority of jurisdictions do this, particularly where there are no policies addressing encampments</p>
Enforcement of anti-camping laws/dissolution of camp WITH notice and/or provision of short term storage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Milwaukee, WI: has a police procedure that allows encampments to exist unless complaints of criminal activity or health code violations compel an action, and in that event requires one week notice and referral to social service providers</li> <li>• Indianapolis, IN: requires the offer of alternative housing before an encampment can be cleared, with emergency exceptions</li> <li>• San Francisco, CA, and Charleston, WV, require an offer of shelter before an encampment clearing specifically</li> <li>• Clearwater and Miami, FL: require an offer of shelter before enforcement of a variety of criminalizing ordinances</li> <li>• Wichita, KS: requires police “make reasonable attempts to find shelter” before clearing an encampment and requires them to treat unattended property with the same respect as property in a home</li> <li>• Santa Cruz, CA and Boise, ID: mandate no citation of individuals for camping if shelters are full</li> <li>• Los Angeles, CA: under court-approved settlement, will not enforce anti-camping ordinances overnight until 1,250 new units of low-income housing are created in Skid Row</li> </ul>

# Municipal responses vary...

Type of response	Cities
Legalized encampment sites (only 3 jurisdictions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Olympia, WA: allows religious organizations or the county to host an encampment under state statute</li><li>• Seattle, WA: authorizes both religious organization hosted encampments and revised zoning laws to temporary encampments on city or private property</li><li>• Sarasota, FL: allows the city commission to consent to temporary encampments on city property and prohibits enforcement of an anti-camping ordinance unless an offer of shelter is made</li></ul>
Alternative open-air shelters/courtyards or industrial tent options (see following slide for images)	San Antonio, TX: Haven for Hope Las Vegas, NV San Diego, CA
Tiny or micro homes or ADUs	Examples include Detroit, Michigan; Dallas, Texas; Austin, Texas; Portland, OR; Seattle, WA; Olympia, WA; Springfield, MO; Wichita, KS; Denver, CO





# Coalition Recommendations

The City has been working in partnership with community leaders, Hennepin County, the state and community leaders to address the immediate issues of the encampment as well as issues facing the homeless community throughout the city. The has created a unique City, County, State and – most importantly, Community Coalition that that has helped evaluate both immediate needs and ongoing recommendations moving forward.

## Partners include:

Metropolitan Urban Indian Directors

Natives Against Heroin

American Indian Community Development Corporation

Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center

Indigenous Peoples Task Force

Minnesota Department of Transportation

People Incorporated

Native American Community Clinic

Community University Health Care Clinic

Minneapolis American Indian Center

Native American Community Development Institute

American Indian OIC

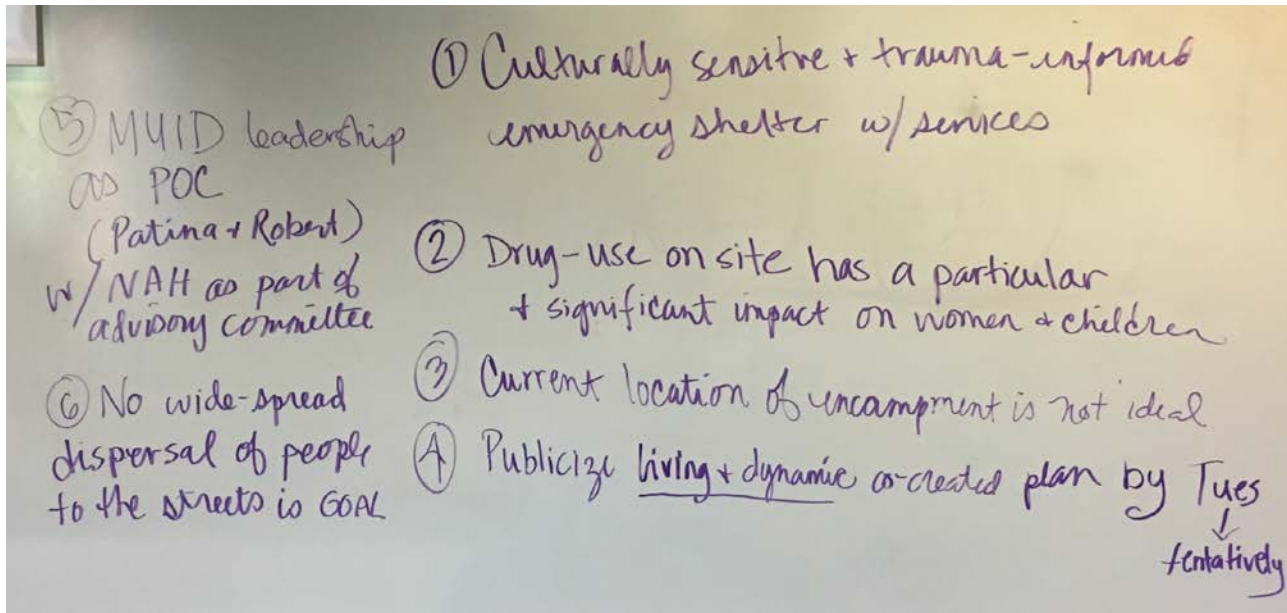
Southside Harm Reduction

Minnesota Department of Health

Hennepin County

St. Stephen's Human Services

Indian Health Board



# Coalition Recommendations

The Coalition has agreed focused on putting not just housing first, but people first in coming up with recommendations to address deeper and longer-term issues of affordable housing, mental health and opioid addiction.

To date, we've focused on two main areas: 1) harm reduction strategies to improve site hygiene, health and sanitation at camp, and 2) outreach and housing referrals to assist those ready for assistance to access emergency and supportive housing as well as addiction or rehabilitation services. Efforts include the below listed, and will continue to be provided throughout the end of the encampment are:

- Providing portable toilets and hand-washing stations.
- Increasing the number of garbage containers and ensuring daily disposal.
- Providing needles and sharps containers.
- Providing naloxone, a medication designed to rapidly reverse opioid overdose.
- Installing lights and cameras to enhance public safety.
- Increasing patrols and presence of Minneapolis Police Department Community Engagement Teams to assist in outreach and public safety efforts.
- Supporting the establishment of a community-built hygiene service area to provide showers and a coordinated hub for service and housing assessments and referrals.
- Increased cross-agency coordination of outreach workers.
- Establishment of appropriate donation sites near the encampment to reduce the amount of waste and debris at the camp site.
- Placement of barriers around the camp to restrict encampment to area furthest from the highway while still ensuring emergency vehicles and authorized service providers can access the camp for garbage collection and servicing of toilet facilities.
- Coordinating with local health care providers to assist with ongoing medical services and health education.
- Over 65 housing assessments have been made resulting in 30 housing referrals. With over 800 single and over 100 family existing shelter beds throughout the system currently, the City and the County have committed to adding additional temporary outreach workers to accelerate shelter placement options for those at the encampment.

# Coalition Recommendations

Additional efforts under way during this initial period leading up to the closure of the encampment include:

- Contracting to provide culturally and trauma-informed healing at the hygiene service area created by the American Indian Community Development Corporation.
- Mobilizing additional outreach workers to facilitate assessment and referral services.
- Coordinating with healthcare providers to provide Hepatitis vaccinations, rapid testing for infectious diseases, and flu shots at the hygiene service area.
- Coordinating with health care organizations to seek more mobile and agile medical assistance at the hygiene service area.
- Coordinating to provide temporary storage solutions for those at the encampment while simultaneously looking to develop new innovative public-facing storage options for those facing homelessness throughout the city.



Lisbon, Portugal: costing around \$16K to make (per set of 12), these lockers provide a mail slot and require a contract promising to keep area around lockers clean and not to use them to store illegal substances.



Denver, CO: built at a cost of \$3,000 each and available for 30 days with the option to extend use of the unit to 60 days



Vancouver, Canada: offers numbered bins stored at a church that also houses a shelter



Salt Lake City, UT: H.O.P.E lockers pilot costing \$10K per unit



San Diego, CA: provides 300 bins for temporary storage



Eugene, OR: provides free day storage in POD containers on city-owned lots (cost of program: \$7350/month + expenses)

# Coalition Recommendations

Next steps for the encampment:

- Creation of a Navigation Center to provide emergency transitional services to those hardest to connect with traditional shelter housing, and will provide low barrier access to emergency beds as well as basic healthcare and support services while more permanent supportive services are developed. Navigation Centers are designed to be short-term, low barrier with comprehensive service and support alternatives.
- The Coalition will develop a logistical plan to transport individuals remaining at the encampment and their belongings to the new Navigation Center as soon as it is open for use.
- Zeroing in on possible locations, but planning on site opening beginning of October. Funding sources and partners being solidified in the coming days.



San Francisco



San Diego



Seattle



# Coalition Recommendations

## Beyond the encampment:

- Highlighting more systemic issues, the Coalition is committed to developing a new 50-60 bed culturally-focused and informed transitional housing program geared to the Native American community that could help get those suffering from chronic homelessness back on the path of self-sufficiency.
- The Coalition is actively working on identifying site options for this new culturally-focused model, and will be working directly with community partners on developing tailored programming that emphasizes cultural and trauma-informed healing practices along with traditional case management needs.
- As this continues to be developed, we will report back to Council on funding needs and sources.



# Coalition Recommendations

## Beyond the encampment:

The Coalition also affirms its commitment to work collaboratively towards ending chronic homelessness by:

- Charging the housing stability task force that includes individuals from the Coalition to address the varied issues surrounding homelessness in Minneapolis. Importantly, this work should include:
  - A review of lessons learned from the encampment to determine best practices that could be used regionally
  - A community engagement plan that solicits input from those facing or at risk of homelessness in community to ensure solutions are informed by those most impacted by the issue
- Convening with Tribal Council leaders from across the state to deepen relationships and increase partnerships regarding the needs of the Native American community in Minneapolis and the region.
- Shortening homelessness by developing constructive alternatives to criminalization. The Minneapolis Police Department has already created a full-time Coordinator of the Homelessness and Vulnerable Populations Initiative and will continue to work in coordinating and cooperation with St. Stephens Street Outreach and other organizations to continue to address our homeless population with dignity. The City will also continue to work with the Coalition to institute policies that codify more humane approaches to eliminate future encampments, including notification, outreach and referral, and temporary storage of belongings. The City will also be looking at existing policies and procedures to identify and remove barriers that impede or hinder access to housing, medical and employment and employment training options for those facing homelessness.



# Coalition Recommendations

## Beyond the encampment:

- Continuing to enhance and modify where applicable the existing shelter system towards a Housing First approach that prioritizes the provision of permanent housing as the primary strategy for ending homelessness. Beyond simply looking at housing, the Housing First model includes a variety of interventions that includes shelter and other transitional housing, rapid re-housing, and permanent supportive housing that is subject to and aligned with an individual's needs and availability of resources.
- Preventing homelessness by strengthening housing protections and eliminating unjust evictions. The City has several efforts in the pipeline that include working on a tenant protections ordinance spearheaded by Council Members Lisa Bender and Jeremiah Ellison. The Mayor's 2019 proposed budget also includes funds to (a) launch a new pilot to provide legal representation in housing court to low income renters facing eviction; (b) increase funding for legal services to help tenants enforce their right to habitable housing; (c) increase funding for tenant hotline information and referral services; and (d) includes \$3.4 million to preserve Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing (NOAH).
- End homelessness by taking steps to increase access to and availability of affordable housing for those earning 30% AMI and less. Continuing to support and act on City policy that writes down the cost of City-owned land to support affordable housing and continuing to fund local housing trust funds are examples of such steps. The Mayor's 2019 budget proposal more than doubles city investment in the City's Affordable Housing Trust Fund ("AHTF") and includes \$3.3 million towards Stable Homes, Stable Schools, a collaboration with Minneapolis Public Schools, Minneapolis Public Housing and Hennepin county to stabilize kids and their families that are, or at risk of, experiencing homelessness.

# Coalition Recommendations

## Beyond the encampment:

- Continue working in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Veteran's Affairs, the US Department of Veteran's Affairs and the Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans in support of the individualized 'by-name' community approach that has halved the number of veterans experiencing homelessness since 2014 and helped more than 700 veterans access permanent housing in that time.
- Furthering integration of housing and employment services as pioneered through the "100 Day Challenge on Youth Homelessness" that helped 236 youth into housing and 157 into employment, education and training in order to provide both housing stability and pathways into careers and increased incomes.
- Building out of the community's Coordinated Entry System to more effectively and efficiently match services to individual's needs, as in the current efforts around chronic homelessness which has helped more than 150 people with the longest histories of homelessness and greatest vulnerabilities and disabilities move into permanent housing in the last 12 months.
- Increase coordination between homelessness and housing services and other mainstream systems, as in the State, County and community 'Minor Connect' pilot that is offering a new model of support for 15-17 year-olds experiencing homelessness through partnership with child welfare and child protection resources and systems.



# Coalition Recommendations

## Beyond the encampment:

- Continuing to expand the variety of Housing Support programs available through the State, County and community partners for those in need of help with housing costs and support services. This includes the Long Term Homeless 'Housing First' permanent supportive housing program, the new 'Housing With Services – Independent' model for those leaving congregate settings and support for low-barrier, culturally specific housing such as the American Indian Community Development Corporation Kola project
- Continuing to investing in upstream prevention and new permanent supportive housing developments – such as the forthcoming Minnehaha Townhomes partnership between Minneapolis Public Housing Authority, the City and the County – to provide more options for families and continue the downward trend of family homelessness, which has declined by more than 40% since 2014.



# Appendix



# Examples – short to mid-term emergency housing



San Diego industrial tents: each holds 325 people in numbered bunks including pets. Offers a variety of services – from healthcare to employment assistance to showers and laundry. Cost was around \$6.5M for all three. A recent 2018 article noted that “most recent data from the tents show they are, in fact, failing to achieve their goal of moving most occupants into permanent housing. Only about 10 percent of those exiting the tents have gone into permanent homes, compared to a goal of 65 percent.”

Las Vegas modeled itself after San Antonio and opened its Courtyard Homeless Resource Center in May 2018 for around \$10M (city allocation was \$5.9M). Current capacity around 113, but city is actively expanding to reach up to 500.



San Antonio Haven of Hope: comprised of two programs:

- The Courtyard is a safe area (accommodates around 600 overnight, but serves around 700 during the day) with basic medical needs, communal showers, outdoor sleeping on mats, meals and other basic services.
- The Transformational Campus (877 beds) is a center that offers services and shelter with an emphasis toward addressing the root causes of homelessness.



# Examples of tiny home villages



Detroit, MI: A two-block stretch of 250 to 400-square-foot fully-equipped micro dwellings for the low-income population, including students, seniors, and the formerly homeless. Tenants pay rent of between \$250 and \$400 a month on a rent-to-own model. **Cost:** \$1.5 million, funded by donations from local companies and organizations, including a \$400,000 contribution from Ford.



Nashville, TN: Interfaith group in collaboration with private construction company built six colorful 60-square-foot shelters for the homeless, housed at Nashville's Green Street Church of Christ—each unit can hold a murphy bed, mini-fridge, microwave, hybrid heating/AC.



Syracuse, NY: A growing collection of 300-square-foot houses for people who have faced homelessness, built on a vacant city lot and offers a living area, bed, kitchen, bathroom, and access to a professional care manager. Tenants pay rent determined on a sliding scale based on income. **Cost:** Each unit cost \$28,500 and was primarily built with volunteer labor and donated supplies. The majority of the funding comes from private donations; the rest come from grant support and resident rent (30 percent of a resident's monthly income).



# Examples of tiny/micro home lots



New field, NY: Non-profit Second Wind Cottage built a village of 12 tiny houses on donated land. Residents pay rent “as they are able” for as long as they need—each structure includes a bedroom, kitchen, and bathroom. **Cost:** About \$15,000 per house, completely funded by donations from individuals, businesses, organizations, and fundraising events.



Los Angeles, CA: Non-profit My Tiny House Project LA has around 40 roughly 50-square-foot micro dwellings for the homeless housed on private property, equipped with rooftop solar panels, wheels, and a portable camping toilet. **Cost:** \$100,000 raised via crowdfunding.



Seattle, WA: Built in collaboration with non-profit Low Income Housing Institute (LIHI), the 3<sup>rd</sup> city-authorized homeless encampment hosts 28 96-square-foot tiny houses and 12 tents on platforms, which are intended as a short-term housing solution for up to 100 people. The village shares a kitchen, shower trailer, donation hut, and security booth. **Cost:** The city pays about \$160,000 per year to supply water, garbage services, and counseling on-site. Donations from individuals, foundations, and other organizations have recently allowed the tiny houses to install heat and electricity. Donations to LIHI also fund the materials for the tiny houses, which cost about \$2,200 per house; construction is mostly courtesy of volunteers.

# Examples of tiny/micro home lots



Dallas, TX: Local social services organizations teamed up to build 50 roughly 400-square-foot cottages for the chronically homeless—each dwelling offers a full kitchen, bathroom, and bedroom, along with mental and medical health care on site. **Cost:** \$6.8 million, \$2.5 million of which came from the city and county, and the rest from a foundation grant, private donors, and local organizations.



Olympia, WA: A local non-profit comprising various faith communities built a community of 30 tiny dwellings—each measuring 144 square feet—for the homeless, with a shared kitchen, dining area, living room, showers, laundry, offices and meeting space. The over two acre site also includes a vegetable garden. **Cost:** \$3.05 million in total, at a rate of about \$88,000 per unit taking into account donated land and services. Funding came from a mix of state funding, community development grants, and donations from local organizations and individuals.



Austin, TX : A 27-acre master-planned village of tiny homes for the disabled, chronically homeless—including 120 micro homes, 100 RVs, and 20 "canvas-sided" homes (tents with concrete foundations). It also offers community amenities like places for worship, gardens, a medical facility, trails, and an outdoor movie theater. Rent is in the range of \$200 to \$350. **Cost:** \$14.5 million privately funded—each structure is privately sponsored.

# Examples of tiny/micro home lots



Portland, OR: Dignity Village, a city-sanctioned, self-governed community on city-owned land is comprised of 43 tiny dwellings built of recycled or reclaimed materials and equipped with a bed and propane heater. City contract requires a two-year maximum stay per person. **Cost:** Yearly operating costs are roughly \$28,000, covered by a \$35 a month fee from each resident, as well as micro-business revenues, and private donations.



Springfield, MO: A non-profit group runs this 4.5 acre gated community that provides 400 square-foot tiny homes to 30 homeless people. **Cost:** The \$3 million project was made possible by federal grants and over 450 donations by local businesses and people like area Catholic school students.



Denver, CO: A self-governing tiny home village whose purpose is to provide a home base and safe place for the homeless. The village includes 11 tiny homes for individuals and couples, 1 communal building for food preparation and gatherings, and restrooms and showers.