



# JOINT OFFICE OF HOMELESS SERVICES



“Sanctioned  
Encampments”  
as Shelter

*Photo Credit: Josh Chang*

# Where it all started: Dignity Village est. 2001



## *From Protest to Provider:*

“Dignity Village is a membership-based community in NE Portland, providing shelter off the streets for 60 people a night since 2001. It’s democratically self-governed with a mission to provide transitional housing that fosters community and self-empowerment— a radical experiment to end homelessness.”

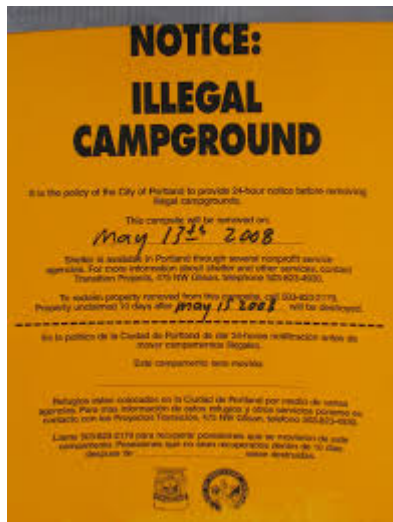


Photo Credit: Kwamba Media Productions and Tent City Urbanism



# Today: One City, Four Examples

1



Photo Credit: Tent City Urbanism

## Dignity Village (est. 2001)

- Began as a protest
- Peer initiated; complete democratic self-governance
- Adults only; no drugs, alcohol on site, no violence /threatening behavior
- 45 sleeping structures (60 people) plus common buildings – no

- longer tents
- Until recently, not integrated into continuum; very low transition rates
- Expectation of stays less than 2 years
- Cost to city/county: donated land, site prep, and contracted administrative staff
- Residents contribute \$35 fee/month & 10 hours per month

2



Photo Credit: Oregonian

## Right 2 Dream Too (est. 2011)

- Began as a protest
- Peer initiated, modified democratic self-governance
- Adults only; similar rules to Dignity Village
- Private sleeping pods for member managers, tented congregate sleeping porches for overnight guests

- Serves up to 70 people per 24 hour period
- Limited integration into the services continuum
- Member managers stay longer-term, majority of guests are night-by-night
- Costs to city/county: donated land, site preparation, and utilities
- Strong neighborhood opposition, then support

# Today: One City, Four Examples (contd.)

3



Photo Credit: KGW8

## Hazelnut Grove (est. 2015)

- Began as protest, peer initiated, currently complete democratic self-governance
- Adults only; rules similar to Dignity Village
- 25 sleeping structures and common buildings – no longer tents
- To date not integrated into continuum – “intentional community”
- Transitioning to a partnership with established non-profit while maintaining self-governance
- Cost to city/county to date: donated land, site preparation, fencing, sanitation services
- Strong opposition from some neighbors

4



Photo Credit: Multnomah County

## Kenton Women's Village (est. 2015)

- Initiated by partnership between government, advocates, and neighborhood
- Professional non-profit management with modified self-governance
- Women identified, with focus on DV, rules like
- Dignity Village
- 14 pods plus common buildings; expectation to expand
- Fully integrated into service continuum; 56% transition rate (May 2018)
- Cost to city/county: donated land, site preparation, common area structures, \$22/bed/night (operations)
- Neighborhood voted to authorize twice



# What Participants in “Sanctioned Encampments” Value



- People with lived experience manage/have a strong say in the creation, maintenance, and operations
- Greater sense of safety & privacy than unsanctioned camping and traditional facility based shelter
- Few barriers to entry and simple behavior-based requirements to live there
- Sense of community & belonging (ex. “Kenton Sisters”)
- Welcoming physical attributes of spaces - the pods, gardens, community spaces
- Opportunities to engage directly with neighbors as leaders and break down stereotypes

Photo Credits: Josh Chang and SE Uplift

# What “Sanctioned Encampments” Can Offer the Shelter System



- A shelter option for people who do not want, or struggle to succeed in, facility based shelter and don't have access to permanent housing options.
- Shelter that is built and sustained in large part by the efforts of people experiencing homelessness and their supporters in the community. This may allow reduced public investments in shelter operations in favor of transition services.
- Shelter that utilizes available vacant land, and uses relatively low-cost portable infrastructure that can be relocated when land is needed – “pop up shelter”
- Shelter that helps build dignity, a sense of self-efficacy and belonging among residents – all of which can help a person end their homelessness
- Shelter that engages neighbors in ways different than most traditional shelter.

*Photo Credits: Portland Tribune*



# Challenges of “Sanctioned Encampments” as Shelters: Policy

- “Villages” as short-term stay shelters: A shelter bed/sleeping pod should not be someone’s tiny “home.”
- Self-governance and community building: These should support a resident’s efforts to end their homelessness, rather than interfere with them.
- Outcomes: “Sanctioned encampments” should be accountable to the same outcomes as other publicly supported shelter - providing basic safety **and** connecting people to services that helps end their homelessness.
- Standards of Care: Public agencies have to ensure that shelters meet certain standards of care. What are those standards in “sanctioned encampments” and how are they met without losing the benefits of this form of shelter?
- Cost: Temporary sites and “mobile” facilities to address an ongoing crisis may be cost-effective in the short run, but may be significantly more expensive over time.
- Limits of the Approach: “Sanctioned encampments” will work for only a subset of people experiencing homelessness and thus must be one, appropriately scaled, part of an overall shelter strategy.
- Public Perceptions: Even more than traditional facility-based shelters, “sanctioned encampments” provoke both greater fear and greater excitement in the community than is likely warranted.

*Photo Credits: Portland Tribune*

# Challenges of “Sanctioned Encampments” as Shelter: Legal

- Civil Rights: “Sanctioned encampment” using democratic self-governance must respect the civil rights protections enjoyed by individuals in the shelter.
- Landlord Tenant Law: Landlord tenant law may apply in “sanctioned encampments” with sleeping pods.
- Building Code: Determining which building code and fire/life safety standards apply to the structures and utilities within a “sanctioned encampment,” and how they are permitted.
- Land Use: The “use category” for “sanctioned encampments” and the zones that allow/should allow this use.
- Liability: The insurability and liability risks associated with “sanctioned encampments.”

## BLOGTOWN

NEWS • CITY HALL

### Officials Plan to Clear North Portland's Forgotten Realms Camp After Monday Fire

by [Dirk VanderHart](#) • Dec 7, 2016 at 4:33 pm

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Forgotten Realms, shortly after it was founded in January 2016. DIRK VANDERHART

The city says it's time for Forgotten Realms to go.

For nearly a year, the organized homeless camp has sat on a city-owned lot at North Kerby and Graham. But in light of a fire that **engulfed a small structure and damaged an adjacent home** on Monday, city officials are planning to move residents elsewhere, according to Mayor Charlie Hales' office.



# Addressing the Challenges of “Sanctioned Encampments” as Shelters

- Adopted community best practices guidelines for “sanctioned encampments” (called “Pop-Up Shelter Guidelines”) through a CoC led stakeholder engagement process.
- Used community guidelines and county contracting requirements to establish requirements for operators of “Pop-Up Shelters” that ensure capacity and commitment to system engagement.
- Investing in organizational capacity and housing placement and service supports for existing “sanctioned encampments.”
- Analyzing public investments into each “sanctioned encampment” and evaluating the costs and outcomes against other shelter strategies and system needs.
- Conducting city and state code review to resolve fire/life safety, building and zoning code issues; developing compliant standards for siting, layouts, structures and utility infrastructure, and pursuing needed legislative changes.
- Meeting with advocates and legal services attorneys to address landlord tenant and civil rights issues.
- Developing a shared understanding among political leaders and community members of the standards and outcome measures for “Pop-Up Shelters,” as well as the value and limits of the strategy.

## For More Information:

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