



FAQ: A Village in St. Johns

Alternative Shelter Planned at North Roberts Avenue

What is planned at the North Roberts Avenue site?

The City of Portland and Multnomah County Joint Office of Homeless Services is negotiating with sheltering community Hazelnut Grove and a partner service provider, Do Good Multnomah, to provide alternative shelter and transitional housing services at the North Roberts Avenue site.

The Roberts Avenue site has been identified, after searching more than 400 city-owned properties, as a suitable location for providing a legal, permitted alternative shelter.

If the current discussions with Hazelnut Grove don't work out, the City and County still believe this is a suitable site for an alternative shelter village and would instead welcome additional proposals for an alternative shelter on the Roberts site from other interested providers.

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 currently 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.

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 unsanctioned.

An alternative shelter is not a camp or a campsite. It is simply a shelter 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 and storage.

What would happen with Hazelnut Grove and the Roberts site?

Hazelnut Grove is in talks with the City and the Joint Office to move to land in St. Johns provided by the City of Portland where it would become a legal, permitted alternative shelter community.

That site is near North Roberts Avenue and North Lombard Street (Multnomah County Tax Lot R323782).

That move would mean dramatic improvements for Hazelnut Grove. Those fixes could include upgraded sleeping pods, connections to utilities (such as water and sewer lines), and partnership with an established provider that will offer transitional services (services that help people transition to permanent housing).

Hazelnut Grove also would serve more people, and could work with outreach workers in St. Johns to bring in people in the neighborhood who are experiencing homelessness.

Hazelnut Grove would provide transitional sheltering services in partnership with Do Good Multnomah, an established shelter and transition services provider that largely works with Veterans. Details of Hazelnut Grove's relationship with Do Good Multnomah are still being worked out.

Do Good Multnomah, besides operating a long-time Veterans shelter in Northeast Portland, also is working with Clackamas County to operate a village-style alternative shelter for Veterans. Do Good also has experience offering transition services and developing permanent housing.

You can learn more about Do Good Multnomah at 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/.

Who would stay at the village, assuming Hazelnut Grove is the operator, and for how long?

Hazelnut Grove serves couples and single adults 18 and older.

Pets are 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.

Guests at Hazelnut Grove's current site have already been making the transition back to housing.

What's the timeline and expected capacity at the new site?

Details around the work needed to prepare the site for a village, including a timeline, have not been finalized. But we are aiming for the site to be ready for a village by April 2019.

Some things wouldn't change no matter who operated an alternative shelter village at the site:

We expect the new site to accommodate about 20 to 25 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.

What would happen to Hazelnut Grove's current site in Overlook?

The City of Portland will work with Overlook Neighborhood Association to decide the future of that site. At first, a fence would stay up around the site. The idea of a community garden has been floated. The City of Portland's Office of Management and Finance would likely coordinate any restoration work needed.

How will a village on the Roberts Avenue site 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.

Hazelnut Grove or any provider 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.

In addition, the model provides shelter on land that otherwise would not be suitable for housing developments or other uses, and uses a relatively lower-cost portable infrastructure.

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

Why was the Roberts Avenue site chosen?

The type of site sought for shelter varies depending upon the nature of the shelter. Generally, shelters must be located within communities so people can feel connected to their neighbors. They should be close to transit, so services can be accessed, along with other amenities.

For alternative shelters, which offer service connections and a safer option for those who have yet to find housing and might not be served well in congregate shelter, the requirements are even more specific. Sites must be zoned for legal use as an alternative shelter, be vacant, have developable land, and offer enough space to accommodate a village (minimum 10,000 square feet). Sites also require bureau approval.

Out of more than 400 potential sites that meet some of those criteria, just a handful of sites, including the site on North Roberts, met all of those criteria. Many sites potential sites were ruled out because of zoning and other land use prohibitions. In addition, the Roberts site also has a sewer pipe down the middle, making it unsuitable for a future housing or similar type of development.

What else does the Roberts site offer?

Beyond meeting those land-use thresholds, the Roberts site is blocks from two major bus lines, a short ride or longer walk to three other bus lines, a County health clinic, a County library, a recovery group, and amenities including grocery stores and the St. Johns Food Share.

Staff at the County health clinic, library and St. Johns Food Share have already expressed interest in working with the village.

The Roberts site is in an area with residential and industrial neighbors. The site is next to some private homes and a senior and assisted-living center that also hosts a preschool. Hazelnut Grove would be expected to contribute to its new neighborhood like any other new arrival might — including volunteering and hosting community events, co-gardening space and offering to work with volunteers.

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 Hazelnut Grove interact with neighbors in St. Johns who are already experiencing homelessness?

There is an opportunity to connect with outreach providers who work in St. Johns and who can refer qualifying individuals who may be interested in obtaining shelter at Hazelnut Grove.

That's similar to the model used by Catholic Charities of Oregon and the Kenton Women's Village, which prioritizes women experiencing unsheltered homelessness in Kenton and North Portland.

What kind of outreach has been done to advance this opportunity?

Letters on the decision to locate a village on the Roberts property were shared with next-door neighbors on Oct. 12. Further meetings with next-door neighbors are set.

Neighborhood partners such as the St. Johns Center for Opportunity, which has been advocating already to bring a village-style alternative shelter to St. Johns, are also supporting this project.

City officials and Joint Office staff have also are set to meet with next-door neighbors and have met with, and will meet again with, other neighborhood stakeholders, including the St. Johns Neighborhood Association.

The Center for Opportunity, which also manages St. Johns' thriving Saturday farmer's market, has been an increasingly visible provider of services for people experiencing homelessness, from advocacy to a clothing closet to food donations.

The Center for Opportunity and other neighbors worked with researchers from Portland State University in 2017 to craft a [Housing Action Plan for St. Johns](#). Among the recommendations that surfaced from those months of engagement was a commitment to advancing opportunities for a village.

Neighbors from Hazelnut Grove's current site, in Overlook, have also have volunteered to talk with neighbors in St. Johns.

How would Hazelnut Grove and Do Good Multnomah address safety concerns?

Like any good neighbor, and like any other social services provider, a village operator 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.
- Weekly general assembly meetings will be open to the public.
- Most importantly, the village will engage the surrounding neighbors in community activities, for example building pods together and tours. 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.

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 shelter, are camping outside or living in homes of their own.

As we have in other neighborhoods, we are committed to ensuring that the program that operates on this site enhances, rather than detracts from, the neighborhood. 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.

For further information: please reach out to Caitlin Burke, alternative shelter program specialist, Joint Office of Homeless Services, at Caitlin.Burke@multco.us.