

Implementation of Co-Governed Encampments in the City of Oakland

Case Studies and Best Practice Analysis

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Author's Note

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I. Executive Summary

At the conclusion of Oakland's budget process in 2019, which finalized funding for Fiscal Years 2019-2021, the Oakland City Council approved a \$600,000 allocation to the Administration to pilot a co-governed homeless encampment intervention in Oakland. Co-governed encampment models are a novel approach that has been explored in other jurisdictions to address the growing public safety and public health concerns that often accompany unsanctioned street encampments. It is important to note that this approach is relatively new and has only been implemented in a handful of jurisdictions across the nation.

This report intends to synthesize the information that was gathered on co-governed encampment models ranging in four cities. In addition to reporting on program designs, budgets, and outcomes, this report also presents the information in one central location, making it easier for policymakers to compare the varying program models. This report also identifies each program's best-practices and considers the feasibility of applying these practices in Oakland, where the political climate and resources may differ greatly. The report concludes with a set of recommendations that offer guidance on the effective and efficient implementation of a co-governed model in Oakland after careful consideration of the lessons learned from the case studies that are highlighted.

The research was conducted, and the report was drafted, during a 10-week internship under the supervision of the City's Homelessness Administrator. The team consisted of three graduate students from UC Berkeley's Goldman School of Public Policy. The team researched four programs—in Seattle, Eugene, Portland, and Denver—and produced four case studies. The team also interviewed staff members, researchers, City officials, advocates, and administrators in each of these regions and in Oakland, to gain additional context and information. In addition to the case studies, the team highlighted other relevant instances of sanctioned encampments for people experiencing homelessness in other cities and examined cooperative housing systems as a possible complement to co-governed encampments.

The team identified several key findings, including the following:

- All the co-governed encampments in our case studies grew out of unsanctioned encampments working with advocacy groups. Community support and involvement in the development of co-governed encampments has been critical to program success.
- Challenges arise when the service provider is not transparent in their decision-making.
- Programs with multiple co-governed encampments, each serving different populations, have been particularly successful.
- Co-governed encampments are cheap to administer, especially if residents are given a high degree of autonomy.
- Co-governed encampments face several key choices, including: which if any barriers to entry to provide, whether or not to limit duration of stay, and whether or not to provide tiny house / cabin infrastructure.

These findings, along with associated recommendations, are compiled in a table at the end of the report.

II. Introduction

Oakland is facing a growing homelessness crisis. The 2019 Point-In-Time Count and Survey reported over four thousand people experiencing homelessness in Oakland on a given night - up from just over two thousand in 2015. Multiple interventions are required to address this crisis, which include increasing the development of deeply affordable housing units (also referred to as Extremely Low Income (ELI) housing), strengthening tenant protections and economic security, and expanding the supply of emergency shelter options for people who are currently unhoused. This report aims to provide information and recommendations regarding a potential model for providing shelter to unhoused people in Oakland: co-governed encampments.

The [Oakland Permanent Access to Housing \(PATH\) Framework](#) generally defines a co-governed encampment as an intervention where unsheltered residents come to an agreement about how they will live together in a community setting¹. This may include selecting site leadership, determining eligibility for participation, developing community expectations for behaviors, holding each other accountable for agreed upon expectations, and maintaining the health and safety of the community. A nonprofit or community-based organization works alongside residents to support the residents in the design, leadership, and operations of the site. The nonprofit agency is the contracting entity with the local municipality and holds ultimate accountability for ensuring the safety and security of the site.

The key features of a co-governed encampment are resident input in setting encampment policies, resident responsibility for some aspects of program maintenance, and partnership with a contracted agency (referred to in this report as the “contractor” or the “service provider”) to ensure compliance with local laws and regulations.

Ambiguity exists around the terms *co-governed*, *self-governed*, *sanctioned*, and *unsanctioned* encampments. This report does not attempt to address the conflation of these terms, but rather clarifies that a co-governed model is generally what exists in practice, falling under the broad umbrella of sanctioned encampments. Conversely, self-governed encampments generally fall under the unsanctioned umbrella. For context, the research team found that some people use the term “self-governed” to refer specifically to encampments where the residents come to internal agreements and govern the encampment entirely on their own, without a formal relationship with a service provider or local municipality. Others use “self-governed” to refer to any encampment where the residents have some decision-making power, regardless of whether or not it is mediated by a service provider. For the purposes of this report, and to avoid ambiguity, the term co-governed is used, following the PATH definition above.

The co-governed model is attractive for several reasons. Unhoused individuals, especially those residing in tent encampments and vehicles, need places to reside without threat of punitive actions or unnecessary displacement, as well as access to critical services and resources. Existing shelters may not provide enough flexibility for many unhoused people, including couples, people who work at night, people with large amounts of possessions that can’t be placed into

¹ Oakland PATH Framework Glossary, updated July 2, 2020: <https://cao-94612.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/Oakland-PATH-Framework-Glossary.pdf>

shelter storage, and people who have pets. Individuals may also feel unfairly controlled, surveilled, or restricted in shelters where they have little autonomy and no control over shelter policies and regulations. A co-governed model can provide increased privacy, flexibility, and agency with regard to program design.

Co-governed encampments are also attractive structurally. Resident responsibility for decisions—such as determining who is allowed to enter a program or what services are provided—can help ensure that the program is fair and provides the most important resources. Co-governance and resident maintenance may help residents acquire skills in facilitation, governance, and security, which may improve access to jobs or permanent housing. Communities with formal co-governance structures may also be better able to negotiate with neighbors and build community.

The co-governed model, in practice, evolved from self-governed encampments that sought out structural and organizational support. As conflicts arose between groups of unhoused people seeking safe and sanitary places to live outdoors, unhoused people turned to each other and advocacy groups for support, while fighting for policies that better addressed their plight, reminding the general public that they were members of the greater community. As street encampments became more prevalent, some individuals partnered with outside groups which acted as fiscal agents and helped residents transition into permanent housing. Co-governed encampments reflect the unique characteristics of their inhabitants—in the barriers to entry, the length of stay, the provision of additional services, the scope of operations performed by the residents and managing agency, and other key characteristics.

Municipal authorities seeking to assist first provided real estate with special ordinances to permit use for habitation. This ameliorated the immediate negative impacts of constant displacement but fell short of adequately serving the needs of people residing in the encampment. While people have formed their own governance structures out of necessity, they may not have the resources, support, skills, or training to adequately address their specific needs. Emergency shelters may be sufficient for a short period of time, but people require privacy, the ability to cohabitate with their others, a place to store their belongings, and the freedom to come and go as necessary to conduct their personal affairs.

A co-governed model provides a combination of management and support and encourages community building and autonomy among residents. By supporting participatory governance among residents, a co-governed encampment builds skills in administration and social interaction that can help residents succeed in transitioning into stable housing and gainful employment. Under a co-governed model, residents can form communities and cater service provisions to meet their specific needs. Services and assistance can be targeted to these communities by the request and organization of residents. A partnering agency is well-suited to fulfill the necessary data collection tasks, monitor and report on spending and budgets, and meet local liability insurance requirements. This external contractor mediates potential friction between residents, ensures effective program management, and the contractor's relationship with the local municipality can help ensure that both the governing residents and the external contractor are accountable to a mutually agreed upon set of community guidelines.

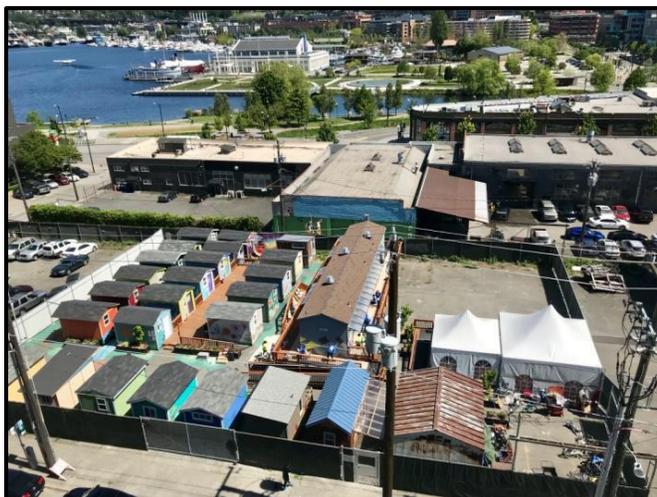
III. Case Studies of Co-governed Encampments

Case Study #1

Low Income Housing Institute - Tiny House Villages in Seattle, Washington

Overview:

The Low Income Housing Institute (LIHI) is a nonprofit organization in Seattle, Washington founded in 1991 that provides a wide array of services to people experiencing homelessness. LIHI owns or manages over 2,200 housing units in the Puget Sound region, including low-income housing, emergency shelters, and “tiny house” villages with a co-governed management model. LIHI also plays an advocacy role and provides case management services, hygiene centers, and other supportive programs. LIHI currently operates ten co-governed tiny house villages within the City of Seattle.



The City of Seattle co-governed model found early support in a [proposal](#) to permit organized legal encampments made by Mayor Ed Murray’s Emergency Taskforce on Unsheltered Homeless at the end of 2014.² The proposal recommended that the City permit organized encampments to be sited on public land and support existing encampments operated by two main advocacy groups: Seattle Housing and Resource Effort (SHARE) and Nickelsville. These groups had existed for decades, struggled to resolve permitting and placement issues with their tent-based encampments, and had difficulty complying with a City requirement that encampments be moved every 90 days.

The Taskforce recommendations led to the City Council approving an authorized transitional encampment [ordinance](#) in March 2015.³ This ordinance allowed for a “transitional encampment accessory use” while establishing restrictions around the number of persons to be served at each site and limiting the term of permitted use to one year, with an option to renew for one additional year. A related [joint Director’s Rule](#) adopted by the City’s Human Services Department and Department of Planning and Development established encampment operational standards

² Emergency Task Force On Unsheltered Homelessness. “Recommendations to Mayor Murray.” December 2014. <https://murray.seattle.gov/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Emergency-Task-Force-On-Unsheltered-Homelessness-Recommendations-to-Mayor-Murray.pdf>

³ O’Brien, Mike. *City of Seattle Ordinance 124747*. 20 April 2015. <http://clerk.seattle.gov/search/ordinances/124747>

including budget and fundraising, site management, maintenance and security protocols, and other goals.⁴ The joint Director’s Rule also outlined community outreach standards and required the creation of Community Advisory Councils to foster communication between residents of encampments and their housed neighbors. A state of emergency [declaration](#) in November 2015 by Seattle Mayor Ed Murray and King County Executive Dow Constantine helped secure emergency funding and establish more administrative authority and flexibility in contracting for services.⁵

In late 2015, LIHI contracted with the City of Seattle to be the fiscal agent for pre-existing self-governed encampments operated by SHARE and Nickelsville. LIHI’s responsibilities included case management, site development, volunteer management, and tiny house construction, while SHARE & Nickelsville were responsible for daily management including establishing and enforcing the code of conduct, intake procedures, and village oversight and security in each of the encampments they managed.⁶ The first three tiny house villages— Othello, Ballard and Interbay— were formed in 2016. These early encampments originally consisted of a combination of tiny houses and tents on platforms and were widely recognized as a viable option for people experiencing homelessness due to the program’s low barriers to entry and the provision of community and case management support. In their first year, these camps served 467 people with 85 (18 percent) exiting to permanent housing.⁷ Of those 467 people, more than half (55 percent) of the adults had slept the previous night in a place not meant for human habitation.⁸

Exit Destination	Othello		Interbay		Ballard	
	70% Tiny Structures		All Tents		70% Tents	
	Total		Total		Total	
Permanent Housing	47	31%	26	20%	14	22%
Place Not Fit For Human Habitation	10	7%	26	20%	10	16%
Transitional Housing	36	24%	3	2%	2	3%
Shelter / Safe Haven	6	4%	9	7%	2	3%
Institution	1	1%	3	2%	3	5%
Other Temporary Situation	2	1%	4	3%	2	3%
Missing / Refused	48	32%	60	46%	30	48%

Demographic data for these camps show that 57 percent of residents were white, 19 percent Black, 10 percent mixed race, 6 percent American Indian or Alaska Native, 1 percent Pacific

⁴ City of Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections & Department of Human Services. “DCI Director’s Rule 9-2016/HSD Director’s Rule 2-2016: Requirements for Transitional Encampments.” 26 May 2016. <http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/codes/dr/DR2016-9docx.pdf>

⁵ Beekman, Daniel & Jack Bloom. “Mayor, county exec declare ‘state of emergency’ over homelessness.” Seattle Times. November 2, 2015 <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/mayor-county-exec-declare-state-of-emergency-over-homelessness/>

⁶ Parr, Evanie, and Sara Rankin. "It Takes a Village: Practical Guide for Authorized Encampments." Seattle University Homeless Rights Advocacy Project. 2018. <https://humboldt.gov/DocumentCenter/View/65017/20180918-Agenda-Item---It-Takes-a-Village>

⁷ City of Seattle Permitted Encampment Evaluation, June 28, 2017. <http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/HumanServices/AboutUs/Final%202017%20Permitted%20Encampment%20Evaluation.pdf>

⁸ City of Seattle Permitted Encampment Evaluation, June 28, 2017. See above link.

Islander or Native Hawaiian, and 1 percent Asian, with the remainder not collected or refusing to answer.

Over time, LIHI has taken over all management responsibilities from SHARE and Nickelsville while still retaining a local management structure with a resident council in each village. The program expanded to seven villages in 2017, then to nine villages in 2019. Under Nickelsville management, one tiny house village had a 16 percent exit rate into permanent housing in the first half of 2018, and when LIHI assumed management, the exit rate more than doubled in the first half of 2019, to 38 percent.⁹ In 2019, LIHI operated nine tiny house villages in Seattle sheltering 651 people in 300 tiny houses. Over the course of their tiny house program from January 2015 to May 2020, a total of 1,696 clients have been served with 626 (40 percent) discharged to permanent housing.¹⁰

Funding and Costs:

In 2016, the first full year of the LIHI co-governed model, the City of Seattle contributed \$559,600 (74 percent) of a total program budget of \$755,500 for the operations and case management costs for the Ballard, Interbay and Othello co-governed encampments. These camps were a combination of tiny house villages and raised platform tent structures. A total of 403 adults and 64 children were served at the permitted encampments, with Othello open only nine months of this period.

At the newest village, Cherry Hill, the program design has been adjusted to include around-the-clock staffing and additional staffing services from the LIHI. A total of 50 new tiny houses will shelter up to 60 single adults or couples experiencing homelessness, and pets are also welcome. The 2020 budget anticipates \$510,624.00 in expenses over a nine month period (April to December), which amounts to \$680,832.00 when projected over a 12-month period. This does not include \$358,360 in start-up costs (see table). Staffing includes two full-time case managers, five village organizers, and one special projects manager.

Cherry Hill Village	
INITIAL SETUP EXPENSES	
Budget Item	Amount
Project Management Fee	\$60,000
General Contractor (Site Prep)	\$60,000
Tiny Houses and transportation*	\$56,000
Power Installation/Power Distribution	\$50,000
Furniture and Appliances	\$30,960
Fencing and Privacy Screens	\$18,000
Plumbing Setup/Shower/Bathroom	\$17,000
Common Area Units and CM Office	\$15,000
Building Materials, tools, signage	\$12,800
Permit Fee	\$11,000
Misc Labor	\$8,000
Shower Trailer (will be donated)	\$6,500
Gravel	\$5,000
Space Rent during Development Phase	\$5,000
Safety Equipment	\$1,600
Architectural Expense	\$1,500
TOTAL	\$358,360

*Urban Housing Institute will donate 10 Tiny Houses

⁹ Greenstone, Scott. “Seven months ago, residents locked the city out of their tiny house village. Now, Seattle officials plan to cut its funding” Seattle Times. 30 October 2019.

¹⁰ “Program Outcomes By Project Type.” Low Income Housing Institute. Clarity Human Services Homeless Management Information System Report. May 19, 2020.

Co-Governed Model:

The governance structure in each village is slightly different, but they all share a group of fundamental characteristics. Residents are required to participate in a democratic decision-making process by signing an agreement which lets them become members of the village association. Each member must attend community meetings with each having one equal vote. Members are required to earn credits by contributing to the day-to-day operation of the village. These tasks include shifts of camp security, participating in neighborhood service activities and other operational duties. Each village has a grievance procedure, and membership can be temporarily or permanently revoked for violation of established community rules.

Challenges and Unintended Consequences:

As noted earlier, the management responsibilities of the partners shifted over time. By the middle of 2019, the relationship between Nickelsville and LIHI had degraded considerably. At the Northlake Village, Nickelsville ceased compliance with their contracts and barred LIHI from the premises. Both Nickelsville and LIHI cited a lack of transparency as a critical concern. LIHI also stated that rules were enforced arbitrarily and that Nickelsville management showed favoritism, overlooking rules violations by their friends while evicting others for petty offenses. The Northlake Village was slated for eviction by June 2020, but the action has been put on hold due to the pandemic.

A pilot “safe user” village (Licton Springs) was a partnership between SHARE and LIHI, which explicitly allowed the use of heroin and other drugs on-site. The mission of the village was to provide a very low barrier to entry for people experiencing homelessness and struggling with substance abuse issues. At its peak occupancy, the village housed over 60 people. Complaints of crime in the neighborhood increased by 62 percent between April 2017, the month the village opened, and March 2018.¹¹ The village did not maintain the same rate of exits as other encampments and failed to meet benchmarks required by their City contract. Licton Springs closed in March of 2019 when the City decided not to renew their lease.

¹¹ Greenstone, Scott. [“This tiny house village allows drugs. Should it have been put in a high drug-traffic area?”](#) Seattle Times. April 23, 2018.

Case Study #2

Dignity Village in Portland, Oregon

Overview:

Dignity Village (The Village) is a unique city authorized, co-governed community on city-owned land in Portland, Oregon. Similar to the Seattle villages, Dignity Village began as a political protest in 2000, starting as an unsanctioned encampment known as Dignity Camp. On February 26, 2004, the Portland City Council passed [Resolution No. 36200](#), which designated city land to be used as an authorized campground site in the Sunderland Yard location, 11 miles away from Downtown Portland.¹² The resolution allowed the site to serve as “transitional housing” and designated Dignity Village Inc. to manage this transitional housing site. Dignity Village Inc. is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization with an elected Board of Directors and a Village Council composed of the Village residents. The City of Portland and Dignity Village Inc. uphold a contract detailing the management of the transitional housing program on City-owned land.¹³ The contract outlines performance measures, site plan standards, safety and project plan compliance checklist, and a financial impact statement.



The Village consists of 43 one- and two- person tiny homes, built on raised decks, which provide villagers with a private space. The Village can house up to 60 individuals, and the structures are built of recycled or reclaimed materials. The structures are not insulated, and utilities are not provided. Unlike many other emergency or transitional interventions, Dignity Village welcomes couples and pets, allowing residents the freedom to live with whom they wish.

¹² <https://efiles.portlandoregon.gov/Record/2300918/File/Document> OR <https://efiles.portlandoregon.gov/Record/2300918/>

¹³ “Dignity Village City Contract.” *Dignity Village*, 28 October 2015, <https://dignityvillageportland.files.wordpress.com/2015/10/dignityvillage.pdf>.

A 2010 report titled, “An Evaluation of Dignity Village” reported the gender, age, racial and ethnic make-up of residents. The count reported that 69 percent of residents were male and 59 percent of residents were between the ages of 31 to 50 years old. Additionally, 93 percent of residents were White/Caucasian.¹⁴ The 2019 Portland Point-in-Time Count and Survey reported that 69.7 percent of individuals who were unsheltered, in emergency shelter, or transitional housing were white.¹⁵ In addition, from those who were unsheltered, in emergency shelter, or transitional housing, 62.8 percent were male and 64.3 percent were between 25 and 54 years of age.

Funding and Costs:

Dignity Village Inc. holds a no-cost contract and lease agreement with the City of Portland and is responsible for operating the site in a financially self-sufficient manner, including covering all operating costs. Operating costs include electricity, internet, waste removal, portable toilet service and water resulting in approximately \$2,424 per month.¹⁶ Yearly operating costs are roughly \$28,000, covered by a \$50 a month fee from each resident, micro-business revenues, and private donations.¹⁷

The following chart shows an estimate of additional costs of Dignity Village to various City bureaus from 2008-2009:

Dignity Village	
ADDITIONAL COSTS	
City Bureaus	Cost
Portland Housing Bureau	\$4,500
Portland Bureau of Transportation	\$4,017
Portland Fire Bureau	\$1,973
Bureau of Development Services	\$4,500
Total	\$14,990

When adding the internal operating costs with the additional City bureau operating costs the total for Dignity Village and the City was approximately \$44,078 for the 2009 year. The funding and costs analysis for this case study relied on 2009-2010 data, the most recent available data for Dignity Village.

¹⁴ Kristina Smock Consulting, “An Evaluation of Dignity Village,” for the Portland Housing Bureau, February 2010, pp. 8–10.

¹⁵ “2019 Point-In-time Count of Homelessness in Portland/Gresham/Multnomah County, Oregon.” 2019, https://static1.squarespace.com/static/566631e8c21b864679fff4de/t/5d434f685800cf0001847e20/1564692373569/2019+PIT+Report_FINAL.pdf.

¹⁶ Kristina Smock Consulting, “An Evaluation of Dignity Village,” for the Portland Housing Bureau, February 2010, pp. 8–10.

¹⁷ Frequently Asked Questions.” *Dignity Village*, 16 May 2020. <http://dignityvillage.org/faq/>

Co-Governed Model:

The Village's stated mission is to provide transitional housing that fosters community and self-empowerment. Dignity Village is a membership-based organization, governed by a council who is elected each December by the membership. The Dignity Village by-laws detail the selection of membership requirements, general meeting requirements, officer positions, council member structure, and overall co-governance structure of the Village, which is detailed below:¹⁸

Membership: Any resident 18 years of age or older is eligible for voting membership if they are a resident for more than fourteen days, have signed an "admittance agreement", are in good standing, and have attended at least one membership meeting. "The Membership is empowered to adopt and implement reasonable policies and strategies designed to encourage broad participation, and equitable and diverse representation to the Council, provided that said policies and strategies respect the Council's need for stability and continuity, and provided they are consistent with all other provisions in these by-laws."

Meeting Requirements: Members are required to attend annual, monthly and special meetings which must be announced at least seven days before such a meeting is held. A twenty percent quorum is required for all membership meetings. The purpose of meetings is to make decisions about the day-to-day operations of the Village and consideration of proposals and resolutions for the council.

Officer Positions: Council member positions include a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Secretary, and Treasurer. Details of each position are included in the bylaws.¹⁹ Voting for the election of council members is by secret written ballot and each member is entitled to one vote.

Council Members: The council consists of any odd number not less than three and not more than twenty-five members. To qualify for councilmember, village members must have been members for at least 90 continuous days. Council members can be elected at annual, monthly, or special meetings and are elected for one-year terms. If council members are elected to fill vacancies, they shall serve until the next annual meeting of membership, which takes place in December. Council members who complete their term of office, may run for re-election at the end of their term.

In 2004, the City of Portland and Dignity Village partnered with a local nonprofit organization, JOIN, to assist in social services and administrative support. JOIN serves as a third-party nonprofit assisting residents with locating and transitioning to safe, decent, affordable housing. Additionally, this partnership has guided Dignity Village to meet the City contract requirements and comply with all reporting standards. The County funds one full-time JOIN staffer to support the Village model, assist Villagers with contracts/nonprofit administration, advocate for residents, and connect residents with relevant resources and service providers.²⁰

¹⁸ "Governance." Dignity Village, 29 Oct. 2015, dignityvillage.org/governance/.

¹⁹ "Governance." Dignity Village, 29 Oct. 2015, dignityvillage.org/governance/.

²⁰ "Frequently Asked Questions." Dignity Village, 16 May 2020, dignityvillage.org/faq/.

Challenges and Unintended Consequences:

It should be noted that Dignity Village is not designed to serve individuals with chronic needs and has a two-year stay limit for its residents. There is a high barrier to entry including interviewing with the Village Intake Committee, signing an Entrance Agreement, and paying \$50 per month for the duration of one's stay. However, the Village does not require background checks or health screenings. A member in good standing agrees to five basic rules outlined in the Entrance Agreement:

- No alcohol, illegal drugs, or drug paraphernalia on-site or within a 1-block radius
- No violence to yourself or others.
- No theft
- No constant disruptive behavior
- Everyone must contribute to the operation and maintenance of the Village. Everyone must do a minimum of 10 hours "sweat" equity a week.²¹

The distance from downtown Portland to Sunderland Yard can be a challenge for residents needing to travel and receive assistance in the city. Traveling from Dignity Village to downtown Portland on public transportation takes about 55 minutes and costs \$2.50 one-way. Since there are no city service providers on staff at Dignity Village, the partnership with JOIN has assisted residents with providing social services.

Case Study #3

Opportunity Village in Eugene, Oregon

Overview:

Opportunity Village Eugene (OVE) is a co-governed transitional micro-housing community on city-owned land located in Eugene, Oregon. Like other village models, OVE grew out of protesters and the 2011 Occupy Movement in Eugene. In 2013, the City of Eugene entered an operational agreement with SquareOne Villages, a local non-profit organization, to manage and operate the site as a low-cost, micro housing pilot project, to serve as transitional housing. The City of Eugene formally recognizes OVE tiny homes as "temporary structures / sleeping units," rather than "dwelling units," which allows the tiny homes to meet City code requirements. Currently, OVE provides 30 tiny homes that range from 60-80 square feet in size, and are supported by common cooking, gathering, restroom, and laundry facilities. While there is no limit to how long someone can stay at the village, the average length of stay is under two years.

SquareOne Villages is the non-profit organization that was designated by the City to manage and operate Opportunity Village. The stated mission of the organization is to create self-managed communities of cost-effective tiny homes for people in need of housing.²² SquareOne Villages was founded in 2012 and has since developed two additional villages - Emerald Village and

²¹ "Entrance Agreement." Dignity Village, 31 May 2019, dignityvillage.org/services/entrance-agreement/.

²² "About Us." SquareOne Villages, www.squareonevillages.org/about-us.

Cottage Village. In addition to managing and operating OVE, SquareOne Villages manages “The Village Model” where aspects of OVE’s governance model is complemented by land trust cooperative housing options.²³

Resident demographic data from 2016 reported seventeen residents were male compared to nine female residents.²⁴ In addition, the majority of residents were between 25 to 54 years old. OVE served 23 white residents compared to serving one Black resident, and one American Indian resident.²⁵



In August 2019, Oakland’s Human Services Department reported on the viability of implementing the SquareOne Villages model in Oakland. The full [report and analysis](#) can be found on the City’s Legistar platform²⁶. The report includes guidance on OVE’s policies, village manual, governance requirements, security plan, safety plan, and community agreements.

Funding and Costs:

OVE operates on City-owned land and is managed by SquareOne Villages. The City-owned land is leased to SquareOne Villages for a nominal fee of \$1 per year. When the pilot project started in 2013, the start-up costs of the village was approximately \$212,000 and the operating costs per month was approximately \$1,200. In 2016, the annual operating budget estimated \$30,000 yearly costs, which included utilities, maintenance, insurance, and bus passes for residents. In order to pay for budget expenditures, the village charges residents a \$30 monthly utility fee to defray operating expenses. The remainder of the budget is funded by private donations and ongoing fundraising efforts.

Co-governed Model:

OVE’s co-governed model relies heavily on resident participation. Since SquareOne Villages and the City of Eugene do not provide full-time staff at the site, residents are required to staff the front desk and manage security checkpoints. Additionally, residents must comply with all village policies, including the community approved governing structure. There are three governing groups within the OVE model, detailed below:

²³ “The Village Model: A Framework Plan for Reimagining Affordable Housing.” June 2020, https://4260ae65-1974-4bdc-a104-1e300c21f389.filesusr.com/ugd/6e1afc_84e97d5bb8e44cb1b60973a02d7551f5.pdf.

²⁴ “Rest Stops and Opportunity Village 2016 Report”. Eugene City Manager’s Office Memorandum to Mayor and City Council. September 13, 2017.

²⁵ “Rest Stops and Opportunity Village 2016 Report”. Eugene City Manager’s Office Memorandum to Mayor and City Council. September 13, 2017.

²⁶ “SquareOne Village Model As A Viable Model For The City Of Oakland.” City of Oakland, 10 September 2019, <https://oakland.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=3920996&GUID=E52EDB6C-5C69-49E0-8800-32E7F01FB3A6>

Weekly Village Meetings: Issues and concerns related to the organization of OVE are discussed in the weekly meetings. All residents are required to attend the weekly meetings but may request an excused absence from the Village Council. Topics of discussion can revolve around the Village Manual, Community Agreement, or Operational Agreement. A quorum is required and is established when over 50 percent of residents are present at the meetings. Each villager has the right to vote at weekly meetings. If a resident is expelled, they may appeal their expulsion at these weekly meetings.

Village Council: The Village Council consists of five to seven members who uphold community agreements and work with the SquareOne Villages Oversight Committee who provide organizational support. To be elected to council, a resident is nominated by another resident and voting takes place at the weekly meetings. The elected term of a council member is two months, but council members may serve consecutive terms. If a council member fails to perform their duties, they may be removed by a majority vote. The council duties are to uphold orderly management of the Village and to oversee the day-to-day operations of the Village.

SquareOne Villages, non-profit organization: The main role of SquareOne Villages is to provide oversight to residents and the council. Together with the council, they help to ensure that the Community Agreement and Village Manual is being upheld. The Board of Directors and staff at SquareOne Villages is responsible for the management of financial, legal, administrative, safety, and sanitation matters. In addition, SquareOne Villages provides technical support as needed and intervenes when the participant agreement and/or the operational agreement with the City of Eugene is violated.

Challenges and Unintended Consequences:

One challenge that OVE has encountered is the balance of power between the villagers and the elected council. To mitigate this challenge, the village manual explicitly states:

“The Council is not meant to have greater power than any other Villager. Those elected to the council are simply given the task of responding to incidents when a Community Agreement is broken and enacting the appropriate level of intervention as specified in this manual. When an incident occurs that is not described in this manual, it is up to the Village Council to determine the appropriate level of intervention.”²⁷

Additionally, since there is no full-time staff on-site provided by SquareOne Villages and the City of Eugene, OVE partners with outside agencies to provide assistance to villagers. Some examples of local partners include White Bird (human services), CAHOOTS (crisis management and conflict mediation), Womenspace (domestic violence), FOOD for Lane County (food pantry site), the University of Oregon, Lane Community College, and several faith-based organizations throughout the Eugene.²⁸

²⁷ “Opportunity Village: Village Manual.” 4 May 2017, https://ead3e67-3a27-4098-aa25-9fa572882b1f.filesusr.com/ugd/bd125b_32be9eddb4d34ea7ae64cf4beed1ddb.pdf.

²⁸ “OVE FAQ.” *SquareOne Villages*, www.squareonevillages.org/opportunity-faq.

Case Study #4

The Colorado Village Collaborative in Denver, Colorado

Overview:

The Colorado Village Collaborative (CVC) was formed in 2017 to create and operate transformational housing communities in partnership with people coming from homelessness. CVC served as the fiscal agent for a grassroots organization of people experiencing homelessness, Denver Homeless Out Loud (DHOL). Their first collaborative community, Beloved Community Village, opened in July



2017 on land contributed by the Urban Land Conservancy. This village began with eleven 96-square-foot tiny houses constructed by volunteers, and included gardens, a shared shower house, restrooms, and a common room for food preparation and gatherings. Community volunteers built these first homes with supervision from building professionals.

In May 2019, the Beloved Community Village moved to a 20,000-square-foot City-owned lot in Denver's historic Globeville neighborhood. In a unanimous vote from Denver's City Council, the village was given a one-year license for \$10 per year, renewable at the City's discretion. In February 2020, the village added eight new tiny homes, bringing the total number to 19, and a new Common House with showers, flushing toilets, and a full kitchen. These buildings were built solely by paid contractors, and local trade schools are developing a longer-term pipeline for tiny house construction. Their second village has 14 tiny houses, and another project is in the pipeline that will utilize public land.

The population of their village is 60 percent white, 18 percent Black, 12 percent Latino, with five percent mixed race and five percent declining to answer.

Funding and Costs:

The 2020 budget calls for \$1,056,540.00 in expenses with \$925,000.00 in expected revenue. The shortfall is expected to be made up through fundraising activities. The revenue is 45 percent corporate support, 28 percent foundations and faith-based, 14 percent individual fundraising, and 14 percent City of Denver contribution.

Co-governed Model:

Villager Responsibilities

Villagers complete an intake form within one week of moving into the village and sign a contract which outlines the rules and responsibilities of the community. The signed agreement is not a lease but is considered a revocable license that may be terminated at any time by the service provider. Failure to comply with the terms of the contract may result in expulsion from the village. Additional village guidelines are listed below:

- Participation in Village Council meetings is mandatory at least once per month for the entire duration (2 hours) of the meeting time. Participation includes voting and accountability processes.
- Everyone is required to participate in the weekly upkeep of the village including all common spaces and the village overall.
- Residents are expected to be progressing towards long-term goals of stability in income, housing, and personal well-being. As residents move into stable housing, new openings are available for others in need.
- Residents are responsible for providing orientation for newcomers and teaching them about the culture of the village.
- Residents are required to check in with Village Organizers every two weeks to facilitate information gathering and to connect residents to resources. Village Organizers offer support, help residents engage in community life, and help residents to progress towards their individual goals.
- Monthly house checks are conducted by CVC staff to ensure the safety, health and well-being of residents. The consent of the resident is required to enter tiny houses as necessary, unless it is an emergency or life-threatening situation.
- Residents are encouraged to respect boundaries with the staff and board and to keep communication with them between working hours except in an emergency.
- Residents must uphold non-negotiable community agreements as described by village governance. Violence, weapons, illegal drugs, and discriminatory or disruptive behavior are prohibited. Consumption of alcohol or marijuana are prohibited in common spaces.
- Residents agree to mediation for conflict resolution.

Village Council Responsibilities

The Village Council is required to follow a facilitated meeting process and make collective decisions. The Council interviews and selects prospective residents, with CVC staff present, to facilitate the process and encourage fair selection. The Council coordinates the maintenance process and makes sure that each villager fulfills their responsibility to clean bathrooms, common areas, waste collection, maintenance of the grounds, and managing the front desk (answer phone, call log, check in guests). The Council is responsible for approving events and tours of parties over five people.

CVC Staff/Board Responsibilities

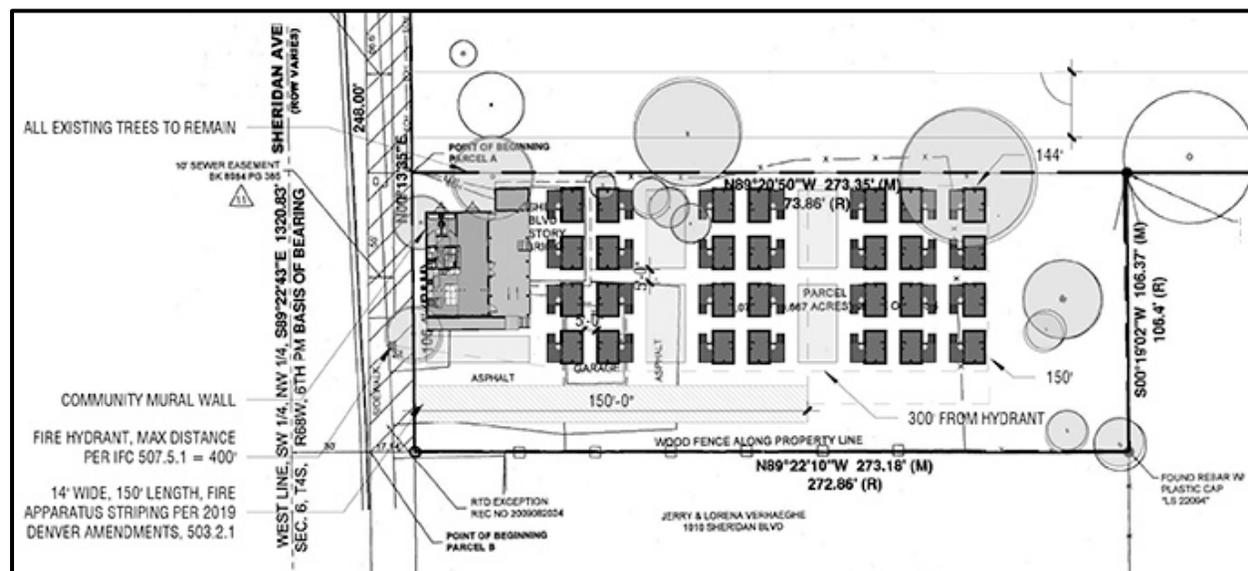
- build and design tiny houses,
- perform village maintenance (broken doors, windows, screens, plumbing issues, etc.),
- conduct fundraising for maintenance and expansion,
- support the Village Council; provide meeting facilitation, note-taking, engagement with the accountability process, encouragement of participation, emotional support during meetings and promotion of follow-up.
- provide resource navigation (such as employment services) and case management
- conduct periodic wellness check-ins every two weeks with village residents.
- organize volunteers for neighborhood clean ups and village projects,
- build relationships with the broader community, and promote a culture of safety, healing, and transformation.

CVC Accountability Team Responsibilities

The Accountability Team is the point of contact for communication around violations of community agreements and village rules. They uphold the terms of the resident contract and check-in with residents when compliance issues occur. The villager agreement is re-evaluated every 12 months to determine whether progress is being made towards long-term housing goals.

Challenges and Unintended Consequences

After problems arose with abuse of power among the resident managers, the service provider took on more responsibility. The original diverse pool of villagers steadily grew less diverse as minorities were excluded and a few strong-willed people consolidated power.



Colorado Village Collaborative Site Plan

Table: Comparison of Program Characteristics

	Opportunity Village (Eugene)	Dignity Village (Portland)	Low Income Housing Institute, Cherry Hill Village (Seattle)	Colorado Village Collaborative Tiny House Villages
Maximum Occupancy	45	60	60	25
Annual Budget	~\$30,000	\$52,111	\$681,775	\$150,000
Setup Costs	Setup costs were ~\$212,000, including donated materials and labor	Setup costs were ~\$218,000. This information is from a 2010 evaluation and has been adjusted for inflation.	Setup costs were ~\$360,000	Unavailable
Annual Budget Per Resident	\$670	\$740	\$11,363	\$12,500
Budget Per Resident Per Night	\$2	\$2	\$31	\$34
Entry Barriers	City application, background check, no drugs or alcohol	Village Intake Committee Process and Entrance Agreement. No drugs or alcohol.	Residents referred by City of Seattle HSD Navigation Team. Substance policy varies by village.	Village Council Process and Entrance Agreement. No drugs or alcohol in common areas.
Maximum Duration of Stay	6 months	None (indefinite)	One year (flexible)	None (indefinite)
Exits to Permanent Housing	20-30% of exits to permanent housing	18% of exits to permanent housing	37% of exits to permanent housing	32% of residents have achieved stable housing
Notes	25-35% return to homelessness; the remainder exited to other programs	70% return to homelessness; 34% of exits were evictions resulting from rules violations	Exits from all LIHI's co-gov programs over 5.5 years, not just Cherry Hill.	31 total people served over 2.5 years, 10 graduates to stable housing.

Selection of Other Relevant Encampment Models and Projects:

Village of Hope in Sacramento

Village of Hope is a Tuff-Shed village in Sacramento managed by the nonprofit organization Poverello House. Village of Hope is a transitional housing program that focuses heavily on reentry services. Village of Hope has found success in providing housing and reentry services together in a location in which participants have some amount of autonomy and community. Village of Hope does not provide specific lessons for implementing a co-governance encampment, as residents do not contribute to governance of the program.

Encampment Intervention in Austin, Texas

In *Austin, Texas*, Governor Greg Abbott set aside a Texas Department of Transportation maintenance yard, miles from downtown, for the use of people experiencing homelessness. No additional services were provided by the State. People began to occupy the site and local non-governmental organizations provided food, porta potties, and other services. The municipal transit agency provided transportation. The people self-organized with an ad hoc governing board and security shifts. About 145 people lived there as of March 2020, but on February 27 the state decided to award a contract to build a large congregate housing tent at the site with a capacity of 300 to replace the existing encampment.

Community First! Village

Community First! Village (CFV) is a 51-acre planned community in Austin, Texas, which provides tiny houses, RV parking, and community for people coming out of chronic homelessness. CFV is restricted to individuals from Travis County who have been chronically homeless and can pay rent. CFV accepts some residents with criminal records. CFV does not have a resident governance structure but does provide a large amount of services. Unlike other similar programs, CFV is meant to provide *permanent* housing to formerly unhoused individuals, as opposed to being a transitional measure.

Tent City in Ontario, California

Tent City is a long-running encampment that has gone through several major changes over the course of its existence. Tent City was established in 2007 to provide a location where unhoused people could reside, and service providers and nonprofit organizations could centralize their services. Tent City grew rapidly, and Ontario made the decision to restrict access to only those who had lived in Ontario or had some connection to the city. Tent City eventually evolved into the Temporary Homelessness Services Area, a much more restricted program, accessible through 90-day residence permits. Tent City did not use formal self-governance or co-governance practices, but did demonstrate the intense need for a permitted, low-barrier encampment location for unhoused people.

IV. The Co-governed Model in Relation to Other Housing Systems

Co-governance in Relation to Cooperative Housing

Some co-governed encampments in our case studies provide shelter with no maximum duration of stay. Others are transitional in nature, providing services to help residents find permanent housing, with a designated length of stay. Thus, co-governed encampments are likely to intersect with other forms of housing, with residents both entering from and exiting to other homeless programs and affordable housing options. One form of housing that may be especially useful for residents of co-governed encampments is cooperative housing. The autonomous and self-managed characteristics of a co-governed model will likely lead residents to develop the skills needed to participate in cooperative housing, should they choose to leave the encampment to enter formal permanent housing.

Cooperative housing and community land trusts offer permanent affordable housing solutions for residents who could not otherwise afford to own homes. The Community Land Trust - Limited Equity Cooperative (CLT-LEC) hybrid ownership structure outlines how to ensure long term affordable housing. The basic structure of CLT-LEC divides ownership of the land and buildings among the residents in the community. A community land trust purchases and preserves buildings outside of the market system and uses cooperative models for residents to run housing cooperatives. Cooperatives realize affordability through shared resources, self-management, and operating at-cost. Examples of CLT-LEC models include the SquareOne Village Model, San Francisco Community Land Trust, and the Bay Area Community Land Trust.

SquareOne Village Model

The “SquareOne Villages Model” in Eugene, Oregon outlines a CLT-LEC approach to the housing affordability problem.²⁹ The model divides expenses by land, construction, and operations to create affordable strategies in Eugene. SquareOne Villages owns the land on which Emerald Village Eugene (EVE) operates. EVE is a 22-unit tiny house cooperative providing stable homes to low-income individuals. Construction of EVE began in May 2017, and individuals and families began moving into the village in 2018. The monthly cost to live at EVE ranges from \$200–\$300 per month, plus a \$50 monthly membership fee.³⁰ The fees cover the share payment, utility expenses, maintenance, and other operating costs. Residents are required to attend monthly meetings, serve on a committee, and contribute 10 volunteer hours per month. EVE’s application outlines membership eligibility and community agreements that members must abide by. EVE has no affiliation with the City of Eugene.³¹

²⁹ “TOOLBOX: Introduction.” *SquareOne Villages*, www.squareonevillages.org/intro-problem.

³⁰ “Emerald Village.” *SquareOne Villages*, www.squareonevillages.org/emerald.

³¹ “Emerald Village Eugene Application Packet.” 8 August 2020, https://eead3e67-3a27-4098-aa25-9fa572882b1f.filesusr.com/ugd/bd125b_53e54aa4e6a948ddb3f330a51bdd3661.pdf.

San Francisco Community Land Trust

The San Francisco Community Land Trust (SFCLT) is a democratically controlled non-profit organization consisting of volunteer committees and a Board of Directors. SFCLT member dues are \$24 per year and offers a sliding scale if affordability is an issue. The three volunteer committees at SFCLT are the Policy Committee, Membership Committee, and Fundraising Committee. In San Francisco, homeownership is only 38 percent of the population, which lags behind the national average of 68 percent.³² This gap highlights vulnerable communities in San Francisco at low- and moderate-income levels that are presented with high rents, economic insecurity, and threats of displacement. Overall, the SFCLT provides low-income communities with opportunities to own a home.

Bay Area Community Land Trust:

The Bay Area Community Land Trust (BACLt) creates permanently affordable, resident-run cooperatives in the Bay Area. BACLt uses a six-step model to define the support and relationship between a community land trust and housing cooperatives.³³ The governance aspect of the membership organization is highlighted by a tripartite division to ensure democratic involvement. The BACLt board is represented by one-third residents of BACLt residents, one-third local community members, and one-third technical experts in the housing field. Another distinct aspect of BACLt is the representation of population groups in the cooperatives that include working families, seniors, people with disabilities, people of color, and LGBTQ communities.

³² *San Francisco Community Land Trust - SFCLT Overview*, sfclt.org/SFCLT_Overview.

³³ Bay Area Community Land Trust." *Bay Area Community L*, www.bayareactl.org.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Cooperative Housing and Community Land Trusts (CLT):

Advantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Land Trust retains ownership of the underlying land and the co-op owns and manages the housing and improvements on the land
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperative housing produces significantly higher quality of life for the resident as compared to affordable rental housing³⁴
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The higher level of participation in cooperatives, as compared to affordable rental housing, was effective in preventing in-building³⁵
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social advantages include community control, cultural diversity, extended services, and elimination of a relationship to a landlord
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong sense of local ownership that has the ability to 1) respond to needs and desires specific to the local community, 2) draw on additional support and resources that exist in the community, and 3) breakdown common stereotypes around homelessness and affordable housing

Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying CLT or non-profit steward
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not necessarily a good fit for individuals/households in need of extensive supportive services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted population is for very-low incomes that are between 30 to 60 percent of the area median income (AMI)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates a stable place to call home rather than a financial asset for accumulating wealth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of upfront share purchase and monthly carrying charges may create barriers

³⁴ Altus and Mathews, "A Look at Satisfaction of Rural Seniors with Cooperative Housing," Cooperative Housing Journal, 1997

³⁵ Saegart and Winkel, "Cooperative Housing, Social Capital and Crime Prevention," Cooperative Housing Journal, 2001

Co-governance in Relation to COVID-19 Emergency Shelters in Portland, OR

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted and created additional challenges and risks to the unhoused community. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) ties the lack of housing opportunities to poor physical and mental health outcomes, and calls for permanent housing solutions for homeless individuals to be prioritized.³⁶ In this section we highlight how Portland, Oregon responded to the pandemic by establishing self-governed models at emergency shelters.

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, the City of Portland created the Creating Conscious Communities with People Outside (C3PO) program.³⁷ This emergency outdoor social distancing shelter program consists of safe and sanitary outdoor social distancing sleep areas with culturally appropriate environments for populations experiencing unsheltered homelessness during the City of Portland COVID-19 State of Emergency. The City of Portland is working with the Joint Office of Homeless Services to fund access to basic necessities and hygiene support, including but not limited to: showers/toilets, hand washing stations, laundry and garbage service, food service and access to potable water, internet and charging station access and harm reduction supplies. The Creating Conscious Communities with People Outside (C3PO) program is a new and developing project and updates/outcomes for this project may be delayed.

Notable Practices
1. <i>Community Collaborative Partnership:</i> The city is collaborating with many advocacy groups on the project including JOIN, who collaborates with Dignity Village.
2. <i>Prioritization of Population Groups:</i> The project consists of three outdoor tent villages open for (1) LGBTQ+ identifying folks, (2) BIPOC folks and (3) blended population including older adults, women, and people with disabilities.
3. <i>Co-govern Model:</i> One of the core ideas behind C3PO is self-governance. Members must sign a Membership Agreement form before living in the sites. Each camp has one designated spokesperson who then communicates and works with the C3PO Coordinator in addressing community needs and issues.

³⁶ "People Experiencing Homelessness." *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/homeless-shelters/unsheltered-homelessness.html.

³⁷ "COVID-19 Response City of Portland Situation Status Report." 30 June 2020, https://www.portland.gov/sites/default/files/2020-06/2020.06.30_portland-situation-report_final_0.pdf.

V. Implementation in Oakland

This section discusses the lessons learned from the case studies and applies those insights to a potential co-governed model in Oakland. Each subsection discusses a particular aspect of implementation, references key examples from the case studies, and discusses the trade-offs between possible alternatives. A summary of key findings and recommendations is presented at the end of the section.

Creating a Co-Governed Encampment

Community Involvement

None of the encampments studied were initially created by a city council or government body. In Seattle, Portland, Eugene, and Denver, unsanctioned encampments were established by unhoused residents and advocacy groups and were later sanctioned by the municipality after a third-party agency was identified to assist with the management of the site. These co-governed encampments were successful in part because of the community connections and support networks that existed before the encampments were ratified by the city.

Building community and working in collaboration with advocacy groups continue to be important elements of a co-governed model after a program is implemented. For example, in Seattle, Community Advisory Committees provide advisory input on proposed encampment operations and to find ways to handle community complaints or concerns relating to encampments or residents.

Discussions with advocacy groups, community members, and potential residents may help with other challenges as well. These may include identifying suitable land, appropriate program size, connecting with potential initial residents, developing site plans, and identifying a competent service provider (or even creating one specifically for this program).

The recommendation is for the City of Oakland to develop a co-governed model while working closely with advocacy groups and with existing encampments that might have the potential to transition to a co-governed model.

Key Finding	Recommendation
Community support is critical to a program's success	Make decisions in consultation with potential residents, advocacy groups, and community members

Service Provider Requirements: A contracted service provider will be responsible for whatever external management is necessary, including coordinating access to services and outreach, supporting governance processes, managing codes of conduct, and overseeing enrollment and exits. Because residents will have control over some policies and actions within the encampment, the service provider will need to be flexible and able to adapt to new needs and policies.

The following table lists key services for which a contracted agency may be responsible. Some services, such as providing referrals for housing assistance and employment assistance, will be a primary responsibility of the contracted agency, regardless of the specific structure of the program. Other services, such as security and conflict arbitration, may be the responsibility of the service provider, or may be the responsibility of the residents, with the contracted agency serving a supportive role. In either case, when seeking to identify a service provider, consider the following services, and whether or not the service provider will be able to effectively provide and support these services:

Contracted agency is primarily responsible for:	Contracted agency and residents may share responsibility:
Housing assistance	Conflict arbitration
Employment assistance	Community outreach
Data collection and reporting	Food / nutrition
Benefits assistance: VA, SSI, SNAP, WIC, etc	Childcare
Health care access	Transportation
Legal aid access	Security
Utilities and supplies	Infrastructure maintenance and facility hygiene
Entry and exit information	Laundry

In identifying a service provider, the City may face a choice between whether to contract with a more established organization, or a newer organization created by advocates and community members specifically to support the co-governed site. It is not clear from the case studies whether one approach outperforms the other. Encampments in Seattle, Portland, and Eugene, supported by community and advocacy groups, were somewhat successful even before formalizing their relationship with the city and a more experienced contractor. This might indicate that a contractor’s experience may not be as important as their connections with community members and advocates who are committed to the success of the program. In Denver, the Colorado Village Collaborative formed out of advocacy groups. This indicates that a newer organization may be successful despite their possible lack of established connections and experience.

If possible, it would be desirable to identify a service provider who has access to outside funding and private support. All service providers in the case studies have some external donor support, and some are funded primarily by external support. External funding can also represent the commitment of community organizations and foundations.

Key Finding	Recommendation
Service providers will have to adapt to changing circumstances	Ensure the service provider is flexible and able to adapt to new needs and policies
Community support may be more important than established connections and history	A newer service provider, founded specifically to support co-governed encampments, may be most effective

Contracting with the Service Provider and Prioritizing Transparency: Contracting with the service provider is likely to be complex. Specific contract requirements are outside the scope of this document, and can be developed out of legal necessity, program design, and community needs. One important contractual recommendation regards procedural transparency.

Some programs have struggled with conflicts between residents and contracted staff. It is critical that the service provider is held to a high standard of procedural transparency and accountability. In the case studies, residents and the external contractor have often come into conflict when the contractor makes decisions without clearly revealing the process behind those decisions, or when the contractor withholds information from the residents.

The City’s contract with the service provider requires a high degree of transparency around all governance processes. Therefore, the recommendation is to ensure proper control mechanisms with regard to contract reporting and monitoring requirements. This includes justification of decision-making, making non-confidential information public, clearly stating the details of the grievance process, and adhering to the details of the grievance process. These requirements will be critical in avoiding issues of service provider overreach and in building trust between residents, community members, and the service provider. These provisions in the contract should also be enforceable; otherwise, non-compliance will be difficult to manage.

Key Finding	Recommendation
Challenges arise when the service provider is not transparent in their decision-making	Include strict procedural transparency requirements in the contract

Initial Participants and Governance:

The initial participants of a co-governed encampment may be joining a program that does not have pre-existing community norms, and in which they may not feel ownership over the governance process. Individuals may have to choose to participate in such a program without knowing exactly what might be asked of them, or whether the program is likely to be a good fit for them. Ideally, a co-governed encampment would quickly reach a more stable state of governance, where the residents are able to make decisions about the governance process, what services are provided, and how to manage physical maintenance and security tasks. Even so, the very beginning of the program may be difficult, as those norms must be established equitably and effectively.

One way to address this would be to initially adopt basic governance procedures and codes of conduct from other co-governed encampments. By starting from a known structure and then allowing residents to make changes to that structure through the established governance process, the program may be able to begin in a stable state and develop the longer-term autonomy and culture that will continue that stability. Having a clear initial management process and code of conduct may also help potential residents decide if the program is likely to be a good fit for them. The tiny house villages in Seattle operated by LIHI are usually opened with a specific, pre-set code of conduct and governance procedure, for example.

Another possibility is to have the initial residents and the service provider form their own initial codes of conduct and governing structure. While this may be procedurally more difficult, it may also help initial residents feel agency and ownership in the governance structure and community and may lead to an initial structure that best serves residents’ needs. An intermediate option is that the service provider can facilitate a process by which the initial constitution of the program is developed by consensus from a set of options for suggested rules.

Oakland has a very different population than the cities in the case studies. All the cities in our case studies are majority white, in total population, unhoused population, and program population. Oakland is much more diverse, and the majority of the unhoused population is Black. This distinction will be crucial for every aspect of a co-governed model in Oakland, especially when ensuring that initial governance structures serve the initial residents. Choices about the initial governance structure should, therefore, be made in collaboration with community members, advocacy groups, and potential residents in order to ensure the best outcome.

Key Finding	Recommendation
Initial residents will be joining a program that does not yet have established norms and procedures	Consider developing a process for writing a constitution with initial residents
	Consider adopting initial codes of conduct and procedures from other programs

Initial Barriers to Entry and Multiple Communities: The program will need to decide which, if any, barriers to entry will be posed to potential residents. These barriers might include requiring residents to not have certain convictions (such as sex offenses) or prohibiting alcohol and drugs.

Higher barriers to entry may reduce the possibility of conflicts within the program, but also unfairly exclude potential residents for whom the program might be a good fit. Some higher barriers may have discriminatory impacts: for example, barriers based on conviction history will disproportionately impact Black people, who are disproportionately policed and targeted for criminal punishment³⁸. Lower barriers may also increase general community support for the program.

The case studies have faced challenges regardless of the level of stringency with regard to program requirements. For example, Dignity Village prohibits the use of drugs and alcohol, and has also faced a high rate of evictions from rules violations. Many LIHI villages do not prohibit illicit drug use in private; some have had high rates of exits to permanent housing and others have not. One especially low-barrier LIHI village, focused on serving residents with drug abuse disorders, was not renewed after its contract expired after two years, but it is not clear that this was a result of the low-barrier aspect of the village. In general, restrictions on drug and alcohol use and prior conviction history do not appear to lead to programs that are safer or more successful.

One useful solution is to ensure that residents have access to many different co-governed programs, each of which can support people in different contexts. For example, one program could be designed for people with substance abuse disorders, providing low barriers to entry and access to treatment. Another program could be designed for women or families with children, prohibiting people with certain convictions. Another program could completely prohibit alcohol and drugs, for those who wish to maintain sobriety. A program could also be specifically targeted at populations that face discrimination in other contexts, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) residents³⁹. Finally, a person who has a conflict in one encampment might be able to make a fresh start in another.

The existence of multiple communities, and the ability of residents to transition between communities, has been central to the success of the Low Income Housing Institute villages in Seattle, and a similar model has been adopted by the C(3)PO COVID response shelters in Portland. The Colorado Village Collaborative, despite being a newer program, already has both a general residence village as well as villages specifically for women.

³⁸ SPARQ Scientists Release Oakland Police Findings, June 2016. <https://sparq.stanford.edu/opd-reports>

³⁹ In other cities, including Seattle and Denver, programs have considered opening a site specifically for Black residents, who have faced discrimination in both programs. This solution may be inappropriate in Oakland, as the majority of the unhoused population is Black; all Oakland programs will need prioritize serving Black people and ensure their protection from discrimination.

It may be difficult to create multiple programs at the same time. However, the recommendation is that the City implement a few smaller programs simultaneously, each managed by the same service provider, each serving slightly different needs and populations, and each potentially having different barriers to entry. In addition to supporting equity and providing opportunities for different residents to have specific needs met, this will also provide more sites for the City to see which policies and practices are successful and which are not.

If the City can only support one co-governed encampment, the City can choose barriers in communication with advocacy and community groups, ultimately deciding on a collective set of barriers (possibly none) that will work well for interested initial residents.

Key Finding	Recommendation
No set of initial barriers addresses all potential challenges; more strict barriers to entry around conviction history and alcohol/drug use do not lead to increased safety or success	Choose barriers based on the needs of potential residents and the service provider
Programs with multiple communities, each serving different populations, have been successful	Create multiple co-governed encampments, each serving different populations, allowing for variation in entry barriers

Initial Infrastructure: Most of the case studies began as tent sites, with tiny houses being provided after a few years. This transition may be a viable model for a new program, allowing residents to live somewhere in tents and develop the co-governance process while further infrastructure is built. A staggered transition from encampments to tiny house villages may also offset initial costs and allow multiple programs to be created rapidly.

However, there may also be benefits to investing initially in providing cabins or tiny houses to residents. Tiny houses may provide more safety and privacy for residents, and residents may feel more investment and ownership in a community where they are provided a roof over their heads. In Denver, volunteer house-building events have been an effective way to involve residents and other community members and build good-will. Tiny homes also offer a positive environmental impact. An exploratory study of “The Ecological Footprints of Tiny Home Downsizers” found that tiny homes reduce both energy use and material demand⁴⁰. Tiny homes increase pro-environmental behaviors including conserving water, using solar power, and decreasing housing upkeep and maintenance.

A co-governed encampment could nonetheless be successful without tiny houses. The most crucial infrastructure is not individual homes, but central community space, as well as utilities, including restrooms, internet access, and electricity. As an initial pilot that can be implemented on a shorter timeline, or with less funding, this may be the most viable model.

⁴⁰ Saxton, “The Ecological Footprints of Tiny Home Downsizers,” Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 2019

The location of the co-governed encampment and initial infrastructure may be important, especially as it pertains to access to City services and transportation. Dignity Village and Opportunity Village have faced challenges around their location. Both villages are located far from the city center, often creating transportation barriers for residents needing to go into the city for services, resources, work, or recreation. This also adds transportation costs, both for the service provider and for residents. Locating the encampment close to key City services, with easy access to public transportation, is crucial.

Key Finding	Recommendation
Tent cities and tiny house villages are both viable models, with tiny houses providing some additional benefit	Focus on central infrastructure; tiny houses are not necessary for the start of a program
Central infrastructure, such as community spaces and utilities, is crucial	
Access to city services is crucial for residents	Locate the encampment centrally, with easy access to the city center and public transportation

Legal Challenges: The location of a co-governed encampment may create zoning and liability issues. Liability issues will likely be similar or comparable to those faced by Community Cabins programs, as they involve permitted shelter housing. Most legal barriers facing a co-governed encampment may be addressed with liability and insurance requirements applied to the contractor, similar to those the City applies to Community Cabins programs.

However, a co-governed encampment will have two major differences from a Community Cabins program. A co-governed encampment may involve housing residents for indefinite periods of time, and program policy will be determined in part by the residents. These issues may require additional legal analysis, but that is beyond the scope of this document. Nonetheless, the basic legal and liability framework of the Community Cabins can be adopted as a starting point for a co-governed encampment.

Key Finding	Recommendation
A co-governed encampment may face unique legal challenges	A basic legal framework of a Community Cabins program may provide a starting point, but any program will need further legal analysis

Operating Co-Governed Encampments

Specific operational requirements for a co-governed encampment are best developed in collaboration with advocacy groups, potential residents, potential neighbors, and potential service providers. Key services are likely to include the provision of utilities, including toilets, water, electricity, internet, garbage collection, and phone access; security and facility maintenance; and governance processes. Key supplies are likely to include paper and office supplies, food, laundry and bedding, and basic transportation.

The case studies vary widely in terms of how operations are managed. In some cases, such as some LIHI villages, the contractor, who is present onsite 24/7, manages most operations. In others, such as Opportunity Village, day-to-day operation is maintained by residents, and the contractor checks in regularly to ensure things are running smoothly and help with any issues. The second model may be more effective and cost-efficient. If a single service provider operates multiple co-governed encampments, it may be useful to have a rotating schedule, where the contractor visits each encampment one or two days a week to provide services and supplies. In this model, residents are responsible for managing supplies and utilities, and the service provider helps with maintenance and provides more supplies when necessary.

Key Finding	Recommendation
Programs face a choice between constant contractor oversight and regular contractor check-ins	A service provider which checks in regularly but is not onsite 24/7 may be more efficient, especially if managing multiple encampments

Finances and Cost Savings: Co-governed encampments in Seattle, Eugene, and Portland have been extremely successful in reducing the costs of shelter housing. All three programs are the cheapest housing programs to administer in their districts. This can be attributed to two factors. First, resident administrative control means services can be requested and provided more efficiently, in direct response to resident needs. Second, residents may be responsible for many maintenance tasks, including security, laundry, facility hygiene, property maintenance, and some conflict arbitration and resolution.

It may be counter-productive to focus primarily on the cost-saving aspect of a co-governed encampment when designing and creating it. A co-governed encampment is not a way to shift cost burdens onto residents; it is a way to provide a place where residents can have autonomy and freedom, and to help residents stabilize and access permanent housing. As discussed above, the recommendation is that the City work with advocacy groups and potential residents to determine the initial responsibilities of a contracted service provider as well as the responsibilities of the residents, and that the City develop a budget based on residents' needs rather than on a desire for cost savings. Newer programs, such as the Colorado Village Collaborative, have been more expensive, and initial program costs are unlikely to be as low as costs for more established programs.

Inasmuch as cost savings are a priority of the City, it is important to emphasize that the cheapest programs, Dignity Village and Opportunity Village, are programs with a very high degree of autonomy and resident control. In these programs, resident responsibility for expensive tasks such as security and property maintenance is paired with a high degree of resident autonomy. This includes having the majority of governance powers vested solely in the residents, with the contractor providing mediation and decision-making only when internal processes cannot come to a resolution. A successful high-autonomy model may also require having the contractor only on-site at certain times rather than 24/7, both as a cost reduction measure and to increase resident agency and autonomy.

Key Finding	Recommendation
Co-governed encampments can be very cheap programs to administer, especially if residents are given a high degree of autonomy	Work with potential residents and community groups to develop the initial budget and identify the most important services
	Avoid treating resident labor as a cost-saving measure

Transparency, Equity, and Accountability: In the case studies, several problems with co-governed encampments have occurred when leadership has acted in non-transparent or inequitable ways. In Seattle and Denver, resident councils have created policies that unfairly restricted entry into the program. Residents in multiple programs have also complained of decision overreach and unnecessary restrictions imposed by contracted staff. In the example of Nickelsville and LIHI, both residents and contracted staff have accused each other of withholding information.

No program in the case study population has fully solved this problem. However, we can make suggestions based on variations within programs that seem to help. Both contractors and resident leaders must follow strict codes of conduct and transparency. One potential model is to have a co-governed encampment elect a paid captain or council who is responsible for coordinating with the contractor and city and for executive decision-making. In addition to payment, this position would come with strict requirements on equity and procedural transparency. This would promote fair outcomes and ensure that the residents are compensated for their administrative work, especially when procedural barriers and transparency requirements are imposed on them.

It's also crucial that residents have access to a grievance process that allows them to register complaints with the service provider and with resident governance, and that those grievances are taken seriously. The recommendation is that the service provider be fully transparent about the structure of the grievance process with residents, the City, and the public.

Key Finding	Recommendations
Issues arise when leadership acts in non-transparent ways	Hold the service provider to a high standard of transparency (to residents and the public)
	Create a formal grievance process for residents; ensure the grievance process is taken seriously by the service provider
	Hold resident management to a high standard of transparency and procedural consistency
	Financially compensate residents for administrative work

Program Stay and Exits: Some co-governed encampments have faced challenges around residents exiting. Programs in Eugene and Seattle, which have a limited duration of stay, face issues both with residents who have become comfortable and do not wish to leave, and with loss of institutional knowledge when key community leaders leave the program. Dignity Village in Portland initially had a limited duration of stay, but later removed that restriction.

A limited duration of stay clarifies the intent of programs to help unhoused people transition into permanent housing. Limited durations of stay also allow the program to serve more people in a given amount of time, as individuals transition through the program more quickly. On the other hand, an unlimited duration of stay heightens many of the benefits of a co-governed encampment, including providing unhoused people a place to live without fear of eventual displacement or punitive action, increasing residents’ ownership and agency in the maintenance and support of the co-governed community and infrastructure, and ensuring that residents are not forced out before they are ready to enter permanent housing.

The recommendation is that a program in Oakland have no limits on duration of stay. The housing crisis in Oakland and the Bay Area is extreme, meaning that placements in permanent housing often require residents to move long distances or accept rent burdens. In addition, the current context of the COVID-19 crisis means that many people need housing and anyone who currently has any kind of shelter should not be denied it. While the immediate threat of COVID-19 may have decreased by the time a co-governed encampment is implemented, full economic recovery and the absence of any threat of outbreak may take a long time. For these reasons, the recommendation is that a co-governed encampment in Oakland does not implement a limited duration of stay. While this may ultimately increase the necessary program size, to accommodate more residents at one time, it is crucial to program equity and success.

A main goal of the program and the service provider will be connecting residents to resources for acquiring permanent housing. In particular, it may be useful for a co-governed encampment to form connections with a housing cooperative, as the skills that residents may develop in community facilitation and maintenance may be valuable to housing cooperatives, and housing

cooperatives may provide a comparable supportive community for residents to join upon leaving a co-governed encampment. For example, SquareOne Villages in Eugene operates both Opportunity Village, a co-governed encampment, and Emerald Village Eugene, a housing cooperative, and some residents have transitioned from Opportunity Village into Emerald Village Eugene.

A key goal of the service provider will be the retention of institutional knowledge in the program. Villages in Seattle in particular have had trouble with loss of institutional knowledge when key figures leave the co-governed encampment. While this problem may be at least partially addressed by having no limited duration of stay, the service provider can assist in ensuring that important information and lessons are passed on to residents for the future when key residents leave. (Some government structures avoid this issue with shorter terms of leadership. The Opportunity Village council term is only two months, ensuring that important knowledge is not concentrated in only a few people.)

Key Finding	Recommendation
Co-governed encampments face a choice of whether or not to have a limited duration of stay	The benefits of having no maximum duration of stay outweigh the costs, especially in the context of the COVID crisis and the housing crisis
Co-governed encampments have some similarities to cooperative housing	Build relationships with cooperative housing programs and help residents transition into cooperative housing
Retaining key knowledge and culture can be difficult when residents leave	Ensure retention of institutional knowledge through the service provider

Measuring Outcomes and Data Collection: It is difficult to make definitive data-driven statements about the effectiveness of the co-governed encampments in the case studies, due to small sample sizes, inconsistent data collection, and limited comparison statistics. Any pilot program in Oakland is likely to face similar challenges: a small program size combined with variability of demographics and circumstances means that simple statistics like rates of positive and negative exits are unlikely to be particularly clear for the first years of any new program.

Some recommendations can be made to try to ensure that useful data are collected and the program can be evaluated. The program can track basic entry and exit data, determining where residents are coming from and where they are leaving to, where possible. If possible, the program can obtain contact information for those who exit the program, so that follow-up check-ins and research might be performed. (For example, if 5 residents exit into permanent housing, how many of those 5 are still in permanent housing a year later?) Any information gathered to track entry and exits should be as specific as possible regarding previous housing, future housing, referrals,

and reasons for leaving in order to have the best possible understanding of who the program is serving and what is working.

Another recommendation is that procedural data, such as the filing and outcomes of grievance processes, are tracked. An effective grievance process sometimes necessitates anonymity, and resident privacy should be respected. However, where residents are willing, the outcomes of grievance processes should be tracked to measure program transparency, flexibility, and accountability. Because this program will be new and not directly comparable to other City programs, it may be difficult to determine benchmarks or comparisons for these data, but it is nonetheless important to track and attempt to understand what grievances are being raised and whether they are being addressed.

Finally, residents should have at least some say in data collection and outcome tracking. Residents may have particular measures of success related to operation of the encampment and services provided to residents and may provide suggestions related to how to evaluate the encampment. Residents should also be allowed privacy, even if that makes some data collection (beyond entry and exit basics and demographics) more difficult.

Key Finding	Recommendation
Demographic and exit data from these programs have been collected inconsistently and are not always clear	Track key data such as entry and exits, demographics, outcomes of grievance processes, and follow-up information
	The City should not expect data to be particularly definitive, especially for the first few years of a smaller program
	Give residents some agency in defining outcome measures and managing data collection
Tracking procedural data may be helpful	Track the outcomes of grievance processes, but only with the permission of the residents

Table: Summary of Key Findings and Recommendations

Area	Key Findings	Recommendation
Community involvement	Community support is critical to a program's success	Make decisions in consultation with potential residents, advocacy groups, and community members
Service provider requirements	Service providers will have to adapt to changing circumstances	Ensure the service provider is flexible and able to adapt to new needs and policies
	Community support may be more important than established connections and history	A newer service provider, founded specifically to support co-governed encampments, may be most effective
Contracting with the service provider and prioritizing transparency	Challenges arise when the service provider is not transparent in their decision-making	Include strict procedural transparency requirements in the contract
Initial participants and governance	Initial residents will be joining a program that does not yet have established norms and procedures	Consider developing a process for writing a constitution with initial residents
		Consider adopting initial codes of conduct and procedures from other programs
Initial barriers to entry and multiple communities	No set of initial barriers addresses all potential challenges	Choose barriers based on the needs of potential residents and the service provider
	Programs with multiple communities, each serving different populations, have been successful	Create multiple co-governed encampments, each serving different populations, allowing for variation in barriers and restriction
Initial infrastructure	Tent cities and tiny house villages are both viable models, with tiny houses providing some additional benefit	Focus on central infrastructure; tiny houses are not necessary for the start of a program
	Central infrastructure, such as community spaces and utilities, is crucial	
	Access to city services is crucial for residents	Locate the encampment centrally, with easy access to the city center and public transportation

Area	Key Findings	Recommendation
Legal challenges	A co-governed encampment may face unique legal challenges	A basic legal framework of a Community Cabins program may provide a starting point, but any program will need further legal analysis
Operations	Programs face a choice between constant contractor oversight and regular contractor check-ins	A service provider which checks in regularly but is not onsite 24/7 may be more efficient, especially if managing multiple encampments
Finances and cost savings	Co-governed encampments can be very cheap programs to administer, especially if residents are given a high degree of autonomy	Work with potential residents and community groups to develop the initial budget and identify the most important services
		Avoid treating resident labor as a cost-saving measure
Transparency, equity, and accountability	Issues arise when leadership acts in non-transparent ways	Hold the service provider to a high standard of transparency (to residents and the public)
		Create a formal grievance process for residents; ensure the grievance process is taken seriously by the service provider
		Hold resident management to a high standard of transparency and procedural consistency
		Financially compensate residents for administrative work
Program stay and exits	Co-governed encampments face a choice of whether or not to have a limited duration of stay	The benefits of having no maximum duration of stay outweigh the costs, especially in the context of the COVID crisis and the housing crisis
	Co-governed encampments have some similarities to cooperative housing	Build relationships with cooperative housing programs and help residents transition into cooperative housing
	Retaining key knowledge and culture can be difficult when residents leave	Ensure retention of institutional knowledge through the service provider

Area	Key Findings	Recommendation
Measuring outcomes and data collection	Demographic and exit data from these programs have been collected inconsistently and are not always clear	Track key data such as entry and exits, demographics, outcomes of grievance processes, and follow-up information
		For the first few years of a smaller program, data is unlikely to provide definitive findings, even if managed well
	Tracking procedural data may be helpful	Track the outcomes of grievance processes, but only with the permission of the residents

VI. Conclusions

The co-governed encampment model is an effective tool to mitigate the adverse impacts of street encampments in Oakland. The programs examined in Seattle, Denver, Portland, and Eugene demonstrate co-governed encampment models can be cost-effective, can provide a useful framework for service provision and community engagement, and can grant agency and autonomy to unhoused individuals. The supplementary research into related housing systems also demonstrates that co-governed encampments can connect in productive and useful ways with other housing systems.

Any co-governed encampment will be unique and will face its own challenges. The hope is that this report’s recommendations provide a useful framework for the creation and operation of a successful co-governed encampment in Oakland. Co-governed encampments are only one tool in the fight to end homelessness. Regardless of any new short-term intervention, such as co-governed encampments or the expansion of emergency shelter programs, the City still has an imperative to provide permanent housing to currently unhoused people, and to prevent individuals from losing their permanent housing in the future.

Acknowledging the need to diversify homelessness solutions in Oakland, a co-governed model is a viable alternative to traditional emergency shelter programs. A co-governed model is also an improvement over the status quo and has the potential to resolve the adverse impacts of unsanctioned street encampments. We hope that the recommendations provided here can be of use in the goal of giving agency, support, and security to Oakland’s unhoused residents.

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