UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE IN INTERDISCIPLINARY HOMELESS COMMUNITY DESIGN: A CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

by

SARAH RUCKER

(Under the Direction of Katherine Melcher)

ABSTRACT

This study aims to inspire the field of landscape architecture to deepen interdisciplinary collaboration to better support people experiencing homelessness. The thesis begins with a literature review to understand existing research surrounding homelessness and how it relates to landscape architecture. This study then analyzes five existing tiny house villages created to address homelessness. A template of eight categories of criteria guides the case study analysis; the categories were developed based on existing qualitative analyses of similar developments. The five case studies are then critiqued together to observe successes, shortcomings, and opportunities for future involvement of landscape architects in the work of eliminating homelessness in the United States. The findings reveal evidence for future collaboration between landscape architects and policymakers, social workers, and nonprofits—specifically in areas of user autonomy, ecological resilience, and governance when designing tiny house communities for people experiencing homelessness.

INDEX WORDS: Tiny House Village, Interdisciplinary Cooperation, Homelessness, Case Study

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BA, University of Georgia, 2017

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTERS OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2025

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to families of individuals struggling with addiction and to families who have lost someone to addiction. While we cannot change the disease affecting our loved ones, I hope we have the courage to change the things we can, things like showing compassion, care, and empathy to others. You never know what someone is going through.

I also dedicate this thesis to my mom, an avid reader and learner who has shown me the strength and resilience that comes from an open mind and an open heart. Thank you for your unconditional love (for me, your favorite daughter) and support for our family.

Finally, I dedicate this thesis to my girlfriend, Bri, who never hesitated to or wavered in supporting me through this strenuous and lonely writing process; my dog, Bean, for being my best friend and companion through the long days; my sisters, Becca and Jess, for your open minds and hearts that are educating new generations; my girlfriend’s parents, Don and Raquel, who have shared wisdom, sarcasm, and pints of Guinness with me through this thesis journey; and, lastly, the queer service industry workers who kept my body, mind and soul fed when my cup was running low. I am so honored and blessed to be loved by y’all. Thank you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to acknowledge and thank all of my committee members for their willingness to contribute to my thesis. I feel so honored to have had your support through this process. Thank you to Professor Melcher for reading all of my many drafts, thank you to Professor Cramer for giving me your time to serve on my committee, and thank you to Professor Mowbray and Claire Cates for answering my cold calls and agreeing to help despite your busy workloads.

I would also like to thank Donnie Longenecker for his support when I experienced a sudden family loss in the middle of my final for his class. I cannot put into words what your kindness and grace meant to me at that time, but I sincerely thank you for your support.

I would like to thank Annelie Klein for her wicked fast replies to my emails and questions. It never went unnoticed; I was always impressed and thankful.

Finally, thank you to the custodians and staff for keeping our studios as clean as you can despite our chaotic creative processes, and for the sweet goody bags you shared with us. The CED is lucky to have you, the best of the best, on our team.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness, 771,480 individuals experienced homelessness in America in 2024—an 18% increase from the previous year (National Alliance to End Homelessness 2025). The current American reality holds the capacity for only a few unanticipated life events to result in any average citizen finding themselves experiencing homelessness. Homelessness is not simply a housing issue, but a complex, systemic issue that stems from the lack of affordable housing, insufficient rise in wages, and inadequate healthcare services (National Alliance to End Homelessness 2025). According to the Public Health Service Act, homelessness is defined as "an individual without permanent housing who may live on the streets; stay in a shelter, mission, single room occupancy facilities, abandoned building or vehicle; or in any other unstable or non-permanent situation" (National Health Care for the Homeless Council, Inc. 2020). The average American household rent increased $360 per month after COVID when compared to the years prior to COVID (Lerner 2022). In a recent study evaluating the associations of homelessness with the presence of medical debt, one-third of the participants (individuals currently experiencing homelessness in Seattle, Washington) felt that accrued medical debt played a role in their current unhoused conditions (Bielenberg et al 2020). The societal divides gain nuance if we factor in race, disabilities, and education; when these demographics are accounted for, the results show a low number of able-bodied, educated, white individuals experiencing homelessness and higher numbers of black and Latino individuals, often with chronic mental or physical illnesses (National Alliance to End Homelessness 2025).

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic alongside inflation with little to no increase in household income has led to a surge in unsheltered individuals (defined as those choosing non-organized spaces such as public parks and abandoned lots in lieu of provided shelters) with little to no reprieve in sight (National Alliance to End Homelessness 2022). Both due to lack of available shelter in some places and the choice to remain unsheltered in others, people experiencing homelessness commonly find refuge in public spaces: parks, green spaces, under bridges and along sidewalks (Parker 2021). If landscape architects are often designing public spaces and those public spaces are often where people experiencing homelessness seek refuge, it is undeniable that designers are stakeholders in the conversations surrounding the homelessness crisis in America.

Objectives and Justification

Abdel-Samad et al. conceptualized how interdisciplinary work can be successful in addressing the crisis of homelessness in the United States; the research provided a foundation for a homeless intervention model that guides collaboration between disciplines. For the field of environmental design, Abdel-Samad et al. recommended “enhanced evaluation of the efficacy of new shelter models that have emerged over the last twenty years” (Abdel-Samad et al. 2021).

The case study evaluation in this thesis aims to begin this effort through the design-led critique of tiny house communities created specifically for the needs of people experiencing homelessness as presented by Abdel-Samad et al. This thesis incorporates the fields of public policy, social work, and city planning in the critique to best gather results on the efficacy of these communities in the journey to eliminating homelessness.

Because the field of landscape architecture covers a wealth of design opportunities ranging from private to public spaces, it can be hard to fully understand the role of landscape architects when it comes to the homelessness crisis in this country. This thesis aims to deepen that understanding and show opportunities that exist for landscape architects to make a more positive impact on designed spaces for the sake of people experiencing homelessness. By understanding interdisciplinary connections to the homelessness crisis, this thesis aims to inspire landscape architects to move beyond aesthetics and into advocacy and collaboration, elevating human dignity and empathy as core design principles.

Research Question

This study addresses the following research questions to increase the influence of landscape architecture in the interdisciplinary efforts to support people experiencing homelessness with tiny house communities:

1. What are the design strengths and weaknesses present in existing tiny house communities used to support people experiencing homelessness?
2. What opportunities exist for landscape architects to better support the interdisciplinary efforts being made to address homelessness with tiny house villages?

Chapter Overview

This thesis explores tiny house villages as an approach to support people experiencing homelessness. It also expands on existing research that encourages interdisciplinary approaches to address the rise of homelessness more successfully.

Chapter two presents the literature review which delves into the discourse and efforts made by the field of landscape architecture in efforts to assist people experiencing homelessness. It analyzes why the field of landscape architecture is a stakeholder in the work surrounding the elimination of homelessness. The literature review also presents terms and phrases used in discourse in this field to give clarity to non-landscape architects in discussions occurring later in the research. Finally, it reveals what efforts have been made already to bridge the gap between disciplines in the interdisciplinary work surrounding the elimination of homelessness.

Chapter 3 presents the methods used in this study and explains why this method of qualitative comparison is beneficial to the current climate surrounding homelessness within the field of landscape architecture. The presentation of case studies, guidelines for qualitative analyses, and what specific methods and metrics were implemented are then presented.

Chapter 4 presents each of the five case studies and evaluates each case study using the framework presented in the methods. Chapter 5 reveals the combined data of each case study and critiques the case studies as a whole to gather conclusions from the data. Chapter 6 concludes this thesis by summarizing overarching findings and presents future research opportunities and suggestions.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The literature review begins with context regarding the relations between the field of landscape architecture and the places people experiencing homelessness find refuge. It then progresses into landscape design theories that exist within the field of landscape architecture as to how to design public spaces to better support all users of a given space. This section also introduces tactical urbanism and its relations to both designers and people experiencing homelessness. The literature review then progresses into tiny house villages and what research exists regarding tiny house villages created to address homelessness to increase clarity on the work being completed in this research; it introduces the concept of NIMBYism as well. Based on this foundation, the literature review progresses into interdisciplinary research to understand what information exists surrounding homelessness in adjacent fields like ecology, natural resources, and meteorology. Then, the literature review broadens to include the interdisciplinary lenses of religion and social work/human services to support methods used later in this research. Finally, the literature review presents existing qualitative research that was used to develop the methods implemented in this research to evaluate each case study.

Context for Landscape Architecture as it Relates to Homelessness

The field of landscape architecture works on a wealth of projects, some being urban, public spaces, some being rural, private landscapes, and many avenues in between. People experiencing homelessness find shelter in a wealth of locations, sometimes the same ones that the field of landscape architecture is designing. It is important to understand what happens when these situations overlap, where this overlap commonly occurs in the landscapes, and what it means for both designers and people experiencing homelessness to utilize these spaces cohesively.

For example, as homeless populations continue to rise, the accommodation of both unhoused individuals and domicile individuals in public spaces breeds friction, and the future of public space will inevitably leave “literally no space for compromise” (Mozingo 1994). Mozingo was discussing McCauley Park in San Francisco, which was designed by landscape architect Walter Kocian in 1982 to be a social park with lawn spaces, seating, and shade trees. In 1987, the city ordered the park to be fenced to deter homeless encampments; the fence proceeded to deter the public from use—not just those experiencing homelessness. Kocian called the choice to fence the park a “negative design to control social behavior”, arguing that the fence deterred all users of the park and left no space for compromise (Mozingo 1994).

This example from Mozingo reveals the importance of design choices for public space when it comes to inclusion and, while not always intentional, exclusion of groups of people. Furthermore, it shows the spatial tension of people experiencing homelessness and public places, revealing the overlap between the design of public spaces and the needs of people experiencing homelessness.

The spaces which exhibit this social tension have been researched by landscape architects to observe commonalities in locations and the factors that influence how and why people experiencing homelessness migrate to certain locations. Parker found that homeless encampments are often found near transportation infrastructure for ease of movement (Parker 2021). Encampments are also common in “edge conditions”, the spaces along the edge of urban life such as fencing, alleys, and overgrown vegetation, for the sake of privacy and mobility of unhoused individuals (Parker 2021). Wolch et al.’s research revealed trends of unhoused people moving near social services and resource centers (Wolch et al. 1988).

This means homelessness, at least regarding homelessness accounted for in data collection, often migrates to cities with ample public transit and homelessness resources, which reveals the spaces with the most opportunity for engagement by designers on behalf of people experiencing homelessness.

The field of landscape architecture is not confined to the design of dense, urban spaces; the key role that nature plays for both designers and people experiencing homelessness is important to take into consideration as well. Speer and Goldfischer gathered memoirs from people experiencing homelessness and their experiences in nature; the personal accounts illustrated how nature provides a place of belonging, provides solace and privacy in dense plantings, and how natural materials can be used in a variety of ways for their lifestyles (Speer and Goldfischer 2019). Understanding the complexity around homelessness is vital for this research, which is why previous researchers have focused on participatory action research as well as memoirs from individuals who have or are still experiencing homelessness. Speer and Goldfischer’s research recounting memoirs from such individuals stands out as it portrays the connection many unhoused individuals have with nature in such a unique and beautiful way. These individuals see nature as “a home in itself” that provides the necessities of “privacy,” “solace,” and “belonging” in their everyday life (Speer and Goldfischer 2019). The value of “dense woodlands” to unhoused individuals is a key criterion for encampment site selection for the sake of privacy (Speer and Goldfischer 2019). These personal accounts not only help to see the connections between the work of the designers of public green spaces and those who inhabit them when housing is inaccessible, but these personal accounts also help to guide designers on the importance of nature and ecological resilience when designing spaces for people experiencing homelessness.

It is clear that there is overlap between the work of landscape architects and the spaces used by people experiencing homelessness to rest and gain reprieve. It is also clear that design choices can help or hinder all users of a given space. That means that the most successful designs would be ones that are flexible so they can accommodate a variety of users. It may not be possible to create a universal design that is perfect for all users, but it is beneficial as designers to theorize how to come close to such a design and to understand what that type of design would need in order to be successful.

Design Theory and Tactical Urbanism

To ensure this research aligns with and immerses into current and future discourse in the field of landscape architecture, it is important to observe what theory-based discourse already exists regarding this overlap between places designed by landscape architects and places that people experiencing homelessness take refuge. It will also allow this thesis to more successfully advance efforts already being done by designers for the betterment of people experiencing homelessness.

In one study by Swapan et al., the authors argue that “now is the time to disrupt the too-common reality of public spaces which design out individuals experiencing hardships like homelessness” under the weight of “recent politics, inflation, and human rights efforts” (Swapan et al. 2024). A work of critical urban theory by Margit Mayer encourages revolutionary thinking for the sake of a post capitalistic city that is for the people over profit (Mayer 2014). A reviewer of Mayer’s theory believes it to have “the capacity to engage, challenge and change the existing order” that currently dominates capitalistic societal thoughts of public spaces (Lakshman 2012). One study highlighted how planners and designers are starting to shift to smaller, less formal designs to allow for the unknown (Ferreri 2015). Smaller, less formal designs would provide flexibility for users of the space, allowing for the space to evolve as users see fit.

This flexible design by users is often referred to by designers as tactical urbanism. Mike Lydon and Anthony Garcia (2015) define tactical urbanism through the following characteristics:

1) A deliberate, phased approach to instigating change
2) An offering of local ideas for local planning challenges

3) Short-term commitment and realistic expectations
4) Low risks, with a possible high reward
5) The development of social capital between citizens, and the building of organizational capacity between public/private institutions, nonprofits/NGOs, and their constituents

(Lydon and Garcia, 2015).

When a person lacks their basic human rights like housing, they must use the practices quite similar to tactical urbanism to survive (Giamarino, 2023). Unhoused individuals engage in "DIY urban design" to formulate spaces that meet their needs when the city fails to do so (Giamarino, 2023). Giamarion argues that setting up tents and cooking areas in public spaces “are not merely coping mechanisms but are also forms of resistance against the marginalization and criminalization of unhoused individuals” (Giamarino, 2023). This “DIY” approach begins out of necessity but can ultimately develop a sense of community as these campsites bring unhoused individuals together. Giamarino illustrates to designers and planners how we can learn from unhoused individuals regarding flexibility and resourcefulness in the designs of urban spaces.

Tiny House Village Approach

It becomes clear that an attainable and flexible approach to assisting people experiencing homelessness in an impactful way would be welcomed by designers and people experiencing homelessness alike. This leads the research to the creation of tiny house villages. These villages are becoming an increasingly popular way to assist people experiencing homelessness, and this social acceptance “underscores their growing acceptance as a viable solution to homelessness” (Kpeebi and Evans 2025) Krista Evans began compiling a geographical database of tiny house villages in 2019 to assist future advocacy efforts and understanding of the existing approaches. In 2019, the database recorded 34 operational villages; by 2024, the number had risen to 123 operational villages (Kpeebi and Evans 2025). Wong et al. found these villages to be cost effective, faster to implement, easier to operate without restrictions, and able to provide case management services that residents might need (Wong et al. 2020).

The field of landscape architecture understands the tension between public spaces and the homelessness crisis; the tension shows how the homelessness crisis affects everyone, leading to less investments in public spaces (Lerner 2019). Tiny house villages have been seen as a way for landscape architects to understand this tension and use our “fearlessness to run into ambiguity and start asking questions” (Lerner 2019). One example of this approach is the Block Project in Seattle, Washington; the founder began the project merely by making it a priority to say hello to the individuals in the community who were experiencing homelessness. It led to the creation of a team including architects, social services, corporate and community partners, funders, government agencies, schools, and construction teams; together, they allow homeowners to offer housing in their own backyards with fully functional tiny house dwellings provided through the partnerships (Block Project 2025). This is a prime example of landscape architects taking their expertise in solving issues with design and implementing it into community action.

Even though the field of landscape architecture is only beginning to understand how to use our skills to better assist people experiencing homelessness, the growth of tiny house villages and the beginning of discourse surrounding homelessness are evidence of the impacts landscape architects can have when we step beyond aesthetics into advocacy work in communities.

Two of the main concerns surrounding tiny house homeless villages that have already been identified by Evans are the need for increased public funding and increased mental health and medical services included in the villages (Kpeebi and Evans 2025). Only 19% of existing tiny house villages were funded solely by public sources according to the research by Kpeebi and Evans. The research also revealed the correlation between inadequate access to community healthcare services and the needs of these services by residents of tiny house villages (Kpeebi and Evans 2025). These considerations are accounted for in the metric for this research and help to bridge the gap between landscape architecture and adjacent disciplines to better understand what we know about homelessness and what we as landscape architects can improve upon when it comes to the design of these villages.

NIMBYism

A common concern with tiny house villages that arose in the literature review was “NIMBYism”, or “Not in My Backyard”—a strong illustration of public hostility and vigilantism towards unhoused individuals and tiny house villages (Giamarino 2023). If a city has high rates of visible unhoused populations, public perceptions of homelessness can be negative, viewing the presence of unhoused individuals in public spaces as a drunk or high nuisance (Mozingo 1994). Concerns often focus on depreciation of property values and the drain of resources needed to support people experiencing homelessness (Mullenbach et al. 2024).

However, existing research shows that tiny house homeless communities that are designed to zoning standards and with proper funding do not have a negative effect on the surrounding “backyards” (Mullenbach et al. 2024; Heben 2019). In fact, these communities are often lower in cost to create and manage than homeless shelters and can increase property values and neighborhood aesthetics (Heben 2019). Furthermore, public perceptions surrounding homelessness have improved according to research from Tsai et al. between 1990 and 2016, finding an increase in compassion towards people experiencing homelessness (Tsai et al. 2017). However, it should be noted that the positive attitudes came at a time with large government aid to assist unhoused populations, something that might change over time and should not be assumed as a guarantee.

NIMBYism is a common mentality that designers encounter, not solely limited to these tiny house villages. The presence of NIMBYism does not negate the success of these villages and the steps to take to avoid or shift these mentalities will be discussed further in this thesis.

Interdisciplinary Context

The literature review has revealed opportunities for the field of landscape architecture to better support people experiencing homelessness, but it is important to also include interdisciplinary context for these opportunities to ensure greater success in these efforts as presented in the questions being asked for this thesis. Gomez, Land, and Derrien conducted research in 2024 that concluded that small-scale efforts from single disciplines do not have the capacity to address homelessness in the meaningful way that structural, interdisciplinary efforts do (Gomez 2019; Land and Derrien 2024). Due to this, it is important to incorporate the research that exists in fields adjacent to landscape architecture like ecology, natural resources, and meteorology to bridge gaps, address shortcomings, and ensure the highest success of the designs of future tiny house villages. It is also important to include fields that directly assist people experiencing homelessness like social work and human services.

Fields Adjacent to Landscape Architecture

Land and Derrien observed a gap in scholarly research regarding the connection between natural resource management and unsheltered homelessness (Land and Derrien 2024; Derrien 2023). For example, ecologists have worked with members of the public that associate homelessness with pollution of natural resources with litter and human waste; ecologists tested this theory and found little evidence to support this theory and, instead, used the results as means to advocate for sanitation dignity for people experiencing homelessness (Rose 2017).

Corinth and Lucas helped bridge gaps in data surrounding weather and rates of homelessness; they found that unsheltered homelessness is higher in warmer places in the United States and low in colder places, but there is great variation in what warm places see high levels of unhoused individuals (Corinth and Lucas 2018). They also found correlation between high poverty rates and low rates of available shelter to be common factors as to why certain cities with warm climates have higher rates of homelessness than other cities (Corinth and Lucas 2018). However, Gregg and Aldern emphasized the importance of not assuming that low levels of unhoused individuals equate to low levels of homelessness, but rather the problem might be concealed using emergency shelters to keep the problem from the public eye (Gregg and Aldern 2022). If the public does not know there is an issue of homelessness in their community because they do not see it in their streets, there is less pressure for the city to intervene. The varying rates of homelessness per state and the possible correlation to weather needs further research; however, it is important to include in this research as it often arises in NIMBY objections against tiny house villages.

Religion

Due to the large involvement of religious organizations in supporting people experiencing homelessness, it is important to include the existing data on religion’s role in eliminating homelessness. Lovett and Weisz found largely positive association between people experiencing homelessness and the role religion played in rebuilding their lives (Lovett and Weisz 2021). Participants in the research revealed that religion provided purpose, sense of self, community, and social benefits in their journey with substance use and homelessness (Lovett and Weisz 2021). An interesting data correlation between high religiosity of a city and high rates of homelessness arose in the research by Corinth and Lucas (Corinth and Lucas 2018). They found that cities with high religiosity saw an increase in rates of homelessness in warm cities, hypothesizing the provision of shelter by the church, though not implying that churches are more likely to provide these services than other organizations in the community (Corinth and Lucas 2018).

More research is still needed to gather data on the associations between religiosity and homelessness; currently it appears to be a very personal matter that must be addressed on an individual basis. This was addressed in the limitations of this thesis and will be incorporated further later in this research.

Social Work/Human Services

The field of social work is arguably a key stakeholder when it comes to work being done to end homelessness due to their direct involvement with individuals experiencing homelessness as case managers in many instances. These case managers assist individuals with employment needs, healthcare access, and connection to resources needed while experiencing homelessness.

In the 1990s, Dr. Same Tsemberis developed the “Housing First” model, which advocates for people to have immediate access to permanent housing instead of traditional models that required people experiencing homelessness to treat issues like substance abuse or mental illness prior to qualifying for housing (Davis and Oliva 2023). This “Housing First” model advanced programs that provide permanent supportive housing partnered with social services like case management and has shown success in ending chronic homelessness for participants (Spector et al. 2020).

Research related to mental health found that social integration by formerly unhoused individuals with mental illness is influenced by housing type, suggesting that housing type can influence the ability to integrate into community (Yanos et al. 2009). Research surrounding permanent supportive housing found improved physical wellbeing for people experiencing chronic homelessness when living in supportive housing programs that are equipped to address medical needs (Spector et al. 2020). The opportunities of tiny house villages to assist people experiencing homelessness with community integration and physical and mental wellbeing are evident and have a strong chance of success in terms of positive outcomes for residents according to existing research related to social work and human services.

Literature Review Findings

The goal of the literature review for this thesis was to observe existing research and theories surrounding landscape architecture, people experiencing homelessness, and the fields that correlate to these subjects. Furthermore, the literature review provided necessary terms to best understand the upcoming case studies in this research.

Existing research shows an overwhelmingly empathetic view towards people experiencing homelessness in design theories and design discourse. This is important to note as this thesis aims to present the field of landscape architecture with opportunities to better support this demographic. The theory-based discourse provides credibility towards this thesis' call to action for the field of landscape architecture to more impactfully engage as stakeholders in the interdisciplinary efforts being done to support people experiencing homelessness.

Urban planners and designers are often tasked with the revitalization of dilapidated urban spaces, ones that may be overlooked by most users of the public space (Kut Gorgun and Kaya 2024). However, these spaces are often used by people experiencing homelessness to gain a reprieve from the public eye while remaining near important resources such as soup kitchens and day shelters (Wolch et al. 1988). Tension can build when designers revitalize these urban spaces and subsequently displace unhoused individuals from the sites. The field of landscape architecture can play a vital role in the reformation of society by developing a richer discourse around designing for “people over profit” and pushing for the creation of more tiny house villages that have already seen success (Brenner et al. 2013).

This thesis uses case studies to analyze design successes and shortcomings of existing tiny house homeless villages. The literature review serves as a foundation to show the existing evidence of success with tiny house villages in supporting such a vulnerable population. Furthermore, the literature review provided evidence of the importance of landscape architects being more involved in the efforts to end homelessness through the correlation of tactical urbanism to designers and people experiencing homelessness alike, as well as the importance of public and green spaces to both stakeholders. The literature review established the field of landscape architecture as a stakeholder in the work to end homelessness; this thesis now aims to further existing efforts by critiquing current tiny house village designs with the goal of understanding how to better serve as stakeholders in future tiny house homeless village design opportunities. The methods for analyzing existing tiny house villages in this thesis are presented in the next chapter; the methods will explain how existing villages designs will be critiqued and how the findings from these case study critiques should be used by future designers.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This study aims to analyze the varying levels of design of the five case studies and what can be improved for future villages. This research is conducted using qualitative assessments under a revised template for designing Empowering Inclusive Landscapes (EIL) as originally created by Chencheng He (He 2018). He developed EIL metrics that combined existing research on inclusive design that empowers people experiencing homelessness to better adapt these principles to the field of landscape architecture. The existing research included four existing metrics: Urban Open Spaces by Marcus, Inclusive Landscape Design by ISL, Inclusive Design Guidelines by Arnett, and the Participatory Redesign of Skid Row by Skid Row Vision (He 2018). He used these metrics to develop the new EIL metric and created five categories with narrowed subcategories in each category. Below is He's table to provide context for the research:

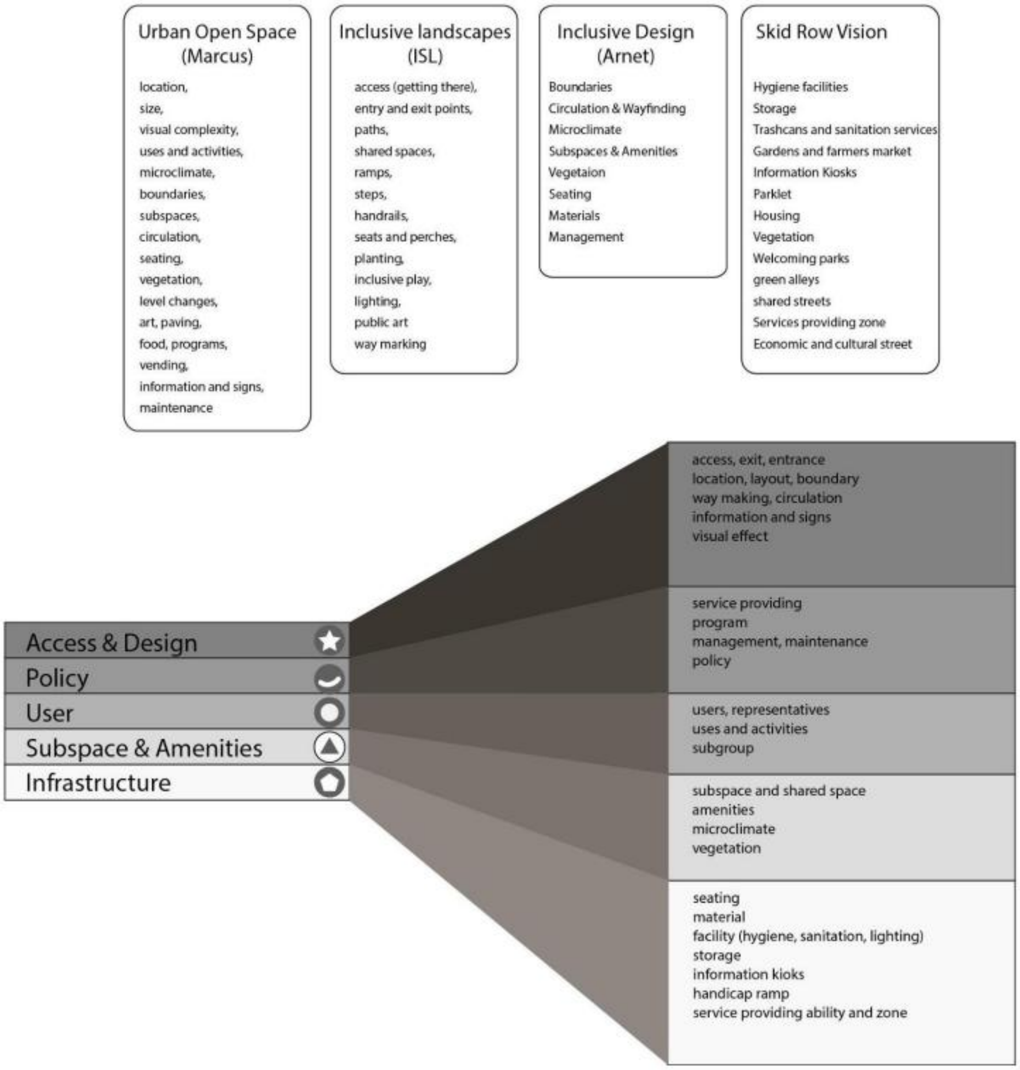
Urban Open Space (Marcus)
location,
size,
visual complexity,
uses and activities,
microclimate,
boundaries,
subspaces,
circulation,
seating,
vegetation,
level changes,
art, paving,
food, programs,
vending,
information and signs,
maintenance
Inclusive landscapes (ISL)
access (getting there),
entry and exit points,
paths,
shared spaces,
ramps,
steps,
handrails,
seats and perches,
planting,
inclusive play,
lighting,
public art
way marking
Inclusive Design (Arnet)
Boundaries
Circulation & Wayfinding
Microclimate
Subspaces & Amenities
Vegetaion
Seating
Materials
Management
Skid Row Vision
Hygiene facilities
Storage
Trashcans and sanitation services
Gardens and farmers market
Information Kiosks
Parklet
Housing
Vegetation
Welcoming parks
green alleys
shared streets
Services providing zone
Economic and cultural street
Access & Design
Policy
User
Subspace & Amenities
Infrastructure
access, exit, entrance
location, layout, boundary
way making, circulation
information and signs
visual effect
service providing
program
management, maintenance
policy
users, representatives
uses and activities
subgroup
subspace and shared space
amenities
microclimate
vegetation
seating
material
facility (hygiene, sanitation, lighting)
storage
information kioks
handicap ramp
service providing ability and zone

TABLE 4.22: Empowering inclusive landscape features and categories

Figure 1: Empowering Inclusive Landscape Features and Categories by He (He 2018)

While the metrics for EIL are strong, I argue that the metrics, depending on the category, can be both too broad and too specific for the goals of this research. For He, the metrics were developed to create a new, site-specific design with curated results to guarantee success. That was the goal in some ways of He’s research: create a checklist for EIL and test it for success in a specific landscape design. However, this research analyzes elements of design in pre-existing communities, making many categories and subcategories irrelevant to the goals of this research as I am not creating a new design.

My research also focuses more on assisting landscape designers with public policy and social work influences—things I think are beneficial yet currently lacking in the field. By combining He's metrics with the literature review which incorporates disciplines outside of landscape architecture, new metrics were developed for this thesis to better understand and evaluate the successes and shortcomings of existing tiny house villages from an interdisciplinary lens. Evaluation of existing government-sanctioned and non-profit shelter sites enriches the discourse around the current successes and/or failures of designing for people experiencing homelessness. By evaluating existing tiny house communities created to aid this demographic, this research aims to create a broad structure for urban planners and landscape architects to use when discussing and developing ideas for communities created to address chronic homelessness.

There are many examples of tiny house communities designed to address homelessness in this country. The five villages selected for case studies were chosen for three reasons:

1. **High rates of homelessness statewide.** According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness, seven states account for 63% of people experiencing homelessness: California, New York, Florida, Texas, Oregon and Massachusetts (National Alliance to End Homelessness 2025). Three of the five case studies

used in this research are from Oregon and Texas to account for these high rates of homelessness. The other case studies are based in Washington State and North Carolina which still have high rates of homelessness but were included to add depth to the remaining criteria below.

2. **Variety in climates.** Because landscape architecture centers around the design of green spaces, it is important to include contrasting climates to ensure the results of the research encapsulates obvious variables between the five tiny house communities. This is why the case studies chosen from states that do not have the highest rates of homelessness from the first criteria were incorporated into the research. Other states with high homelessness rates were not included in this research because of the states' saturated reliance on the use of emergency and temporary shelters or developments too new to have enough information for this analysis (Gregg and Aldern 2022).
3. **Varying levels of design influence.** Existing research has included a few of the case studies that are used in this research. However, the existing research was conducted for different end goals, not for design analysis for understanding the role of landscape architecture in the creation of tiny house villages for people experiencing homelessness. By combining villages with clear design influence with villages with little to no evidence of design, the results should highlight opportunities for engagement by landscape architects.

In this thesis, a more specified evaluation template is developed through literature review and existing metrics to increase clarity in the comparison of five villages used as case studies (the specific villages will be discussed later.) The goal is to have precise qualitative guidelines that can conjure descriptive outcomes from each of the case studies. The reasoning for this stems from Abdel-Samad's research which created guidelines for an interdisciplinary approach to eliminating homelessness. For the field of environmental design, the research suggests comparative studies to test the efficacy of existing homeless shelter models which "builds upon the findings of social scientists" (Abdel-Samad 2021). In order to build upon existing research as suggested, the literature review incorporated interdisciplinary context to better understand how to test the efficacy of existing models. Furthermore, Flanigan discussed the importance of observing intersectionality as means to foster connection and inclusivity (Flanigan 2024). This thesis tests efficacy of tiny house villages through design elements to understand the successes and shortcomings of design elements in their ability to foster community and inclusion as directed by the existing research. The measurable outcomes of the comparisons between five homeless tiny house communities should be heavily influenced using public policy and the skills of social work. Building upon the work discussed in the literature review, eight categories are to be used to analyze the five case studies to understand their successes and shortcomings. The eight categories are: Accessibility, Community, Dignity/Autonomy, Ecological Function, Flexibility/Resilience, Participation in Design, Public v. Private Realm, and Policy/Governance.

Category	Definition / Purpose	Key Evaluation Points	Design Implications
1. Accessibility	Measures how well each village supports inclusion and physical access.	• ADA compliance, barriers to inclusion, integration with surrounding city life	Ensure equitable access and inclusivity beyond ADA minimums; promote connectivity within and beyond the village.
2. Community	Assess sense of belonging, social interaction, and neighborhood context.	• Opportunities for resident connection and with broader community, public perception and NIMBYism	Design of spaces that foster relationships, reduce stigma, and integrate with local context.
3. Dignity / Autonomy	Evaluates privacy, control, and independence	• Levels of privacy, levels of personalization, and resident governance and independence	Prioritizing privacy and personal agency to restore dignity and stability.
4. Ecological Function	Examine sustainability, ecology, and resilience of site design.	• Integration of nature and green infrastructure and overall village climate resilience	Incorporate ecological systems to enhance mental health, functionality, and resilience.
5. Flexibility / Resilience	Measures adaptability of design to different users, programs, and climates.	• Temporary vs. permanent elements, adaptability to community needs	Develop flexible, adaptive, and climate-responsive site plans.
6. Participation in Design	Evaluates resident involvement and ongoing stewardship.	• Resident participation in planning stages, opportunities for ongoing stewardship	Promote co-design and shared management to strengthen community.
7. Public vs. Private Realm	Reviews spatial hierarchy and its influence on inclusion and belonging.	• Design of communal vs. personal spaces, fencing, signage, and safety	Balance privacy with community using design elements to communicate inclusion
8. Policy / Governance	Analyzes administrative, legal, and financial frameworks.	• Zoning and permitting processes, funding, partnerships, and access to resources	Align design with public policy and social service frameworks for long-term viability.

1. Accessibility: analysis of ADA compliance, barriers to inclusion, and navigation.

Statistics show that chronic homelessness for people with disabilities has been on the rise since 2016 (National Alliance to End Homelessness 2025). Knowing this, the case studies must include an analysis on the level of ADA compliance present in each village not only to be accessible to the users of the space but also to reflect on the levels of ADA compliance used by landscape architects and the possible opportunities for further compliance in the future. The tiny house villages should include accessible features like wheelchair ramps and wide sidewalks to ensure high levels of accessibility.

People experiencing homelessness often face barriers to inclusion in housing; income, disability, and substance use are common barriers to both income-driven housing and government-sanctioned shelters (National Alliance to End Homelessness 2025). By following the “Housing First” method, tiny house villages, when successful, should aid in removing some of these barriers to entry (Davis and Oliva 2023). Accessibility is not limited to ADA compliance; these communities will also be evaluated on the accessibility of community and city life surrounding the villages.

2. Community: spatial context, social acceptance, and public involvement

Research has shown that the health-related quality of life for people experiencing chronic homelessness improves with stable housing and the ability to foster a sense of community (Spector et al. 2020). Tiny house villages often present opportunities for residents to connect not only with each other, but in some instances, with the surrounding community through volunteer work and religious events (Lovett and Weisz 2021). These factors will be assessed in this thesis to analyze successes and shortcomings in the village designs, and how the designs influence the ability to engage with community.

The literature review discussed NIMBYism and the public perceptions surrounding tiny house villages. This concept will be analyzed for each case study through geographical mapping to understand the context of the village within the surrounding city, as well as research of news and media articles to understand the social discourse surrounding the village.

3. Dignity/Autonomy: critique of the levels of privacy and independence available to residents

Living without shelter allows little privacy and dignity for individuals. The literature review illustrated the importance of nature to gain privacy and invisibility and also discussed the removal of unhoused individuals by law enforcement without notice (Derrien 2023; Dignity Village 2025). Based on this data, it is important to ensure that these communities provide users with dignity and autonomy of their personal space.

The evaluation will observe and critique levels of privacy as well as levels of independence for users of the villages; this includes the ability of users to customize and govern their spaces.

4. Ecological function: analysis of existing ecology, sustainability and the functions of existing ecology systems

The literature review showed the importance of nature in the lives of people experiencing homelessness for mental health, privacy, and function (Astell-Burt et al. 2014). Tiny house villages will be analyzed on ecological function to ensure nature is incorporated into designs and to reveal to landscape architects any opportunities for enhanced environmental design.

Climate change is also a growing concern, so these case studies will be critiqued on their climate resilience and ability to endure climate events. This is important because tiny houses can be built in a cost-effective manner, but it is necessary to ensure that these tiny houses can withstand major climate events depending on the geographical region of the village (Heben 2019).

5. Flexibility/Resilience: adaptability of spaces, programs, and climates

Landscape architecture knows there is no universal design to accommodate all individuals; the same mentality is true for the design of tiny house villages. The most successful designs, according to the research presented in the literature review, will allow for high levels of flexibility for the use of space (Yanos et al. 2009). Part of this is due to the temporary nature of some villages, taking place on gravel lots as directed by city officials.

There is a push and pull between categories in this metric; flexibility exists in the ability to rapidly assemble and fill these tiny houses but then falter in the flexibility of users to navigate non-ADA compliant grounds. This will be further analyzed in the critique of each village.

6. Participation in design: history of design and current stewardship levels of residents

One way to enhance dignity and autonomy for users of these spaces is to incorporate them in the design process. The field of landscape architecture often creates management plans for historic sites, government sites, and other related projects, so it is an idea that could be incorporated into the designs of these villages in the future. These villages are also evaluated on the level of flexibility, so the ability to incorporate new users of the spaces into stewardship efforts is another method to analyze the success of these villages.

7. Public versus private realm: observations on transitional spaces and communal spaces in the design of each space

The example from Mozingo in the literature review on the use of fencing to communicate inclusion or exclusion shows the importance of design and the messaging it relays to users of a space (Mozingo 19994). These case studies will be critiqued on elements of design related to public space versus private space to observe the successes and/or shortcomings of existing designs in the messages communicated to users. Fencing, communal spaces, and signage are some examples of elements to be critiqued.

8. Policy/Governance: zoning, policy, funding, partnerships, services

This category of assessment most clearly reveals the interdisciplinary elements of tiny house villages; from the zoning regulations to get the villages approved to the funding that keeps the villages in operation, there are many factors in this criterium that help illustrate the role of landscape architecture in the development of tiny house villages. The case studies will be evaluated based on available data regarding the founding of the villages as well as the factors that are responsible for their ongoing success.

These eight criteria will be used to evaluate the varying levels of design that are incorporated into the case studies. The criteria can be assessed through visual elements and design influence, which should allow for clear interpretation of the influence of landscape architecture on existing designs as well as the possible opportunities that exist for future engagement by landscape architects in tiny house village designs. The data used in the evaluations is gathered from village websites, news articles, government websites, and existing scholarly research (when applicable) to best gain design evidence and village success. Each category is then ranked based on this evidence, receiving one to three check marks depending on the level of qualitative success found for each category, one check mark being zero to minimal evidence of success, two being minimal to clear evidence of success with some room for improvement, three being excellent evidence of success that can serve to inspire future villages. Checkmarks were chosen for the research, as the goal was not necessarily to find the most successful village, but rather, to highlights the strengths and shortcomings across all case studies to better understand what future opportunities can be addressed by landscape architects. When the measurable outcomes are gathered, the findings should be able to generate a framework to guide landscape architects in future design. The goal is to aid landscape architects in deeper interdisciplinary work and to encourage the field to engage in the growing need for thoughtfully designed communities to address chronic homelessness.

The five case studies to be addressed in this thesis are: Dignity Village in Portland, Oregon, Opportunity Village in Eugene, Oregon, Eden Village in Wilmington, North Carolina, Community First! Village in Austin, Texas, and Whittier Heights in Seattle, Washington. The selection was made for the sake of covering regions known for high rates of homelessness, cities with contrasting climates, and communities with varying levels of professional design. Furthermore, some of the villages chosen address homelessness as a whole while others address homelessness for specific demographics such as women, seniors, and those with disabilities; this aligns with the National Alliance to End Homelessness' data that shows the nuances in demographics related to homelessness (National Alliance to End Homelessness 2025). By addressing the needs of people experiencing homelessness on a small scale, whether that is site size, house size, or population size, there is greater success in a designer's abilities to meet the needs of the specific audience (Ferreri 2021).

Levels of development, permanence, design, and governance contrast between the communities as well to provide depth to the assessments made in this research based on existing literature. The evaluation framework was developed to be able to best understand what elements of design are most important for these villages which will allow the comparisons to reveal the successes and shortcomings of existing designs.

During the development of this thesis and the methods to be used, many villages were considered for critique in this research. The five case studies used in this thesis were selected above others for a few reasons. First, Dignity Village, Whittier Heights Village, and Opportunity were chosen to address states with high homelessness rates; this allows designers to see what elements of design are essential in spaces where homelessness rates are high and space is limited. Next, Community First! Village was chosen to illustrate how strong design influence can create success for designers and people experiencing homelessness simultaneously; this village served to gain depth on the importance of design in tiny house homeless villages. Finally, Eden Village was incorporated to increase depth surrounding the impacts of climate on designers and people experiencing homelessness; this village serves to understand the success of villages in states that may not have statistically high rates of homelessness. Together, these villages each present unique qualities in each evaluation category which allows for more cohesive findings when compared and contrasted together at the end of this thesis.

There are other existing villages that were considered for case studies in this thesis; however, as introductory research progressed, less information was found to complete evaluations of these villages. In some cases, this was due to the villages being too new to add depth to the research; websites and articles only discussed the introductory phases of the villages which would not answer many evaluation questions being used in this thesis. In other cases, villages fell short in other ways, such as lacking design or lacking funding, which would lead to a lack of depth in the evaluations used in this case study comparison.

The case studies used in this research were chosen to best answer both research questions in this thesis: what are the successes and shortcomings of existing villages, and what opportunities exist for designers of future villages. Some case studies reveal stark successes and limited shortcomings when others reveal the opposite. This allows for better understanding for designers when it comes to future designs when considering what design elements are essential and which have more flexibility. As the methods were solidified for this thesis, the case studies used were chosen in efforts to exchange and refine perspectives on what successful design looks like when it comes to tiny house homeless villages. The case studies provide a range of perspectives and approaches, which aids in the analysis of what success means for designers of these villages.

The next chapter implements these qualitative metrics in each of the five case studies. It includes photos and aerial context to better support the ratings given for each of the eight evaluation metrics.

CHAPTER 4

CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

The case studies being used in this research present contrasting rates of homelessness statewide, levels of design incorporated into the villages, and populations served by the village. By comparing these five villages, the results should highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the community in each evaluation category; when combined, the findings should reveal to designers what elements of design are most important to address when developing future village designs. Furthermore, the findings should reveal any shortcomings of these case studies to allow future designs to address these needs. It should also reveal the stakeholders in these villages and how to collaborate with the other stakeholders to ensure future designs address as many stakeholders needs as possible. The five case studies are analyzed in this chapter and the findings are presented in the following chapter.

Dignity Village (DV)

Location: Portland, OR

Climate Context: USDA Hardiness Zone 8B with regular precipitation and cold, overcast winters with heavy snowfall. (USDA 2025)

Year Established: 2000

Development Type: government-owned, nonprofit tiny house community

Population Served: 50 to 60 individuals per year (Dignity Village 2025

DV is a nonprofit tiny house community on a government-owned lot near the PDX airport. DV was selected for this research as the first and oldest example of a city-sanctioned village (pdx.edu 2022) and has inspired other cities across the country (pdx.edu 2022). Because it has been in operation for over two decades, this case study presented a wealth of data ranging from firsthand accounts to scholarly articles. This wealth of information is a key reason DV was included as a case study; the longevity of the village is a vital factor that adds depth to this research when compared to newer village models.

DV was formed by unhoused community members in protest of the erasure of campsites by city officials and police (Dignity Village 2025). Together, they pitched their tents as a direct movement of social justice, engaged in community outreach, and held press conferences to educate the community in their efforts and to combat negative stereotypes surrounding the ideas of homelessness to be dirty and unruly. Through these efforts, the city gave the campsite a contract on government-owned land which remains today (Dignity Village 2025). DV is a prime example of the influence of tactical urbanism discussed by Lydon and community action that can create long-term success and recognition for unhoused individuals discussed by Lydon, Garcia, Sendra and Sennett (Lydon and Garcia 2015, Sendra and Sennett 2020).

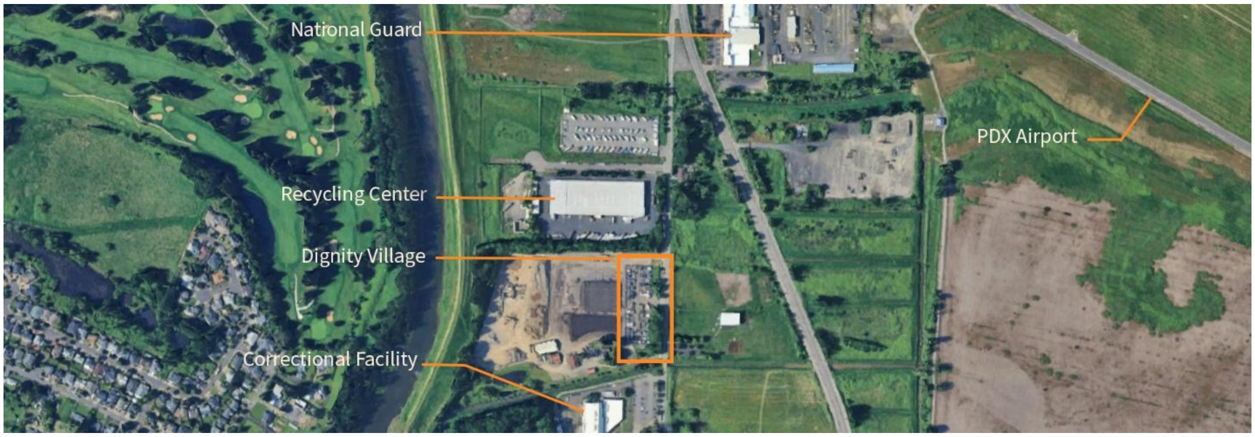
National Guard
PDX Airport
Recycling Center
Dignity Village
Correctional Facility

Figure 2: Google Earth Aerial Context for DV (Google Earth 2025)

Figure 3: Historical Context for DV's Protest Parade (Dignity Village 2025)

Figure 4: Early DV Activism under Fremont Bridge (Dignity Village 2025)

Figure 5: Early Temporary Tent Community Advocacy for City Recognition of DV (Dignity Village 2025)

Accessibility ✓

DV purposely lacks a grid formation for the village, stating that grids "promote aggression and isolation" (Dignity Village 2025). The community layout is, overall, informal, with the primary framework being a chain-link fence around the village.

Several homes have stairs to entry, but DV states they can provide ADA accessibility depending on time constraints (Dignity Village 2025). The community pathways are flat and allow for easy navigation for users with physical disabilities. Communal spaces have ramps for mobility device users. There is no evidence of formal design for DV, but informal design such as container gardens and asphalt and siding paintings are present.

When it comes to applying to live at DV, potential residents must meet with the Village Intake Committee (current residents that govern the property) to screen for understanding of the rules, and to better understand the story and needs of potential residents (Dignity Village 2025). There is a current waitlist for housing and to maintain one's place on the waitlist, potential residents must call weekly and volunteer sweat equity each month (accommodation is made for those who are employed full time and those with disabilities). The wait for a spot can be several years, highlighting the importance of and need for DV, but also the limitations of the square footage of the site. If a spot opens in DV, new residents are given a 60-day period to ensure DV is a good fit for them and for other existing residents of the village. 80% of residents exit into permanent housing after one to two years of residency at DV (Dignity Village 2025).

The accessibility of DV is ranked with one check mark as there is much room for improvement when considering the design of future communities. The accessibility is limited by the size of the lot and the informal nature of its mission, which originally stemmed from tactical urbanism practices and then evolved into a permanent space. This is successful under the discussions presented by Lyndon and Garcia on how tactical urbanism practices can lead to government participation (Lydon and Garcia 2015). People with disabilities also spend so much time advocating for their needs that a community without designed accommodation must be ranked low, as landscape architects must meet ADA requirements in the majority of their designs—especially ones with specific audiences like these tiny house villages. Bielenberg discussed the high correlation between medical debt, disabilities and rates of homelessness, so designers must advocate for accessibility as often as possible when designing communities meant to support vulnerable populations (Bielenberg 2020).

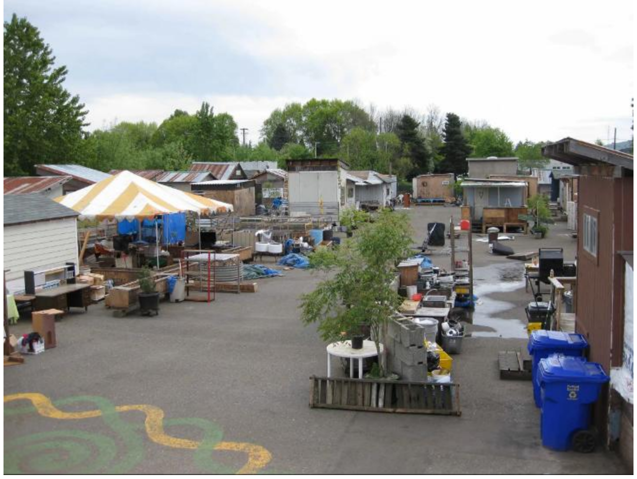

Figure 6: Contextual Evidence of DV's Limited ADA Accessibility (Oregon Encyclopedia 2025)

Community ✓

While the surrounding Portland community accepts and appreciates DV, it is important to criticize the placement of the village within the surrounding city. In geographical context, DV is near the PDX airport, Portland Correctional Facility, Portland National Guard, and Portland Recycling Center. Noise pollution and increased surveillance are barriers for residents of this village to feel fully accepted by the surrounding city. It can also be viewed as impeding on the needs of vulnerable individuals who suffer from mental health issues and possess more sensory needs as discussed by Larson (Larson 2016). While the people of Portland accept the village, stigmas surrounding homelessness are reinforced by the placement of the village (Smock 2010).

The community ranking for this village is one checkmark. As discussed, the placement of the village on the outskirts of the city limits the immersion of the village into community life. While it does meet the parameters of being close to public transit as presented by Parker, it does not meet the criteria of being near resources like Wolch's research suggest, nor does it allow for the flexibility presented in the concepts of the "open city" presented by Stevens et al. and Mayer (Stevens et al. 2024; Mayer 2014).

Dignity/Autonomy ✓✓✓

Residents have full ability to customize their individual homes (Dignity Village 2025). The community has three job opportunities: hot dog food trailer operations, firewood preparation and sales, and recycling, though it should be noted that much of the profits go towards the DV's annual expenses totaling around $76,000 (Dignity Village 2025). The community shows evident signs of ongoing self-expression and customization, with garden planters and paint colors making the space inviting to all (Dignity Village 2025; Google Street View 2025). This confirms the importance of tactical urbanism practices being used as means to gain government participation as found by Lydon and Garcia (Lydon and Garcia 2015). Therefore, DV received three checkmarks for the ongoing efforts for dignity and autonomy.

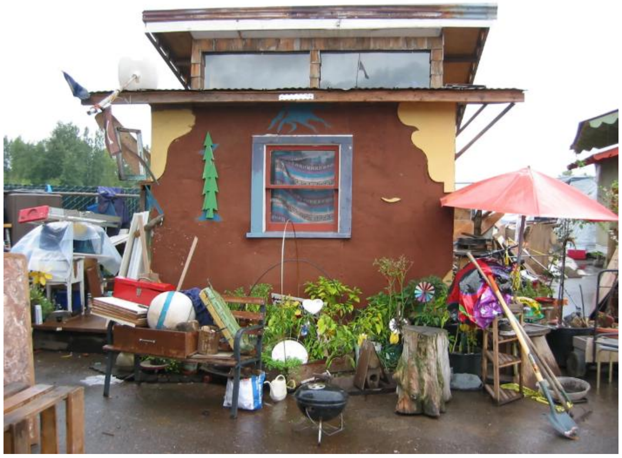

Figure 7: Customization of Home as context for Resident Autonomy (Oregon Encyclopedia 2025)

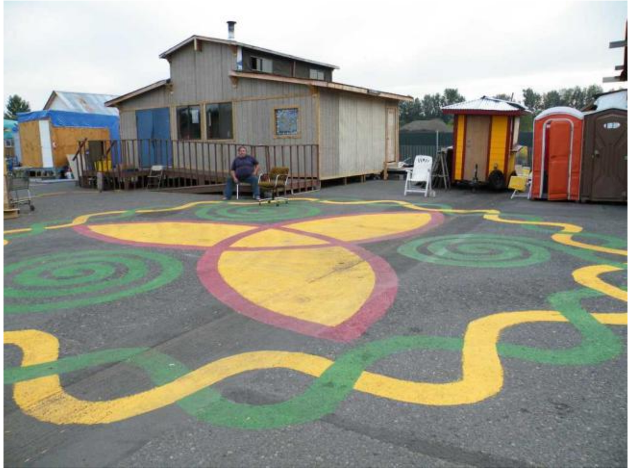

Figure 8: Customization by Residents as context to User Autonomy (Oregon Encyclopedia 2025)

Ecological Function ✓

DV has established itself and evolved itself to be quite inviting, though the core of the property without the artistic expression of residents would be a mere asphalt lot. Beyond the handful of raised garden beds and planters, the site is barren and lacking ecological resilience. DV does use solar panels and greenhouses for annual plantings, but the ecological resilience has much room for improvement when considering similar future designs. Astell-Burt and Larson argued the importance of green space for mental health benefits, and Speer and Goldfischer's personal memoirs from people experiencing homelessness showed the sense of belonging created by natural spaces, so it can be confirmed that low ecological function is a low point for this community (Astell-Burt et al. 2022; Larson 2016; Speer and Goldfischer 2019).

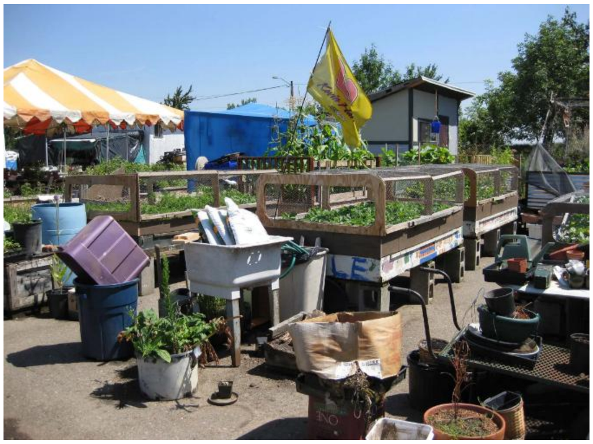

Figure 9: DV's Garden Space as context for Ecological Function (Safe Growth 2009)

Flexibility/Resilience ✓✓

The physical site of DV is small, approximately 50,000 sq. ft. with 43 dwellings, limiting the ability to expand to accommodate future residents (Google Earth 2025). The houses themselves are built by the residents, allowing for personalization for wants and needs of residents (Dignity Village 2025). However, the houses are built using salvaged materials, leaving them vulnerable to the harsh winter conditions. It received two checkmarks as it is flexible, does promote tactical urbanism practices, and shows sustainability efforts, but can be improved by making the homes more resilient to weather.

Participation in Design ✓✓✓

DV was founded by residents, for residents using tactical urbanism practices to gain government recognition, just like Lydon and Garcia argued; this means the homes at DV were, and continue to be, built and maintained by residents, though with the final site location receiving input from outside collaborators and designers to meet zoning requirements (Lydon and Garcia 2015). DV is an excellent example of user participation; the operations are governed by residents and allows for greater participation than most villages. The open city allows for greater democracy and the ability to be dynamic to change as presented by Sendra and Sennett, and DV shows the success of such an approach (Sendra and Sennett 2020).

Public versus Private Realm ✓✓

As mentioned previously, DV intentionally avoided a grid layout, but the village is contained by a chain-link fence. There is little intentionality in separating public and private spaces to allow better integration of residents into the space. This can be viewed as both a positive and negative feature depending on the relations of the current residents. Remaining open to the community allows for more opportunities for connection; too much openness diminishes individual autonomy of one’s space in the village.

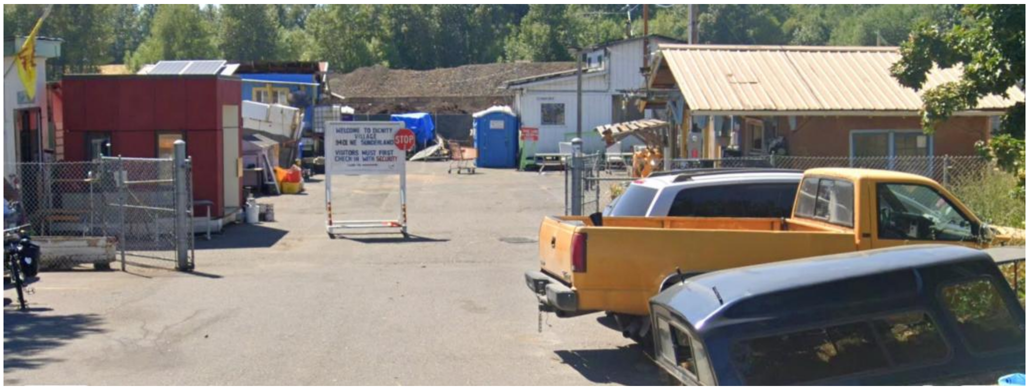
WELCOME TO DIGNITY VILLAGE
VISITORS MUST FIRST CHECK IN WITH SECURITY
STOP

Figure 10: Google Earth View of Entry/Exit Space as context for Public v. Private Space; sign informs visitors to check in with security upon arrival

Policy/Governance ✓✓✓

What began as an unsheltered “tent city”, DV fought to be recognized by the city government in order to avoid being removed by city officials. DV is now a recognized nonprofit with a board of residents, allowing for more permanence and legal representation (Dignity Village 2025). With residents leading the rules of the village, there is autonomy gained unless disagreements on how to govern arise. A previous chief of staff to the Portland mayor said that DV is “one of the best and cheapest bets to curb homelessness, at least for now” (Green 2016).

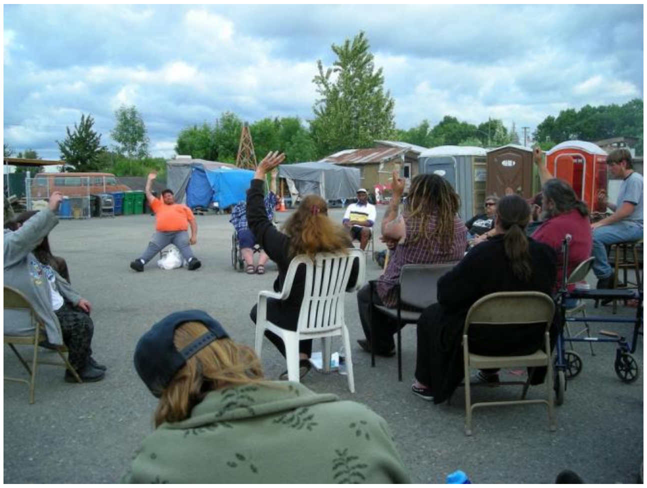

Figure 11: Resident Council Meeting (Dignity Village 2025)

Opportunity Village (OV)

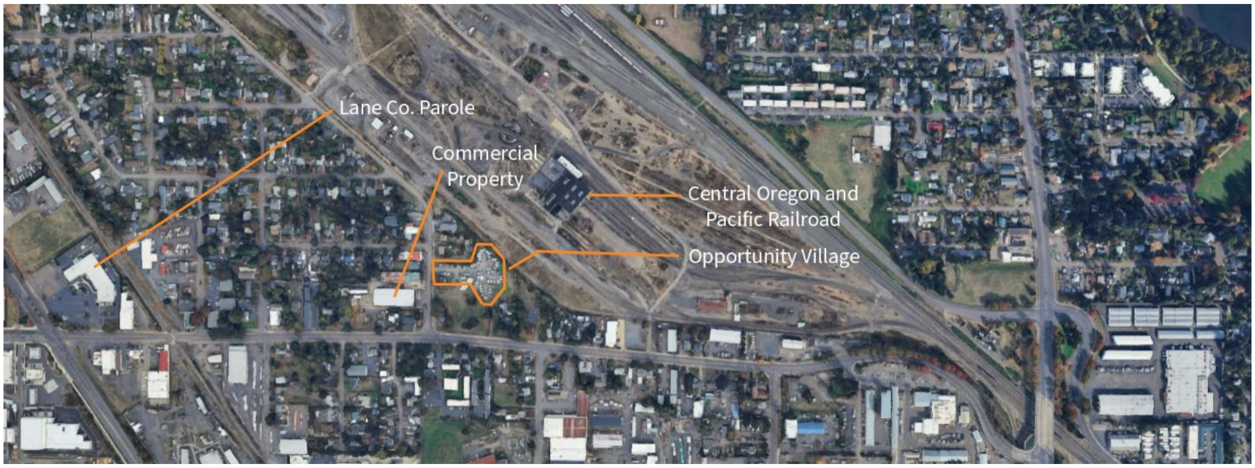
Lane Co. Parole
Commercial Property
Central Oregon and Pacific Railroad
Opportunity Village

Figure 12: Google Earth Aerial Context for OV (Google Earth 2025)

Location: Eugene, Oregon

Climate Context: USDA Zone 8B, warm summers with cool, wet winters. (USDA 2025)

Year Established: May 2014

Development Type: tiny house community operated by a nonprofit

Population Served: 35 to 40 individuals (SquareOne 2025)

OV is a self-governed nonprofit in Eugene, Oregon that provides 30 tiny homes to unsheltered individuals and couples. It was founded in 2013 with SquareOne Villages, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization whose mission is to create communities with environmentally sustainable and permanently affordable housing (SquareOne 2025). It spawned from the Occupy Movement in 2011 which advocated on behalf of unhoused individuals in Eugene, gaining inspiration from the work of DV in Portland (SquareOne 2025). SquareOne Villages has since expanded similar village designs to found six similar villages in Eugene; while OV serves unhoused individuals, the other six villages serve to support low-income residents (SquareOne 2025). Some villages accept residents with 50% or less than the median income, some 60% or lower, and some 80% or lower. The tiered approach helps to combat repeat users of homeless shelters, working to provide stability for the most vulnerable of populations.

OV was chosen for this research because of SquareOne Villages' non-profit model with tiered housing options that address a variety of needs, as well as being a nonprofit with little to no religious affiliation. SquareOne also built upon the work of DV to use public outcry as means to motivate city officials to act for the sake of unhoused individuals (SquareOne 2025). Public leaders called the "Homeless Solutions Committee" were instructed to "direct city staff to work with community members to identify potential sites independently financed with oversight by a not-for-profit organization or agency"—proof of the need for collaborative efforts between fields to create solutions to homelessness. Furthermore, OV was chosen for this research because of its proof of design, with master plans and construction documents provided that will deepen the analysis for the field of landscape architecture. The OV village moved in 2023 as its original site had a temporary contract with the city, which makes its elements of design much more impactful as they must maintain a steep level of adaptability and transience (SquareOne 2025). SquareOne and Opportunity Village provided design documents, traceable research and city engagement, and local news coverage, which strengthened the understanding and analysis of the village for this research.

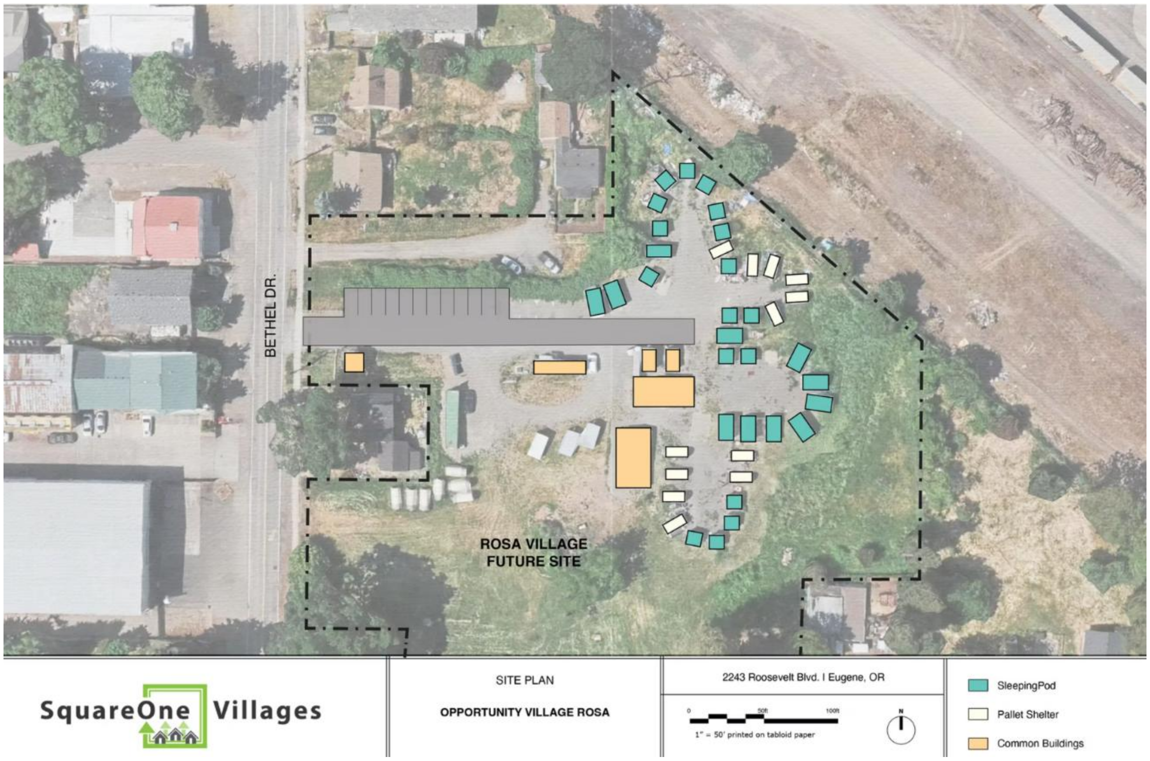
BETHEL DR.
ROSA VILLAGE
FUTURE SITE
SquareOne Villages
SITE PLAN
OPPORTUNITY VILLAGE ROSA
2243 Roosevelt Blvd. I Eugene, OR
0
50ft
100ft
1" = 50' printed on tabloid paper
N
SleepingPod
Pallet Shelter
Common Buildings

Figure 13: OV Master Plan for Design Evidence (Square One 2025)

Accessibility ✓✓

OV is in a centralized city location with clear circulation and accessibility to both residents and visitors. Some housing is ADA accessible, but those housing units are limited which weakens the accessibility ranking as Bielenberg has found unhoused individuals to have high rates of health issues related to disabilities (Bielenberg 2020). Design elements and navigation are clear without risking negative impacts of strict, grid-like formations that could potentially cause isolation for some residents.

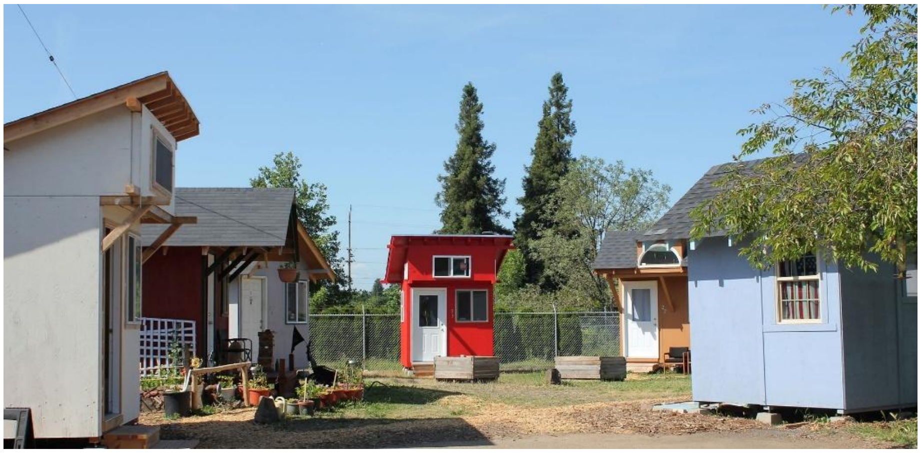

Figure 14: OV Accessibility Context (Square One 2025)

Community ✓✓✓

OV ranks high in this case study comparison because of the strength of its urban integration. OV is immersed and accepted in the surrounding community, allowing easy transition from private to public spaces. A bus stop is one block away from the village, providing connection to more distant parts of the city. OV received three check marks as its work with public policy and city planning on site selection eliminated NIMBYism from the community and allowed the village to be accepted into the community with ease (Mozingo 1994, Parker 2021).

Dignity/Autonomy ✓✓

The goal of OV is to provide a safe space for unhoused residents transitioning out of chronic homelessness but is not meant to serve as permanent housing. This limits connection, personalization, and autonomy in the micro-shelters. However, it is one of the only non-congregate models of shelter in the state, which “respects the autonomy and dignity of each resident” more than an emergency shelter option would (SquareOne 2025). OV received two checkmarks because the housing is not permanent and facilities such as showers and kitchens are shared resources for many of the houses, meaning residents may lose dignity when having to share personal spaces like these.

Ecological Function ✓

OV is built upon a gravel lot, limiting the ecological resilience of the space. There are small garden spaces, but this village falls short of most ecological influences that could positively benefit the demographic being served. It is important to note that OV has only existed at the present site since 2023, meaning many ecological functions may not have had full time to come to fruition at the time of this study. OV receives one check mark but may need to be revisited in the future once the ecology of the new site has had a chance to flourish.

Flexibility/Resilience ✓✓

Because OV had to move locations recently, the flexibility of the housing model is strong but the resiliency can falter depending on contracts with the City of Eugene. However, so much effort went into collaborating with city planners and community members to choose the new site, which gives hope to the longevity of the new site (Heben 2019). OV received two check marks for flexibility and resilience but can improve interdisciplinary efforts to ensure future designs do not have to be moved like OV.

Participation in Design ✓✓

Residents had little input in the initial design and design process of OV. The ability to participate in the governance of the village is now a key way residents have input into the future of OV. Maintenance hours and engagement with village communal spaces allow residents to connect to the village more, and therefore, OV still receives two checkmarks for its ongoing participation in design.

Public versus Private Realm ✓✓

Each tiny house provides personal space and privacy for residents. Kitchens and bathrooms are shared, but with little transition between public and personal spaces. The fence around the community is simple but more ornate than a chain-link fence which helps avoid negative connotations between “insiders” and “outsiders” of the community. Ideally, resources like showers would not have to be shared, as it is a private act, so OV receives two check marks for discernment between private and public spaces.

Policy/Governance ✓✓✓

SquareOne serves at the nonprofit which leads key factors such as zoning exemptions. The work of SquareOne with zoning committees allowed for the community to try something new and innovative in creating OV, arguably the key to the success of the village. OV is also self-governed using a “democratic process to make decisions about how the community is operated and managed” (SquareOne 2025). Residents attend weekly meetings, work ten weekly maintenance hours, and meet with

SquareOne staff to ensure that OV meets internal policies and procedures created by the city of Eugene (SquareOne 2025).

According to a case study by Andrew Heben with Square One, the village was approved by the city council under the use of “temporary homeless shelter”, which relaxed code requirements (Heben 2019). City officials approved OV under these specialty codes as a way to keep costs low, improving flexibility for the community (Heben 2019). This provides strong evidence of the ability of designers to partner with city planners and policymakers on behalf of people experiencing homelessness to find new solutions to address homelessness like these tiny house villages.

Community First! Village (CFV)

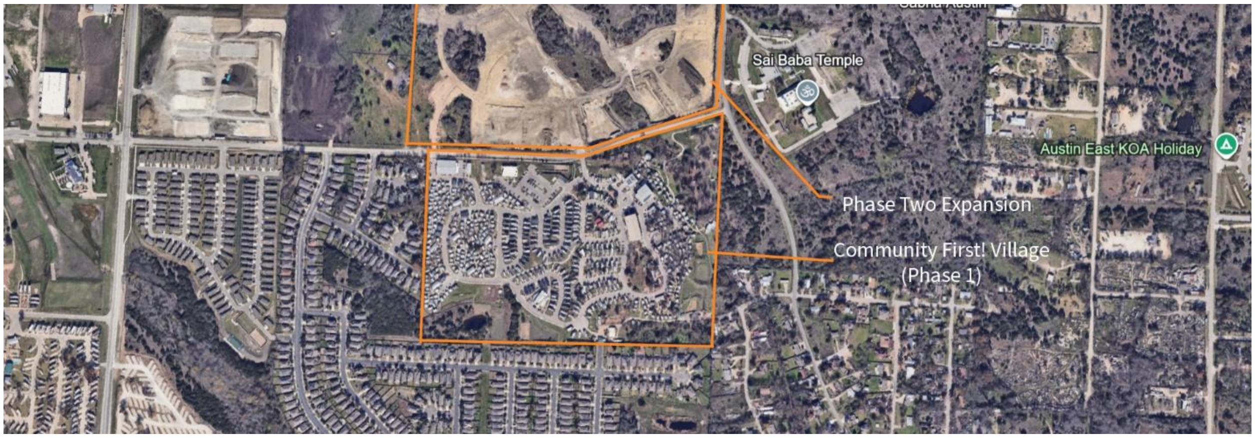

Figure 15: Google Earth Aerial Context for CFV (Google Earth 2025)

Location: Austin, Texas

Climate Context: USDA Zone 8B/9A, humid, subtropical climate with long, hot summers and mild winters (USDA 2025)

Year Established: December 2015

Development Type: master-planned supportive housing communities

Population Served: around 500 chronically homeless individuals who possess the ability to pay an average of $385 monthly (Mobile Loaves and Fish 2025)

CFV was founded in 2015 by Mobile Loaves & Fishes, a Christian outreach ministry in Austin, Texas. Mobile Loaves & Fishes also runs a food truck to feed unhoused members across the community, and Community Works, which runs the community's cinema, organic farm, and art programs (Mobile Loaves and Fish 2025). CFV was chosen for this research due to its depth in design features, religious foundation, and unique opportunities for community connection like its cinema and community market. Furthermore, this village has been included in many news articles, blogs, media coverage, and some scholarly articles, adding depth to this research on the successes and shortcomings of the village as a whole.

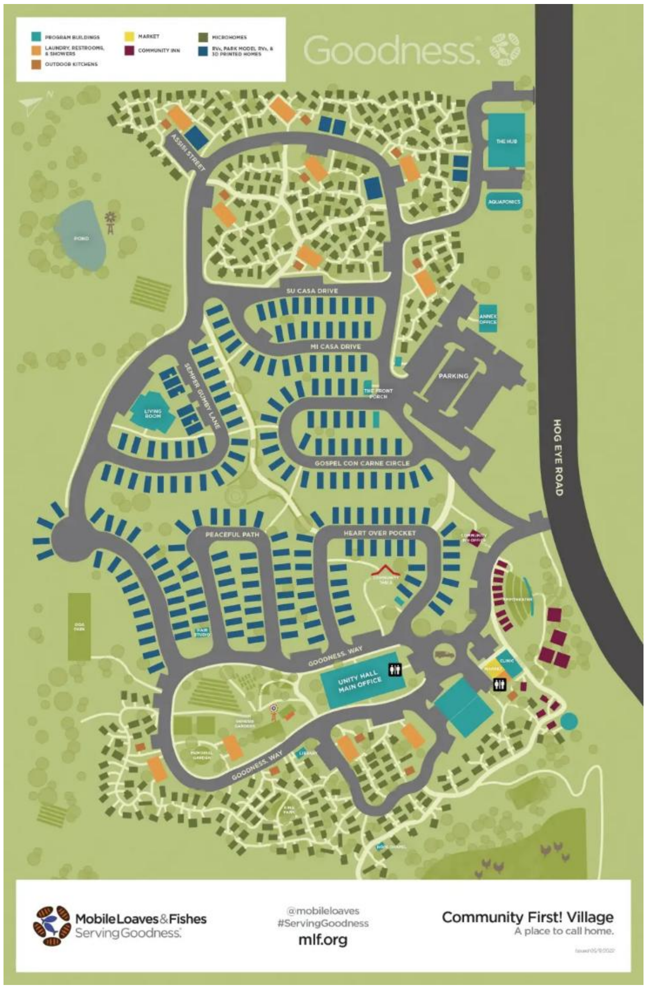
PROGRAM BUILDINGS
LAUNDRY, RESTROOMS, & SHOWERS
OUTDOOR KITCHENS
MARKET
COMMUNITY INN
MICROHOMES
RVs, PARK MODEL RVs, & 3D PRINTED HOMES
Goodness.
N
POND
ASSISI STREET
THE HUB
AQUAPONICS
SU CASA DRIVE
ANNEX OFFICE
MI CASA DRIVE
PARKING
THE FRONT PORCH
SEMPER GUMBY LANE
LIVING ROOM
GOSPEL CON CARNE CIRCLE
HOG EYE ROAD
PEACEFUL PATH
HEART OVER POCKET
COMMUNITY INN OFFICE
DOG PARK
HAIR STUDIO
GOODNESS WAY
UNITY HALL MAIN OFFICE
CLINIC
MARKET
MEMORIAL GARDEN
LIBRARY
GOODNESS WAY
MobileLoaves&Fishes
ServingGoodness.
@mobileloaves
#ServingGoodness
mlf.org
Community First! Village
A place to call home.

Figure 16: CFV Master Plan as Design Evidence (Mobile Loaves and Fish 2025)

Accessibility ✓✓✓

The thoughtfulness incorporated into the design of CFV is quickly evident: wide sidewalks and pathways, limited fencing surrounds the community, and a formal master plan that gives each home the physical room to breathe. One of the only downfalls of this design is the geographical location, located on the outskirts of Austin city life, which has been found to negatively affect people experiencing homelessness by Wolch's research (Wolch et al. 2012). However, a city bus line runs directly to the community, allowing for better connections to the city as suggested by Parker's studies on the proximity of homeless populations to transportation services (Parker 2021). CFV receives three check marks for accessibility; the designs are inclusive for Hartig and Bielenberg's studies on high rates of disability and medical debt in homeless populations (Hartig 2014, Bielenberg 2020).

Community ✓✓

The community integration for CFV is strong, hosting many public-facing events that allow the community to feel like a social hub rather than a volunteer opportunity. There is even an inn open to guests to allow for better social integration. The category of community is given two check marks; while the community itself is rich, its distance from city life keeps residents isolated from alternative communities.

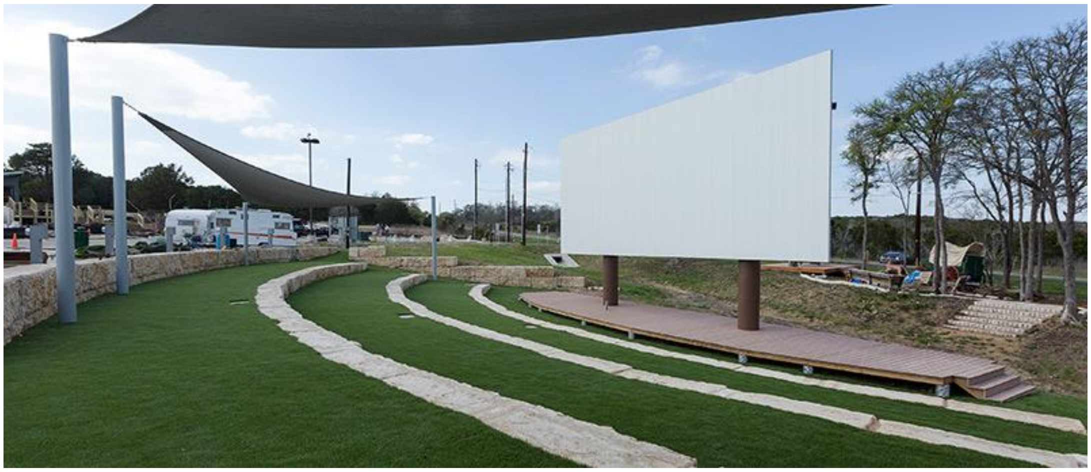

Figure 17: CFV Cinema as context for Community Evidence (Mobile Loaves and Fish 2025)

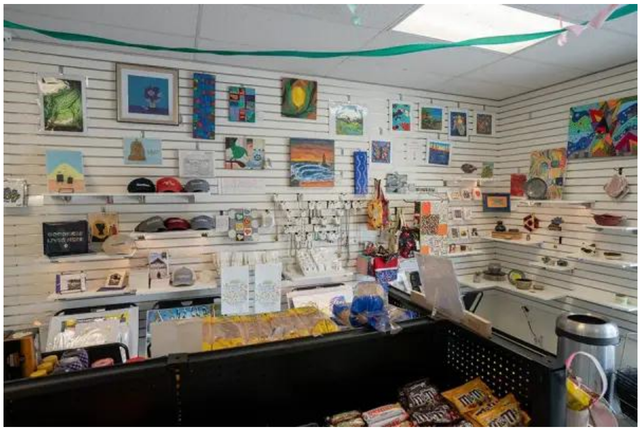

Figure 18: CFV Community Market as contextual Community Evidence (Mobile Loaves and Fish 2025)

Dignity/Autonomy ✓✓✓

Residents at CFV are able to customize and personalize their homes (Mobile Loaves and Fish 2025). There are also quite a few opportunities for employment such as farming, maintenance, and cooking. Despite having many aspects of the community open to the public, the design of CFV maintains a strong balance between privacy for residents and connection to community. Therefore, three check marks have been given to CFV for autonomy.

Ecological Function ✓✓✓

CFV is one of the strongest examples of ecological resilience with the master plan including many features such as farm plots for animals, produce, and pollinators (Mobile Loaves and Fish 2025). The community's ecology is intentional, with plant selections that can adapt to climate change. Some parts of the community even feature rainwater harvesting and compost toilets. Overall, it feels like the ecological resilience of this community design was a crucial and intentional aspect; three check marks were given as a result.

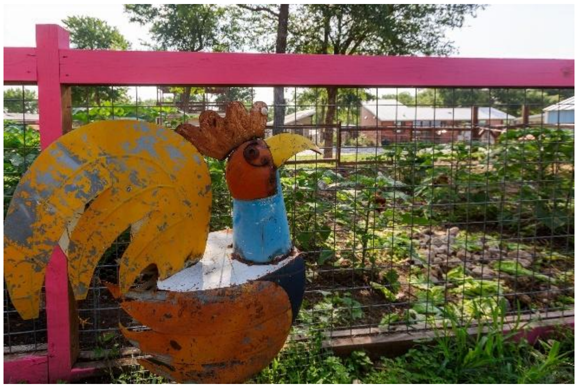

Figure 19: CFV Community Garden evidence for Ecological Function (Mobile Loaves and Fish 2025)

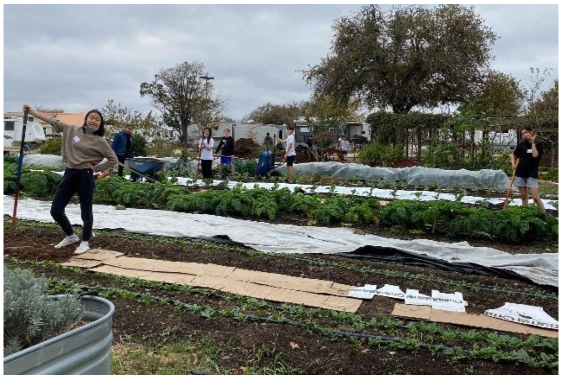

Figure 20: CFV Community Engagement within Community Garden (Mobile Loaves and Fish 2025)

Flexibility/Resilience ✓✓✓

The considerate master plan of CFV includes several home types: 120 micro homes, 100 recreational vehicles, and 20 canvas cottages (Mobile Loaves and Fish 2025). This allows for flexibility in use depending on the needs of the residents. It also expands in congruence with community needs, allowing growth phases to evolve over time. The site plan is resilient in climate with shade structures and plant selection. Three check marks were given for flexibility and resilience.

Participation in Design ✓✓

Some participation was included in the master plan from residents under the guidance of MLF. Design features allow for continuation in participation: art studios, gift shops, and farming are all present for residential engagement. Because data included in this research has shown the importance of residents' democratic involvement in the early phases of design, two check marks were given for design participation.

Public versus Private Realm ✓✓✓

While many spaces in the community are open to the public, there are clear transitions into private spaces, such as garden buffers and porches. The communal spaces include outdoor kitchens, an amphitheater, markets, and nature trails. Three check marks were given because the master plan ensured clear navigation between public and private spaces.

Policy/Governance ✓✓

The land for CFV is privately owned by MFL, which helped avoid roadblocks from city zoning codes. It is financially funded by donations instead of municipal budgets (Mobile Loaves and Fish 2025). It is strong, but only through donations and philanthropic endeavors. Some concern surrounds the longevity of a community funded solely by donations alongside the religious affiliations of the community, so two check marks have been given for this category.

Eden Village (EV)

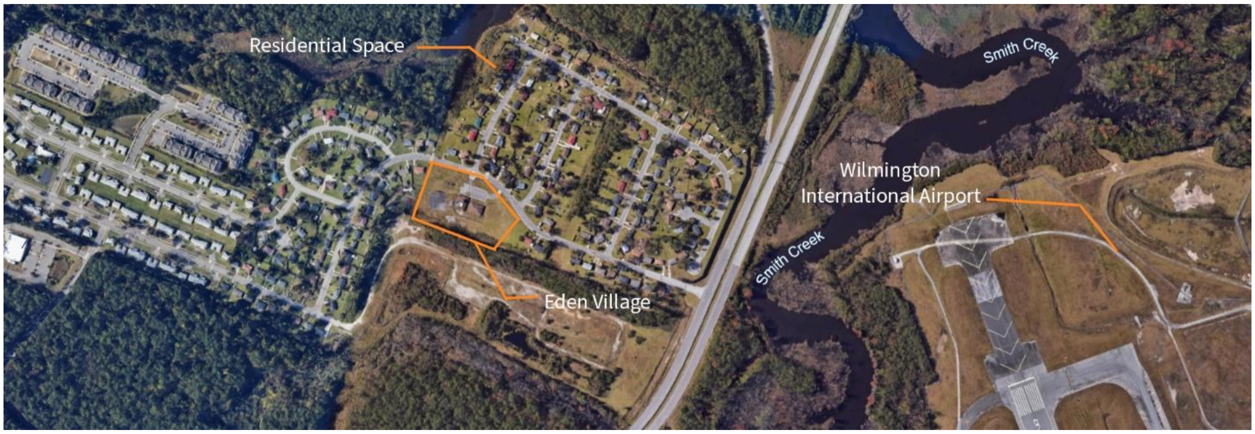

Figure 21: Google Earth Aerial Context for EV (Google Earth 2025)

Location: Wilmington, North Carolina

Climate Context: USDA Zone 8B, humid, subtropical with hot summers, mild winters, and substantial rainfall (USDA 2025)

Year Established: June 2023

Development Type: tiny house community operated by a religious nonprofit

Population Served: 31 individuals who are: chronically homeless, mentally and/or physically disabled, and can provide $300 monthly rent (Eden Village 2025)

EV is a tiny home community in Wilmington, NC created to support people with disabilities and people experiencing chronic homelessness because of ongoing health issues. EV was founded in Springfield, Missouri in 2010 by a group of church members, and the creators of that village have gone on to inspire and advocate for similar communities in other cities, one being Wilmington. To become a resident of EV, applicants must be chronically homeless, have a severe mental or physical disability, and can pay $350 per month in rent (Eden Village 2025). Most residents are accepted through referrals from homeless advocate groups. EV was chosen for this research as it has clear success that has led to similar developments in other cities by the same organization. It does have strong religious affiliation which adds important depth to the comparative efforts of this research; research shows the important and positive role religion can play in the journey of individuals experiencing homelessness (Lovett and Weisz 2021). Furthermore, it was included despite having less depth of information to be accessed online through secondhand sources; it serves as a strong example of a village that may lack media coverage yet still serve as an example in terms of design.

Accessibility ✓✓✓

This community was designed specifically to meet ADA guidelines for the users of the community (Eden Village 2025). It has paved sidewalks throughout the community. The houses and communal spaces are also designed with ADA compliance in mind. The thoughtful pre planning evident in the final product of the community gives EV three check marks.

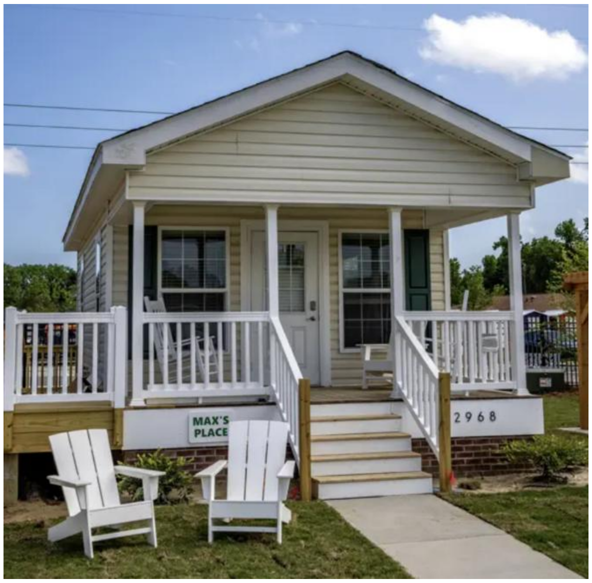

Figure 22: Porch Space and ADA Ramp Accessibility Evidence (Eden Village 2025)

Community ✓✓✓

Socially, EV was founded on human connection, volunteerism, and many donations. It remains connected to the community through volunteer workdays and events. EV also incorporates what they refer to as “Home Teams” meaning a group of 4-6 city residents that meet with EV residents once a month (Eden Village 2025). This allows for connection and a sense of communal proximity, greatly increasing the success of the transition from unhoused to homed. Geographically, EV is located within the surrounding urban community, but in close proximity to a main interstate as well as the Wilmington International Airport, leading to some noise pollution. The site, homes, and other elements of EV are often sponsored by a variety of community organizations. Three check marks were given for community efforts.

Dignity/Autonomy ✓✓✓

The tiny homes in EV include kitchens and bathrooms which increases a resident’s privacy and dignity. Rent is low and fixed (around $350) and the leases for residents are long term, increasing the success of regression (Eden Village 2025). Three check marks were given for dignity and autonomy.

Ecological Function ✓✓

The community garden promotes community engagement, with flat pathways to allow for relative ADA accessibility onto garden plots. The installed landscaping was chosen to be adaptable to local climate. Solar panels are also featured on most roofs. The community is still new and has not grown into fruition so for the time being EV received two check marks for ecological function as it currently is not the primary focus for the community.

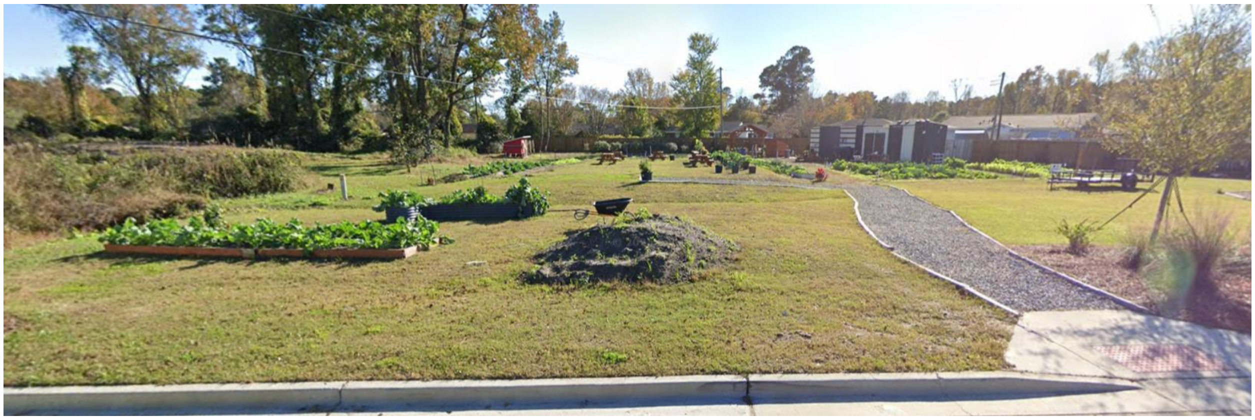

Figure 23: Google Street View of EV Garden as evidence for Accessibility and Ecological Function (Google Street View 2025)

Flexibility/Resilience ✓✓

Because the area is known to experience hurricanes, infrastructure was built to be resilient to intense weather (Eden Village 2025). Communal spaces have the ability to flex and adapt to future needs to some extent, but is not the primary focus, so two check marks have been given to flexibility and resilience.

Participation in Design ✓

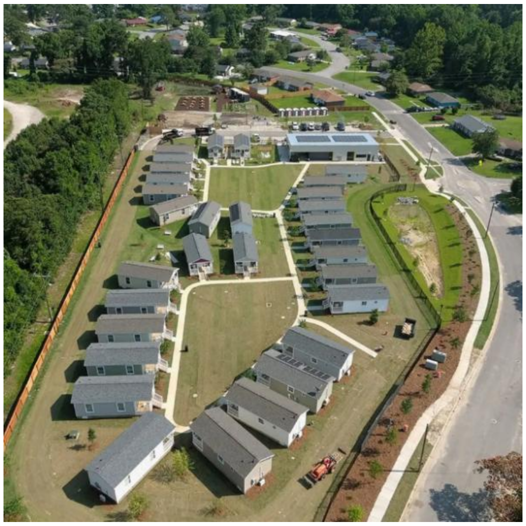

Figure 24: Design Evidence of EV (Eden Village 2025)

Some community involvement was included in the design phase, but the majority was conducted by Eden Village (Eden Village 2025). It is limited compared to other communities and that is why it has been given one check mark. There is not much evidence to expand upon when it comes to direct resident participation in design for EV.

Public versus Private Realm ✓✓✓

The village homes have porches that create a nice balance between private and shared spaces in the community. Furthermore, communal spaces and community gardens provide opportunities for engagement and connection. Three check marks were given as the design supports balance between the public and private realms in the community.

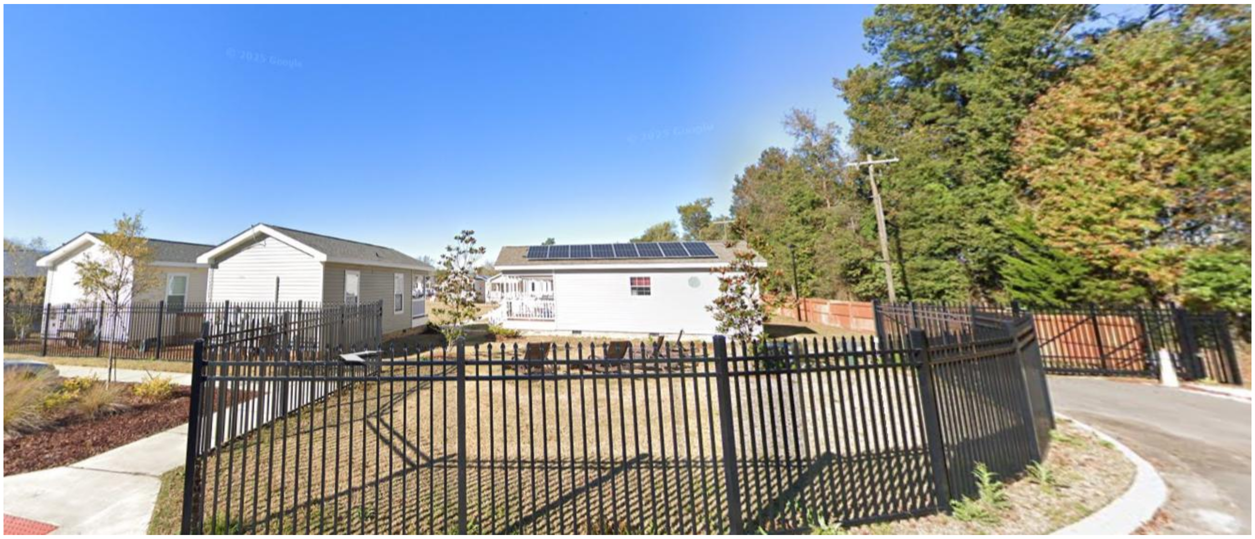

Figure 25: Google Street View of Fencing as Public v. Private Evidence (Google Street View 2025)

Policy/Governance ✓✓

Governance is stable, strongly supported by nonprofit and faith-based organizations in the community. This can lead to potential future instability and therefore ranks EV with two check marks for governance in congruence with existing research (Gregg and Aldern 2022; Flanigan 2024).

Whittier Heights Village (WHV)

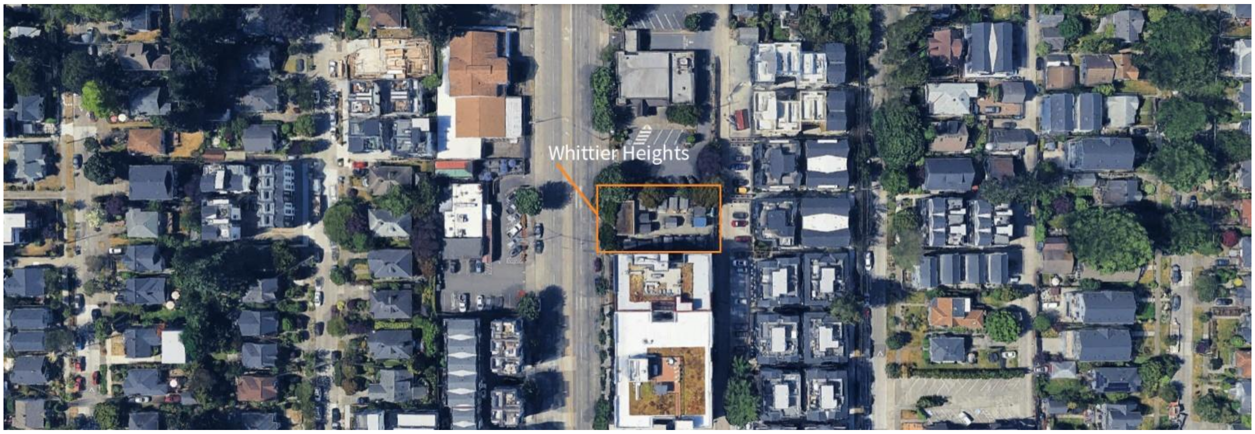

Figure 26: Google Earth Aerial Context for WHV (Google Earth 2025)

Location: Seattle, Washington

Climate Context: Marine west coast, wet winters with cool, dry summers and frequent rain. (USDA 2025)

Year Established: 2018

Development Type: tiny house transitional housing village

Population Served: female-identifying adults (LIHI 2025)

WHV is a tiny house village in Seattle, Washington that serves female-identifying adults. The village began in the Whittier Heights neighborhood on a repurposed city property and is operated by the Low Income Housing Institute (LIHI). LIHI was founded in 1991 to provide and manage housing for people experiencing homelessness as well as provide social work services for the residents. At this time, community members occupied a vacant apartment village to draw attention to the numerous vacant properties in deterioration despite the critical need for housing. They called themselves

Operation Homestead and the members’ hard work allowed LIHI to form and use the apartment building for the first installment of low-income housing (LIHI 2025).

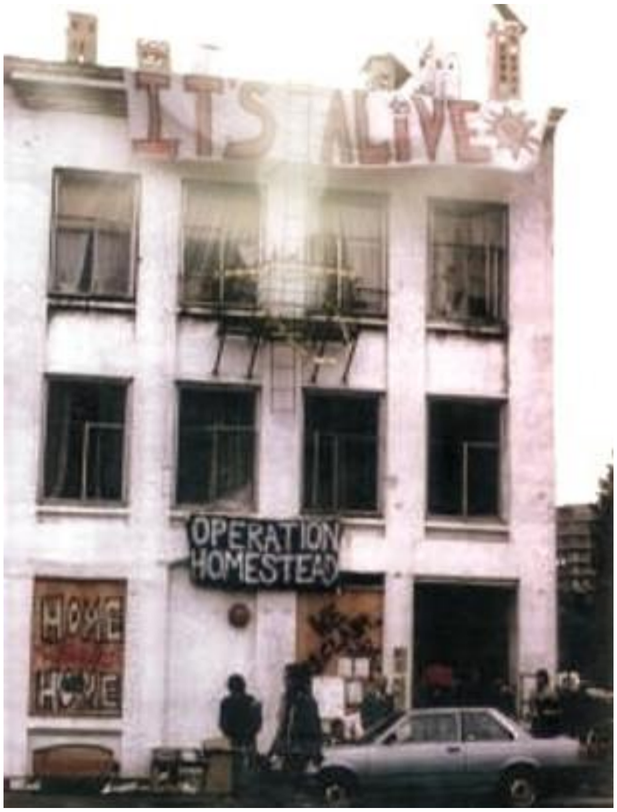

Figure 27: Historical Context for the creation of LIHI (LIHI 2025)

LIHI now operates 18 tiny house villages throughout Washington State and housed 1,200 people in these villages in 2022. The villages provide case managers to assist with finding permanent housing and employment. In addition, LIHI operates “Urban Rest Stops”, providing restrooms, showers and laundry facilities to people experiencing homelessness (LIHI 2025).

WHV was chosen for this case study research due to its urban setting and its specific clientele accepted into the community. While other case studies in this research address homelessness as a whole, WHV serves female-identifying individuals exclusively. It adds to the research to include villages created to address specific needs of a specific demographic in the design of the community; for this demographic, safety and security are the key factors desired by users of this space (WHV Website 2025). Lastly, because of the depth of work accomplished by LIHI, there was ample information found through LIHI, media coverage, and some scholarly coverage; despite the small size and specified demographic addressed by this village, this village adds great depth to this research and shows a unique approach to housing when compared to the other case studies used in this research.

Accessibility ✓✓

The site is in an incredibly dense, urban environment, making it accessible to city life, community, and public transit, aligning with what Wolch identified as a need when making site selections for these encampments (Wolch et al. 1988). In contrast to DV and OV in this study, which are situated on the outskirts of city life, WHV is in a central area of the city. This can often breed NIMBYism between city residents and WH advocates; opponents argue it lowers property values and leads to a strain on government resources. However, the research of Land and Derrien found that to be untrue, especially when managed by a non-profit organization who provides much of the funding for these communities (Land and Derrien 2024).

Most houses and common spaces meet basic ADA accessibility, but the needs of such a vulnerable population that commonly include people with disabilities, basic ADA accessibility is falling short (Bielenber et al. 2020). That is why the accessibility ranking for this village lost a check mark.

Community ✓✓

Being in such an urban space allows for easy access to community, but it does raise concerns on safety, especially for a female-identifying user base. These concerns were addressed with border fencing, security staffing, locking tiny houses, and village protocols related to safety. The safety measures were necessary, but can cause isolation from the surrounding community, so future designs should be cautious on this duality.

A checkmark was deducted from the ranking in community due to the small space of the village. When compared to other tiny house villages, this village is bare boned, providing housing and some level of security but not much beyond.

Dignity/Autonomy ✓✓✓

Each cabin is private and lockable. WH serving exclusively women allows for the residents to feel safer. LIHI also provides a variety of case management services to aid in the process of finding permanent housing. These features of security to support the female-identifying users are unique to WHV in this case study analysis, providing a good foundation for gender-sensitive designs in the future.

Ecological Function ✓

The site is urban and paved, a result of previous utility uses. There are little to no ecological functions to this village, but opportunities for rain gardens, raised bed planters, and shade trees would elevate future use. The village ranked with one check mark due to its many opportunities for improvement in the ways aforementioned.

Flexibility/Resilience ✓✓✓

This model of housing is easy to replicate as well as relocate which is why it received three check marks. The services provided by LIHI increase the resilience of the program and the residents alike. Other communities like CFV are highly customized and lack flexibility, but WHV reveals the benefits of maintaining flexibility in the design of a tiny house community to support people experiencing homelessness.

Participation in Design ✓✓✓

A group called Women4Women, which provides carpentry apprenticeships to women, were the main builders of the tiny houses. This allowed for more consideration in design choices by the women involved. This is one of the few instances where residents not only were able to participate in design, but were able to learn skills in the process from other woman.

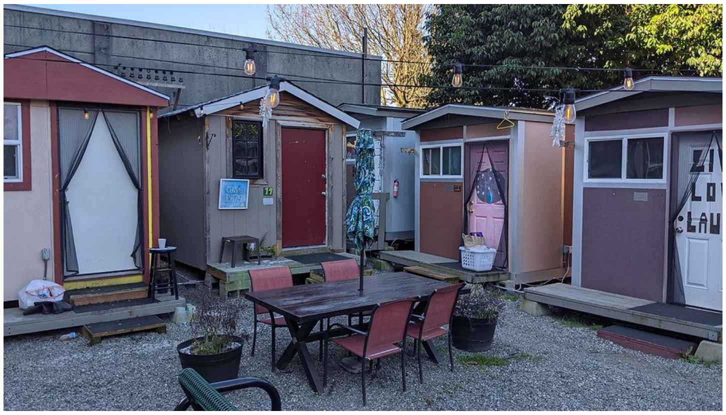

Figure 28: WHV as Customized by Residents (LIHI 2025)

Public versus Private Realm ✓✓

Each cabin is private but located near shared facilities with clear transitions between the private and public spaces. Despite the constraints on space and urban context, the thoughtful layout provides clarity for residents.

Policy/Governance ✓✓✓

LIHI provides most governance through referrals from city social services for future residents. Consistent case management assists residents in the search for permanent housing and employment. There is little resident autonomy, but the strength of LIHI's governance allows for stability of the community.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Below is a chart that combines the ratings of each village in each of the eight criteria.

Criteria	**Community First! (Austin, TX)**	**Opportunity Village (Eugene, OR)**	**Dignity Village (Portland, OR)**	**Eden Village (Wilmington, NC)**	**Whittier Heights (Seattle, WA)**
Accessibility	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓✓	✓✓
Community Integration	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓
Dignity & Autonomy	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
Ecological Function	✓✓✓	✓	✓	✓✓	✓
Flexibility & Resilience	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓
Participation in Design	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓	✓✓✓
Public vs. Private Realm	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓
Policy & Governance	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓

Figure 29: Combined Case Study Rankings

Accessibility rankings are mid to high in every case study except Dignity Village, which was ranked low due to its informal design and its long waitlist for new tenants. Villages with more sophisticated levels of design like CFV rank high as there was greater input from landscape architects and planners in the master plan creation which allowed for higher levels of ADA accessibility. In contrast, DV, the oldest village in this case study, remains informal with little accessibility efforts unless requested.

Community integration shows room for improvement in all cases except OV. OV had in-depth surveys from stakeholders during the process of choosing a site for the community; it even had to move locations in the past two years despite its surveying efforts. It ranked high due to its community integration and community support. While WHV was centrally located in the urban space, it required security and fencing more than other villages, tucking it away from the community. DV sits on the outskirts of the city with high noise pollution, unfortunately reinforcing stigmas around homelessness. All village combined, this research reveals the importance of geographical site selection by designers prior to design and construction.

Dignity and autonomy is high for these villages; users have been allowed to lock, customize, and add accessibility to their own tiny houses. Even in instances where these housing units are temporary solutions, there is still a high priority for customization for each user. EV and CFV removed dependence on communal spaces like kitchens and bathrooms which increased these villages' levels of autonomy. Elements of autonomy like private facilities, customization of homes and lockability of personal spaces should be used in future designs.

Ecological function proved to be the weakest category with only CFV ranking high across the sites. CFV, which had its own elaborately designed master plan, included garden plots and climate-adapted plant selection. DV and WH are ranked low due to their allocated location by the city being a simple, paved lot. With CFV, OV, and EV, pre-construction designs allowed for the implementation of designated garden spaces. This reveals strong opportunities for engagement by landscape architects in providing planting plans that strengthen the ecological resilience of future communities.

Flexibility and resilience are high in DV, OV, WHV and EV as they are designed to be temporary with yearly contracts with the city. It is more permanent than unhoused campsites, but there is still room for improvements, especially with DV and WHV and their small site size. It can be argued that since DV and WHV are easier to replicate, it makes these two villages more resilient in design. CFV showed resilience through its community connections and variety of housing structures, but less flexibility in design. That differences between villages in terms of flexibility and resilience reveal opportunities for landscape architects to work on a case-by-case basis for each specific community; no one design will satisfy the needs of all communities.

Participation in design varied, revealing differences in governance models. EV, WHV, OV and CFV were designed in a more top-down approach, designed by the nonprofit organizations who lead and fund the villages. DV was the only one fully led by its own residents in terms of design. Participation may not always be possible in future developments, but it does enhance connection and autonomy for residents. Designers should be encouraged to include residents as stakeholders in future designs.

Clarity between public and private realms is strong in all five case studies. Fencing is the main method of clarity between public and private spaces in all case studies. It is a necessary element for these communities, so future designers should put more thought into the appearance of these fences as to not indirectly communicate negative messages as discussed with Mozingo and McCauley Park (Mozingo 1994).

Policy and governance is strong in all case studies, but revealed itself to be a key role in the longevity of a site. OV had to move locations and find exceptions to zoning regulations. CFV has long-term viability as the land is owned by its nonprofit ownership. DV and WHV used tactical urbanism and democratic efforts to gain city recognition. This reveals the importance of interdisciplinary efforts to ensure landscape architects can not only design successful communities, but work with city planners, social workers, and nonprofit organizations to ensure the longevity of these communities.

The evaluation of these five tiny house communities confirmed that there is not one universal design that can be implemented to fully meet the needs of the people being served by these communities. Instead, successful designs include collaboration with the future residents as stakeholders to ensure the specific needs of the residents are met in the design of the villages. The most successful future designs would be tailored to address specific populations, whether that be people with disabilities, women, veterans, or any other vulnerable population.

From the data gathered in this study, one thing is clear across all case studies: ecological function within tiny house communities created to address homelessness has vast room for improvement. Simple improvements can be incorporated into future designs: rain barrels where applicable, raised garden beds and window planters for urban lots, and site selection adjacent to green space are the simplest recommendations. Ideally, site selection for future projects will include space for garden plots, nature paths, and ample plantings incorporated into master plans. This will increase mental health for all users, but especially those with mental disabilities and those with physical disabilities that may limit mobility.

Future site selection should be as immersed into a nearby community as possible. To avoid NIMBYism from neighbors, engage in surveys and communications with the community when selecting a site. Include the community in projects like construction and planting to better connect residents to community members when possible.

This research also revealed the vitality of the role of policy and governance. OV successfully used zoning exemptions, CFV leveraged private land ownership, and DV and WHV used protests and tactical urbanism to gain government action. This reinforces the central research argument that the field of landscape architecture must expend its interdisciplinary efforts for the sake of people experiencing homelessness. By collaborating with city planners, nonprofit organizations that work with unhoused individuals, and social workers, landscape architects have the opportunity to design future communities that better support people experiencing homelessness.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This thesis used case studies to observe successes and shortcomings in existing tiny house villages to better understand the role of landscape architecture in future village designs. It found that future designs by landscape architects should design with specificity for the particular users of the community, ensure ADA accessibility as a top priority, provide privacy and security to increase autonomy, incorporate as much ecological resilience for longevity and mental health purposes, and design with flexibility and adaptability in mind. These goals can be met by increasing collaboration with policymakers, social workers, and nonprofits to better secure funding and zoning needs that can empower future residents and ensure longevity of the communities.

The growing use of tiny house villages to address rising homelessness rates shows success in these efforts, but further engagement by the field of landscape architecture will strengthen these communities, improve wellbeing for users of these spaces, and increase ecological resilience, aligning with the interdisciplinary efforts that exist surrounding supporting people experiencing homelessness. The field of landscape architecture should further engagement with the field of social work to strengthen the positive impacts of public space design and community integration; this thesis shows the opportunities available in tiny house village design, but the opportunities can extend to other work created by landscape architects. This thesis pushes for deeper interdisciplinary connection in the future by landscape architects in fields related to human services to better bridge the gaps in existing research and improve human connection through landscapes.

Limitations

It is important to note that there is no singular effort that can solve the homelessness crisis in the United States. Each person experiencing homelessness presents unique histories and needs, and each tiny house village presents its own approach to supporting a diverse set of needs. Because of this, there is no universal design that can be implemented across the country to create these villages. The case study comparison is meant to serve as initial research of successes and shortcomings in design elements of the villages, and to immerse design deeper into the research being conducted by other disciplines regarding homelessness.

The field of religion was incorporated into the literature review to account for the religiosity of many nonprofits that organize and run tiny house villages. Research in the field of religion noted that more research needs to be done surrounding religion and homelessness. Few conclusions were able to be made in this thesis surrounding the ethics of a specific religion being the organizer of housing for vulnerable populations, but it is something that should be considered and researched more for future efforts.

This thesis used qualitative metrics to analyze five case studies with the support of secondary data sources. The research is limited by the number case studies used and future research should continue efforts to critically evaluate the efficacy of new and existing village to increase depth and understanding of the impacts of design on user experiences. Furthermore, this research did not incorporate site visits but instead relied on existing aerial footage and photos of the case study sites; this limited the sensory understanding of the spaces as well as limited the ability to fully understand user experience. Future research should incorporate more firsthand accounts from users of the villages to better understand the needs of users that can be addressed through design elements.

A key limitation that arose as the research was gathered was a lack of consistency on information found for each case study. Some villages presented ample coverage across academic sources, news coverage, firsthand accounts, and organizations while other case studies were much more limited in terms of accessible and thorough information. In many instances, the gaps in provided information were filled through aerial imagery and Google Earth street views. For future case study efforts, it is recommended that case studies are chosen based on similar information available in order to more accurately compare the case studies to one another.

Reflection

The field of landscape architecture engages with a wealth of design opportunities from public spaces to residential properties. This thesis aims to increase discourse surrounding opportunities that overlap with spaces that people experiencing homelessness find refuge. As prices for everyday necessities continue to rise, I believe it is vital not only for the field of landscape architecture but for all humanity to better consider how to support each other. When we prioritize accessibility and community, the designs we produce increase in function, impact, and usefulness. If the cost of living continues to rise while income remains generally stagnant for most, it will require community members to come together to supplement their needs where income falls short. I believe the United States is moving away from individualistic mindsets and into deeper family and community relationships; these villages are evidence of that that I hope will continue to grow.

We as landscape designers know some things to be true, like which plant species are known to be invasive or that Olmsted is an important historical figure in our field. We might know less about the proximity of a bus stop to a homeless resource center or the importance of a vacant lot to someone experiencing homelessness when we begin to convert it into an urban plaza. We don't know what we don't know. This thesis aims to illustrate to the field of landscape architecture the impacts of our work on some of the most vulnerable populations in hopes that our field can increase collaboration with fields like social work to increase the resiliency of our designs for all users. How can we as designers improve ourselves to better support people experiencing homelessness? With the opportunities revealed in this research, I believe these tiny house villages to be a great place to start. Landscape architects can lead these efforts by meeting more often with social workers and policy makers to collaborate on how to create a village in your community and other opportunities to implement designs that better support people experiencing homelessness. Through my studies, I've seen empathy, mental health, and ecological resilience to be key factors in landscape designs; I urge the field of landscape architecture to carry these values further and incorporate them into all design choices. We need to extend beyond aesthetics and into advocacy and collaboration, using empathy as a key design consideration in all work. When we do this, we elevate dignity and connection as core design values, leading to resilience in our designs and our communities.

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