

Welcoming, Empowering, Safe Habitation Initiative with Neighborhood Engagement



FAQs for WeShine Initiative, Inc.

1. What is the mission of the WeShine Initiative?

Develop organized, neighborhood-based transitional outdoor shelters that:

- are supported by social, behavioral, hygiene, and sanitary services,
- encourage self-governance, and
- lead to permanent affordable housing for all participants.

Our goals are to:

a) Develop micro-villages of tiny houses, parked vehicles, or tents (in sets of 6 units), located on privately-owned property within residential neighborhoods. Support infrastructure will include:

- toilets,
- garbage/recycling/sharps collection and disposal,
- portable kitchen,
- a covered community eating/meeting space,
- a privacy fence, and
- weekly access to showers, laundry and peer or other behavioral health, medical care, and social services

b) Use green technology in the micro-villages wherever possible including solar-powered juice boxes, grey water diversion to community plantings, composting, and recycling.

c) Provide ongoing operational support, through both community and faith-based volunteers and donations, to build a sense of community and a solid system of self-governance with the guests.

d) Provide training in job-seeking, communication, problem-solving, anti-bias, and leadership skills for guests, as well as linkage to job opportunities.

2. What makes the WeShine Initiative different from other outdoor shelters and villages being developed or operated by other non-profit organizations?

- Small, neighborhood-based micro-villages of 6 units tiny houses, parked vehicles, or tents) throughout residential neighborhoods.
- Focus on engaging neighborhood residents, businesses, and faith-based communities in hospitality rather than hostility towards villagers.
- Capability to provide all the temporary infrastructure needed for each micro-village and to provide job skills training and employment opportunities for community members.

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- Will lease private property and use portable and green technology to ensure we leave only a light footprint on the property.
- Micro-villages will operate on a model of self-governance that empowers the guests to engage in a positive way with their neighbors utilizing Good Neighbor Agreements and a Community Council that meets weekly at each site. A part-time paid Community Coordinator, with lived experience, will also be employed in each micro-village. Guests will be offered training to help them de-escalate and resolve conflicts and make decisions.
- Social and behavioral health services are built into the budget for each micro-village; service providers will be available on site each week.
- Site amenities will include basic hygiene and sanitation as well as access to cooking facilities, a meeting/dining space, and privacy fencing integrated with plantings and/or street art.

3. Is the WeShine Initiative a non-profit corporation?

Yes, we are newly incorporated as a non-profit organization; our application for tax exempt status is in process. Donations to the WeShine Initiative are not tax-exempt currently.

4. Who is part of WeShine Board of Directors

Currently, five active neighbors from the Laurelhurst, Kerns, and Sullivan's Gulch neighborhoods have volunteered their time as the initial officers and interim executive director of the WeShine Initiative. We have also formed an Advisory Committee of volunteers with special administrative and operational skills.

We are actively seeking 4 additional cultural, racial, or sexual/gender minority persons or persons with lived experience of houselessness as Board members.

Right now, the Board is very engaged and hard working. As the WeShine micro-villages expand we anticipate the Board will be involved in executive level decisions with operations work carried out by WeShine staff as well as each neighborhood's volunteer staff and committees.

5. Who will be served by each micro-village?

The WeShine Initiative will work with the property owner, neighbors, the Joint Office of Homeless Services, and other service providers (especially culturally specific service providers) to determine the admission criteria for each micro-village. Each will be low-barrier for entry with no requirement for participation in treatment. Non-aggressive pets will be welcomed. Guests will be expected to sign and abide by a Good Neighbor Agreement, as well as to pay a monthly user fee and contribute sweat equity to the community. All guests will be asked to participate in both the Village Council and training sessions to foster the development of a welcoming, empowering, and just community.

6. What kind of sites is the WeShine Initiative looking for?

WeShine volunteers have identified parking lots owned by private, non-profit organizations, faith-based communities, and businesses in each of the founding neighborhoods (Kerns, Laurelhurst, and Sullivan's

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Gulch). Sites should be near public transit and retail or commercial conveniences and zoned appropriately for outdoor/alternate shelters of at least six units.

Other neighborhoods are welcome to join WeShine once they have identified a property owner interested in leasing property for at least 6 units of transitional outdoor shelter and have recruited a core group of 10 or more volunteers to support the micro-village.

7. Does WeShine plan to recruit campers from the un-managed encampments in each neighborhood to reside in that neighborhood's cluster(s)?

WeShine volunteers will do regular outreach to encampments in each participating neighborhood to get to know campers and invite their input and involvement in micro-village development. Volunteers will let them know when micro-villages are accepting new residents and what the admission criteria are.

8. Will WeShine empty out the current unmanaged encampments and keep campers from returning to these same sites?

WeShine can neither guarantee to empty out current encampments that are a concern to neighbors nor prevent new campers from moving into an encampment if some campers transition as guests in a WeShine micro-village. It is our hope that the WeShine model will be a catalyst for other neighborhood-based outdoor shelter developments. We hope to develop and support several hundred micro-villages over the next several years. We think our efforts, in combination with the efforts of other non-profits doing similar work, will make a substantial reduction in the number of unmanaged encampments in Portland.

9. What will WeShine do for water and sewer needs?

If a micro-village is located on a piece of property that has hook ups to or existing water and sewer services, we will try to tie into these, if feasible. Where no sewer tie-in is possible, we will rely on porta-potties. Our shower/laundry trailers can use water tanks that are refilled daily.

10. Does WeShine require approval of the neighborhood association to develop a micro-village within a neighborhood?

No, WeShine does not require neighborhood association approval to develop a micro-village in any given neighborhood. However, WeShine seeks the support of neighborhood and faith-based community volunteers. WeShine will always endeavor to work with the local neighborhood association to hear their concerns, help them more fully understand the issues of houselessness, and affirm their role in helping to solve these issues. To site our micro-villages, WeShine will follow all City code requirements regarding providing required notice to neighbors and opportunities to meet with them to discuss concerns and receive their input.