

Welcoming, Empowering,  
Safe Habitation Initiative with  
Neighborhood Engagement



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WeShinePDX.org

## FAQs Regarding Parkrose Community Village

### **WeShine** Mission and Vision

**WeShine** provides transitional shelter to vulnerable adults in micro-villages with basic hygiene, sanitation, service connections, and support while guests await access to permanent affordable housing. To accomplish this mission, **WeShine** will develop and operate a coordinated network of micro shelter-villages in neighborhoods across the Portland area, on leased or donated private or public land.

The **WeShine** vision is to develop and operate a coordinated network of micro-village style neighborhood-based shelters with wraparound services. **WeShine** will also serve as a catalyst and supporter for the development of a region-wide diverse network of alternative shelters. Within a few years, unhoused persons in the Portland area will be able to choose among a network of diverse alternative shelter programs and then successfully transition from shelter into permanent housing.

Over several years, this strategy could amount to a thousand units of humane, safe, and well-managed shelter for houseless Portlanders while our region continues to develop and open other types of congregate shelters, Safe Rest Villages, as well as permanent affordable and supportive housing.

**WeShine's** efforts, in combination with those of other non-profits doing similar work, will make a substantial reduction in the number of unmanaged encampments in the metro area.

### 1. What do **WeShine** Villages consist of?

All **WeShine** micro-villages will include:

- Paid staff including a live-in *Village Life Coordinator*, *Service and Resource Coordinator*, *Peer Support Specialist* and a *Maintenance and Support person at each village*. These team members will alternate being on call for emergencies after business hours. The Executive Director of WeShine or the Program Manager will provide a secondary level of back-up and support to the staff after in the evenings and on weekends.
- Physical structures that promote safety, privacy, hygiene, and community. These include:
  - lockable sleeping pods for individuals, or larger pods for couples or those who use wheelchairs
    - a shower and toilets
    - laundry machines if feasible
    - garbage and recycling station
    - a community service pod for service providers to meet privately with villagers
    - community buildings with shared kitchenette and space for dining and meeting
    - a perimeter fence and gate for security and privacy

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- A robust and diverse group of volunteers involved in both building and sustaining each village.
- Community Service partnerships to augment and supplement **WeShine** services, including:
  - Supplemental case management through Providence Behavioral Health's Better Outcomes through Bridges program,
  - Gather:Make:Shelter planting and art installations
  - Donated food and meals
  - Financial literacy education through SaveFirst, a program of Catholic Charities of Oregon,
  - We are working on additional partnerships for medical and nursing support through Outside In and the OHSU School of Nursing. These and other service partners will visit the Village regularly to meet with the guests.

## 2. How will **WeShine** and the Church prevent the village from becoming a magnet for RVs and other campers?

The village is a resource for guests only, not open to all. The Parkrose Community Village will collaborate with other volunteers to patrol the near-by area, providing garbage bags and picking up trash, doing outreach to campers, and encouraging those who are camping near by to move. No RVs or other campers will be allowed to stay on church property.

## 3. How will **WeShine** reduce violence, or at least not increase violence, in the neighborhood?

**WeShine** interviews applicants and all must sign a Good Guest Agreement that addresses behavior expectations. Violence by and among villagers will not be tolerated. Guests will participate in maintaining the security, safety, and cleanliness not only of the village, but also of the church property. The Executive Director and Program Manager are both trained and skilled in de-escalation and crisis intervention and will train other staff as well.

## 4. How does **WeShine** reduce the harm of drug use?

Guests will be held accountable for their behavior but like other citizens living in their own homes, have the right to privacy within their sleeping pods. **WeShine** staff will work with guests continually to reduce the harm of drug or alcohol abuse while also supporting them to seek treatment if they are willing. There are no shelters—including those that are labelled clean and sober settings—that do not have participants who use drugs and/or alcohol. Allowing villagers personal autonomy and freedom within their own pods helps create open communication with staff about substance use and how to take steps towards treatment. As readers may be aware, it is very difficult to access substance abuse treatment in the

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Portland area and can take weeks to months of effort. Most people who want treatment for substance abuse require the assistance of professionals to access that treatment.

**5. What can neighbors do to help?**

Get to know our guests, join as a volunteer, donate your time and/or skills, or spare funds to support WeShine's work.

**6. Where can concerned neighbors ask questions?**

Many neighbors have attended our meetings. We have set up a new email account for the public to use at [pcv@weshinepdx.org](mailto:pcv@weshinepdx.org). Emails to that address will be sent directly to the Executive Director and Program Manager of **WeShine**. **WeShine** staff are also available to come to talk to groups upon request and as our schedules allow.

**7. Who will be served at Parkrose Community Village? **WeShine** will seek referrals from nonprofits and homeless outreach programs to seek applicants for the micro-village who are LGBTQIA+. We will prioritize serving those who are also Black, Indigenous, or People of Color, those who were assigned female gender at birth or who identify as female, and those who have been camping within a 1-mile radius of the village site.**

**8. What will be required of those who are admitted to the Village?**

Village applicants must complete a paper application, undergo an interview and vulnerability assessment to assign their priority level. Each must agree to sign a Good Guest agreement. When we offer them a placement, they will sign the Good Guest Agreement and plan their move-in with a Village host. Each new villager will be accepted on a 60-day trial basis. At the end of the 60 days, they will be re-interviewed and if their conduct has been acceptable, they will be admitted as guests for up to 2 years.

All villagers will be expected to set personal goals and make a plan to meet those goals as well as to contribute at least 8 hours a week of sweat equity to help maintain the village. Villagers will meet at least monthly with a **WeShine** staff person to give an update on progress they are making towards meeting their personal goals. They will also be expected to attend the weekly Village Council meetings. See Good Guest Agreement.

**9. Why Low Barrier Shelter**

Low barrier means that staff will meet villagers where they are at and help break down the barriers that stand in the way of obtaining housing and being a successful community member. Low barrier does not mean the village will be a free-for-all or that we will not hold villagers accountable for their behavior. For

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the Parkrose Community Village low barrier means that Villagers will not be required to enter a treatment program or undergo a background check to be accepted to the Village. We will accept non-aggressive pets that are appropriately licensed and cared for. We will allow couples who are accepted to the Village to share a pod. We will not accept any children or minors into the Parkrose Community Village.

Although **WeShine** will allow the use of alcohol and/or illegal drugs within the privacy of a guests' pod, we will hold villagers accountable for their behavior. The village will be a closed setting, with only authorized visitors allowed within the village gates. Villagers, volunteers, church members, and **WeShine** staff will develop an outreach and safety plan to prevent camping and criminal activity, as well as to keep a perimeter area free of trash, needles, etc.

#### **10. The Parkrose Community Village is a transitional shelter accommodation. Definition of Transitional Housing Accommodations**

ORS 446.265

*Transitional housing accommodations; regulation and limitations; definition*

*Transitional housing accommodations are intended to be used by individuals or families on a limited basis for seasonal, emergency, or transitional housing purposes and may include yurts, huts, cabins, fabric structures, tents and similar accommodations. The transitional housing accommodations may provide parking facilities, walkways and access to water, toilet, shower, laundry, cooking, telephone or other services either through separate or shared facilities. The Oregon Health Authority may develop public health best practices for shared health and sanitation facilities for transitional housing accommodations.*

*Transitional housing accommodations are not subject to ORS chapter 90 pertaining to landlord tenant law.*

The occupants of **WeShine** micro-villages are not renters and do not have renter rights. The occupants are referred to as **guests**.

#### **12. What permits are required to build a micro-village?**

The development of a temporary outdoor shelter is allowed as an outright use on faith-community owned property. The site and all structures are subject to City permitting standards. All electrical and plumbing work on the site will be done under a trade permit and the community buildings will meet building permit standards. The site plan has undergone a site development review and has obtained a Conditional Use Permit from the City Fire Marshall.

**WeShine** has invited stakeholders including business owners, neighborhood association representatives, neighborhood watch group members, the Joint Office of Homeless Services, the Parkrose Community United Church of Christ, and others to participate in a process to develop a Good Neighbor Agreement. The goal of this Agreement will be to initiate and maintain open, productive and transparent



communications and understanding among the parties in order to be proactive and ready to respond if concerns arise, including to

- Develop clear expectations and procedures for resolving problems
- Enhance neighborhood safety and livability and promote access to services.
- Foster positive relationships between the village and neighbors.
- Reduce crime and the fear of crime in the neighborhood. ☒

**13. How will *WeShine* ensure that the micro-village does not become a permanent fixture on the property?**

The *WeShine* micro-village is funded as a temporary outdoor shelter. As such, it will undergo an annual permit renewal process through the City of Portland. *WeShine* holds a two-year lease on the site. If, at the end of the initial 2-year period, there is still a need for transitional shelter such as this village, *WeShine* may seek an extension of the lease and the shelter permit to operate on the site.

In the meantime, we ask every guest to sign a Good Guest Agreement that stipulates that we are offering temporary shelter and will work with them to access permanent affordable housing to meet their needs.

We will provide weekly on-site assistance from our own staff as well as community partners to link our guests to housing and other needed health and social services.

We will stop admitting new guests several months prior to the end of the lease period.

If our lease at this site is not renewed, we will search for an alternate site well in advance of the termination of the lease period so that we can continue to serve guests who still need shelter and services.

**14. What kind of track record do similar villages have for transitioning guests to permanent supportive housing?**

Data from Portland's Kenton Women's Village, as well as Hazelnut Grove, and Seattle's transitional villages indicate that the annual rate of transition to permanent housing ranges from 40 to 60% and is much higher than the rate in conventionally-built congregate shelters. The biggest factor preventing complete success at transitioning individuals to permanent affordable housing is the lack of availability of affordable housing.

**15. Partnership between *WeShine* and Parkrose Community United Church of Christ**

The Church will continue to serve the homeless community in the area with congregate meals and access, as feasible, to mobile shower services, as well as to support the *WeShine* micro-village. .

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Church members as well as neighbors will be welcomed as volunteers to enhance the sense of community and the quality of life within the village. Volunteers will be supervised and supported by **WeShine** and—for church members—by the Director of Religious Education and Community Life.

**WeShine** staff will work with the church to coordinate a daily outreach and safety program with the help of our villagers and other volunteers to prevent camping on or adjacent to the church property and to keep the church campus and perimeter free of trash. We will work with near-by businesses to extend the perimeter we are checking daily further if we have sufficient volunteer resources.

**WeShine** will work with any campers or villagers who are asked to leave the property to help them find alternate shelter away from the immediate area.