

Community Village FAQs

1. What is a community village?

We believe that one of the greatest causes of homelessness is a profound, catastrophic loss of family and a healthy community. That's why housing for individuals experiencing chronic homelessness should do more than just provide a roof and a bed. Our village will develop a community with supportive services and amenities to help address an individual's relational needs, empower them to build relationships with others, and experience restoration within a broader community.

2. Why should taxpayers pay for this?

The per unit cost will be about half the cost of typical public housing and most of the revenue needed for the project will come from private donations, not taxpayers. For every homeless person lifted permanently off the streets, there is a significant savings in the costs of law enforcement and medic contacts and emergency room visits.

3. Is the County going to manage this?

The Tacoma Rescue Mission will own and operate the village.

4. Will you have security at the village?

Yes, the entrance will be controlled. The village will be fenced, a surveillance system will be in place, proactive staff and volunteer residents will engage residents at the individual level, dedicated security staff will monitor the grounds 24/7, and the area outside the community will be monitored as

well. The most effective means of ensuring a safe environment will be the pride residents take in their neighborhoods.

5. Will there be any restrictions on the residents?

To live in the village, residents will be expected to pay rent, be a good neighbor, and obey the law.

6. What kind of services will be available for village residents?

Residents will have onsite a) mental health and addiction recovery treatment, b) job training and employment opportunities, c) case management, d) volunteers and staff living alongside residents in each neighborhood to engage formerly homeless residents and build community.

7. With CFV being a county co-led project, will the village comply with all applicable county, state and federal land use and environmental law?

Yes, the project must comply with all applicable county, state, federal and environmental laws.

8. There are clearly a lot of wetlands in and near the site. How are you going to protect them and the wildlife inhabiting the area?

There is sufficient dry land (about 27 acres) on which to build the village. Over 58 acres will not be developed, including wetlands. We will comply with all federal, state and local land use and wetland regulations to protect the habitat for the wildlife in this area.

9. Won't the property values near the site be negatively impacted by the village?

We recognize some may be concerned about property values because residents of the village will be formerly homeless. However, residents will choose to live at the village, be given many opportunities for personal transformation, and must comply with the law, pay rent and be good neighbors. With the strong focus on community, and staff engaging residents, we believe it will be as safe as Community First! Village in Austin, the model our village is following. According to the Austin CFV website: “Crime statistics for the three-mile area surrounding Community First! Village show a dramatic contrast to what we experience in our neighborhood.” <https://mlf.org/faqs/>

10. Won't the village become a magnet for crime and drug selling?

The entrance will be controlled by a manned security gate, the village will be fenced, a monitored surveillance system will be in place, proactive staff and volunteer residents will engage residents at the individual level, dedicated security staff will monitor the grounds 24/7, and the area outside the grounds will be monitored as well.

11. Spanaway already has more than its share of problems with homelessness and crime. Isn't the village going to make things worse?

Persons living on the streets of Spanaway will be prioritized for the first 50 microhomes, so in fact the village should make things better. We all should want individuals experiencing homelessness out of encampments and off the streets and living instead in the structured, accountable, and restorative environment of the village.

12. I learned you are doing septic and not a sewer hook up to serve the 200 plus residents. How is that environmentally possible, especially with the wetlands nearby?

Additional test pits, final design, and permitting of the proposed systems will be completed. But based on the available information (topography and soils data) there is adequate space on the site outside the wetlands and required buffers to allow the septic systems to be permitted and constructed for the proposed project. While the site is intended to have 285 living units, nearly all of them are single occupancy and the resulting septic system is equal to approximately 50 single family three-bedroom residences. The septic systems are intended to be broken into a series of smaller systems to allow flexibility of construction timing and location. As required by Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department requirements, the systems will be located in areas where effluent discharged to the drain fields will not adversely impact the wetlands.

13. Aren't you going to just isolate the formerly homeless living there? Won't they be unable to get the help they need?

The village is near busy Pacific Ave and will be served by a shuttle van to take residents to services and to the nearby Pierce Transit bus stop and transit center a few minutes away. A behavioral health and primary care clinic for those insured by Medicaid is less than 5 minutes from the village, and shopping is less than 10 minutes from the village.

14. Will you admit those with a criminal background?

Potential resident applications will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis taking into account last known address, duration of time spent homeless, disability, veteran status, and criminal record. For those with a criminal background, the review team will consider multiple factors, including nature of crimes committed, rehabilitation efforts, engagement with therapeutic resources, etc. We are deeply committed to the safety and security of the community within and surrounding the village. The application review team will include a member with extensive law enforcement experience to advise the process.

15. How can you put that much residential density on roughly 21 acres? Aren't you violating land use laws?

The County's residential density provisions allow the number of contemplated microhomes and will not violate zoning laws.

16. How many people will you house?

The first phase contemplates 150 formerly homeless residents, and 21 volunteer residents. The second phase will house approximately 100 formerly homeless and 7 volunteer residents. Volunteer residents are not formerly homeless individuals but those who agree to live alongside, engage, and help build community with formerly homeless residents.

17. Why are you building free housing for homeless people?

The housing will not be free to residents. All are expected to pay rent and can work onsite to earn a dignified wage to help with the cost of rent.

18. How big is the village? How much land is it going to use?

The village will take several years to complete and likely a minimum of 6 years to reach full residential capacity. We plan by year six, 250 formerly homeless residents and 28 staff and volunteer residents to help build community. We will use approximately 27 of the 85 acres.

19. How can I ask questions or register a concern?

Please get in touch with us at www.piercecountywa.gov/village.

20. I think this is a great idea – how can I get involved?

*Thank you! Please sign up and stay informed as the project moves forward. There will be volunteer, in-kind, and regular donation opportunities in the future. Additional information can be found at:
www.piercecountywa.gov/village.*

21. Why was there not a vote on this village prior to developing a site plan?

Last fall the County took a vote to set aside \$22 million of American Rescue Plan Act dollars for its own community village in the 2022-2023 Biennial Budget. This allocation was to help cover the costs of land acquisition, infrastructure, and pre-design, and assumes substantial private and other funding for the construction of microhomes and other structures. The final proposal has been submitted to Council, which is expected to vote whether to release the \$22 million in November 2022.