



# How to Build a Shelter Community

A checklist guide to building safe, dignified, and cost-effective shelter for your neighbors experiencing homelessness.

With this guide, you will learn the basic steps required to build a rapid and personal shelter community for your neighbors experiencing homelessness. New permanent housing is under construction in cities across America, but it cannot come fast enough for those who currently sleep on the streets. In the interim, a personal shelter community can provide a stepping stone out of homelessness and into stability.

With more than half a million people experiencing homelessness in America alone, we need to act fast to build safe, dignified, and effective shelter at scale - because for every day that we delay, our neighbors without homes face another night without a safe place to sleep.

## Quick Start Checklist

This shelter community resource will provide you with an introductory guide to building your own shelter community, including:

- Summary of shelter
- Where to build your shelter community
- How to prepare the site you select
- What utilities to consider
- What services are needed for your site
- How to fund your shelter community
- Additional considerations

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# Where to Start

It takes a village to build a Pallet shelter community, but there are four key groups to have at the table from the very beginning.

**Elected Leaders:** They can declare a state of emergency related to homelessness, and then assist in areas from site selection to funding.

**Local Service Providers:** They know your neighbors experiencing homelessness best and can advise on how Pallet will complement their existing strategies, expand their number of beds, and transition people into permanent housing.

**Fire Marshall:** They will ensure that new structures meet all local occupancy and fire safety requirements.

**Building and Safety:** Inspectors will ensure that new structures meet local safety requirements, including building safety and housing code.

# Shelter

# Dignified and Scalable Shelter

Start by getting to know the shelters that you will build in your community.

Pallet builds personal, dignified shelter communities for people experiencing homelessness. Assembled in less than a half hour each, our cost-effective shelters are a rapid and proven stepping stone out of homelessness and into a life of stability. Advantages of Pallet shelters include:

- Rapid assembly
- 10 year product lifespan
- Climate control with insulation, heat, and air conditioning
- Mold, mildew, and rot resistant
- Pest resistant
- Safety features including smoke detectors and fire extinguishers
- Safety and security for residents
- Electric connectivity kit
- Openable windows and doors for ventilation



## Designed and Built by People with Lived Experience

When we set out to design a personal shelter for people experiencing homelessness, we asked people experiencing homelessness what they needed to improve their lives.

Our personal shelters are more effective at transitioning people into permanent housing because they are designed and built by people with lived experience in homelessness - most people who build our shelters are formerly homeless, addicted, or incarcerated themselves, and a purchase of Pallet shelters helps to employ this nontraditional workforce.



## Rapid

Pallet's simple and durable shelters can each be built by a team of two people in less than an hour with minimal tools, making them a scalable solution.



## Comfortable

Features like insulation, heating, air conditioning, openable windows, and other ventilation throughout offer individual climate control.



## Proven

Pallet's personal shelters have a higher adoption rate and are a proven stepping stone out of homelessness and into stability.



## Private

Each shelter features a locking door for privacy, and personal shelters allow residents to practice social distancing for the reduction of virus transmission.



## Sanitary

Shelter materials are easy to sanitize between uses, and the structure is resistant to mold and pests. Personal shelter reduces virus transmission.

# Proven Solution

Pallet shelters are a proven stepping stone out of homelessness and into stability, and are more cost effective at transitioning people into permanent housing.

*"It gives them this practice run at being housed."*

**Melissa Moss**

Director, Catholic Community Services

Three primary factors contribute to the success of residents who live in Pallet shelter communities:

- 1 Privacy, security, and the dignity of personal space
- 2 Comfort in leaving personal items, pets, and other owned items for periods of time to engage in services, participate in employment opportunities, or engage with treatment programs
- 3 Community engagement and ability to organize by shared experience or other service specific target

# Shelter Worksheet



*How many people currently live unsheltered in your region?*

*What dignified shelter options are currently available in your region?*

*What climate considerations need to be made in your region?*

*Does current Housing Code allow for temporary or emergency shelter?*



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# Site Selection

# Site Selection

Pallet shelters are designed to be rapid and cost-effective and can be built on almost any reasonably level surface. Every site is different, but consider these best practices as you select your shelter site locations.

## LOCATION

### Proximity to Essential Services

- Grocery stores
- Employment opportunities
- Social services
- Public transportation
- Hospitals and primary care

### Required Physical Characteristics

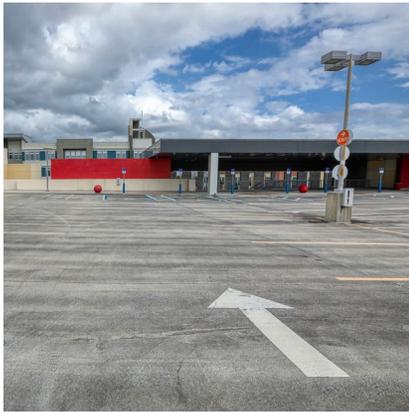
- Relatively flat
- Adequate space for shelters
- Access driveways for emergency services (fire department, ambulance)

## BEST PRACTICES

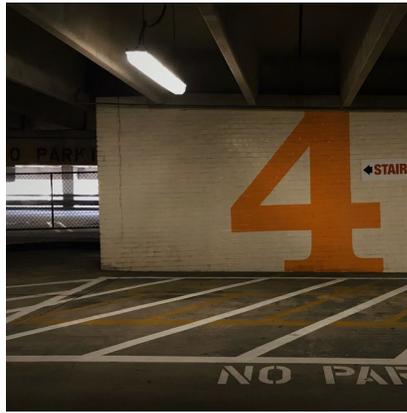
- Organize shelter communities in pods of 30 to 50 shelters to foster smaller group networks and encourage peer-based recovery support
- Plan for a minimum of 2 bathrooms and 2 showers per 30 residents
- Position communal facility services (bathrooms, hand washing, etc.) to minimize site infrastructure costs
- Access to established utility connections is recommended, but not required

# Sample Site Locations

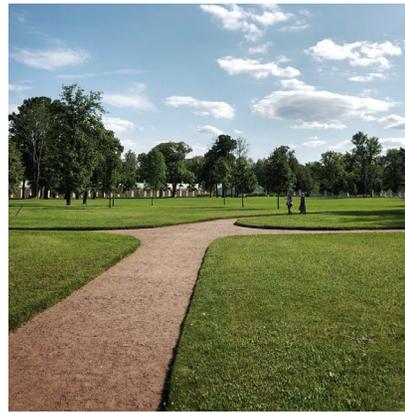
Pallet has built personal shelter communities in locations ranging from parking lots to the interior of vacant warehouse space. The following are some example locations to consider as you identify site locations in your city.



Parking lot (vacant commercial or industrial)



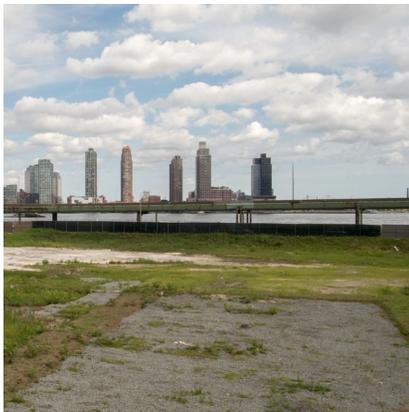
Parking garage (interior or top level)



Grassy lawn (sports field, empty park)



Dirt lot (vacant empty land)



Vacant property awaiting future development



Transit development staging sites



Existing shelter site (congregate shelter parking lot)



Interior site (vacant warehouse space)

# Site Preparation

After you have selected a site for your shelter community, consider the preparation that is needed for that site before building shelter. Pallet shelters are intentionally designed to require minimal site preparation, however each site varies.

## SITE CONSIDERATIONS

- Lighting
- Fencing
- Graveling
- Landscaping
- Walkways
- Pets
- Community Space



Resist the urge to overengineer the site. Pallet shelters are designed as a rapid solution to a homelessness emergency, and your neighbors need shelter urgently. The more you can do to expedite the process of choosing and preparing a site, the sooner your neighbors without homes can move in and begin their pathway to stability.

## UTILITIES

### Sewer and Water

- Sewer and water trenching
- Sewer and water tap
- Sewer and water piping
- Sewer and water stubs for bathroom/laundry
- Hand washing stations
- Potable water for drinking

### Electricity

- Electrical trenching
- Electrical tap
- Electrical source
  - Municipal Grid
  - Solar
  - Generator

### Fire Suppression

- Hydrant line with pressure

# Site Worksheet



*What underused sites in your region could be used for temporary shelter?*

*What people, groups, and departments could help you find sites?*

*How will your site provide communal bathrooms, showers, and laundry?*

*What are your planning, building safety, and fire requirements for shelter?*



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# Services



# Services Management

Choosing a local service provider for your community of residents.

When it comes to improving outcomes and placements into permanent housing for your neighbors experiencing homelessness, shelter is just the start. In the long run, services are critical for positive outcomes and placements into permanent housing. Pallet does not provide services management for its shelter communities, and we advise you to choose a local organization already working to provide homelessness services in your region - after all, they know your neighbors experiencing homelessness best.

## SERVICES MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS:

Your local homelessness service provider should be able to provide or advise on the following:

- Intake process
- Street outreach
- Community code of conduct
- On-site dispute resolution
- Transition into permanent housing
- Jobs preparation
- Health screening and medical care
- Substance policy
- Dining and drinking water
- Security
- On-site offices
- Waste management
- Showers, including cleaning
- Bathrooms, including cleaning
- Laundry
- Transportation
- Other areas of work specific to your unique region and population

*In some cases, select services may not be necessary on-site if that service is provided by the surrounding neighborhood where the shelter community is located. For example, on-site medical may not be necessary if a hospital is located within walking distance from the shelter community (services management can refer residents to the hospital instead of providing medical care on-site).*

# Services Worksheet



*What homelessness service providers already work in your region?*

*What service providers in your region have non-congregate shelter experience?*

*How will shelter residents access medical treatment, recovery services, etc.?*

*What dining services, if any, will be provided for shelter residents?*



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# Additional Information

# Funding Sources

Funding shelters, site preparation, and ongoing services will vary based on your unique community, but the following are examples of funding sources.

## FUNDING SOURCES

- **Direct:** payment via city, county, state, or federal funding
- **Reimbursement:** grants from state or federal programs to fund emergency shelter for people experiencing homelessness
- **Faith-Based Organizations:** some faith-based groups may provide funding, sites for shelter communities, and/or services
- **Philanthropy Partner:** family/group foundations or business partners may provide funding



Reimbursement grants may be available. Due to the growing number of people experiencing homelessness, state and federal programs can provide reimbursement and/or matching grants for shelter communities. For more information, contact Pallet at: [info@palletshelter.com](mailto:info@palletshelter.com)



# Find Help



# Need assistance?

It's common to find roadblocks on your path to build shelter for people experiencing homelessness, and we can help you navigate those roadblocks.

## AREAS WHERE WE CAN HELP:

- Building Issues
- Site Selection
- Site Layout
- Community Support
- Political Support
- Funding Ideas
- Utilities Requirements
- Zoning Challenges
- Other Areas



## Contact Us

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