

Memorandum

Date: September 13, 2017
 To: Mayor and City Council
 From: Regan Watjus, City Manager's Office
 Subject: Rest Stops and Opportunity Village 2016 Report

Background

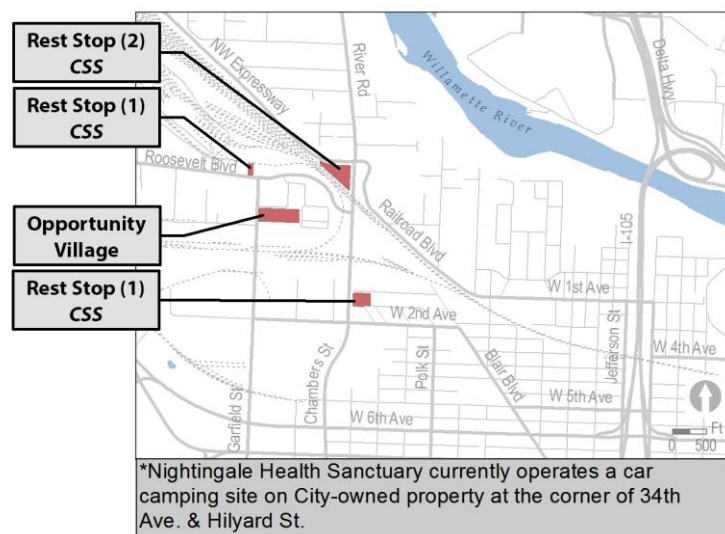
On December 10, 2012, City Council authorized the establishment of Opportunity Village Eugene (OVE), a self-managed micro-housing site within the designated Eugene Public Works & Maintenance complex at 111 N. Garfield Street. The site has capacity to shelter up to 45 people in 30 temporary residential units. OVE now operates under the umbrella of the non-profit SquareOne Villages, and the original agreement to operate the site has been extended through June 1, 2018.

On September 25, 2013, Council passed an ordinance creating the Permitted Overnight Sleeping Pilot ("Rest Stop") Program. A rest stop allows up to 20 people to sleep in tents, trailers or Conestoga huts at designated, Council-approved sites. The City enters into an agreement with a third party that operates and supervises each site. On February 27, 2017, Council approved an ordinance to remove the sunset date for the program. Council also authorized \$25,000 for rest stop operations in the FY17 Supplemental Budget One process in December 2016. Per Council direction, City staff are continuing work with community members to promote outreach, education, and engagement around the program, and working with interested parties to identify viable locations for additional rest stops outside of Ward 7.

The purpose of this report is to provide City Council with a summary of activity at these sites for the 2016 calendar year. This is the second consecutive report.

Current Site Locations

OVE has operated at its current location at 111 N. Garfield since it first opened in August 2013. There are currently four rest stop sites, all operated by Community Supported Shelters (CSS). The site at N. Garfield and Roosevelt has been in operation since November 2013; one site at NW Expressway and Chambers since April 2014; the site at the Eugene Mission since June 2015; and another site at NW Expressway and Chambers since April 2016. Nightingale Health Sanctuary (NHS) operated two rest stops on the property of the Lane



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County Behavioral Health Center from December 2015 until August 2016, at which time they relocated to the Eugene Mission, where they operated one rest stop until April 2017. NHS is currently operating a car camping site of six residents at the corner of 34th Ave. & Hilyard St., while they, the City and community members continue to look for a long term site for their rest stop operations.



Overview of Programs

In addition to small bungalows (64-80 SF) and Conestoga huts (60 SF), OVE hosts a number of community spaces and shared infrastructure, such as showers, bathrooms, laundry, kitchen, raised garden beds, a gazebo built by volunteers in 2016, and a heated yurt with computer access and a library. OVE also provides water, electric and internet for communal purposes, as individual dwellings are not developed with these amenities.

Infrastructure at rest stops is more limited. Rest stops consist of a mix of tents on raised platforms and Conestoga huts with additional covered areas for cooking, storage and warming. There is no electricity provided, but municipal water is available at the current CSS “Safe Spot” sites. Water was also available to NHS residents at the Eugene Mission site, and Good Samaritan, neighbor to the current NHS car camping site, is providing access to water at that location.

The perimeters of both OVE and rest stops are fenced and ingress and egress controlled. Both programs are responsible for providing restrooms and trash service at their respective sites. Residents at all sites go through an application and screening process and must abide by relevant City administrative rules as well as those required by the operating entity. These include the prohibition of weapons, drugs, alcohol, theft, violence, overnight visitors, threatening or disruptive behavior, and activity that damages or disrupts the property or the property of the surrounding area. Failure to follow rules could lead to a resident’s eviction from a site. All sites also require that residents contribute to site upkeep and maintenance.

Each organization maintains a slightly different governance model, but all include residents in decision making and day-to-day management of the sites. Resident site councils have been employed by NHS and OVE. Each organization has a board or steering committee that provides oversight.

While these programs are viewed as transitional, it is acknowledged that participants require different periods of time to gain stability and work to transition to more stable, permanent housing. Site managers take different approaches to setting limits on length of stay. All provide mentoring and support in setting and meeting personal goals to help residents improve their long-term situations. NHS and OVE have no hard limits, while CSS implements a length-of-stay limit of 10 months for their “Safe Spot” Program, which includes a 30-day trial period, and a 6-month stay with the possibility of a 3-month extension. Some of the programs also utilize different forms of peer support, employment training and volunteer opportunities.

	Rest Stops	OVE	Total
Age¹:			
18-24	3	0	3
25-54	49	19	68
55-64	10	2	12
65+	4	5	9
Gender:			
Male	118	17	135
Female	70	9	79
Transgender/Gender non-conforming	2	0	2
Ethnicity¹:			
Hispanic or Latino	5	4	9
Non-Hispanic or Non-Latino	61	26	87
Race¹:			
White/Caucasian	57	23	80
Black/African American	1	1	2
Am. Indian or Alaskan Native	3	1	4
Two or more races	5	0	5
Veterans	55	1	56
Disabled¹	20	5	25
Employed¹	4	6	10
¹ Demographic data on age, ethnicity, race, employment and disability status was only reported by NHS and OVE. CSS is updating their database software in 2017 in order to help capture all of the requested information.			

Resident Characteristics & Departure Destinations

Rest stops and OVE served a total of 296 people in 2016. Of the total residents who have entered OVE since its opening in 2013, all but one have reported coming from Lane County. In rest stops, 123 or 65% of those who entered in 2016 reported coming there from Lane County. Nearly 75% of OVE and rest stop residents were between the ages of 25 and 54, and about 35% were female. Two incoming rest stop residents identified as transgender or gender non-conforming. There were 7 female heads of household and 4 elderly heads of household who entered OVE. The majority of both rest stop and OVE residents identified their race as white/Caucasian. Rest stops served 55 veterans and 20 people with disabilities or special needs, most of these at specific rest stop sites that prioritize these groups. In addition, 6 OVE residents and 4 rest stop residents were employed during their stay

with these programs. See Table 1 for more detailed demographic information about OVE and rest stop residents.

Turnover continues to be more frequent at rest stops than at OVE, with about 75% of those who departed rest stops having lived there six months or less, compared to 43% at OVE. Seven people who departed OVE in 2016 did so after being a resident of the village for more than two years. At the end of 2016, both rest stops and OVE had fifteen people each in their programs who had been there for more than one year.

Of the 22 people who departed OVE in 2016, eight or 36% did so voluntarily (down from 68% who departed voluntarily in 2015), while thirteen departed for rules

violations. Of the 167 people who departed rest stops in 2016, 120 or 72% did so voluntarily (up from 70% who departed voluntarily in 2015), while 47 departed for rules violations.

Destination:	Rest Stops	OVE	Total
Rental house or apartment	34	1	35
Public housing	7	2	9
Section 8	0	2	2
Shelter Plus Care	12	0	12
Homeownership	0	0	0
Family or friends (permanent)	18	1	19
Supportive housing	4	0	4
Family or friends (temporary)	7	3	10
Transitional housing for homeless	9	0	9
Psychiatric hospital	0	0	0
Inpatient alcohol/drug treatment	2	1	3
Jail/prison	4	0	4
Remained homeless	24	11	35
Other	8	0	8
Unknown	38	1	39

The purpose of the rest stops and OVE are to provide temporary, safe shelter that will help people who are unhoused transition to more stable, permanent housing. Table 2 provides a summary of the different destinations for those departing a rest stop or OVE in 2016. Those who left these programs to go to a rental house or apartment, public housing, Section 8 housing, Shelter Plus Care, homeownership, permanent situations with family or friends, or supportive housing are all considered to have transitioned to permanent housing. Those who left to go to a psychiatric hospital, transitional housing for the homeless, an inpatient alcohol/drug treatment program, or a temporary situation with family or friends are considered to have moved into another form of temporary or transitional housing. For OVE, six residents or 27% of those who departed in 2016 went to permanent housing (down from 58% in 2015); four or 18% went to temporary or transitional housing situations; and half remained homeless upon departure. For those who departed rest stops in 2016, 75 or 45% went to permanent housing (up from 31% in 2015); 18 people or 11% went to another type of temporary or transitional housing situation; 24 or 14% remained homeless; 4 or 2% went to jail; and destinations are unknown for 23% and listed as “other” for 5% who departed.

Those residents who are involved in the day to day management of these sites have received training in conflict de-escalation and mediation and use these techniques to help settle instances of miscommunication or potential dispute or conflict. Operating agreements that the overseeing non-profits have developed outline protocols for handling disciplinary situations and grievances, and peer governance is helpful in mitigating issues that arise and promoting residents’ personal investment in the successful operation of these sites. Out of twelve disturbances at OVE in 2016, nine of them were resolved by the OVE community, and three were called in to the Eugene Police Department. Disturbances at rest stops were reported only by NHS, where 4 out of 5 were resolved by the rest stop community, and one required police assistance.

Partnerships

Rest stops and OVE continue to improve their collaboration with local service providers and other organizations. These partnerships are crucial to the ability of the programs to meet their goals of connecting unhoused members of the community with the resources needed to help them transition into permanent or improved housing situations. In 2016, these partners included:

- Eugene Mission
- Willamette Family Treatment Centers
- Shelter Care
- Whitebird/CAHOOTS
- Veterans Administration
- St. Vincent de Paul
- Laurel Hill Center
- Church of the Resurrection
- Occupy Medical
- Catholic Community Services
- Hounds for the Homeless
- Senior and Disability Services
- Buckley House
- Love In The Name of Christ (Love INC)
- Allies, LLC
- Lane Independent Living Alliance (LILA)
- Food for Lane County
- University of Oregon
- Sacred Heart Riverbend and University District
- First Christian Church

- St. Mary's Episcopal
- Jesco Club
- Lane Transit District (LTD)

These are not the only organizations who worked with rest stop and OVE residents, as many program residents also have their own working relationships and seek out assistance on their own with other service providers.

Accomplishments

- In 2016, rest stops and OVE provided the safety and stability needed to help 81 formerly homeless individuals find permanent housing. Combined with the numbers reported in 2015, OVE and rest stops have assisted 136 people in achieving stable, permanent housing in the last two-year reporting period.
- A total of 636 hours of community service in City parks were contributed by OVE and rest stop residents. OVE volunteers contributed 432 hours cleaning and painting over graffiti at the Sladden Park restroom. This encompasses 212 straight days, without a break, from April to November. NHS volunteers contributed 108 hours in three projects. And CSS volunteers contributed 96 hours during four projects.
- CSS opened a fourth Safe Spot at NW Expressway and Chambers, utilizing volunteers from existing Safe Spots to build and set up the new site that prioritizes women in need of safe shelter.
- OVE hired a Village Coordinator through a grant from Oregon Community Foundation who is working ten hours a week providing administrative support to the village. A Social Work intern from PSU also temporarily assisted residents with their transition plans.
- OVE acquired a new gazebo, built by a group of college students from Northern Idaho College who spent their spring break constructing the gazebo and doing a clean-up of the site.
- Senator Jeff Merkley toured OVE in September.
- OVE created a new Oversight Committee to take on more of the supervisory tasks at the site, allowing the Executive Director more capacity to expand the work of the nonprofit SquareOne Villages.
- A new Food for Lane County food pantry was established at the main CSS office on Grant St.
- CSS installed grey-water collection tanks at the rest stops at NW Expressway, as well as two solar charging station systems and gravel pathways at two rest stops. They also updated kitchen facilities at the Veterans Safe Spot; updated common space facilities at all of its rest stops with hard-shelled, movable buildings, 12 volt lighting systems, cell phone charging areas, and wood burning stoves for heat; and established new weekly Communication Meetings designed to help promote healthy communication between camp residents.
- Both rest stops and OVE benefited from significant in-kind donations of items as well as time from community members with skills such as a health nurse, mediation counselors, a group facilitator, a baker, and many more.

Challenges

- The City and NHS continue to face challenges in identifying a long-term location for an NHS rest stop. Finding new potential sites, particularly in areas of the city outside of the industrial area, is challenging, due to both the availability of sites that meet criteria for a rest stop and the need to engage sufficiently with neighbors before establishing a new site.
- It is a struggle for the rest stop programs to maintain stable funding and secure the resources needed for general operations, program expansion, and more adequate staff pay. Operators hope to achieve more stable and developed financial foundations that will allow them to grow their programs.

- Some programs are seeing an increase in the number of people in the area who are suffering from methamphetamine (meth) addiction. While the programs have succeeded in working with some individuals struggling with addiction, these residents often struggle in the program and pose unique challenges for the operators.
- The concentration of the programs along with other homeless services in one area of the city has created some anxiety among residents or a sentiment that these neighborhoods are bearing the weight of the homelessness problem.
- Meeting the needs of people who have serious medical problems is also a challenge for these programs.

Conclusion

The rest stops and Opportunity Village continue to demonstrate success in the numbers served, stabilized, and housed through these programs. Anecdotal information also indicates the significant value of these programs to people who need them and can abide by their rules and structure. While there are a number of applicants who struggle and may not be able to conform to the requirements of the programs, and while some remain homeless upon departure, there are many who have greatly benefited from the stability, support, connections and self-growth these communities offer, and who attribute their success in achieving permanent housing and significant life improvement to the programs.

Thanks to the individuals who operate and manage Community Supported Shelters, Nightingale Health Sanctuary, and Opportunity Village Eugene, these programs continue to grow and evolve in ways that increase their ability to effectively serve their residents, take care of basic needs, and provide options and support for exiting homelessness. Although operators face challenges in creating stable and predictable funding mechanisms, serving high needs populations, and prioritizing a variety of needs, they have nonetheless developed positive reputations and important partnerships in the community that help their residents transition to more stable housing while minimizing impacts on the surrounding neighbors.

City Council and staff have recently taken important steps to increase support and community awareness for these programs. In 2017, City Council eliminated the sunset date for the rest stop program, allocated funds for the first time to the program, and directed the City Manager to promote further education and outreach and to work with interested neighborhood groups on exploring opportunities for program expansion into new areas of the city. City staff have been working to implement these directives, most recently developing an Outreach Handbook to assist interested neighborhood groups and community members in searching for viable sites and conducting outreach to their neighbors. The rest stop program and OVE have been largely community-driven undertakings, and expansion of these programs will require continued and increased community support in order to build on that momentum.