

Silver Medal Winner

Quixote Village Olympia, Washington

A low-cost, sustainable community of tiny houses developed for—and, in part, by—people who were homeless



Jeremy Bittermann

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Challenging Conventions

The 2015 Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence



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Panza

Overview

Submitted by: Panza

Completed: 2013

Total Development Cost: \$3.05 million

Located in Olympia, Washington, Quixote Village is a two-acre residential community that provides permanent, supportive housing for previously homeless adults, including people suffering from mental illness and physical disabilities and recovering from addiction.

Completed in December 2013, the village is composed of 30 tiny cottages facing a central open space and retention ponds, as well as a 2,640-square-foot community building that houses a communal kitchen and gathering room, showers and laundry facilities, staff offices, and a meeting room. Each 144-square-foot house provides just enough room for a single bed, a desk and chair, a half bath, and a closet. Front porches encourage interaction and contribute to the sense of community, as do personalized decorations and small "door gardens" at the cottage entrances.

“A FASCINATING PROJECT THAT ADAPTED THE TINY HOUSE MODEL TO CREATE AN INNOVATIVE DESIGN SOLUTION AND CHANGED PERCEPTIONS ABOUT HOMELESSNESS IN THE COMMUNITY.” —2015 Selection Committee

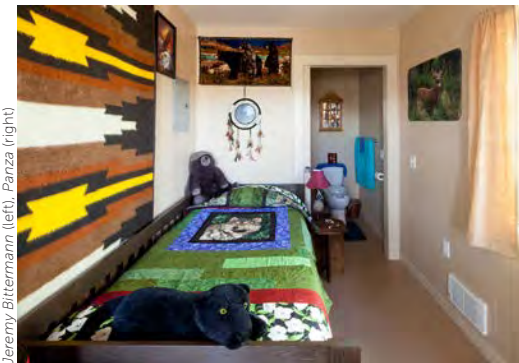
The concept for Quixote Village emerged from a group of community organizers and homeless adults who, in 2007, formed a self-governing tent community in a downtown Olympia parking lot in response to a new city ordinance forbidding sitting or lying down on downtown sidewalks. After city officials threatened to remove the camp, a local church offered to host the community on its grounds.

Over the next seven years, Camp Quixote, as the tent community was called, moved from site to site among local churches with the help of Panza, a nonprofit formed to support Camp Quixote and, eventually, help develop a permanent home for its residents. Panza was able to achieve this final goal after securing a plot of land from Thurston County on the edge of an industrial park in Olympia. The “tiny house” idea—providing a basic, free-standing cottage for each resident with shared bathing and cooking facilities rather than individual rooms or apartments within a larger building—emerged from a series of workshops with camp residents and Panza members led by Garner Miller of MSGS Architects, a local architect and Camp Quixote volunteer.

Although Panza serves as the legal owner and landlord, residents of Quixote Village have responsibilities and continue to play a significant role in governing the community. Weekly resident council meetings address community concerns and advise Panza on new resident applications. Each Quixote Village resident is expected to pay 30% of his or her monthly income as rent, participate in regular council meetings, and share cleaning and maintenance duties, including managing the shared vegetable garden and berry patch. A full-time program and facilities manager and a resident advocate provide support for the community including property management, local transportation, and programmed activities, as well as

individualized counseling that connects residents with education and employment opportunities, local mental and physical health services, and state and federal government aid.

Advocates for the homeless suggest that Quixote Village offers an innovative and practical solution for a widely shared housing problem, presenting a cost-effective and empowering alternative to traditional methods for housing people who are homeless, especially in less urban settings. It provides a sense of place for residents, many of whom have seen their lives dramatically improved in this supportive and empowering community, enabling them to regain their footing and pursue paths towards long-term personal and economic stability. Quixote Village, and Camp Quixote before it, also, in the words of one participant, “changed the way [the] community thinks about homeless people and homelessness,” especially among the hundreds of volunteers who got to know the residents as they served as camp “hosts.”



Jeremy Bittermann (left), Panza (right)





Project at a Glance

- A low-cost, sustainable community of 30 tiny cottages developed for, and to a significant degree by, homeless residents, demonstrating an innovative and cost-effective local and national model for housing people who are homeless.
- The seven-year evolution of a self-governing tent community that started as a protest against an anti-homeless ordinance and moved among church sites over 20 times before becoming a permanent housing solution.
- A housing solution that provides both privacy and a strong sense of community, offering residents basic social and financial support in a safe and stable place from which residents can begin rebuilding their lives.
- A demonstration of how the connection between homeless people in tents and the church members and other volunteers who supported them broke down stereotypes and changed the way a city and county think about homelessness.

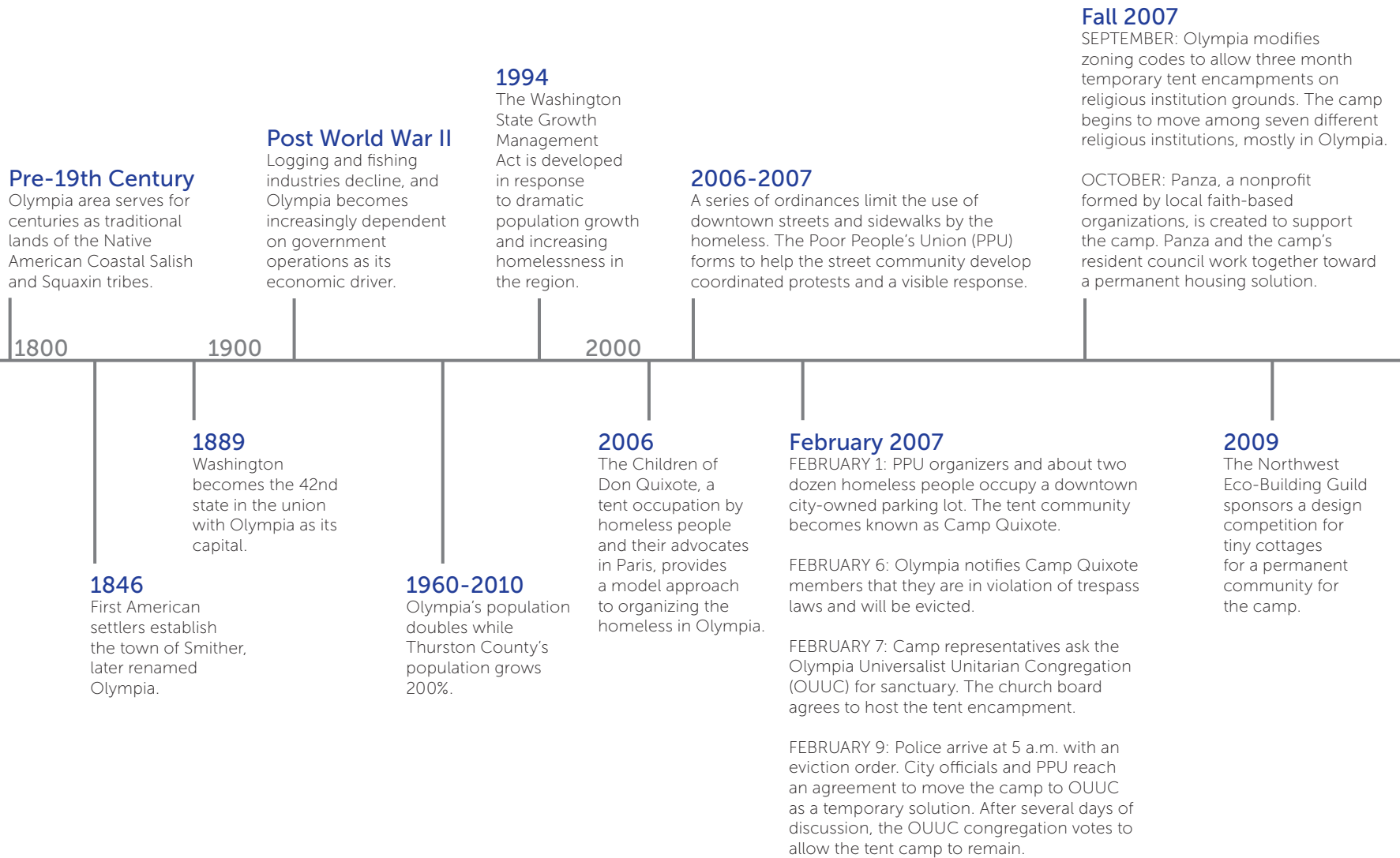


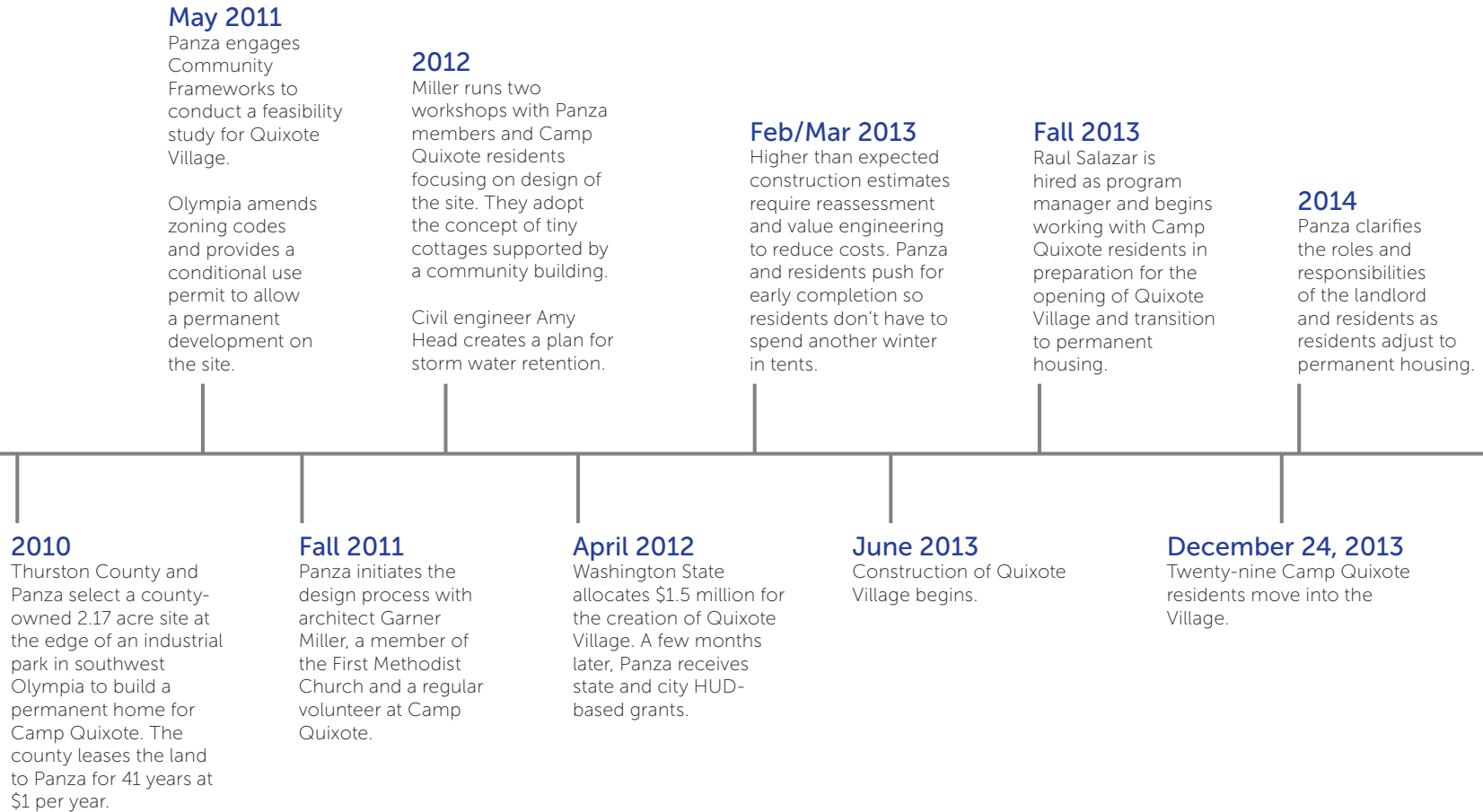
Project Goals

- Provide basic housing for chronically homeless adults—a population that is “often traumatized, disabled, and burdened by deficits,” but resilient.
- Overcome community opposition and keep the tent camp alive.
- Support a community characterized by self-government by residents.
- Provide a low-cost housing solution with a small carbon footprint.
- Offer housing that balances the need for privacy with a design that supports and promotes social interaction and helps maintain a sense of community and common purpose.



Chronology







Project Description

INTRODUCTION

Quixote Village is a residential community in Olympia, Washington, that provides permanent, supportive housing for previously homeless adults, including people suffering from mental illness and physical disabilities and recovering from addiction. The long process that led to the development of Quixote Village began with a tent encampment—a protest by community organizers and homeless individuals against city ordinances intended to push the homeless out of downtown Olympia. For the next seven years, “Camp Quixote” migrated among church sites, supported by Panza, a not-for-profit organization made up largely of members of the faith-based community in Olympia and neighboring towns. Day-to-day operation of the camp was managed primarily by the residents.

Working with community partners and officials from city, county, and state government, Panza was able to obtain a two-acre site at the edge of an industrial park along with funding to build a permanent community. Quixote Village is composed of 30 tiny cottages facing a central open space and retention ponds. A community building houses a communal kitchen and gathering room, showers and laundry facilities, staff offices, and a meeting room. Panza provides support to residents through a full-time program and facilities manager and a resident advocate, local transportation, and individualized counseling that connects residents with education and employment opportunities, local mental and physical health services, and state and federal government aid.

CONTEXT

Olympia

The area now occupied by the city of Olympia, on the southern-most point of access to inlets from Puget Sound, just 60 miles southwest of Seattle, served for centuries as a fishing, hunting, and gathering site for Native Americans of the Coastal Salish and Squaxin tribes. The European “discovery” of the area was made by a British Vancouver expedition led by Peter Puget in the late eighteenth century, and the first permanent American settlers arrived in the mid-nineteenth century. Olympia was first named the provisional territorial capital in 1853 and later the state capital when Washington became the 42nd state in the union in 1889.

Olympia’s economy depended on industry that was based on its location and ecology—logging, lumber, ship building, and commercial fishing—along with the steady presence of state and county government workers. After World War II, the major industries (particularly logging and ship building) declined, and the economy became, and is still, significantly dependent on Olympia’s status as the site of city, county, and state governments.

Olympia is the seat of Thurston County and is part of a larger metropolitan area that has a total population of about 120,000 and includes the contiguous cities of Tumwater and Lacey. As of the 2010 census, Olympia’s population was largely white (83.7%) with 6% Asian, 10.3% other, and 6% across racial groups identifying as of Hispanic or Latino origin. The median household income for Olympia is \$51,902, about 15% lower than Washington state as a whole.

Thurston County has grown dramatically in recent decades, in part as a spillover of its proximity to Seattle. The population of 55,000 in 1960 more than doubled by 1980 to 124,264 and doubled again by 2010 to 252,264. Olympia has also grown significantly, from under 20,000 in 1960 to over 46,000 in 2010, though the growth rate has slowed in the past 10 years.



Aerial view of Olympia taken between 1928 and 1940.

Washington’s population surge was state wide, prompting the passage of the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) in 1990. Four years later, the first Comprehensive Plan produced under the GMA sought to “find the balance between planning responsibly for our future population while preserving the qualities our residents so appreciate.”

Homelessness was a problem that Olympia and the broader Thurston County area had already been struggling with for decades, a result of the dramatic increase in population, rising housing costs, and financial inequality. Changes in Olympia’s governance model in 1982 resulted in the establishment of an Office of Community Development to address these issues, although it seems that there was often uncertainty about whether the city or county should be responsible for finding solutions and alternative housing options. In 2005, the county developed a 10-year plan to reduce the number of homeless people by half by improving coordination of services and increasing affordable housing options. The

county also began an annual one-day “homeless census” (since adopted by the state for all counties) to document the number of homeless people and provide a baseline against which progress could be measured. The census documented significant fluctuation of Thurston County’s homeless population over the last 10 years, from 441 in 2006 to 976 in 2010 and down to 599 in 2014. The report on the 2014 homeless census attributes the gradual improvement over the past few years to the increased coordination of programs and an improving economy.

Olympia, the most urban city in Thurston County, has experienced a visible presence of homeless people on the streets of downtown. In a city struggling with economic revival, this was seen by local retailers and some officials as discouraging business traffic. Many of Thurston County’s social services for people who are homeless are based in Olympia, which, some say, has helped attract more homeless individuals to the city. Despite the belief that the homeless population comes to Olympia from great distances, the annual homeless surveys suggest that most are actually local to Thurston County, if not Olympia in particular.

PROJECT HISTORY AND LEADERSHIP

The story of Quixote Village is one of empowerment—really self-empowerment—of people on society’s lowest rung: those who are homeless, often including individuals who have suffered physical or sexual abuse or other traumas; suffer from mental illness, chronic diseases, or physical disabilities; and/or are addicted to alcohol or street drugs. It is also a story of the support provided to this community by volunteers, largely from faith-based organizations, who helped create a long-term and finally permanent housing solution for the Camp Quixote community. While Olympia city government was initially an obstacle to be overcome—although a few isolated officials lent support from the start—an important aspect of the story is the turn-around of government bodies and officials who eventually provided

the support, funding, and ordinance and code changes that ultimately made Quixote Village possible. In the end, while the physical solution was unique and cost-effective, the strength of community support and the effort by the homeless population itself may be the most unusual and impressive part of this project.

By 2007, the homeless community in Olympia and its advocates in organizations such as Bread and Roses, a nonprofit Catholic Worker community that served “the homeless, the poor, and the marginalized,” saw the city as hostile to people in need. These attitudes grew particularly strong after the city council passed a series of ordinances designed to keep people who were or even looked homeless off of the streets, culminating in the Pedestrian Interference Ordinance of 2007, which made obstructing pedestrian or vehicular traffic and “aggressive panhandling” on sidewalks, streets, or alleys in downtown areas illegal. Although homeless people and their advocates regularly spoke out at city council meetings, they felt ignored in their protests.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Poor People’s Union

In late 2006, Bread and Roses staff and interns, working with Olympia’s homeless community, began to meet regularly to plan a political action that would provide a place of shelter for homeless adults while dramatizing their situation and the lack of responsiveness from the city. They named their organizing body the Poor People’s Union (PPU) and held Saturday meetings with coffee and pizza, attracting several dozen people from the street community.

From these first discussions, the PPU developed a strategy that included creating a temporary encampment—a tent city where a community could form and members and supporters could work towards “a permanent site

that they owned, and could farm, free of the pressures of the social service system, able to recover at their own pace." In "A Tale of Tent Cities: A Camp Quixote Retrospective," Rob Richards of the PPU notes that they were surprised by the degree to which these homeless people "bought in almost immediately" to a plan that would give them control of their own destiny.

In planning for the tent encampment, Richards reports, a series of committees were established, along with a constitution assuring that "any decision that affected only the street community was made by only members of the street community." Encampment members chose the name Camp

Quixote after a contemporary tent camp set up by homeless protesters in Paris which had called itself The Children of Don Quixote, presumably for their opposition to the power of the city government.

PPU committees made up of Bread and Roses staff and homeless people discussed and planned every aspect of the coming protest. A site selection committee was formed and discussed potential camp locations, eventually choosing a highly visible city-owned lot downtown to keep the focus on city rulings and represent their belief that city land belongs to all people. The goal was to move in on February 1, 2007, when the ordinance would take effect, and toward that end detailed logistical and material preparations were made.

On February 1, protestors and supporters set up 21 tents on the downtown site as well as portable toilets and a kitchen tent, and by the end of the day they shared a community meal. They worried about being removed from the site by the police and considered each day that the camp remained undisturbed a victory. A chicken dinner cooked on site several days later, with food donated by local supporters, took on the trappings of a festive meal celebrating the success of the protest.

While many local residents were supportive of the protestors and brought food and coffee, many local business leaders and city officials were openly opposed. One former city official commented that the camp "fed the narrative of Olympia as dangerous and hurt the tax base [...] the city has a right to regulate and this was clearly illegal." On February 6, the city manager told reporters that "the community's patience is wearing thin." He and the police chief informed the camp members that they were trespassing and subject to arrest and asked them to vacate the site. Pressure of a pending raid led to discussion of alternatives, and a Bread and Roses intern offered to contact leaders of his congregation, the Olympia Unitarian Universalist Church (OUUC), to request sanctuary.



Photos: Rob Richards

The first Camp Quixote encampment in downtown Olympia.

Olympia Unitarian Universalist Church

OUUC's minister, Reverend Arthur Vaeni, had also gotten a call from a city council member who was anonymously supportive of Camp Quixote, asking OUUC to consider hosting the tent city if police moved to evict camp residents from the downtown site. Earlier that year, the congregation's difficulties in managing its own shelter for homeless families had led OUUC to have a series of internal conversations, led by OUUC Board President (and later Panza Board President) Tim Ransom, about OUUC's mutual responsibility, potential liability, goals, and role in working with homeless people. These conversations led the congregation to an understanding of the need for a more holistic approach to homelessness and primed the OUUC congregation to be ready to intervene in the evolving downtown crisis.

On the evening of February 7, representatives of Camp Quixote contacted the church board, concerned that eviction could come at any time. The board went into emergency session and on February 8 voted to create a Temporary Emergency Sanctuary Policy allowing sanctuary with stipulations that sexual predators or people with outstanding warrants be screened out and that drugs or alcohol not be allowed on site. The board also agreed that the temporary sanctuary would only be in place until the full congregation voted on the matter.

At 5:00 a.m. on February 9, officials arrived with an eviction order for the tent encampment and police surrounded the tent site. Reverend Vaeni had been notified of the action early that morning. When he arrived shortly after the police to offer the sanctuary of the church's grounds, it appeared to some city officials, who hadn't known about the fervent discussions of the previous day, that Vaeni had come "from nowhere [...] to offer the church site." Camp residents, organizers, and city officials agreed to the move, so that when the police moved in there was no resistance, averting a difficult response that could have sent camp residents to jail and scattered the community (as it was, several residents left when the police arrived



Camp Quixote at St. John's Episcopal Church in Olympia.

and were not heard from for weeks). Volunteers—including the camp's supporter on the city council—brought trucks which carted people, tents, and supplies to the church. Soon after, though, the city informed OUUC that this move was in violation of city codes and that it would have to apply for a permit to allow the camp on its grounds. Obtaining the permit, it was made clear, would involve a significant commitment of time and money.

The question was put to the OUUC congregation, which had an extended discussion and ultimately unanimously approved hosting the camp. Several members of the congregation noted how proud they were that they had come through a long and difficult discussion with an informed and strong commitment to get involved. "Justice won out in the end," one member said.



Soon after the vote, the church board negotiated with city officials, including Steve Friddle, principal planner for the City of Olympia, about the code issues. Friddle helped work out a compliance agreement that allowed the camp to stay for 90 days with a set of requirements (largely addressing public health and safety issues), but with no fees. This agreement became the basis of the ordinance the city passed later in 2007. The church's case was supported by the 2000 Federal Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA), which was created to protect religious institutions from zoning or other land use regulations that are "unduly burdensome."

The goal of the tent city, in the view of the PPU, was to force the government and citizens of Olympia to reexamine the city's approach to dealing with the street community. It seems to have done that and more. Members of the church described how the coming of Camp Quixote galvanized their community and brought ordinary citizens into direct contact with homeless people as peers, resulting in changes in understanding, lessening of stereotypes, and, in some cases, creation of long-term friendships.

City of Olympia

City policy also changed as a result of the protest and OUUC's involvement. Although the city had agreed to the move to church grounds, this solution violated existing zoning codes. In 2008, Olympia City Council passed the Temporary Homeless Encampment Ordinance as a zoning modification that allowed tents to remain at a particular site for up to three months. Similar ordinances eventually were passed in Lacey, Tumwater, and Thurston County. Several years later, the ordinance was modified again to extend the allowable time to six months. The ordinance specified that only religious organizations could host a tent camp, with an additional proviso that there be a congregant volunteer on duty 24 hours a day. One city official noted that connecting the camp to religious sites would help it to secure second amendment protection against attempts of any future government to dismantle it.



Photos: Panza

Seven churches in the area hosted Camp Quixote during its more than 20 moves over seven years.

Panza

The need to find a new home for the tent community after three months and to arrange ongoing logistical support led to discussions among OUUC and other religious institutions within Olympia and in Tumwater and Lacey as well. This resulted in the creation of a support organization called Panza (as Sancho Panza lent support to Don Quixote), composed of people from multiple religious institutions and registered with the state of Washington as a nonprofit in October 2007. Panza became a federally recognized 501(c)(3) organization in 2008.

Panza's mission was to provide critical support for Camp Quixote. Initially that meant organizing the church tent sites and managing the moves among them, providing volunteers to serve at the sites, raising funds, and lobbying and interfacing with government and social service agency officials. Ultimately, Panza was the primary advocate for and eventually legal owner and manager of the permanent housing site for camp residents.

Under Panza's guidance, in this post-protest period and over the next seven years, Camp Quixote moved from site to site, over 20 times in all, among seven churches, with additional support from a synagogue, a mosque, and other organizations. Although Lacey, Tumwater, and Thurston County passed similar ordinances allowing temporary tent encampments, only one church outside of Olympia, in Lacey, actually hosted the camp.

Throughout this period, one constant was the self-governing nature of the camp. The residents formed a resident council, elected officers, and organized into a series of committees that managed issues ranging from internal security to meals. Problems among residents were addressed by extensive discussions in open weekly meetings that included the entire resident group. This process appeared to the volunteers to be functional, positive, and in many ways therapeutic for residents, many of whom had

experienced years of difficult personal circumstances, including disempowerment and abuse.

The Camp Quixote tent community continued and thrived, and it soon came to be seen within Olympia as something positive rather than a liability. Several people noted with satisfaction that many government officials as well as the local newspaper that had called for the camp to be ousted later became supporters and called Camp Quixote a great success. The city ordinance that allowed the churches to host encampment sites required that before each move to the next site, an open meeting had to be held for neighborhood residents. Typically, the first time the group moved to a site, these meetings were crowded and contentious. By the second or third time around, however, they became non-events, as neighboring residents realized that Camp Quixote did not represent a threat. To the contrary, in many cases it was seen as a positive addition to the neighborhood, as camp members lent "eyes on the street," provided security patrols, and helped keep the neighborhood clean.

However well run, Camp Quixote was still a community in tents. Although one church with a more protected setting had become the regular winter-over site, Washington winters can be difficult, and no one considered the tents to be a long-term solution. A permanent site with built structures was always the ultimate goal. Panza members and the camp's resident council lobbied government officials toward a long-term solution, including finding and obtaining a piece of land for a permanent home. Jill Severn's relationship with members of the state government proved particularly effective. Severn, an OUUC member and later president of the Panza board, had a varied career in journalism and editing, educational program development, and state government, where she had worked on educational policy and served as a speechwriter for two governors. She and many members of Panza had personal and professional connections



Views of Quixote Village and the surrounding industrial park looking west and east along Mottman Road.

with city, county, and state officials, and the organization became very effective at lobbying and turning volunteers and residents out en masse for government meetings.

In 2010, Thurston County identified a number of potential sites that could serve as the permanent home for Camp Quixote. Panza and county officials evaluated four sites and settled on a 2.17-acre parcel on the edge of an industrial park. The site also placed Quixote Village within the concern and purview of three jurisdictions: Thurston County, the city of Olympia, and the city of Tumwater, whose northern border is a few feet from the property. County Commissioner Cathy Wolfe, speaking on behalf of all three county commissioners, testified that Thurston County was “100% behind this effort” as “efficient, economically feasible, and environmentally sensitive...a model for the rest of the county.” Later that year, the county leased the parcel of land to Panza for 41 years at \$1 per year. This land use required changes to Olympia’s master plan and to zoning codes, which were recommended by the Planning Commission in May 2011 and approved by the city council in September as a conditional use permit allowing residential unit construction in this industrial zone.

When the site was announced, neighboring industry owners protested. They felt that the plan had not been announced until it was too late for them to do anything about it and were concerned that the presence of the homes in an industrial area would lead to restrictions on their operations. They also feared that residents would sooner or later complain about noise, leading the city to change the rules governing the industrial zone. The business owners sued the city but lost at every turn.

Community Frameworks

Having a site for the permanent community made it possible for supportive state legislators to enable a \$1.5 million appropriation from the Washington State Housing Trust Fund for the proposed Quixote Village. With land

and significant funding in hand, the need to create a plan for its development and implementation became clear. In May 2010, Panza leaders were introduced to Ginger Segel of Community Frameworks, a local nonprofit community development organization with a mission “to support and develop affordable housing as a foundation upon which individuals, families, and neighborhoods can build vital communities.” Community Frameworks’ considerable experience as a nonprofit developer of affordable housing brought important expertise to the project.

As an initial test of their relationship, Panza contracted with Community Frameworks to complete a feasibility report, specifying what would be needed in order to complete the project now that the parcel of land and initial state funds were available. This included research on the potential for further public funding, which became more complicated as the concept of non-traditional housing in the form of tiny cottages without bathrooms began to emerge.

The feasibility report, completed in November 2011, suggested that the construction would cost about \$2 million. By this point, Segel and Community Frameworks were excited to be involved in the project and officially signed on to be a part of the development team.

DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

Once the land was transferred from the county, Panza began in earnest to design the facility. The design process was led by Garner Miller of MSGS Architects and included Panza Board member Bob Wolpert, an architect, and Amy Head, a civil engineer. Based on the results of several participatory design workshops with Panza and Camp Quixote residents, Miller settled on a circular plan that placed 30 tiny cottages and a community building around an open space. Initially, each cottage had electricity and heat but no plumbing, and the community building, which faced the street, included a

shared kitchen, bathrooms, and gathering spaces. The cottages were later modified to include a half-bath. The plan was also revised to incorporate an extensive storm water management system designed by Head.

The groundbreaking ceremony was held in early summer 2013, and the team felt pushed to move construction forward so that residents could move in by the end of the year and not have to spend another winter in tents. In fact, the site was occupied just a few days after the start of winter, on December 24, 2013.

Getting a design that worked for Quixote Village was a challenge, given the specific needs and desires of the residents, limited funding, and a small, difficult site. Several critical elements determined the final outcome of Quixote Village, including a participatory design process that involved Camp Quixote residents, leading to the use of the tiny cottage model and layout of the site; addressing storm water management and necessary codes and permits; and value engineering to bring the project within budget.



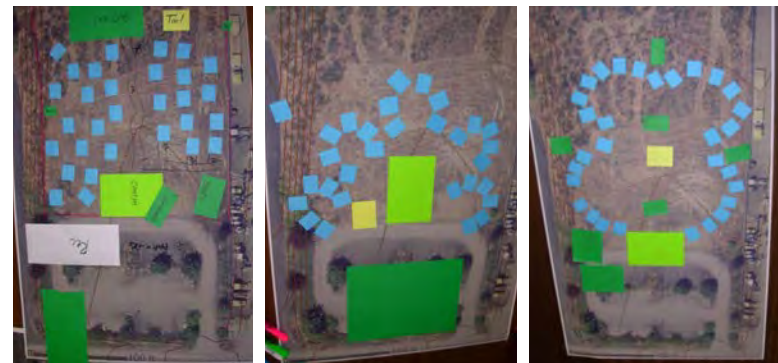
Initial rendering of the proposed design.

Participatory Design Process

Architect Garner Miller was then a member of one of the hosting congregations, the First United Methodist Church of Olympia, and had volunteered with Camp Quixote when it was at the church site. As such, he had gotten to know many of the people in the camp and understood their concerns. Miller, whose seven-person firm, MSGS Architects, does mostly commercial projects, provided his services pro bono at first and was eventually contracted by Panza to complete the design.

The conceptual plan and many design details for Quixote Village, such as the layout and spacing of the cottages and community building, were addressed in two design workshops led by Miller, working directly with homeless residents of Camp Quixote and Panza members. Panza staff and residents recalled these workshops as creative and exciting and felt that they had played a major role in representing resident needs in the final design.

The first meeting focused on the general layout of the site. In 2009, Panza and representatives of the Northwest Eco-Building Guild, which promotes sustainable small housing, sponsored a design competition to identify prototypes for Quixote Village. Although the competition resulted in only three entries, it introduced the concept of tiny cottages supported by a community building, and that idea became an important part of these workshops. Residents were attracted to the idea of having free-standing homes rather than a unit in a large building. Much of the workshop addressed how 30 cottages and a community building would be organized. Three groups were formed and given maps of the site and paper cut-outs of building footprints. They devised three different ways of laying out the houses: (1) a grid with rows of houses, (2) five clusters of houses, and (3) a circular plan with houses surrounding an open area. When the whole group came together to discuss these options, the grid was rejected as too "street-like," and the clusters seemed too likely to create and support cliques within the



MSGS Architects

Design workshop with Camp Quixote residents and Panza members (top) and resulting site design alternatives.

larger community. The circular plan was adopted as the one that could most help provide a sense of community for the entire population while still maintaining separation for privacy. The second meeting addressed issues of the design of the community building and individual cottages.

Adapting the Tiny House Model

For Camp Quixote residents, adapting the tiny house model for their cottages represented a perfect fit—larger and more protected than the tents they had been using, the cottages provided some independent personal space but were small enough to help make the community affordable. Residents emphasized their need for autonomy and privacy within the community, which meant, in part, having no shared walls among their homes. Many of the homeless adults in this area, after all, had lived in the woods before coming to Olympia or on Olympia’s streets.

The cottages were intended to provide a modest bedroom with a closet. As small as the cottages already were, residents were willing to trade off some indoor space for a small front porch. Porches were important to the residents as a way to connect to the community (to be able to nod at and greet neighbors and passersby) and to the outdoors. Sitting on one’s own front porch is a symbol of ownership of the space and an important demonstration of belonging for this group of people who had lived so long without a permanent place to call their own.

In a development without common walls, a minimum distance between buildings of 10 feet was required by fire code. Side windows were off-set so that no one would have a direct view into a neighbor’s home. The group indicated a preference for a simple, traditional style home with a pitched roof, with most amenities residing in the community building. Two of the cottages directly adjacent to the community building were made accessible according to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards with ramps and 10 additional square feet of interior space.



Each cottage includes a front porch, bedroom, and powder room.

Photos: Jeremy Bliternann

Initially, the architects proposed using factory-built structures for the cottages to speed construction and save money. However, there were no available buildings that would have met their criteria, and the ones that came closest would have required considerable on-site modifications. The contractor, Construct, Inc., offered a competitive price to build on site, and the final design closely resembled the images residents had seen in the workshops.

Quixote Village cottages have just enough room for a single bed, desk, and chair, plus a small back room with a sink, toilet, and closet. There are five different exterior paint color schemes to support visual variety and individualization, and many residents add their own personal items and decorations, including chairs, hammocks, and art. Each has a small patch of land in front which is typically used for a lawn, flowers, or an individual herb or vegetable garden.

The cottages are wood framed with painted plywood floors supported by concrete posts, roofs constructed of engineered lumber, and wood stud walls with board-and-batten siding over fiberglass batt insulation. Each cottage has electric heating and a sprinkler, with two sprinklers in the ADA accessible units, as per fire code.

The Community Building

Residents played a key role in determining the design of kitchen and bathroom layouts in the community building, drawing on years of experience using the shared tent kitchen in Camp Quixote. The community building was intended to be homey and lodge-like, comfortable for people used to living in the woods, as many residents had. The combined dining room and living space serves as a “great room” with a high ceiling and a wood stove and uses natural materials such as cedar siding on beams and columns as well as cork flooring. The living room windows have a view



The community building includes a shared kitchen and great room.

Photos: Jeremy Bittermann

north toward a forested area. The broad back porch acts as an extension of the living room, with comfortable chairs and a view of the common area and woods.

The community building serves as the development's face onto the street, and its lockable front door provides secure access into the fenced site. It houses necessary facilities lacking in the cottages such as showers and bathtubs (as specifically requested by the residents), coin-operated clothes washers and dryers, and lockable storage units. The four showers/tubs and two toilets in the community building are in individual rooms with lockable doors rather than large, institutional toilet or shower rooms. The large kitchen is designed for individual as well as group meal preparation. A comfortable living room area anchored by a wood-burning stove is used for sitting and reading, small group gatherings, and whole community meetings. Staff and residents post notices and messages on a chalkboard on the wall in the living area, and a separate meeting room used for resident council and Panza board meetings is located across from the program manager and resident advisor offices.

Lockable storage (both refrigerators and pantry lockers for non-perishable food and personal items) was important to the residents, responding to a constant concern, after living on the street or in the woods, about loss of personal property. That fear seems to have lessened in this community over time and there are now discussions about whether, for instance, locks are needed on the refrigerators. A soda machine and the chalkboard wall that serves as a message center were added to the community building in response to resident requests.

From the designers' perspective, the combination of tiny cottages and the large community building provides an ideal mix of the kind of privacy that many of the previously homeless residents desired, with opportunities for



Initial community building floor plan.

interaction over meals and use of other facilities in the community building that help promote a sense of community.

Sustainability

All affordable housing projects that receive support from the Washington State Housing Trust Fund are required to meet state Evergreen Sustainable Development Standards, which are intended to safeguard “health and safety, increase energy and water efficiency, promote sustainable living, and preserve the environment.” In Quixote Village, no carpet or vinyl was allowed; landscape used water efficient design and plantings; the community building has piping and pre-wiring for solar photovoltaic and solar hot water systems; roofing and paving were designed to reduce heat island effects; and efficient lighting, heating systems, and appliances were used. In many ways, the small size of the cottages themselves may be the site’s most sustainable feature, reducing the amount of material used as well as the heating costs of more typical-sized housing.

Storm Water Management

Over the years, Community Frameworks has learned that “donated land often comes with donated problems,” and in the case of the site given by Thurston County for Quixote Village, the biggest of those problems was water drainage. The need to retain and direct storm water flow had the largest impact on the final design. Civil engineer Amy Head, who had gotten to know architect Garner Miller through involvement in Leadership Thurston County, was brought in to design the storm water management plan. The water issues had to be reviewed and approved by three jurisdictions: Thurston County and the cities of Olympia and Tumwater.

Storm water management is often an important issue in Olympia, as in most of the Pacific Northwest, due to the plentiful annual rainfall and the clay subsoil that doesn’t allow water to infiltrate. County code required that the Quixote Village site allow no more water to flow out than in its original,



Storm water management issues required the addition of on-site retention ponds.

pre-development condition, which in this case, lacking other historical data, was calculated to be a wooded area. Given these conditions and the tight budget, finding enough space to hold the required storm water was not an easy assignment.

Solution options were limited by the small, narrow lot. Off-site water storage in neighboring lots would have been expensive to construct and wouldn’t have held enough water to solve the problem.

Resolving the storm water management issues and site design was an iterative process between the architect and engineer. The site design came first, following the resident workshops, and was handed off to Head, whose assessment of required pond size created issues the architects then had to address in adapting the design, following which Head reviewed and made final water management calculations. The first design she received placed retention ponds on the outside of the lot, surrounding the houses

and community building, which themselves enclosed an open space to be used as a garden, much like the original PPU plan of a village with a farm. This plan was the one that was submitted to the county for the conditional use permit.

The required size of water retention ponds, however, made the proposed design unfeasible. In fact, at one point it seemed as if the ponds might be too big to fit on the property and still allow room for the houses and community building. Olympia code, however, provided storm water modeling credits that allowed a 20% reduction of water retention if natural dispersion plans were used. Natural dispersion, in this case, meant that most water on the site flowed naturally, without being artificially collected and piped to the ponds. It is considered "low impact development," mimicking what water has always done: flow to the lowest points.

The final engineering design incorporated three ponds. In the first two dry ponds, designed to hold water in heavy rain, water is treated using plants and cattails. The third pond is wet and substantially deeper at 12 feet, with a relief valve into an existing fourth pond off-property. The three ponds function as one big collection area. One large pipe brings water in at the point closest to the community building, additional pipes connect the three ponds, and one more pipe leads out of the property at the back.

Even with the 20% credit, the required pond size was so large that the circle of houses facing one another grew uncomfortably small. Quixote residents strongly indicated a preference for a low density community with space between the homes, so when they reviewed the revised plan, the houses facing one another seemed much too close. In the next iteration, therefore, the ponds were brought into the central open space, surrounded by the cottages. There was no longer enough space to complete the circle of cottages around the ponds, so in the new layout, two rows of staggered cottages face one another across the expanses of water. A community

vegetable garden and berry patch fill available space on either side of the community building.

A landscape architect was brought in to design a required green buffer around the perimeter and proposed a simple row of trees to separate Quixote Village from the surrounding industrial sites. Black chain-link fencing was used around the last and largest pond because of its 12-foot depth. Since intensive landscaping was one of the things lost to cost cutting, residents have helped improve the site by cultivating their own front yard gardens as well as the community garden and berry patch and by placing plants (mostly donated) around the village. In addition, volunteers from the city of Olympia and Washington Americorps provided and installed more plants around the storm water ponds.

Cost Cutting and Value Engineering

None of the participants in this project commanded significant monetary resources. Panza and the residents became adept at lobbying for funding at state, county, and city levels, but the price tag for Quixote Village remained a significant sum. Community Frameworks' 2011 feasibility study pointed out that fundraising was a challenge because Panza was a new organization with no track record to give confidence to funders or lenders. Given that reality, Panza's ability to raise the needed funding was impressive, even more so when it succeeded in raising additional money as costs grew from \$2 million to \$3 million.

Early in 2013, Panza was pressed for both funds and time, given its commitment to occupancy by winter 2013 so residents would not have to spend another cold season in tents. A third-party cost estimator determined that the project's price would be higher than anticipated, which, along with changes suggested by value engineering, prompted Panza and the design team to reduce the project scope and cut \$500,000 from the construction budget. The community building lost a second floor loft

library and wrap-around porch. Cedar siding and cork flooring originally intended for the cottage interiors became board-and-batten walls and painted plywood floors. Concrete slab foundations for the cottages were replaced by concrete posts that supported the wood frames. Other changes included fewer cabinets in the kitchen and the elimination of bi-fold doors separating bathrooms and closets in the cottages. A picnic shelter and shop building were dropped from the plans. Eventually some items listed in the bids as alternates were able to be included, such as painting the community building interior, installing downspouts and gutters, and providing fencing around the site. Additional amenities were supplied by volunteers who painted cottage interiors, made curtains, and donated toilet accessories and the community building's wood stove.

Codes and Permitting

The original cottage design was unusual not only for its size—a mere 144 square feet—but also for having no indoor plumbing. Sinks, toilets, and showers were amenities meant to be in the community building only. Living in cottages that had no plumbing would not have been a stretch for Camp Quixote residents who had spent seven years living in tents, but it was a sufficiently atypical design to complicate the process of obtaining funding and approvals. There were no models or precedents the city could use in providing permits for this type of development. The cottages would not fit code requirements for individual dwelling units, nor for dormitory or multifamily units, nor for a trailer park. Half-baths (each with a toilet and sink) were therefore added, largely in response to urging by funders, Panza board members, and local affordable housing proponents.

Units with toilets but no showers still presented problems with respect to codes, permits, and Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Section 8 requirements for rental assistance for low-income households. In the end, the development was treated as if it were a deconstructed dormitory. For the International Residential Code and the city's conditional

use permit, the cottages were considered sleeping units rather than dwelling units, like Single Room Occupancy (SRO) housing. To qualify for HUD vouchers, the city wrote a local definition of Single Room Occupancy (SRO) housing to describe Quixote Village, understanding that HUD allows facilities to meet either its definition or the definition in a local code.

Construction was difficult largely because of limited tractor access to the narrow and often muddy site. It would have been easier if equipment could have entered from the side, but at the time, Panza was in court battles with neighbors who refused to allow such access. Moreover, there was not the efficiency that would have been available if these had been shared-wall row houses rather than individual units. Still, the project was completed in time for the residents to be out of tents for the winter of 2014. The site was occupied on Christmas Eve, 2013.

A Permanent Home

The physical setting works well, by most accounts, but the first year on the site was a period of adjustment and change for both the residents and Panza. The organization hired its first full-time employee, Raul Salazar, in the fall of 2013 so that he could establish relationships with the residents, learn how the organization functioned, and help design the rules and policies under which Quixote Village would be run prior to the transition. Salazar had studied criminal justice and, having spent years as a probation officer, had considerable experience working with people with histories of drug abuse and mental illness.

Salazar was not used to or comfortable with the lack of structure at Quixote Village. Panza had hoped to run the village in much the same manner as Camp Quixote had been run, with the resident council maintaining significant control over rules and decisions. But a number of incidents occurred in the first months of occupying the permanent site that required staff and police to come to the site after hours, including drug use and aggressive

behavior. Moreover, there were complaints by residents that some on the resident council abused their position. One original camp resident in particular was seen as the cause of difficulties and was uncomfortable with the new rules, reportedly saying when confronted, "You can't kick me out—this place was built for me."

Among the most important changes that took place in the transition from Camp Quixote to Quixote Village was the institution of a policy that all residents must pledge and work to stay "clean and sober," a step significantly beyond the Camp Quixote requirement of no drug or alcohol use on site. This change, which had been discussed extensively in resident meetings prior to the move to the permanent site, played a role in the turnover of residents in the first months of Quixote Village's operation. Many who left were not ready or able to make such a commitment, although for those who stayed, risks remained. In early 2015, one resident died of a drug overdose, the first and only incident of this kind since Quixote Village opened.

Residents and Panza members soon discovered that the situation had changed, and the ideal of resident self-government that had been so effective in the tent camp had to be adapted to a new reality in which Panza was the owner and landlord with legal responsibility and liability for operations. For example, tenant law required confidentiality and due process in the case of evictions, which conflicted with the open dialogue process and quick expulsion after a resident council vote that occurred in Camp Quixote.

Eventually, a new system was established which came with a series of re-formulated guidelines. Residents were required to sign leases, agreeing to pay 30% of their income, if they had any, toward rent. They accepted rules that prohibited aggressive behavior or substance use and agreed to be monitored by staff-administered drug tests, understanding that eviction could result from a violation of the rules. The eviction of one of the early



Jeremy Bittermann

Residents value the autonomy and privacy provided by the cottages.

residents, after a series of complaints and numerous attempts to address the problems through other measures, made this reality clear for all residents. In the first year, about a dozen of the initial residents left for many reasons, most often because of difficulty living under the more structured system. Of the 31 residents still living in the tents of Camp Quixote at the time Quixote Village opened, 29 moved in, and 17 remained 15 months later. The remaining cottages were filled by others from the homeless population of Olympia.



Jeremy Bittermann

Porches provide important connections to outdoors and the community.

Turnover has slowed since then as the remaining original and new residents have accepted and seem quite comfortable with the established goals, policies, and procedures. Residents continue to participate in the operation of the village, albeit with less authority within the framework of the new structure.

Churches and volunteers continue to be involved, but the nature of volunteer efforts is shifting as the needs of the Quixote Village community change. Many saw Thanksgiving 2014 as a turning point in resident self-image and sense of independence when offers of donated food and cooking help were politely declined by residents in favor of a meal that they purchased and prepared themselves. It also represented a difficult change for some volunteers who were needed less for these basic services.

Quixote Village continues to receive financial support from churches, local Native American tribes, and individuals, and people still volunteer to bring services and programs to the Village, but Panza is trying to redirect volunteer efforts to other critical forms of support, such as education, job training, and health services. Social service agencies with specialization in these areas are taking on a greater role.

OPERATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Quixote Village is a community, not a social service agency. Residents live in their own rented space and are free to do what they wish during the day. Many work in the community garden or maintain their own small front gardens. Several have jobs and a few do day labor. Four are going to school, two have recently earned high school diplomas, and others spend time reconnecting with family. Some attend intensive outpatient addiction treatment programs and go to mental health peer support group meetings. The residents' only requirement as members of Quixote Village, in addition to paying rent, is to spend a portion of each week doing maintenance and cleaning chores assigned by the resident council.

To support residents, Panza staff members work hard to connect them with relevant programs, treatments, and services available in and around Olympia. Residents routinely take part in treatment programs, and an increasing number are taking advantage of educational programs.

The resident council and its elected executive committee meet regularly with the program manager to discuss issues. The executive committee interviews potential new, pre-screened candidates and provides input to staff members who make the final determination regarding admissions. More recently, several residents participated on the team that interviewed candidates to fill the resident advocate position. The resident advocate, Panza's second paid employee at Quixote Village, helps residents gain access to the variety of local, state, county, and federal services to which they are entitled, including health care, employment, and counseling.

At Quixote Village, there is also an emphasis on health and wellbeing. Volunteer nurses regularly visit the village and meet with residents. Yoga classes are offered as are exercise activities, such as group hikes. None are required, but many residents take part. Perhaps the most significant health benefits come from living in the community itself. Residents report greatly reduced stress levels as a result of being part of a community and knowing they will be spending the night in a safe and warm setting. They also comment on the vast improvement in their diet that comes from eating more fresh vegetables and cooking for themselves. In fact, residents have full control over the extensive vegetable garden and plan, purchase, and prepare their own meals.

Panza owns a van which is driven by staff and volunteers and used to take residents to programs, events, doctor and mental health appointments, and the food bank. Some residents have their own cars while others make use of bicycles and public transportation, which has recently become much more accessible thanks to the location of a bus stop only a block away.

There is no limit to how long a resident can stay at Quixote Village. This can be long-term housing if needed and desired. Some residents see it that way and have no plans to leave, although that could change as people build new lives and relationships. Those who plan to stay are, for the most part, older and/or more severely disabled. Others view this as a step towards independence and plan to leave after a year or so as they achieve more stability in their lives.

When a cottage at Quixote Village becomes vacant due to resident turnover, staff look to a waiting list of individuals that is maintained by a non-profit agency that acts as a county-wide, single point of entry for homeless programs for single adults. The slow process of filling empty cottages is frustrating to Panza, and improving the system through better coordination with county agencies is a near-term goal.

ADDITIONAL COMMUNITY PARTNERS

In addition to the faith-based institutions that formed the basis for Panza, Quixote Village also partnered with Community Frameworks as its developer, AmeriCorps volunteers who planted native plants in the storm water ponds, and the Eco-Building Guild for a design competition for the cottages. Catholic Community Services provided considerable logistical support and advice to Camp Quixote, and teams from a local technical school and the Evergreen State College are collaborating with Panza on the design and construction of additional outbuildings. Interns from a nursing program at St. Martin's College in Lacey provide regular wellness visits for residents. Additional and continuing financial support comes from the Nisqually, Snoqualmie, and Chehalis Tribes; the Boeing Employees' Community Fund; and several foundations, including Seattle's Medina Foundation and the Elizabeth A. Lynn Foundation. Panza also works closely with city, state, and county agencies to make sure that residents receive the services and benefits to which they are entitled.



Panza



Organized activities such as Halloween trick-or-treating and meals connect residents, families, volunteers, and the community.

The role of volunteers has changed since Quixote Village opened but is still important. During the years of Camp Quixote, volunteers provided critical resources, including meals and staffing the mandated 24-hour monitoring of the camp in three-hour shifts. In Quixote Village, residents are more able to get, grow, and cook their own food, and round-the-clock community staffing is no longer required. The focus now is on redirecting volunteer efforts to services that support residents’ growth, such as educational programs or job skills training. Volunteers who bring improved quality of life experiences are welcomed and regularly provide haircuts, art activities (for example, workshops in guitar, batiking, and creative writing), and exercise programs. Residents invite friends and supporters to meals and special events and open Quixote Village to children from nearby residential areas for Halloween festivities each year.

FINANCING

Development

Although raising all the funds necessary to create Quixote Village was no easy task, the list of sources that made it possible is short and straightforward. About 90% of all development funds came from government sources, most of it from state and county funds. The early appropriation from the State of Washington Housing Trust Fund of \$1,559,000 not only provided half of the total development costs in a single stroke, it also gave credibility to the project at a crucial time when Panza was seeking other funding sources and requesting adjustments of city codes.

Another 25% of funds came through Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) from the state (\$644,022) and the City of Olympia (\$55,000 designated specifically for the community building). Thurston County donated the land and granted an additional \$170,000 from the 2163 Fund, which comes from document recording fees and is specifically earmarked for homeless housing programs. Approximately \$300,000 came from cash

TABLE 1: DEVELOPMENT SOURCES AND USES

<i>Sources</i>		<i>Soft Costs</i>	
Washington State Housing Trust Fund	\$1,559,000	Architect	\$200,822
Washington State CDBG	\$644,022	Developer Fee	\$170,000
Thurston County (donated land)	\$333,000	Legal - Real Estate	\$36,000
Thurston County 2163 Fund	\$170,000	Davis Bacon Monitoring	\$10,500
Olympia CDBG (exclusively for the community building)	\$55,000	Environmental Assessment	\$4,990
Cash Donations (private sources)	\$215,082	Boundary and Topographic Survey	\$3,063
In-Kind Services	\$80,321	Geotechnical Study	\$1,335
Total	\$3,052,999	Capital Needs Assessment	\$1,300
<i>Uses</i>		Subtotal	\$428,010
<i>Acquisition</i>		<i>Permanent Financing</i>	
Land	\$333,000	State Housing Trust Fund Fees	\$31,000
Closing, Title, and Recording Costs	\$4,726	County Administration of CDBG Funds	\$3,000
Subtotal	\$337,726	Subtotal	\$34,000
<i>Construction</i>		<i>Capitalized Reserves</i>	
Community Building	\$665,500	Operating Reserves	\$50,000
Cottages	\$568,000	Replacement Reserves	\$100,000
Site Work/Infrastructure/General Conditions	\$419,267	Subtotal	\$150,000
Primary Electrical Service (through Puget Sound Energy)	\$30,540	<i>Other Development Costs</i>	
Off-Site Infrastructure	\$25,000	Permits, Fees, and Hookups	\$94,811
Material Testing and Other Miscellaneous Fees	\$4,157	Insurance	\$5,655
Furniture	\$2,165	Bidding Costs	\$1,798
Other Construction Costs	\$25,910	Development Period Utilities	\$1,030
Sales Tax	\$153,146	Subtotal	\$103,294
Construction Contingency	\$106,285	Total	\$3,052,999
Subtotal	\$1,999,970		

donations from private sources including community organizations, foundations, and individuals as well as in-kind contributions, including architect and real estate fees. Contributing organizations included the Nisqually and Chehalis Tribes and the Boeing Employee Community Fund.

Of the available funds for development, \$1,999,970 was used for hard construction costs and \$428,010 for soft costs, and \$150,000 was set aside for operating costs and replacement reserves. The per-unit cost for all development expenses was just over \$88,000.

Operating Expenses

Quixote Village’s total operating costs for 2015 were projected to be \$230,841. This sum does not include food, which is purchased by residents or donated, or significant levels of programming and social services which

are provided by state, city, or county agencies or nonprofit organizations. It does include salaries for two staff members—the program manager and resident advocate—as well as office and organizational operations (auditing and legal services, copying and office supplies, insurance, maintenance, utilities, etc.), and a set-aside fund for operating and replacement reserves.

Most of the revenue to cover these expenses comes from the Washington Housing Trust Fund (targeted to non-HUD supported units); grants administered by Thurston county; and a community investment partnership of the United Way, the county, and the three largest cities within the county (\$118,681). An additional \$88,580 comes from rental fees for the 30 cottages. About 10% of that rental income is paid by residents in rental fees that equal 30% of their income. The rest comes from HUD Section 8 payments which cover the difference between what the low-income tenants can pay and the full rental value of the unit. This income source is expected to increase as Quixote Village is using only a portion of the 25 project-based Section 8 vouchers it was granted by HUD.

TABLE 2: 2015 OPERATING BUDGET (PROJECTED)	
<i>Income</i>	
Grants and Contracts	\$118,681
Rent	\$88,580
Additional Donations	\$23,400
Subtotal	\$230,661
<i>Expenses</i>	
Payroll	\$108,317
Operations	\$79,839
Contract Services	\$26,685
Office Administration	\$2,500
Reserve	\$13,500
Subtotal	\$230,841

IMPACT

Quixote Village is an exemplary story of how a group of people on the lowest rung of the social ladder—people who were homeless—effected powerful change by taking control of their own lives with important support from local nonprofit organizations, primarily from the faith-based community. What started as a political protest against laws removing the homeless from downtown Olympia streets led to a traveling tent community and eventually a permanent home. Quixote Village made innovative use of a tiny house model for its 30 cottages, providing a low-cost, independent living model for housing formerly homeless people.

Quixote Village also shows that “bottom-up” efforts such as this need great persistence and perseverance to reach their goals. In this case, the tent community had to survive seven years in temporary encampments and learn to work with local government to create the permanent solution. Government support was needed to procure the site and development funds and to devise ways to help make this model, which didn’t fit previous rules and codes for supportive housing, work. The long process brought volunteers into contact with Quixote residents who helped change perceptions of homelessness.

Empowerment of Homeless People

The most essential theme that runs through the story of Quixote Village is the empowerment of the homeless population of Olympia. In particular, this effort helped empower the group that was committed to the tent encampment protest, lived for years in Camp Quixote, and eventually moved into Quixote Village. The village demonstrates that even those with the least power and control in our society can organize to effect changes in their own situation as well as in broader policy—and control their own lives through self-government of an intentional community.

The original tent city and the extended Camp Quixote brought together people who, by nature of their circumstances, had lived alone or in small groups and in transient situations—essentially community-less. In this created community, they had domiciles (even if they had tarps for walls), a relatively stable home (even if it moved every three or six months), and an ongoing community of fellow residents, connected organizers, and volunteers. In working through committees, attending a great many meetings, and voting over decisions such as who could come into the community and who had to leave, residents took control of their lives and their community. It was, by all accounts, a process that changed perspectives and lives.

Innovative Approach to Housing First through Tiny Houses

This project provides a model of addressing homelessness through permanent supportive housing. It differs from “housing first” models in its requirement that residents pledge to become and remain “clean and sober” and in its emphasis on helping residents gain access to community-based services to help them improve their health and quality of life. Many housing first programs do not provide these kinds of services or require such behavioral changes and commitments on the assumption that having a decent and stable place to live is a necessary precondition to other life changes. At Quixote Village, housing and services are seen as interdependent.

Many residents at Quixote Village have taken advantage of the stability and relative ease of their daily routine, free of the controlling concern for subsistence and shelter, to address their personal problems in terms of relationships with family, education and training, employment, medical attention, and therapy so they can, among other things, uphold their commitment to sobriety. Residents commented that their lives were “more



The design of Quixote Village fosters both independence and cooperation.

cohesive, more functional, and stronger” now. One said that having basic needs for housing met “allows my brain to have space for things that will make my life better. In an apartment I would isolate myself. I feel supported to recover here.”

Quixote Village has also helped some residents reestablish family bonds. Several have visitation rights with their children that hadn’t been exercised in years. Children can’t live at Quixote Village but can come and stay over weekends, and several residents have taken advantage of this opportunity to spend time with their children or grandchildren.

One Panza member noted that for this community, where people often have problems with substance abuse or mental illness, housing cannot be the only response. The current focus is on making connections to a variety of education, employment, counseling, and health care programs to provide support for residents. Quixote Village represents an impressive, creative, and cost-effective approach to a serious urban problem that exists in all US cities.

One interesting note is the inclusion of toilets in the Quixote Village cottages. The initial designs excluded toilets in an attempt to save money and as a nod to the years of life in the tent camp. It turned out, though, that not having toilets in the cottages was itself an obstacle for regulators and funders. Once they moved into Quixote Village, residents acknowledged that having a half-bath in the cottage indeed had a significant impact on their lives. Not only did it allow them to avoid outdoor trips during unpleasant weather, but it also added to their sense of control and privacy, helping them to be more comfortable venturing out to interact with the group.

Quixote Village is looked upon as a model by many in this region and elsewhere because of its level of self-government by the residents and its use of tiny cottages. The tiny house movement has drawn increasing



Quixote Village has attracted considerable local and national press.

interest as an approach to affordability and sustainability. Panza has had dozens of inquiries and visits from interested parties from around the country and has been told that local adaptations of the model are being implemented in Eugene, Oregon, and Austin, Texas, and at least three cities in Western Washington are seriously considering following suit. The founders of Occupy Madison’s tiny home development consider Quixote Village an inspiration.

At this time, Panza has no plans for another project of this type; the organization’s hands are full trying to run and maximize the potential of Quixote Village. This project drew heavily on the volunteer community which, at the moment, is somewhat exhausted from the effort. City and county officials indicated that codes are in place and resources could be

available for another project, but that the effort would have to originate from the community.

Collaboration among Faith-Based, Nonprofit, and Government Sectors

The process that created and sustained first Camp Quixote and finally Quixote Village was largely driven by not-for-profit and faith-based volunteer organizations. The organizational efforts started by Bread and Roses and then the Poor People's Union were impressive in their foresight, their self-governance model, and their impact.

Government staff, officials, and agencies also played a role in this story, albeit a secondary one. At first, government was seen as part of the problem, an obstacle to be overcome. The one Camp Quixote supporter in the city council was able to provide some support, but only surreptitiously. Later, as politics and perceptions changed, crucial support was provided by the government in the form of money, land, code changes, and policies. Groups trying to create similar communities in other places, such as Occupy Madison in Wisconsin, were envious of having a county that provided land, a state government that allocated significant funds, and a city council that worked to modify zoning restrictions to make this community possible.

One of the most impressive parts of the Quixote Village story is the strength of the faith-based community, which maintained a high level of support and involvement over such an extended period of time. For seven years, formerly homeless individuals were able to maintain a cohesive community, in spite of living in tents and making frequent moves. Over that time, Panza needed to provide considerable material and emotional support and keep the camp staffed by volunteers 24 hours a day in three-hour shifts—amounting to over 20,000 volunteer shifts over the seven-year period. In addition, Panza was charged with finding the land, resources, and expertise to create the final permanent camp, and many of those resources



Quixote Village involved collaboration and support from faith-based organizations, government, and volunteers.

and experts came from the volunteer groups. The striking thing is not that some volunteer sources were exhausted by the time the residents moved into their permanent home, but that volunteers were able to keep up the effort so well and for so long.

Changing Stereotypes of Homelessness

An important aspect of Quixote Village was its impact on ordinary citizens, particularly those affiliated with the participating faith-based institutions. The 24-hour volunteer shifts required by the city ordinance promoted contact between volunteers and Camp Quixote residents. There are many stories of people who became involved in the camp through their religious affiliation and, in so doing, had their first direct social contact with people from the homeless community. Volunteers talked about being nervous and fearful when going into the camp for the first time and of



Residents can cook and share meals together in the community building kitchen.

establishing relationships that changed their understanding of the people and the problem. Congregants hired residents to do odd jobs, and residents attended church services and programs. Some have maintained contacts and friendships for many years.

Changing Realities of Power and Control in a Permanent Community

If an important part of this story is empowerment of the homeless community through self-government, then a coda is how that governing situation changed in response to the realities of creating a permanent community. In developing Quixote Village, a legal entity was needed to take on the role of fundraiser, owner, landlord, and signatory on legal documents such as grants and deeds. That role fell to Panza, and one consequence was a significant shift in power and control from the residents to Panza. While residents maintained a certain level of involvement, they

shifted from self-governance to a primarily advisory role. This was a difficult change for some in Panza who were politically and emotionally committed to an ideology of resident self-control.

It was also a difficult change for some of the early residents, who found the new restrictions and adjustments to the new governing structure sufficient reason to leave the village. For example, residents could no longer meet on their own to determine evictions—such action would run afoul of tenancy and fair housing laws. Moreover, in the first months, some leaders on the resident council appeared to take unfair advantage of their position, leading to resentment disputes within the community. Concern over loss of some aspects of governance was intermixed with the new and stricter standards of behavior with respect to substance use, and this had much to do with the significant early turnover of residents.

Despite these challenges, most residents in early 2015 seemed happy with the arrangement and distribution of control and are proud of their continuing level of involvement in operations. For example, residents were an active part of the search for a new resident advocate in spring 2015. Three residents were on the committee that interviewed candidates, and the whole community met candidates at Quixote Village breakfast meetings.

Anecdotally, lives seem to be changing for the better at Quixote Village, although at this early stage, there are no formal data to support such an assertion. This improvement is likely aided by the fact that residents who remain are more committed to a clean and sober lifestyle and better able to carry through with such a commitment. Residents have access to a number of health-related programs which have the potential to improve their well-being. First and foremost, the stability of having housing and a supportive community reduces life stress. Food from the village garden and meals cooked in the well-equipped community kitchen provide an

important change in nutrition from living on the street. In addition, Quixote residents get regular visits from volunteer medical professionals. Volunteer-led programs also provide wellness activities such as yoga and nature walks.

Future Challenges

Quixote Village came into being because of dedication, perseverance, and innovative thinking—but not with an overabundance of funds. One of the challenges of the future will be in finding ways to maintain a balanced operating budget while maintaining or increasing programmatic support. There is some potential to increase the number of residents receiving Section 8 voucher support for their rent.

Surviving seven years of a wandering tent camp, followed by the heavy lift of developing, building, and opening the permanent village, took its toll on the Panza board of trustees, which, by some accounts, is suffering from burnout. An important step in the future will be to build new board capacity and operate Quixote Village in a way that does not drain board time and energy, allowing it to focus on policy and fundraising.

For some in Panza, the hardest part of opening Quixote Village was reducing the level of control the homeless residents exerted on day-to-day decisions. While this was a necessary change to accommodate the realities of owning a permanent site, some hope that they will find a way to reassert more resident control.

Social service organizations and government agencies in this region seem very positive about Quixote Village and its impact on the people living there. Quixote Village is a significant part of the broader response to homelessness in the community, as has been acknowledged by other service organizations in the area, including Catholic Community Services, Inter-faith Works, and Homes First, and by the local governmental consortium that coordinates their services and funding resources. Everyone recognizes

that it only addresses the problems of a specific segment of the homeless community, including individuals willing to live in the setting, engage in its self-governing process, and commit to its rules. Different solutions are needed for other segments of the homeless community, including families and others unable to make the commitment necessary to live in Quixote Village.

ASSESSING IMPACT IN RESPECT TO PROJECT GOALS

Quixote Village succeeded in creating permanent housing that provides security, safety, and dignity for its occupants. In so doing, it became a new option in the broader city and county homeless system and, through its innovative plan, has become a model for others seeking sustainable and affordable responses to homelessness, both locally and nationally. The model was a physical one—the use of tiny homes for permanent housing—but also an approach to empowerment through self-government by the formerly homeless occupants. It is a cost-efficient approach that leverages the social services available in the city and county as well as the efforts of volunteers, to a large degree from the local faith-based community.

GOAL: Provide basic housing for chronically homeless adults—a population that is “often traumatized, disabled, and burdened by deficits,” but resilient.

Quixote Village has successfully provided housing for a specific segment of the homeless population. While 30 units is small scale, even for a city the size of Olympia, its unique approach to creating low-cost housing in a community setting serves as a model for other communities in the US and elsewhere.

GOAL: Overcome community opposition and keep the tent camp alive.

Community opposition to the original tent camp was overcome surprisingly quickly, largely because of the effect of constant and casual contact between residents and volunteers and the way the camps came to be seen

as beneficial to each temporary encampment site. Opposition to Quixote Village from industrial neighbors was only overcome by winning court challenges. Some of these neighbors have become helpful (donating furniture, for example) but are still skeptical about the long-term impact on their businesses.

GOAL: Support a community characterized by self-government by residents.

Self-government has been an important aspect of this project from its first day of planning and operation more than eight years ago. The scope and nature of self-government changed as the community moved into Quixote Village because of the realities of ownership and tenancy, which have forced Panza to assert greater control. Even so, within these new limits, residents have a significant impact on rules, hires, acceptance of new tenants, and day-to-day issues and operations.

GOAL: Provide a low-cost housing solution with a small carbon footprint.

Quixote Village has been widely recognized as a viable, sustainable model for housing people who are homeless. Units in Quixote Village cost about half of typical units in other homeless housing projects. While those savings were achieved by building tiny cottages with limited facilities, living in Quixote Village is by no means a bare-bones existence. The mix of privacy and social interaction and the facilities available on the grounds and in the community building provide a rich, varied, and home-like setting. Quixote Village was recently given the Phoenix Award from Behavioral Health Resources Foundation to “celebrate those who have risen from the ashes of mental illness and addiction along with those who have helped them do so.” It is too soon to know how many places will build homeless communities based on tiny homes and self-governance, but Quixote Village has also been visited and lauded by a number of homeless housing advocates, especially since a 2014 story about the village in the *New York Times*. Other places looking for ways to offer sustainable housing for their



Residents manage the community garden and share the harvest.

homeless populations, including one in Madison, Wisconsin, cite Quixote Village as their inspiration.

GOAL: Offer housing that balances the need for privacy with design that supports and promotes social interaction and helps maintain a sense of community and common purpose.

Quixote Village provides a thoughtful mix of facilities that gives residents the ability to be alone in their individually-owned space or to connect with others from their front porch, in the community building, or on village grounds. These qualities are particularly important for this community of residents, people who have spent significant parts of their lives outside mainstream living and who may have disabilities that make social connections anxiety provoking or difficult. This design gives them a range of choices that have helped spur the strong community feeling that most residents seem to have.

SELECTION COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

Like the other 2015 winners, Quixote Village addresses a critical urban issue: in this case, homelessness. The project captured the Selection Committee's attention as a fascinating story that tapped into the tiny house movement to create an innovative design solution. The committee applauded Quixote Village as a response to a big, national issue that grew out of the local community and volunteers. It is an entirely grass roots, nonprofit venture that did not rely on big institutions and funding. The process and resulting project educated people in a very personal way, changing perceptions and increasing understanding of the homeless as individuals. It builds human capacity by creating a community that fosters physical and psychological autonomy for residents.

The committee commended the project for its approach to design, including the adaptation of the tiny house model. They noted its success in creating a balance of community and privacy for residents, particularly in serving a specific demographic part of the homeless community. The arrangement of the buildings around a central green space contributes to the sense of community with the community center providing the social hub and nucleus. The committee observed that the project illustrates the importance of creating layers of spaces that provide transitions between private and public areas and offer residents a choice of environments—such as the privacy of a cottage interior, the semi-privacy of the front porch and "door garden," and the more public communal green space and community building.

Although they were excited about the project and the potential for replication, committee members had some reservations. They acknowledged that some of the aspects of the project that make it so successful—such as the adaptation of the tiny house model—could make the project difficult to replicate in other places, particularly in denser urban areas. The com-



Community building entrance.

Tim Ransom

“QUIXOTE VILLAGE BUILDS HUMAN CAPITAL BY CREATING A COMMUNITY THAT FOSTERS PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL AUTONOMY FOR RESIDENTS.”

mittee observed that its location puts people already living on the margins on the margin of the city; it is an island within an industrial park. They also suggested that the building and site designs might have been a bit more inspired and questioned the long-term durability of the building materials. The committee suggested there may be potential for partnerships with organizations like Habitat for Humanity and AmeriCorps that utilize volunteers to support grass roots community-building efforts.



Residents beautify the community with individual “door gardens.”

RELATED RBA WINNERS

As a way of addressing a particular segment of the homeless population, Quixote Village is a unique site and solution, but the issue itself is anything but new. Homelessness is, sadly, a common problem in large and small urban centers across the US, and there have been many thoughtful attempts to address this issue, including other RBA winners.



THE BRIDGE (2011 Gold Medalist), for instance, was built as an important part of Dallas’ response to chronic homelessness. While it addresses housing needs for a similar population, it differs from Quixote Village in its scale, its focus on emergency and transitional shelter, and its attempts to serve as a central point for social services for the local homeless population.



THE ST. JOSEPH REBUILD CENTER (2009 Silver Medalist) in New Orleans is a day center for homeless people. It serves the chronically homeless, people made homeless by Hurricane Katrina, and immigrants with housing problems. It does not provide housing per se but offers services to those without it, including meals, laundry, health care, and social services access.



THE TIMES SQUARE (1997 Gold Medalist) in New York City is, in some ways, the opposite of the Quixote Village “deconstructed SRO” model. An example of a high-rise SRO in an elegantly rehabilitated landmarked building in the center of Manhattan, it was created to house the formerly homeless, mentally ill, elderly, and persons with AIDS.

Many other RBA winners have addressed related issues, including low-income housing (2013 Silver Medalist Via Verde in Bronx, NY; 1997 Silver Medalist Hismen Hin-Nu Terrace in Oakland, CA; 1993 Silver Medalists New Community Corporation in Newark and Harbor Point in Boston; and 1989 Silver Medalist Tenant Interim Leasing Program in New York City) and tiny houses (1997 Silver Medalist Project Row Houses in Houston).

More information about these and other RBA winners can be found at www.rudybruneraward.org.

Resources

This case study was compiled from information gathered from the project application, an extensive site visit in April 2015, discussions with the RBA Selection Committee, and research and interviews conducted during these processes and throughout the writing and editing of this book. Titles and positions of interviewees and URLs listed below were effective as of the site visit unless otherwise noted.

INTERVIEWS

Panza Board and Staff:

Tim Ransom, Board President
Jill Severn, former Board President
Raul Salazar, Program Manager
Alicia Crumpton, Resident Advocate
Rev. Arthur Vaeni, former Minister, Olympia Unitarian Universalist Church*
Miriam Lorch, Board Member

Volunteers and Supporters from the Faith-Based Community:

Steve Pederson
Jerry Smith
Linda Crabtree
Ralph Blankenship
Kathy Driesbach, Westwood Baptist Church
Howard Ullery, Pastor, Lacey Community Church

Quixote Village Residents:

Mike Bell
Scott Benz
Lisa Blazer
Richard Bolton
Jon Waddey
Sharon Wilson

Consultants:

Ginger Segel, Community Frameworks
Garner Miller, MSGS Architects
Andrew Christiansen, Construct Inc.
Rob Richards, Bread and Roses, Poor People's Union*
Amy Head, SCJ Alliance*

Government Officials:

Mark Foutch, former Mayor, City of Olympia
Steve Hall, City Manager, City of Olympia
Steve Friddle, Principal Planner, City of Olympia
Leonard Bauer, Deputy Director, City of Olympia Community Planning and Development Department
Pete Kmet, Mayor, Tumwater City
Neal McClanahan, Tumwater City Councilman
Theresa Slusher, Thurston County Homeless Coordinator
Karen Valenzuela, former Tumwater Councilperson, former County Commissioner
Cathy Wolfe, Thurston County Commissioner
Denny Heck, State Representative, Tenth Congressional District

**Interviews conducted by phone*

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View from community building towards cottages and retention ponds.

