



## Reedway Safe Rest Village Community Questions Answered (Oct. 22)

Community members from the area surrounding the [Reedway Safe Rest Village](#) have asked a range of questions. As many similar questions have been asked (and answered directly to those who have asked) over the last year, we have consolidated, organized, and updated responses to these questions for sharing.

### Safe Rest Village Program Questions:

There were many questions in this topic area, surrounding the program budget, compliance with the federal grant that funds this project, the program model, and other related questions.

#### *Program Budget:*

The Safe Rest Village Initiative is a three-year, federally funded program aimed at addressing the needs of those experiencing homelessness, as an interim to help them move from unsheltered life to housing. The program is funded to establish and run six new alternative shelters with 24/7 on-site staffing, services, and basic amenities. The funding was allocated in two parts. The first tranche of \$16.02M was allocated in July 2021, followed by a larger tranche of \$28.1M in June 2022. The [Safe Rest Village program budget](#) webpage discusses this in greater detail.

#### *Spending federal dollars in compliance with federal rules:*

The Safe Rest Village program is one of several programs that the City of Portland is using federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) grant funds to achieve. You can check out [the City's ARPA program webpage](#) for further details. Using federal dollars comes with federal spending and contracting guidelines and reporting requirements, all of which supersede local Portland guidelines. Fortunately, they are both aimed at fiscal responsibility, equitable and competitive contracting, and supporting projects with impact. The SRV team has worked with our partners in the City's Procurement Office and our team's Grant Analyst to ensure we are compliant with all federal and city rules.

#### *Vendors:*

All vendors providing services or supplies to the Safe Rest Village program are selected through competitive bidding processes, following federal and city procurement rules. Vendors range from graphic artists and photographers to those producing the sleeping units, and shared services structures for restrooms/laundry/showers. Contracting rules vary depending on the size of the anticipated contract. Where possible, our team specifically looks to the Oregon State [Certification Office for Business Inclusion and Diversity \(COBID\)](#) from which to recruit contractors.

Given supply chain concerns, which have impacted sleeping unit production for units

being deployed currently to Menlo Park, the decision about which vendor will provide sleeping units for Reedway has not been made yet.

*Success Rate of this model of service:*

The [Joint Office of Homeless Services](#), funded jointly by the City of Portland and Multnomah County, oversees a range of programs and services for those experiencing houselessness. There are many models of service, from congregate shelter and motel shelters to sites that offer day programs and services, with no overnight sheltering. There are also alternative outdoor shelters, which is the category in which the Safe Rest Villages fit. [Portland State University \(PSU\)](#) recently did a study of this shelter model, though it was done before our first Safe Rest Village opened. It includes a good deal of information on these types of programs, some managed and with services, others self-managed. Each have a role to play in the system, given each person's needs are different as they move from life unsheltered to housing. [PSU's Homelessness Research & Action Collaborative \(HRAC\) report](#) examined the effectiveness of this style of shelter, as well assessing community concerns before and after villages opened.

At the time of this writing (October 2022) we are finishing the first quarter of service with our Multnomah Safe Rest Village. Soon we will be publishing the results on program outcomes, as part of the ARPA reporting requirements. Meanwhile, the City's ARPA webpage has reporting on some aspects of our program and spending, available now on the City of Portland's [Rescue Plan Open Data](#) page.

*Outreach Efforts:*

Several questions centered about program staff outreach to the community as well as those in need. The Safe Rest Village team has been working with community groups representing the surrounding area since the site was announced in February 2022. Groups involved in outreach include, alphabetically, the Lents Grown Business Association, Lents Neighborhood Association, Lents Neighborhood Livability Association, Lents Strong! Housing Team, PDX Saints Love, and Sisters of the Road.

While there has been considerable news coverage about the Safe Rest Village program, we recognize that not all neighbors have heard about our project. Our outreach efforts will continue as we get closer to site development. Additionally, once the shelter operator is selected and has started, they will be able to address many of the community questions that center around site operations.

## **Referral Process Questions**

A range of questions expressed concerns about the limited options to serve those in need, while others asked about how people get referred to services in general – and into the Safe Rest Village, specifically.

The City of Portland and Multnomah County, through the [Joint Office of Homeless Services](#), the [Portland Housing Bureau](#), and the [Safe Rest Village program](#) among others, collectively offer a variety of programs, services and shelters to support those who are experiencing houselessness or who are at risk of houselessness. The Safe Rest Village program is just one of a menu of options available – though we are all aware that the need is greater than what is currently available. Each person's needs are unique, so meeting their needs requires this variety of options, and is why people are

referred to [211 to connect to services](#) (by calling 211 or on the web). Their process includes understanding a person's individual situation and matching that to the program, service, or shelter that best meets their needs. Sometimes there is not availability, but still the 211 service is able to provide the most complete set of options to people in need.

There is no self-referral to a Safe Rest Village. We ask that everyone respect this process and, in general, refer everyone to 211 for services. Specific outreach workers will make referrals to the Safe Rest Villages, including Reedway Safe Rest Village.

## **Site Development Questions**

There were several questions that asked about the use of this specific site. Some centered around concerns regarding the proximity to the natural area, flood plain, and past soil contamination, as well as community safety. Some questions specifically were asked of our partners at the Bureau of Environmental Services, who authored the recent soil testing report, to understand the results and clarify the level of concern / response.

### *Why this location:*

The goal of the Safe Rest Village program is to meet people where they are – both geographically, and on their path from living unsheltered to housing.

Geographic equity is one of the program principles to ensure that those in need throughout the City of Portland have access to a village near the community they consider home, where they have jobs, connections, and services on which they rely. The selection of SE Reedway as one of the Safe Rest Village sites was to provide such a village in SE Portland, where there is such need.

As many of the questions asked of the team pointed out, this part of town already has many people experiencing houselessness, including this site itself and within the adjacent Beggars Tick Natural Area. Camping in the natural area has significant impacts on the habitat qualities of the site, damages restoration efforts, and is frankly risky for those living unsheltered due to potential flood concerns. Program participants inside the Safe Rest Village will have protections from those risks, and the project team has already discussed with [Portland Parks & Recreation](#) (which manages the nearby Beggars Tick Natural Area) the future partnerships and stewardship opportunities between them and those in the Village.

### *Flood plain concerns*

To be very clear, the portion of the Bureau of Environmental Services property on which the Village is being sited is outside the flood risk area intentionally. It will not be paved, but rather graveled, both because the use as a Safe Rest Village is temporary, and to allow for better drainage, and minimize flood risks for all. Our team's architects have been working with the property owners to ensure that the project will not detrimentally impact plans for the site or cause negative environmental impacts.

### *Health concerns about the site:*

Among health concerns raised about use of this site people brought up historic soil contamination, questions about possible carcinogens, as well as possible environmental impacts by use of this space.

This property was previously zoned industrial, until it was purchased by the Bureau of Environmental Services. While it is adjacent to the significant Beggars Tick Natural Area, the portion of the property on which the Safe Rest Village will be located sits on the portion that previously was zoned industrial. Industrial use can imply historic uses that may be harmful to humans. The city is following the direction of the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality to ensure that all precautions and site preparations are made for use as a temporary village.

Specifically, there was some history of illegal soil dumping on this site.

- More than 5 years ago there was a case of small illegally dumped piles of soil with contaminants. Those piles were tested and removed in 2016.
- Later, in August 2020 some soil strippings from a nearby floodplain restoration project were removed from the site. The site was graded and capped with clean soil with appropriate approvals from Oregon Department of Environmental Quality.

Both past concerns were addressed and resolved to the satisfaction of Oregon Department of Environmental Quality.

With the Reedway Safe Rest Village planned for this site, the Safe Rest Village team requested a new soil sampling and analysis, to ensure that all past concerns were mitigated and get direction on how to move forward in a safe way if there were any concerns. The [shorter 5-page results of that soil sampling and analysis](#), as well as the longer full report are both available on the [Reedway SRV webpage](#).

In a summary of this soil sampling work recently the Bureau of Environmental Services stated that:

*“Environmental Services took soil samples at the Reedway Safe Rest Village site and analyzed them for various contaminants of potential concern (arsenic, barium, cadmium, chromium, copper, lead, mercury, nickel, selenium, silver, zinc), semivolatile organic compounds (SVOCs), and Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) using appropriate analytical methods.*

*Contaminants were detected in some soil samples at concentrations typically found in an urban environment. The soil in areas where contaminant concentrations are in excess of applicable screening values (i.e., for human occupancy) will be removed or capped, thus eliminating exposure pathways.*

*Soil at the Safe Rest Village site will be appropriately managed during site development. This will be accomplished through a Contaminated Media Management Plan.”*

Some have asked specific follow up questions of the author of that Bureau of Environmental Services report. Those questions and their responses are below:

1. Q. Why wasn't testing done for total petroleum hydrocarbons (TPH) in 2022?

- A. Prior samples were analyzed for TPH and it was determined not to be a contaminant of concern for the site. Analyzing for TPH would just lead to a follow up analysis of PAHs or SVOCs to determine risk.
2. Q. Recent sampling for PAHs and SVOCs (often byproducts of TPH) only went down to 3 feet and then hit a cobble layer. If SVOCs are present (which the report indicates they are), they have the potential to volatilize through the soil and loose rock. The City should be testing below the cobble layer because the volatilization of those contaminants, especially benzopyrene, are really problematic for health.
- A. Benzo(a) pyrene is considered a “nonvolatile” chemical for purposes of the exposure calculations. A chemical is defined as nonvolatile if the Henry’s law constant is less than  $1 \times 10^{-5}$  atm/m<sup>3</sup>-mole and vapor pressure less than one mm mercury.
3. Q. Were there any water table assessments?
- A. Yes, there was a groundwater investigation prior to purchase and there were not any detections above applicable screening values.
4. Q. Where are the three wells located, previously mentioned in stakeholder meetings?
- A. The wells were abandoned. There are no longer any wells on site.

To wrap up the environmental concerns, the Safe Rest Village team will work with the Bureau of Environmental Services’ Coordinated Site Assessment Program, our contractors, and the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality to follow the recommendations laid out in the above listed report and will obtain the appropriate permits prior to construction to ensure the safety and success of the Safe Rest Village at this location.

### *Impacts on the community*

Regarding use of the site as an impact on the community, providing a safe, fenced shelter with 24/7 staffing, on-site case managers, visiting mental and behavioral health practitioners and other amenities will be very different than what people see today – unrestricted and unsupported camping. The services and amenities planned for all the Safe Rest Villages will provide participants the safety from the trauma of life on the street, support to address their personal issues, and encouragement to move to whatever is next in their lives – be that housing, reconnecting with family, rehab, or something else.

All Safe Rest Villages have a 150-foot camping ban surrounding them, to be managed by the City’s [Impact Reduction Program](#). All community members can report camping concerns to the city in one of two ways. To report concerns about a campsite:

1. visit [PDX reporter](#) or
2. call the City’s Information and Referral team at 311

Once a shelter operator for this site is in place, they will be able to speak to many of the questions that relate to their role, how to address concerns related to the village operations, and to become part of the community.

A Good Neighbor Agreement will include the neighborhood association, the Impact Reduction Program, the Safe Rest Village team, and the shelter operator, among others, to make sure roles are clear, lines of communication are defined, and problem-solving protocols are in place to move forward together. Creating this Good Neighbor Agreement will kickstart when the shelter operator – as a critical partner in this – is on board and ready.

## **Site Management Questions**

The last category of questions are about how the village will be operated and how to address possible concerns as they arise. Some of these questions will be best answered by the shelter operator, once they are on board. The [Safe Rest Village Program website](#) also addresses many of these questions. Below is a recap of some of that information.

### *Safety concerns*

As with all communities in which a new Safe Rest Village will be located, people are keen to understand how they will operate, and how safety concerns will be addressed. This is influenced by what is witnessed daily all over Portland, with so many people with unmet mental health needs, possible addictions, and other concerns. They also reflect lived experience as victims of property damage or other crimes. Safety for those in and around the Village is a priority for all in the Safe Rest Village team and will be a priority for whichever shelter operator takes on management of this site

Many people living unsheltered have the same concerns for their own safety as housed neighbors.

Safe Rest Villages will be a respite from those conditions, for those currently living unsheltered, and provide them with support, on-site case management, access to basic needs, and mental and behavioral health services – all things that will help alleviate trauma, and help people navigate to what may be next in their lives.

All Safe Rest Villages will be staffed 24/7 by a qualified shelter operator, contracted by the Joint Office of Homeless Services. They will be fenced, for both privacy and safety of all. Typically, only participants and Village staff will be allowed in the village.

No one will be forced to live in the Villages. People will be choosing to live in the Villages, as a safe and stable place to start over off the streets.

### *Low barrier and village behavior*

Low barrier as it relates to the Safe Rest Village program means that people can move into the villages if they are an adult and are homeless. No one will be forced to live in them – but neither can everyone stay if they behave inappropriately.

Like all shelters, the Reedway Safe Rest Village will have a Code of Conduct, an agreement to live in a shared space, follow rules of the program, including being good

neighbors to those surrounding the village. Non-compliance will be addressed directly by the shelter operators.

### *Program offerings*

Each shelter operator will have their own approach within the parameters set by the Safe Rest Village Program. However, here are the general similarities across all programs:

- All villages will have on-site staff 24/7, case managers who will know each program participant, determine their needs, and help them address them.
- Per code, all villages will have a privacy fence around them, as well as for the privacy and stability that the Villages are intended to create for the villagers and those in the neighborhood. Typically, this will be a 7-foot wooden fence.
- All villages will have regular garbage and recycling services at all the Villages.
- All villages will be connected to sewer and water.
- Meals will be provided at least once per day, and the village will have a kitchenette for program participants to make their own meals.
- All villages will provide flushing toilets, shower, and laundry facilities.
- Crime that occurs within the village will be dealt with like any other crime. Laws apply inside the fence just as they do outside. Shelter operators will call the police as needed and follow up accordingly.