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# IT TAKES A VILLAGE

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Analysis of Pallet House Shelters as a Solution to Reducing Homelessness



A pallet house camp is shown in Lower Sackville, N.S., on Wednesday, March 13, 2024. (Kelly Clark/The Canadian Press)

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## Introduction

Nova Scotia has a housing crisis. Over the last few years availability for living spaces such as apartments has dwindled and at the same time the number of people identified as homeless has increased significantly (Seguin, 2023). Homelessness can mean many things and looks different from person to person, but the core result is uncertainty and instability in someone's life which makes it difficult for them to succeed in our society. Being homeless can lead to both physical and mental health issues, or exasperate existing conditions; it can make it harder to find and maintain a job due to the lack of a stable address and access to amenities; and overall the effects can compound and feed into each other to make it much more difficult for someone experiencing homelessness to get back on their feet (Homeless Link, 2024). As this problem continues to get worse in Nova Scotia there is a need for an innovative solution to housing availability that does not rely on massive apartment developments and market movements, given Nova Scotia's population size.

One solution to help address critical/chronic cases of homelessness is the development of what are known as "pallet communities" or homes. These communities are built with small, 70-square-foot, single-room dwellings that provide a place to sleep with separate facilities for washrooms and laundry (Tutton, 2024). The dwellings are small enough to fit many of them in a small space such as a repurposed parking lot and are easy to transport from their point of construction, hence the reference to pallets. As of 2024, in Nova Scotia the provincial government has already purchased 200 of these shelters for \$7.5 million from the aptly-named Pallet company, and placed 19 of them so far; this represents \$630,000 of the total purchase amount and includes the cost of the washroom and laundry facilities (Tutton, 2024).

In the coming sections, this paper will provide a background on the issues facing Nova Scotians regarding housing, homelessness, and the development of pallet homes. As well, the infrastructure and operational requirements for these communities will be presented and analysed to help understand the challenges facing these communities and the effectiveness of these communities as a solution to homelessness. Some existing pallet communities will function as case studies for exploring the challenges and comparing their implementations to determine the critical success factors that can help in the further development of such communities in the future. Furthermore, the potential impact of these shelter communities will be speculated on based on the given information.

## Background

### Homelessness in Atlantic Canada

In 2021 around 10.5% of survey respondents in Canada reported some form of homelessness or housing insecurity at some point in their life and there were at least 9275 people actively living in shelters across Canada (Dionne, Laporte, Loeppky, & Miller, 2023). Of those people, 225 were in Atlantic Canada, meaning only 0.13% of people experiencing some form of homelessness in Atlantic Canada were living in a shelter<sup>1</sup>. The biggest factor affecting this number is the lack of access to shelters due to the large number of people experiencing homelessness and the limited availability of facilities, with Nova Scotia only having 11 shelters as of 2019 (Kalajdzieva, 2022). While certainly over-referenced, Maslow's hierarchy of needs remains true and the fact is that until people's basic physiological needs are met through food, water, and shelter they cannot be expected to pursue self-actualization<sup>2</sup>. There is a clear need for solutions to address the homelessness epidemic in Nova Scotia, let alone the entire country. The current strategies for addressing homelessness have included additional funding to help secure access to existing housing for low-income households (Infrastructure Canada, 2023), funding more organizations who work with homeless people to address root causes such as mental health issues or addiction, and funding to build more affordable housing to help stabilize rising prices (Cox, 2021). However, while all these strategies may be effective eventually, they are long-term plans that fail to provide immediate relief to those persons who are currently homeless.

### Evolution of Tiny Homes

Since the 1970s there has been a growing movement away from gratuity and eccentrics in housing with many people instead opting for quaint and minimalist accommodations (Simon, 2024). Over time this desire for minimalist living has led to a growing industry of "tiny homes" which are often single room constructions that only contain the bare necessities for modern life, as well as sometimes being made with environmentalist goals through the use of green-technology and recycled materials (Simon, 2024). Despite the apparent desire to be less extravagant than the luxury homes of the ultra-rich or be more practical than the "McMansions" of middle-class America, these tiny homes in recent years have still been heavily associated with the upper class living due to the land requirements (Alter, 2018), technology requirements, legal barriers, and the amenities requirements, all things that lead to added financial and time costs on top of the \$60,000 USD price tag (Simon, 2024) just to build the base home, which you might not be able to get a loan for due to a lack of resale value, in the eyes of big banks (Alter, 2018). However, all that said, the tiny home movement has continued to grow across a wide range of socioeconomic

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<sup>1</sup> As of 2021, 2.4 million people live in Atlantic Canada ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atlantic\\_Canada](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atlantic_Canada)) and 7.3% of Atlantic Canadians reported some level of homelessness (Dionne, Laporte, Loeppky, & Miller, 2023).

<sup>2</sup> Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs: <https://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html>

groups, especially due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and set the groundwork for the development of pallet homes for the homeless (Chang, 2021).

## Introduction of Pallet Shelters

At the forefront of the pallet home movement in regards to homelessness is the aptly named Pallet Shelters company which was founded in 2016 in Washington, USA with the original intent of building emergency shelters for natural disaster relief (Chang, 2021), and their first shelter “village” being constructed soon after in 2017 (Pallet, PBC, 2023). By 2020 the company had begun targeting municipalities with critical needs for housing to address their homelessness issues, with over 1500 beds constructed across the USA that year (Chang, 2021). Due to the company’s original intent of these shelters being used in rapid deployments to disaster relief zones, the designs of these shelters are meant to be quickly constructed by teams either on location, or easily transported to the required location, using lightweight robust materials such as aluminum and fibreglass-reinforced plastic composites (Chang, 2021). As well, unlike their tiny home predecessors, these shelters are not intended to be permanent homes for people and thus don’t require the same level of amenities, square footage, or frankly comfort, which helps to reduce the overall cost of the homes from the previously mentioned \$60,000 USD down to as low as \$5500 for a 64sqft shelter (Chang, 2021). Despite the growing market for tiny homes the Pallet company does not currently accept orders for individual units from people or real estate businesses, with the goal of the organization to keep prices low and accessible to communities in need of homeless shelters. The Pallet company claims that data collected from their locations around the USA shows their model of building “villages” rather than single units is an effective way to help transition homeless persons into more permanent housing solutions (Pallet, PBC, 2024). Based on the perceived successes of the Pallet company, the government of Nova Scotia has purchased two hundred of these shelters for use around the province, of which nineteen shelters are already operational (Tutton, 2024).

## Case Studies

### Lower Sackville, NS

This is one of the first of its kind in Nova Scotia and already had nineteen shelters installed by March of 2024 with plans to expand the community further over time (Tutton, 2024). The community is being built directly by the provincial government who is pledging to provide the community with continued funding to maintain it long-term. The funding support helps to maintain two support workers in the nearby traditional shelter who will provide social services and mental health counselling to residents (Tutton, 2024). This is to maintain a dedicated support system which will help residents move toward permanent housing solutions over time and is seen as a critical component for success.

The organisation overseeing the community, Beacon, indicated that residents are expected to “be able to live responsibly and respectfully” and must sign an agreement to that effect which includes various rules and policies to be followed to avoid expulsion (Tutton, 2024). Furthermore, there is a strong sentiment among organisers and community members that the shelter community should be temporary not only as a location for unhoused but in its entirety, with some indicating that they hope the shelters will be deconstructed at some point within the decade (Tutton, 2024).

### Vancouver, WA

The shelter community in Vancouver, Washington was the first official shelter community built by Pallet for addressing the homelessness crisis in America (Pallet, PBC, 2024). The shelter village was built in place of an existing encampment, according to Pallet PBC, 2024, meaning residents did not have to travel to access it. The intent with these villages is to provide a safe and dignified place for unhoused persons to get access to shelter and services which will enable them to transition to permanent housing and employment. This location provided access to essential amenities such as bathrooms, washing stations, a kitchen, and meeting spaces; meals were provided daily and mobile healthcare providers visit the shelter often to help provide health and social support for the residents; and even residents pets can be taken care of through assistance of the American Humane Society (Pallet, PBC, 2024).

Over the course of the village’s lifetime, it has seen many successes from its residents. According to Pallet, PBC, 2024 they had seven people find permanent housing within the first few months of the sites opening and many of them found jobs. Since then, fourteen people have successfully transitioned to permanent housing, forty people completed housing assessments, sixteen people obtained identification cards which will help them to access housing and additional services, and eleven people secured job placements (Pallet, PBC, 2024).

Some of the challenges facing residents have been the harsh weather which makes it more critical for unhoused people to find shelter and means that Pallet shelters must be able to provide adequate levels

of comfort and safety during the winter (Pallet, PBC, 2024). Without access to shelters it can also delay essential medical treatments, as some residents have reported, due to not having a safe place to recover (Pallet, PBC, 2024). These are all factors that organisations must consider when establishing their shelter communities and accepting people into the shelters.

## Testimonials

Some former residents have highlighted some of the aspects of the Pallet village model which helped them to transition into permanent housing solutions and employment:

- Personal autonomy: former resident John remarked that while there are always rules to follow, he appreciated the ability and freedom to do things at his own pace due to the nature of the private individual shelters (Pallet, PBC, 2022).
- Individual dignity: former resident Tim appreciated being able to have his personal affects with him and truly turn the shelter into his own space, such as by lining the walls with his collection of Hot Wheels toy cars (Tim's story: From a Pallet shelter village to housing, 2022).
- Opportunity: Tim was also able to use his time at the shelter village to secure permanent housing and income through the assistance of Salvation Army case workers (Pallet, PBC, 2022).

What these highlights show is how important peoples sense of dignity and independence is when they are trying to regain their footing. Group shelters with hostel-style accommodations can lead to many situations where somebody is unable to properly express their individuality or start to build their own concept of self. These group shelters also tend to isolate people from their partners and pets which can further antagonise insecurities and anxieties that these people may have (HHRC, 2024).

## Housing First

Another case study that is like this solution but not entirely the same is what has been done in Finland. The Finnish government created a “Housing First” policy which aims to provide everyone with a permanent home, directly, regardless of their situation (Taggart, 2020). As of 2020, they are the only country in Europe where the rate of homelessness is declining (Taggart, 2020). The main difference being that Finland was providing permanent housing immediately, skipping the transitional stage, and their primary focus is providing housing with less strict guidelines for transition to complete independence.

# Requirements

## Infrastructure

### Shelter Design

The shelters designed by Pallet use lightweight fibreglass reinforced plastic panels with foam insulation and an aluminum frame which also makes up the entire floor (Pallet, PBC, 2021). The units are raised off the ground by adjustable pedestals which allow the structure more flexibility of terrain while remaining level for the occupant, and further to that the units can be tied-down to the ground using a hook system much like what you would find on a tent which connects the roof to the floor and then to the ground (S2 Sleeper). After construction, the unit can be moved in whole by forklift or easily disassembled for storage. These sort of design choices reflect the need for these shelters to be easily and rapidly constructed, low-cost, and easily transported, while still providing the essential level of comfort to facilitate success.

Each shelter has heaters and air conditioning to maintain comfortable living conditions, as well as various safety features such as smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors, door locks, peepholes, fire extinguishers, and emergency egress windows; the units support 120V electronics with a simple wiring system (S2 Sleeper). Pallet claims that the shelters can last for over 10 years with a 15 to 20-year material lifespan, designed to withstand wind and snow (S2 Sleeper). For a location such as Nova Scotia which is prone to heavy snowfall and hurricanes, having such ratings is critical to be effective in the wintertime when homeless persons are at the most risk.

### Location Selection

Pallet shelters can be built on any relatively level surface, whether it is a parking lot or a grassy field, as long as there is enough space and access to some basic infrastructure the units can be placed (Pallet, PBC, 2021). To be effective, each shelter community needs to have direct access to roads, electricity, and essential amenities. Communities shouldn't be secluded or tucked away as they need to be able to access all the same services as any other resident such as emergency services, public transportation, grocery stores, and primary care clinics (Pallet, PBC, 2021). Furthermore, there should be onsite amenities such as toilets, showers, and laundry services to ensure that residents have a basic quality of life and to remain accessible to those with mobility difficulties (Pallet, PBC, 2021). A large aspect of the transition process is getting homeless people access to health improvement services and employment opportunities which will allow them to successfully move into a more permanent housing situation. This means that if there is no direct access to critical services, then access must be provided some other way whether through direct transportation services or by having access to public transportation.

## Operational

### Initial Staffing

If an organisation chooses to implement a pallet community to address homelessness, then they will need to establish an operational structure which will successfully facilitate every step of the process from site selection to daily operations. Typically, these communities are established by an existing organisation which will already have a basic top-level structure for coordinating the initial design and implementation of a shelter community. Once the initial planning is completed and a site is selected that meets the shelter design requirements outlined above, they will need to hire staff to prepare a location for the development and ensure that the proper infrastructure is available such as electricity and water or make it available. Once construction is completed there will need to be ongoing staffing for general maintenance and upkeep.

### Ongoing Staffing

Once a community is constructed and being maintained, it will need support staff to help collaborate with the residents to transition them from shelter living into a more permanent solution. This could include general support workers providing care and social services, as well as mental health counsellors. Another aspect to consider is bringing on support workers and/or volunteers to provide services such as hot meals and guidance on a regular basis. Having an effective support system is part of the process for an effective transition from homelessness (Tutton, 2024). Ideally, organizations may consider having staff available 24/7 for essential services and emergencies.

### Security and Safety

To ensure the success of the community there are some security and safety practices that organizations should consider. Things such as exterior fencing, monitored entry-points, minimum staffing levels including security guards, conflict resolution processes, zero-tolerance policies for violence, and even just proper lighting can help reduce crime<sup>3</sup>, improve the security of residents, and keep people safe (Creating a safe environment, 2023). Other things to consider are having fire safety plans, access to fire hydrants, and the distance to the nearest firefighting station or hospital.

### Financial Sustainability

It is important to consider how funding for the community will be obtained and maintained through the lifetime of the shelter village. For non-profit organisations, this funding may come from public donations or government investments. There are many different funding sources available to non-profits with a growing number of funds being dedicated directly to affordable housing initiatives. In Nova Scotia the

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/effects-improved-street-lighting-crime>

province has already purchased 200 Pallet shelters which they will be implementing directly (Tutton, 2024), but for other organizations they can also receive funding from the government through things such as the National Housing Strategy which will see over \$42 billion put into affordable housing solutions including shelters (Department of Finance, 2022).

## Community

Part of the planning for a shelter village should include how the organisation aims to have the shelter integrated into the existing community. As will be discussed further later, a big threat to the ability of organisations to establish shelters is NIMBYism which pushes back out of fear of potential consequences for existing community members. Care should be taken to establish clear community guidelines that are communicated with shelter residents and residents of the larger community (Jain, 2023). One option to consider is holding educational open houses and events to show community members the importance and impact of these shelters on the lives of their neighbours which can help alleviate their concerns. By involving the existing residents with the development of the shelter village it can also help to identify potential issues with the development and it can help to build mutual understanding and tolerance. Unhoused people are already part of the community as it is, but many people do not view them as such and it is critical to remind people that this is not an issue that is happening somewhere else, but rather in their own neighbourhood.

## Policy & Ethos

### Resident Eligibility

Given the limited availability of shelter space the hardest part of operating a shelter community will be determining who will be given priority when it comes to accessing the shelters. Any policy or eligibility criteria that is established should try to be as low-barrier as possible as to be accessible to as many people as possible. For the people experiencing homelessness there are often other challenges which can make it difficult for them to navigate complicated application processes and in general homelessness can look vastly different from person to person. Every organisation has its own goals and ideology for their outreach programs so how they implement the policy for their shelter community will vary, but they key elements to keep in mind are ease-of-access and critical-needs. Priority should be given to the most at risk individuals, like those who are chronically homeless<sup>4</sup>, who would otherwise have the most difficulty trying to transition into permanent housing on their own.

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<sup>4</sup> Infrastructure Canada, “Refers to individuals who are currently experiencing homelessness AND who meet at least 1 of the following criteria: they have a total of at least 6 months (180 days) of homelessness over the past year; they have recurrent experiences of homelessness over the past 3 years, with a cumulative duration of at least 18 months (546 days)”. - <https://www.infrastructure.gc.ca/homelessness-sans-abri/directives-eng.html>

## Code of Conduct

In any society it is important to establish a code of conduct whether informally through cultural and social norms or formally through a system of laws and governance. This extends to shelter communities but with keeping in mind one of the key elements of remaining low barrier. Often organisations can have well-intentioned policies such as sobriety requirements to remain at a shelter, which makes sense in hostel-style group shelters as it is a shared space with risk of conflict, but clashes with the intention of individual pallet-style shelters that aim to provide autonomy and dignity to residents. Organisations should stray away from policies that restrict the activities of residents in ways that a typical tenant or homeowner would not be required to as these policies can make it harder for residents to maintain employment and relationships (HHRC, 2024) which, as mentioned, are critical for their successful transition into permanent housing. And while shelters should aim to remain low barrier, it is still important to implement clear rules and regulations such as safety policies against weapons, violence, and on-site substance use. How violations of these rules are managed will affect the chances for success for residents. Instead of expelling residents from the shelter, steps should be taken to resolve the issue in a way that allows the resident to remain housed while moving toward their overall goal of personal improvement. Whether it is through sobriety programs, anger management programs, or other social services.

## Conflict Resolution

To expand on the concept of low-barrier and compassionate policies, some methods to avoid having to expel residents include:

- Do not unnecessarily search residents as this can create conflict and strip people of their dignity. Instead, consider providing amnesty boxes for disposing of items not permitted on site such as drugs and weapons while not making residents feel pressured to hide things from staff out of fear of losing access to the shelter (HHRC, 2024).
- Consider implementing substance abuse programs to help treat addiction rather than punish it by calling the police (HHRC, 2024). While you should call the police during an emergency, encounters with the police for non-violent crimes can lead to more obstacles for residents as they try to self-actualize.
- Train staff to handle escalated situations and/or bring on social workers and other professional care workers to help mediate, educate, and resolve ongoing issues among residents while also working to address underlying roadblocks that they may be facing personally (HHRC, 2024).

Outside of more direct conflicts such as those listed above, there is also the internal conflict for people with circumstances such as relationships or pets that would otherwise discourage them from seeking shelter. Consider allowing couples and pets to occupy shelters together instead of segregating them, and if this is not feasible then it would be beneficial to provide some sort of compromise such as additional

shelter space for partners and pets, separated as needed but close enough to reduce anxieties that they might have about being apart (HHRC, 2024).

## Goal Oriented

Finally, a big aspect of any shelter community's policy should be to remain focused on the goal of helping every person gain access to permanent housing so that they may reach self-actualization and success. This includes by focusing on addressing the root causes of homelessness, remaining compassionate when people struggle during this process, and by ensuring that residents feel welcomed and included in their community. It can be frustrating for support staff and community members to watch as other struggle to transition into permanent housing, and often there are scary moments or complex issues that might make people uncomfortable. However, it is critical to remain open to those who have a critical need in the same way a hospital would not turn away a patient in critical need as most issues cannot be resolved by simply ignoring them (HHRC, 2024).

## Success Criteria

Based on the requirements and goals for these shelter communities, here are some suggestions on how the success of a community can be measured. This focuses on the dynamic offered by pallet communities but is applicable broadly to all shelters.

## Housing Stability

The measure of a successful shelter community should be judged based on various aspects, most importantly its ability to provide stable housing solutions to its residents. The primary goal of a shelter community is to provide housing solutions to homeless people. This means that organisations should aim to maintain a low repeat-resident rate by ensuring that residents find more stable and permanent housing solutions. This also would represent the shelters' ability to keep residents living on the premises and their expulsion rate. A high rate of returning residents might indicate that policies are too strict or solutions for care and conflict resolution are inadequate.

## Employment and Income

Another metric that will determine if the strategies and policies of a shelter are effective will be the rate of residents entering the workforce, and their level of income in the months or years following their transition from temporary housing into a permanent residence. In the ideal situation, a shelter community will provide or facilitate opportunities for residents to re-enter the workforce and become self-sustaining. The primary way this is achieved is by providing the temporary residence so that they can focus on seeking employment or on developing the skills required to seek employment. However, it should be noted that not every resident will have the ability to find employment due to things such as

disabilities and mental health struggles, so other metrics should be considered such as whether these particularly disadvantaged residents are able to access things such as social assistance (welfare).

## Health Outcomes

Throughout their time at the shelter many residents will be facing health issues such as addiction, disability, mental health crises, or medical conditions. To ensure continued success for residents, organisations should help them to address their health needs and work toward tangible solutions for these hurdles. Resident happiness, outlook, and perceived wellbeing should be tracked over time during their stay and compared to their reported wellbeing after their stay to determine whether there is a trend of improvement. This can be done through direct surveys and general monitoring by staff and will also help identify points of failure for the community.

## Long-term Solutions

As mentioned above, these metrics should be monitored during and after the resident has left the temporary shelter so that it can be determined the overall success rate of the shelter. Pallet communities are uniquely positioned to provide longer-term temporary shelter to unhoused persons and as such have a duty to follow through with residents over the course of their transition and beyond. A successful community should find that residents have long-term successes in the years following their transition to permanent housing solutions, whether through improved health or employment or otherwise.

## Challenges

Many of the challenges facing these communities have already been touched on previously:

- Infrastructure challenges such as utility access and general location
- Funding access and budget constraints for organisations
- Harsh weather conditions such as those that Nova Scotia experiences
- Establishing effective policies and procedures including safety and security
- Ensuring long-term efficacy

## Staffing

As well, long-term staffing will be one of the biggest challenges facing a pallet shelter community. Having many individual shelters, with unique living situations, health needs, social needs, and strategies will lead to complex dynamics between community members and staff. In Nova Scotia there is already a staffing shortage in many health-related fields that will affect the ability of organisations to provide adequate care for things like mental health and addiction (Draus, 2021). Many of the other challenges facing the shelter community will exacerbate staffing issues if organisations are not able to retain existing workers and volunteers due to unaddressed problems and poor policy oversight.

## Time

Another operational challenge is the in the time it takes to implement these shelters as a solution to a homelessness crisis. While pallet shelters are designed to be quickly constructed and easily transported there is still often a lot of planning required. Each aspect of the initial setup such as location scouting, securing funding, staffing, and making partnerships with social services takes time and resources which can lead to delays such as what has happened with the government funded shelters in Nova Scotia (Gormon, 2024). This is combined with the ongoing struggle to combat the pushback from local landowners and residents in having a shelter near their homes, a sentiment known as NIMBYism which has led to the development of regulations and laws that can act as hurdles for building shelters (Balintec, 2023). All of this can cause delays that mean more people are left unhoused for longer.

## NIMBYism

For consideration in Nova Scotia, there are various regulations regarding the construction of buildings and communities. Some zoning requirements mean that these shelters cannot be built anywhere with space, unless explicitly permitted by the local government (Nova Scotia, n.d.). Historically, there has been a lot of resistance from local governments and residents, specifically the government of Halifax, when it comes to the construction of modern skyscrapers, student housing, low-cost housing, and anything that doesn't fit the traditional aesthetic of the city (Nichols, 2021). This resistance is commonly known as "NIMBYism" which stands for "Not in my back-yard" and has a long history in the US and Canada where residents and land owners fear the impact of new developments on their property values, personal enjoyment, safety, or their sense of community (Balintec, 2023). This mindset has led to the adoption of many regulations which make it difficult to navigate zoning requirements for low-income housing. According to 2023 polling, a majority of Canadians believe that NIMBY sentiments are a major factor holding back the development of affordable housing at a time where more than 250,000 people are on affordable housing waiting lists across the country (Balintec, 2023). Consider the idea of the government building a nuclear power plant to help combat climate change, it sounds beneficial to many, but now think about how you would feel if it were being built next to your house. That is the feeling NIMBY's have toward low-income housing, shelter developments, skyscrapers, and other projects. To build pallet shelter communities in Nova Scotia on a larger scale, overcoming these misgivings from NIMBY-type people will be a major challenge.

## Potential Impact

Given the success factors of these tiny home villages the long-term impact of these communities as a solution for addressing the homelessness crisis will depend on the continued commitment of organisations to provide resources to the residents and meet their critical needs. As discussed, it is not just a matter of providing housing to people but also ensuring that they receive the help they need to improve their mental and physical health, treat addictions, and find employment opportunities so that they can continue to operate independently and with dignity. For people to reach self-actualization and become the best version of themselves they need to have their basic needs met. Right now, one of the biggest needs not being met for thousands of people in our country is housing. Whether people are unhoused or on the brink of becoming homeless due to rising costs, the impact of these shelter communities could create a safety net for residents that helps to keep them on track in the most demanding situations.

Outside of simply providing temporary shelter, these communities can help to build the conversation around affordable housing solutions and the need for addressing systemic problems that are putting people in the position where they need these temporary shelters. Over time as affordable housing becomes more available and social stigmas are lessened, the need for these shelters could disappear

and lead to better overall living conditions for everyone in the community, not just those who are temporarily displaced. This improvement will be especially important for those who are particularly disadvantaged through additional forms of systemic issues such as those faced by Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) groups<sup>5</sup>. The potential for far reaching effects with these shelters is very promising when considering other less direct examples of these sort of solutions such as what has been done in Finland. The Finnish government implemented a “Housing First” policy which aimed to provide everyone with a permanent home, directly, regardless of their situation and has provided so many homes to residents that, as of 2020, they are the only country in Europe where the rate of homelessness is declining (Taggart, 2020). The main difference being that Finland was providing permanent housing immediately, skipping the transitional stage. Overall, this is a notable example of the potential impact that providing housing can have on the homelessness crisis.

## Conclusion

With the careful development of effective policies and strategies for the transition of unhoused persons into permanent living-spaces communities could see a significant reduction in the level of homelessness experienced by residents. By providing comfortable and private living quarters to those experiencing homelessness it can help provide them the basic level of safety and security required in their life to reach higher levels of self-actualization. The benefits of using Pallet shelters being that people remain autonomous, dignified, and secure, allows them to receive care for medical issues, mental health problems, and employment resources which are critical to transitioning to permanent housing in their broader community. While also maintaining their sense of community by residing in a village of that can work together to improve their lives. Shelter alone cannot solve every problem, but it opens the doorway for so many more elements of care and opportunity. Given one of the biggest challenges facing unhoused people across the continent is the lack of availability for affordable housing, these low-cost temporary dwellings are better suited to address crisis situations such as those being faced by Nova Scotians right now, especially given our smaller population which often prevents larger developments being economical. Overall, the implementation of these villages and the further development of policies and designs has the potential to create a lasting impact on our society that will leave more people with a sense of safety and security that will allow them to succeed.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://palletshelter.com/blog/how-homelessness-impacts-marginalized-communities/>

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