

Tiny Homes for Big Problems: Do Tiny Home Villages in LA County Help Unhoused Residents Obtain Permanent Housing?



Alexandria Park Tiny Home Village, North Hollywood, CA. Source: [West Coast Ariel Photography](#)

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Introduction

As home prices and rents continue to rise across the country, and especially in Los Angeles, so does the number of unhoused people. Local governments are struggling to implement effective strategies to prevent people from becoming unhoused or give unhoused people permanent housing. However, in the past decade or so, a new kind of temporary housing has emerged: Tiny home villages. These villages vary widely in terms of the size of units, number of units, amenities, community rules, and type of housing. Some are considered shelter beds/transitional housing and others are more similar to permanent housing. There are two primary reasons that tiny homes appeal to local governments as a housing solution (albeit often a temporary solution): 1) Tiny homes are often cheaper to build than other forms of temporary housing, and; 2) They can be moved if officials want to use the land for another project. But, are tiny homes a better housing solution for residents than other forms of temporary housing?

The goal of this study is to examine how staying in a tiny home village impacts unhoused people. Does it propel them toward permanent housing or just provide another temporary roof over their head? And, how do residents experience living in tiny homes while they reside there? In this paper, I use the term permanent housing broadly to refer to housing where residents have a lease and can live indefinitely, and where they have private units which come with kitchens and bathrooms.¹ Answering these questions is critical to understanding how to solve the housing crisis and will help non-profits, communities, and policy makers make informed decisions. If tiny home villages do make residents feel safer, give them more stability than other forms of temporary housing, and put them on a path to permanent housing, investing in existing villages

¹ This definition includes Permanent Supportive Housing (which includes onsite supportive services), buildings or situations where residents have housing vouchers, living in low-income housing, or living in a traditional apartment complex or house.

and funding new ones is a logical path. However, if tiny home villages are not helping residents more than other forms of temporary housing, then policy makers should consider re-directing funds directly toward permanent housing or rental subsidies that help prevent individuals from becoming unhoused.

In this report, I start by reviewing the existing literature on tiny home villages as a housing solution as well as research on what leads to unhoused people sustaining permanent housing after becoming housed. I then provide background on tiny home villages in Los Angeles in the context of the city's affordable housing crisis. Next, I detail the data I collected, including from Google reviews left by residents of tiny home villages across Los Angeles, as well as documents from Los Angeles City Council and information from public records requests submitted to various city departments. I describe the methods used to analyze my data, including using ATLAS.ti coding software to identify patterns and themes. Then, I present my findings on how residents experience living in tiny home villages as well as the severe lack of available information about tiny homes in LA. I close with a series of recommendations for local policy makers and for the service providers who operate these tiny home villages, as well as recommendations for future research on this issue.

Literature Review

In this literature review, I examine research on the effectiveness of tiny homes as a strategy to address homelessness. Tiny home villages are appealing to local policy makers for several reasons. First, they are cheaper to build than more permanent structures like apartment complexes. Second, they can be more flexible – many are on wheels or are otherwise constructed in ways that allow them to be moved from one location to another. Although these villages have been around both informally and formally for decades, there was a large increase in the number of operational villages during and after the pandemic (Calhoun et al., 2022). This is in part because, unlike congregate shelters (where residents often sleep on beds close together in an open area and are sometimes required to leave during the day), they allow residents to keep a safe distance from one another, which is beneficial to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other communicable diseases. In order to understand if and how tiny home villages help unhoused individuals find permanent housing, I synthesize literature examining how these villages operate both physically and institutionally, and resident experiences in tiny homes villages. I also examine literature on which factors make unhoused people more likely to stay in permanent housing once they have obtained it.

A 2018 meta-analysis (Boland et al. 2018) examined the results of 38 previous studies from the U.S., Canada, and Australia to understand, comprehensively, which factors lead to tenancy sustainment among formerly unhoused individuals. Its goal was to identify which factors are positively or negatively associated with these individuals remaining housed. Many of the studies in the meta-analysis have contradictory findings. Nonetheless, the authors find that, overall, older age was positively associated with housing sustainment. Some studies suggested that if the housing is close to public transport links and important resources (e.g., grocery

stores), this helps sustain tenancy. The authors also find studies showing a positive relationship between having supportive resources onsite. However, no study examines the physical structure of the housing (e.g., amenities offered, size of units) except for “adequate privacy,” which proves to be important but is not adequately defined.

There has been a good amount of research done regarding the use of tiny home villages as a solution to homelessness. Studies have explored a variety of issues including analyzing residents’ experiences at specific villages and whether tiny homes work well for people living with serious mental illness. Some larger studies aim to determine the number of tiny home villages in the U.S. and record their amenities and physical characteristics. Another broader (and non-empirical) study examines existing literature on tiny homes as a response to homelessness in high-income countries.

A 2025 study out of the University of Missouri (Kpeebe & Evans, 2025a) surveyed all tiny home villages for unhoused people in the U.S., given the recent uptick in unhoused people nationally and the rise in tiny home villages as a solution. The researchers attempted to create a complete database of villages and also document detailed information about each village. Data they collected includes: location, the number of units, amenities and utilities available, cost to build and operate, zoning restrictions, sources of funding, and building materials used. The study found that as of January 2024, there were a total of 195 tiny home villages for the homeless; 123 of them were open, 23 were under construction or not yet open, and 14 were of unknown status. The average number of units per village was 49 and the average square feet per unit was 233.

Another study (Wilson, 2022) sought to determine whether tiny homes/tiny home villages are a suitable variation of affordable housing for individuals with serious mental illness, or SMI. To answer this question, instead of surveying people with SMIs currently living in tiny homes,

they set up a model tiny house and had participants stay in the model house for 24 hours. These individuals were not necessarily unhoused but all of them were living with an SMI; the study notes that according to the National Coalition for Homelessness, between 20 and 25 percent of unhoused individuals in the U.S. are living with an SMI. After their stay, participants answered questions about their experiences and were asked to provide feedback on how the model could be improved. The study finds that all eight participants positively reviewed the tiny home and expressed that it was better than their current accommodations. Participants expressed that not sharing a wall was beneficial and could help ease paranoia, which often affects individuals with mental illnesses such as bipolar and schizophrenia. Most participants expressed that privacy was a priority, but that community is important as well, so finding a balance between the two is necessary. The tiny home model used in this study had a kitchen as well as both running water and electricity, which is not the norm for most tiny home villages. The study has limitations in that the participants only got a 24-hour trial and not the chance to actually live there.

An article examining the Kenton Women's Village in Portland, Oregon (Leickly et al., 2019) looks at a tiny home village for unhoused women. The authors sought to better understand how the village works and what residents' experiences were living in the village. They conducted surveys of the residents followed by semi-structured interviews with 9 out of the 12 (75% of) residents living there at the time. The authors found that although the "pods" are small, they are very aesthetically appealing. They have electricity but no running water, and bathrooms are communal. This village is operated by a non-profit and has two full-time staff who provide case management services to the residents. From the surveys, residents reported overall high satisfaction with their pods, the village, and the neighborhood. Despite being satisfied with the village overall, however, residents brought up concerns and challenges relating to living in the

village. Many expressed being food insecure and said that the village's location made it hard to access resources outside the village, considering the nearest transit stop was a half a mile away. Some residents also expressed frustration with the village being close to train tracks and a major roadway, a decision that was made because the creators did not want to take up space that could be otherwise used for permanent housing. However, being located near a busy road and train tracks means residents are exposed to significant ambient noise (which could disrupt sleep) as well as air pollution from vehicle exhaust. Residents also reported that they wished the village was run with more input from residents. The village is not open to the public, but some residents were worried about safety, and expressed that the name of the village "Kenton Women's Village" made them feel unsafe because it makes it clear that women and only women live there. On the other hand, the authors find that the name made the village more appealing to the community because women are perceived as less threatening. This case provides useful insight from the residents on how this village and others can be improved to better fit the needs of their residents.

A 2022 study (Calhoun et al., 2022) examined tiny homes as a response to homelessness in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic by surveying field experts working in tiny home villages during the pandemic. The study finds that tiny home villages were able to provide shelter to unhoused people while enabling residents to maintain a safe physical distance from one another by providing private units. Providing the same type of physical distance is not possible in traditional congregate shelters where residents sleep on a bed in a large room with many other people. As a result, tiny homes make it much easier to prevent the spread of communicable disease among shelter residents. This study also finds that villages were still able to create a sense of community and connection during the pandemic.

Conversely, a 2023 study (Margier, 2023) argues that tiny home villages—which, in this case, are considered government funded and non-profit operated—are an institutionalization of informal homeless encampments. Moreover, the author argues that some tiny home villages have similar drawbacks to congregate shelters such as a lack of privacy, rules banning pets, and not being able to stay during the day. However, the author states that some experts argue that these publicly-funded villages can be alternative to congregate shelters, because they don't require residents to be separated from partners of the opposite gender, allow residents to bring more of their belongings, and are more likely to allow pets than congregate shelters. This study also argues that these villages do little to solve the housing crisis because they are temporary and fail to address the root causes of homelessness—a lack of affordable housing and uncontrolled rent increases—and instead act as a bandaid.

A recent article published in the *Journal of Wellbeing, Space, and Society* (Marshall et al., 2026) conducted a scoping review of published research on tiny homes and sleeping cabins (what they abbreviate as THSCs) in high-income countries in order to determine if they are an effective solution to homelessness. The authors analyzed a total of 116 studies, 56 percent of which were empirical and 37.1 percent of which were peer reviewed. The vast majority (76.7%) of the studies examined THSCs in the U.S., 12 percent examined THSCs in Canada, 6 percent examined multiple countries, and 3.4 percent pertained to Australia. This study defines “tiny homes” as units that are 29 square meters or smaller and contain a private bathroom and kitchen area, whereas “sleeping cabins” are defined as units with a bedroom area and lockable door but no private kitchen or bathroom. Notably, 42.2 percent of the articles this study analyzed examined tiny homes (units with integrated amenities), 25 percent of the articles specifically

pertained to sleeping cabins (units with no integrated amenities), and 28.4 percent examined both tiny homes and sleeping cabins in the same article.

Importantly, the study (Marshall et al., 2026) finds that more than half of the studies show that inconsistency in definitions of tiny homes and sleeping cabins was an issue, and the authors of those studies expressed a need for more consistent terminology. Various terms are used to describe tiny homes/sleeping cabins and different organizations use the same terms to refer to different things, leading to confusion about what tiny homes are or should be. Additionally, because of the varying types of tiny homes and their included amenities, there is confusion surrounding what role tiny homes play in ending homelessness. Some villages are more transitional housing but are closer to permanent housing and may even charge rent, some are more similar to shelter beds, and some even limit residents' lengths of stay.

Through their analysis of these 116 studies, the authors identified four themes (Marshall et al., 2026). The first theme is THSCs as a viable component of a broader solution to homelessness: Eighty-one percent of studies analyzed found that tiny homes were not a cure-all for homelessness but that they were a useful addition to the homeless response alongside other existing forms of shelters and transitional housing, and can be used to house people who would not otherwise want to stay in shelters. Some of the studies analyzed found that THSC villages can help address food insecurity and that these villages have more of a sense of community as compared to other forms of shelter. Some studies found that THSCs provided stable shelter which was seen as providing a foundation for leaving homelessness by helping unhoused people prepare to transition successfully to permanent housing by managing substance use and obtaining job skills. The latter is important as it helps residents secure employment, which increases their independence and ability to get permanent housing. Additionally a main benefit of

THSCs was the affordability and speed of their construction in comparison to permanent housing, as well as their lower ecological footprint. However, some of the studies suggested that because of the housing affordability crisis with “no end in sight,” tiny homes will need to be used for permanent housing and not just as transitional housing (Marshall et al., 2026).

Theme two is “How to make it happen.” Seventy-eight percent of the 116 studies examined the process of establishing THSC villages. The authors determined the biggest challenge was availability of land and local land use/zoning policy in general. Projects tended to go more smoothly on municipal-owned land where the service provider had a partnership with the municipality, but villages have also been able to successfully partner with private institutions such as churches to establish villages on private land. Another significant challenge is community opposition to the establishment of villages, which the studies found is easier to address in the early stages of development (Marshall et al., 2026).

Theme three is “Critical perspectives on the use of THSCs as a response to homelessness.” The authors find a lack of consensus regarding whether tiny home villages should be used to address homelessness. This is in large part due to what the authors describe as a “profound lack of empirical evidence” available to support THSC villages as a viable solution to homelessness. Authors expressed a need for much more research to be done across a variety of locations to determine the effectiveness of THSC as a response to homelessness.

Theme four is “It’s better than nothing.” Studies analyzed determined that living in a THSC village was better than living on the street or in an encampment, and that THSCs play an important role in providing shelter to unhoused people in the face of the severe lack of affordable housing and available shelter beds. Additionally, one of the studies noted that THSC offered residents more privacy and safety compared to traditional shelters (Scoccimaro, 2021).

Across all the literature reviewed in this scoping study, Marshall et al. (2026) describe a division in perspectives regarding sleeping cabins versus tiny homes, and that sleeping cabins drew criticism on ethical grounds. They specifically emphasize the use of “pallet shelters,” which are very cheap to construct and can be built in a way that skirts local building code, subsequently putting resident’s health and safety at risk. Overall, this scoping review of existing literature on tiny homes as a response to homelessness concluded that tiny homes are probably better than nothing, but that more research, and especially empirical research, is needed to determine if THSCs are in fact an effective solution for addressing homelessness in high income countries like the U.S. (Marshall et al., 2026).

There has been significant research into the use of tiny homes as a solution to homelessness, but there has been no research published that specifically examines which factors lead to unhoused people obtaining permanent housing, or how living in a tiny home impacts an unhoused person’s likelihood of obtaining permanent housing. This study aims to fill that gap by examining publicly-funded tiny home villages in Los Angeles operated by the following non-profit service providers: Hope the Mission, Urban Alchemy, and Salvation Army.

Background

In 2022, the City of Los Angeles declared a state of emergency in regards to the issue of homelessness. Under Los Angeles Administrative Code Section 8.33 the Mayor is authorized to declare a state of emergency if one or more of the following is true: First, if housing supply is projected to be 40 percent or more below the annual housing production goals set by the City's Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA); second, if the ratio of unhoused people to available interim housing beds is more than 2:1; and third, if the number of unhoused people in Los Angeles increases by more than 20 percent in one year (according to point-in-time counts (PIT) estimating the number of unhoused people in the city). According to the “Homelessness Emergency Declaration - 2024-2025 Fourth Quarterly Report” from LA City Administrative Office on May 16, 2025, the first two criteria for the state of emergency have been met. Housing production for 2021-2029 is 65 percent below RHNA housing production goals, meaning that Los Angeles is not on track to have the estimated number of additional housing units needed by 2029. Additionally, there are 18,077 available interim beds—far fewer than the 45,252 unhoused individuals residing within the City, according to the most recent PIT counts (LAHSA, 2025). The Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) is responsible for this data collection, which is done by volunteers who walk around the city counting the number of unsheltered people and dwellings (i.e, tents, RVs, cars) being used as temporary shelter.

In the last few decades, tiny home villages have become an increasingly popular solution to addressing homelessness in the United States, especially in West Coast cities including Los Angeles (Margier, 2023). In Los Angeles, these tiny home villages have mostly sprung up in the years during and after the pandemic. There are currently nine tiny home villages for unhoused people in LA. One tiny home village was constructed and became operational in Eagle Rock in

2022. According to a City Council report from March 2025 on homeless funding recommendations, the Eagle Rock Tiny Home Village is operated by Salvation Army, though it was initially operated by Union Station Homeless Services. Three are operated by the non-profit Urban Alchemy, and seven more are operated by Hope the Mission (Formerly Hope of the Valley), a large organization which also operates other types of shelters.

Most of the tiny homes in LA contain units known as “pallet shelters” which are manufactured by a company called Pallet, and can be shipped and assembled. These units can also be deconstructed and moved to other locations as needed. The City of Los Angeles has funded over twelve hundred beds using pallet shelters, according to Pallet’s website². The company’s standard 64-square-foot shelter is known as the “S2 Sleeper (70)” and is designed for one person or a couple, though it also makes family shelters that can house up to four people. Additionally, it manufactures the communal laundry, dining, bathroom/shower facilities needed for villages to operate, as well as buildings for service providers to meet with residents.

Most of the villages are built over concrete with units very close together with little if any greenery inside the fence lining the periphery. However, some sites, such as the Arroyo Seco Tiny Home Village in Highland Park, make an effort to paint the units and concrete with bright cheerful colors (see Figure 1 below).



Figure 1: Arroyo Seco Tiny Home Village, Highland Park, Los Angeles, CA. Source: [West Coast Ariel Photography](#)

² [Los Angeles: 1,200+ new beds for unhoused neighbors - Pallet Shelter](#)

As mentioned above, villages often have tall opaque fencing surrounding their entire perimeter. This is understandable for the privacy of the residents, but can give the appearance and feeling of a prison. These fences may also make the village stand out in a neighborhood instead of appearing to be part of the larger community, which could be a detriment to both the residents and the surrounding community members. Tiny home villages in Los Angeles are also often built near or directly adjacent to major freeways, as they tend to be constructed in industrial areas or parking lots (see Figure 2 below). This is likely due to increased political feasibility of constructing homes in these kinds of locations given that members of the public are not as invested in the land use of more undesirable and/or industrial locations. People are less likely to protest the construction of a facility for unhoused people if it is not near a place where they live or would like to live. However, the impact that this has on residents seems to have been overlooked. There are major health impacts associated with living near freeways, including higher asthma risks as a result of pollution (Van Tol, 2024).

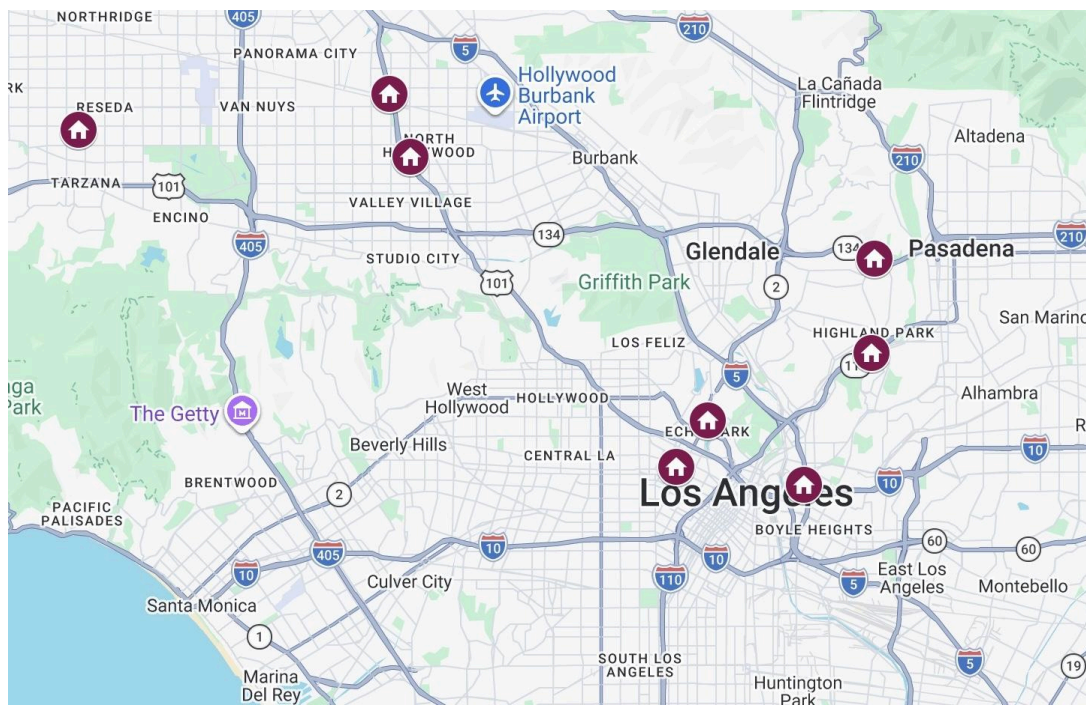


Figure 2 shows a map of tiny home villages in LA County, click the link to explore the [Interactive Map](#)

Data & Methods

In order to answer my research question of whether living in tiny home villages help unhoused people become permanently housed and what life is like for residents, I describe how I analyze data from Google reviews left by residents and how I attempted to obtain data directly from service providers. I also attempted to conduct interviews directly with residents and staff, but was unable to due to a lack of responsiveness from the service providers.

Challenges with Data Collection and Data Access

To answer my research questions, I originally set out to conduct interviews with both residents of tiny home villages, particularly in Eagle Rock (my original case study), and case managers working with residents. Case managers are responsible for connecting residents to resources they may need, including obtaining identification documents, accessing healthcare and job training, and helping them find and apply for permanent housing. To conduct such human subjects research, I applied for and obtained approval from the Occidental College Institutional Review Board.³

I started out by identifying the service provider at Eagle Rock Tiny Home Villages; little did I know that this information, in and of itself, would be difficult to obtain. First, I obtained and examined City Council documents related to tiny home villages, particularly the Eagle Rock Tiny Homes Village (my original case study). I learned that the Eagle Rock Tiny Homes Village location is unique because the plot of land that it is on is owned by several entities, all of whom had to agree to the project. The land is an underutilized parking lot of the Eagle Rock Recreation Center. The village was established on land of which parts are owned by each of the following

³ For more information, see: <https://www.oxy.edu/offices-services/institutional-review-boards>.

entities: the City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP), Los Angeles County, and Southern California Edison (SCE), a private utility company.

In order to get information about the operation of the village and, if possible, data such as number of residents and average lengths of stay, I reached out to Union Station Homeless Services, which was listed online and in city council documents as the service provider that operated the village. I contacted its office email and received no response, so I found emails of individuals at the non-profit that I thought might oversee the village online. I emailed two of them, also receiving no response. I then called the listed office phone number, and was informed that Union Station Homeless Services no longer operates the site. The person I spoke with did not have information about when or why Union Services stopped operating the site or what entity took over its operation. This person referred me to another person who may have had the answers to these questions, but I received no response. With the help of a contact at the City of Los Angeles, however, I figured out that the new operator is Salvation Army. The aforementioned city council report listing Salvation Army as the current operator contained no contact information—and I could not find a contact or any information about the tiny home village on the Salvation Army website.

I contacted the Office of Los Angeles City Council District 14 because, under the previous council member, the office had sponsored the Eagle Rock Tiny Homes Village proposal in 2021. I met with a staffer, but they had no information about the project beyond what was publicly available from city council documents pertaining to the land use approval and project approval reports, which contain mostly planning information about the villages with no information about how they currently operate. The staff member informed me that the contracts between the City of Los Angeles and the service providers at these villages are executed by the

LA City's General Services Department (GSD), which is responsible for managing facilities, maintenance, and supporting elected officials and other city departments. I contacted the GSD multiple times via phone and email, but never received a response.

To get information on what data exist in regard to the village I then submitted two public records requests to the City of LA. The first was to the LA City Clerk, which released 6 pages of documents, but with no new information. The second was to RAP, which released 52 pages of documents, both from the city council approvals and planning/proposal documents, including visuals of the set up for the Eagle Rock Tiny Homes Village. The documents also revealed that the city council's approval of the project was contingent on the service provider reporting back to the RAP Board of Commissioners every 6 months, with data including intake info and number of residents. I therefore contacted the RAP Board of Commissioners requesting those reports, including the data from the service provider. It sent me 72 pages of documents, including all the same documents that were released to me from my initial public records request as well as pre-project planning documents. However, the release included no data or reports regarding the operation of the village, even though the collection of these data is mandatory. I followed up to confirm that those reports and data were in fact not in their possession and was told that all the documents they had were already released to me.

Due to these challenges obtaining information and data about the Eagle Rock Tiny Homes Village, I broadened the scope of my case study and contacted other service providers who operate villages in Los Angeles, including Hope the Mission (formerly known as Hope of the Valley) and Urban Alchemy. Both organizations operate tiny home villages in LA, according to their websites, but it is difficult to verify who operates which village as there seems to be high turnover of operators. According to Hope the Mission's website, it currently operates seven tiny

home villages, six of which are in the Los Angeles area. Westlake THV and Alvarado THV were at one point operated by Urban Alchemy, but some reviews left by former residents have claimed that they are no longer the service provider; it remains unclear which organization would have taken over. I could not reach Urban Alchemy by email or phone (because there was no number listed for its LA office, I called its main office in Sacramento; the person I spoke with said they were unable to give me any contact information for the Los Angeles office).

I reached out to Hope the Mission requesting information about the tiny home villages it operates and to request interviews with case managers who work inside these villages—specifically to answer my question about if and how tiny home villages help unhoused people obtain permanent housing. While one person tried to connect me with someone who could facilitate these interviews, ultimately, communication dropped. I found contact information for individuals at the organization and sent my request via email, but did not get a response. My faculty advisor for this research project also contacted the organization, as they had initially expressed interest in participating, but also did not receive a response.

Another data source I pursued was the Housing Management Information System (HMIS) database. Indeed, through city council documents, I learned that service providers who operate tiny homes villages are required to input case management and intake data for residents into the HMIS. This is to ensure that as a resident goes from one service provider to the next, or one case manager to the next, there is a continuous file that everyone can access. Researchers can access these data through an agreement between California Policy Lab and UCLA. I started the process of getting access to this data, including a meeting with the contact at USC who trains users of the data. However, I soon learned that data utilization agreements can take months, or sometimes over a year, and I did not have time to wait for this agreement to be processed. Also,

there is no guarantee that the service providers are entering the data into the HMIS system (despite it being mandatory); this is for future research to investigate.

Thematic Analysis of Google Review Data

While I could not speak to residents or case managers directly (due to the aforementioned challenges), I found a different source providing a rich set of data to analyze toward answering my research questions: Google reviews (where anyone can write a review for a location on Google maps) left by residents of tiny home villages in Los Angeles. Not all tiny home village locations have reviews on Google—and among those that have reviews, the number ranges from one to more than ten. All of the tiny home villages in LA County which I found Google reviews for were included in this analysis. I analyzed reviews of the following: Arroyo Seco Tiny Home Village, Mission Tiny Home Village, Reseda Tiny Home Village, Alexandria Park Tiny Home Village, Whitsett West Tiny Home Village, Westlake Tiny Home Village, and Alvarado Tiny Home Village.

In total, I analyzed 38 reviews of the aforementioned villages. Only written reviews that appeared to be from residents or former residents (i.e., they indicated this information in some way) were taken into consideration. Reviews by community members who were not residents of a tiny home village expressing complaints about or support for the villages were not included in this analysis, nor were more vague reviews where the positionality of the reviewer was unclear. For example, a review stating “This place is awesome!” would not be included because it is unclear if the reviewer has first-hand experience with the location. Ratings which were not accompanied by a written review were also not considered for the same reason.

To analyze the Google review data, I used a qualitative data analysis approach. I did structural coding to identify patterns in residents' reviews of their living experiences in the village. To conduct the coding, I used the qualitative data analysis software ATLAS.ti, in which I attached codes to excerpts, which I then extracted by code and to identify patterns in the nature and number of comments from residents regarding their stays in the tiny home villages. In order to determine what residents' overall opinions were of their time living in a village, I organized reviews into one of three categories: overall positive, neutral, or overall negative. Categories were assigned based on the content of the review and not the star rating attached to the review.

There are many limitations to this approach. First, the sample size is relatively small, I analyzed only 42 reviews across all villages that each have had (presumably) hundreds of residents (however it is unclear because of a lack of intake data). Second, it is possible that the people who chose to leave reviews were either very upset about their experience living in the village or had very positive experiences that motivated them to write the review, and so may contain bias. However, most of the reviews analyzed listed both positive and negative aspects of living in the villages.

Findings & Discussion

In this section, I present findings related to peoples' experiences living in tiny home villages in Los Angeles. The Google reviews that residents of tiny home villages wrote, and that I analyzed, provide a snapshot of how some residents experienced life in the villages. Of the 42 reviews I analyzed, 30 were overall positive, 11 were overall negative, and 1 was neutral.

I start with positive experiences and then turn to negative experiences, most of which focus on issues residents have had with case managers and other village staff and issues with the physical location of the villages. I close with a discussion about the lack of available information and data related to tiny home villages in Los Angeles.

Positive Experiences

Several residents expressed that staff members were kind, helpful, and professional. Two Alexandria Park THV residents described the staff as "Very nice" and two residents at the Arroyo Seco THV in Highland Park also expressed appreciation to staff members with one saying "the staff are the best" and another stating that "the whole staff is respectful and very professional." Several residents were also appreciative about the villages allowing pets.

Staff Mistreatment & Negligence

The most common complaint by far was about mistreatment from staff, with numerous complaints alleging (often severe) mistreatment and/or negligence by staff members. One resident from Westlake Tiny Homes Villages described being mistreated by a staff member on the basis of their LGBTQ status. A resident of Alexandria Park Tiny Home Village (THV) said:

“The staff and management miss treat certain [people] they are abusing their powers as management.”

One resident from Whitsett West THV wrote a 628-word review detailing a range of grievances related to staff. First, the resident had a housing voucher but their caseworker did not adequately help them secure an apartment, which is part of a case manager’s job responsibilities. The resident states that:

[My caseworker] failed to follow up on leads for available units and neglected to assist me for nine months. Numerous landlords I contacted said she never returned their calls. Emails she would reply to a week or two later when landlords reached out to her about my voucher. She provided no assistance even after I spoke with her supervisor.”

Additionally, the reviewer states that on three separate occasions the caseworker failed to submit a request for an extension for the housing voucher, but claimed that she had and was waiting for a response. It is unclear how the resident would know if the caseworker had or had not submitted it, but the resident alleges that all of this eventually resulted in the loss of the housing voucher.

The reviewer also describes a time when a staff member provided a ride to a medical appointment and said that she would wait for the duration of the appointment, but instead drove off and did not answer any phone calls, leaving the reviewer stranded. At the time of writing the review, this resident had lived in the village for nearly a year, but writes, “There is no hope of any help for me here.”

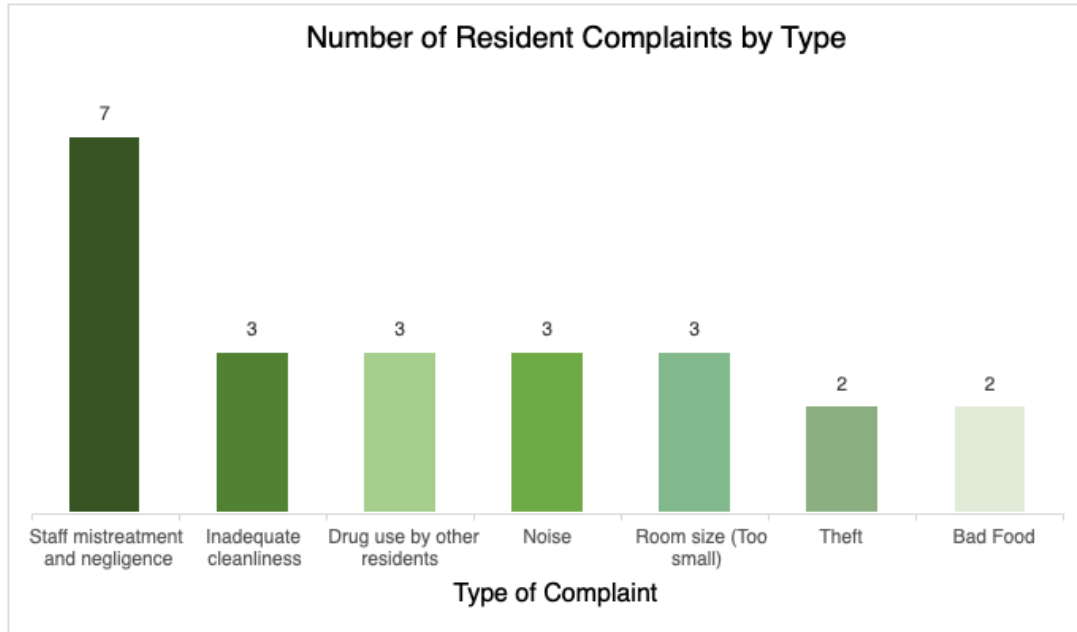


Figure 2 shows the number of each type of complaint found in the reviews analyzed.

Other Complaints & Issues

In terms of other common complaints, three residents reported hearing loud noises from other residents, such as playing music, especially at night, and smoke alarms being set off as a result of drug use (see Figure 2). Also related to noise, the same reviewer of Whitsett West THV from above also details the challenges of living so close to the freeway (see Figure 1), writing:

“...the excessive noise from the freeway traffic due to the blown-down sound barriers has been an ongoing issue. The barriers remained on the ground for five months, collecting mildew, despite my repeated reports. Imagine trying to sleep when a constant flow of traffic noise rumbles the cubicle as trucks or motorcycles pass by.”

Not only does proximity to the freeway create an often unbearable amount of noise, which made it particularly difficult to sleep, but the same resident from Whitsett West THV also explained that being near the freeway was an issue because of pollution related to emissions from passing vehicles, presumably including large semi-trucks fueled by diesel. Indeed, this resident stated that the pollution worsened his asthma symptoms. Although this concern only came up once in

the reviews, it is likely not an isolated issue given that so many of these tiny home villages are located directly adjacent to or near by major freeways (see Figure 1 for a map of tiny homes and their proximity to freeways). This seems to be because of available land to use, given that it is politically more feasible to construct homeless shelters in less desirable and/or more industrial areas. However, this could have consequences for residents who live there. Putting unhoused people who have inadequate access to healthcare in areas could increase their risk of asthma or worsen existing conditions.

Additionally, multiple residents also cited theft as an issue. One resident says a case manager stole beads from inside her locked tiny home, and another resident reported the theft of an electric scooter.

Additionally, most if not all of the tiny home villages in Los Angeles have fences around them, which make them look, and perhaps feel, almost like prisons, even though residents are able to come and go as they please (which is a benefit to tiny homes as compared to other traditional shelters and other temporary housing programs which often have curfews). On the one hand, residents deserve privacy from curious passersby. On the other hand, it seems to act as an intentional barrier separating the village from the surrounding community, which sends a message to both the residents and the community that they are different, other, or not part of the community. In order for unhoused people to build stable lives, it is beneficial to be an integrated part of the larger community.

A Lack of Public Information about Tiny Home Villages in Los Angeles

In the Data and Methods section of this paper, I detailed my efforts to obtain information, including via interviews, about tiny home villages in Los Angeles—but I was met with many

roadblocks and dead ends. Overall, there is very little public information available about any of these villages. While Hope the Mission has a webpage with basic information about all the tiny home villages it operates, there is basically no other information online (save the Google reviews). It took me months to even identify the service provider operating the Eagle Rock Tiny Home Village. And while I finally figured out that the Salvation Army is the new operator of the site, according to one city council document, I never secured any more reliable information about the site or any contact information for the people involved in operating the village.

My research revealed that the Eagle Rock Tiny Home Village is not unique in this regard: tiny home villages in Los Angeles change service providers frequently, but there is very little public information about how or why this happens. The Arroyo Seco Tiny Homes Village opened by Hope the Mission in 2021, according to the organization's history page on their website. However, it has a list of tiny home villages it currently operates (on its website), and Arroyo Seco is not listed. The Westlake Tiny Homes Village was operated by Urban Alchemy in 2022, but according to a former resident's Google review, the site operations switched to another non-profit, though they did not write which one. It is unclear why these changes are happening, but when the service provider changes, so do the staff, and perhaps the rules of a village. This is concerning because it could lead to instability for residents. If a case manager is helping a resident find and apply for permanent housing and then the case manager leaves, it could disrupt the resident's progress towards getting permanently housed.

Additionally, my public records request for reports from the non-profit that operates the Eagle Rock Tiny Homes Village revealed that the City is not getting reports from service providers. This is notable because per the land use agreement approved by city council, the service provider is *required* to report back with data about the operation of the village. Moreover,

the LA City Council and RAP Commission continues to extend the approval for the land use for the project without mandating that the service provider reports back. It is vital these data get reported, because without it, there is not enough evidence to support tiny homes as a solution to the homelessness and the housing crisis. It is impossible to understand the impact they are having on the community, how they can be improved, and what they are doing well that can be applied elsewhere if this data is not being collected and analyzed.

Recommendations

Recommendations for future research:

More empirical research is needed on this topic. Building on my analysis of Google reviews, conducting more in-depth interviews with residents of tiny home villages is critical to further understanding what their day-to-day lives are like and how living in the villages impacts their lives and housing trajectories. Specifically, current and former residents can provide valuable insight into what aspects of village life are beneficial and which aspects negatively impacted them, and collecting that information is critical to improve resident's experiences living in tiny home villages. It is also important to conduct interviews with case managers because they can provide broader perspectives on the most common barriers their clients experience when it comes to finding permanent housing. We can also learn how to better support the staff in their role so that they can in turn better support the residents they serve.

I was unable to secure interviews for this study but I prepared interview guides / surveys for both residents and case managers (see appendix for guides available in both English and Spanish). Researchers conducting further investigation can use these guides as a starting point.

Recommendations for non-profit village operators:

The non-profits that operate tiny home villages in Los Angeles need to place greater emphasis on the collection of data at their facilities. It is unclear if case managers are entering data into the HMIS system as required by law, but beyond that, they should maintain a database of resident intake information, including prior housing situation, the date residents entered the facility, the date they moved out, and where they went when they left, (for example, if they moved to another kind of shelter, to permanent housing, or end up unhoused). Additionally, case managers should collect information about a resident's journeys to permanent housing noting things including barriers residents are facing, and what strategies help get residents permanently housed. It is likely that they are collecting some of this data already, but they should make annual reports compiling all this information and submit it to the public and local housing authorities.

Additionally, if they do not already, service providers should have designated methods for residents to report their concerns and all providers should document all resident complaints (including issues with village facilities, staff, and other residents) and how they were handled. These reports should also be accessible to local authorities as they provide valuable insight as to the effectiveness of each village.

Recommendations for policy makers:

Tiny home villages should be established in locations that are not near major freeways or other health hazards. Rather, they should be located in areas near grocery stores, transit options, and other essential amenities that increase residents mobility and access to resources and opportunities. Alvarado Tiny Home Village in Echo Park is a good example of this. It is located in a mixed-use residential/commercial area and not along a freeway. There are two grocery stores

within eye sight of the village and several nearby transit stops. Additionally, it is about an eight-minute walk to the nearest public library. In comparison, many other tiny home villages including the Eagle Rock THV, the Arroyo Seco THV, and Whitsett West, are all directly adjacent to major freeways and have fewer resources, services, and amenities nearby (see Figure 1).

In order to determine if these tiny home villages are in fact an effective solution for addressing homelessness in Los Angeles, there needs to be a broad scale collection of data from each village, as detailed in the previous section. Local policy should mandate that service providers report anonymized data to local government authorities, specifically city council in the case of Los Angeles, and be made available to researchers and the public. Currently, the land use agreement with the City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks states that service providers should be required to provide reports on this data to the RAP Board of Commissioners, but it appears that no reports have been submitted. That analysis would also help policy makers determine whether establishing tiny home villages on public land funded by taxpayer dollars is a good investment or if funding and land should be re-directed and used for other housing solutions, such as construction of more permanent affordable housing.

Conclusion

Many residents express satisfaction with their time living in tiny home villages in Los Angeles and consider living in a tiny home to be better than living on the street, in part because of factors including privacy, and the onsite resources provided such as free food, laundry, and showers. However, many also highlight severe issues with units themselves, the way villages are run, and issues with some case managers and other staff. Although living in a tiny home may be a step up from living on the street, there is a lack of empirical evidence to support the use of tiny homes as a solution to homelessness, and specifically, a lack of evidence to show that tiny homes (and especially ones without private bathrooms and kitchens) are effective at helping unhoused people obtain permanent housing.

Due to a lack of available (or accessible) data from the service providers who operate tiny home villages in Los Angeles, I was unable to draw firm conclusions regarding my initial research question of whether tiny home villages lead to residents obtaining permanent housing. Cities across the country continue to invest large amounts of public funding into these villages, despite a lack of evidence regarding their effectiveness as a solution to homelessness. It is critical that local authorities scrutinize these them more closely to ensure that they are being run equitably and collecting and reporting the necessary data.

Appendix:

Interview Guide for Case Managers of Tiny Home Villages:

The results of this survey will be used for a research project about Tiny Homes Villages as solutions to houselessness. Your participation is greatly appreciated and all responses will be kept confidential and no names will be published.

How long have you been working as a case manager at this site?

How many cases are you assigned to manage at one time? How often do you typically meet with each of your residents?

Have any of the residents you've met with been able to get permanent housing after living here?

- If so, what role did living in the village play in being able to obtain permanent housing?
- If not, why not?

What percentage of residents would you estimate move on to permanent housing after living here?

About what proportion of residents are looking for permanent housing? For those who are seeking permanent housing, what are the biggest barriers they face in doing so?

Is there anything else you would like to share?

Preguntas de entrevista para gestores de casos en las Tiny Home Villages:

Los resultados de esta encuesta se utilizarán para un proyecto de investigación sobre las Tiny Homes Villages. Su participación es apreciada y todas las respuestas se mantendrán confidenciales y no se publicarán nombres.

¿Cuánto tiempo llevas trabajando como gestor de casos en este centro?

¿Cuántos casos se te asignan para gestionar a la vez? ¿Cuántas veces te encuentras reuniendo con cada uno de tus residentes?

¿Alguno de los residentes ha conseguido una vivienda permanente después de vivir aquí?

En tal caso, ¿qué impacto tuvo vivir en esta vivienda que pudo obtener una vivienda permanente?

Si no, ¿por qué?

¿Qué porcentaje diría usted que estos residentes encontrarán vivienda después de vivir aquí?

¿Qué proporción de los residentes buscan vivienda permanente? Para los que buscan una vivienda permanente, ¿cuáles son las mayores barreras que enfrentan?

¿Hay algo más que te gustaría compartir?

Survey for Residents of Tiny Home Villages:

The results of this survey will be used for a research project about Tiny Home Villages. Your participation is greatly appreciated and all responses will be kept confidential and no names will be published.

In the first section, you will be asked to share details about your experience living in this village and your prior housing situation, and in the second section you'll be able to share your experience with trying to find permanent housing.

Experience Living in the Village:

1. When did you move in here? (Please be as specific as possible)
2. How long do you plan to stay here?
3. How would you rate your overall experience with living here on a scale of 1 to 5 (Circle one)
 1. Very dissatisfied
 2. Dissatisfied
 3. Neutral
 4. Satisfied
 5. Very satisfied
4. Please share why you are satisfied, neutral, or dissatisfied:
5. If you could change anything about this village, what would it be? (Feel free to list multiple things.)
6. Have you ever stayed in other shelters or temporary housing?

Yes No

7. If yes, how would you compare that experience to living in this village?

8. What was your housing situation like immediately prior to living here? (Circle one)
 - A. Unsheltered
 - B. Staying temporary shelters overnight
 - C. Living in a temporary shelter
 - D. Living in permanent housing
 - E. Living with family
 - F. Other - Please describe

Tiny Home Villages as a pathway to permanent housing:

1. Are you actively looking for permanent housing?

2. If you are looking for permanent housing, have the staff here been able to help you?

3. Do you know of any people who have left this village to move into permanent housing?

4. Is there anything else you would like to share?

Thank you so much for taking the time to fill out this survey!

Encuesta para residentes de una tiny home village:

Los resultados de esta encuesta se utilizarán para un proyecto de investigación sobre Tiny Home Villages. Su participación es apreciada y todas las respuestas se mantendrán confidenciales y no se publicarán nombres.

En la primera sección, se le pedirá que comparta detalles sobre su experiencia viviendo en este pueblo y su situación previa de vivienda, y en la segunda sección podrá compartir su experiencia buscando una vivienda permanente.

Experiencia viviendo en el pueblo:

1. ¿Cuánto tiempo ha sido que te has movido aquí? (Por favor, sean lo más específicos posible) ¿

2. ¿Cuánto tiempo piensas quedarte aquí?

3. ¿Cómo valorarías tu experiencia general viviendo aquí, del 1 al 5 (Círculo uno)?

Muy insatisfecho

Insatisfecho

Neutral

Satisfecho

Muy satisfecho.

4. Por favor, comparte por qué estás satisfecho, insatisfecho o Neutral:

5. Si pudieras cambiar algo de este pueblo, ¿qué sería? (No dudes en enumerar varias cosas)

6. ¿Alguna vez has usado otros refugios o viviendas temporales?

Sí No

7. Si es así, ¿cómo compararías esta experiencia de vivir en este pueblo?

8. ¿Cómo era tu situación de vivienda justo antes de vivir aquí? (Círculo uno)

Vivir en la calle

Pasar la noche en albergues

Temporales Vivir en un refugio temporal

Vivir en vivienda permanente

Vivir con familia

Otros - Por favor, describe

Las Tiny Home Villages como vías hacia viviendas permanentes:

1. ¿Estás buscando activamente vivienda permanente?

2. Si buscas alojamiento permanente, ¿Las trabajadoras han podido ayudarte?

3. ¿Conoces a alguien que ha dejado este pueblo para moverse a una vivienda permanente?

4. ¿Hay algo más que te gustaría compartir?

¡Muchas gracias por tomarse el tiempo para rellenar esta encuesta!

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