

Santa Fe Safe Outdoor Space Questions — December 2022 Community Meeting

Can you talk about the willingness of people to participate in these kinds of sites?

In similar communities across the United States, participation from unhoused neighbors has been significant. Each time a managed community is set up, we remain in constant conversation with those who are currently unhoused, as well as with individuals who have lived experience. This allows us to create a community that feels safe for those who will live there, and also allows us to maintain connection to those who are unhoused and outside. We have seen that once a site opens, even individuals who were reluctant at first tend to find themselves coming to the community. There will always be some individuals who cannot come inside, but this model helps remove many of the significant barriers individuals face at congregate shelter sites.

As for the willingness of housed neighbors and communities, the sites have mixed feelings at the start. In every community we have people who are excited and willing to host a site, we have people who are concerned and do not want the site, and we have people who are concerned but want the site. We have found that education, conversations, and the continued communication before and during the program is key to community success. After opening, complaints have universally dropped, and many times we see positive community engagement from housed and unhoused alike.

Are we creating “safe outdoors” for the homeowners, or for people experiencing homelessness? Besides security, what other services will be offered? Will there be educational opportunities?

A Safe Outdoor Space is a managed community for our community members and neighbors who are unhoused. The goal is always to ensure a safe and positive community for housed and unhoused alike as we seek to serve the community as a whole. The site is staffed 24-7 by at least two individuals. Sites offer onsite services, assistance with documents, safety net registration, employment assistance, etc. We work with community partners who are already providing medical, case management, outreach, substance and mental health programming to streamline care and to be able to focus on trauma informed person centered care. We always try to set up education opportunities in the communities.

There must be an eligibility requirement for these sites. For individuals that are deemed ineligible, are there other resources or programs to serve them? Was there any unintended consequences to your program?

Each site, and the provider running it, gets the final say in eligibility and policies. That said, these sites are very “low barrier” by design. Unlike most congregate settings, who are held to insurance policies’ limitations, managed communities remove multiple barriers for individuals struggling

with mental health, substances, who are living with a partner, who feel unsafe inside, who have a pet, or who need ADA access. While violence, weapons, and public substance use is forbidden, each site is set up to serve as many individuals as possible. We are then able to assess who is not served by this type of community, we can then work to ensure services and support reach those individuals.

Can shelters be relocated after they're installed? What's the lifespan of a pallet shelter? What's the cost per unit? What's the operating cost per head/night?

Pallet shelters take an hour to put up and pull down! They are very easy to transport and store (they store on a pallet, hence the name). The Pallet Shelter also comes with a 10 year warranty. Cost per head depends on many factors. On average, we see \$60-\$75 a night at other sites.

A lot of people with lived experience are afraid to engage with the people who think Pallet Shelters will make someone "safe."

Pallet shelters were designed by the unhoused for the unhoused. The number one response nationally from those who have stayed in them, is the feeling of safety from being able to lock the door and have secure space to sleep and store belongings. This feeling of safety is not universal, and does not take away the feeling of being unsafe from other trauma, situations outside of the Pallet, etc. We would encourage anyone who is unhoused and concerned about the Pallet as a safe place to talk to an advocate or peer who has lived in one.

What kind of NIMBYism occurs in Durango surrounding the SOSs?

Every location that has implemented managed communities has seen NIMBY. People, housed and unhoused alike, have their own traumas. People have their own concerns, most of which are rooted in experience or fear of experience. We have learned that education, conversation, community meetings, and Good Neighbor Agreements are a great way to counteract NIMBYism. We have also seen that once a site opens, the NIMBYism goes away or substantially decreases. It was proven that crime actually goes down in areas where managed communities are, which is always the largest concern for those speaking out against the space.

Do you partner with municipalities and businesses to offer employment opportunities? What % of clients have gained employment?

Absolutely. Our business and local government entities are always such a pillar to success. For some individuals experiencing homelessness, they are ready for employment assistance, training, and opportunities. We have seen these collaborations lead to successful outcomes at many sites.

What is your relationship with medical entities in the communities you work in?

We encourage all managed communities to be engaged with the medical community, nonprofit organizations offering resources, police, fire, local government, and neighbors. The more we can collaborate within our community, the more we can support those in need.

Do you allow felons in your SOS?

Some sites allow felons, yes. This is a significant barrier for many individuals. That said, each site has policies set by those providing the direct 24-7 service on site.

Where are the people who have mental health issues supposed to go? They get turned away from the shelters. Where are these people served?

Due to the low barrier expectations of these types of communities, individuals who struggle with mental health and substance use are welcome to be a part of the community. Being in congregate shelter can be very triggering in ways that having an outside, individualized unit is not.

Do the shelters have insulation?

The shelters are climate controlled. There is a thin layer of insulation, but the ability to both heat or cool the unit makes them livable and comfortable across all climates.

What % of the SOS is shouldered by the sponsor, and what % is shouldered by the government? In other words, where does the funding come from?

Funding is different in every city. Some sites are all privately funded, others are jointly funded by government and private funders. We never expect local nonprofits to shoulder the full cost of the program.

What kind of hunger relief efforts do you have at these sites? What types of partnerships help with these efforts?

We always work with those in the community who work in food security. Food banks/pantries are a key resource and one we hope to partner with. We also ensure that we register individuals with all safety net programs they qualify for.