

REPORT OF THE  
OUUC TINY HOME AD HOC GROUP  
TO THE FAITH IN ACTION MINISTRY

December 18, 2018

On December 12, 2018, an OUUC ad hoc group met to begin to respond to the following:

*Whereas* the City of Olympia has requested that faith communities participate in a solution to the current crisis of homelessness in our community, and

*Whereas* the Faith in Action Leadership Team has approved OUUC's participation in the newly formed interfaith group FAITH (Faith Alliance Initiative for Tiny Houses), the mission of which is "to encourage the development by faith communities of tiny house solutions to homelessness in Olympia and the surrounding areas in partnership with each other and with the City of Olympia," and

*Whereas* OUUC's mission, as a liberal religious community, is to *open minds, fill hearts. and transform lives,*

We, the OUUC Tiny Home Ad Hoc Group (AHG), recommend that OUUC pursue the following course of action regarding the building and possible hosting of tiny houses to provide transitional housing for some of our homeless neighbors:

(1) That we at OUUC begin constructing up to three tiny houses according to the designs and specs provided by the Low Income Housing Institute (LIHI; see attached *Tiny House Building Assembly Instructions*) and as feasible, according to budget and manpower constraints, and as soon as possible, and

(2) That we at OUUC undertake as soon as possible a process to gauge the Congregation's response to three additional courses of action: (1) housing up to three tiny houses on our property, for a period of at least one year; (2) jointly serving with other faith communities in building/operating a tiny house village elsewhere; and (3) serving at the Plum Street Village . This response would inform a final decision of actions to pursue, which would be made by our minister. Approval from the Board of Trustees would also be required if changes to the annual budget are proposed.

Details and questions associated with these actions are presented below.

**(1) Construction of tiny houses**

It is our understanding that the larger community, in particular the faith community, has need of tiny houses to provide temporary homes to the currently homeless on public and private properties.

Our participation in meetings of the FAITH group and presentations by City of Olympia staff indicate that the model provided by LIHI, which includes a list of necessary parts and building procedures, currently is our best option. Materials can be obtained from local stores (Home Depot, etc.).

Costs: LIHI has also provided a preliminary price estimate. Base price is set at \$2,400 each, with \$80/unit added in delivery fees; additional costs could include paint and furnishings (see Hosting, below). Thus, costs associated with the construction-only proposal for 1-3 houses range from approximately \$2,500 - \$7500.

Considerations and Questions:

*Location:* We propose that if feasible the houses be built in the northwest corner of the upper OUUC parking lot, across from the entrance to the RE wing.

*Weather concerns:* how to safely and effectively build tiny houses in the winter months has yet to be sufficiently addressed. Ideas presented thus far include providing a canopy over the site and a lockable space for storage of tools and materials.

*Labor Source:* We do not anticipate that the OUUC Building & Grounds Team be in charge of construction. Rather, we would look to the entire congregation, other faith communities, staff of the City of Olympia, and other as yet undesignated sources for skilled and unskilled labor to build the houses.

**(2) Hosting Tiny Houses at OUUC**

With its approval, the AHG proposes that the Faith in Action Leadership Team work with the OUUC Minister and Board to schedule a congregational "linkage" style meeting at which a proposal to host tiny houses for the homeless on OUUC property be presented for review and comment. We intend that the results of such a meeting inform the Minister in reaching a final decision on the proposal.

Costs: In addition to those detailed above for construction, we anticipate that there would be an additional \$500/unit in costs associated with the provision of utilities (electrical, water) and furnishings (bed & mattress, lighting fixture and radiating oil heater, some of which might be in-kind donations), as well as undetermined costs of operation & maintenance (see below). Thus the estimated costs of building 1-3 tiny houses for installation at OUUC would be \$3,000 - \$9,000.

Considerations and Questions:

*Location:* We propose that 1-3 houses be placed in the northwest corner of the upper OUUC parking lot, across from the entrance to the RE wing, where they would be built. This site offers: good drainage, a sufficiently level surface, proximity to a source of electrical power (light

standards) and water, a visual barrier from neighboring properties, and proximity to the church, where residents may avail themselves of amenities, including showers (see below).

*Operation & Maintenance:* In its effort to create housing for the homeless in its community, the City of Olympia is proposing to provide an array of services to faith communities that participate. The City has proposed a pilot project, whereby faith communities commit to host tiny houses on their property for a minimum of one year, after which extensions may be granted (See attached fact sheet, *Faith Community & City Tiny House Pilot Partnership*). The City proposes to waive certain requirements, such as the need to obtain a conditional use permit, that have been in place up to this point.

\* *Choice of Residents:* The City will contract with a non-profit organization to provide for screening of potential residents, most likely using available Coordinated Entry agencies (e.g., Sidewalk); in addition faith community hosts "may establish overlying criteria to fit their needs" (City fact sheet). Initial screening would be for such things as sexual predators, people with outstanding warrants and/or histories of violence. We could consider adding criteria concerned with such things as gender, age, type (e.g., single adult, family) and so on.

\* *Services:* The City has indicated its willingness to take responsibility for providing sanitary facilities, water and sewer services, trash removal and "linkage to social services providers for aiding residents to deal with mental issues, find jobs and transition to better housing." (fact sheet). In conversations with City staff, it appears that the City will provide and maintain Port-a-Potties, including hand washing stations, and provide assistance if needed with water and electrical hookup and trash removal.

\* *Monitoring of Tiny House/Residents:* It appears that the day-to-day monitoring of the residents and their homes would fall to the Congregation and Church staff. The City has indicated that its staff, most likely the Homeless Program Coordinator, will provide some oversight to tiny home communities sponsored by the faith communities. However, it is the opinion of AHG that the City should be pressed to engage additional staff to provide more significant support, particularly regarding linkages for the residents to physical and mental health service providers and so on.

\* *Use of the Church by Residents:* We propose that the residents of the tiny homes be provided limited access to the church building for showers. The coordination and scheduling of this access would be worked out with the Church Administrator, Minister and other staff.

\* *Limitations on Permissible Activities by the Residents:* Before moving in, residents will be required to sign a contract with the managing nonprofit and OUUC that will include a list of permissible and prohibited activities on the resident's part. This list has yet to be developed, but would likely address onsite cooking, smoking, use of illegal drugs and alcohol, presence and frequency of visitors, and so on. We have access to a number of such contracts as models,

including ones from the City of Eugene, Camp Quixote/Quixote Village and Out of the Woods. In addition, the City will help develop a sample contract for general use.

\* *Public Process:* In addition to the Congregational Linkage meeting, we will want to have a meeting to inform the neighbors about our plans to host a small village for the homeless. The City has said it will provide support for such an event.

## **General Considerations**

\* *Resources:* The AHG requests the assistance of the Faith in Action Leadership Team in determining how the building and hosting of 1-3 tiny houses might be financed. We have identified the following possible resources:

- > A Raise the Paddle event at the annual church auction
- > Future income from Books, Beans and Brownies
- > The Faith in Action Team's reserves
- > Donations from outside groups, including other faith communities that may not have space to host their own tiny villages
- > Support from the Community Foundation, through FAITH
- > In-kind donations
- > A special OUUC fundraiser

The AHG noted that, in the event that a future event is identified as a source of funding, church reserves might be tapped as a short-term loan in order to speed up engaging in the process of building the tiny houses.

\* *Coordination with other entities:* The AHG recognizes the importance of coordinating our efforts with others that may provide additional expertise and resources. We see the need for continuing coordination with City of Olympia staff and the FAITH effort; we also anticipate looking to our past partners within the faith and larger communities for additional support, including the possibility of working together on building/operating a tiny house village here or elsewhere. We also recognize the importance of consulting with OUUC's Environmental Action Team (formerly the Green Sanctuary Committee) in consideration of the environmental impacts of carrying out this proposal.

\* *Relationship of the Congregation to the Residents:* The AHG believes that an important part of any commitment the Congregation makes to housing homeless neighbors includes significant support for and interaction with the residents. In addition to making amenities at the church available, we anticipate that the Congregation would welcome the residents to services, provide occasional meals, and work to insure that the residents are sufficiently comfortable and cared for.

Submitted by Tim Ransom for the OUUC Tiny Home Ad Hoc Group (names available upon request)