

HOMELESS TO HOUSED

Terwilliger Center for Housing



The first phase of tiny homes at VCP of St. Louis, Missouri, features inviting green spaces, shaded front porches, and walkable pathways that connect each home to the Outreach Center and to one another, fostering a strong, supportive community. (Veterans Community Project)

CASE STUDY: VETERANS COMMUNITY PROJECT



VCP of St. Louis's Outreach Center is located on the city's busiest bus line, minutes from the John Cochran VA Medical Center, ready to offer walk-in support and vital resources for local Veterans. (Veterans Community Project)

ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

LOCATION:

1515 North Grand
Boulevard
St. Louis, Missouri

PROJECT TYPE:

Veterans Community Project (VCP) of St. Louis, Missouri, is a transitional tiny home community for Veterans experiencing homelessness that offers wraparound case management services, ensuring residents can sustainably transition into permanent housing.

SIZE:

Lot Size: 4 acres
Facility Size: 240/360
square feet each
Total Capacity: 50 tiny
homes

OWNER:

Veterans Community Project

OPERATOR:

Veterans Community Project

PARTNERS:

Castle Consulting LLC,
ARCO National Construction,
Urban Land Institute (ULI)
St. Louis

COST:

\$12,803,854

COMPLETION DATE:

November 2023
(Outreach Center)

CONTACT:

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of St. Louis, Missouri,
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A Veteran returns home and is warmly welcomed by a VCP co-founder, marking the beginning of a new chapter filled with dignity, stability, and support. (Veterans Community Project)

Project Overview

Veterans Community Project (VCP) of St. Louis, Missouri, is a transitional tiny home community for Veterans experiencing homelessness, honoring all who took the oath to serve and embracing Veterans of all service backgrounds. VCP offers Veterans a stable environment where they can adjust to daily life at their own pace and with a sense of security. The parent organization was founded in Kansas City, Missouri, in 2016 by a group of combat Veterans shaped by their military service and a determination to do better for Veterans in need. The founders wanted to provide Veterans experiencing homelessness with a home of their own and wraparound case management services that leverage the support of the community. VCP of St. Louis offers high-quality services that help Veterans address immediate crises, navigate daily challenges, and work toward lasting stability. Veterans typically stay 14 to 16 months in a VCP Village before transitioning to sustainable, permanent housing.

Supporting Veterans in obtaining permanent housing is a critical issue. In 2025, the U.S. Departments of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Housing and Urban Development (HUD) estimate that there are more

than 30,000 Veterans experiencing homelessness on any given night in the United States, accounting for about 4 percent of the total unhoused population. Experiencing homelessness is particularly difficult for Veterans as many live with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), have high rates of chronic health issues, and have an elevated risk of suicide. For example, research on Veterans Health Administration (VHA) patients revealed that suicide is twice as common among Veterans who have been homeless compared to those who have not experienced homelessness. These findings emphasize the urgent need for targeted interventions. VCP is committed to reducing Veteran suicide, restoring hope, and empowering those who have served. As a recipient of the Staff Sergeant Parker Gordon Fox grant, VCP's Veteran Services teams are equipped with mental health screening tools and a direct connection to VA suicide prevention coordinators.

A key element of the St. Louis project is how VCP embraced innovative land-use strategies to maximize resources and expand its reach. One such approach is Enhanced Use Leasing (EUL), which is a federal program that allows government entities to lease underused land to private or nonprofit developers in exchange for in-kind benefits rather than financial rent. By securing land through EUL, VCP minimized

acquisition costs and accelerated project timelines, allowing more resources to be allocated to Veteran housing and support services.

The Partnership

VCP of St. Louis's success relied on developing key partnerships with local organizations and businesses. Castle Consulting LLC worked closely with the city to ensure a cost-effective solution and provided land assemblage, environmental remediation, and infrastructure support. A team from ARCO National Construction assisted in constructing and preparing the homes, as well as enhanced the site's appearance. ULI St. Louis contributed expertise in trauma-informed design, guiding the development of tiny homes. Additionally, VCP's partnership with Boeing was instrumental: with a significant number of military Veterans employed by the company, Boeing supported Veterans through workforce transition and rehabilitation programs.

Costs and Financing

VCP operates with support from private donations and nonrestrictive grants. In St. Louis, the Missouri Veterans Commission provided \$2.2 million in funding, while the Veterans United Foundation contributed an additional \$500,000.

To further reduce costs, VCP leveraged EUL to secure surplus government land without purchasing property or paying rent. In return, VCP provided site improvements, including environmental remediation and optimizing the land for development.

What Worked: The Project

Located at 1515 North Grand Boulevard in the Jeff-Vander-Lou neighborhood of St. Louis, VCP is an accessible resource and a crucial presence in the community. The Village is a thoughtfully designed, people-centered community featuring an Outreach Center, 50 transitional tiny homes for Veterans,

and a Village Center. Located just one mile from the John Cochran VA Medical Center and along the city's busiest bus line, this site offers easy access to essential services, including health care, public transportation, and employment opportunities, making it easier to connect Veterans to the resources they need. Each home is 240 square feet for individuals or 360 square feet for family units, which can sleep up to five people. Every home includes a bed, kitchen, and bathroom and comes fully stocked with essential household items such as appliances, bedding, pots, pans, utensils, towels, and chairs. Additionally, each unit is stocked with two weeks of groceries upon move-in. The home design prioritizes security and privacy, ensuring Veterans feel safe while transitioning out of homelessness through trauma-informed design elements, such as sightlines to doors and windows, which cater to those with PTSD. Pets are also welcomed, and the community's first canine residents were given dog beds.

The site will also feature a Community Center that is a hub for social services, case management, and peer support programs. Common spaces foster a sense of community while giving residents the opportunity to build supportive relationships.

What Worked: The Program

VCP has an effective model with an 85 percent success rate at getting Veterans back on their feet and ensuring they continue standing. Its residential program provides Veterans with the dignity of a home with wraparound services that provide comprehensive and individualized case management. VCP has a two-part process to support Veterans following its proprietary H.O.M.E.S. Index case management framework that focuses on five core areas of support: health and well-being, opportunity for education and training, money management, earnings and income stability, and a support network. Each Veteran receives personalized case management with a dedicated staff member overseeing no more than 10 residents. Weekly meetings help support consistent financial literacy,



Angie—a proud U.S. Navy Veteran and resident of the VCP Village in St. Louis—has found that her life in her 240-square-foot tiny home is inspiring a career in interior design. (Pat Swanson, Veterans Community Project)

employment readiness, and mental health progress. Every month, residents retake the H.O.M.E.S. Index and their progress is tracked, which allows VCP to understand who is approaching their goals and will be ready to transition to their own permanent housing. Veterans transitioning to permanent housing keep the furniture and all essential household items when they leave, enabling a move that is financially less burdensome, provides them with a sense of continuity and stability, and helps them settle into their new environments with familiar belongings.

Challenges

The project encountered several obstacles, including land acquisition, environmental remediation, and zoning restrictions. St. Louis's zoning codes did not have a permit to build tiny house villages, requiring VCP to attain a planned unit development (PUD) permit that allows for tiny houses, which it successfully obtained. Additionally, regulatory barriers slowed the process, though strategic partnerships and creative land use techniques, such as EUL, helped to overcome these challenges.

Outcomes

Veterans Community Project has demonstrated remarkable success in helping Veterans, with 85 percent of residents successfully moving into permanent housing. The project's model is now being replicated nationwide, with new VCP Villages planned or completed in cities across the country.

As the model expands, the core of VCP's vision remains rooted in the lives it transforms—each story a testament to the program's impact on individual Veterans and their journeys toward healing and stability. Every story is unique and reflects resilience, hope, and the profound impact of safe, supportive housing on rebuilding lives. Home is more than offering shelter; it's about restoring dignity, fostering stability, and honoring sacrifices. For example, U.S. Army Veteran and VCP alum Tim said, "If not for VCP, I don't know where I'd be right now. That one year I spent in the Village set off a whole chain of events. And not one time in the last six years have I turned around and gone backward—it's all been progressing. VCP saved my life."

HOMELESS TO HOUSED: PROJECT PRO FORMA

NAME Veterans Community Project of St. Louis, Missouri	BRIEF DESCRIPTION Veterans Community Project (VCP) of St. Louis, Missouri, is a transitional tiny home community for Veterans experiencing homelessness that offers wraparound case management services, ensuring residents can sustainably transition into permanent housing.
LOCATION 1515 North Grand Boulevard, St. Louis, Missouri	
SPONSOR Veterans Community Project	
NUMBER OF UNITS 50	
SIZE (SQUARE FOOTAGE) 4 acres; 50 homes at 240/360 square feet each and 4,000-square-foot commercial center for services	

DEVELOPMENT PRO FORMA TOTAL (\$) PER RES./UNIT (\$)

USE OF FUNDS		
Acquisition of land and/or building	1,823,768	36,475
Architecture, engineering, and entitlement costs	363,344	7,267
Construction costs	5,403,820	108,076
Legal and professional costs	0	0
Additional equipment and related costs	0	0
Development fees	0	0
Interest during construction	0	0
Real estate taxes during construction	0	0
Other costs	1,764,109	35,282
Total uses, capital cost	9,355,041	187,101
SOURCE OF FUNDS		
Permanent debt	0	0
Equity	0	0
Philanthropic capital, government grants, or similar	9,355,041	187,101
Total sources	9,355,041	187,101

OPERATING PRO FORMA TOTAL (\$) PER RES./UNIT (\$)

ANNUAL REVENUE		
Revenue from residents	0	0
Revenue from resident-related sources (vouchers, etc.)	0	0
Revenue from other sources (grants, philanthropy)	1,175,000	23,500
Support for wraparound services	0	0
Total revenue	1,175,000	23,500
ANNUAL EXPENSES		
PROPERTY OPERATIONS		
Salaries	93,990	1,880
Repairs and maintenance	229,453	4,589
Utilities	81,200	1,624
Taxes	0	0
Insurance	18,924	378
Other property-related expenses	18,742	375
Total property operations	442,309	8,846
RESIDENT SERVICES		
Salaries	550,399	11,008
Contract services	0	0
Other cost reallocation for services	137,700	2,754
Total resident services	688,099	13,762
Total expenses	1,130,408	22,608
Net revenue	44,592	892

About the Urban Land Institute

ULI is a nonprofit education and research institute supported by its members. Its mission is to shape the future of the built environment for transformative impact in communities worldwide. Established in 1936, the Institute has more than 48,000 members worldwide representing all aspects of land use and development disciplines.

About ULI Homeless to Housed

Homeless to Housed (H2H) recognizes that ULI members are well positioned to help address homelessness. With generous support from a growing number of ULI members, the initiative works to explore real estate solutions to the growing crisis affecting communities everywhere. Core elements of this work include conducting research, promoting cross-sector collaboration, providing local technical assistance through ULI's network of district councils, and sharing knowledge and expertise for addressing housing challenges for individuals and families.

This initiative began through the 2022 research report *Homeless to Housed: The ULI Perspective Based on Actual Case Studies*. Driven by the generosity and guidance of Preston Butcher, the report explores the role the real estate community can play in addressing the issue of homelessness. It includes a summary of lessons learned, a blueprint for how to replicate best practices in U.S. communities, and a series of case studies that demonstrate how the development community can be an active partner in addressing the critical shortage of housing in the United States. See the full report and companion case studies: uli.org/h2h.

uli.org/homelessness
homelessness@uli.org

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