

In Our Backyard

Sheltering Unhoused Neighbors in Anchorage, Alaska

By John Wolfe Jr.
On behalf of the In Our Backyard board of directors

May 2026

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From the In Our Backyard board of directors:

We are grateful to Central Lutheran Church members for supporting and believing in our idea, and we are grateful for the use of church property. Without these things, the project would not have been possible.



We dedicate this booklet
In Memory of Carol Norquist.
Carol volunteered many hours as In Our Backyard's treasurer
and helped the organization get off the ground.

In Our Backyard is located on the ancestral homelands of the Dena'ina Athabascan people. We give thanks for their presence and stewardship of this place since time immemorial, and respectfully acknowledge the continued contributions of the Alaska Native community.

***The community response was just
overwhelming.***

Betty Hertz
In Our Backyard board member

***(We are) committed to building Anchorage's
safety net for our most vulnerable citizens. IOBY
is a key component in this journey. I think back
over the last 1.5 years, and IOBY has changed
the conversations around serving our unhoused
population. As IOBY has shown, we cannot 'fix'
homelessness, but we partner with those who
are homeless and figure it all out together.***

Cathleen McLaughlin
Restorative and ReEntry Services, Anchorage

***Persistence and effort and loving the neighbor
can get you to a pretty good place.***

Pastor Zach Manzella
Central Lutheran Church, Anchorage

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Dear Reader,

Who knew back in 2023 that the idea of creating a small housing community on a parking lot would become In Our Backyard. Certainly not me. But perhaps that isn't exactly true. The more we started researching, talking with people in the social services agencies, talking with people with lived experience, the more I could "see" it. I could see the tiny cabins in a circle, gardens, a safe calm beautiful space. I could see a community of people working together and supporting one another. The more obstacles that occurred, and the more "NOs" I heard, the more I was determined to make this vision a reality. We always found a way around every barrier.

We felt a sense of urgency to make IOBY viable before the winter of 2024-2025 set in. One of the biggest setbacks came in late August 2024. A grant to pay for construction costs from the Department of Housing and Urban Development that we had been assured was a go suddenly was not. I went out on a long walk with my dog through amazing trails, taking in the beauty around me, listening to the wind in the trees, and arguing with myself – do we wait another year to try and garner funding, or do we push forward on faith that "these things will work out"? At the end of that walk, I decided firmly to take the "abundance over scarcity" approach. There is abundance in our community, an abundance of resources, and of compassion, and of faith. I returned from my walk – good thing my dog is such a good listener – and checked my email. There in my inbox was a notice that we had received \$25,000 from a national faith group. Abundance abounds! We also put out word on our website and Facebook that we needed construction funds, and people donated!

I am well aware that this modest IOBY project does not have much impact on the overall number of people who are unhoused in Anchorage. However, it does have a huge impact on the individuals who are staying at IOBY. They have found a place of safety, rest, and community. In the words of one of the guests: "All the weight is lifted. I can focus on housing now. I have never felt this safe and cared for."

I wasn't alone. I had a team of hard working do-ers, people willing to also make a positive difference by being part of resolving the homelessness issue in our community. People who had worked alongside unhoused individuals, people who volunteered to participate on task forces and committees looking for long term solutions to the housing crisis, and people with an abundance of faith and compassion. And as guests of IOBY became part of the community and even moved on to permanent housing, they too have become part of the IOBY team.

What if other faith groups or civic organizations can use the model of IOBY to create similar small, safe places for unhoused people to have a chance to get back on their feet? It is certainly not an end-all solution, but it is part of the complex nature of caring for our unhoused neighbors. IOBY also has shown that a transitional community can add beauty and value to a neighborhood. Just ask the people who drive past the gardens, or who walk along the sidewalk and admire the flowers, pick berries, and visit with guests who might be out watering plants. IOBY is breaking down stereotypes of unhoused people and opening up eyes, hearts, and minds to all that we have in common.

Perhaps, after reading this document, you will be moved to start a similar "tiny cabins" project, become active helping unhoused people in the community, or simply remember that you too can make a difference in the lives of others.

Loaves & Fishes,

Julie Greene-Graham

Founder and Chair of In Our Backyard





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A Church and Its Backyard

Introduction

There is a stigma to being unhoused, and efforts to help those “living on the streets” (or in their cars, or in shelters) often meet a NIMBY response: “Not in My Backyard.” Cities across the United States struggling to house all their residents try various solutions, but the NIMBY response can mean gridlock and slow progress.

In Anchorage, Alaska, members of Central Lutheran Church saw a need and took action. Camps had sprung up on church property at 15th Avenue and Cordova Street, near downtown Anchorage, and on public land adjacent to the church – literally in the church’s backyard. Rejecting the “*Not*,” members of the church founded a new non-governmental organization and called it “In Our Backyard” (IOBY). They decided to serve unhoused senior citizens with transitional dwellings – “tiny cabins” – to fill a gap in services between larger, short-term group shelters and long-term housing. This project was a first for Anchorage, testing new laws and a new housing model.

This booklet is part record of what happened, part manual that others might learn from, and also part storytelling, because there were some good stories along the way. In Our Backyard produced this booklet to help answer questions for people who wondered how IOBY did it and to encourage similar efforts in Anchorage, or anywhere.

IOBY’s timing was good, and the small organization was able to move fast. From achieving 501(c)(3) non-profit status in January 2024 to receiving the first of what it calls “guests” in December 2024, a lot happened. (See timeline in [Appendix A](#).) The ultimate result, as of the end of 2025, is a fenced plot of land of 55 feet by 90 feet on which there are:

- four 8-foot by 8-foot cabins (each may house one person)
- two 8-foot by 12-foot cabins (each may house up to two roommates)
- a shower trailer (two bathrooms with showers)
- a 12-foot by 16-foot community building
- raised garden beds for vegetables within the fence (in part to protect from moose)
- perennial, medicinal, and berry gardens outside the fence

...and senior guests who live there temporarily in peaceful, lockable, and even homey spaces of their own.

Read on to find out what the IOBY board learned and what they did to make this project happen.





Central Lutheran Church in Anchorage, Alaska, June 2024.
Photo Courtesy of Your Alaska Link.

It Started in the Church

Julie Greene-Graham, with her husband Mike Graham and extended family, has long been an active member of Central Lutheran Church. Four generations of Grahams attend, including Mike's mother, Julie and Mike's adult daughters, and their young grandchildren. The church already was actively serving people in need in the Fairview neighborhood, where the church is located, operating a Helping Hands Clothing Closet, a monthly Foot and Wound Clinic, and a monthly meal service ("Eddie's BBQ"), and participating in a Family Emergency Cold Weather Shelter program with other organizations. The church was concerned about homelessness as well. Unhoused people had for some time been setting up camps near or on church property. The Municipality of Anchorage had converted a large sports and events arena to a low-barrier emergency shelter during the Covid 19 pandemic, and it was close enough that the church, along with residents of surrounding apartments and homes, frequently saw and were in contact with the unhoused population.



An alliance of churches called Anchorage Faith & Action Congregations Together (AFACT), of which Central Lutheran is a part, was discussing the growing and intractable city-wide issue of protecting unhoused people from long, cold winters and other hazards of life without a home. Julie ended up taking the lead within the Local Organizing Ministry of Central Lutheran Church on the homelessness issue, mostly to do research and report back to the Local Organizing Ministry and AFACT as a whole. When then-Anchorage Mayor Dave Bronson set up a task force in 2023 to explore issues related to people living on the street and in shelters, Julie participated.

She also volunteered serving coffee at a huge, messy, informal encampment that had grown in Davis Park, a large municipal park in northeast Anchorage, and talked to people living there. She and others also gathered information about the realities of serving the unhoused population with multiple social service organizations as part of their research. Through these efforts, Julie says, she “learned the difficulties” both for unhoused Anchorage residents and for those providing shelter and services for the unhoused.

The mayor’s task force looked at the possibility of sanctioned camps. Julie had seen and heard stories of misery at the Davis Park camp – campers involved in sex trafficking, drug use and drug sales, extortion, burning of people’s tents and belongings, and more. St. John United Methodist Church had an idea that building “tiny houses” on their property might provide housing, at least temporarily, for those in need. But that church’s location on the Lower Hillside in southeast Anchorage was relatively far from downtown and most services, and it was not on a bus route. The idea, though, took hold among Julie and a couple of other people at Central Lutheran Church.

“Somebody should do something about this,” Julie recalls thinking. “I am somebody. Maybe I should do something.” She already was working with others in her church, and the idea grew of building tiny structures rather than a free-form camp on church property. She and others were somewhat disappointed the mayor’s task force seemed to be talking but not acting. “You know what?” she says. “It can’t be just the government.”

The Church Council was cautiously interested in using church property but rejected the overall proposal at first, wanting more information at minimum. Ultimately, the Church Council supported the concept but suggested its management fall to a separate entity, perhaps a new organization.

Julie and two others she had been working with agreed to form an initial board of directors – Steve Lambert, who was on the Church Council and had experience with construction, and Hank Koegel, who was active on the homelessness issue and had firsthand experience as the primary point of contact for an unhoused person and church member living in a tent on church property. Julie, Steve, and Hank applied to be a non-profit corporation called “In Our Backyard.” The State of Alaska issued a certificate of incorporation December 12, 2023, and the U.S. Internal Revenue Service granted tax-exempt status as a charitable organization in January 2024.

The new group ambitiously set out to provide housing before the next winter set in around Halloween, only ten months away.





In Our Backyard site with downtown Anchorage in the background, May 2026. Drone Photo by Michael Still @LiveTravelTeach.





The Need and Community Buy-In

In Our Backyard was a concept with legs before it was a bona fide non-profit corporation or had a name. Researching, reaching out to agencies and the community, developing a plan, and securing the site took place before there was a formal organization. Nonetheless, it was critical work. The timeline in [Appendix A](#) provides an overview.

Articulating the need and fostering community buy-in were among these early tasks. The concept needed acceptance by key entities:

- Central Lutheran Church itself, as provider of the land and the nearest “neighbor” of the proposed new housing, including its leadership and its individual members.
- The surrounding Fairview neighborhood, both individual residents (housed and unhoused) and the Fairview Community Council.
- Potential supporting organizations and partners: social service agencies, other faith communities, municipal departments, and elected officials.

Landowner Approval

IOBY formed within Central Lutheran Church and had the church’s general support. Still, the church had a lot to balance as it considered entering new relationships with the community, with various ministry partners, and within the congregation itself. Lawyers, building-and-grounds guys, risk managers, and security people – not to mention parents of small children – sit on the Church Council, are employed by the church, or are congregation members who care about the church and provide money to sustain it. The new organization formally approached the Church Council. “There was skepticism, and even some challenge,” says Pastor Zach Manzella of Central Lutheran. “It was not unkind, and it wasn’t a No.” There were questions about insurance, the law, building codes, and more. The new team collected more information (see “[Proof of Concept](#),” below in this section) and presented it before the Church Council two more times.

“The doggedness of Julie really helped out,” says Pastor Zach. After the third presentation, the Council granted approval. However, the Council decided it would be best for a legal entity separate from the church to own and manage the new development. There were specific stipulations in a formal agreement that said the church would allow use of its land and would provide office space, but that nothing should imply any formal or legal partnership, and that



there would be no financial entanglement between the church organization and the new IOBY organization.

In addition, the IOBY proponents took the proposal to the full congregation for a vote of approval at an annual meeting.

Several other churches partnering with IOBY include: Amazing Grace Lutheran, First Presbyterian, the Alaska Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, First Covenant, Girdwood United Methodist, Greater Friendly Church of Christ and God, St. John United Methodist, First United Methodist, and Turnagain United Methodist.

Community Outreach and Community Councils

Central Lutheran and its members had long been active serving unhoused neighbors. As Julie's involvement was beginning, the church invited Mayor Dave Bronson and Assembly Chair Suzanne LaFrance to a small meeting with the people researching homelessness. Both elected officials saw the issue as a priority but had different ways of approaching it – enough that it felt like a “gulf” between them. It was then, says Pastor Zach, that he “felt some resolve” in the Local Organizing Ministry members. They were going to act and not wait around for a city solution. (Suzanne LaFrance would go on to be elected mayor as IOBY geared up for construction.)

As Julie became involved in homelessness issues, she volunteered at the large Davis Park encampment in Mountain View, a nearby neighborhood, and learned directly from campers what it was like to camp there. She came away with the sense that “no one is safe” inside that kind of free-form camp.



*Board members hand out meals to people living out of tents near Central Lutheran Church, July 2024.
Photo Courtesy of Alaska Public Media.*

The outreach and information gathering of the Local Organizing Committee at Central Lutheran Church included sending representatives to community council meetings. “That’s just essential,” says board member Betty Hertz. Community councils in Anchorage advise the Anchorage Municipal Assembly on local neighborhood issues and city-wide issues (<https://communitycouncils.org/>). The Fairview Community Council is the local council – the one surrounding the church. The first visits to this and the nearby Mountain View and Airport Heights Community Councils were, according to Julie, “just hearing what’s going on, hearing what people are thinking.” In general, the community outreach was a combination of learning the needs, creating relationships, and sounding people out for their support of the potential project.





A cluster of bicycles and tents sits in an encampment near the 15th Avenue fishing reel bridge, near the future site of In Our Backyard, July 2024. Photo Courtesy of Alaska Public Media.

Later, Julie attended a Fairview Community Council meeting specifically to lay out the IOBY plan, but not until after the Church Council had approved it. IOBY wrote up a “good neighbor policy” for use with the church and with the community council (see [Appendix B](#)). The memorandum addressed cleanliness, quiet hours, proposed communication, and more. This step was meant to ensure that if Fairview neighbors felt there was a problem at IOBY that needed resolution, they could have confidence it would be communicated and acted upon. The community council issued a letter of support for IOBY, which ultimately helped in securing the municipal grant. The community council also considered and ultimately signed the good neighbor policy.

Later, in 2024, an informal encampment grew on and adjacent to church property, eventually amounting to more than 40 tents. Pastor Zach, who previously had been Associate Director of Residential Life at the University of Alaska Anchorage, walked over to the tents with other church members, and they talked to everybody they could find, inviting them to a kind of “residents’ meeting.” The church, as part of its local organizing ministry efforts, also posted flyers on the doors of housed neighbors near the church and posted flyers in camps inviting all of the neighbors to the church to discuss issues about homelessness. A couple dozen people – housed and unhoused – attended and met with church members, sharing phone numbers, information, needs, and concerns. The church and housed neighbors had people sometimes sleeping in their doorways or defecating in their yards. The unhoused neighbors said they needed toilets, food, and a way to deal with trash. The church arranged for portable toilets and some meal deliveries, thanks to donations, and trash bags the city would collect. This dialog among housed and unhoused neighbors built momentum for a shared solution and doing something more long-lasting. “The church got a better sense of its neighbors,” says Pastor Zach. The church and housed neighbors were able to “recognize the humanity in the people out there.” And, he says, “people were serious about getting something done.”



Social Service Agencies

Concurrent with the community outreach efforts, the organization continued what Julie already had been doing – asking questions of service providers in the community in order to learn. What will be helpful? What is the need? How would the proposed small shelters fit with what is going on in the city?

Key organizations included:

- Catholic Social Services
- Lutheran Social Services
- RuralCap
- NeighborWorks
- Christian Health Associates
- Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness

There are many social service organizations, mostly non-profit organizations, that address the needs of the unhoused population. [Appendix C](#) contains links to lists of agencies providing services in Anchorage. In addition, Julie reached out to people in other states in organizations with missions similar to that of IOBY and learned more from them.

Target Group for the Project

After talking with social service agencies and with their own church, the IOBY team had begun thinking that they should focus their project specifically on senior unhoused people. The data showed that 27 percent of Anchorage homeless people were in the age range of 45 to 64 years old. Also, Lutheran Social Services had identified a need for greater services for this age group. And, says Julie, “there was more empathy” for that age range in the church. “It was an easier sell for our church population, honestly.”

Originally, the IOBY team thought it would serve couples and roommates (two people who knew each other) in slightly larger cabins. Julie had seen couples at the Davis Park camp. But in data the city and state maintain (displayed on a detailed computer “dashboard”) — and



Among its many tasks, the Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness provides food, resources, and aid to unhoused neighbors living outdoors. Photo Courtesy of Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness.

from talking with social service providers — it appeared that overall there were fewer couples than expected. So the board decided to change its target slightly so that only two larger cabins would be built to serve couples or roommates, and the other four would be smaller single cabins. Getting a handle on the data was helpful for the board. The Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness maintains the Data Dashboard: <https://www.aceh.org/data>.



Proof of Concept

Social service agencies had said it would be good to show “proof of concept.” The outreach, interviews and information gathering, and volunteer efforts both at homeless camps and on official committees addressing the topic all culminated in a Proof of Concept (POC) document created in the fall of 2023. This occurred before the organization was formally incorporated. Two of the founding board members drew up the document. The POC document was meant to clarify the thinking of the fledgling organization, both for itself and for outreach to the church and other potential partner organizations. Its content became the basic format for IOBY.

Before deciding to form IOBY, the team looked into organizing under the wing of an established group; Christian Health Associates and Lutheran Social Services of Alaska were the two candidates. The POC document aided in discussions with these organizations, and while both groups were very supportive, there was concern this new venture might be “mission creep” for them. They could hash it out with their own boards, but that might take a year. The discussions helped gel the concept that the tiny cabins would be a product of a new independent organization.

Julie Greene-Graham speaks with members of the Rasmuson Foundation, November 2024. Photo Courtesy of Rasmuson Foundation.



The Proof of Concept document addressed the following:

Name of Project

The POC identified several possible names, one of which was In Our Backyard.

Identify Problem or Opportunity

At the time, IOBY stated the problem/opportunity as follows: “The Shelter Project is an opportunity to be proactive in addressing the needs of our houseless neighbors. This project will be a model for other faith based organizations, community groups, or businesses to address homelessness.” This was later refined in developing the current Mission, Vision, and Core Values (see following subsection).

Target Audience (People to be served)

The POC identified preliminary criteria for the unhoused people the project would serve, including age 50+ and other criteria which have been consistent since then. See also Program Agreement in Section 7.

Resources Needed

The POC addressed Materials, Permits, and Human Expertise but not financial resources. (Although finances could have been part of it.)

Success Criteria

The board set what it felt were realistic goals as measures of success, such as “60 percent of clients have moved into permanent housing within twelve months.”

Project Scope

The “Project Scope” section was a five-paragraph narrative for “rolling out the plan” – partly an attempt to realistically lay out how IOBY would work and partly a way to project confidence to readers, who might be permitters or funders. This section helped the board build confidence in itself.

Timeline

IOBY expressed the proposed timeline to opening its doors in three phases:

- Approval (proof of concept, church approval, non-profit status, sponsoring agency)
- Permits and Funding (building permits, grants secured)
- Completion (construction and installation).



Mission, Vision, Core Values

The new organization thought through its vision, its mission, and its core values. This clarification is a common step for any organization getting its start. The wording has changed only slightly over time. See the accompanying box for the words that guide the organization today.

MISSION:
Building a welcoming community to provide safe interim homes and connection to resources for our unhoused senior neighbors.

VISION:
Creating a community where everyone is housed.

VALUES:
Respect, Compassion, Welcome, Collaboration.

These statements of purpose did not just spring into being. The background work of the board members and others starting in 2023 (and continuing into 2024) had incrementally gelled the concept, values, and aspirations of the project. Taking the time to think through and fully articulate mission, vision, and values focuses an organization on what is most important. Mission, vision, and values are often a critical part of grant applications. They can be essential for outreach within the broader community to communicate succinctly what the organization is all about. They also parallel the typical statements of purpose that appear in a non-profit corporation’s legal documents and may be developed at the same time.

Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws

To apply to be a non-profit corporation, it is necessary to develop and submit articles of incorporation. This is a legal document (a bit like the Declaration of Independence or the pre-U.S. Constitution Articles of Confederation) that lays out the basic purpose of the organization and identifies who is responsible for operating it. The State of Alaska requires a minimum of three people to form a board of directors, and the functions of president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer must be presented. The document is submitted to the State of Alaska Division of Corporations (part of the Department of Commerce and Economic Development). The information becomes a matter of public record.

Bylaws are more like the fully-thought-out Constitution for the organization and present specific internal rules for operating the new non-profit organization – duties of officers, when and how meetings will be conducted, etc. State law requires bylaws, but they need not be submitted to the state. However, for non-profits seeking tax-exempt status from the U.S. Internal Revenue Service, it is necessary to submit bylaws to the IRS.



IOBY looked at model bylaws from other non-profits, used a free version of Rocket Lawyer online, and used ChapGPT artificial intelligence (“how to write bylaws for a non-profit focusing on housing issues”). These efforts were blended into an initial draft and then fine-tuned by Betsy Baker, a volunteer, with advice from Pastor Zach. Both had legal backgrounds, and Betsy’s experience with other non-profits was key. IOBY completed articles of incorporation and bylaws at the end of 2023.

The reality of non-profit corporations is that it takes time to manage the organization – to follow the rules, file the paperwork, keep the notes, bring new people up to speed – and sometimes it feels like this management is a distraction from the actual mission of the organization. Drawing on people with relevant professional and non-profit experience can be very helpful. The organization gained Carol Norquist, a retired accountant, to handle the duties of treasurer. She worked as a volunteer without being a voting director. In IOBY’s first major transition, Hank Koegel bowed out, and Betty Hertz joined the board. Betty had been working with Julie on homelessness as part of her own church – St. John United Methodist. And then Betsy (who had used her legal expertise to help write the bylaws) also joined. Joanna Knapp later took over as treasurer. These transitions in the first year were not necessarily unusual for any new non-profit group.



Board members of In Our Backyard meet with NVision Architecture consultants to discuss shelter design ideas, April 2024.





The Site and Its Influence

A housing project necessarily needs a place, a plot of land. IOBY had started with the concept of using a portion of the Central Lutheran Church property, so its address within Anchorage was pretty well settled. It helped that the church was located on the edge of downtown, near existing services designed to help unhoused people with emergency shelter, food, clothing, showers, and social services, and on bus routes. However, there was a need to identify where, exactly, the tiny cabins would occur on the three-acre church property. How much space would they take up? How would it affect existing church uses of the property?

NVision Architecture donated services to lay out the cabins to scale and figure out how much space the “tiny” community might require. Snow removal, a reality in Anchorage, turned out to be a related issue. The church hires someone to plow the parking lot but has sufficient land to store the snow on site, so it doesn’t pay to have the snow trucked away. A good deal of the plowed snow historically had been pushed to the western edge of the property, right where NVision was laying out potential sites. (See [illustration](#) in Section 5.) After some negotiation among the board, the church, and the architects, the decision was made that an area 60 feet by 90 feet would be allowed – just large enough to fit the conceptual group of cabins but not so large as to preclude needed snow storage. “So snow removal determined the size,” Julie says wryly.

Wes Tonkins is a mechanical engineer. Julie characterizes him as “a longtime member of Central (Lutheran Church) and the kind of guy who knows everything about the church building.” He serves on the church’s property committee and is a sort of buildings-and-grounds person for the church. One day Steve Lambert and Julie, with Pastor Zach and Wes Tonkins, walked the property, starting with an area already fenced near the southeast corner of the lot, very close to the intersection of Cordova St. and 15th Avenue, which had been discussed as a location that likely would work for the cabins.

Among the siting considerations were noise, security, visibility, topography, access to utilities, and snow removal. The primary noise issue for this project was the traffic on



Future site of In Our Backyard on the west end of the parking lot at Central Lutheran Church, July 2021.



adjacent roads. In general, additional noise issues could also include potential noise of the operation and its effect on existing uses of the land or on neighbors, even if it is more a matter of perception rather than actual decibels. The noise of construction is also worth considering. Security and visibility are related. There is a need for security for existing uses of the land and for the new guests who generally want nothing more than to live with a little peace. The Central Lutheran Church property is level along the southern boundary, and the northern portion slopes downhill. It might be tempting to tuck the tiny cabins away at the bottom of the hill in a hidden corner for best privacy, but visibility to the public or to other users of the property also helps reduce the potential for vandalism.

During their walk, the southeast corner of the Central Lutheran property seemed quite loud with traffic noise and within close view of drivers stopping at the intersection. When the group walked to the southwest corner, it seemed markedly quieter and more suitable for living. The bottom of the hill would be the most private but perhaps also would have the least security, and the low area collects drainage, especially in the spring as snow melts. The primary church parking lot and entrance are located on the southern part of the property, and the use of that area would need to continue. Ultimately it was agreed that the southwest corner, immediately off the paved parking lot and butted up to a berm along the property boundary, would provide good access and visibility, better privacy and lower noise, and minimal disturbance to existing church uses.

When it came time, in spring 2024, to lay out the site on the ground, church member Stan Olsen worked with BC Excavating. Stan had retired from a project management career, directing construction of buildings like schools and hospitals. Stan and the excavator noted that if they made the IOBY area 55 feet wide instead of 60 feet wide, they could avoid any need to cut into the berm. This was financially attractive, and what's five feet? So that is what they laid out, and that was the size that a fencing company fenced in. But there was a municipal requirement for the buildings to be located five feet minimum from the fence line



In Our Backyard with Central Lutheran Church in the background, May 2026. Drone Photo by Michael Still @LiveTravelTeach.

around the 55x90 foot IOBY area – again, to accommodate snow, only this time snow that would slide off the roofs. And there was barely room to fit the arc of tiny cabins in the 60-foot area.

“We had to scootch” the buildings a bit closer to each other, says Julie, in order to ensure enough setback to pass the Municipal inspection. For Julie, this felt like Lesson Learned: Be very careful with even small changes from the plans when transferring them onto the land in real life. For Stan, who was more accustomed to making changes on a job site, it felt more like a routine adjustment for practical purposes, but he concedes the space to work with was very tight.





Permit and Insurance Requirements Drive Planning and Budget

Permits

Building almost any structure within the Municipality of Anchorage or any city or county in the U.S. typically requires building permits and associated electrical and plumbing permits. In general, permits are meant to ensure that plans and built structures meet building codes. These codes are adopted by ordinance (law) by the Anchorage Assembly and are intended to ensure that new structures are safe, have minimal negative effects on other properties, and generally function well within the city. When earthquakes hit in developing countries and buildings collapse, a lack of building codes or permit enforcement are likely reasons. Building codes and associated permits mean to ensure that roofs and walls hold up under local snow, wind, and – yes – earthquake loads. Plans need to be provided for parking. Electrical systems need to minimize the risk of electrocution and electrical fire. Nobody wants risks to life and health.

All that said, the permitting process has a bad reputation for being full of bureaucracy and red tape, and often feels random and nonsensical to project proponents. IOBY experienced this feeling of randomness and nonsense, and it was heightened because IOBY was the first local entity to propose a cluster of tiny cabins for the unhoused. The board “was very naive about how the system worked,” says founding board member Steve Lambert. “Our expectations were much greater than what was capable of happening” within the city’s Development Services Department. At the same time, the local government was supportive and helped resolve problems when they arose. The municipal requirements ultimately clarified what IOBY needed to do and shaped the plan and budget.

“We really had no idea starting out” what the cost of the project might be, Julie says. It helped that the Assembly had been thinking about some kind of micro-unit housing and had set aside some funding, even though it had not addressed this kind of transitional housing in an ordinance. Between the Assembly’s preparation and lobbying by IOBY for changes that





In Our Backyard cabins face a common area with a fire pit, May 2025. Photo Courtesy of Your Alaska Link.

would make an actual “micro-unit” project practical, the Assembly passed an amendment to municipal code requirements specifically for use of pre-fabricated micro-unit housing with no permanent foundation for sheltering unhoused city residents. The ordinance made the use of such small and temporary buildings legal without need for a building permit, as long as the manufacturer of the pre-fabricated structure had certified the design with a registered professional engineer. Electrical, fire, and plumbing permits and inspections still would be needed. Instead of falling under the umbrella of a building permit, any permits needed would fall under an electrical permit.

The Anchorage Assembly passed Assembly Ordinance 2024-53 on May 21, 2024. (It appears in [Appendix D](#).) IOBY saw winter coming and wanted to have its cabins completed to house people before the worst of winter. They went right to the Development Services Department (permitting) to seek approval of their plan and were rebuffed. The people behind the counter at Development Services had no idea there was a new ordinance and weren’t going to take IOBY’s word for it. Knowledge of the new ordinance just hadn’t gotten through the bureaucratic channels yet. “The Muni understands there were problems,” says Julie, and it quickly saw IOBY as a test case. Julie says Development Services subsequently met with Julie, Stan Olsen, and Steve Lambert and worked through a list of steps that need to be completed to make the process better and clearer for any future project. The municipality published this as informational Handout AG.31; see [Appendix E](#).

The proposed IOBY tiny cabins met the requirements of the new ordinance (under 120 square feet, technically portable and not permanently anchored to the ground). IOBY had intended to use Pallet Shelter brand structures but ultimately went with cabins built with structural insulated panels (SIPs). These were manufactured in Washington and needed to be shipped to Alaska and assembled. The cost for the four 8x8 shelters was more than \$14,000 each, and somewhat more for each of the two 8x12 shelters. The shower trailer came to about \$65,000. Matson, a shipping company, provided a grant that covered the shipping of these structures from Washington. (IOBY had to find other money to get the shower trailer from Arizona to Washington).

IOBY still needed permits for electrical and plumbing, and the board was floored by the costs they were hearing to meet permit requirements. It was one of the largest challenges of the project. Compared to what IOBY had been assuming, the utilities “were way out of line,” Julie says. The cost for extending power to the site in a buried trench was more than \$100,000, a



huge amount compared to the assumed overall project. “That almost put an end to it!” Julie says. Providing year-round water also would have cost a large amount for the work, plus they were told they would have to post a bond to remove the water and sewer connections when the (“temporary”) shower trailer was removed in the future. Costs could run to \$300,000 just for water, according to Stan Olsen. These issues were resolved by a combination of forgoing an official water utility hookup and raising more money to enable the electric connection. See “[Utilities](#)” under Section 5, below.

Aimie Survant, PE, an Anchorage electrical engineer and member of United Methodist Church, heard about the project and volunteered her time around her normal work days. She interacted well with Chugach Electric Association (the utility) and Kodiak Electric (contracted to wire the cabins and hook them up to the underground cable) and was key to sorting out the electrical permits, requirements, and costs.

Insurance and Management Plan

IOBY always knew that insurance would be required eventually. But the team came face to face with the need to secure insurance as soon as possible when it became clear that the Municipality of Anchorage was a likely funding source for the project, and that the municipality required insurance in order to give a grant. The upside of this requirement is that it prodded the board to get serious about its policies and plans and put them into writing. While it would have been ideal to get insurance right away, the reality was that it took about six months.

Insurance – mostly liability insurance – is a need for almost any organization. The local insurance broker said insurance companies would require a business plan. Because IOBY did not consider itself a business in the traditional sense, the board created a document they call a Management Plan. It was a non-profit business plan meant to answer questions from potential permittees and funders (for example, the municipality) and others like insurance companies. And much of it was straightforward and even helpful. The insurance broker’s application asked questions like “what is your policy on pets?” and “what is your sexual harassment policy?” and “what is your emergency exit plan?” To answer those questions, the board talked through what made sense and wrote it down as policy in the Management Plan. The policies later transferred to the Program Agreement forms IOBY uses with applicants. See [Section 7](#).

Once the board had submitted the Management Plan to the insurance broker, actually getting insurance was its own minor adventure. The broker sent out the insurance proposal, with information from the Management Plan, to multiple national and in-state insurance companies. Big national names declined to insure IOBY, either because of their other commitments (the insurance industry was responding to massive fire damage in California) or because they did not like something within the proposal. The reasons were not clear. However, Umialik Insurance Company, an Alaska company based in Anchorage, agreed to insure IOBY. And the cost quoted was better than what IOBY had feared it might be. The ultimate cost was about \$6,000 per year.



Ultimately, Umialik provided IOBY the following coverages:

- Property (for damage to property from events such as fire, theft, and natural disaster).
- General Liability (for protection of the organization in case any person is injured at the site). This includes liability coverage for directors and officers for decisions the organization makes in good faith and for volunteers working on behalf of the organization.
- Crime (generally for fraud, embezzlement, etc. that results in financial loss).
- Hired and Non-Owned Auto (for protection of the organization if there is a problem when volunteers are driving their own vehicles or rental vehicles for IOBY).
- Umbrella (an extra layer of insurance over and above the others, raising the limits on the insurance amount).

Management Plan Outline

The Management Plan included the following headings:

Introduction

Manager

Management Operations

Operating Assumptions

Description of the Facility

Description of the Population Served

Eligibility Criteria and Referral

Volunteers

Staffing: Church Office Support; Support Services Contract; Case

Managers

Maintenance Plan

Transit Plan

Supportive Services

Meals

Subsidized Services (*transit and laundry vouchers, move-in kits for permanent housing*)

Security and Emergency Plan

Privacy Rights

Insurance

Code of Conduct for Community Members



Budgeted Costs, and Actual Costs

The Management Plan, various spreadsheets, and grant proposals included the capital budget and operating budget. The capital budget was for construction – the materials and labor to get the site completely set up and ready to operate. The operating budget projected costs to operate the IOBY program in its first full year.

Capital Budget: \$401,600

Actual Cost of Construction: \$333,783 + multiple donated services valued at \$54,000

First-Year Operating Budget: \$154,279

Actual 2025 Operating Expense: \$92,924

The tables on the following pages summarize this information and provide a column of actual costs for comparison.

IOBY’s operating expenses include an array of different and mostly-small costs, but they add up. These include: utilities (electricity, water delivery, wastewater pumping, propane), daily food/meals for IOBY guests, administrative assistance (church secretary additional duties), online database system for volunteers and donations, website fees, and guest support services (shopping for clothes upon moving in, taxi vouchers/bus passes, laundry vouchers) among others. Originally, IOBY budgeted for on-site managers who would be a physical presence most of the time, but they decided in practice that the operation did not need the on-site staff. Instead, some funds go to a few hours of the church secretary’s time to help with administrative tasks, and some funds go to Restorative and ReEntry Services, LLC to help more generally with management. See also [Section 8](#).



Inside an 8'x8' shelter at In Our Backyard, November 2024.



In Our Backyard Capital Budget, Phase 1, 2024

Item	Budget	Actual Expense
Building Expense : Contingency	\$43,000	\$2,092
Building Expense : Doors	\$5,600	\$6,538
Building Expense : Earthwork	\$20,000	\$41,565
Building Expense : Electrical	\$60,000	\$115,983
Building Expense : Fence	\$28,000	\$22,486
Building Expense : Flooring	\$1,600	\$1,237
Building Expense : Holding Tank	\$9,800	\$15,481
Building Expense : Paint	\$1,000	\$699
Building Expense : Roof	\$6,300	\$5,082
Building Expense : Security	\$9,800	\$4,138
Building Expense : SIPs Panels	\$47,200	\$46,023
Building Expense : Site Survey	\$5,250	\$5,899
Building Expense : Shower Trailer	\$73,000	\$64,911
Building Expense : Water	\$25,000	\$ - -
Building Expense : Windows	\$1,650	\$1,649
Project Manager	\$7,100	IN KIND
Construction Manager	\$3,200	IN KIND
Construction Labor	\$18,400	IN KIND
Design Work	\$21,000	IN KIND
Electrical Engineer	\$13,200	IN KIND
Electrical Engineering Drawings	\$1,500	IN KIND
Total:	\$401,600	\$333,783

This table covers Phase 1 construction in 2024 and does not include the community building erected in 2025, or the water line and gardens established in 2025.



A worker delivers SIPs materials to the site, October 2024.



Volunteers construct the shelters, October 2024.



In Our Backyard 2025 Operating Budget		
ADMIN	Budget	Actual Expense
Bank Fees	\$50	\$20
Contingency	\$1,000	-
License/ Fees	\$300	\$300
Office Supplies	\$300	\$480
Paypal/Credit Card Fees	\$750	\$990
Phone/Internet/Website	\$2,100	\$1,231
Postage	\$800	\$327
CABIN	Budget	Actual Expense
Cabin Supplies	\$3,000	\$4,800
Food	\$13,140	\$12,000
Laundry	\$3,600	\$2,826
Clothing	-	\$5,000
Bus Passes	-	\$500
Garden Activity	-	\$8,850
RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT	Budget	Actual Expense
Fundraising	\$750	\$1,000
Mailchimp	\$240	\$240
Printing	\$1,000	\$500
UTILITIES	Budget	Actual Expense
Electricity	\$11,634	\$4,910
Propane	\$13,500	\$2,702
Snow Removal	\$4,000	\$1,399
Trash	\$1,260	\$1,362
Water	\$3,500	\$1,860
Water Pumping	\$3,000	\$3,120
VOLUNTEER COMMITTEE	Budget	Actual Expense
Background Checks	\$55	\$100
Accounting	\$300	\$250
OTHER	Budget	Actual Expense
Site Manager	\$77,000	\$23,500
Insurance	\$5,100	\$5,965
Miscellaneous	\$100	\$1,404
Property Repairs	\$3,500	\$2,288
Reserves	\$4,300	\$5,000
Total:	\$154,279	\$92,924

*Garden Activity = build and plant the garden; Site Manager = Administrative assistance;
Snow Removal = snow removal budget went to a snow blower operated by guests and volunteers.*





“Tiny Cabin” Concept Leads to Construction

Concept

The concept had started with “tiny houses.” But the typical structure called a tiny house most often is a fairly upscale custom home that happens to be of a size that can be moved using a trailer. IOBY did not want to imply “custom home” or “upscale.” The Municipality had begun using the term “micro-unit,” but that sounded like an institutional term. Over time, the board came to call the units “cabins” or “tiny cabins.” One of the first applicants cemented this term after he took a look at the structure he was to inhabit and said it reminded him of his cabin at fish camp. Fishing cabins, trapping/hunting cabins, mining cabins, and small cabins as homes have a long history in Alaska, and this terminology seemed like a good fit.

But what would this “tiny” community actually look like? What would the cabins actually be? Early in 2024, NVision Architecture donated time to create a “due diligence plan.” This step is an investigation conducted before a project begins to determine a site’s feasibility, risks, and regulatory constraints. The idea is to head off costly pitfalls by thinking through all parts of the project. The memorandum addressed zoning, building codes and permits (and exceptions that might be requested),

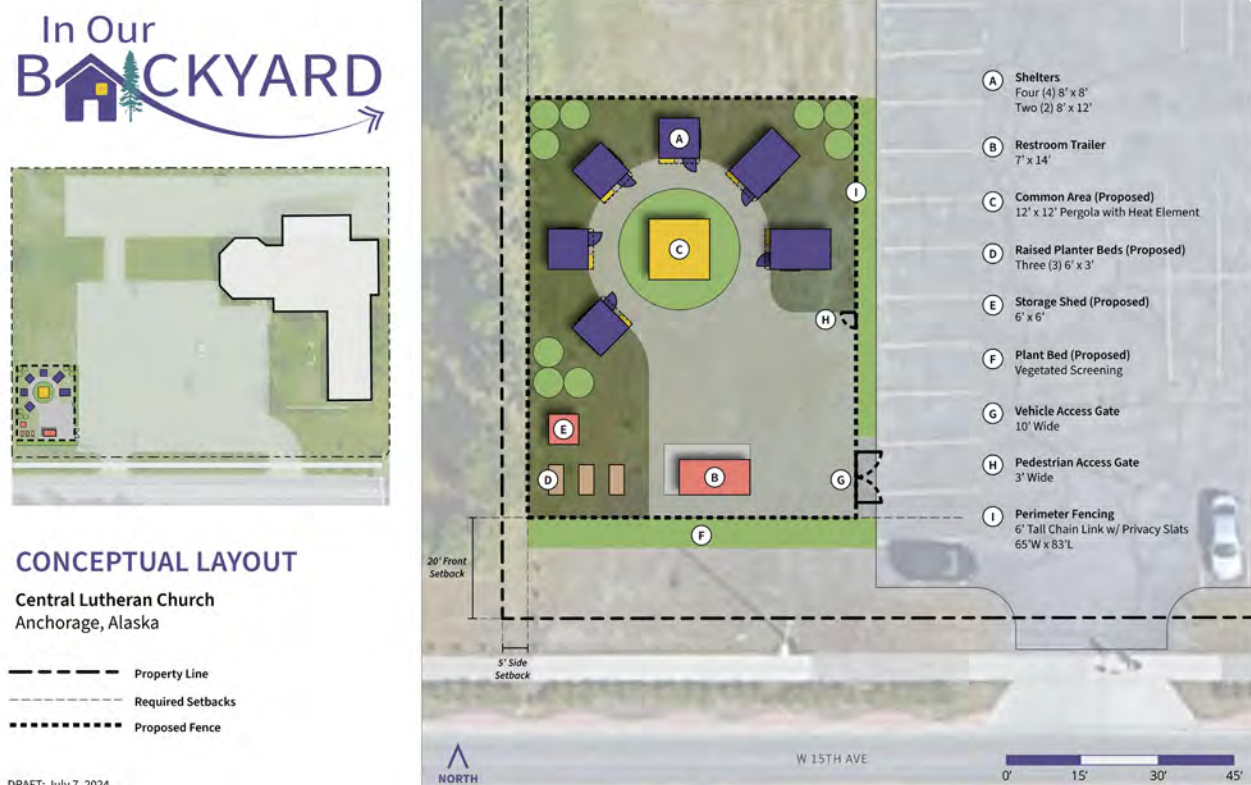


Site layout options from NVision Architecture’s due diligence plan, February 2024.



accessibility for those with disabilities, stand-alone vs. multi-plex “tiny” buildings, Pallet Shelters vs. structural insulated panels, heating, water, and laundry.

“I always wanted it nice,” says Julie, indicating she and her daughter, a landscape architect, had discussed indigenous ways and creating a sense of community through the layout of the site, suggesting a semi-circular layout with a central fire pit, raised planting beds, and other landscaping. IOBY ultimately went with this concept (illustrated below).

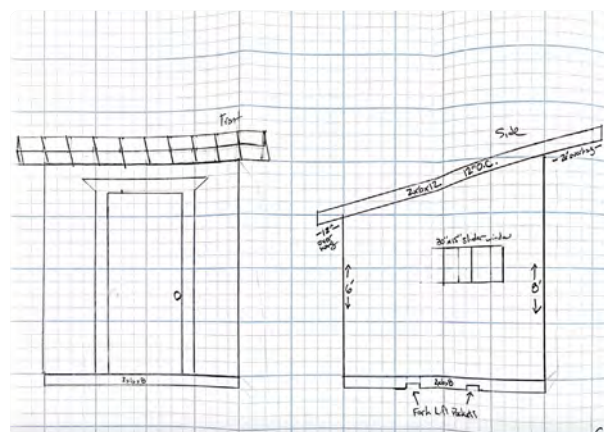


Final site layout concept, July 2024.

Design and Materials

Pastor Andy Bartel at St. John United Methodist Church had laid out on graph paper a concept of a small building that could provide housing for an unhoused person. It was the inspiration for the tiny cabins to come. NVision Architecture used the sketch and made it meet municipal requirements.

Pallet Shelter is a brand that had shown up in early research. Pallet Shelters are



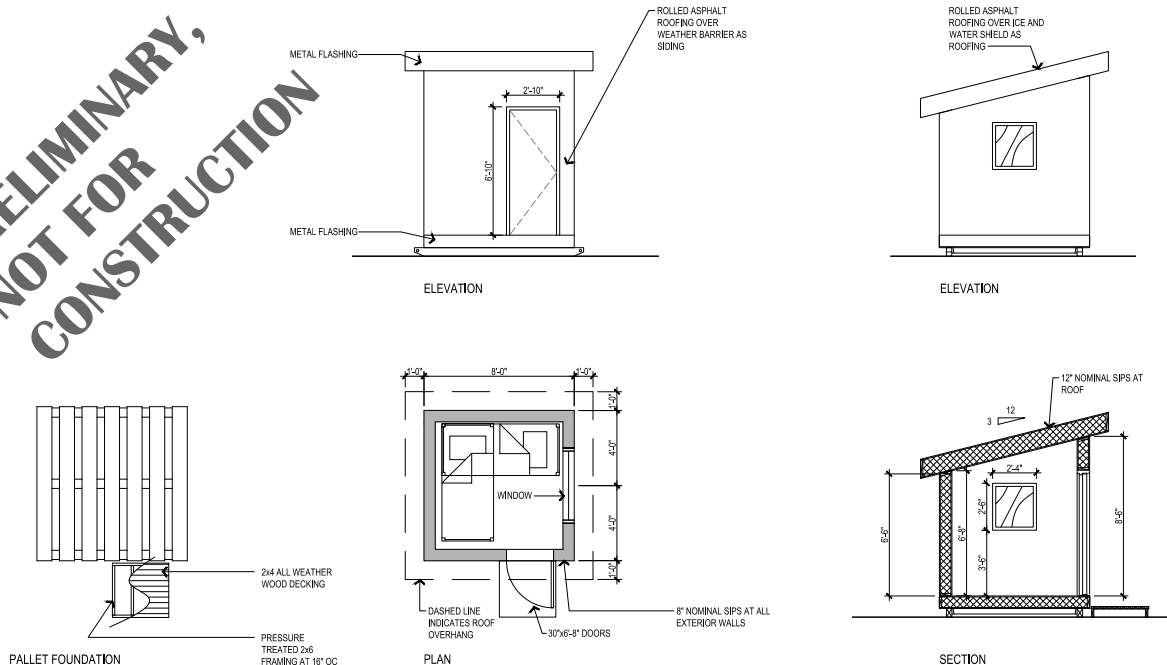
Preliminary sketch of shelter design by Pastor Andy Bartel at St. John United Methodist Church, February 2024.



billed as rapid-response shelters specifically intended for “shelter villages,” useful for addressing homelessness, disaster response, and workforce housing. Ultimately, IOBY wanted more insulation for Alaska winters than Pallet Shelters provided. Structural Insulated Panels (SIPs) turned out to be a bit less expensive and to provide insulation and structural strength together in pre-formed wall, floor, or roof panels, each panel a slab of insulating foam sandwiched with structural plywood on each side. They are not manufactured in Anchorage, likely because Anchorage building code does not allow them for typical residential construction. IOBY approached a company in Wasilla, Alaska, but that company was booked with orders for rural Alaska homes, so the timing would not work for IOBY’s schedule.

Uresco Construction Materials, Inc. is a major supplier of building materials in Alaska and the Pacific Northwest, and a wholesale dealer for many building materials. It bills itself as equipped to handle delivery of building materials to sites across Alaska. It was the ideal company to help with procuring and delivering the tiny cabins. Uresco was able to procure SIPs structures from Premier Building Systems, a SIPs manufacturer in Washington.

**PRELIMINARY,
NOT FOR
CONSTRUCTION**



Transitional TinyHaus - Single Unit Version

SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0"

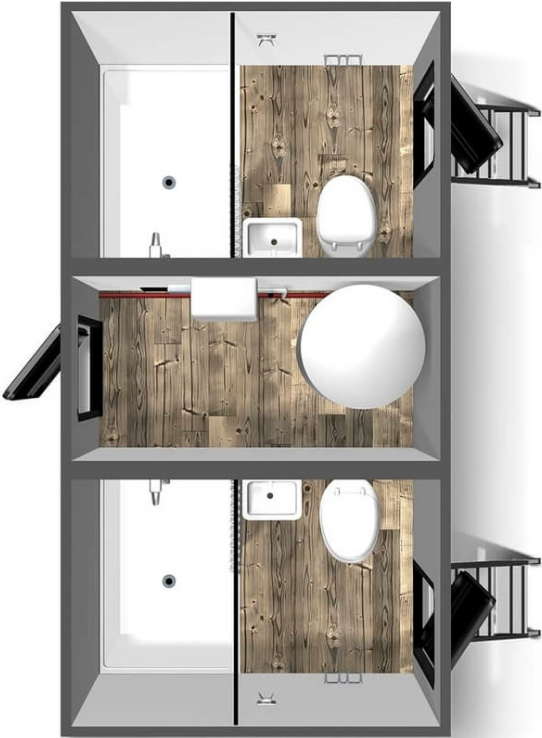
Architects formalized the design for use in permitting and for use by the SIPs manufacturer.



Utilities

The unexpected costs of utilities (see [Section 4](#)) were resolved both by increasing the budget and fundraising effort, and by modifying the plan to hold costs down:

- Electricity seemed like an absolute requirement. Small electric panel heaters were the intended heat sources. Lights would be necessary. Pumps for sinks, showers, and toilets would be necessary. IOBY increased its budget and increased the “ask” for fundraising to accommodate the \$85,000 cost of running a buried cable to the site. A Rasmuson Foundation grant covered the cost of providing electricity to the site.
- There was greater flexibility with water and sewer services. IOBY determined that a formal hook-up to the Anchorage Water and Wastewater Utility was not strictly necessary. There are services that deliver water by filling a tank, and services that pump wastewater from a tank. In the end, by mid-summer 2025, a compromise operation resulted in hooking up an insulated shutoff valve, along with a water meter and temperature sensor, to the church’s plumbing and running a buried water line from the church to the shower trailer in the IOBY compound. It is a system that needs to be closed down and drained when the sensor indicates freezing temperatures are penetrating to the two-foot depth of burial. IOBY is hoping to use this water supply for at least eight months of the year and will have water delivered the balance of the year. Septic water is pumped out regularly by a commercial service, an ongoing operating expense. The water supply from the church is metered and thus set up so that the church could bill IOBY for the water. However, the water use is minimal, and the Church Council has voted to provide water at no cost to IOBY.
- Elk Creek Trailers in Arizona provided the shower trailer as a ready-to-use, pre-plumbed building on wheels. It required hook-up to a water supply (supply tank or water line) and to a pumpable wastewater tank. The wastewater tank is buried.
- Propane heats the domestic hot water in the shower trailer. Originally, propane came in medium-sized portable (yet heavy) tanks that could be transported for refill. But keeping up with frequent refills proved unwieldy for volunteers. To resolve this issue, IOBY replaced the smaller tanks with a larger stationary tank rented from Suburban Propane that is refilled less frequently by delivery truck.



Conceptual rendering of a shower trailer similar to the trailer IOBY installed.



Construction

Phase 1

Construction occurred in October 2024. In advance, BC Excavating did relatively minimal site work – leveling, plus excavating for the buried disposal tank that would capture sewage and gray water from the shower trailer. A fencing company erected chain link fencing around the site; the fence included a person-sized gate and a vehicle-accessible gate, both with padlocks. The vehicle gate needed to be widened later, and the pedestrian gate ultimately was upgraded with a mechanical push-button lock to make it easier for guests to come and go. A great deal of effort had gone into finding, designing, ordering, raising funds for, and delivering the tiny cabins and shower trailer. Once the cabin packages were delivered, however, they were almost completely built. A team of 25 volunteers, headed by Stan Olsen and an experienced construction manager, unpacked and assembled the six cabins in a day and had them virtually done (windows, doors, roofing, flooring, and paint) in a week. IOBY used Uresco not only for delivery of the cabin kits but for metal roofing, siding, flooring, windows, doors, and miscellaneous building materials.

IOBY used Kodiak Electrical Construction, a licensed electrical contractor, to add wiring, outlets, switches, and lights to the buildings. Kodiak Electrical donated most of their labor. Chugach Electric Association, the local electrical cooperative (electric utility), buried a cable along the northern and western sides of the church property, a distance of some 650 feet, and charged normal rates. Circle Plumbing & Heating, a licensed plumbing contractor, did the small job (at normal rates) of connecting the trailer to the wastewater tank.

Volunteers build the cabins, October 2024.



Phase 1 made the site usable and liveable. Phase 2 added important amenities after guests were already living on the site.

Phase 2

In 2025, IOBY partnered with Lions Clubs on a big “Phase 2: Community-Building” effort. Larry Helgeson, a member of Central Lutheran Church and of Lions District 49A, was key to this effort. “He worked tirelessly on this grant,” says Julie. “Phase Two of In Our Backyard is to provide a consistent water supply to the project, build a community gathering space and create community gardens,” according the grant application. The justification was, in large part, “to help guests learn the skills on how to be a part of a community. In order to help this process, they need community spaces and secure reliable water supply.”

Specifically, Phase 2 added a community building – a larger “tiny” building where guests could mingle – and it added planter boxes, garden beds, and a water supply. The substantial gardening effort happened under the direction of Yarducopia and Anchor Gardens, two community garden organizations. NeighborWorks and the gardening groups garnered a community grant from the Municipality to aid the effort.

“This is a huge part of our Program Agreement,” says Julie. Guests are expected to help care for the gardens, and the first season fulfilled expectations. IOBY guests and community volunteers jointly planted and nurtured flowers, vegetables, medicinal plants, and berry bushes, with a substantial harvest by fall. The idea is a “melding of housed and unhoused” people, says Julie. “We’re all in the manure together,” a community effort. The flowers and other plants are a hit with shoppers at the Saturday Market that takes place in

An Electric Situation

The electric line had a two or three week delay. Ironically, an unhoused individual had a tent on the easement where the electric line was supposed to run. This was a person who goes to the church every Sunday. The church asked him to move his tent, and he refused. The church had adopted him; we didn’t want to officially abate his camp and bring in municipal people or police. Finally, Mike (Graham) just ended up moving his tent when he was gone, but he moved it back. I was doubting – Am I causing more harm in pursuit of a larger project? Finally, another church member was able to convince him to move his tent about 20 feet. Chugach Electric went ahead with the trenching work, and he moved his tent back when they were done. He’s still out there now.

-Julie Greene-Graham, *board chair*



Guests and board members hosted a garden party with now-Mayor LaFrance and other leaders in government in the fall of 2025. The garden provided for treats, including a rhubarb pie an IOBY guest baked in the propane grill.





The Gathering Place community building, February 2026.

the adjacent church parking lot every week during summer and with people driving past. They also provide greater privacy for the cabins and aesthetics for IOBY, the church, and the neighborhood at large.

The community building is a 12-foot by 16-foot SIPs building for use by IOBY guests as an office/meeting and social space, and as a place with more kitchen features than in the individual cabins – again, to further foster a sense of community.



Lions Club volunteers build garden boxes, July 2025.

Projects included the new seasonal water line connecting the church water system to the shower trailer. See the previous subsection under the “Utilities” heading.

The District 49A Lions Clubs, covering the Girdwood, Anchorage, and Mat-Su areas, had become excited by the work IOBY was doing and raised \$31,000 for these projects. The Lions Club International Foundation matched with an additional \$31,000.



Guests and volunteers planted a public garden adjacent to the In Our Backyard cabins, June 2025.



Lessons Learned About Permitting and Construction

Once the cabins were in place, project manager Stan Olsen compiled “lessons learned.” Highlights follow.

Permits

Have an initial meeting with the Municipal Development Services Department to confirm exactly what they will require. By the second meeting, be prepared to present drafts of proposed civil, architectural, and conceptual electrical plans. Once they feel you are generally in compliance, proceed to final drawings for submittal. Ideally, find someone with construction permitting experience to coordinate the process.

For a shower/toilet trailer, find out exactly what the city will require electrically. It may be more than the trailer people are accustomed to providing.

Architecture

Be sure any *pro bono* volunteer providing professional architectural and structural engineering services can treat the job like any professional job and meet the city’s permitting deadlines when needed. Have this discussion up front.

Site Civil Engineering

Make sure you have good engineer coordination with the water/wastewater utility and state Department of Environmental Conservation early on, for water issues, and with the electrical utility and local Development Services Department for electrical issues.

The water/wastewater utility has many requirements, and all cost time and money, so get water service figured out early, including expected costs. Septic or city waste lines also need to be determined early, including expected costs. Both water and sewer will affect the project timeline.

Get the electrical utility engaged very early in the process.

Fencing

Make sure the fenced area is large enough to accommodate everything desired inside the secured area and to accommodate the setback area required by building codes. Make sure the drive gate in the fence is wide enough to accommodate all expected traffic. Twelve feet is suggested.



Site excavation and leveling begins, September 2024.

Shower Trailer

Get commitment early from the trailer manufacturer about getting it delivered on time. Be sure the manufacturer understands Alaska's cold climate.

Before signing a purchase order and/or giving them any money, get in writing and on the contract that the manufacturer will provide:

- Schematic electrical drawings.
- Total electrical load for the trailer and location of the electrical panel.
- Assurance that the trailer will meet electric requirements of local electrical code and the local Development Services Department.
- Dimensioned floor plan for water supply and waste line exit.

Cabin/Building Materials Providers

Make sure the design of any structure meets applicable local building codes. Have this documented on shop drawings that will be presented to the Development Services Department.

If using Structural Insulated Panels (SIPs), be sure to ask the local (Wasilla-area) SIP manufacturer to price the panels. They may have a much quicker fabrication timeline and lower delivery cost than ordering from out of state.



The shared restroom and shower trailer, November 2024. Photo Courtesy of Rasmuson Foundation.





Money Has to Come From Somewhere

Non-profit organizations typically seek money, or services in lieu of money, from any of several sources:

- grants from private charitable foundations or government agencies
- donations of cash, services, or volunteer hours from businesses
- donations of cash or volunteer hours from civic organizations and faith communities
- donations of cash or labor from individuals

Non-profits may also generate revenue through sales, events, or services they offer, although so far this has been a minimal source of funds for IOBY.

Research showed that tiny SIPs buildings cost \$14,000 to \$17,000 each, plus shipping costs. The pre-plumbed shower trailer cost \$65,000, plus shipping. IOBY had little experience with fundraising (often called “development”) but learned fast and ultimately tapped multiple sources eager to help the fledgling project. As is common, however, not every application resulted in a grant.

Government Grants

IOBY applied for a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) from the Municipality of Anchorage, which would have used federal funds from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). This grant had been lined up as the major funding for purchase of materials and for construction. But grant administrators determined the application not eligible at the last minute in summer 2024.

Later, IOBY was successful in getting a Municipality of Anchorage “Alcoholic Beverage Retail Sales Tax Fund” appropriation by resolution of the Anchorage Assembly.

IOBY applied for but did not get a grant from the State of Alaska’s Mental Health Trust Authority.



Anchorage Mayor LaFrance cuts the ribbon at the opening ceremony, November 2024.



Foundation Grants

In July 2024, IOBY applied for a grant from the Rasmuson Foundation, the largest foundation in Alaska, and was successful. It covered the larger-than-expected cost to extend power to the cabins and the plumbing costs.

Business Grants

Matson provided in-kind shipping to get the pre-fabricated shelters and the shower trailer from Washington to Alaska. Matson called it an in-kind shipping grant, with a value of more than \$9,000.

NVision Architecture provided *pro bono* architecture services.

Kodiak Electrical Construction provided *pro bono* electrical work.



A Matson grant covered shipping costs for shelter materials and the shower trailer, September 2024.

Many businesses also donate money to causes their employees or owners believe in. For example, IOBY has benefited from a grant from Northrim Bank.

IOBY applied for but did not get a cash grant from Costco.

Faith Community and Civic Organization Donations and Grants

IOBY has enjoyed the financial and volunteer support of several Anchorage churches of different denominations. Grants also have come from statewide and national faith organizations: the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, a separate grant from the ELCA Alaska Synod, and The Deaconess Community of the Evangelical Church in America.



The Church of God in Christ presents In Our Backyard with a \$1,000 donation, June 2024.

Civic organizations such as the Bartlett Democratic Club, Lions Clubs locally and Lions Club International, and Anchorage Downtown Partnership also have given money, in some cases substantial amounts.

Individual Donations

Interested people from the community who heard about IOBY at community council meetings, in churches, and through the press – more than 400 individuals – donated money. Even a likely unhoused person donated, Julie says: “one individual came up on a rough looking bike – rode up and gave us two dollars.” Individual donations ranged from that two dollars to \$25,000. Except for



the electrical hookup and plumbing, individual donations raised all the money needed for materials and construction of Phase 1 (2024). In addition:

- A civil engineer provided engineering services on her own time, primarily for the water/wastewater hookup to the shower trailer.
- An electrical engineer provided engineering services on her own time and shepherded plans for electrical permit approval through the system.
- Volunteers donated their time to put up and paint the buildings and establish the gardens and landscaping.

Outside of the construction process, volunteers also are key to many day-to-day operations. They help guests get settled and deliver meals. There is a “Home Team,” a small group of key volunteers who are assigned to guests to help them during their time at IOBY. There are people who help with maintenance. There is a Green Team that helps get the gardens going in spring and puts them to bed in the fall.

Volunteers and members of the Lions Club work with Anchor Gardens to build raised plant beds and a public garden, July 2025.





Theory Becomes Reality: The Program Agreement

The Proof of Concept; the Mission, Vision, and Values statements; the Management Plan – these and all the meetings, spreadsheets, and emails eventually become a backdrop, the underpinnings for housing a real person. It was December 2024 that IOBY’s first guest moved in. To make move-in possible, IOBY had translated the plans and policies into various forms and information sheets for use with actual prospective guests, most of these compiled into a Program Agreement. IOBY also created a process to follow. The general process is as follows:

1. Prospective guest fills out an Interest Form.
2. IOBY conducts a formal background check.
3. If the background check is adequate, two board members and a case manager, if applicable, interview the prospective guest.
4. Acceptance: The guest and IOBY sign a Program Agreement.
5. Welcome: An IOBY board member and a Mentor Guest welcome the new guest and complete an orientation for the guest. A Home Team volunteer is assigned to the guest for support.
6. The guest completes follow-up meetings with a case manager from a separate agency while living at IOBY. The guest also has scheduled follow up meetings with a board member. Such meetings are a requirement and are meant to lead to permanent housing.
7. Exit: Upon successfully acquiring permanent housing or otherwise leaving the program, there is an exit interview.

Don't be sorry for me! This is the most wonderful thing for me right now.

- An early guest at IOBY, when a grandchild said it was too bad she had to live in such a little place (as reported by board member Betty Hertz).



Referrals to IOBY come from a variety of shelters, from people stopping in, and from current or former guests. Forms are available in the Central Lutheran Church office. IOBY has decided to require that prospective guests have a case manager before they can be admitted — “so now the person is really invested” in the process, says Julie. See [Section 8](#) for more about case management.

Together, the main collection of admission forms is called the Program Agreement. IOBY also has an Interest Form, which prospective guests fill out, and an Intake Form, which a board member fills out after an interview with the prospective guest. The following paragraphs describe the forms, and they appear in full in [Appendix F](#).

Interest Form and Intake Form

The **Statement of Interest to Stay** at In Our Backyard is a two-page form that provides the basic criteria for staying:

50 and older, singles or couples; able to live independently; no alcohol, marijuana use or substance abuse on site; pets allowed on approval; and ready to work on locating permanent housing with a case manager.

It also asks for basic identifying information; “significant people” such as doctors, case managers, or parole officers; emergency contact information; agreement to release information; and “Reasons for wanting to be part of In Our Backyard.”

The **Intake Form** provides a record of an interview of the prospective guest. It provides space to record responses regarding three basic questions:

1. Where are you staying now, and how long have you been there?
2. Why are you interested in staying at IOBY? What can you contribute to the community?
3. Where do you see yourself six months from now?

Program Agreement

The Program Agreement is a collection of forms, some applicable generally and some only in specific circumstances (e.g., car owners). These forms together spell out the agreement for staying at IOBY and provide all the policies and rules. These policies and rules are indications that this is a “high-barrier” program – that is, it only takes people who meet the criteria and are willing to follow some restrictive rules (e.g., no alcohol on site). The forms are as follows:

Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct is two pages, to be initialed by the guest, that lays out expectations of “Respect for self,” “Respect for neighbors in IOBY,” and “Respect for the community at large,” plus rules about possessions, bike and car parking, absences, etc. Key requirements are agreement to work with a case manager to find permanent housing; no possession or use of alcohol, marijuana, or illegal drugs or abuse of other drugs; deposit of an agreed-upon



dollar amount monthly as a show of commitment (to be returned and applied to permanent housing upon moving to permanent housing); no possession or use of weapons; no guests; and requirements to keep the space tidy.

Corrective Action, Termination and Grievance Policy

If a guest is in violation of the Code of Conduct, they may be able to participate in a corrective action plan with the program. Persistent violation of the Code of Conduct or failure to follow corrective action plans will be considered cause for termination. This page-and-a-half document includes the termination policy and a grievance procedure.

Savings Fund Agreement

The savings fund is held by IOBY and accumulates the monthly deposit. The amount is customized for individual guests, depending on their circumstances. This simple one-page form sets the amount and makes clear that the fund may be used if the property is damaged but that otherwise the funds will be returned at the transition to permanent housing to help pay for housing.

Why a Vehicle Form?

One of the early guests came with a car that she used to get to her job. It was not registered. The person's case manager set a time to go to the Division of Motor Vehicles to take care of the paperwork. The day before the appointment, somebody stole the car. After looking into it with the police, it turned out the car previously had been stolen and that our guest had bought it but without a title. So, a stolen car got stolen. Lesson learned: insurance, title, driver's license, and registration all need to be in place before an IOBY guest brings a car to the parking lot. This resulted in the current vehicle form and parking pass.

- Julie Greene-Graham,
board chair

Contact Information

This one-page form collects basic information – name and phone numbers for the guest, an emergency contact person, and the case manager.

Vehicle Form for Parking Pass

This one-page form collects driver's license and vehicle license plate, vehicle description, and vehicle insurance information. It also includes vehicle-related rules, including agreement that the vehicle will not be used by anybody for sleeping.

Pet Policy

This one-page form collects information on any pet a guest may have, including breed, vaccination status, and spay-neuter status and includes policy information such as no excessive barking, an expectation that the animal will be leashed/under control and not aggressive, and licensed and up to date on vaccinations. The guest signs to acknowledge that violation of the policies is grounds for termination.

Guest Acknowledgement

This is an overall one-page form the guest and an IOBY board member sign to acknowledge all the policies and formally accept the incoming person as a guest.



Other Publications – The Home Team Handbook

IOBY in late 2024 instituted a Home Team. This is a small group of volunteers (currently five; more needed) who support IOBY guests throughout their stay at IOBY. Each volunteer must sign a release of liability waiver and submit to a background check, undergo an orientation and training for trauma-informed care, and work with at least one other volunteer to be the “home team” for a guest. The home team welcomes assigned guests, meets with them once or twice a week, and supports them with whatever needs each individual identifies (e.g., appointments, errands, “just doing life”). The group members are meant to support each other as well as the guests. IOBY published a Home Team Handbook to provide consistent guidance for this group as new volunteers join. The “handbook” is several pages outlining IOBY and Home Team expectations. It appears in [Appendix G](#).

Volunteering on the Home Team

Guests have so much to give volunteers if we will humbly pay attention. We all need both privacy and community, all need shelter, food, safety, dignity, and love. We are all human and need each other, and all have love to share. Volunteering is not a one-way street; it is guests and volunteers building community together, listening to and acting on what is needed day by day.

- Betsy Baker, *board member and Home Team volunteer*

A community message board highlights events for In Our Backyard guests, July 2025. Photo Courtesy of Alaska Public Media.





Management

Originally, IOBY intended to have a part-time on-site manager and part-time case managers for its guests. The church had offered office space, and it was thought that on-site staff would keep an eye on activity, provide security, and take care of the physical needs of the site, such as ordering water deliveries and minor maintenance such as unclogging drains. However, typical site management at shelters for the unhoused are heavy on security and enforcement (body searches, room checks). The population that was starting to use the tiny cabins was older and more ready to work toward permanent housing and convinced the board that they didn't need to be "babysat" and would appreciate the opportunity for a level of self-management. IOBY realized that 24/7 oversight was not strictly needed.

Now, IOBY works principally with [Catholic Social Services](#) for case managers and with [Restorative and ReEntry Services](#) for a portion of site management services.

Case Management

IOBY's goal was to provide space for guests to live, relax, take a breath, and move on to permanent housing. That is the "transition" in transitional housing. Many unhoused persons, however, are unaware of resources available and lack basics such as internet access, a mailing address, or email address necessary to find information, make appointments, complete paperwork, and otherwise navigate the transition.

Case management is about managing each individual case separately and responding to the needs of the individual. Importantly, this includes providing information and guiding decisions about what permanent housing options are available and appropriate for any given person. Additionally, case management can include education, information, and guidance about jobs, counseling, money management, substance abuse treatments, legal issues, assistance programs for food and medicine, building life skills, and any number of other problems and opportunities an unhoused person may face. Typically, a case manager develops an individualized plan. A case manager ideally is advocating for the needs of the individual and monitoring that person's progress toward self-sufficiency.

IOBY had learned that there were capable social service agencies trained and experienced in doing this work, and IOBY was not going to try to replicate their services. Instead, IOBY wanted to find a partner agency already familiar with unhoused individuals that could refer senior unhoused people to IOBY when they were ready and follow their progress toward getting permanent housing.

IOBY started with one group from among the contacts made during early research but ultimately felt that group was focused more on the big picture of advocating for the unhoused population in general and not enough on specific individuals. Some guests already have



a case manager when they begin the IOBY application process, and some need a case manager. After the first several guests, IOBY instituted a policy that prospective guests would need to have a case manager in place in order to be admitted. IOBY now mostly uses Brother Francis Shelter, a program of Catholic Social Services, for guests who need a case manager, but works with case managers from several other agencies.

Case managers come to meet guests at the IOBY office in the church or at the community building. IOBY has them meet at IOBY because it is at “home”; it is a more peaceful, less stressful environment than the 3rd Avenue Navigation Shelter or Brother Francis Shelter. IOBY gets a signed authorization for release of information so IOBY can talk to case managers.

Site Management

Restorative and ReEntry Services is an organization that works to integrate and coordinate social services in Anchorage to help ensure that different agencies and organizations provide services without holes or substantial duplication. RRS provides third party oversight of emergency shelters for the Municipality of Anchorage and assists the Municipality with its transition to a more dispersed model of providing shelters and transitional housing. RRS has an agreement with IOBY to provide elements of site management – background checks, guest lunch meetings to discuss operations, conferencing with guests – and other navigational support for IOBY’s guests and managers. RRS also performs occasional site checks.



*Cabins at In Our Backyard display colorful planter beds and flower baskets, July 2025.
Photo Courtesy of Alaska Public Media.*



Board members use the office and are in and out of the area, but IOBY has no paid site manager, nor any volunteer position specifically doing site management. Still, certain management and maintenance tasks are necessary, from ordering the water delivery and sewage pumping services when needed, to “fix-it” tasks, to arranging rides for guests or taking guests shopping for clothing and winter wear. At this time, these tasks fall to board members and volunteers. Eliminating a paid on-site manager had the advantages of saving operating funds and empowering the guests to manage themselves, but it had the disadvantage of adding to the tasks of volunteers and the board. IOBY currently pays for a few hours per week of the church secretary’s time for administrative help.



Flower baskets bring color to In Our Backyard, June 2025.





Looking Forward

With the advent of 2026, In Our Backyard began its second calendar year providing transitional housing. A goal during planning in early 2024 and a determinant of project success was that 60 percent of IOBY guests would successfully move to permanent housing or to a residential treatment program within 12 months. To date, the data from a still-small set of guests stands at 58 percent. The board is aiming to surpass the original goal rather than almost make the goal. But the project has an abundance of community goodwill, 1,000 people on its contact list and, most importantly, eight guests enjoying a step up and working toward permanent housing.

The board may pursue funding to hire a staff person (case manager liaison), probably part-time, to undertake more site management and create better sustainability for volunteers and board members (that is, reduce burnout potential). The IOBY organization and Central Lutheran Church do not envision expanding at the church site anytime soon, but there has been long-term talk about building some kind of permanent – and not necessarily “tiny” – supportive housing.



Sunflower grown by guests at In Our Backyard, August 2025.

In the meantime, the volunteers at IOBY hope the tiny cabins idea takes hold with others who have access to a little land and who believe their own efforts can help the community overall and the unhoused community in particular.

“I think where we are right now is encouraging others to take the same route,” says Pastor Zach. “It would be an excellent way for us to take a little bite out of this (unhoused neighbors) problem.”

“A couple little cabins, that’s a couple of people off the streets,” says Betty Hertz. “We had the bumps, and we learned from them. And we’re willing to share what we learned.”

You could do this!

- Betty Hertz, board member



Find Out More

In Our Backyard

Physical Location:

195 E. 15th Avenue, Anchorage AK 99501
(15th Ave. near Corvova Street)

Website: inourbackyard-ak.org



Email: info@inourbackyard-ak.org

Snail Mail: PO Box 91986, Anchorage AK 99509

Video:

Search YouTube for
“Rasmuson Passion to Purpose In Our Backyard”
or use this [YouTube Link](#) or this QR code:
501(c)(3) Public Charity Nonprofit. EIN: 93-4915440



Thank you in advance for any donation of time or funds
to help Anchorage’s unhoused senior neighbors.



Glossary

In Our Backyard (IOBY) is a “non-profit” organization. It runs a “high-barrier program” providing “transitional housing” to “unhoused” people in “micro-units” that IOBY calls “cabins.” The following is meant to help sort out terms associated with the “unhoused” population or “homelessness” in general, many of which appear in this document.

Cabin: In Our Backyard built micro-units as transitional housing for unhoused neighbors and called each unit a “cabin” or “tiny cabin,” which IOBY felt was appropriate to Alaska’s culture of fishing, hunting, mining, and recreational cabins—and more accurate than “tiny house” and less institutional than “micro-unit.”

Chronically homeless (or unhoused): A person or group that is unhoused long-term or permanently, often cycling in and out of shelters. Contrast with “situationally homeless.” Chronically unhoused people often need greater support and services.

Congregate shelter: A type of shelter for unhoused people typically characterized by large open rooms with rows of cots and mattresses on the floor.

High-barrier shelter (or program): A type of management of shelter for the unhoused characterized by relatively a high number of restrictions or rules, such as age limits, prohibition on drug or alcohol use, mandates to attend therapy programs or meet with service providers, requirement for a background check, or requirements to make progress toward finding work or permanent housing. Contrast with “low-barrier.”

Homeless/homelessness: See “unhoused.”

Low-barrier shelter (or program): A type of management of shelter for the unhoused characterized by relatively few restrictions or rules and maximizing the number of people protected from the elements. Such programs may let in virtually anyone in need of shelter for a short stay. For example, a low barrier program may accept people who are intoxicated.

Micro-unit: A very small separate house typically for sleeping only. Some units may have a microwave oven or mini-refrigerator and some storage. See also “tiny house,” “cabin,” “Pallet Shelter.”

Non-congregate shelter: A type of transitional housing that typically contains many rooms where unhoused people live with a roommate. The manager typically aims to fill rooms; roommates may not have previously known each other.

Non-profit: An organization, typically a corporation, that seeks to pay its staff, pay its bills, and pay for its programs by taking in funds from any of a variety of sources, but without making a profit for investors, organization leaders, or owners. Typically all revenue in excess



of expense is put back into the organization to serve its mission. The organization may be designated as tax-exempt by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service, and certain non-profits may be designated as charitable organizations by the IRS, allowing for potential tax advantage to people who donate to the non-profit.

Pallet Shelter: Brand name for a type of micro-unit produced by Pallet, a public benefit corporation in Washington state. The name derives from sleeping pallets and has a double meaning, because the buildings ship flat on pallets that forklifts can handle. The shelters are not built from wooden pallets. The term is sometimes broadly used to refer to all types of micro-units.

Shelter: A place to be out of the elements typically providing a place to sleep and often some type of food. Shelter is not considered housing and is generally day-to-day or very short-term. Shelter for unhoused people typically is provided by a government agency, a non-governmental organization (non-profit), or a faith-based organization.

Situationally homeless (or unhoused): A person or group that is unhoused because of a specific situation, such as the loss of a job leading to eviction for inability to pay rent. Contrast with “chronically homeless.” Situationally unhoused people may need relatively minimal services and support to avoid a downward spiral into chronic homelessness.

Tiny house: A widely used term for very small dwellings, typically meant to be complete with kitchens, bathrooms, and sleeping space. These originally were meant to be mobile units built on trailers and therefore outside the purview of residential building codes. Often they are custom built homes, and they have taken on an aura of swankiness in popular culture. The term is sometimes used for micro-units used to shelter unhoused persons.

Transitional housing: Places for unhoused people to live during a transition from staying in large shelters or on the street to permanent housing, such as an apartment.

Unhoused: A state of living without a home, or without a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. Unhoused people may stay in community shelters, in a car or camper, with a relative or friend, or in an informal camp on public or private property. Also called “homeless,” although “unhoused” has become favored over “homeless” in recent years because of stigma attached to “homeless.” The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 1987 and related federal law provide a more detailed definition of “homeless.” Find it at Title 42 of U.S. Code, Section 11302 (42 USC 11302) at [uscode.house.gov](https://www.uscode.house.gov) or elsewhere online.



Appendices

Appendix A. In Our Backyard Timeline

Appendix B. In Our Backyard Good Neighbor Policy

Appendix C. Homelessness Resources in Anchorage

Appendix D. Assembly Ordinance 2024-53

Appendix E. Municipal Building Handout AG.31

Appendix F. In Our Backyard Program Agreement

Appendix G. In Our Backyard Home Team Handbook



In Our Backyard

Sheltering Unhoused Neighbors in Anchorage, Alaska

Appendix A

In Our Backyard Timeline

In Our Backyard Timeline

2023

February 2023	Church invites Mayor and Assembly Chair to meet about homelessness.
Spring/Summer 2023	Research, community outreach, first visit to Fairview Community Council
Fall 2023	Participation in mayor's Emergency Shelter Task Force
Fall 2023	Approach Church Council three times before earning approval.
Fall 2023	Proof of Concept document written
Dec 2023	Articles of Incorporation filed with the Alaska Division of Corporations.

2024

January 2024	501(c)(3) charitable non-profit status granted to IOBY
Late Winter 2024	Participation in mayor's task force regarding sanctioned camps.
Spring 2024	Board meets with Assembly members and testifies about ordinance.
May 2024	Municipal ordinance allows for a cabin cluster as transitional housing.
Spring/Summer 2024	Meetings, planning, architectural work, capital fundraising.
Spring/Summer 2024	Meeting of housed and unhoused neighbors near church.
September/October 2024	Shower trailer arrives, site prep, fencing, SIP panel buildings delivered.
October 21-27 2024	Cabins erected – roofing, flooring, siding, paint, windows, doors installed.
October/November 2024	Utilities connected. Plan for guest interviews, meals, and volunteer teams.
November 2024	Finishing touches, niceties, “welcome home” signs, bedding, etc.
December 2024	First two guests take up residence.

2025

January 2025	All cabins occupied.
April 2025	First guest moves to permanent housing.
June 2025	Water connected for warm months.
July 2025	Community garden and raised bed garden completed.
August 2025	Community building erected.
Fall 2025	First garden harvest.
December 2025	First couples take up residence; all cabins filled to capacity.

In Our Backyard

Sheltering Unhoused Neighbors in Anchorage, Alaska

Appendix B

In Our Backyard Good Neighbor Policy

Good Neighbor Policy

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Between **In Our Backyard (IOBY)** and **Fairview Community Council**

Effective Date: _____

This Memorandum of Understanding (hereafter MOU) is hereby entered into by and between Fairview Community Council (hereafter Community Council), a community council within the Municipality of Anchorage, and In Our Backyard (hereafter IOBY), an interim housing project that operates at Central Lutheran Church, 1420 Cordova Street, Anchorage, AK.

1. Recitals

WHEREAS, the Community Council has a vested interest in ensuring that it represents the best interests of the Community Council area; and

WHEREAS, the Community Council and IOBY have a long-term interest in fostering a mutually beneficial relationship to address communications and problem-solving;

Now, therefore, the parties agree as follows:

2. Agreement

The primary point of Contact for the IOBY is Julie Greene-Graham who may be contacted at 907-258-0203 to leave a voice message or chair@inourbackyard-ak.org. Contact may be made outside of business hours if necessary to address issues as they arise. Changes to the points of contact or contact information shall be promptly shared with the Community Council.

The point of contact for the Community Council is the President, currently _____, who can be contacted as follows: _____ . Contact may be outside of regular business hours. Changes to the points of contact or contact information shall be promptly shared with the IOBY.

3. Mutual Goals

All parties in this agreement share common goals, which include:

- Maintaining a peaceful, safe and clean neighborhood.
- Sharing open and honest communication.
- Helping each other address concerns and solve problems.
- Respecting others and their property.

4. Property

To respect the immediate neighborhood, IOBY will:

- Maintain IOBY and the surrounding area, keeping the space free from trash and debris.
- Maintain the housing units and grounds in good condition at all times.

5. Code of Conduct

Conduct that is respectful of others and to the surrounding community is essential for a peaceful neighborhood. Occupants will be following a code of conduct. Failure to adhere to the conduct may be cause for terminating their occupancy at IOBY.

6. Communication

When the FCC's residents or businesses, the FCC, or IOBY raise issues, the Community Council and IOBY will take the following action:

- Share concerns as they arise in a timely manner.
- Come to consensus on how to best resolve the concern.
- Keep communication open and respectful.
- IOBY will document all complaints and concerns, including responses to problems and outcomes to responses and provide a summary report to neighbors.
- A Board member of IOBY will be empowered to speak on behalf of IOBY and will regularly attend Community Council meetings, at least once a quarter
- IOBY will update the Community Council should there be any upcoming changes to IOBY operations or recent major incidents with community impact.

7. Dispute Resolution

If consensus is not reached on issues raised under Section 6 above, or a dispute arises between an FCC business, resident, or the community council itself with guests of IOBY or regarding IOBY's management plan, the IOBY Board will attempt to resolve the situation directly with the complainant. If the IOBY Board is unable to do so, either IOBY or the complainant will bring the matter to the attention of the FCC. The FCC will attempt resolution by referring it to an ad hoc committee consisting of one member each of the IOBY Board, the FCC, and a relevant outside agency. The ad hoc committee will meet to determine the resolution, generating a recommendation for the IOBY Board to accept or decline. The dispute process, including all meetings and official discussions, will be documented and kept on file for a period of seven years.

8. No Formal Partnership

This Agreement is mutually beneficial to the Community Council and IOBY. The parties understand and acknowledge that they do not intend to create a formal partnership. Nothing in this agreement shall be construed or interpreted to create any fiduciary responsibility between them. Neither party shall have any authority, express or implied, to act for or to assume any obligation or responsibility on behalf of the other party. Neither party shall be responsible for the liabilities of the other. The parties understand that non-compliance with this agreement carries no penalties.

9. Term of Agreement

The parties have executed this Agreement as of the effective date. The Agreement may be updated from time to time with the concurrence of both parties and shall remain in effect as long as IOBY is operating at the identified location.

_____, President Fairview Community Council

Date: _____, 2024

_____, Chair IOBY

Date: _____, 2024

In Our Backyard

Sheltering Unhoused Neighbors in Anchorage, Alaska

Appendix C

Homelessness Resources in Anchorage

Resources in Anchorage Regarding Homelessness

Click on the link, or scan the QR code with a mobile phone camera.



Anchorage Health Department
Resource List for Persons Experiencing Homelessness
[Service Providers](#)



Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness (ACEH)
“Anchored Home” Five-Year Strategic Plan
[Anchored Home](#)



Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness
Resource Flyer
[Flyer](#)



Municipality of Anchorage
Pathways to Care for People Experiencing Homelessness
[Pathways](#)

In Our Backyard
Sheltering Unhoused Neighbors in Anchorage, Alaska

Appendix D

Assembly Ordinance 2024-53
**Regarding Use of Shelter Units for Unhoused
Persons**

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA
AO No. 2024-53, As Amended

AN ORDINANCE OF THE ANCHORAGE MUNICIPAL ASSEMBLY AMENDING ANCHORAGE MUNICIPAL CODE SECTION 23.10.104.16 TO UPDATE THE TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS OF SHELTER UNITS THAT ARE EXEMPT FROM THE BUILDING PERMIT REQUIREMENTS OF TITLE 23.

WHEREAS, Temporary shelters are a temporary means to provide basic shelter for those experiencing homelessness; and

WHEREAS, the portable and relocatable temporary shelters, such as Pallet Shelter or Boss Cubes, are available that will be able to provide shelter for those experiencing homelessness; and

WHEREAS, portable shelters can be rapidly deployed with a one day construction time and require a simple electrical hook up for lighting and electric heat. Shelters are insulated and capable of sustaining clients during winter conditions; and

WHEREAS, similar shelters have been successfully established in other municipalities and proven successful as a path to housing by providing a simple secure space that clients may take ownership and pride in; and

WHEREAS, portable shelters can house one to four individuals providing them with a lockable space to provide safety and security for the individual and their belongings; and

WHEREAS, successful community shelter camps have limited occupancy to 25-50 residents; and

WHEREAS, the intent of individual temporary shelter is to provide a pathway towards stability to receiving counseling and medical services towards permanent housing solutions, however these are not considered permanent housing; and

WHEREAS, similar spaces have been designed with onsite counseling, medical and security offices to be used for providers to aid in facilitation of successful transition to permanent housing; and

WHEREAS, similar facilities have been designed with restroom and bathing facilities, laundry facilities, garbage collection, and central shared space for basic cooking and meal prep or storage, as well as communal spaces for socializing; now, therefore,

THE ANCHORAGE ASSEMBLY ORDAINS:

Section 1. Anchorage Municipal Code section 23.10.104.16 is hereby amended as follows:

1
2
3 **23.10.104.16 Shelter Units exempt from building permit [LOCATED**
4 **IN ALLOWED CAMPS].**

5
6 A. Definition. Shelter unit[S] means a rigid structure of small size
7 designed by the manufacturer to be portable and relocatable, and
8 intended for limited, short-term use by individuals without permanent
9 housing. A shelter unit may be for sleeping overnight, or provided
10 ancillary to sleeping shelter units for small gatherings of persons or
11 for personal hygiene (restroom/washroom facilities). Exclusions:
12 [LOCATED WITHIN ALLOWED CAMPS, EXCLUDING] common
13 fabric tents typically available at retailers rated by the manufacturer for
14 four persons or less.[,]

15
16 B. Shelter units may be set up without obtaining a building permit and
17 certificate of occupancy under the following restrictions and
18 requirements:

19
20 1[A]. Sleeping units shall not exceed 120 [100] square feet gross
21 floor area.

22
23 2[B]. Hygiene and community units shall not exceed 400 [800]
24 square feet gross floor area.

25 a. Exception: Units meeting the requirements of
26 relocatable ancillary buildings under AMC 23.95 may
27 exceed this limit.

28
29 3[C]. Units shall be capable of supporting 20 [25] psf snow load and
30 be able to resist 95 mph [THE] wind [DESIGN] load [FOR THE
31 LOCATION]. This requirement may be met by certification of
32 the manufacturer.

33
34 4[D]. Units shall be restrained to resist wind load. The attachment
35 shall be designed and stamped by a[N ALASKA] licensed civil
36 or structural engineer, or by certification of the manufacturer if
37 included with the unit.

38
39 5[E]. Wall/roof panel finish material shall be tested in accordance
40 with ASTM E84 and the flame spread shall not exceed 200
41 and the smoke developed index shall not exceed 450 (Class
42 C finish material).

43
44 6[F]. Units shall be located and arranged to allow for emergency
45 responder access and snow removal.

46 a. A minimum clear space of at least 5 feet shall be
47 provided on sides subject to snow shedding. This clear
48 space may be shared by adjacent units within a cluster.

49 b. A minimum clear space of at least 5 [10] feet shall be

1 provided in front (on the door side) of each unit.

- 2 c. Units may be located adjacent to each other forming
3 clusters with up to eight units per cluster. Clusters of
4 units shall be located ten feet minimum from permanent
5 structures, property lines, support structures and other
6 clusters.

7
8 7[G]. The accumulation of trash, combustibles, and other
9 obstructions shall not be allowed in the required clear space.

10
11 8[H]. [UNITS AND THE REQUIRED CLEAR SPACE SHALL BE
12 MAINTAINED FREE FROM THE ACCUMULATION OF
13 SNOW AND ICE.] Snow shall not be allowed to accumulate
14 on the unit.

15
16 9[I]. Electrical permit required:

- 17 a. A licensed electrical contractor shall obtain a permit to
18 provide electrical service and/or connection to the
19 unit(s). The electrical connection shall consist of an
20 approved flexible cord, attachment cap and receptacle
21 approved for the location.
22 b. [THE U] Units shall comply with the National Electrical
23 Code as noted by NEC 550.4(A). A code compliance
24 inspection shall be performed, and necessary
25 corrections made before power is connected. A
26 licensed electrical contractor shall obtain a permit and
27 make the correction. The permit for providing electrical
28 service and/or connection may include the corrections
29 when performed by the same contractor.
30 c. Installations involving connection to more than one unit
31 require an electrical design sealed by an Alaska
32 licensed electrical engineer.

33
34 10[J]. Occupants shall have access to on-site toilet, [AND]bathing
35 **facilities, and trash service**~~laundry facilities~~.

36
37 11[K]. If any [THE] unit is connected to a water supply or wastewater
38 system, a licensed plumbing contractor shall obtain a retrofit
39 permit and perform the work. A public water supply shall be
40 isolated by a reduced pressure backflow assembly.

41
42 12[L]. If any unit is to be connected to a natural gas or propane
43 supply, a retrofit permit shall be obtained by one of the
44 following:

- 45 a. A licensed plumbing contractor, or
46 b. A licensed mechanical contractor that employs a
47 licensed plumber or gas fitter.
48

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36

13[M]. Service equipment located adjacent to vehicle lanes shall be protected with bollards or other substantial barrier.

14[N]. Units shall comply with fire code and operational processes as determined by the fire marshal. These include, but are not limited to:

- a. An Anchorage Fire Department (AFD) approved, currently serviced fire extinguisher shall be located inside the unit.
- b. Propane tanks shall be protected from vehicle impact and shall be located in accordance with the fire code.
- c. Unit locations shall not impact fire lanes or emergency vehicle access to the units or nearby structures.

C[O]. Units that do not meet all applicable restrictions and requirements listed in subsection B. [ITEMS A. THROUGH M.] shall require a building permit in accordance with this code.

(AO No. 2023-70(S-1), § 3, 7-11-23)

Section 2. This ordinance shall be effective immediately upon passage and approval by the Assembly.

PASSED AND APPROVED by the Anchorage Assembly this 21st day of May, 2024.

Christopher Constant

Chair

ATTEST:

Jenine King

Municipal Clerk



MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE

Assembly Memorandum

No. AM 440 - 2024

Meeting Date: May 7, 2024

1 **From:** Assembly Members Sulte and Bronga

2
3 **Subject:** AN ORDINANCE OF THE ANCHORAGE MUNICIPAL ASSEMBLY
4 AMENDING ANCHORAGE MUNICIPAL CODE SECTION 23.10.104.16
5 TO UPDATE THE TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS OF SHELTER UNITS
6 THAT ARE EXEMPT FROM THE BUILDING PERMIT REQUIREMENTS
7 OF TITLE 23.
8

9 This proposed ordinance makes some changes to Anchorage Municipal Code section
10 23.10.104.16 that was enacted last summer by passage of AO 2023-70(S-1), As
11 Amended. That code section provides an exemption from the building permit and
12 certificate of occupancy requirements of Title 23, Building Codes, and was drafted with
13 assistance from the Acting Building Official at the time. So long as the requirements are
14 complied with and approvals obtained, the longer process for permits and inspections for
15 permanent buildings and structures is avoided.
16

17 However, last summer the only rapid-setup, small relocatable structure on the market that
18 was contemplated were Pallet Shelters, and AMC 23.10.104.16 was drafted with
19 reference to that product's publicly available specifications. Since then, we have seen
20 there are other competitive products on the market, such as Boss Cubez, which function
21 similarly to provide temporary shelter units. A representative with that company assisted
22 with identifying some changes to the technical requirements that would also
23 accommodate its product. Our objective is not to restrict to a single product, but to have
24 specifications for safety that allow innovation and can be satisfied by a variety of products
25 at the choice of property owners or operators who wish to establish a community of
26 temporary shelters.
27

28 Additionally, the reference to "allowed camps" is removed, because these units may be
29 part of different types of land uses, and restricted to only one type of use. There are no
30 anticipated economic effects associated with this ordinance that only amends Code.
31

32 **We recommend approval of the ordinance.**
33

34 Prepared by: Assembly Counsel's Office
35 Respectfully submitted: Randy Sulte, Assembly Member
36 District 6 – South Anchorage, Girdwood, and Turnagain Arm
37
38 Karen Bronga, Assembly Member
39 District 5 – East Anchorage

In Our Backyard

Sheltering Unhoused Neighbors in Anchorage, Alaska

Appendix E

**Municipal Building Handout AG.31,
Shelter Units Exempt from
Building Permit Requirements of Title 23**

MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE

Development Services Department



Building Safety

Handout AG.31

Shelter Units Exempt from Building Permit Requirements of Title 23

Scope: This handout explains how shelter units may be exempted from building code review and inspection as defined in Title 23, provided they meet the requirements outlined below. All permitting for the buildings will be submitted under an Electrical Only Permit and will include the supporting documentation needed as described below.

Basis: This handout is based on AMC 23.10.104.16, added by Assembly Ordinance (AO) 2023-70(S-1) and further modified by AO 2024-53.

Exception: Facilities proposed outside of the Anchorage Building Safety Service Area ([see GIS map here](#)) are required to submit for a Land Use Only permit and are not required to submit items listed under AMC 23.10.104.16, except as follows:

1. Utilities in the Right-of-Way would still require permit (see below Title 23 – Building Code Requirements: item 9b – Additional Permitting: Units/utilities built in the Right-of-Way).
2. An approved Zoning Use is still required (see below Title 21 – Zoning Code Requirements).

Completion of the project will require three steps:

1. Issuance of permit (submitting permit and meeting Title 21 and Title 23 requirements).
2. Completion of Inspections (completing the scope of work and calling for all inspections).
3. Certificate of Completion (close out permit with the permitting office)

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Permit Close Out Requirements	6

Title 21 – Zoning Code Requirements

A permit will not be issued if the parcel selected does not allow the proposed use, in this case shelters. This is defined and controlled by AMC Title 21.

AMC Title 21 requires a proposed use to fit a use definition in the zoning code and further be allowed on the proposed parcel for its zoning district (e.g. a single-family home would not be allowed in an industrial zone). Since there is not a specific definition for “Long-term Transient Sleeping Rooms”, the two existing use definitions applicable would be:

1. **Transitional Living Facility:** “A facility providing temporary housing with services to assist homeless persons and families with special needs to prepare for and obtain permanent housing within twenty-four months. The facility provides 24-hour a day, seven days a week programmatic assistance or services for self-sufficiency skills to its tenants, and may provide services such as, but not limited to, on-site assistance in learning independent living skills (shopping, cooking, financial budgeting, preparing for job interviews, preparing resumes, and similar skills), and referral to off-site education and employment resources (GED completion, job training, computer training, employment services, and the like) to assist the tenants in becoming financially self-sustaining.”
 - a. **Permitted Zoning Districts:** Permitted *by right* in the R-3, R-3A, R-4, R-4A, B-1B, and B3 districts. Permitted by *Conditional Use Permit* in the PLI district.

2. **Homeless and Transient Shelter:** “A facility designed to provide minimum necessities of life, including overnight accommodation, on a limited, short-term basis for individuals and families during periods of dislocation or emergency pending formulation of longer-term planning. Facility elements may include providing the physical care required, including shelter, food, and necessary medical and clothing needs, directly or by referral to appropriate agency; and planning for more permanent housing and employment, including contact with community resources.”
 - a. **Permitted Zoning Districts:** Permitted by *Conditional Use Permit* in the B-3 and PLI districts.
 - b. **Use Specific Standards:**
 - i. Homeless and transient shelters shall be located more than 500 feet from other homeless and transient shelters.
 - ii. Homeless and transient shelters shall be located within on-quarter mile of a public transit route or have a plan to provide transportation to guests. Commuter routes shall not be counted as public transit routes for this standard.
 - iii. Secure storage for both personal belongings and bicycles shall be provided on-site for guests.
 - iv. In the B-3 district, homeless and transient shelter may not serve more than 150 overnight clients. A variance pursuant to section 21.03.240 is required for a site to exceed 150 overnight client restriction, and the fee for such variance application shall be waived.

When a *Conditional Use Permit* is required, the applicant will have to apply with Planning and undergo a public hearing with the Zoning Board of Examiners and Appeals before the Electrical Only Permit can be approved.

Please provide a description of the intended use and services that will be provided by the proposed facility to meet the requirements of one of the two uses above. This can be a written narrative of the proposed facility and can be submitted along with the main permit. Zoning will review to determine if it meets the definition of the zoning use and if the property is zoned for that use.

Note: The department reserves the right to require a final as-built of the facilities if deemed necessary to confirm conformance with zoning regulations.

Title 23 – Building Code Requirements

The AMC section added for shelter units to be exempt from building review and inspections lists the items below for determining compliance with this exemption. All the following will need to be submitted in an Electrical Only Permit for approval by the department prior to construction.

1. **Shelter Unit Size:** Sleeping units gross floor area shall not exceed 120 square feet. Hygiene and community units shall not exceed 400 square feet. Gross floor area is defined as the floor area measure from the inside face of exterior walls. A community unit may be used to house multiple sleeping units. Sleeping units shall be separated by 1-hour rated fire partitions when installed within a single community unit.

AMC 15.10.140 describes maximum density for sleeping units that would be applicable to the shelters: One occupant requires 70 square feet. Two occupants utilizing a bunk bed only require 70 square feet; otherwise, two occupants require 120 square feet. Three occupants, with two utilizing a bunk bed, require 120 square feet.

Please provide floor plans to document the size of the proposed units along with the proposed number of occupants.

2. **Structural Design Criteria:** Structures shall be capable of supporting 20 psf roof snow load and be able to resist 95 mph allowable wind speed (or 125 mph ultimate wind speed). ***Please provide documentation that the structures can support these loads.*** This may be documented by manufacturer drawings stating this design criteria or a letter or report from the manufacturer certifying this design criteria is met.
3. **Overturning Restraint:** Units shall be restrained for overturning to resist 95 mph allowable wind speed (or 125 mph ultimate wind speed). This shall be designed and stamped by a civil or structural engineer licensed in any state. ***Please provide an engineer stamped design for resisting wind overturning forces.***
4. **Fire Resistant Finish:** Wall and ceiling panel interior finishes shall be a Class C finish material by ASTM E84 (i.e. have a flame spread index not to exceed 200 and a smoke developed index no to exceed 450). An example of finish material would be the gypsum wall board (a.k.a. drywall) on the face of a wall and ceiling. ***Please provide documentation of the interior finish materials that meet this requirement.*** This may be through manufacturer specifications or ICC Evaluation Service Report (ICC-ESR). Alternatives may be considered upon submittal.
5. **Unit Spacing (See Figure A below for an example):**
 - a. Units may be in clusters of up to eight (8) units per cluster. Clusters of units shall be located ten (10) feet minimum from permanent structures, property lines, support structures (e.g. hygiene structure or other community shelter unit), and other clusters.
 - b. In clusters, a minimum five (5) feet shall be provided on sides subject to snow shedding. Snow shedding is expected on the low end of the roof slope; in cases where the structure have effectively flat roofs, the intended side for snow shedding/clearing shall be proposed. Units are allowed to share snow shedding space.

Please provide a site plan showing the proposed unit/cluster layout and adjacent structures on the site, including the direction of intended snow shedding. This may be shown on the electrical plans as long as dimensions are shown and units are named (e.g. cluster A, unit 1-8, or hygiene unit 1, etc.).

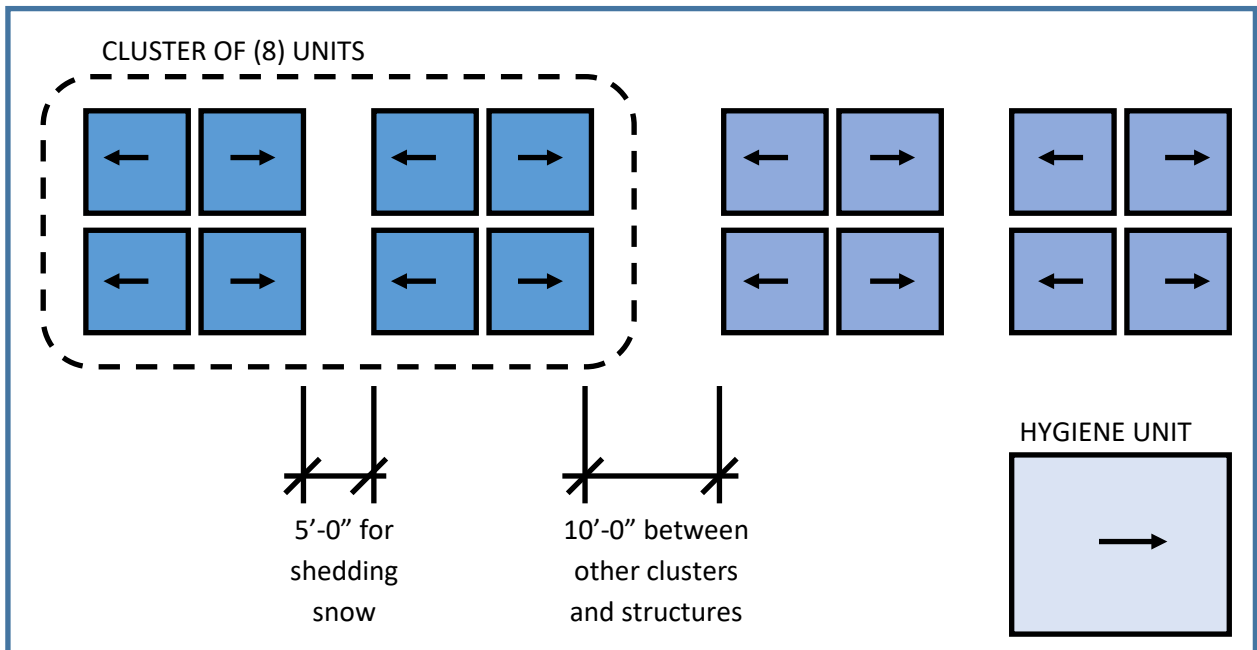


Figure A: Example of unit clusters with snow shedding direction noted.

6. **Toilet and Bathing Facilities and Trash Services:** If a hygiene unit for toilet and bathing facilities is not provided, an alternative shall be proposed. Mobile toilet and bathing facilities (i.e. units on a trailer) are an acceptable option for providing this service; facilities within the primary structure may be utilized as applicable when proper access is provided for shelter occupants. Trash service (e.g. an accessible dumpster) is required. Toilet and bathing facilities, by the International Building Code, would be required within **500'** of the shelter units. Trash service, for serviceability, should be within **1000'** of the shelter units. **Please provide on the plan the location and nature of the facilities and services requested and distance from the proposed shelter units.** This may be shown on the electrical plans.

Building code requires a minimum number of toilet and bathing facilities based on the occupant load. We will not review this as part of your permit, but this could be enforced if determined to be a health and safety violation. Below is the required number of toilets and bathing facilities by code.

- a. **For toilet facilities:** Provide one (1) toilet and sink for every ten (10) occupants. For a 20-occupant facility, this would require two (2) toilets and two (2) sinks.
 - b. **For bathing facilities:** Provide one (1) shower or bathtub for every eight (8) occupants. For a 20-occupant facility, this would require 3 showers or bathtubs.
7. **Fire Marshal Approval:** Units shall comply with fire code and operational processes as determined by the Fire Marshal. These items may vary depending on the specific location and arrangement of units and accessibility by fire officials, but the following shall apply at a minimum:
 - a. Provide an Anchorage Fire Department approved (and currently serviced) minimum size 5lb, A,B,C class fire extinguisher in each unit with a minimum rating of 2A:10B:C.

- b. Provide operable smoke alarms in each sleeping unit secured within a tamper resistant guard. When multiple sleeping units are housed within a community unit, the smoke alarms within the community unit shall be interconnected.
- c. Propane tank (if applicable) must be protected from vehicle impact and located in accordance with fire code (to be confirmed from site plan).
- d. Unit locations shall not impact fire lanes or emergency vehicle access to the units or nearby structures (to be confirmed from site plan).
- e. Provide a Fire Safety and Evacuation: A plan needs to be provided that shows the locations of smoke alarms and fire extinguishers; this can be show on the electrical or architectural plan. A fire safety plan will include operational maintenance of unit life-safety components such as routine verification of smoke alarm operability, combustible storage, and clearance from heat sources. The evacuation plan should also include a description of escape and evacuation procedures and gathering locations and provide a way to verify all occupants are accounted for.

Please provide a plan that shows the fire extinguishers and smoke alarms in each sleeping unit and the propane tank (if applicable). This may be shown on the electrical plans.

- 8. **Electrical Design:** An electrical permit is required by this code, with the work being completed by a licensed electrical contractor. When installation involves more than one sleeping unit, an electrical design sealed by an Alaska licensed engineer is required. ***Please provide electrical design drawings for review.***

The code references National Electrical Code (NEC) 550.4(A), which is for Mobile Homes and Manufactured Homes in Mobile Home Parks. Depending on the proposed facility, it may be more applicable to use NEC 590 for temporary structures, since this would include emergency structures. Clarification of intent on drawings is preferable, however this can be determined in field if necessary. At a minimum:

- a. All underground wiring shall comply with NEC for permanent installations.
- b. Any receptacle within sleeping areas shall be AFCI protected.

Code requires a “code compliance inspection” of the installation be completed. This will be completed as an electrical inspection by one of our electrical inspectors.

- 9. **Additional Permitting:** The following conditions will require additional permitting or documentation.
 - a. **Water/wastewater supply or natural gas/propane supply:** ***Please provide drawings of intended installation as applicable with the Electrical Only Permit.*** Drawings shall be reviewed for conformance to the code for temporary installation and must be completed by a licensed contractor (discipline as applicable). Work shall be inspected by a municipal inspector for code compliance.
 - b. **Units/utilities built in the Right-of-Way:** All units are considered temporary since they will not have permanent foundations; however, installation within the Right-of-Way is not allowed. If access to the Right-of-Way is required for installation of utilities (e.g. plumbing, waste water, electrical, etc.), a separate Right-of-Way permit must be achieved. ***Please apply for Right-of-Way permit as applicable ([link](#), see “Application for Right-of-Way Permit”).***
 - c. **Site preparation:** When facilities will require site preparation, clearing, or grading, a Fill and Grade Permit in accordance with AG.09 will be required, as applicable. ***Please apply for a Fill and Grade permit as applicable ([link](#)).***

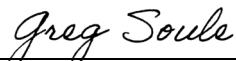
Inspection Requirements

Once a permit is issued, the work on the site may begin. During the project work, you will need to coordinate with our office on inspections. Below are the most common inspections to complete, but more may be required depending on your scope of work.

1. **Electrical Inspections:** There will be multiple electrical inspections at different phases of the project. Depending on the scope of work, these will vary, but these are some common inspections:
 - a. **Underground Electrical:** To be made after all conduits are installed in a permanent manner and prior to pouring concrete slabs. Electrical systems installed underground and exterior to any building must be inspected prior to covering trenches (e.g. backfilling).
 - b. **Electrical Rough:** To be done after wiring system, including grounding conductor, has been installed in approved boxes, cabinets, and service equipment. Switches, receptacles, and fixtures are not to be installed at the time of rough-in.
 - c. **Final Electrical:** The electrical system shall be completed in its entirety. All electrical equipment and mechanical equipment shall be third party certified (for example, UL certified).
2. **Final Fire:** Inspection to be made when project is complete, and all fire detection (i.e. smoke alarms) and suppression systems (i.e. fire extinguishers) are functional. Building numbers and Knox boxes shall be installed. Fire inspector will verify the site layout aligns with approved site plan and fire access is not disturbed.
3. **Final Zoning:** Inspection to be made when project is complete. Zoning inspector will verify site aligns with the approved site plan and additional Title 21 requirements as applicable.

Permit Close Out (Certificate of Completion) Requirements

To close your permit, you will need to complete all “Final” Inspections. Typically, this will include Final Electrical, Final Fire, and Final Zoning. If additional scope exists (such as plumbing or gas connections), additional final inspections may be required. Once all Final Inspections are completed, you can come in to the Permit Counter to close your permit and receive a **Certificate of Completion**. This will signify you’ve completed the project in conformance with applicable Building and Zoning codes.



Greg Soule, Building Official
January 13, 2025

For convenience, a checklist of the specific items for submittal are provided below. Additional items may be required depending on the proposed facility and site plan provided. See further explanation of requirements on pages 1 through 5.

Item for review	Expected document	Reviewer	Provided?
Unit sizes	Shelter plans	Zoning	
Structural capacity	Shelter manufacturer certification	Zoning	
Wind restraint	Engineer stamped drawing	Zoning	
Fire-resistant finish	Material specification	Fire	
Unit spacing	Site Plan	Fire/Zoning	
Toilet/bathing facilities	Site Plan	Zoning	
Trash services	Site Plan	Zoning	
Fire extinguisher/smoke detector	Site plan or shelter plans	Fire	
Propane tank location (if applicable)	Site plan	Fire	
Fire access (to be verified)	Site plan	Fire	
Fire Safety and Evacuation Plan	Plan letter or description	Fire	
Electrical design (stamped if applicable)	Electrical drawings	Electrical	
Water/wastewater supply (if applicable)	Plumbing drawings	Plumbing	
Natural gas/propane supply (if applicable)	Plumbing drawings	Plumbing	
Right-of-Way permit (if applicable)	See Right-of-Way for details	ROW	
Fill and Grade permit (if applicable)	See AG.09 for details	Varies	
Determine address	Site Plan	Addressing	
Zoning use	Zoning use description	Zoning	

In Our Backyard
Sheltering Unhoused Neighbors in Anchorage, Alaska

Appendix F

In Our Backyard Program Agreement

Program Agreement

Code of Conduct

Respect for self

I will:

- Take care of myself and reach out for help when needed.
- Work with my case manager toward finding permanent housing and achieving behavioral health goals
- Identify and pursue goals and next steps.
- Understand that the program team is here to coach and assist me in reaching my goals.
- Deposit _____ of my income monthly in a savings account held by In Our Backyard under my name. When I exit IOBY (In Our Backyard), my savings will be returned to me, unless I have caused damage to the shelter.

I understand that possession or use of any the following items in the shelters, bath trailer, or in the fenced perimeter of IOBY *is not allowed and is a cause for removal from In Our Backyard*:

- Illegal drugs, and drug paraphernalia
- Alcohol, marijuana, and misuse of prescription and “over the counter” medications
- Tobacco and non-tobacco products (clove, herbal, vaping, etc.)
- Weapons such as but not limited to guns, knives, nunchucks and bear spray.

Respect for neighbors in IOBY

I will:

- Treat my IOBY neighbors with respect and dignity at all times
- Strive to be kind, responsible, and caring in all my actions
- Abide by the quiet hours of 9:00 pm - 7:00 am in which my personal noise levels do not carry into other people’s living space.
- Not invite guests into my cabin or site area.

I understand:

- I will be thoughtful of my use of water in the restroom/shower trailer.
- I will help care for the garden beds inside the fence area with other community members.

Respect for Community at Large

I will:

- Treat Community at Large with respect and dignity at all times
- Put trash in the communal trash receptacles.
- Keep the common areas neat and tidy.
- Store my personal items only inside my designated shelter.
- Clean up after myself when using the restroom/shower area.
- Follow Federal, State and Municipal Laws.

I understand that:

- All my personal items must be contained in my living unit and not stored outside or in the perimeter of IOBY. There is no additional storage provided outside of the individual shelter. Any personal items placed in the area outside the IOBY perimeter is on church property and will be discarded.
- I am allowed to have one vehicle parked in a designated spot, with a parking pass issued by the Board of IOBY must be displayed on the front dash, or the car will be towed. The vehicle must be in running condition, licensed, registered, and insured according to state law.
- I am allowed one bike that can be locked to the bike rack inside the perimeter of In Our Backyard.
- If I am absent from the site for more than 24 hours I will notify the program in advance or as soon as possible by calling the number provided.* If I will be absent for more than three days (72 hours) I will obtain advance written permission from the program before leaving.
- Security cameras are in use 24-7 outdoors at the IOBY site for the safety and security of all.
- I will participate in caring for the perennial and berry gardens outside the fenced area with other members of the community.

Corrective Action, Termination and Grievance Policy

Corrective Action

If a guest is in violation of the Code of Conduct, they may be able to participate in a corrective action plan with the program. Persistent violation of the Code of Conduct or failure to follow corrective action plans will be considered cause for termination.

Termination Policy

The following are grounds for termination from In Our Backyard.

1. Harassment of guests, staff, or volunteers.
2. Discrimination against another resident, staff or volunteer because of their race, gender, ethnicity, religion, or sexual identity.
3. Disorderly conduct that poses an immediate risk to self or others, including loud, abusive, violent, or threatening behaviors.
4. Failure to comply with the drug, alcohol, and tobacco policy.
5. Destruction of property, theft, or other criminal action.
6. Violations of rules related to noise, weapons, or visitors.
7. Refusal to work with a case manager toward finding permanent housing and achieving behavioral health goals.
8. Violations of the law.

If someone is asked to leave, they must leave within 24 hours or sooner, depending on safety issues they might pose to the community. After the final determination, the guest will have 72 hours to claim their and remove their property. If the personal property is not removed within 72 hours after the final determination, IOBY will take possession and determine the disposition of the property.

Grievance Procedure

1. If a guest is asked to leave the program or determined to be liable for any infraction, they can appeal the decision within 24 hours and receive a decision within 48 hours of their appeal.
2. The process of the appeal will be for the guest to communicate either in writing or verbally with a staff member.
3. The staff member will write down the statement, signed by the guest.
4. The statement will go to two board members to review.
5. The board members will render a decision within 48 hours.

Savings Fund Agreement

I, _____, agree to deposit _____ of my net income per month in a fund with my name, held by In Our Backyard.

I understand that when I obtain permanent housing, my savings will be returned to me to help offset a down payment of a rental agreement.

I understand that if I damage the property of In Our Backyard, my savings will be used to repair the damage.

I have read, understand and agree to this Savings Fund agreement.

Guest's Signature

Date

Guest's Printed Name

Date

IOBY Treasurer

Date

Contact Information

Legal Name _____

Name I like to be called _____

Cell # _____

Emergency Contact Name _____

Emergency Contact Cell# _____

Case Manager _____

Contact # _____

Other Contact information:

Vehicle Form for Parking Pass

Name of owner: _____

DRIVER LICENSE # AND EXPIRATION DATE: _____

Vehicle License # and expiration date:

Vehicle Make, Model, Year, Color:

Vehicle Insurance Company, Policy Number:

I, _____ agree that my vehicle will not be used for a sleeping space by myself or others. I will park in the designated space. I understand that Central Lutheran Church or IOBY is not responsible for the safety of my vehicle.

Owner Signature

Date: _____

Board member

Date: _____

Pet Policy

Name of Owner _____

Type of Pet: _____

Breed: _____

Gender: _____

Age: _____

Spayed or Neutered? _____

Current Rabies Vaccination? _____

As the pet owner, I will:

- Clean up after my pet after each outing and dispose of dog/cat waste in the outside trash can.
- Keep my dog on a leash at all times or under voice control in the IOBY fenced area.
- Agree to have my pet licensed and up to date on all vaccinations.
(Help will be provided if needed).

As the pet owner, I understand that:

- My pet will not excessively bark and disrupt the IOBY community.
- My pet will not act aggressively towards people or other pets.

I understand that failure to comply with the expectations above may result in termination of my stay at IOBY.

Pet Owner's signature

Board Member's signature

Guest Acknowledgement

Guest:

I, _____, have read, understand, and agree that, if selected as a program guest, I will abide by the rules and expectations set forth in the Program Agreement. I understand that non-compliance with these rules and expectations may result in termination of my stay at In Our Backyard.

1. I understand that
 - a. The stay at In Our Backyard is approximately six to nine months.
 - b. In Our Backyard is a secured area and I am free to leave at any time.
 - c. In Our Backyard is not responsible for the loss, theft or damage of any of my belongings.

Guest's signature

Date

Guest's Printed Name

IOBY Board Member Signature

Date

IOBY Board Member Printed Name

In Our Backyard
Sheltering Unhoused Neighbors in Anchorage, Alaska

Appendix G

In Our Backyard Home Team Handbook



PO Box 91986, Anchorage AK, 99509

Welcome to **the Home Team Handbook**

Thank you for making the time to be part of IOBY's Home Team. This Handbook is designed as a reference for common questions about operations and to provide resources to help us all grow into building community with each other and our Guests. Written in December 2024, the Handbook will be updated online as needed (most recently in November 2025) to reflect current operations.

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WHO WE ARE

In Our Backyard's Mission and Non-Profit Status

IOBY's Mission is "Building a welcoming community to provide safe interim homes and connections to resources for our unhoused senior neighbors." Those homes are tiny cabins located on the property of Central Lutheran Church in Anchorage, but IOBY is incorporated separately from CLC and received its IRS designation as a tax exempt 501(c)(3) non-profit Public Charity.

Board Members and other Volunteers

In Our Backyard is entirely volunteer driven, from our Board to the dozens of people who contributed pro bono skills to design and build the tiny cabins, to you on the Home Team. The Board comprises four members from Central Lutheran Church, three from other churches or social service organizations and, once Guests move in, one of the IOBY Guests. IOBY employs no staff and contracts with [Catholic Social Services](#) for Case Managers and with [Restorative & ReEntry Services](#) for Site Managers. We have three categories of Volunteers: Providers (quilts, linens, snacks etc), Workers (building, shoveling, etc.) and the Home Team.

Guests

Guests come to us through one of several social service entities and homeless outreach groups such as Catholic Social Services and Restorative and ReEntry Services. Typically Guests are already working with Case Managers.

Guests are: Single elders or couples in need of transitional housing while they work toward permanent housing with their case manager. Selection criteria are:

- Age 50 and older
- Able to live independently
- No alcohol or marijuana use on site
- No substance abuse on site
- Not on sex offender registry
- Able to contribute a minimum monthly fee to be held in savings and returned when they enter permanent housing

The Home Team

A Home Team Member is:

Compassionate - Respectful - Encouraging - Supportive - Nurturing - Dependable

A Listener - A Relationship builder - A Problem Solver - A Team member

A Home Team Member commits to:

- Being a Home Team partner with at least one guest, beginning by welcoming them the day they move in to IOBY
- Connecting with your guest(s) 1-2 times a week until they move into permanent housing (six to nine months)
- Offering support through friendship
- Supporting Guest(s) in needs they identify (e.g. appointments, errands, events, just doing life, driving as needed)
- Submitting to a background check
- Attending an Orientation for IOBY
 - Training will be available for home team members not already familiar with trauma-informed care and related topics
- Working with other Home Team members as needed
- Meeting periodically with the Home Team, Guests, and IOBY to see what's working and what needs changing
- Giving no gifts or funds to Guests except collectively, with Board approval.
- Communicating by text and phone with guests, but not bringing them to your home.

ONBOARDING TASKLIST

Background Checks, Orientation, Training, Insurance

- Please sign and return the Volunteer Confidentiality Agreement on p. 6
- Thank you for completing your background checks. If you don't yet have one, please contact _____. If you completed a check but have not given ____ a copy, please send her one today.
- Orientation: We will hold an Orientation for new Home Team volunteers in January 2026, with individual orientations being possible on shorter notice if needed.
- Training: If you would like to have Trauma Informed Care training, we can put you in touch with online resources.
- IOBY Volunteers are automatically covered by our insurance policy.

RESOURCES

Contacts

- **24/7 Go-To Number: Restorative & ReEntry Services _____ (907) _____-_____**
- Board Members for In Our Backyard, [link here]
- Security and Other Service Providers, [link here]. Our version of the list used by the Site Managers still needs some numbers added.

Policies and Procedures

- Program Agreement Form for guests [link], includes site rules, pet policies, etc.
- **Volunteer Confidentiality Agreement** - attached on the following page. **Please print, sign, and return to _____** or by USPS mail to: In Our Backyard, PO Box 90986, Anchorage AK 99509

Books and Movies

Books

- **Welcome Homeless** by Alan Graham (available at [Loussac](#))
- **Same Kind of Different as Me** by Ron Hall & Denver Moore (also at [Loussac](#))
- **When Helping Hurts** by Steve Corbett & Brian Fikkert (also at [Loussac](#))
- **Beyond Homelessness** by Brian Walsh ([Google Books](#))
- **Grace Can Lead Us Home** by Kevin Nye ([GoodReads](#))
- **Crazy Church Ladies** by Gwen Adams (recently available at Title Wave) Relates to trafficking, not homelessness but addresses similar potential 'savior complex' issues.

Movies

- **Same Kind of Different as Me**
- **The Soloist**
- **The Public**

Please email _____ with questions, corrections or additions.
Thank you for your generous heart and sharing your skills and your time.



Volunteer Confidentiality Agreement

Thank you for volunteering with *In Our Backyard!*

To maintain guest privacy, all volunteers with In Our Backyard (IOBY), including Board Members, are required to sign a confidentiality agreement. Please read and sign the following and return it to the Board Chair or Secretary

As a volunteer, I understand my roles and responsibilities are a valuable part of IOBY, and agree to carry out my responsibilities to the best of my ability. As I carry out my responsibilities, I may meet donors, community members and participants who wish to remain anonymous. Accordingly, I understand and agree:

- That I have received volunteer orientation in person and understand the contents.
- Not to disclose the identity of IOBY clients or donors I meet in the course of my volunteer work. If I encounter clients outside of IOBY, I will wait for them to acknowledge me rather than state where I met them.
- Not to share or discuss IOBY data on clients, donors, staff, volunteers, corporations, foundations and affiliated organizations.
- Not to access confidential information for purposes other than official IOBY business.
- Not to take any photographs or record any information while on IOBY property without specific permission.
- That security cameras are in use 24-7 outdoors at the IOBY site for the safety and security of all.
- To represent IOBY in a safe, positive, and professional manner.
- To follow the guidance of IOBY Board members where I am volunteering.
- To ask for help and to ask questions when needed.

Printed Name _____ Phone _____ E-mail: _____

Signature: _____ Date _____

Waiver and Release of Liability

I am aware that any activity, including volunteering with IOBY and its programs, can expose me to risk of injury or danger. I hereby voluntarily and knowingly enter into this waiver and release of liability and do hereby release and forever discharge In Our Backyard (Mailing Address PO Box, Anchorage AK, 99509, EIN # 93-4915440) and its board members, agents, volunteers, and any future staff for any physical or psychological injury that I may suffer as a direct result of my volunteer activity with In Our Backyard.

Printed Name _____ Address _____

Signature _____ Date: _____

Emergency Contact(s)/Phone(s) _____