

**LOCATION:**

Madison, WI

SIZE:

30 shelters

POPULATION SERVED:

- Unhoused neighbors
- Couples and pets
- To support unhoused people living in Reindahl Park

OPENING DATE:

Nov. 2021

FUNDING:

ARPA Funding

HIGHLIGHTS:

- 20 people moved to permanent housing in the first 12 months
- Innovative solution to building-code roadblock

Finding Innovative Ways to Provide Shelter

When building codes make supporting unhoused neighbors a challenge, cities are using creative solutions to overcome the barriers.

With average temperatures ranging from 9 – 90°F, Madison, Wisconsin, needed a specialized solution to support its unhoused communities. Freezing nights are an extreme danger for people experiencing homelessness without vital resources like insulated winter clothing and warm shelter.

The city reached out to Pallet in July 2021 to discuss shelter options for unhoused neighbors. Officials wanted to move quickly to shelter 70 people living in a park encampment before winter weather arrived. Pallet's extreme cold weather shelters felt like the right solution but after planning was underway, building codes created a roadblock.

The city met the challenge with a creative solution. Classifying the shelters as camping units and rezoning the land as a campground allowed them to move forward and shelter those living in the park before the bitter cold posed a danger.



Obstacles overcome, the city went to work building the site. The 30 Pallet shelters were placed on concrete pads to further improve cold-weather insulation, and spaced 20 feet apart for fire safety. Each shelter features a heater, air conditioning, and electricity. The shelter village opened in November 2021, just as the temperatures started to fall. It now provides a safe place to sleep and a way for residents to access essential social services through Madison Street Medicine, the nonprofit that operates the site.

Wraparound services available onsite include case management, healthcare, and help on the path to permanent housing. Residents also have access to warm bathrooms with hot showers, and meals are provided.

“It’s a legal place to sleep at night, which doesn’t really exist [elsewhere]. It provides an opportunity for couples, people with pets, to sleep at night while they’re seeking other opportunities. The shelters are way better than a tent. It has heat, electricity and AC. Their basic needs are met.”

BRENDA KONKEL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MADISON STREET MEDICINE

Site Features:

- 30 Pallet shelters
- 4500-watt heaters for extreme cold
- Warm restrooms with hot showers
- Access to support services
- Open to unhoused neighbors, couples and pets

