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**Statement of Rosette Village Neighborhood Collective
Oct. 26, 2023**

On Saturday, Oct. 21, a tiny homes village for unhoused neighbors was erected in New Haven's Hill Section. This bold emergency initiative has been led by the [Rosette Neighborhood Village Collective](#), in partnership with [Benincasa](#) (a faith-based farming community in Guilford), and [Amistad House](#) in the Hill, which has provided the land and infrastructure for the supported encampment since June of 2022. A work crew of more than 50 people came from all over the region, from Milford to East Haddam, to Rosette Street neighbors themselves, and began unloading the six prefabricated homes at 9 a.m. By mid-afternoon, the structures were ready for occupancy.



Donna A. was delighted to move into her new home at Rosette Neighborhood Village on Tuesday. Residents host a community breakfast every Sunday at 9:30 a.m. and offer to show people around their backyard micro-neighborhood that is open to everyone.

“Simply put, this is a neighborhood response to homelessness”, said Mark Colville, a resident community member at Amistad. “It began when we recognized that the economic refugees on our streets and under our bridges, as well as those ejected every morning from city shelters to the margins of our community with a standing order to scatter and disappear- these people are our neighbors. And our neighbors have a human right to create homes for themselves in their own neighborhood when they’ve been excluded by the economy, and by government inaction, from doing so. In other words, we don’t consider ourselves housing developers. We are human rights defenders.”

Mayor Elicker has expressed concern over this project, characterizing it as “outside the box” in terms of compliance with municipal zoning laws. But in the wake of Governor Lamont’s recent designation of homelessness as a public health crisis, and the obvious consent and cooperation of Rosette Village’s surrounding neighbors, city officials have expressed the city’s willingness to collaborate with Rosette Village in securing the permits it will require. Shannon Carter, a public health professional and local member of the Rosette Village Collective, notes: “It is well-established in the scientific literature that housing *is* healthcare. In light of the recent declaration that homelessness is a public health crisis in the State of Connecticut, it is important to emphasize that housing is a key component of both the mental and physical health of our unhoused neighbors.”

These prefabricated homes are made by Pallet, a for-profit company on the west coast which has contracted with more than a hundred municipalities nationwide, including private entities like church communities and social service agencies, to erect these supported encampments. The city of Providence, Rhode Island is considering a plan to build 45 of them on a designated parcel of public land. Jacob Miller, a real estate professional and next-door neighbor to Amistad house who, with his wife Keeley Colville has given over half of their backyard to the Village, contrasts this model of transitional housing with the mayor’s decision to purchase a hotel on the outskirts of the city and turn it into a homeless shelter: “The Pallet structures at Rosette Village are a much more effective solution from an impact-per-dollar perspective. When you include site preparation, equipment rental, installation, delivery and unit costs, this project had a total cost of around \$123,000 and netted 6 units and 8 beds (about \$20,000 per unit). The city’s hotel-to-shelter project total cost, before over-runs, will amount to \$121,000 per room!”

The Rosette Village tiny homes initiative was first conceived of last winter, after a host of residents from many of New Haven’s suburbs, together with city residents, became disturbed by news reports of the tragic and unnecessarily aggressive demolition actions against encampments for the unhoused, which have continued unabated under this mayor. At the invitation of Amistad residents, they began to gather and meet at the site to imagine an alternative. “I brought my family to a neighborhood breakfast after reading about what Amistad was doing in the New Haven Independent,” said Corey Sorenson from Guilford, “and we all were moved to try and help. Their

practical, people-before-policy, community-based approach to our homeless crisis just makes sense.” Caitlin Sorenson agreed, adding that working with the Rosette Village Collective has offered her “the rare opportunity to practice the skill and craft of being a neighbor”.

As this powerful community of support around Rosette Village celebrates an objective fulfilled, they need only look to the next lot over - a city-owned community garden space where another dozen people are still taking refuge in tents - to see the urgent work and struggle that lies before them. Many are questioning what it will take to compel the city to become a full partner in their undeterred efforts to turn the Hill’s unhoused residents back into neighbors.

Barbara Smith, who has lived on Rosette Street for 30 years, is grateful to be on the same block as Rosette Village. “I don’t have any problem with those people, the ones who live in the backyard. I see them here on the block, and they’ve always been respectful to me. They even help me when I need help. And I think it’s a great thing, that they’re able to have real homes here now!”

Members of the press: We are happy to supply stills or video footage of the village for your stories. You are also welcome to contact us to arrange a tour.

Before ...

After

