



**6 Step Journey from Homelessness
Via Urban Camp**



We design Urban Camp Homes and Neighborhoods as an intervention in the life of a homeless person living on the street. It's a place to stop the dangerous path of life that the homeless walk, and turn toward a better way.

We know that the needs of the homeless go well beyond the realm of a physical dwelling. But we think that Urban Camp is a safe place where people can start the path to re-build their lives.



Here is how we would describe the re-building path:

1 Self-Control

Living on the street in a tent camp is living in an environment with near-zero personal control, and limited opportunities for change. The first step is to get a sense of control as a start to think through the options.

2 Self-Care

The basics include sleeping eating, bathing, toilet, and keeping personal items safe. Taking care of yourself builds the feeling of value as a person and being of value to other people. And daily tasks like cooking and cleaning your home build work habits and skills.

3 Safety Net

With a stable living address, a person can start to build a safety net of public social benefits. This can help satisfy the daily needs for income, food, health, and housing support.

4 Purpose

For the formerly homeless who can work, employment can start with casual day labor, and build to full time employment. For those who cannot get a job, there may be local opportunities to volunteer. And there is always the opportunity to maintain the local community and be a friend and neighbor.

5 Engagement and Support

Where many homeless people are shunned, people on the re-bounce are engaged and even embraced by the people around them. We all draw our best most effective support from our friends and neighbors—no different are the formerly homeless.

6 Fulfillment

People build a sense of fulfillment through human relationships. It may be friendship, co-workers, companionship, marital, siblings, parents, or spiritual. It's a strength to take people successfully through the ups and downs of life.

Learning from Homeless Tent Camps

What we learn from observing homeless tent camps is that the homeless do not live solitary. Rather they form in relatively small groups of 8–10 tents. In some cases contiguous groups will form into an dozens or even an alarming hundreds of tents.

Why do the homeless form small groups? Likely it starts with simple security against violence and theft. But likely also a natural human desire to bond with other people, and maybe a sense that life will be better that way.

A second question is: Why are Homeless Tent Camp located where they are? Tent camps are often located on the boundaries of good commercial and residential neighborhoods, where the homeless have access to resources, and the small scale of the camps is tolerated.

Via Urban Camp

Urban Camp homes are designed for small groupings of about 10 units. This works for a few good reasons:



For now, lets focus on the first “Human Nature to Form Small Groups”, to understand why the 6 Step Via Urban Camp is the best path from Homelessness.

1 Step 1: Self Control

For any person in crisis, the first step is to stop the downward momentum and re-gain some control.

The homeless tent camp environment has its benefits of extreme low cost, community, and some access to resources whether earned, donated, or taken. Primary amongst its drawbacks are threats from violence, theft, displacement, and the exposure to the environment leading to discomfort, illness, and perhaps death.

The homeless person in a tent camp has near zero control over the environment in order to meet its most basic needs for security and subsistence. It is difficult to think of much else from this place.

An Urban Camp dwelling is first a “personal control space” meaning that the formerly homeless person has a key to a secure, dry, and temperature controlled environment in which to live. And along with that a responsibility to care for it.

2 Step 2: Self Care

Life on the street in tent camps deprive people of the opportunity for normal self care. The lack of self-care is a barrier to most employment, but more importantly a barrier to engagement with other people.

Urban Camp homes provide facilities within the dwelling for full self care. It's part of the building code that a dwelling must provide "complete independent living facilities including living, sleeping, eating, cooking, and sanitation (bath and toilet)". Urban Camp Units include:

✓	Standard size bed off the floor and lots of storage shelving for clothing and personal items.	
✓	Standard flush toilet within bath area.	
✓	Standard hot and cold water shower	
✓	Standard sink in the bath area with storage for personal hygiene items	
✓	A micro kitchen with sink, food heating appliances, small refrigerator, food storage areas	
✓	Clothes washer and dryer within the unit or common to cluster	
✓	Surfaces designed for high durability and ease of cleaning	

Self Care, Cooking, and Cleaning are the daily responsibility of the formerly homeless person in an Urban Camp Dwelling. It is an important step for building confidence and discipline for the path ahead.

3 Step 3: Safety Net

The lack of an address can keep homeless people outside the social safety net that is so valuable to people with very low income but stable housing. A living address facilitates the delivery of many social benefits including:

- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (SNAP)
- Medical (Medicaid)
- Housing Vouchers (HUD)
- Lifeline Assistance (Cell Phone)

Once a person is established at an address, the social safety net benefits can be initiated and claimed. This reduces the need for panhandling, petty theft, and other activities that distance the homeless from the broader society.

An address also allows an individual to be protected by emergency services for police, fire, and paramedics. And for individuals battling addiction and mental health issues, the address allows for sustained attention from treatment professionals.

4 Step 4: Purpose

Purpose will have a different meaning for different individuals. But here are 3 types of purpose that formerly homeless persons commonly adopt:

<p>Work for those who can work.</p> <p>For the formerly homeless who can work, employment can start with casual day labor, and build to full time employment. It may be an opportunity to learn new skills and experiences to drive increasing income. Maybe it is an opportunity to a pre-homeless life that was better and desired.</p> <p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; text-align: right;">1</p>	<p>Battling Addiction or Mental Illness</p> <p>Fighting addiction or mental illness requires determination and discipline. Getting to live beyond these debilitating conditions may be ones purpose.</p> <p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; text-align: right;">2</p>	<p>Caring for Others</p> <p>For the elderly and those unable to work there may be purpose in volunteer work in the community, being a good neighbor, and being a friend and helping hand to those in need.</p> <p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; text-align: right;">3</p>
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5 Step 5: Engagement and Support

Urban Camp is designed as small groupings of about 10 homes. This small group size and the way that the units are orientated toward each other assure engagement with others. Being built open to the surrounding community, rather than behind security fence, fosters engagement with society.

Social engagement has a therapeutic aspect for individuals fighting back from a homeless condition. It is critical to Via Urban Camp and successful rebuilding of lives. Where engagement leading to caring and support of other, it is not only useful, but often leads to a sense of happiness in itself.

Building bonds with neighbors, friends, and the surrounding community are fundamental and essential. Through this building, there should also be a set of social skills, attitudes, and behaviors that can lead to reconciliation. Many formerly homeless people may have torn relationships with families, friends, and partners. Repairing these relationships can be an important part of the rebound process.

6 Step 6: Fulfillment

Lets call fulfillment a person as they were meant to be. Each of us is a unique individual with unique character and talents. Life should be a process of exploring and learning and use of these talents.

Nobody sees a homeless person living on the street and thinks that person is fulfilled and living as they were meant to be. It is obvious that something is broken.

Via Urban Camp is a way to fix the break and direct the formerly homeless person back to the path meant for their unique life.