

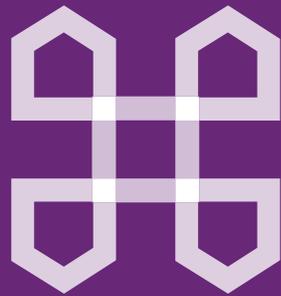
**ENVISION**

COMMUNITY

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# OPERATING HANDBOOK

A handbook for a dignified and diverse community from across the housing spectrum, intentionally living and learning together in low-barrier and extremely affordable permanent housing, where all people have what they need to live their healthiest lives.



**ENVISION COMMUNITY**  
**OVERVIEW**



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“The point of community is to stimulate our minds and help us come up. The idea is to learn and grow from everybody.”

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## **Envision a future where all people have what they need to live their healthiest lives**

Where housing instability is addressed by empowering and elevating potential residents as designers, problem-solvers, and decision-makers.

Where the conditions for social connectedness are considered as integral to healing as the structures that offer solitude, safety and privacy.

Where health care systems collaborate with local governments, social service organizations, patients, and community partners to heal conditions like housing insecurity that have devastating effects on our families, neighbors, and community.

## Welcome to Envision Community

A dignified and diverse community from across the housing spectrum intentionally living and learning together in low-barrier, extremely affordable permanent housing.



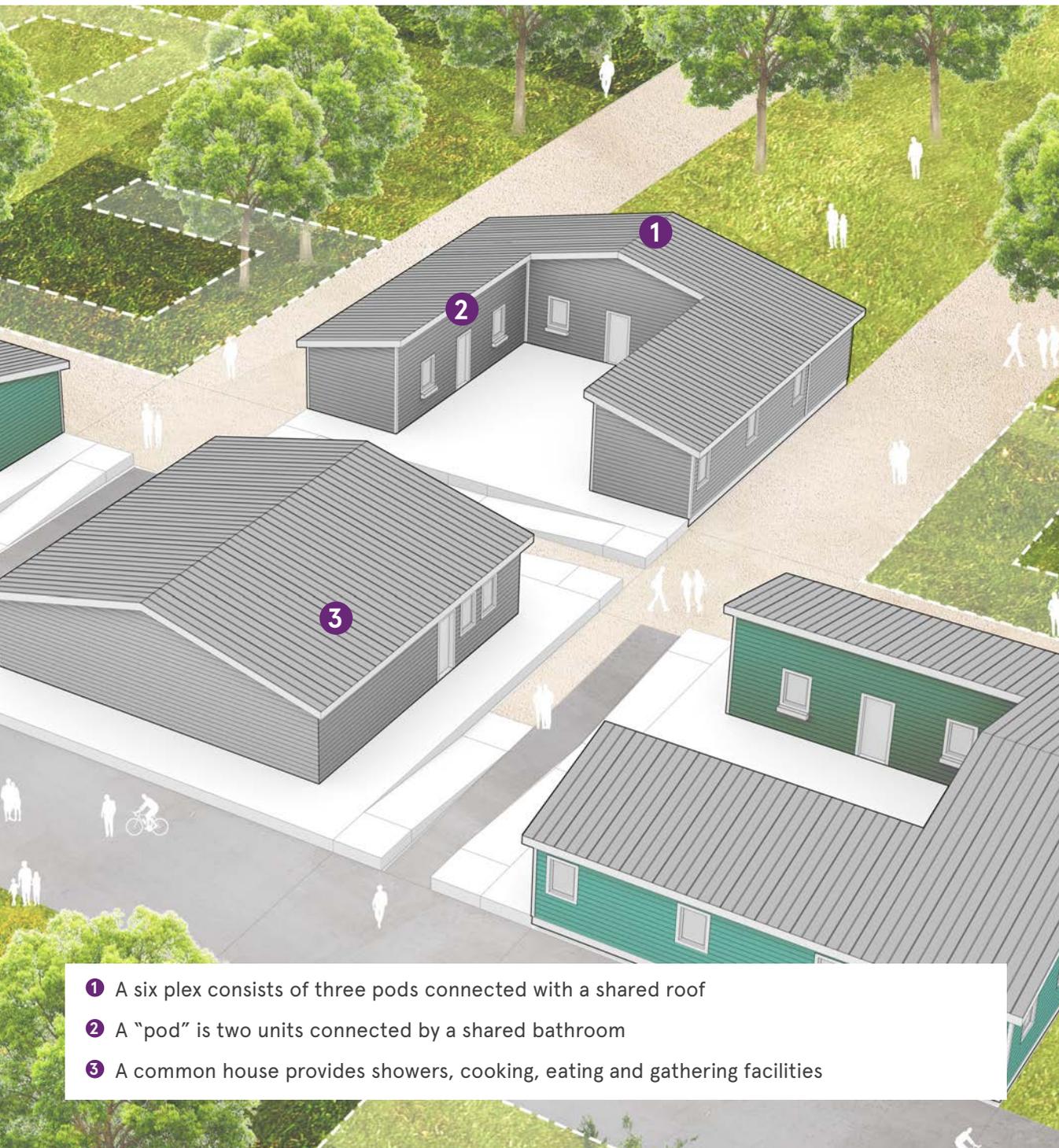


## **Envision is a new type of housing, designed by people experiencing housing instability**

We recognize and respect the successful work and deep expertise that exists in our community around issues of housing, homelessness and health. We see Envision as a small and important addition to the great menu of housing in Minnesota.

Envision Community grew out of the goal to reduce barriers, reduce costs, and reduce social isolation associated with affordable housing. It began with the aim of designing solutions in a new way - by inviting those most impacted to the table.

With smaller buildings, shared facilities, and a unique focus on intentional living, we understand that Envision Community is not for everyone. However, for the people with and for whom Envision was designed, we offer a desirable housing alternative.



- ❶ A six plex consists of three pods connected with a shared roof
- ❷ A “pod” is two units connected by a shared bathroom
- ❸ A common house provides showers, cooking, eating and gathering facilities

## Envision is Different

### Designed by residents from across the housing spectrum

Envision was designed by potential residents including individuals who have never experienced homelessness working side-by-side with those who are in daily pursuit of housing. We believe a diverse community is crucial to building stability and destigmatizing homelessness.

### Truly affordable for residents and the healthcare system

By designating 20% of units for the highest healthcare utilizers, leveraging innovative building techniques, and allowing for resident-led operations, Envision opens up new possibilities for the healthcare system to invest in affordable housing.

### Intentional community with shared values and spaces

As a response to the devastating impacts of social isolation, Envision is designed as an intentional community grounded in shared values and shared responsibilities.



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“People who have experienced homelessness are the most resourceful people out there. This is one of the many gifts they can give back to society. They can teach us how to live with less and be more efficient.”

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## Envision Goals

### Autonomy & Flourishing

Envision will provide a safe, respectful environment where residents have the freedom to heal, create meaning, and build lasting skills and financial health to support independent and fulfilling lives.

### Health Equity

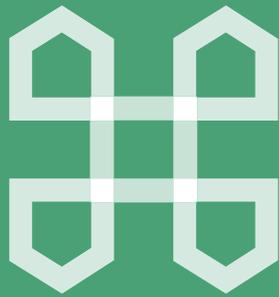
Envision will support residents and provide resources to improve mental and physical health, eliminate health disparities, reduce healthcare costs, and support achievement of personal goals.

### Community Engagement

Envision will continue to build upon the beauty, strength, and resiliency of community among many who experience homelessness. It will enrich the surrounding neighborhood by making it safer and more beautiful.

### Innovative Building Practices

Envision will be faster and less expensive to build than traditional housing, while maintaining high quality.



**ENVISION COMMUNITY**  
**OPERATING HANDBOOK**



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“I want to feel that burning in my chest that says I can be big and be a part of the bigness.”

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## How to use this handbook

Written in the style of an Operating Handbook, this document represents the outputs of shared meals and working sessions with a diverse team. It is an overview, manual, and manifesto for a new type of housing named “Envision.” As it is a living document we look forward to ongoing contributions and improvements.

## Thank you to our Contributors

This book was made by people who are passionate about eliminating housing insecurity and building strong communities - potential residents and collaborators including Street Voices of Change, Hennepin County, Project for Pride in Living, St. Stephens, Tasks Unlimited, and many others.

**Additional Thanks** to the many villages who shared lessons learned and best practices which informed this work, including Community First, Dignity Village, Emerald Village, Low Income Housing Institute, Occupy Madison, Opportunity Village, and Quixote Village.

Envision works because...



Envision works because...

# #1 We commit to each other through shared purpose and shared values

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“Shared values  
- the things that  
people agree to  
- is what holds  
your community  
together.” - Andrew,  
Opportunity Village

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We do this to ensure we're all aligned about what living in community means and why it's important. Knowing the bigger "why" helps us get through smaller challenges like sharing space.

Without shared purpose and values we're just people who happen to live next to each other.



### **Our Shared Purpose**

**Envision is a place where all people are empowered to live their healthiest lives.**

### **Our Shared Values**

Our values represent the character of Envision. They are seen and felt at Envision every day.

#### **AUTONOMY**

We honor each other's autonomy through transparency, flexibility, and choice.

#### **TRUST**

We must earn trust from each other rather than expecting it to be readily given.

#### **LETTING GO**

We seek to release what is no longer needed to make room for health, purpose, and community.

#### **OPEN TO LEARNING**

We respect each person as a teacher from whom we want to learn.

#### **SHARED RESPONSIBILITY**

We share responsibility for cultivating this community.

#### **SOCIAL CHANGE**

We see ourselves as part of a broader movement towards health and housing equity.

# Our 4 Agreements to Each Other:

As residents of Envision, we commit to following these agreements because we are all responsible for making Envision a safe and healthy place to live.

**#1 We agree everyone should feel welcome and safe at Envision.**

Discrimination, harassment, and violence are not tolerated.

**#2 We agree to respect each others' belongings and personal space.** Theft and persistent disruptive behavior is not acceptable.

**#3 We agree to balance the needs of the whole with the needs of the individual.** Drugs and alcohol cannot be used in common spaces.

**#4 We agree to meet each other where we're at.** We trust that we each contribute what we can to the community.

Envision works because...

## #2 We show we care by sharing responsibilities

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“Working together and investing ‘sweat equity’ creates shared purpose and gets people outside and engaged.” - Lisa, Dignity Village

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We do this because taking care of something together creates connection, builds trust, and reduces the costs of living at Envision.

Without shared responsibilities we wouldn't have the opportunity to develop new skills and take pride in caring for our community.

## Our Shared Responsibilities

We are all responsible for supporting each other and our community. Sharing responsibilities keeps costs low, builds skills, and gives us pride in our community.

### How we all care for Envision:

- We take turns and ask for help if needed
- We provide options so individuals can choose how to contribute
- We understand self-care is critical for a healthy community and is sometimes all people can contribute; we trust everyone is honest about what they can and can't do
- Extra effort is made visible, appreciated, and acknowledged
- We support and hold each other accountable if work isn't done or doesn't meet expectations

### Envision Weekly Responsibilities

Each week we rotate tasks. If you can't complete your task, ask for help or swap with someone else.

<p><b>Shared Spaces:</b></p> <p>Bathroom:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; text-align: center; width: 50px; margin: 2px auto;">JUNAIL</div> <p>Kitchen:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; text-align: center; width: 50px; margin: 2px auto;">THAO</div> <p>Laundry:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; text-align: center; width: 50px; margin: 2px auto;">JOANNA</div> <p>Common space:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; text-align: center; width: 50px; margin: 2px auto;">SHERRY</div>	<p><b>Outdoor Spaces:</b></p> <p>Sidewalks:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; text-align: center; width: 50px; margin: 2px auto;">FREDDY</div> <p>Gardens:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; text-align: center; width: 50px; margin: 2px auto;">KHALID</div> <p>Trash:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; text-align: center; width: 50px; margin: 2px auto;">EDUARDO</div>	<p><b>Weekly Meal:</b></p> <p>Shopping:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; text-align: center; width: 50px; margin: 2px auto;">DEWAYNE</div> <p>Cooking:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; text-align: center; width: 50px; margin: 2px auto;">SOFIA</div> <p>Cleaning:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; text-align: center; width: 50px; margin: 2px auto;">CLAIRE</div>	<p><b>Community Watch:</b></p> <p>Monday:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; text-align: center; width: 50px; margin: 2px auto;">DYLAN</div> <p>Tuesday:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; text-align: center; width: 50px; margin: 2px auto;">ROME</div> <p>Wednesday:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; text-align: center; width: 50px; margin: 2px auto;">CARLA</div> <p>Thursday:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; text-align: center; width: 50px; margin: 2px auto;">SALEEM</div> <p>Friday:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; text-align: center; width: 50px; margin: 2px auto;">KRISTEN</div>
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**Shared Spaces Instructions:**

**Outdoor Spaces Instructions:**

**Weekly Meal Instructions:**

**Community Watch Instructions:**

<p><b>Self Care:</b></p> <p>Take time if you need it.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; text-align: center; width: 50px; margin: 2px auto;">ASHLEY</div>	<p><b>Extra Tasks:</b></p> <p>Add a chore + sign up below.</p> <table border="1" style="font-size: 8px; border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">WASH KITCHEN WINDOWS FREDDY</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">REPLACE KITCHEN LIGHTBULB DEWAYNE</td> </tr> </table>	WASH KITCHEN WINDOWS FREDDY	REPLACE KITCHEN LIGHTBULB DEWAYNE
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Envision works because...

# #3 We manage ourselves (with support from people we trust)

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“People stand up a little straighter with their shoulders back when they talk about our self governance.”  
- Lisa, Dignity Village

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We do this because self-management provides autonomy and opportunities for engagement, while trusted partners give us the support we need.

Without self-management we risk creating an “us vs. them” attitude between residents and staff, and we miss the opportunity to restore the voice of people who have been systemically disempowered.

## Learning to Live in Community

Living cooperatively is a new experience for many of us, but learning to live together is essential for our success.

We support each other in learning to live in community by teaching skills, learning from others in our community, and building our capabilities. Participation is optional, but we encourage each other to engage and learn.

### Peer and community-led classes for living in community:

- Self care
- How to recognize and ask for help
- Receiving and responding to feedback
- Coping in stressful situations
- Sharing space with people who are different than me
- Setting and achieving goals for personal growth
- Working through conflict with others
- Cooking for a group



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**“When you require people to participate, it feels like control. When you invite them, it becomes an opportunity to engage.”**  
- Project for Pride in Living

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## How We Manage Envision

First and foremost, we rely on one another. The reason for this is simple: we are the ones who live here! We believe having responsibility and the power to make decisions builds confidence and important skills. Together we are responsible for many aspects of managing Envision. Our roles include:



### Envision residents

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ALL PEOPLE LIVING AT ENVISION

We care for Envision by attending weekly meetings, helping with shared responsibilities, following community agreements, selecting Resident Council members, providing input on new residents selection, planning activities, and attending events.



### Counselor of the Day

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ROTATING COUNCIL MEMBER

I care for Envision by being accessible to residents, answering urgent resident questions, and supporting conflict resolution as needed.



### Resident Council

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AN ELECTED GROUP OF 7 RESIDENTS SERVING AS LEADERS FOR 4 MONTHS

We care for Envision by following community agreements, facilitating meetings, leading tours, voting on policy changes, providing input on staff and partners, attending board meetings, and building relationships within the community.

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**“Setting up one resident as the main point of contact for conflicts helps support self-governance rather than residents running to staff .”**

**- Andrew, Opportunity Village**

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## How We Get Support from People We Trust

Service providers and 24-hour staff play an important role in making sure we have what we need as individuals and as a community - especially as we are first getting ourselves established. They are selected by the Board with input from residents and the Resident Council. Their roles include:



### Community Advocate

EMPLOYEE SUPPORTING RESIDENTS

I support Envision by helping residents set and achieve goals, connect to resources, resolve conflicts, and build relationships with the community.



### Envision Board

A DIVERSE GROUP OF RESIDENTS, EXPERTS & COMMUNITY MEMBERS

We support Envision by ensuring the vision and values are upheld; approving finances, new staff, providers, and policy changes; and attending some meetings or meals.



### Property Manager

EMPLOYEE MANAGING PROPERTY

I support Envision by helping residents understand and follow the lease and community agreements, and ensuring repairs and maintenance are done.



### External Providers

PARTNERS OR VOLUNTEERS PROVIDING SERVICES FOR RESIDENTS ON OR OFF-SITE

We support Envision by offering a wide range of services, trainings, and classes provided by Case Managers, ARMHS workers, mental health providers, social workers, PCAs, community health workers, and others. While our scale may not justify having a clinic on site, our partners will, like Envision, leverage social connectedness and community as a way to promote and improve health.



### Street Voices of Change

FOUNDERS + COMMUNITY SUPPORT

We support Envision by connecting residents to resources, serving on the Board, and attending activities.

Envision works because...

## #4 We anticipate challenges and embrace learning from them

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“If I meet people where they at, I can’t treat everybody the same because some people have addiction. It’s about connecting with each individual and trying to find their needs, not because of what I want them to do.” - Marco, housing unstable

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We do this because Envision is a place for growth, exploration and learning - both for residents and as a new type of housing.

Without this we limit our potential to adapt and learn.

## Our Policies

Our policies clearly describe what all residents and guests agree to in order to make Envision a safe and welcoming place to live. All policies are enforced on a case-by-case basis as part of the lease. The community has the opportunity to change these policies via the Resident Council.

**Individual spaces:** Keep personal spaces clean inside and out. Keep items in personal space. Keep food in rodent-proof containers. Participate in inspections 3-4 times/year.

**Common Spaces:** Clean up after yourself and return common spaces the way you found them after use.

**Security of Common Spaces:** Community rooms are locked at all times and only residents and staff have keys.

**Drugs + Alcohol:** No drugs or alcohol in common spaces. No selling or sharing prescription drugs.

**Smoking:** Smoking is only allowed in designated areas outside.

**Noise:** Noise from inside your private space should not be heard outside your private space. Quiet hours for outdoor space and the common house are from 10pm - 7am on weekdays and from 11pm-7am on weekends.

**Guests:** Guests are the responsibility of the resident hosting them and can't stay if the host isn't present. The Property Manager is notified if a guest stays longer than 4 days. Guests may not stay longer than 14 days.

**Leave of Absence + Abandonment:** Notify Resident Council and Property Manager of any planned leaves longer than 7 days and arrange to have responsibilities covered. Vacancy for 2 months without notification and rent payment is considered abandonment. Vacancy for more than 3 months (even with rent payment) will negatively impact the community and is considered abandonment.

**Pets:** Pets are allowed with application, approval, and security deposit. Pets must be well cared for, cleaned up after, and kept on a leash when outside. Pets are not allowed in common spaces.

**Weapons:** No weapons or firearms allowed at Envision (unless required as part of your job).

*Note: These policies are agreed to by each resident, and are enforceable as part of the lease that each resident signs upon moving in. Additional policies to be determined at a later date include parking, rent payment, and terms and security deposit.*

## It's Okay if you Screw Up

We all make unhealthy choices. We understand they happen. All we ask is that you learn from them.



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“We understand the complexity of alcohol and substance abuse and work with residents at every stage of their recovery.”

- Jaycee, Quixote Village

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### Anticipating Challenges with Addiction:

At Envision, we have no preconditions to housing like the requirement to be sober or clean. As a result, we recognize that some of our residents will bring addiction or mental health challenges with them. When residents are ready to address their addiction, we will work with them to support their goals by providing optional support services, connecting residents to resources, and following a harm reduction model.

### Enforcing Policies with Consistency & Understanding:

At Envision, we work together to follow our Community Agreements and Policies. We know that may not be easy for some, but we help residents learn and stay whenever possible. Policies are enforced by the Property Manager and Envision Board (if needed) on a case-by-case basis.

### Balancing the Health of Individuals and Community:

We strive to create a stable home for our residents and a positive recovery environment for those who need it. As we enforce policies, we work with each of our residents and the community as a whole, balancing the needs of each, to empower all our residents to live their healthiest lives.

## What Happens if you Screw Up

Unless it is a serious offense (e.g. violence or assault), you'll have the chance to learn from your choices.

### The Policy Enforcement Process

Individuals who don't follow policies or agreements follow the steps below, with the chance to appeal if they want. Other residents are not involved in "policing" the policies, but they can play a role in encouraging each other to follow the agreements.

- If a policy is broken once the resident receives a warning from the Property Manager, and gets support from the Community Advocate.
- If a policy is broken twice the resident is placed on 30-day probation where they are monitored by the Property Manager and must follow policies. They get continued support and are connected with resources by the Community Advocate.
- If a policy is broken on probation or a serious offense occurs the issue is reviewed by the Property Manager (and Board, if needed) to discuss potential mutual termination of the lease, eviction, or other action.

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**"We have clear policies and agreements but residents need second and third chances. If we didn't give them that we wouldn't have any residents."**

**- Jaycee, Quixote Village**

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### An Example:

Carla, a resident, relapses in the common space. Freddy, another resident, approaches Carla to offer his help. He talks about his own challenges with addiction and tells Carla that they can go get help together if she's willing. With her consent, Freddy notifies the Community Advocate. The Community Advocate and Carla find support resources she'd like to try. The Property Manager, who is also notified of the incident, keeps an eye on Carla for the next month to ensure she's getting the help she needs.

## It's Okay if you Disagree

Living together in shared spaces with others can be challenging, and we know that conflicts will arise. Together we train in conflict resolution, and we have a plan to address and resolve conflicts together.

### Conflict Resolution Guidelines:

- We, as residents, lead conflict resolution
- We, as individuals and a community, are trained in conflict resolution processes and techniques
- We recognize that residents are the best resources for each other and can often figure out the best solutions themselves
- We have external support to leverage for matters that are private or related to personal health

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**“There are always conflicts when people with diverse backgrounds come together.”**

**- Andrew, Opportunity Village**

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### Conflict Resolution Process:

1. Attempt to work it out yourselves by discussing the issue and using conflict resolution skills
2. Get support from the Counselor of the Day
3. Go to the Community Advocate or Property Manager if it is a private matter or involves a personal health issue, or you can't come to resolution on your own

### **It's Okay if it Doesn't Work Out**

For many of us, Envision will be a great place to live – for a few months, for a year, or for many years. For others, it might not be quite right. And for some of us, it'll be a stepping stone on our way to a different type of housing. That is okay.

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**“It may not be  
someone’s forever  
spot. Sometimes it is  
about helping them  
transition to something  
else.”**  
**- Tasks Unlimited**

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### **Envision isn't for Everyone:**

If a resident isn't a good fit for Envision, the Community Advocate will work with other service providers to support that individual and help them find other housing options that might be a better fit.

Envision works because...

# **#5 We attract residents who are a good fit by sharing honestly about Envision**

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“It is really important to get the right residents. If you do, you eliminate a lot of challenges.”  
- Allan, Occupy Madison

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We do this because people need to know what Envision is and if it is right for them. In a community living setting, residents are what make or break our community.

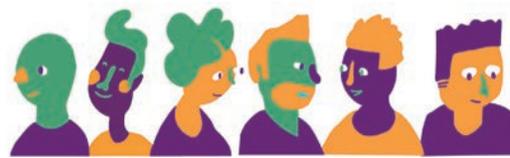
Without finding individuals who are a good fit, we risk harming everyone - cycling new residents through housing that doesn't work and jeopardizing the health of the community.

## Our Diverse Community

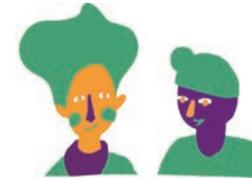
Envision is made up of adults from across the housing spectrum to bring many perspectives, strengths, and experiences to the community that provide stability and support.



### 20% Chronic Housing Instability (LTH)



### 60% Recent or Current Housing Instability



### 20% No Recent Housing Instability

#### Healthcare Utilization

- High

- Medium

- Medium - Low

#### Payment Source

- Have Housing Support subsidy (FKA GRH)

- Various subsidies (Housing Support, MSA, Section 8, etc.)

- Paid for independently (no housing subsidy)

#### Range of Resident Needs

- A stable, safe space to live
- A supportive community
- Support managing chronic health conditions and/or severe mental illness

- Help setting and achieving personal goals
- Ability to contribute to community
- Support managing health conditions or challenges

- A safe, supportive community addressing systemic inequities
- Help growing, sharing with others, and living intentionally

#### Resident Recruiting

- Connected through the Coordinated Entry System (CES) because of predicted health impact, healthcare savings, and high scores on the VI-SPDAT
- Navigation teams or case managers help clearly communicate options

- Learn about Envision through friends, groups like Street Voices of Change, social workers, or other partners and housing providers
- Attend events, activities, and gatherings at Envision

- Find Envision through intentional community Facebook groups and recommendations from others involved in social justice, housing, or related work

## Our Clear, Low-Barrier Resident Criteria

We aim to make Envision as low barrier as possible, but also recognize that Envision is not for everyone.

### Envision is Not For Everyone:

Because we are a self-managed community we also recognize that Envision will not be for everyone. Envision is best for residents who want to live small, and want to live in community.

Living at Envision can provide many benefits, like forming deep lasting relationships and being part of systemic change. However, it can also be challenging. It takes work and conflicts can arise from living closely with others.

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**“Self management will only work if you have the right people, if they want to be involved. You have to have a clear code of conduct and ensure people are aligned.”**

**- Luke, Low Income Housing Institute**

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### Residents at Envision must be:

- Adults (18+)
- Willing to agree with and able to follow the community agreements and policies
- No arson or Level 2 or 3 sex offenders
- Able to pay rent or qualify for a subsidy to cover the cost of housing
- Current or recent experience with housing instability (applies to 80 percent of residents)

## Our Resident Selection Process

We select people to live at Envision through a fair and transparent process which is the same for everyone.

### Two-Way Choice

#### Applicants can experience Envision:

Because it isn't for everyone, we provide many opportunities for people to decide if they will like it here - including an intake form, tour, trial experiences, and 2-way interview. This may add a few steps to the process, but it helps ensure people who move in are more likely to remain housed.

#### The community has input:

It is equally important to ensure the community can meet individuals who might join and to have input in the process.



### Selection Process:

1. Meet the eligibility criteria (see p 28)
2. Complete a New Resident Intake Form, which asks a few questions to help Envision learn more about you and help you decide if Envision is right for you
3. Take a tour of Envision or take part in a trial experience - attending a meeting, joining a community meal, or shadowing residents in completing their shared responsibilities
4. Participate in a "two-way interview" where you meet residents, get to know each other, and ask questions
5. Decide if you want to move in to Envision, while the Property Manager and Community Advocate decide if you're a good fit based on your willingness to follow the community agreements and input from residents

