



MULTNOMAH COUNTY UMBRELLAS

Bolstering community embrace of alternative shelters and presenting a united public-facing coalition.

Proposal Summary

Officials and community-based organizations in Multnomah County know how to end the homelessness crisis in our region—what they lack is the public’s full embrace of the extensive measures it will take to make this happen. Additionally, the multi-pronged nature of homeless services can look to the average county resident as a disjointed response to the crisis. As such, work on alternative shelters should invest a small percentage of overall resources into building community support for alternative shelters—reinforcing that these spaces are a thoughtful, temporary solution enacted by a concerted group of expert advocates and officials.

It seems from my research, that two big needs in providing alternative temporary shelters are: a lack of sanctioned land to build on, and a lack of political will to put weight behind these projects. I believe both of these needs can be traced back to negative assumptions, held by the general public, of what a homeless village will bring to their community and whether the cost is justified. If you can calm

those anxieties, change negative perceptions, and explain to the public why temporary shelters are a smart option, I believe you can win the average Multnomah County resident to your side. Then you can more easily solve the problem of finding land and engendering robust political support.

I propose that the Joint Office of Homeless Services (JOHS) spend a small fraction of the overall project budget on education and outreach for the general public. There is an opportunity at each of these alternative sheltering sites to educate Multnomah County residents about the causes of homelessness, and build support for temporary shelters as a viable option to quell the crisis. The following is a proposal for an over-arching public outreach campaign to run in tandem with all JOHS approved alternative shelter projects.

We know how to end the homelessness crisis in our region—what we lack is the public’s full embrace of the extensive measures it will take to make this happen.

Proposal: Multnomah County Umbrellas



Design Attributes

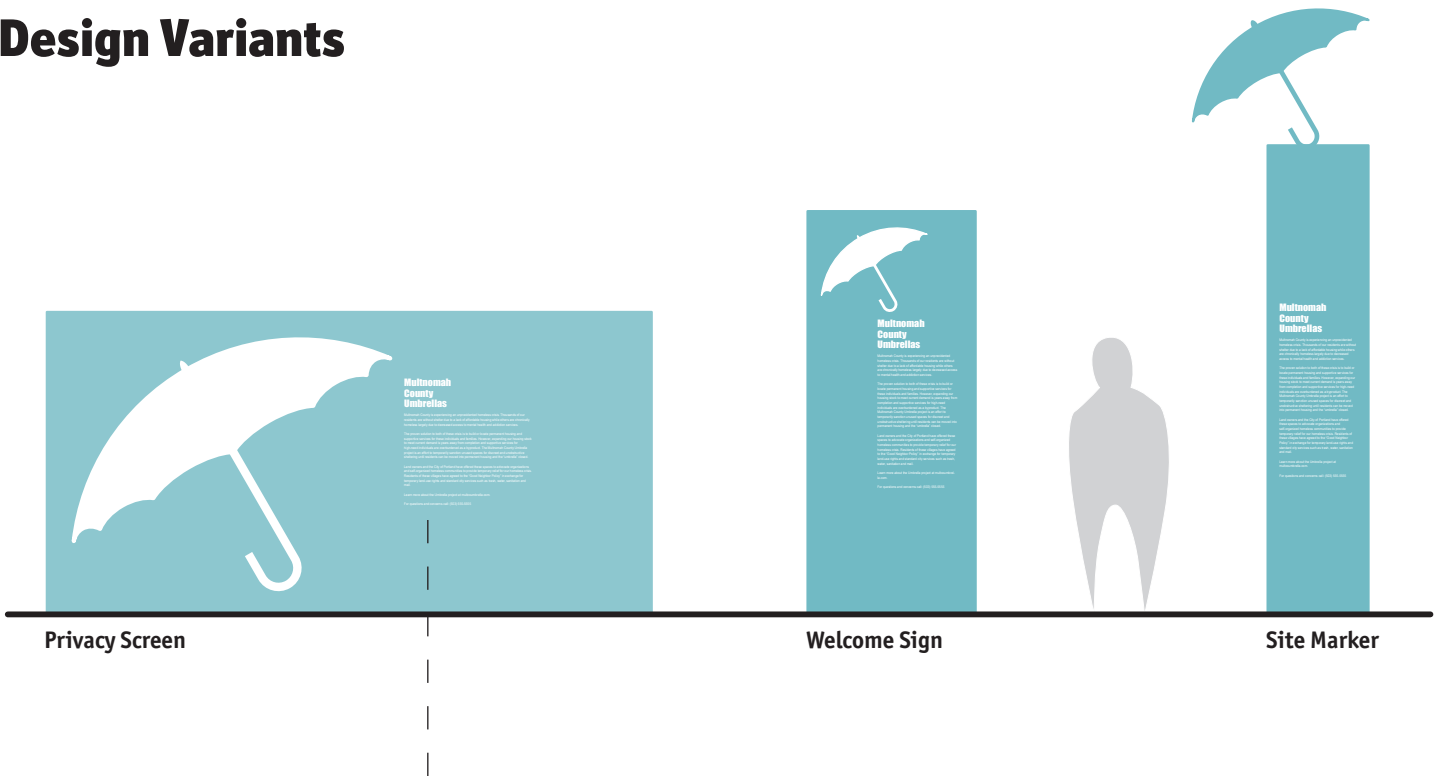
The Multnomah County Umbrellas will be a suite of branded signage elements that visually unite alternative shelter sites. They function on one level as a way to show county residents that the people living at these sites are there with the city's blessing, they are known, and they are on track to move into permanent shelter when it becomes available. Implicit in this design is also the promise that these sites are temporary, allaying fears about permanent encampments.

Placed just outside of homeless villages, the signage does double duty as infrastructure for public education. County residents that find one of these sites in their neighborhood can read information on the signage about the Umbrella sites, and connect with online resources that will educate them about the homeless crisis and the county's response. These designs will take a variety of form factors dependent on the type of temporary village where they are installed.



An umbrella is a temporary shelter for a rainy day or a shade from oppressive heat. It is deployed only when needed and put away when the need has passed. It protects all that it covers and can unite strangers under its canopy.

Design Variants



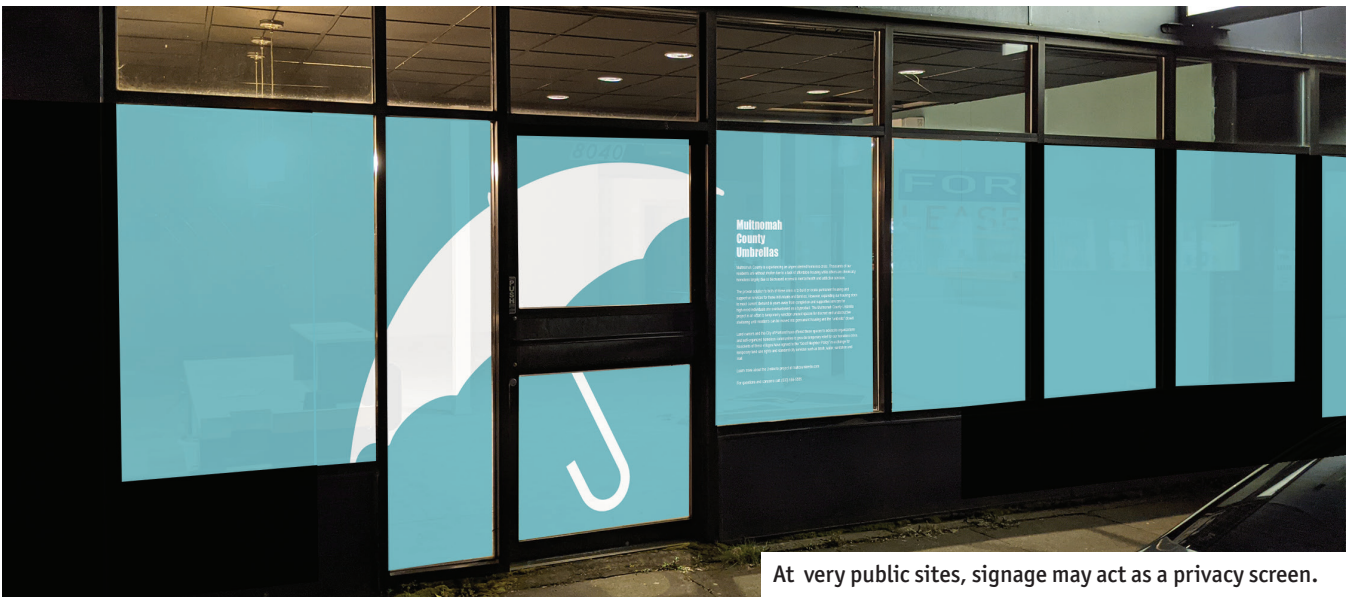
Sample Copy

Multnomah County is experiencing an unprecedented homeless crisis. Thousands of our residents are without shelter due to a lack of affordable housing while others are chronically homeless due primarily to decreased access to mental health and addiction services.

The proven solution to both of these crises is to build or locate permanent housing and supportive services for these individuals and families. However, expanding our housing stock to meet current demand is years away from completion and supportive services for high-need individuals are overburdened as a result. The Multnomah County Umbrella project is an effort to temporarily sanction unused spaces for discreet and unobstructive sheltering until residents can be moved into permanent housing and the “umbrella” closed.

Land owners and Multnomah County have offered these spaces to community-based organizations and self-organized homeless communities to provide temporary relief for our homeless crisis. Residents of these villages have agreed to the “Good Neighbor Policy” in exchange for temporary land-use rights and standard city services such as trash, water, sanitation and mail.

Learn more about the Umbrella project at multcoubrellas.com
For questions and concerns call: (503) 555-5555



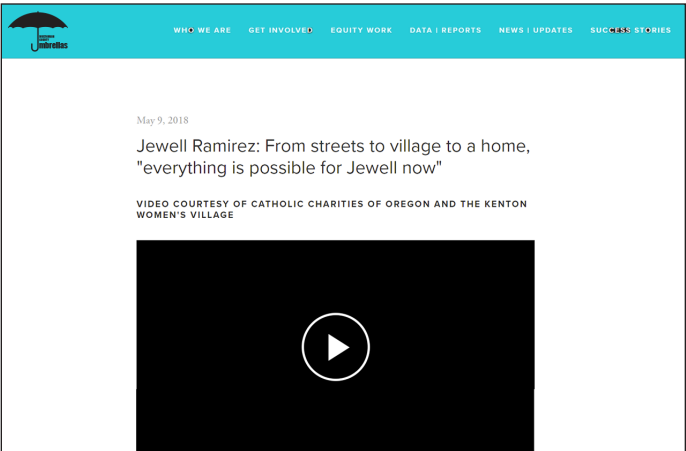
At very public sites, signage may act as a privacy screen.



In more private sites, signage may be a marker viewable from afar, notifying the public that the camp is a sanctioned Umbrella site.

The Website

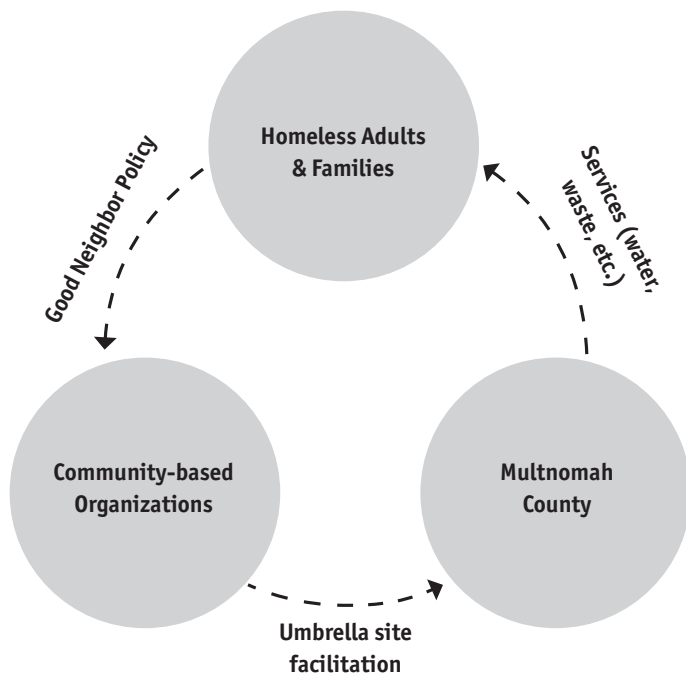
Physical signage offers the opportunity for a second layer of educational engagement by directing the public towards the project website. The website will feature information about the homeless crisis, the County's response, contact information and helpful resources. The website should also feature stories and video introducing county residents to typical people living in these temporary villages.



Values and Objectives

This proposal is meant to serve the homeless community by eroding resistance to alternative shelters being built in our communities. Frankly, there are many residents of Multnomah County who have a "not in my backyard," or "not with my money" attitude towards homelessness, and they will vote along those lines. If we wish to have stable and persistent political support for these alternative shelter spaces, we need to have the full-throated support of the average Multnomah County resident. Effort should be made to educate and evangelize for the efficacy of robust homeless services if we wish to have sustained support during the years that it will take to end this crisis.

Effort should be made to educate and evangelize for the efficacy of robust homeless services if we wish to have sustained support during the years that it will take to end this crisis.



Requirements for Participation

Residents of Umbrella sites will have agreed to the "Good Neighbor Policy" in exchange for temporary shelter and, ideally, standard city services such as waste, water, sanitation, storage and even postal service. (In fact, these services are crucial to enabling homeless citizens to fulfill their promise to be good neighbors.) This agreement would lay out achievable, common-sense policies for residency in one of the umbrella sites, such as: expectations for safe social-distancing, noise ordinances, waste clean-up, etc.

Facilitation

The Multnomah County Umbrella signage and website will require no staff support beyond installation and eventual removal. Obviously, community-based organizations will need to ensure that their staff is available to manage the day-to-day operation of their sites. It should also be expected that county liaisons are available by phone or email to answer questions and concerns about the Umbrella sites. Additionally, should standard city services such as waste and water be provided, those will need to be enacted and maintained by the county/city.

Experience / Expertise

I have almost two decades of experience in design, design-research and creating systems-based solutions. Most recently, I have been working in design and development for museum exhibitions which translates well to this type of public outreach and education project. I also have experience facilitating public art installations and I can leverage personal connections in the design and fine art community. My professional experience can be viewed [here](#).

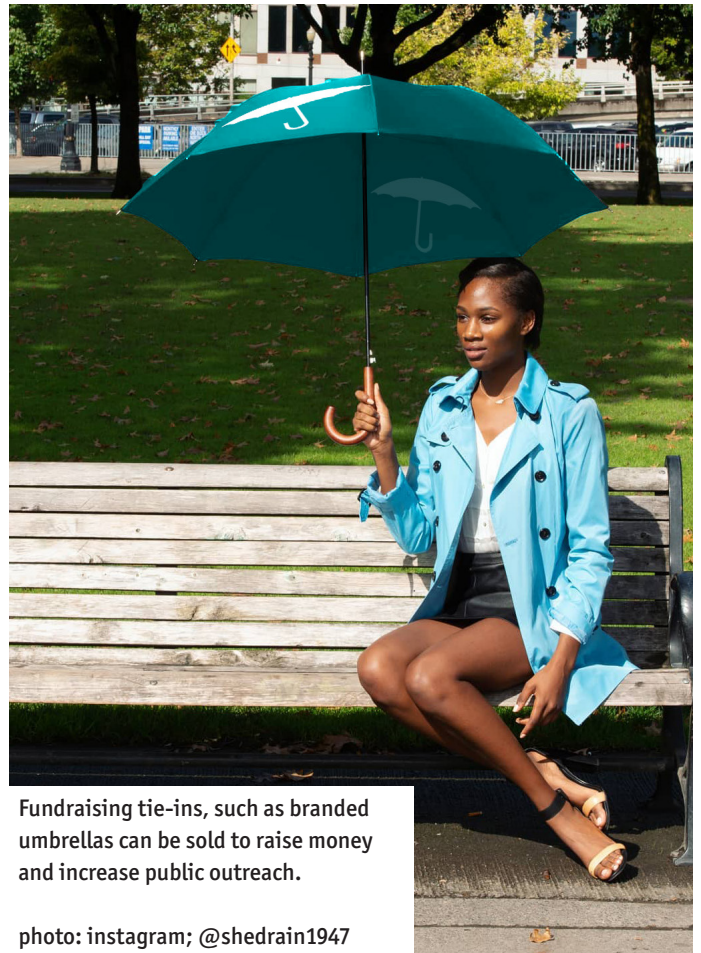
Next Steps / Timeline

This design concept should continue to evolve in collaboration with JOHS, community-based organizations working on alternative shelters, relevant county agencies and the homeless citizens who would live in these Umbrella sites. I have some contacts in this regard but would be looking to JOHS for help making more connections. Further research and design development would last a month or two. Design, vendor sourcing and fabrication should take another 6-8 weeks. In total, I believe this project could be up and running in 3-4 months.

Estimated Costs

I suggest dedicating 2% of the alternative shelter funds to this public outreach campaign. For a \$3m overall budget that total would be \$60,000. That may break down as follows.

A portion of the funds would go to pay myself and subcontractors (estimated: 240hrs @ \$50/hr=\$12,000) for design and project management services. Approximately \$2000 would go to developing a short “explainer” video for the website. Another \$5000 would go to design and development of the website. (JOHS will pay separately to host the website.) The remaining \$40,000 would go to the fabrication of signage for 10-20 sites in Multnomah County. Effort will be made to stretch the budget or expand the design by relying on donated materials and services from vendors, such as printers. Additionally, fundraising tie-ins, such as branded umbrellas can be sold to raise money and increase public outreach.



Fundraising tie-ins, such as branded umbrellas can be sold to raise money and increase public outreach.

photo: instagram; @shedrain1947