

Community Supported Shelters: Conestoga Huts

Eugene, Oregon, USA

Project Description: Community Supported Shelters designed Conestoga Huts, a stronger and more permanent form of tent, for their homeless community members and got legislative backing from the city to ensure legal usage in public space.

Distinguishing Features: This program focuses on providing pre-housing options for homeless individuals. Of particular note is the city of Eugene's recent legislation allowing homeless individuals to set up Conestoga huts in parking lots or church yards.

Population Served: Unsheltered Homeless

Website: communitysupportedshelters.org/conestoga-huts

News Story: komonews.com/news/local/huts-for-the-homeless-catching-on-in-the-northwest

SUMMARY

Conestoga huts were designed by Erik de Buhr of Community Supported Shelters as a quick shelter option for individuals experiencing homelessness. They are hard-shelled, tent-like structures that provide an insulated, dry space for individuals living on the street. The huts also feature a lockable door; an important feature allowing individuals to keep their belongings safe.

The secure space gives individuals the ability to focus on other factors of homelessness, including looking for employment, and pursuing education.

- 60 sq. ft. of interior space & 20 sq. ft. of covered porch space with rain-fly option
- Overall dimensions are 14' long by 6' wide by roughly 8' tall (inside height is approx. 6' from floor to ceiling)
- Lockable Door (30" wide) and Window (2'X3')
- Insulated floor, walls, & roof with mold-resistant interior
- Modular design that can be assembled, disassembled, and refurbished
- Simple design uses a minimum of materials to achieve a safe, temporary shelter option



*Limitation: As Conestoga Huts are designed for the mild climate of the Pacific Northwest, USA, they would only be appropriate seasonally in Durham Region. However, the legislative changes in Eugene are noteworthy for all forms of temporary housing.

Eugene Legislation

The city of Eugene enacted an overnight camping ordinance that allows homeless individuals to set up tents or Conestoga Huts in designated **quasi-public** spaces. The city allows up to 20 huts on parking lots, and up to 6 huts on church grounds. Eugene is one of two Pacific Northwest cities that have embraced this approach to temporary shelter, with Walla Walla, Washington following suite. In the news story linked above "Huts for the Homeless Catching on in the Northwest", the Mayor's office commented that "[The huts] look nice and they look orderly and I think the people in this community appreciate the look of it as well."

Community Supported Shelters

Community Supported Shelters provides practical support services for homeless individuals in Eugene. They run a donation & distribution centre for sleeping gear and basic supplies, and in 2014, CSS pioneered the development of Conestoga Huts for their less fortunate community members.

CONNECTED ORGANIZATIONS

Walla Walla Alliance for the Homeless

Walla Walla Alliance for the homeless is a fellow pacific northwest organization that uses 31 Conestoga Huts to provide shelter in their Sleeping Center. They are the only organization in the city of Walla Walla that provides barrier free shelter; individuals using substances, couples, and pets are all welcome.

They also pioneered the Exit Homelessness program in 2018 [See 'Exit Homelessness' PDF for further info']

allianceforthehomeless.com