



LOCATION:
Burlington, VT

SIZE:
30 shelters

POPULATION SERVED:

- Local unhoused people
- Low barrier to entry
- Pets welcomed

OPENING DATE:
February 7, 2023

FUNDING:

- ARPA Funds
- Donations from local businesses, non-profits, and foundations

Creating Safe and Durable Shelter to Withstand the Bitter Cold

With their Pallet™ shelter village, Burlington created refuge from harsh Vermont winters for their local unhoused community.

In Burlington, Vermont, it's common for temperatures to drop into negative digits each winter. And although this lively city known for its robust arts scene, universities, and access to outdoor recreation is usually considered a livable place to call home, it has recently seen a disproportionately high rate of homelessness—and an unsheltered population facing life-threatening weather conditions.

In October 2021, Burlington's Assistant Director for Community Works, Samantha Dunn, reached out to Pallet seeking a village to support the 60-70 people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in the city every day. Dunn hoped to provide refuge from the cold for these members of the community. In early February 2023, the Elmwood Community Shelter (ECS) welcomed its first residents to move into the newly installed 25 shelters.

Knowing they had to hold up in the bitter cold of northern Vermont's coldest nights, ECS was outfitted with Pallet's severe cold climate shelters. Equipped with thick insulation, powerful 4500-watt heaters, and a weatherproofing system that seals connection points to eliminate drafts and leaks, this configuration can readily withstand frigid climates. Early reports from the site operator show that residents were kept warm at a cost of only ~\$10 per shelter per day.

Independent lab testing from SGC North America in Denver, CO verified that the shelters can maintain a comfortable 68°F when outside temperatures drop to -20°F; the heavy duty structures can also handle snow loads up to 50 lb. per square foot and withstand wind gusts of 170 mph.

In addition to being a safe retreat from the cold, ECS also offers other wraparound services onsite including case management, health care, job-search assistance, drug and alcohol dependency support, and help securing permanent housing. The low-barrier program adopted by the village is an effective option for those with medical and mental health concerns, substance use disorder, and other challenges accessing traditional temporary shelter models.

ECS has already made a positive impact on the community: 37 residents have gained private, secure shelter from the frigid cold of winter in Burlington, and after only 50 days of operation, 2 residents had already transitioned into permanent housing.

“We’re in a challenging time right now when a lot of people are suffering and when the community is suffering. This is a facility that is going to be a very significant step in the right direction.”

BURLINGTON MAYOR MIRO WEINBERGER

Site Features:

- 30 Pallet shelters
- Resource center and hygiene facilities
- Onsite meals
- Onsite medical care, mental health services, and substance use treatment services

