Eden village is a program of The Gathering Tree Corporation, a non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation, providing permanent supportive housing for the chronically homeless with disabilities in Springfield, Missouri. The Gathering Tree started in 2010 as an evening drop-in-center

for the homeless in downtown Springfield. Through the encounters we experienced at the drop-in-center we built relationships with our homeless friends and gained insight into the multiple causes that lead to homelessness. Our view of homelessness, which we feel is the distorted view of most individuals, flipped 180 degrees from when we started. About the fourth year of operating the center, we realized that we were providing a needed service for our friends but not a solution to end homelessness. That is when we stated looking at possible solutions.

We found a few cities that had built tiny home communities for the homeless. They seemed to be one successful solution that was working. We researched some of these and with some of their data started dreaming of what we could do in Springfield. In 2016 we put together a team that ultimately designed the model that is now known as Eden Village of Springfield. We opened our first Eden Village in 2018 with 31 homes and a community center. In 2021 we opened Eden Village 2 with 24 more homes. In 2023 we have started construction of Eden Village 3 which should be completed by Spring, 2024. This will add another 24 homes. We have already reduced the chronically homeless population in Springfield by 25 percent. Our dream is to build two or three more Eden Villages so that Springfield will become A City Where No One Sleeps Outside.

Not only have we made an impact by reducing the homeless count but there is an economic impact to the city. It is estimated that every chronically homeless person costs a city between $30,000 TO $40,000 per person per year. They are a particularly a drain on the health care system of a city. Permanent supportive housing, such as Eden Village, reduces that number by 60% to 80%.

I tell our story in order to praise the FHLB for their part in making us successful. Each village has been the recipient of a maximum AHP grant. We have been able to raise enough money from various private sources in our city so the AHP grant is the tipping point financially that has allowed us to proceed with construction and completion.

I know these sessions are to compliment FHLB for what works and suggestions to make it better for the future. I don’t have any suggestions for change. I can’t shower enough praise on the staff of FHLBDM for their help during the application process but after submittal of the application their continued help in fine tuning the application to make it as complete as possible to receive a grant. The staff are outstanding in help with the follow up reporting also and are tireless in helping make these reports complete. We have been the recipient of $2,500,000 for these villages.

What started as an idea by my wife and myself in 2010 and doing something about a societal problem has blossomed into present day Eden Village USA. We had no real expertise except for our love of mankind but stepped out in faith that we might be able to make a difference. We never dreamed the impact this venture would have, not only in Springfield but across the country. We now have licensed 13 cities in 11 states to build our Eden Village model in their cities. And we feel we have just touched the tip of the iceberg called homelessness by the national attention we have begun to receive. Maybe our dream will spread where someday No One Will Sleep Outside in the USA.