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## Community and Economic Development in North Carolina and Beyond Blog: The Potential of Micro-Housing to Expand Affordable Housing Options

By CED Program Interns & Students

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A coalition in Greensboro is spearheading a campaign that would bring a

relatively recent innovation in permanent supportive housing to North Carolina. An outgrowth of the increasingly popular tiny house movement, the development of multiple, standalone units connected to specialized services is gaining traction in other parts of the country. Building off the success of the housing first approach, which has demonstrated that connecting chronically homeless individuals with permanent supportive housing can reduce public costs associated with administering services to this population, this community group has been working to develop a model micro-home—a mobile, 128 square foot home with its own kitchen—that will serve as a tool for engaging discussion about the role of these types of housing developments in supporting low-income people who are pursuing stability and self-sufficiency. This blog post will highlight examples of similar developments in cities around the U.S. and explore some of the broader implications associated with this innovation.

### Dallas, TX—The Cottages at Hickory Crossing

The Central Dallas Community Development Corporation is the developer/owner and manager of this 2.7 acre development located half a mile from downtown Dallas on a site that was once a homeless camp. Upon completion later this year, The Cottages will consist of 50 free-standing, 430 square foot units that would house high-risk men and women referred by the Metro Dallas Homeless Alliance and the Dallas County Criminal Justice System. Despite being ineligible for Low Income Housing Tax Credits, this \$8.2 million development was made possible through the contributions by foundations, city and county agencies, and individuals. This public-private partnership extends beyond funding. Area hospitals and other organizations have signed on to provide a variety of health, behavioral, and workforce development services, while the Dallas Housing Authority will provide housing vouchers to subsidize tenants' rental payments. In addition to its functional benefits, the community aesthetic and green technology features helped this development win a design award by the local chapter of the American Institute of Architects

### Olympia, WA—Quixote Village

The development of Quixote Village occurred in response to a 2007 city ordinance that prohibited people from lying or sleeping on sidewalks. Following protests, local churches agreed to host the dislocated individuals on their grounds, and the subsequent homeless encampment then known as “Camp Quixote” was formed. After several years of the encampment relocating from church to church, the community came together to develop Quixote Village—a roughly 2.2 acre development that features 30 foundation-built, 144 square foot cottages and a community center with shared kitchen, shower, and laundry facilities. Much of the grassroots support for this project comes through Panza (as in Sancho Panza), a non-profit formed specifically to build and support the Village, while the state's Housing Trust Fund (\$1.5



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million), contributions from Thurston County (\$170,000 and a \$1 per year land lease agreement), portions of the City and County's Community Development Block Grants (almost \$700K), and private and individual donations also enabled residents of the camp to move into Quixote Village in late 2013. Total costs for this project were just over \$3 million, but, after deducting the value and the land and pro bono services, each unit cost \$87,500.

### Scaling Micro-home Development

One of the largest tiny home developments targeting chronically homeless people broke ground outside of Austin this year. Community First! Village, a project of Mobile Loaves & Fishes, is a 27 acre master-planned community that will offer residential options including 144 to 180 square foot micro-homes, recreational vehicles, and canvas-sided cottages. Rent will range from \$120 to \$450 per month and will include access to a community garden, workshop for micro-enterprise development, and an outdoor theatre designed by the Alamo Drafthouse.

Austin's building codes prohibited the site from being located within the city, but the conversation about how to incorporate small and mobile structures into the city's housing portfolio is still underway. In October, the Planning Director of the City of Austin released a memo outlining some of the drivers behind the development of tiny houses for market-rate customers and guidance for interpreting zoning and building codes that pertain to these structures. Here, in North Carolina, the Asheville Small Home Advocacy Committee—a volunteer group—recently launched to support the development and authorization of micro-homes through collaboration with leaders in the City and Buncombe County. Community groups like those in Asheville and Greensboro are helping introduce new strategies to address the challenge of affordable housing, but it will be up to the local governments to determine whether these types of structures (both affordable and market-rate) become mainstream throughout the state.

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