



With funding from Fannie Mae, HDRC has built a community of tiny homes based on trauma-informed design | Photo source [Fannie Mae](#)

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A NEW APPROACH TO HOUSING FOR THE HOMELESS

 ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN

A non-profit has built a community of tiny homes using trauma-informed design

Spotted: Across the US, as elsewhere, housing costs are shooting up. Increasingly, people find themselves unable to pay rent, despite in many cases working two or more jobs. In Bozeman, Montana, one non-profit has developed a unique approach to the housing affordability crunch. The Human Resources Development Council (HRDC) has turned to tiny houses in an effort to help the chronically unhoused find accommodation. But the really unique aspect of this project is the way that it embraces trauma-informed design.

Using funding from the US government-funded Federal National Mortgage Association (Fannie Mae) Sustainable Communities Initiative, HRDC designed a community of tiny houses, called the Housing First Village. Each house is just 100 to 350 square feet in size, but includes high ceilings to give a sense of space, soundproofing, large windows to let in light, a private bathroom, and a mini-kitchen. The houses are arranged to give some privacy as residents leave their front doors, and there is shared green space and garden plots.

Residents will pay 30 per cent of their income on rent, and the complex includes on-site support for mental health, basic health needs, and financial planning. HDRC argues that this model will not only help the homeless, but will help the municipality save money. Tracy Menezes, a community development director at HDRC, [points out](#) that, “It’s kind of a cold economic model: These are the people in your community who are using the most services, and who would benefit the most from being stably housed.”

Tiny homes have existed since at least pioneer times, but they have become even more popular in last few decades as people search for cheaper and more flexible housing options. At Springwise, we have covered some unique approaches to housing, including an off-the-grid tiny [house on wheels](#) and a tiny house the size of a garden shed that uses innovative designs to [create space](#).

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Takeaway:

HRDC applies a housing-first model to homelessness, but at the same time, the Housing First Village is designed to help relieve the stresses and anxiety that affect homeless individuals. There are currently 12 homes on the site, with another seven planned for construction in 2022. HRDC also plans to offer guidance for other agencies on how to find land for similar projects and how to arrange financing. However, HRDC also acknowledges that tiny homes are just a small part of what needs to be a larger solution. Menezes [says that](#), “We need to add thousands more units in order to really ensure that we don’t have people experiencing homelessness in the community. But I think tiny homes will continue to be a part of that solution, along with every other kind of housing.”