

Testimony on HB2737 by:

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SquareOne Villages is a non-profit organization dedicated to advancing the development of tiny house communities in an effort to cost-effectively increase the stock of transitional and affordable housing in Oregon.

We're currently developing Emerald Village, a 22-unit tiny house community in Eugene, Oregon for people with extremely low incomes, scheduled to break ground this spring. We've received land use approvals to develop the project as a multi-family residential land use, and are currently in the process of obtaining building permits for each of the tiny houses. They range from 160 - 300 sq. ft. in size, will be built on permanent foundations, and will be plumbed and wired to include a bathroom and kitchenette.

Residents will be members of a limited equity housing cooperative, making payments of \$250 - 350/month (including utilities). We've already selected our initial residents, half of which are over the age of 60 and living on a fixed income—yet currently homeless because they can't afford a studio apartment, and only one in every four people that qualify for housing assistance receives it.

Emerald Village will change that for these people, and it's being developed for one-third of the per unit cost of a conventional affordable housing project.

The designs for these houses (see Exhibit 1) demonstrate that this can be accomplished without compromise to construction quality, durability, or life safety. However, following the existing building code requires these designs to be far less efficient and cost-effective than they could be. Examples include loft access, minimum room height and size standards, and insulation standards.

This is because Oregon's existing building code does not take house size into consideration. A 4,000 square foot home is required to meet the same standards as a 200 square foot home, even though it takes significantly less energy to heat or cool, for example. This makes no practical sense other than to incentivize the development of larger homes. Homes that are less sustainable and produce more carbon emissions.

The recently approved Appendix V of the 2018 International Residential Code provides a critical step forward in addressing this very solvable dilemma, however it may be years before this update is adopted at the state level. We urge the Oregon Legislature to expedite the adoption of this Appendix, and in the meantime we ask that local jurisdictions be given latitude to apply this Appendix to ease the development of compact, affordable housing. Why wait when there is such overwhelming demand?

An analysis by the National Low Income Housing Coalition finds that there are only 22 affordable and available rental units for every 100 extremely low-income renters in Oregon. That's a deficit of a little more than 103,000 units.

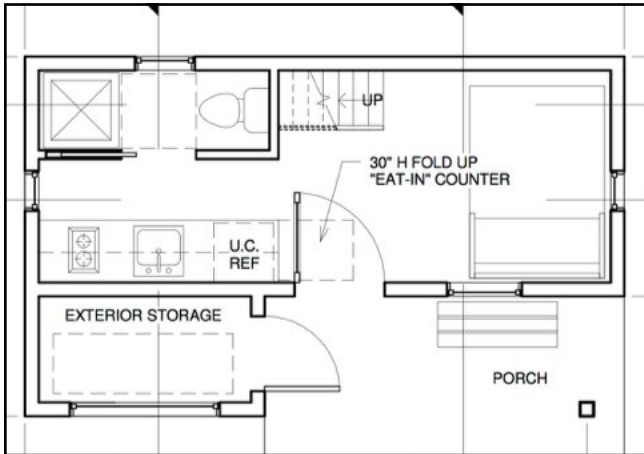
SquareOne Villages is currently working on plans for a similar tiny house development in Cottage Grove. And we've also consulted with groups in Medford, Roseburg, Portland, Washington County, Veneta, Redmond, Bend, Florence, Curry County; each of which is interested in developing a transitional or affordable tiny house community in their community.

In addition to tiny house developments, the dwellings can also be used as ADUs in single family neighborhoods, to provided much needed increases in density without changing the overall character of the neighborhood. Currently this is already being done under the radar throughout the state because people see no other option. Adopting Appendix V of the 2018 IRC would provide a reasonable legal pathway to permitting and inspecting these structures to ensure structural quality.

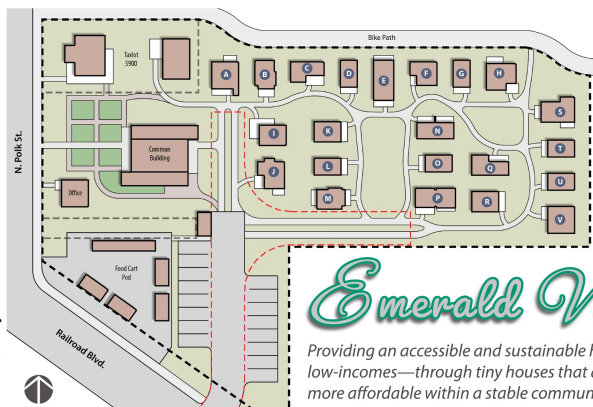
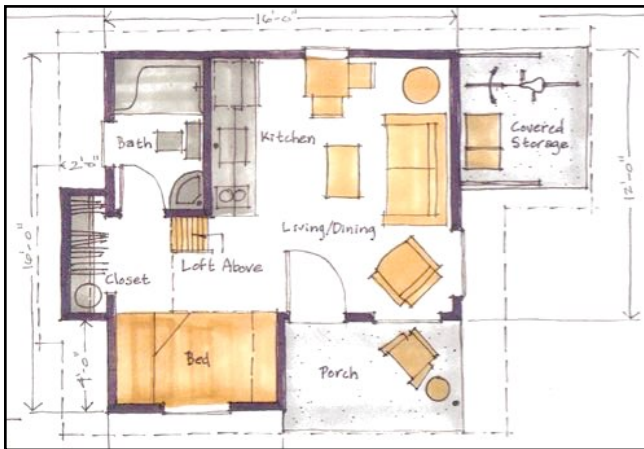
160 sq. ft.

Exhibit 1: Emerald Village Tiny House Design

more at www.squareonevillages.org



236 sq. ft.



Emerald Village Eugene

Providing an accessible and sustainable housing option for people with very low-incomes—through tiny houses that are safe, livable, and significantly more affordable within a stable community setting.

Emerald Village Eugene (EVE) is a project developed by SquareOne Villages, a non-profit organization creating self-managed communities of low-cost tiny homes for people in need of housing. It builds upon the success of Opportunity Village Eugene, a transitional micro-housing community for otherwise homeless individuals and couples. This next iteration of our 'village model' will provide a more accessible and sustainable place to transition to.

Each of the 22 homes at EVE are designed to meet the definition of a 'permanent dwelling'—including sleeping and living areas, a kitchenette, and bathroom—all in 160-300 square feet. The individual units will be supported by a common building that includes a gathering area, kitchen, laundry, restroom, and tool storage.

Unlike most affordable housing projects, residents of EVE will not simply be renters; they will be members of a housing cooperative with a share in ownership of the village—enabling them to create a modest asset that can be cashed out if and when they choose to move out.

Members will make monthly payments of between \$250-350 to cover operating costs. As part of this payment, each household will also accumulate a \$1,500 share, paid in increments over the course of 30 months.

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