

Small house movement

(Redirected from [Tiny house](#))

The small house movement



Illustration 1: A tiny mobile house in Olympia, Washington, USA

(also known as the "tiny house movement"^[1]) is a popular description for the [architectural](#) and [social movement](#) that advocates [living simply](#) in small homes.

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Background

In the [United States](#) the average size of new single family homes grew from 1,780 square feet (165 m²) in 1978 to 2,479 square feet (230.3 m²) in 2007, and to 2,662 square feet (247.3 m²) in 2013, despite a

decrease in the size of the average family.^{[2][3]} Reasons for this include increased material wealth and prestige.^[2]

The small house movement is a return to houses of less than 1,000 square feet (93 m²). Frequently the distinction is made between *small* (between 400 square feet (37 m²) and 1,000 square feet (93 m²)), and *tiny* houses (less than 400 square feet (37 m²)), with some as small as 80 square feet (7.4 m²).^[4] [Sarah Susanka](#) has been credited with starting the recent countermovement toward smaller houses when she published *The Not So Big House* (1997).^[2] Earlier pioneers include Lloyd Kahn, author of *Shelter* (1973). Henry David Thoreau, and the publication of his book "Walden" is also quoted as early

inspiration.[5]

Tiny houses on wheels were popularized by Jay Shafer who designed and lived in a 96 sq ft house and later went on to offer the first plans for tiny houses on wheels, initially founding [Tumbleweed Tiny House Company](#), and then Four Lights Tiny House Company (September 6, 2012).[6][7]

In 2005, after [Hurricane Katrina](#), [Marianne Cusato](#) developed [Katrina Cottages](#), that start at 308 square feet (28.6 m²) as an alternative to [FEMA trailers](#). Though these were created to provide a pleasant solution to a disaster zone, Cusato received wider interest in her design from developers of resorts, for example.[8]

With the [financial crisis of 2007–08](#), the small house movement attracted more attention as it offers housing that is more affordable and ecologically friendly.[9] Overall, however, it represents a very small part of real estate transactions. Thus only 1% of home buyers acquire houses of 1,000 square feet (93 m²) or less.[10] Small houses are also used as accessory dwelling units (or ADUs), to serve as additional on-property housing for aging relatives or returning children, as a home office, or as a guest house.[10] Typical costs are about \$20,000 to \$50,000 as of 2012.[10]

Workshops to teach the art of tiny house building began to be offered by Jay Shafer of Tumbleweed Tiny House Company and others. In June 2013, the first Tiny House Fair, sponsored by Tiny House Community, was held at the Yestermorrow Design Build School in Vermont, drawing together builders and enthusiasts from across the country. A Tiny House Conference followed in 2014.[11]

In [Oakland, California](#), [Gregory Kloehn](#) builds small houses out of found materials, for an estimated cost of \$40.[12][13]

Interest in very small homes has been revived in other countries, as well. For example,

- In [Japan](#), where space is at a premium, [Takaharu Tezuka](#) built the *House to Catch the Sky* in [Tokyo](#), a 925-square-foot (85.9 m²) home for four;
- In [Barcelona, Spain](#), Eva Prats and Ricardo Flores presented the 300-square-foot (28 m²) *House in a Suitcase*;
- In [Britain](#), Abito created intelligent living spaces apartments of 353 square feet (32.8 m²) in [Manchester](#);
- In [Germany](#), British architect Richard Horton and the [Technical University of Munich](#) developed the *Micro Compact Home (M-CH)*, a high end small[2] (76-square-foot (7.1 m²)) cube, designed for 1–2 persons, with functional spaces for cooking, hygiene, dining/working, and sleeping.[14]
- In [Russia](#) and [Germany](#), architect Maxim Kurennoy from Futteralhaus GmbH developed the "Futteralhaus Modell FH_25" (25 m²), designed for family with 1-2 children, a studio with bath, kitchen, sleeping nook, living area and terrace space.

Current movement

Small and tiny houses have received increasing media coverage [15] including a television show, *Tiny House Nation*, [16] in 2014 and *Tiny House Hunters*. The possibility of building one's own home has fueled the movement, particularly for tiny houses on wheels. Tiny houses on wheels are often compared to [RVs](#). However, tiny houses are built to last as long as traditional homes, they use traditional building techniques and materials, and they are aesthetically similar to larger homes. [17]



Tiny House Giant Journey travels through the [Petrified Forest National Park](#) in Arizona while an RV drives by.

This increase in popularity of tiny houses, and particularly the rapid increase in the number of both amateur and professional builders, has led to concerns regarding safety among tiny house professionals. In 2013, an Alliance of tiny house builders was formed to promote ethical business practices and offer guidelines for construction of tiny houses on wheels. [18]

In 2014, the first "tiny house friendly town" was declared in [Spur, Texas](#), however it was later clarified that a tiny house may not be on wheels but must be secured to a foundation. [19]

One of the biggest obstacles to growth of the tiny house movement is the difficulty in finding a place to keep one. [20] Zoning regulations typically specify minimum square footage for new construction on a foundation, and for tiny houses on wheels, parking on one's own land may be prohibited by local regulations against "camping." [21] In addition, RV parks do not always welcome tiny houses. DIYers may be turned away, as many RV parks require RVs be manufactured by a member of the Recreational Vehicle Industry Association "(RVIA)".

In 2015, the nonprofit American Tiny House Association was formed to promote the tiny house as a viable, formally acceptable dwelling option and to work with local government agencies to discuss zoning and coding regulations that can reduce the obstacles to tiny living. [22]

Tiny house communities for the homeless

The financial crisis of 2007–08, fueled the growth of the small house movement. For thousands who lost their homes due to foreclosure or unemployment, tiny houses became an attractive option. With their low cost and relative ease of construction, tiny houses are being adopted as shelter for the homeless in Eugene, OR, Olympia, WA, and other cities. Communities of tiny houses can offer residents a transition towards self-sufficiency. [23] [24]

Pros and cons

Smaller homes are less expensive than larger ones in terms of taxes and building, heating, maintenance, and repair costs. In addition to costing less, small houses may encourage a less cluttered and simpler lifestyle and reduce ecological impacts for their residents.^[2] The typical size of a small home seldom exceeds 500 square feet (46 m²).^[25] The typical tiny house on wheels is usually less than 8 ft by 20 ft, with livable space totalling 120 square feet or less, for ease of towing and to exempt it from the need for a building permit.

Small houses may emphasize design over size,^[8] utilize dual purpose features and multi-functional furniture, and incorporate technological advances of space saving equipment and appliances.^[2] Vertical space optimization is also a common feature of small houses and apartments.

As small houses may be attractive as second homes, their increased utilization may lead to development of more land.^[25] People interested in building a small home can encounter institutional “discrimination” when [building codes](#) require minimum size well above the size of a small home.^[21] Also, neighbors may be hostile because they fear negative impacts on their property values.^[26] However, this concern may be baseless, as there is evidence that small homes actually increase property values through increases in density.^[27] There has also been opposition based on this fact, due to concerns about increased taxes.^{[28][29][30]}

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