

How the Occupy Movement is Enriching People's Lives

by Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Monday, December 30, 2013

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Imagine an eco-community of micro-homes designed as a first step out of homelessness.

Housing, easy to get into, if people care. Occupy Madison in Wisconsin has come up with an innovative first step of a solution [see below].

These 96 square foot homes are no long term solution, at all. But if you're struggling to get some stability in your life and you're homeless, it's that much harder. Just having a roof over your head can give you warmth and a good night sleep to help you be more capable of doing everything else you need to improve your life.

Madison's average home cost is \$300,000. The average 2013 detached home sale price in Vancouver was [hold your breath] \$1.25 million. So affordability is definitely an issue here as well.

Moving homeless folks into some kind of housing is a start, but humans being humans, it's easy to feel all contented and say the job is done. But 96 square feet is a bandaid, not a solution.

The most hopeful part of this story below, is this great focus: "It's a co-op mixed with Habitat for Humanity mixed with eco-village as the long-term goal."

This is about community building, but also re-envisioning what community means.

And when you add that Occupy's [Rolling Jubilee program](#) that has paid off \$15 million in American's foreclosure debt, for only pennies on the dollar [which itself shows how predatory capitalism is], we can see that the spirit of Occupy is living on.

For many couples, the thought of living together in a 96-square-foot house sounds awful. But for Chris Derrick and Betty Ybarra, it's a Christmas miracle.

That's because Derrick and Ybarra have spent the better part of a year braving Madison, Wisconsin's often-harsh climate without a roof over their head.

They'll spend this Christmas in their own home, thanks to more than 50 volunteers with Occupy Madison, a local Wisconsin version of the original Occupy Wall Street group in New York. The group, including Derrick and Ybarra, spent the past year on an innovative and audacious plan to fight inequality in the state's capital: build tiny homes for the homeless.

In a city where an average home for sale costs nearly [\\$300,000](#), many low-income individuals simply can't afford somewhere to live.

Indeed, in January of this year, a citywide [count](#) found 831 homeless people living in Madison, a 47 percent increase in the past 3 years. And it's not just adults; 110 families with children were identified as well.

The "Tiny House Project" [began](#) the same month. The plan was for volunteers to build micro-homes that still include living necessities like a bed, insulation, and a toilet. The homes are heated via propane and [include](#) a pole-mounted solar panel to power the house's light. The total cost: \$3,000, paid for by private donations.

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via [Homeless Couple Gets A Home On Christmas Eve, Thanks To Innovative 'Occupy' Group | ThinkProgress](#).