

# Many Organizations Contribute to 'Rapid Shelter' Effort Addressing Homelessness

Homelessness is an increasing problem in Denver and around the world, thanks in part to the financial effects of Covid-19, including rising unemployment. Like me, you have probably seen news reports about homeless encampments in Denver, wondering what can be done to address what appears to be an intractable problem.

As a committed capitalist and entrepreneur, as well as a would-be philanthropist, I know there are solutions to this social challenge, so I was pleased to come across a *Fast Company* article with the headline, "45 innovative solutions for beautiful, easy-to-build housing to help cities with the homelessness crisis."

That article was inspired by the **Rapid Shelter Innovation Showcase**, "a clearinghouse for smart ideas on how to lower construction times for cities in need of new housing for people living on the street or after a disaster." You'll find the showcase on the website of **The Housing Innovation Collaborative**, created in 2019 by several Los Angeles non-profits committed to addressing homelessness in L.A. and around the world.

According to their website, "almost one million people [in L.A.] live on the verge of homelessness, and 60,000 people are homeless on any given night. Just to sustain ourselves, we need to build over 500,000 affordable housing units and increase our current housing production by 4.5x."

The cost per bed of the 45 concepts, many of which are described as "in stock," ranges from under \$1,000 to over \$100,000. Others are

described as "conceptual ideas only" or "nearly ready," with days required to set up each product ranging from 1 to 90 days. Eleven were described as "built prototypes only." Each has a link to its own web page with complete information.

Previously I have written about the "tiny home" movement, and I've visited several tiny homes, including one on the annual Boulder Green Home Tour. A few years ago, several tiny homes were displayed in the parking lot next to the Golden Public Library, and last year there was a display of them (which I missed) on open land off Pena Boulevard.

Tiny homes are intended to be permanent housing. They have complete kitchens and bathrooms, requiring hook-ups to water and sewer, although some are available as trailers requiring only the occasional RV hook-up. But most of the solutions displayed on the collaborative's showcase are intended to get homeless people out of tents.

It's hard to describe the variety of technologies and styles in the showcase, so I'll show just a few of them here, but I have links to the full showcase, as well as these three examples at [www.GoldenREblog.com](http://www.GoldenREblog.com).

Not mentioned in the showcase is a British charity called **ShelterBox**, which I learned about as a Rotarian. Their containers, easily carried by two persons, are warehoused around the world, ready to be deployed quickly to disaster locations. They contain a tent and other aid items such as mosquito nets, water filters, water carriers, solar lights, cooking sets, blankets and mats. It is a charity worthy of your support. Learn more at [www.ShelterBoxUSA.org](http://www.ShelterBoxUSA.org).

REAL ESTATE TODAY



By JIM SMITH, Realtor®



IndieDwell, a Boise-based company, offers this 2-bed unit built from an 8'x40' shipping container for \$50,000. Setup time is 18 days.

NYC Emergency Housing Prototype can be built in less than 15 hours. Cost: \$156,000, 6 beds.

You can buy this 2-bedroom 600-sq.-ft. in-stock kit home from Sunshine Network Homes, Inc. for \$53,642. Setup time is estimated at 29 days.



## As More Companies Encourage Work-at-Home, Expect More Office Space to Become Residential

While residential real estate is booming, the prognosis for commercial real estate must be pretty bad, especially since the Covid-19 pandemic has inspired many companies, big and small, to let their employees keep working at home permanently. And, of course, many companies, especially in the hospitality industry, have called it quits. Also, the oil and gas industry, a big part of Colorado's economy, has suffered greatly from the reduced value of oil on the world market and we're seeing big cut-backs in their operations. BP, for example, recently announced a 15% cut in personnel by year's end.

This means that there will be a lot of vacant office space, and many commercial landlords, seeing a shrinking demand for commercial space and a rising demand for residential units, are thinking of converting their buildings to residential use.

This trend could "free up a lot of

commercial space, which can be converted to affordable housing," HUD Secretary Ben Carson told Fox News in a June interview.

I have witnessed such conversions — in both directions — firsthand, long before Covid-19. Back in 1991 I purchased a building that had been built in 1905 as a 28-unit apartment house. It had been converted to an office building before I bought it, but after I sold it in 2007, it was converted back to apartments.

During Denver's 1980s oil bust there were many vacant office buildings in Denver and elsewhere, but they weren't converted to residential use because the residential real estate market at that time was also depressed. Now, with the residential real estate market booming more than ever, I fully expect to see some of those high-rise office buildings converted to apartments or condos in coming years, some of them as mixed use (only partly residential).

### Just Listed: Affordable 1-BR Condo Close to Light Rail

This is a totally remodeled top level (one flight up) condo with new stainless steel appliances, washer and dryer, new vinyl hardwood floors in the living room, dining area and kitchen. The bedroom has new carpet and two closets. The bathroom has newer flooring and a new vanity. Many of the light fixtures are new. There are air-conditioning units in both the living room and bedroom. Enjoy your morning coffee on your private sunny rooftop deck outside the living room. This is the only one-bedroom unit with 2 reserved parking spots. There is a 4x8 storage unit in the front building (shown in picture above). This condo is conveniently located a short walk to the Garrison light rail station and to bus stops on Colfax Avenue. Take a narrated video walk-through, at [www.LakewoodCondo.info](http://www.LakewoodCondo.info), then call your agent or David Dlugasch at 303-908-4835 for a private showing.



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