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A SUBURBIA FOR THE HOMELESS EXISTS AND THEY CAN LIVE THERE FOREVER

By [Christopher Dawson](#), CNN

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(CNN) — The world looks a little brighter from the front porch of your own home.

It's a sight more than 200 formerly homeless people are waking up to each morning at the [Community First! Village](#) in Austin, Texas.

And they can take their time getting used to it; residents are invited to stay for the rest of their lives.

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A resident looks out from the top deck of his new home in the Community First! Village in Austin, Texas.

Community First! Village is built and run by the nonprofit [Mobile Loaves & Fishes](#) to lift the most chronically homeless off the streets and into a place they can call home.

They live in about 100 RVs and 125 micro homes arranged on streets with names like "Peaceful Path" and "Goodness Way."

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Community First! Village is a 51-acre master planned community for the chronically homeless.

Building a community that cares for each

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"Because within each of us innately are two fundamental human desires to be fully and wholly loved and to be fully and wholly known and just stuffing somebody into a shelter or a house with four walls and a roof is nowhere near sufficient. It's all about the relationship here."



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laundry and wash rooms, meeting halls, playgrounds, a dog park, a barber shop, an outdoor movie theater, a medical facility and a community market.



All the facilities and amenities throughout Community First! Village are accessible by paved pathways that meander

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just spending time with each other. So it's really that human interaction that is so critically important. And when that happens, relationships begin to form, and that becomes the power of community."

New residents might initially keep to themselves, but it is hard to resist the smell of Texas barbecue on the grill, or the sight of fresh vegetables grown on site and being sliced for the community potluck dinner. Hearing the rhythmic tunes of a jam session in Unity Hall is an open invitation to take a seat, tap a foot, and maybe even add a voice to the chorus.

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Jam sessions are both scheduled and impromptu gatherings in Unity Hall.

The village also includes an art studio, an artisan blacksmithing shop, glassblowing, beekeeping, a community garden and a car care shop. These hobbies teach new skills and become a source of dignified income.

"We offer a number of micro-enterprise opportunities on this property that in the past two years has

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The paintings and works of pottery made by residents in the on-site art studio can be sold in the popular community market.

In the heart of the village is a large community center called Unity Hall where administrators, staff and counselors put together daily activities, counseling services, job placement and mentoring to help residents find their way.

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A movement to end homelessness

Mobile Loaves & Fishes hopes its efforts will launch a movement across the United States; a compassionate answer to homelessness.

Every quarter, they host a [three-day symposium](#) in Austin that teaches attendees how to build similar communities in their cities.

Similar ideas have already taken hold. Tiny houses have been used to tackle homelessness from [Seattle](#) to [New York](#).

For Mobile Loaves & Fishes, it starts with seeing the homeless as members of the community.

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All the micro homes in Community First! Village offer front porches to encourage neighbors to get to know each other.

"These are our neighbors. It's all about the community being inspired into a lifestyle, a service with this person," Graham says. "And that starts by going into a relationship with them. So roll the window down, say hello. Go break bread with them at McDonald's. It starts by seeing one another."

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