

Abstract Program Description:

*Reweaving the Neighborhood Fabric: How Modular Housing Can Build Affordable and Dignified Communities.*

This initiative will bring exquisitely designed, affordable, sustainable, and accessible modular infill housing to three neighborhoods where affordable housing is extremely scarce. Each will receive one dwelling, designed by teams of graduate students. Each is intended as a catalyst for future infill units in the neighborhoods, knitting them together and strengthening them as livable communities. The new housing will include a Community Room where design and construction meetings take place for future neighborhood projects, other pro-bono architectural services, and activities to benefit the community. The Community Room will also be the Storefront Office for the local professional organization of architects. With it, we endeavor to raise the profile of architects as advocates for the community. The local architectural practitioners offer this initiative as a gift to the community. The professional participation is provided at no fee.

This program was created to offer citizens in communities across America an opportunity to celebrate their community heritage, address emerging architectural challenges and trends, and find their voices to help make their vision real for beautiful, safe, and livable communities.

This initiative strives to knit together inner-city neighborhoods by infusing creatively designed affordable housing in the blighted gaps between existing housing. Providing secure, sustainable, and vibrant housing in already-established neighborhoods with existing infrastructure will revive a sense of community here. "All eyes on the street" is a phrase that speaks to housing with wide front porches and inviting facades. Our initiative will feature this type of housing. Located near bus lines and family-supporting manufacturing, service, and professional jobs, these dwellings will afford their residents an opportunity to realize a dignified standard of living. Walkable, pedestrian-scaled neighborhoods with parks, amenities, and services nearby are achievable through the thoughtful integration of owner-occupied housing in critical mass. Each neighborhood in which we build will be one step closer to accomplishing this goal.

The *Reweaving the Neighborhood Fabric* initiative is aggressive and comprehensive. It relies on a productive dialogue with and commitment from an array of policy-makers, community organizations, non-profits and stake-holders. Making a compelling presentation of the initiative to each city's mayor, director of planning, housing authority, or all three, was a critical key step that is proving beneficial. Typically, we are asking these cities to donate or help us obtain land, rezone parcels, qualify residents, relax restrictions on creative housing, or all of the above. Without their consideration and partnering, our efforts cannot move forward. We are also forging positive relationships with the leadership of community organizations and neighborhood associations to understand their needs, goals, and concerns. We will tailor the process and product to fit their communities. Third, we are forming partnerships with non-profit organizations and foundations. Their expertise in similar ventures and potential financial assistance will be vital. Fourth, we are collaborating with the leadership of the local School of Architecture and Urban Planning to provide the design services for our initiative. Teams of students in a graduate level studio led by an energetic and talented professor developed design drawings for each neighborhood. Finally, our team is interfacing with suppliers, manufacturers, and builders. We are developing relationships with leaders in the construction industry to contribute knowledge, labor, or materials to our initiative.