

AUSTIN, GARFIELD PARK, NORTH LAWDALE

Can These Factory-Built Homes On The West Side Help Fix Chicago's Affordable Housing Shortage?

Affordable duplexes at the Harrison Row Townhomes will be modular homes built in off-site factories, which cuts costs and enables developers to complete a home in just 90 days.

Pascal Sabino 7:21 AM CST on Mar 8, 2022



Credit: Provided

A modular home being built for the Harrison Row Townhomes development.

Credibility: Original Reporting Sources Cited



EAST GARFIELD PARK — Dozens of factory-built homes are being developed in East Garfield Park in an effort to offset rising housing prices for working-class families.

The 33 affordable homes are being built as part of the second phase of the Harrison Row Townhomes project led by Structured Development.

Fourteen of the townhomes will be duplexes assembled with a modular construction process to keep costs low, developers said. The homes are being built off-site in a factory by Kinexx Modular Construction, which cuts down the costs and the turnaround time for building the townhouses, said Mike Drew, principal for Structured Development.

The timeline for laying the foundations, assembling and installing each home is 90 days, far less than a typical construction process, which takes at least seven months, Drew said.

Once complete, those houses will be installed at the Harrison and Francisco site, developers said.

The three-bedroom, one-and-a-half-bathroom townhouses and duplexes will be around 1,600 square feet and go for \$245,000, which is well below market rate for an area where housing prices have risen faster than nearly any other neighborhood, Drew said. A few blocks east or south, a similar home sells for \$500,000-\$600,000, Drew said.

An analysis of home prices by the Institute of Housing Studies at DePaul University showed that in 2018, East Garfield Park property values increased by 20 percent, the highest growth in the city.

“Workforce housing for something that’s new, three bedrooms ... that you will own and build equity on is really, really rare in Chicago,” Drew said.

Kinexx launched in 2020 “in the hopes of addressing Chicago’s affordable housing shortage,” said principal and CEO Joshua Braun. It is the first company to design,

build and install modular homes in Chicago.

“Our modular homes are indistinguishable from homes built using traditional construction methods, and we believe Harrison Row will prove the viability and scalability of our model ... to create homeownership opportunities for low- and middle-income households,” Braun said.

Kinexx has also built modular homes in [North Lawndale as part of the Reclaiming Communities Campaign](#). The effort led by Lawndale Christian Development Corporation, the North Lawndale Homeowners Association, United Power and Chicago Neighborhood Initiatives in partnership with the city aims to build 1,000 affordable homes on the South and West sides.

Each of the Harrison Row Townhomes units will be bound to a covenant with the Chicago Community Land Trust for 30 years to prevent gentrification so the houses “stay affordable in perpetuity,” Drew said. The covenant prevents housing speculation, prevents the property from being rented out by the owners, and ensures future buyers must be within a specific income range.

“The program is designed for first-time home buyers. They agree to, when they move out, sell the home at a restricted sales price that keeps it affordable for any new buyer that comes in,” Drew said.

Thanks for subscribing to Block Club Chicago, an independent, 501(c)(3), journalist-run newsroom. Every dime we make funds reporting from Chicago's neighborhoods. Click [here](#) to support Block Club with a [tax-deductible donation](#).

Listen to “It’s All Good: A Block Club Chicago Podcast”: