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Citizens Forge Ahead to Directly Address Housing Crisis

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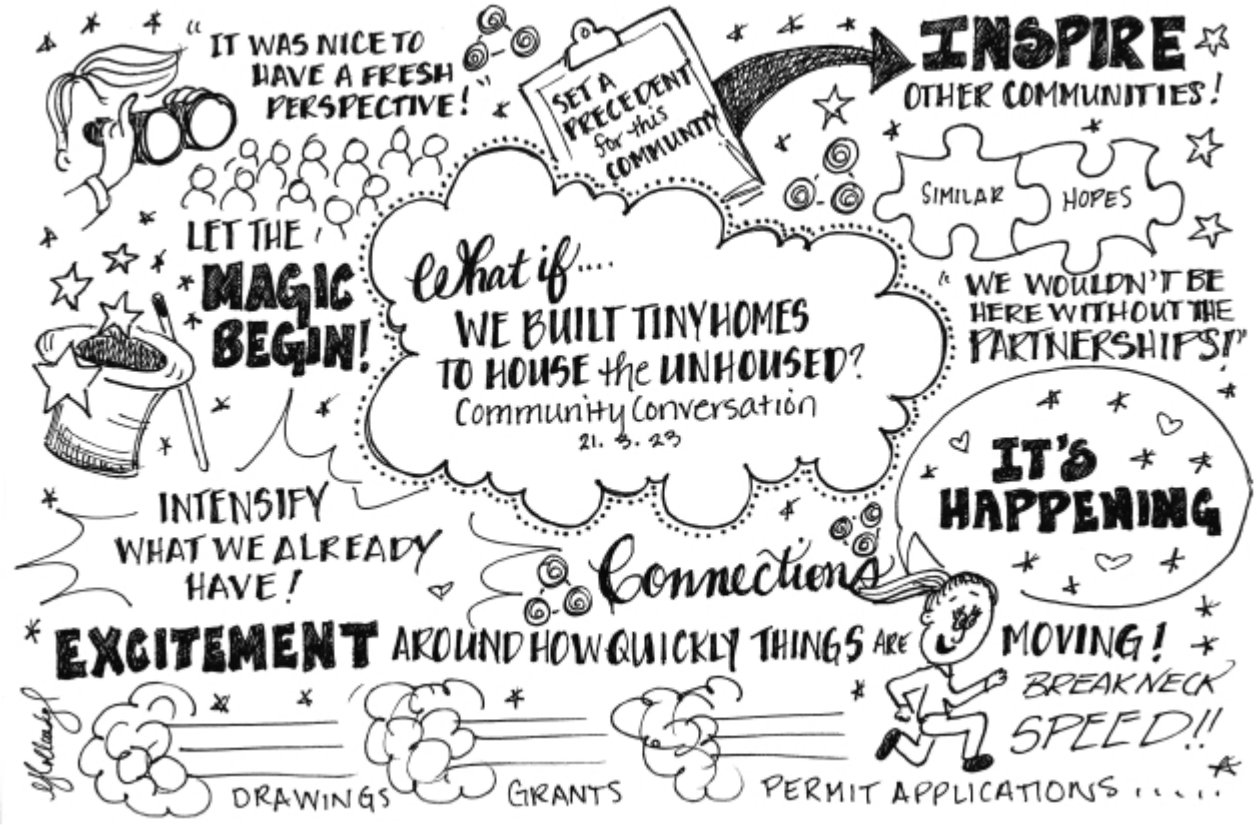


Not willing to wait any longer for a system response to the housing crisis in their community, a group of citizens in Brantford, Ontario has taken it upon themselves to do what they can.

Two community-led summits and six months later, a small group is making progress in the direction of building two tiny homes to pilot their way to a community transformation.

With a property identified and a nod to proceed with two dwellings, the group continues to expand its circle of friends and influence.

The events offered on those two occasions were an opportunity to learn more about where the project is at, share ideas and learn how to be involved.

Many new people joined in the conversation, while others were reconnected.

“Everything is moving at a quick speed; what started as a conversation is now a reality.”

— Jocelyn Birkes

People said they came because they are aware of the housing crisis. Some joined because they appreciate the sustainability in a smaller home footprint and are seeking new ways to live. Others were looking for inspiration and community, and others came with a healthy dose of curiosity.

The result of the two conversations was a wonderfully eclectic mix of passions, skills and offers to contribute as the project continues to move along.

The project once again has moved ahead and everyone who participated left feeling refreshed by the collective energy in the room.

During a series of breakout sessions — both virtual and at the Brantford Public Library, where the March 23 event was hosted from — citizens offered to connect with local businesses as well as people with talents for carpentry, interior design and appliance installation to invite their participation once work begins on two initial builds.

Many attendees said it was a sense of community building they saw in the project that drew them to the conversation. Many were amazed by how quickly the tiny-home project has moved forward since it was proposed a year ago.

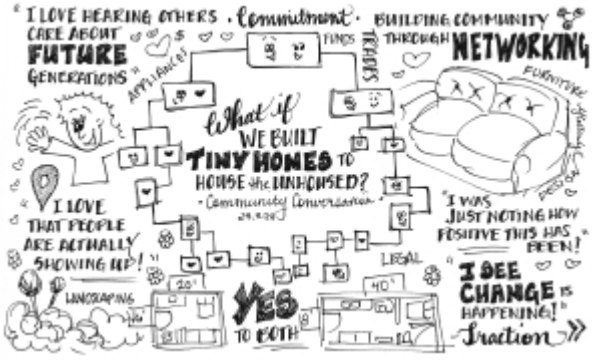
“Everything is moving at a quick speed; what started as a conversation is now a reality,” said Jocelyn Birkes, one of the groups conveners.

In early 2022, a person in Brantford affected by the housing crisis suggested tiny homes as a response.

Jocelyn took this to heart, convened a small group, which in turn sparked a movement.

By April, the group had created a working circle that meets fortnightly to identify assets and shape next steps.

The group snowballed, and today, 11 months later, plans are in the works to build two tiny homes on land owned by a local nonprofit affordable home provider.



Graphic reflections from the Mar. 23 Tiny Homes Working Circle sketched live during the gathering by Yvonne Hollandy. Click the image to see a larger version.

The efficiency of the Tiny Homes Working Circle clearly made a positive impression on those attending the Community Conversation.

“I love seeing how this has been growing; it has been nice to hear how much progress has been made,” said one attendee.

Those involved with the Tiny Homes Working Circle say they want the success of this project to serve as a Rosetta Stone for future community projects.

“We want to pilot this and inspire others to do the same, (and) we want to create a process so this can be replicated,” said one member.

The next step in the journey is to draw blueprints for the first two tiny homes, and, as one working circle member stated, “we are super excited about this.”

“Everything has been moving in the right direction,” they said.

Get Involved!

If you have interest in joining this tiny home project in Brantford, Ontario, experience in building them, funds or spaces to offer or help access, or if you simply wish to know more, please contact Jocelyn at jocelynbirkes@clbrant.com.

Tiny Homes Initiative In Pictures

Follow the journey of the citizen-led Tiny Homes imitative in Brantford, Ontario via this Flickr album featuring graphic reflections from each gathering by Yvonne Hollandy.

Click here to view the album.