



EXIT & BUILD

THE

8 BEST HOUSING OPTIONS

FOR YOUR **INTENTIONAL COMMUNITY**





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If you're going to choose the community you wish to live in, then you should also be intentional about the type of home you live in.

Different housing structures are best suited for different environments, climates, goals, and personalities.

There are many traditional and unique styles of homes to choose from, and we've picked out over half a dozen houses to suit your needs. They range from ancient dwellings to modern creations. And one of them will be just right for you.

Here are the 8 best housing options for your intentional community:



1. RANCH STYLE HOME



WHAT IS A RANCH AND HOW IS IT DESIGNED?

A ranch-style home is exactly how you probably imagine it:

A long, rectangular single-story home with a prominent, devoted patio space, big windows, and a low roofline.

Ranches can be built into a “U” or “L” shape, but the most common ranches run in a straight line. But from there, ranches can offer a lot of diversity in terms of appearance, building materials, garages, and so on.

The design has a “wide open spaces” appeal with a nod to true cattle ranches. And since you are likely to be raising cattle in your intentional community, it’s a perfect fit.

One important note, ranches can have finished basements even though they don’t feature second floors. Which makes a ranch the most spacious of all housing structures on this list.



WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF RANCH STYLE HOMES?

1. Walk right out into nature

The shape and style of ranches allow you to walk right outside your door into the great outdoors. Big patio spaces, fire pits, and other outdoor areas become the centerpiece of the home, rather than the inside, which can be somewhat small.

2. Grow a family with ease

Bedrooms, bathrooms, baby rooms, and laundry rooms can all be accessed on one floor without running up and down stairs. This is especially important for new families who do a lot of running around as their toddlers grow up. You can cook dinner and check on your kids by walking a few feet.

3. Grow old gracefully

A ranch is the kind of home you can enjoy when you're young all the way up into your golden years. Limited mobility isn't much of a problem with ranch-style homes. This is an important consideration, especially if you are older or will have older members of your family living with you. Ranch-style homes are also very customizable, so it's easy to place wider doors or eliminate curbs for wheelchair access.

4. Open and free flowing

Ranches are very informal homes with fewer walls between spaces, such as the kitchen and living room. This is how a ranch ought to be, in our opinion. Some ranches you find will have dividers and peninsulas built in, but they're very easy to remove and restructure.



WHO IS BEST SUITED FOR A RANCH STYLE HOME?

A ranch is the best choice for someone looking for a reliable, beautiful, and more “traditional” home. This is the housing structure that is most similar to a “normal” house and is very popular in the country, for good reason.

If you plan on raising cattle, then a ranch is the quintessential home to live in. It’s called “ranching” for a reason. Also, a ranch will give you more space for tools and supplies than most other homes on this list.





2. RV (RECREATION VEHICLE)



WHAT IS AN RV AND HOW IS IT DESIGNED?

RV stands for Recreational Vehicle.

There are motorized RVs and towable RVs. We'll go over each briefly so you understand the difference. But think about it this way: A motorized RV is a home you can drive, and a towable RV is a home you can drag with you.

There are 3 classes of drivable RVs:



Class A



Class A RVs are the standard template for modern motorhomes. They're big, long vehicles that you've probably spotted on the road or in a neighbor's driveway. They've usually got 6 wheels and a full cab for the driver and front passenger. Passengers can easily move around inside the RV while it's in motion. And it comes with every amenity you would want. But that also means it's more expensive. On the low end, you'll pay around \$70,000, but you could pay up to a million dollars for super luxurious RVs.



Class B



Class B RVs look like and often start out as vans. In fact, many RV manufacturers convert vans into Class B motorhomes by raising the roof height, installing new hardware and even adding to the overall length of the chassis. You'll pay around \$40,000 on the low end up to \$125,000 on the new market.



Class C



Class C RVs resemble a truck more than a van. They have an overhanging section that extends beyond the roof of the front cab, which usually provides room for a bunk overhead. You'll pay anywhere from \$50,000 to \$120,000 for this class.

Towable RVs





Towable RVs are exactly what they sound like. Hitch ‘em to the back of your car and truck and hit the open road. Some are foldable for easier travel and are less expensive. Others are big trailers in a range of sizes and prices. Some are compact and only provide enough room for sleeping and some necessities. Others are much more spacious with multiple bedrooms, a kitchen, and a bathroom. You’ll pay anywhere from \$15,000 to \$40,000 or even more in the case of a fully loaded and customized toy hauler.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF RVS?

1. Setup home anywhere

The biggest and most obvious benefit of RVs is you can “lay down your roots” anywhere. If you’re traveling, there are thousands of campgrounds and RV-specific parking spots to stop. But you can also use it to create a temporary or even permanent home in an intentional community. You could also use an RV to “try out” one intentional community, and if it doesn’t work out, pack up your stuff and drive to another one. Or even bounce back and forth between communities at different times of the year. The possibilities are endless.

2. Never pay a mortgage

Instead of spending \$200,000 on a home, you can spend \$50,000 on an RV and still get most of what you would want in a home. Cost savings are insane. Not just on the house itself, but also in property taxes and utilities and maintenance.



3. Work from anywhere

An RV lets you work anywhere you want. Some people travel for their job, such as making cross-country deliveries. Living where you work makes life a lot easier. If you have an online business or some other mobile line of work, you can enjoy the open road while still earning a living.

4. Travel with the comfort of home

One of the worst parts of traveling is not being able to sleep in your own bed. It's easy to get homesick. RVs let you experience new places and people every day yet still be able to retire to your own, warm bed at night. It gives you the best of both worlds.

WHO IS BEST SUITED FOR AN RV?

An RV is best suited for those that don't want to stay in one place very long. If you love travel, love driving, and are fine living a minimal lifestyle, then RV life is for you.

It may seem odd to include this type of home on a list about intentional community housing structures where you assume everyone will permanently live in one area together. But you can still be part of a community even if you don't live there all year round. Besides, having someone in the community who is ready and willing to make long trips, perhaps even to act as an "ambassador" to other intentional communities, is extremely valuable.



One thing to keep in mind is, RVs do require regular maintenance. So it literally pays to have basic mechanic skills when it comes to vehicles. You have to make sure to check the tires, the engine, the toilets and the “black tank” where human waste is stored, and plenty more.

If that doesn't scare you, then an RV is still a good choice for you.



3. TINY HOMES



WHAT IS A TINY HOME AND HOW IS IT DESIGNED?

The tiny home movement has been accelerating in the last decade throughout the United States, the Netherlands, and elsewhere, driven by a desire to get back to the essence of living closely with our families with minimal things cluttering our lives.

Tiny homes range between 100 and 400 square feet in size. They rarely exceed 500 square feet.

Tiny homes are small, square, portable dwellings with a minimalistic design. These homes generally display clever ways of utilizing space. They are often (mostly) self-sufficient and function as full-time dwellings. And some of them are mobile, but this isn't a requirement.

Tiny homes usually measure approximately 8' x 16' in size and contain a living area, a sleeping loft, a kitchen, and a bathroom.



WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF TINY HOMES?

1. Inexpensive to build and maintain

Prices for tiny homes can range from less than \$19,000 to around \$50,000 depending on their size and furnishings. Housing and maintenance costs are many times smaller than keeping up with a larger home. The extra money you save can be spent on enjoying life rather than fixing a big house.

2. Minimalist lifestyle

This is the main draw of tiny homes for most people - the chance to escape the “tyranny of things” and live with only bare essentials and your most-loved possessions. Simple living is the core ethos animating adherents of tiny home living. Where modern society compels people to overconsume, tiny homes encourage you to consume only what you must, often leading to less stress, anxiety, and worry.

3. Sustainable and environmentally-friendly

Tiny homes force you to consume less, waste less, use less energy, and reduce your “carbon footprint.” But it also brings you closer to what life is really all about: pursuing meaning in existence and experiences rather than accumulating stuff. Plus, because tiny homes are so small, you can make a lot of it out of recycled, repurposed, and salvaged materials.



4. Deeper connection with people and nature

Living in a tiny home compels you to go out into the world more often, interacting with more strangers on a day-to-day basis. You don't want to stay cooped up in your house all day, and that's a good thing. It also encourages you to enjoy the great outdoors as much as possible, since that's where you'll find the room to move around and play.

WHO IS BEST SUITED FOR A TINY HOME?

If the lifestyle of minimalism and simple living entices you, then a tiny home would make a perfect home. It's also well-suited for people who love being outside and enjoying nature. If you only care to use your home to sleep and eat and maybe work, and you'd rather spend most of your time elsewhere, then why have a big house when you can have a tiny one?

Plus, in an intentional community where you'll often be doing things outside, communing with others in shared spaces, and working on projects around the community, you won't need a lot of house space.

Keep in mind, you'll be constantly decluttering, cleaning, and keeping your stuff to a minimum. If that's not a dealbreaker, then a tiny home is right for you.



4. EARTH-SHELTERED HOMES



WHAT IS AN EARTH HOME AND HOW IS IT DESIGNED?

Earth-sheltered homes incorporate the earth itself into the design and construction of the home. They conform to the surrounding environment, creating a unique fusion of man-made dwellings with nature.

There are 3 common types of earth-sheltered homes:



In-hill homes



In-hill homes are similar to hobbit homes from the Lord of the Rings series. They are built into slopes or hills with one wall facing out while the earth covers the other walls and the roof. They're typically built above ground, just embedded into the earth. The exposed wall features windows to absorb passive heat from the sun.

Bermed homes





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Bermed homes are close to in-hill homes, but instead of being built into slopes or hills, the walls of the home are simply covered by earth. The roof may or may not be covered. The earth surrounding the home helps insulate the interior temperature by absorbing and storing heat. The soil also helps manage storm drainage since the earth against the walls slopes away from the home.

Underground homes



Underground homes are built below ground level but typically feature an open atrium or courtyard to give you exposure to light and air. These homes are secluded and quiet, and the open courtyard provides private outdoor space.



WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF EARTH HOMES?

1. Eco-friendly

Easily, the biggest advantage of Earth-sheltered homes is their naturally eco-friendly design and construction. They're minimally invasive to the surrounding flora and fauna, allowing nature to thrive around your home.

2. Stable and consistent indoor temperature

The earth surrounding your home absorbs most of the heat and prevents air penetration. This maintains a consistent and comfortable temperature inside throughout the year.

3. Natural rainwater filter

Green roofs are able to absorb and filter rainwater, returning cleaner water to the atmosphere and surrounding areas. According to the National Park Service, the absorption from earth-sheltered homes help to slow down the flow of rainwater into sewer systems, which in turn, helps prevent flooding by capturing 80 percent of the water from rain. By comparison, regular roofs only capture 24 percent of rainwater.

4. Durable and resilient

Earth-sheltered homes are extremely durable, far more than common homes. The "living roofs" have the ability to withstand extreme weather conditions and common forms of erosion, giving earth-sheltered homes 3x the lifespan of normal homes.



WHO IS BEST SUITED FOR AN EARTH HOME?

If you ever imagined living like a hobbit, then an earth-sheltered home is your dream come true. You're going to be very close to nature. Your home is literally being "hugged" by the earth, which is pretty special. And you'll get incredible energy savings while preserving the natural world.

If you're looking for privacy, sustainability, and a "cool" factor (because living in the side of a hill is very cool), then earth-sheltered homes are right for you.



5. SHIPPING CONTAINER HOME



WHAT IS A SHIPPING CONTAINER HOME AND HOW IS IT DESIGNED?

A shipping container home is a dwelling made from a shipping container. But as boring as that may sound, they're extremely diverse.

Shipping containers usually come in two sizes: 20 feet by 8 feet (160 square feet) or 40 feet by 8 feet (320 square feet).

Many builders combine multiple shipping containers to create large homes, removing walls and constructing traditional interior walls and rooms.



WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF SHIPPING CONTAINER HOMES?

1. Environmentally-conscious

Most shipping containers used for homes have already been used to transport goods. So you are using recycled materials for your home. You're reducing the amount of wood used in home construction. And you can easily incorporate solar panels, rainwater harvesting systems, and more.

2. Quick to build

Shipping container homes can be built very fast, much faster than traditional homes. I mean, think about it: most of the home is already built. You really only need to add windows and doors, electricity and other utility materials, and then furnish it.

3. Affordable

Building a new home can be extremely costly, depending on the price of raw materials such as lumber which jump in price unexpectedly, as we saw in 2020. Converting an existing shipping container into a home is much cheaper because it requires much fewer building materials and the job can be completed faster.

4. Creativity in design

While the outside of a shipping container home is plain steel in a basic rectangular shape, the inside can include anything you wish. They can be converted into homes, offices, schools, anything you like. And you can fill it with anything you wish.



WHO IS BEST SUITED FOR A SHIPPING CONTAINER HOME?

If a tiny home sounds desirable, then so will a shipping container. It's essentially a "longer," more tubular tiny home.

It will need a fair amount of work to furnish to your liking, transforming cold steel into a warm dwelling. But once the basic amenities are installed, and you nail down the design, there's very little maintenance.

Plus, shipping container homes would be great for a planned intentional community where many people are living in shipping containers, or you stack a bunch of shipping containers together to form one large dwelling for a community.

If you want a "recycled home" with a good amount of space and a simple design, a shipping container home is for you.



6. SILO HOMES



WHAT IS A SILO HOME AND HOW IS IT DESIGNED?

A grain silo home, or silo home for shore, are grain silos that have been converted into houses.

Have you driven down a country road and seen a large, cylindrical metal structure? Most likely you saw a grain silo, which is used to store grain harvested from a farmer's fields, such as corn and wheat.

Silo homes are a new trend catching on quick with those looking for a unique, farm-type home that's very nontraditional.

Many grain silos in rural communities are standing empty just waiting for someone to fill them. The typical cost is \$200 per square foot.



WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF SILO HOMES?

1. High wind rating

The “wind zone” is the rating of the amount of wind pressure a home must be built to withstand. Round buildings, such as grain silos, have much higher wind ratings than traditional straight-edge buildings, making them far more resilient to adverse weather conditions.

2. Eco-friendly

Like shipping containers, silo homes are already constructed. They simply need to be repurposed.

3. Energy-efficient

Round houses have less surface area on the exterior making for a home that is easier to heat and cool. Installing basic insulation will allow you to stay warm and comfortable year-round.

4. Easy to maintain

Silo homes are naturally fire-resistant and highly durable against wind and earthquakes. They don't break down easily, so there's very little to repair. And their exterior doesn't have to be painted or maintained at all.



WHO IS BEST SUITED FOR A SILO HOME?

If you like the aesthetic old grain bins towering over farm fields or grew up around farms that had silos, then living in one would be a natural fit.

You can get very creative with the interior design.

It's also one of the rare homes on this list that allows you to build at least a second level, if not a third, giving you many more rooms and space.

And again, there is very little maintenance.

If you're looking for a cool and different home that doesn't require much upkeep but gives you a lot of space, silos should top your list.



7. COB HOME



WHAT IS A COB HOME AND HOW IS IT DESIGNED?

Cob is a natural building material made from subsoil, water, fibrous organic material (typically straw), and sometimes lime. Essentially, cob is clay, sand, and straw.

It doesn't seem like it would be very sturdy, but cob hardens to a thick, strong, and long-lasting building material.

The best part? It's basically a mud castle for adults.

And it's a building technique that has been used for the last 10,000 years by cultures worldwide.



WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF COB HOMES?

1. Superior thermal regulation

The walls of cob homes are usually 2 feet thick, which gives them superior regulation over air temperature. During hot summers, the walls keep the interior nice and cool. During cold winters, you'll stay warm and cozy.

2. Fire-resistant

Wood burns easily, which is why traditional homes are so susceptible to fire. Clay and sand don't burn at all. And while you may use straw, it, too, is covered in clay and sand. This makes cob houses especially important and popular in areas prone to wildfires and other extreme forms of weather.

3. Affordable

Clay, sand, and straw are very inexpensive materials and can be acquired in large quantities at low prices. And oftentimes, the site where you want to construct your home will have soil that you can use to build your home.

4. Durable and persistent

Cob homes can last a really, really long time. Generations. There is a reason it's been used for 10,000 years. If the interior or exterior gets any wear and tear, simply make more cob and apply it by hand. Also, because the entire structure acts as a single monolith, it's highly resistant to earthquakes.



WHO IS BEST SUITED FOR A COB HOME?

Cob houses are very unique. Very “ancient.” Very earthy, even more so than an earth-sheltered home. Their aesthetic is organic and smooth and stylish. They truly are “hand-sculpted” homes.

They’re small and quaint, quiet and homely.

This style of home will really bring you back to your human roots. Simple and literally “down to earth.”

If this sounds too good to be true for you, then go all in on a cob house. You won’t regret it, and you’ll probably have the “coolest” house in your intentional community.



8. YURTS



WHAT IS A YURT AND HOW IS IT DESIGNED?

A yurt is a round cylindrical dwelling capped with a conic roof that's been in use for at least the past few thousand years.

It originated in Central Asia (Genghis Khan once used them). The yurt was valued (and still is) for its portability, durability, and structural soundness. It's constructed using an accordion lattice wall, a tension band, radial rafters leading up to a central compression ring and is covered in felt or fabric.

Modern yurts include materials like clear acrylic windows, high-strength steel cables, and UV-resistant marine quality polyester siding. Nowadays you can get a yurt with French doors, windows, gutters and skylights.



WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF YURTS?

1. Energy-efficient

On average, round buildings use 15-20 percent fewer materials per square foot compared to rectangular. Insulation liners can keep your yurt warm in the winter and cool in the summer by reflecting up to 97 percent of radiant heat around your yurt. And if you install solar panels, you can produce enough energy to power pretty much everything you'll need in the yurt.

2. Comfortable and soothing

Round spaces have a calming effect on the mind, and many yurt dwellers report feeling more grounded and serene in a round home rather than a square. Plus, the acoustics of a yurt is fantastic, both for conversation and music. And the shape of your home naturally compels people to come together - there's no place to separate.

3. Weather-resistant

Similar to silo homes, the circular shape of yurts makes them highly resistant to windstorms, hurricanes, and earthquakes. Yurts feature many interconnected points in their structure, which provide a high level of stability and flexibility.

4. Environmentally-friendly

Yurts are built atop a platform, leaving minimal impact on the land. They're small, taking up less space needing less energy to function. And they're portable, so you can reuse the same yurt again and again in different places.



WHO IS BEST SUITED FOR A YURT?

If you want to be intimately close to those in your home and nature itself and aren't sure if you want to settle in one place, then a yurt is for you.

Yurts aren't soundproof at all - you will hear nature all around you. Rain and thunder and wind will create a natural symphony. The toono (skylight) in the roof of the yurt gives you a perfect view of the sky during the day or night.

Yurts are definitely right for you if you want a small, portable, intimate home that brings you right up next to nature.



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