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Family Promise CEO Ted Taylor stands on the Glendale site in Glendale. (Independent Newsmedia/Steve Stockmar)

West Valley gets first container development

Family Promise hopes to roll out other ‘microcommunities’ across the state based on the Glendale model

By Steve Stockmar
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

One nonprofit has come up with a new way to combat homelessness and the high cost of housing in the Valley.

In what is believed to be the first of its kind locally, Family Promise of Greater Phoenix, which for 22 years has served a primary purpose of addressing housing insecurity, will construct a microdevelopment that features six residential units made out of new modified

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shipping containers structurally engineered for use as housing.

The community, called Container Village, will be located on the grounds of First Christian Church, at 6242 N. 59th Ave., in Glendale. The housing, which will feature containers measuring 8-feet by 40-feet by 10-feet, will occupy 18,000 square feet of undeveloped land behind the church building.

“It will be the first of its kind in the Valley, in that it’s a very safe community built for what we call ‘extremely low-income families,’” said Ted Taylor, CEO of Family Promise of Greater Phoenix.

This small scale, rent-based housing facility will include on-site property management and supportive services for income-qualified residents.

Each unit will include two shipping containers joined together to feature a 640-square-foot, two-bedroom, fully furnished apartment running on solar power to minimize energy costs. The price for each unit is about \$100,000, Taylor said. The project has been certified by the state of Arizona. The group is now waiting on a final design review from the city of Glendale. Construction on Container Village should start in the next 30 to 45 days, with tenants expected to move in by June.

“We know this area has suffered due to homelessness, and we want to clean that up,” Taylor said. “This is commercial-grade construction, this is not manufactured home construction.”

“The idea that we could create a micromodel of housing development by-right could deploy across congregational locations in this Valley is a game-changer.”

Ted Taylor
CEO of Family Promise of Greater Phoenix



This artist rendering depicts one of the Container Village units as it looks from the outside. (Family Promise of Greater Phoenix)



This rendering shows the interior layout of one of the six 640-square foot units coming to Glendale. (Family Promise of Greater Phoenix)

Arizona economics expert Elliott Pollack, from the Elliott D. Pollack & Co., reports the average monthly house payment in the Phoenix area increased 81.5% from 2020 to 2022. While his economic and real estate modeling shows housing affordability should improve in 2023, “It is still unlikely to get back to pre-Covid affordability levels,” he said.

Up for Growth, an advocacy group measuring housing equity, notes a 30% increase in median rent from 2012 through 2019 in the Phoenix Metro.

And in terms of avail-

able inventory, the Arizona Department of Housing estimates 270,000 more housing units are needed to meet demand.

Those realities leave many struggling families with almost no housing options.

Family Promise, which works with more than 7,000 congregations from diverse faiths in 42 states, is providing that assistance, including with the Glendale microcommunity model.

By developing on less than one-third of an acre, on a church property, small housing projects can develop “by-right,” which is defined by the Nation-

al Multifamily Housing Council as “development (that) primarily impacts affordability by allowing the supply of housing to meet demand.”

“The idea that we could create a micromodel of housing development by-right could deploy across congregational locations in this Valley is a game-changer,” Taylor said. “It’s disruptive to the whole development model because big developers won’t touch those small pieces of land.”

And since the proposed use is consistent with the existing zoning, the development is not subject to a conditional-use permit or

An artist rendering depicts the overhead view of the upcoming Container Village in Glendale. (Family Promise of Greater Phoenix)



Michelle Lind

city action. About the only enforcement the city can — and did — apply relates to the structures’ exterior.

Glendale is requiring the development to include material such as gabion or fiber cement siding to bring texture to each structure’s outside walls with the intent of making the units look less like containers to comply with the city’s Residential Design and Development Manual. The city is also requiring a designed entrance into the community to enhance its curb appeal.

Taylor says those extra features likely won’t appear on future developments modeled after the Glendale pilot community around the Valley.

“The other communities we’re talking to are telling us that’s not going

to be a requirement,” he said.

The BHHS Legacy Foundation, which has invested more than \$110 million to nonprofit projects to date, was the primary funder who “made this new housing development possible,” Taylor says.

The Arizona Housing Fund, a money source for nonprofits that build and operate permanent, low-income housing units, this month awarded \$850,000 in grants to support multifamily housing.

The grants included \$100,000 designated for Glendale’s Container Village.

“The issue of homelessness impacts Arizona’s most vulnerable communities including families, the elderly and veterans — this must be addressed with the construction of permanent and affordable housing across the state,” Michelle Lind, counsel for the Arizona Realtors, which donated \$2,500 toward the grants, shared in a statement.

With the state of Arizona granting final certification on the three Glendale home models, Family Promise can reproduce them in perpetuity anywhere in the state with no additional approval required.