

March 23, 2021

Greetings!

Spring is here, and it brings a renewed energy to thinking creatively about solutions to the growing affordable housing need in St. Helena.

For inspiration, over the next few months we will feature some of the industry leaders who are using creative approaches to deliver housing that is affordable. We'll look at companies who are turning shipping containers into customized homes or retrofitting standalone garages, creating win-win equations for existing and new homeowners. The old prefab housing model has been reborn as modular housing. The quality is high, it's fast and cost-effective.



This month we're profiling the [Napa Sonoma ADU Center](#)—a comprehensive resource for any homeowner who's entertaining thoughts of building an accessory dwelling unit (ADU). An ADU can be attached to or detached from the primary residence. Either way, it provides benefits to the homeowner and the community if used for affordable housing. If you want to be part of the housing solution, I encourage you to strongly consider whether an ADU is right for you.

Best,

Jennifer La Liberte
OTSH Executive Director

Is an ADU Right for You?

The Napa Sonoma ADU Center is committed to making the ADU building process as turnkey as possible for its homeowner market. The [Center's](#) website is a comprehensive resource for anyone who may be thinking about building an ADU. You can review sample floorplans, receive a free feasibility study and listen to webinars that break down the economics and realities of ADU construction.



The biggest reality check?

If you guessed cost, you're right. Building an ADU isn't inexpensive. But costs vary, as an ADU can take many forms--from an attached unit with a separate entrance to a small cottage. The benefits far outweigh the costs, as an ADU can generate monthly income for the homeowner, and it increases property value.

Renée J. Schomp, J.D.: Director of the Napa Sonoma ADU Center

Renee is a Sonoma County native with nearly a decade of experience in the legal aid and nonprofit sectors. Her team helps interested homeowners with ADU questions, technical assistance and analyses and partners with local government on ADU initiatives. [The ADU Center has more information](#) and is your go-to resource.

“ I believe that in the next few years we're going to see many more ADUs being built throughout Napa and Sonoma counties. Thanks to state laws implemented in 2020, many homeowners are now eligible to build ADUs. There is increased interest in ADUs because they can fill housing needs for every stage of our lifecycles.

—Renee Schomp, JD

Meet Larry Vermeulen, Brenkle Court Project Manager



Larry Vermeulen teaches his crew to measure and safely use power tools

Larry Vermeulen has been responsible for keeping Brenkle Court, our USDA Rural Development Mutual Self-Help project, on track and on budget, despite setbacks from the pandemic and 2020 wildfires. His job includes ordering materials, scheduling inspections and subcontractors, and so much more. Most importantly, he's turned a group of novices without any construction experience into a skilled, functioning team.

On-the-job training, starting with the most basic carpenter skills

Over the past 90 weeks, Larry has taught the homeowner families basic skills, starting with hammering nails, learning to measure and safely using power equipment. From there the families' skills evolved. They dug trenches in an August heat wave; they began framing and raising walls. They mastered new skills and celebrated their milestones. And it's gotten easier. Something important has happened. Larry has given his crew the confidence to keep learning new skills and moving forward. Through this process, our homeowners have formed a small community on McCorkle.

What's New at Brenkle Court?



New Marvin windows and siding--the Brenkle Court women have been painting the siding all winter



Sanding walls on a sunny Saturday morning

The Finish Line is Now in View

With a tentative August move-in date, the Brenkle Court units are looking more like real homes with every passing week. The siding is going up and roofing is underway; we've ordered kitchen cabinets, and the plumbing and electrical are in process. It's not too late to be part of this amazing project--contact Larry Vermeulen @ projectmanager@ourtownstheleena.org.



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