



CO-LIVING

Maker Town

Making Space For What Matters



Preface

Housing is one of the biggest issues today around the world. As rents and the cost of purchasing homes escalates, even while for many wages remain flat or decrease, anger and unrest boil over. At the same time many issues relating to housing are to-do with a deeper question around relationships and the breakdown of families as well as the enforced cohousing as older children return to their parents' homes for a variety of reasons, even while others - particularly the elderly - often live on their own in isolation and ultimately at risk of losing their homes to care providers. Even with the increase in conventional house-building, there is a focus on smaller micro-dwellings which risk further isolating people. And land remains seemingly in short supply unless homes are built over protected areas or vertically in towers.

It is time to make space for what matters. We need to start first by understanding the notion of home and not just housing which tends to focus the mind on a fixed building or block of air that is used over a long period of time. Whilst this concept of the settled, bought and mortgaged dwelling has a place for many particularly at certain periods in their lives there is another more liquid way of understanding home. At Maker Town we focus on homing, helping people as they explore the lifestyle of becoming a Maker, tap into a multiplicity of solutions throughout their various life transitions but in the context of sharing communities so that resources can be matched and willingly distributed to those who need space the most, when they need it most whilst offering a high and continuously improving quality of home-experience for everyone involved.

The Challenge

At Maker Life, we believe everyone has a spiritual home, one that is both independent of just one location but which finds expression in one or more places at different times in life. We believe the idea of home should one day feel more like a service, like water or internet, rather than just a commodity to be bought and sold and occasionally lived in, and be just as on-demand one day (for shorter or longer periods matching life stages and needs) as for other sharing economy services. Achieving this vision is not going to be easy. In fact, it represents one of the defining challenges of an increasingly urbanising world. However, by starting with experiments and building an ecosystem with a variety of partners, and with the application of technology, we believe we can together create a world in which homes follow people, not ones in which the lack of housing crushes their dreams or limits how and where they can work. To do this we will need to explore every possible angle and look at solutions which can both scale but also find ones which suit different geographies. Above all, we need solutions that can be made available today and not just ones involving developments that may take many years to create, which has been the traditional response to the chronic lack of housing need we face.

Maker Town Framework

Maker Town partners with developers, space and landowners to provide its members and clients with a growing and locally tailored menu of affordable housing solutions designed to help them make space for what matters on demand in line with their life transitions.

For those just starting out and single or in partnerships with no children, solutions such as being a guardian in a commercial, retail, or community property may be appropriate. For those further advanced with starter families modular housing solutions even on land only available for five or so years may be more appropriate, or as their children grow older cohousing with elderly single people in larger homes that could be retrofitted for such purposes may be an option. For others still, cohousing developments and shared equity solutions may be the right approach. Such solutions will be popped up in a variety of contexts from car parks to church and community buildings, from farms to empty shopping malls and high streets, from empty foreign-owned houses to homes owned by families and individuals with spare rooms whether as primary or holiday residences – in many cases regenerating and renewing underutilised land and buildings. A key concept within the movement is split-siting. Because certain locations such as in the heart of major cities are often most sought after, we invite members to explore living in town and out of town and swapping with others going the other way where their work and lifestyles and family arrangements permit, to both lower the cost overall of housing across two or more locations, as well as to get the benefits of both urban and suburban or rural living and bringing economic opportunities into out of the way spaces. To make this model work requires careful thought and planning and partnerships on both sides with landowners including those who have bought homes as an investment but who have left them empty as well as parents and relatives who currently provide rooms for their grown-up children. Furniture design will be key to enable people to quickly drop down beds and access their possessions when in a particular location. Not all members and their families will be invited to split site but where it is an option it will be encouraged so that work, learning, and living can be carried out more sustainably and people get the best of both worlds.

Members comprise those who are just starting (for example doing the Maker Year course), who commit beyond their initial year to a three-year stint, and those who are involved in leading the movement who get to live globally in the housing ecosystem wherever hubs are available around the world. They will typically in the early years be those yearning for solutions and being part of experimenting with them rather than those desiring more conventional answers, since the nature and quality of the housing may not necessarily be the same as that in ordinary contexts – though there will be a high emphasis on building solutions together that are safe, convenient and affordable.

Ultimately a subscription model will enable member led design and product making with an emphasis throughout as much as possible on open source solutions and the ability for members within the movement to download and create them onsite easily and at low cost even when those designs might sell for far higher prices outside the movement in the open market.

The need for shared storage and open-source furniture

Maker Town will in general not seek to profit from its housing solutions as a broker or curator, focusing instead on finding great partners developing solutions which its platform can plug into, whether land or building owners, guardianship providers, nonprofits who specialize in different niches, as well as developers and investors, and modular, tiny living and even robot furniture designers. The long-term source of sustainability for Maker Town will, in fact, be in providing space saving solutions on a subscription basis. As part of this, it will need to develop a network of on-demand local storage solutions since many of the housing options it will provide will not involve very many large spaces. Furniture that is multi-use and flexible will also be important both in the housing spaces and nearby work and learning spaces that Maker Town members will be able to access.

Benefits to Stakeholders

There will be many benefits to a wide range of stakeholders who choose to get involved in, finance, and partner with Maker Town

- For space owners, more efficient use of space and with Maker Town members as guardians their land and buildings can be protected from squatting and antisocial behaviour whilst saving money on costlier security services.
- For housing and storage providers, the Maker Town model provides a means of tapping into innovation and creating solutions that fit demand today rather than just tomorrow.
- For governments and city authorities, Maker Town could provide a means of increasing density yet also making the most of less well-utilised land in town and on the edge of or away from town.
- For charities and those working with the vulnerable, Maker Town creates not just housing solutions but also a means of training people to develop their own low-cost furniture and be in communities of those transitioning into work and different forms of asset ownership.
- For investors, Maker Town presents a new lower fixed asset way of generating returns on different projects whilst helping address major social issues related to the lack of immediate housing availability.
- For employers, both private, public, and civic Maker Town provides a way of enabling employees and contractors and live more affordable in town and yet without becoming trapped in monocultural and socio-economic filter bubbles which ultimately will impact on the quality and appeal of their output.

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