

Printing a Home

While housing insecurity, lack of affordable housing, or lack of housing in general continues to be an issue for many citizens globally, a new idea has emerged as a potential solution. Though it may still be in its early stages, some believe that 3-D printing is the solution to housing that is not only affordable, but also has less of an impact on the environment than traditional construction.

A specific example of this is shown by news article, *Around the Corner*, reporting on Austin, Texas, where 3D-printed homes have been built.¹ People that had formerly been without homes have now found permanent housing in this 3D-printed neighborhood, which is only expected to grow.² The article focuses specifically on Tim Shea, who is thought to be the first person in the U.S. to live in 3D-printed home.

A construction tech company involved in this project, Icon, has stated that 3D-printing has decreased both time and money spent on construction.³ Overall, this limits the environmental footprint that otherwise would've been larger with regular construction practices. Icon believes that 3D-printing homes have the potential to greatly aid the housing crisis that is currently being faced by so many people.⁴

However, there are some who are wary of this new idea. Some have pointed out that 3D-printing can only get you so far in the construction of houses -- and that the roof and other parts will not be able to printed.⁵ This idea turns into a way to limit the costs of construction instead of complete alternative. Others point to the worry that 3D-printing is still in its very early stages, and that it could be quite some time until an impact is seen in the current market.⁶

Since 3D printing is still quite new, there are of course legal considerations that must be taken into account. The liabilities of 3D-printing are not yet fully known. Resulting from the lack of experts on this subject, particularly in regard to construction, liability may still be somewhat of a question mark to courts, and companies that decide to partake in using 3D-printing for their construction projects. On one hand, the lack of knowledge makes it harder to figure out who should be held responsible for defective jobs, or how to evaluate 3D-printed homes properly. On the other hand, streamlining the construction process through printing could result in less on-the-job injuries from construction workers.

¹ Sharon Jayson, *Around the Corner: 3D Housing Designed For The Homeless And Needy Seniors*, KHN (March 9, 2020), <https://khn.org/news/3d-printed-housing-designed-for-the-homeless-and-needy-seniors/>.

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

⁴ See *Id.*

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Id.*

There seem to be many questions still surrounding 3D-printed homes, both legally and functionally. To many, like Tim Shea, who has moved into one of these homes after having been without a home, 3D-printing has offered a new hope and stability.