

# Tiny Home Development for a More Sustainable and Inclusive Community in Seaside, California

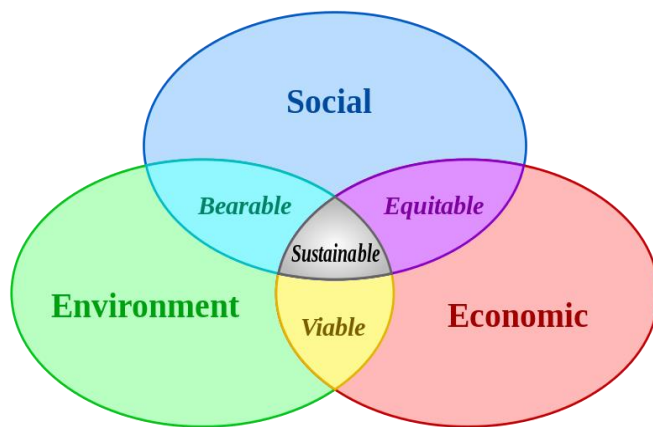
STEPHANI SMITH California State University, Monterey Bay

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As the world faces climate change and increasing social and economic polarities, countries are taking the pledge to reduce their carbon footprint and invest in sustainable development to satisfy the needs of people and ensure ecologic stability. Because the United States is apart of the Sustainable Development Goals set forth during the 2015 U.N. summit, states have the duty of attaining these goals to benefit both local and global residents.

Sustainable development encompasses a variety of goals, some of which include: ending poverty, protecting the planet and ensuring prosperity for all<sup>1</sup>. California is one of the leading states in developing legislature to try and satisfy sustainable development goals.

Sustainable development is an organizing principle for humans to meet our own



development goals without compromising natural systems that of which our economy and society depend upon. The concept is often depicted as the balancing of social wellbeing, economic gains and environmental protection, which is reflective of the U.N.'s main goals (Refer to Figure 1, pg. 1).

In order to achieve sustainable development it is imperative that up-and-coming infrastructure addresses both environmental protection and social basic needs while providing economic value.

**Figure 1:** Social, environmental and economic are illustrated as the pillars for successful sustainable development.  
Retrieved from  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Sustainable\\_development.svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Sustainable_development.svg)

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<sup>1</sup> *Sustainable Development Goals*, (United Nations, 2017). Retrieved from  
<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

## Social Sustainability - Homelessness

Basic needs are defined differently from culture to culture and requires a holistic view to be applicable to all beings. However, the three pillars of basic needs that stay true throughout time are: food, shelter and water. In Western society, we commonly define basic needs following Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Placed as the foundation are: food, water, warmth, rest and security<sup>2</sup>.

Basic needs often go unmet in economically disadvantaged populations. When unmet, adverse mental health<sup>3</sup>, physical health<sup>4</sup> and mortality outcomes are more likely. It is also a strong predictor of psychological stress<sup>5</sup>. A particular demographic experiencing these effects disproportionately are low-income and minority populations<sup>6</sup>.

In California, low-income residents are increasingly susceptible to homelessness. Homelessness has been on the rise, including the figure of unsheltered individuals<sup>7</sup>. Homelessness takes on many forms including: unsheltered, sheltered and doubling up.

**Unsheltered:** living on the street, in a car or in an abandoned building

**Sheltered:** staying in emergency shelters or transitional housing

**Doubled up:** staying with friends or family temporarily

California's Department of Housing and Community Development reported that in a single night in 2016, more than 118,000 people experienced unsheltered homelessness in California — 22 percent of the entire nation's homeless population. The number of unaccompanied youth, veterans and chronically homeless individuals are the highest in the nation.

According to the Current Sales and Price Statistics Report, collected and provided by the California Association of Realtors, California has seen an increase in housing prices for the past several years. Although the current price median for a home is less costly than before the 2008 housing market crash (when homelessness was at an all-time high), the current upward trends are precursors to increased homelessness. Available statistics provided by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development are beginning to prove this pattern (Refer to Figure 2&3, pg. 3).

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<sup>2</sup> Saul McLeod, *Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs*, (Simply Psychology, 2017). Retrieved from <https://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html>

<sup>3</sup> DG Blazer, et. al., *Perception of Unmet Basic Needs as a Predictor of Depressive Symptoms Among Community-Dwelling Older Adults*, (Maryland, US National Library of Medicine National Institutes of Health, 2007).

<sup>4</sup> Sachs-Ericsson, et. al., *Perception of Unmet Basic Needs as a Predictor of Physical Functioning Among Community-Dwelling Older Adults*, (Maryland, Journal of Aging and Health, 2006), 852-868.

<sup>5</sup> Weiting Ng, *Affluence, Stress, and Well-Being*, (Encyclopedia of Quality of Life and Well-Being Research, Springer, 2008), 93-96.

<sup>6</sup> Stuart C. Carr, Todd S. Sloan, *Poverty and Psychology*. (Springer, 2003), 1-15.

<sup>7</sup> Meghan Henry, et al., *The 2017 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress*, (The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2017), 1-100.

Along with increased housing prices, California is experiencing an extreme housing shortage with there being about 2.2 million low-income renter households competing for 664,000 affordable rental homes<sup>8</sup>. This shortage hasn't gone unnoticed on the individual and governmental level.

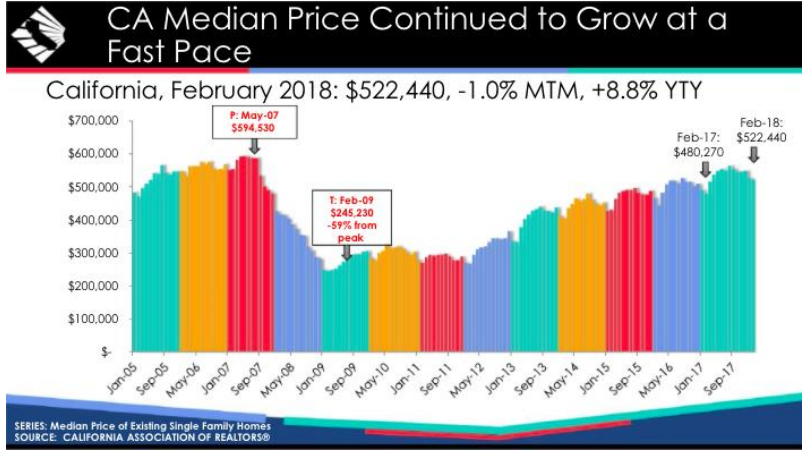


Figure 2: <https://www.car.org/marketdata/data/countysalesactivity/>

EXHIBIT 1.1: PIT Estimates of People Experiencing Homelessness By Sheltered Status, 2007–2017

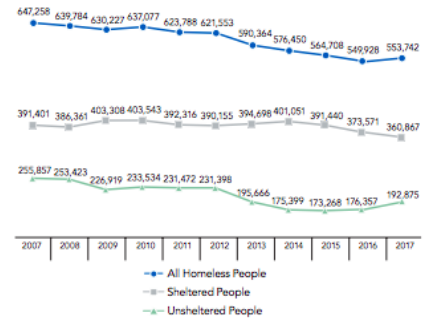


Figure 3: <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2017-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

Homeless has been exacerbated by decades of cuts to federal and state funding for affordable housing and by rising inequality. While homelessness is increasing, state legislature has been slow in addressing the issue. To address homelessness, municipal governments have been acting on their own accord. Some local governments have invested in shelters, transitional housing and social services. Often there are high requirements to enter into these facilities and a limited amount of resources, leaving anyone ‘unfit’ unsheltered. Unsheltered populations are faced with a wide range of laws and codes that disproportionately affect the homeless—often worsening the situation<sup>9</sup>.

A recent research report published by Berkley Law looked at the history and current trends of homeless within California and discovered three key findings:

1. California cities continue to enact new anti-homeless laws in record numbers.
2. Arrests of people experiencing homelessness continue to rise in spite of an improving economy.
3. Arrests of people experiencing homelessness are increasingly based on status, not behavior.

<sup>8</sup> Senate Bill 3 (2018)

<sup>9</sup> Fisher, Marina, Nathaniel Miller, Lindsay Walter, and Jeffrey Selbin. *Californias New Vagrancy Laws: The Growing Enactment and Enforcement of Anti-Homeless Laws in the Golden State*. SSRN. (Electronic Journal, June, 2016). 2.

This Californian narrative rings true, even in Monterey. With limited shelters and high qualification standards for transitional housing, over a thousand individuals are left unsheltered resulting in unnecessary fines and arrests.

## Homelessness in Monterey and Seaside

Required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, a biennial Point-in-Time Census and Survey count is the standard survey tool to identify the number of unsheltered and sheltered individuals. As of the 2017 Homeless Census of Monterey County, 724 persons are sheltered and 1,692 persons are living unsheltered<sup>10</sup>. The methodology used for this survey is often described as a “blitz count” since it is conducted over a short period of time by a large group of volunteers. The results are observations based by the count of individuals and families who *appear* to be homeless. This type of survey isn’t entirely representative of the homeless population because it doesn’t count for 1) car-living and/or couch surfing housing insecure individuals or families, including students, 2) is based on appearance and 3) does not count anyone not seen during the time of the survey. For the purpose of this report, I will assume there are more homeless individuals than found in the Census.

Out of the twenty-seven cities in Monterey County, there are a total of eight shelters for the homeless or housing insecure<sup>11</sup>. Five of the eight are specifically for women and children, two are for families and one, located in Salinas, is for men. The only shelters in Seaside are the Women and Children Shelter for domestic violence victims and the Salvation Army Transitional Housing. Both are for families only and have strict qualifications found commonly in homeless shelters across the nation.

Qualifications for the Salvation Army Transitional Housing in Seaside are:

- Must be homeless or at risk of becoming homeless within the meaning of HUD regulations, e.g., due to eviction, foreclosure, loss of employment, domestic violence, or divorce, and must be able to provide proof of circumstances.
- Must meet HUD low-income guidelines.
- Must be a legal resident of the United States.
- Must be 18 years of age or older.
- A criminal background check will be conducted. Anyone convicted of a felony, violent offense or sexual offense will not be accepted into the program.
- Unless unable due to protected disability, must be able to actively look for and secure employment in the first 30 days of the Emergency Housing program. Transitional Housing Program Applicants must be working a minimum of 32 hours per week for at least 30 days prior to entering the program, unless unable due to a protected disability.
- Must be pregnant or have children under the age of 18 currently living with them and have at minimum 50% shared legal/physical custody of children in care and be able to provide proof.

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<sup>10</sup> *Monterey County Homeless Census and Survey*, (Applied Survey Research, 2017), 13.

<sup>11</sup> *Monterey Homeless Shelters & Services For The Needy*, (Homeless Shelter Directory).

- Children must be enrolled in and attending school. Homeschooling will not be accepted.
- Must be free of all alcohol and drugs for at least 12 months and be able to provide proof of sobriety and/or recovery program.
- Both single parents and couples with children are eligible.
- If attending school in addition to working 32 hours, must provide a copy of school schedule.
- Must be willing to adhere to all program guidelines and to work closely with a case manager towards self-sufficiency. Must be highly self-motivated.

The accessibility of these shelters are exclusive and often unpredictable, leaving hundreds out on the street and/or on waiting lists for several months<sup>12</sup>.

Students are also facing challenges with housing stability. The Office of the Chancellor conducted a Basic Needs survey in 2017 to quantify the number of students experiencing housing insecurity. Across the state, nearly 11 percent of students experienced homelessness within the last year<sup>13</sup>. At CSU Monterey Bay, that statistic is nearly 15 percent. Monterey housing for students is particularly difficult due to stagnant developmental growth, increasing housing market prices and sprawled resources.

I have heard multiple accounts of students having to double up with friends and live in their vehicles; utilizing the gyms' showers and bathrooms in extreme scenarios. Students who need to work nearly full-time to pay for rent and other necessities often do so at the expense of their grades and academic success.

The CSU Office of the Chancellor defined student basic needs required for student success. The goal is to ensure equitable and affordable access to resources while working with Associated Students to alleviate any barriers students may face on their particular campuses. They needs are as follows:

- *Housing\**
- *Physical health*
- *Quality education*
- *Mental well-being*
- *Sense of belonging*
- *Financial support*
- *Safety*
- *Food\**

If we apply Maslow's theology, we can assume that lack of access to housing and food often leads to failure in all all other categories.

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<sup>12</sup> Carey Fuller, *Homeless Shelter Systems and What They Don't Tell You*, (Huffington Post, 2011).

<sup>13</sup> Rashida Crutchfield, Jennifer Maguire (2018). *Study of Student Basic Needs*. Long Beach, CA: California State University Office of the Chancellor.

To better serve and represent these susceptible populations, innovative, inclusive and sustainable accommodations must be adopted by cities. Social barriers and lack of resources can be prevented to better aid the unsheltered. Over the last decade, counties and organizations across the U.S. have initiated the erection of tiny home villages for the homeless. These villages can either serve as transitional housing, rent-then-own programs or a blend of the two. Housing insecure individuals or families are able to stay in these homes for longer periods of time versus traditional shelters; allowing more time for people to form physical and emotional stability. These villages often have little-to-no requirements for housing, creating an inclusive and diverse community.

## Tiny Homes

Tiny homes are a relatively new concept, conceived in the late 80's and popularized in the early 2000's. Common themes as to why companies and individuals construct tiny homes is to simplify living standards, reduce financial burdens and decrease ones carbon footprint.

These homes were coined 'tiny' when compared to American's median home size. In 2013, the Census Bureau found the average single-family home size is 2,384 square feet, which is a about a 800 square feet increase from 1973<sup>14</sup>.

The true square footage of a 'tiny home' is still ambiguous, and differs from business to business and owner to owner. *The Tiny Life Blog* states a tiny home should be 100-400 squared foot. A popular tiny home company, Tumbleweed Tiny House Company, claims that homes should have at least 220 square feet of interior space to be legal<sup>15</sup>. The International Code Council specifies: "Every dwelling unit shall have at least one room that shall have not less than 120 square feet of net floor area"<sup>16</sup>. The tiny home original creation was on a trailer bed, which is maxed out at 48' in length, 8'6" in width and 10' in height for all states. For the purpose of this report, I will define a tiny home as a dwelling unit between 120 – 400 square feet to satisfy all definitions of a tiny home.

Because of the versatile dimensions of tiny homes, they can be both stationary or transportable units dependent on its' occupants. Often these homes are constructed on top of trailer beds, making it easy for transportation purposes. In the tiny home villages there can be both types of units – the stationary units would serve as transitional housing for a maximum of \$30 a month and a two-year stay, the transportable units could serve as a rent-to-own model for about \$200 to \$400 a month over the period of time it takes to pay off the original price of construction. Both types of units should be built on a trailer bed to circumvent construction and zoning codes.

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<sup>14</sup> "Median and Average Square Feet of Floor Area in New Single-Family Houses Completed by Location". United States Census Bureau

<sup>15</sup> Weissmann and Spesard, *Tiny House Style*

<sup>16</sup> International Code Council, 2012 International Building Code

Tiny homes are dramatically less expensive than the average American home and the construction of traditional shelters and transitional housing. The cost of the average tiny home varies and is often dependent on size, amenities, materials and labor. According to Ryan Mitchell of the [tinylife.com](http://tinylife.com) and the Tiny House Conference, the average cost of 350-square foot home is \$23,000. This price is reflective of homes built from new materials and have a bathroom, kitchen, washer, dryer as well as a dining area.

The tiny homes often seen in transitional villages are much smaller and lack large appliances. Dependent on the materials the home is made out of and whether or not it is constructed by a non-profit or a developer, homes can cost anywhere between \$2,000 to \$8,000.

Tiny homes provide a space large enough for a bed, a desk and basic amenities, including a mini-fridge and storage trunks with locks. Without a kitchen, washer, dryer or bathroom, many tiny home villages share these amenities with their neighbors. Most villages are based on communal living, or ‘cohousing’, maximizing sustainable living styles. This includes a communal restroom, a kitchen, a garden and off-grid hook-up’s. Villages are linked to the cities infrastructure grid but have off-grid resources such as solar, water tanks for rain storage and composting toilets.

Cohousing offers financial, social and environmental benefits. With utilities being shared, there are no utility bills and exceptionally low energy-impacts. To reduce car dependency, villages are placed near transit stops, grocery and toiletry stores. The community garden would also reduce the frequency of trips to the grocery store and create an opportunity to teach eco-friendly practices. These types of communities often depend on the labor and respect of one another, creating a productive and stable environment. It is often cited in journals that future development and infrastructure be based on the notion of self-sufficient living styles to create a sense of belonging and reduce environmental impacts<sup>17</sup>.

## **Proposal for Seaside**

In respect to sustainable development and in an effort to alleviate social barriers, I recommend that the city of Seaside i) designate a parcel of land, by forming an ordinance, in the up-and-coming Seaside East assimilation for a tiny home transitional village, ii) develop an eco-village for students east of CSU Monterey Bay main campus (similar functionality to the transitional village) and iii) designate Parker Flats as a tiny home park for travelers and stationary units as a potential to generate tourism.

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<sup>17</sup> Ali, Harlina Mohamad, et al. “Self-Sufficient Community through the Concepts of Collective Living and Universal Housing.” *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, vol. 68, 2012, pp. 615–627.

### ***Tiny Home Transitional Village – Seaside East***

The creation of tiny home transitional villages can be achieved in many ways. It is important to note that the placement of this village be mixed in with regular residential sectors, a transit center, grocery stores and pharmacies to eliminate marginalization and inequitable access to resources<sup>18</sup>. To ensure adequate space and optimized planning, the new village should be placed in the up-and-coming Seaside East development (Refer to Image 1).

**Figure 12: Former Fort Ord lands**



**Image 1:** Location of Seaside East – currently owned by FORA will soon be absorbed by the city of Seaside. The land has already been ecologically offset.

In Oregon, there are three villages: Nickelsville, Dignity Village and Opportunity Village. All three are self-governed and are built on city-sanctioned land, designated to homeless encampments. To make this possible cities adopted resolutions, passed zoning provisions and created partnerships with organizations.

The tiny homes are crafted by volunteers and residents using recycled materials derived from lumber stores and developers. To promote self-sufficiency, sustainable practices and to reduce barriers these villages include a shared garden, kitchen, shower and toilet. The houses are often transitional, only costing about \$30 a month at a two-year maximum

<sup>18</sup> Joseph, Mark L., Robert J. Chaskin, and Henry S. Webber. *The Theoretical Basis for Addressing Poverty Through Mixed-Income Development*. (Urban Affairs, Review 42, no. 3, 2007). 369-409.



stay. The rent-to-own models cost anywhere between \$200 to \$300 a month and can be paid off in less than eight years.

These sites have minimal rules regarding requirements for occupancy and behavior. For example, Dignity Village outlines the following rules:

1. No violence toward yourself or others.
2. No illegal substances or alcohol or paraphernalia on the premises or within a one-block radius.
3. No stealing.
4. Everyone contributes to the upkeep and welfare of the village and works to become a productive member of the community.
5. No disruptive behavior of any kind that disturbs the general peace and welfare of the village.

Seattle, Oregon, Portland and Washington have been cited in the blog-sphere as the most successful cities to erect tiny home ‘encampments’ throughout the United States. These cities can pose as models for future development.

Another route the village can come to fruition is through a buy-one-get-one program. During one of our meetings, Kurt Overmeyer, the city of Seaside’s Economic Developer, proposed the city make a contract with a developer that produces two tiny homes for the cost of one.

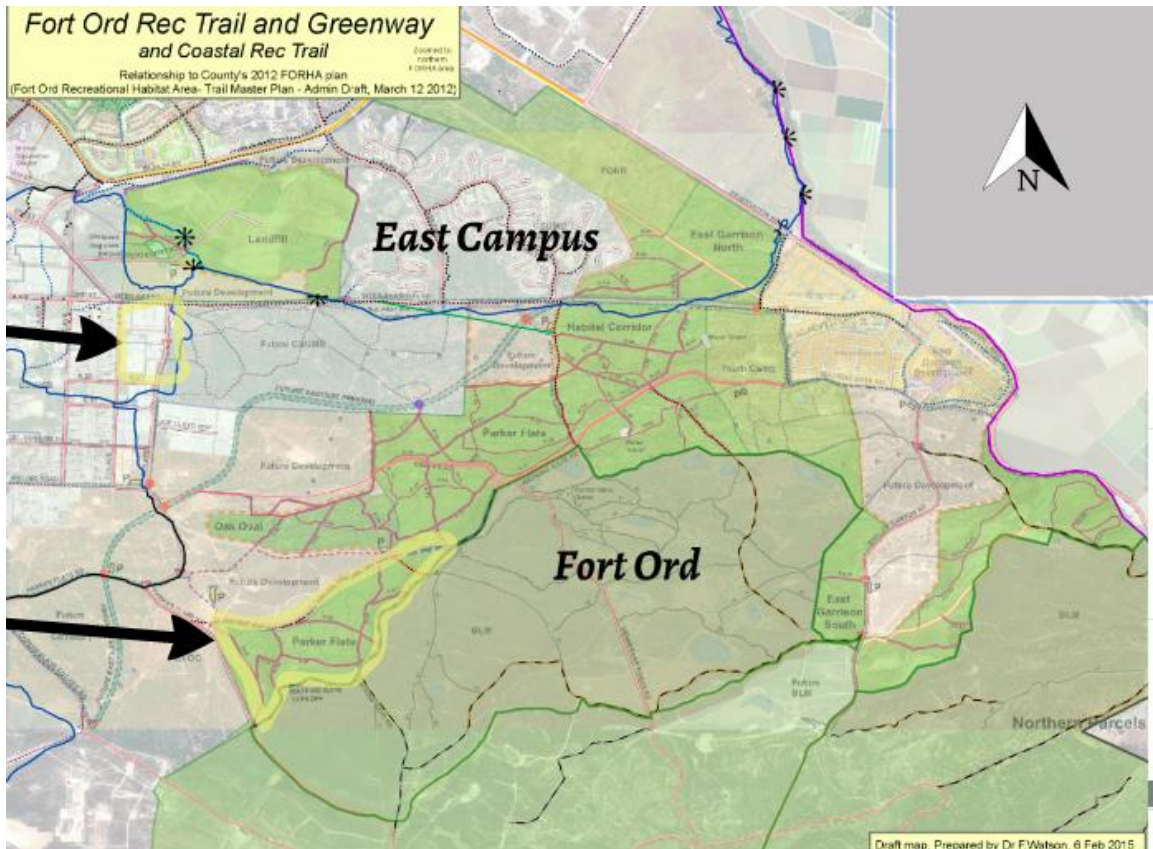
### ***Tiny Home Eco-Village – CSU Monterey Bay***

A tiny home village would be highly beneficial to low-income and housing insecure students. I recommend this village have both the transitional model and rent-to-own model, as mentioned earlier. The eco-village would be configured into communal living spaces, reducing financial costs, environmental impacts and increasing social outlets. The location can be disputed, however, I identified an open parcel of land east of main campus and west of east campus that can be a potential location (Refer to top arrow, Image 2).

Smaller, less equipped homes can be transitional (\$30/month) while potentially larger more equipped homes could be rent-to-own (\$500/month). Both units can be developed by a city selected developer. The rent-to-own would still be the least expensive housing option for CSUMB students, and a home is guaranteed after graduation.

Madalyn Price, a student at CSU Monterey Bay, researched the cost difference between a traditional path of student housing versus purchasing a rent-to-own model tiny home for CSUMB students. Her cited tiny home is priced at \$37,000; this includes amenities such as a kitchen, bathroom, washer and dryer. Her paper looked at nine years of inhabitation in a tiny home, including utility and property costs after graduation, compared to traditional four-year housing on campus and found \$26,000 worth of savings. It also

meant housing security after graduation and the ability to save money, offering a quicker path to paying off student loans<sup>19</sup>.



**Image 2:** Location of CSUMB proposed eco-village (top square) and Parker Flats tiny home park (lower outlined plot near Fort Ord).

### ***Parker Flats Tiny Home Park***

Designating Parker Flats as a tiny home park can potentially provide revenue and eco-tourism for the city and Fort Ord National Monument (Refer to bottom arrow, Image 2).

A common barrier tiny home owners face when looking to live or travel in a tiny home is identifying a stationary location. Parker Flats, boarding Fort Ord, would be an opportune place to develop a tiny home park to promote sustainable development and eco-tourism. Because tiny homes are minimally energy-intensive and small, the placement between Fort Ord and more dense development would be a nice ecologic transition and would not require much clear-cutting.

The minimal development this park would necessitate is electricity and water hookup's, unless they are off-grid homes.

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<sup>19</sup> Madalyn S. Price. *Tiny Homes as an Alternative to Traditional Student Housing*. (CSU Monterey Bay, 2018). 1-12.

## **Conclusion**

Tiny homes and cohousing units relieve financial burdens, reduce environmental impacts and provide physical and emotional stability. In order to achieve compliance with state legislature, such as SB 32, and continue to develop sustainable infrastructure, in accordance to the U.N. Summit of Sustainable Development Goals of 2015, it is crucial we not only consider tiny home villages, but continue to ensure it's validity and maximize its' potential for the sake of our people and societies.

## **Suggestions for Future Capstone Projects**

To continue on the work of validating the tiny home projects as feasible solutions, I recommend a sequence of the following actions:

*For Tiny Home Transitional Village:*

- 1) Interview other tiny home village management sites – identify best methodologies and village structures through others successes and failures.
- 2) Host a charrette – gather community (including homeless and housing insecure populations), developer and city input and create a draft plan for the city.
- 3) Meet regularly with city officials until details are perfected for all stakeholders.
- 4) \*Develop a non-profit organization that builds tiny homes with community support

*For Student Eco-Village:*

- 1) Meet with the Basic Needs Senator and Sustainability Senator in Associated Students to ask for advocacy and support in your project – you can apply to the CSU 'Greenovation Fund' for financial support, as well.
- 2) Meet with stakeholder faculty and staff that can help formulate this project and bring it to decision-makers.
- 3) Meet with the city of Seaside and Marina to identify potential developers.

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