



## Home Sweet “Tiny” Home

By Anne Groebner

If you haven't noticed, there is a trend that is sweeping the country and it just hit Lakeside. They're called “tiny homes” and some people are calling it a “social movement” where people are choosing to downsize their living space, get rid of extra stuff that they have accumulated, reduce their living expenses and spend more time doing the things they love. “It's very liberating,” says Sherry Stebbeds, sales manager for the new tiny home community, Luxtiny. Luxtiny is the first and only tiny-home community in Lakeside, Arizona. “It's empowering to go through cupboards and closets and realize all the stuff you have...half of it you didn't even know you had and haven't used for quite a while — so, you just get rid of it.

If you watch HGTV like I do, then you've probably heard about Luxtiny. I was watching a tiny home show on HGTV a few months ago and was pretty surprised to see Luxtiny, located in Lakeside, Arizona, featured. It was the brainchild of Steve Dedmon and, with only two homes on his property, HGTV heard about him and wanted to put him on TV. Dedmon started this project about four years ago and, once he got past all the hoop jumping with the County, the State and Planning and Zoning, he has developed a pretty amazing tiny home community. One of his first customers, Sherry and Rick Stebbeds of Mesa, have lived there since May. Since building their tiny home, Sherry has become Steve's on-site sales manager and, because her house turned out so awesome, she is his designer as well. Rick, Sherry's husband, still has a few more months before he retires but, as soon as he does, it sounds like Steve will be putting him to work too. Rick says he is the “jack-of-all-trades and the master at none.” Sherry says he is very handy.

When I walked into Rick and Sherry's 399 square-foot home, I was pretty amazed. There is a large bedroom with two closets — one for clothes and one for a full-sized washer and dryer. There is a full-sized bathroom with a huge shower and the kitchen is a Chef's kitchen, complete with gas stove, 3-door refrigerator, dishwasher and a large island in the middle. The countertops are granite and there are so many cabinets, it's crazy how well they all fit. The living room is kind of small but, because Sherry is claustrophobic, she had them extend the floor a little and built a bay window. She also made the ceiling

high and put in lots of windows to bring in more light. Steve liked her house design so much that he offers the same floor plan to other customers and he calls it “The Sherry.”

It’s hard to believe how little, pardon the pun, one of these homes costs. The house itself runs anywhere from \$39,000 to \$79,000, depending on upgrades, and renting a lot at Luxtyny runs about \$329/month for a standard size and \$359/month for a larger size, which includes your water, sewer and trash. Located above the refrigerator in Sherry and Rick’s home is a mini-split heater and cooler that is capable of regulating the indoor temperature for the entire home. “This house is so well insulated,” Sherry says, “that we only pay about \$48 a month for electricity and \$11-\$12 a month for gas.

Steve and his crew build the homes in a warehouse close to the community. They construct the shell and some of the interior. Since the homes sit on trailers, they can be transferred to the lot pretty easily and then they finish the inside. Some customers opt in for the additional 144 square-foot, site-built guest house. It’s pretty handy to have an extra bedroom that can also be used as an office. The one I saw them working on included a bathroom as well. (The only drawback is that the addition will stay on the lot even if the owners move their home to another location). That’s one of the awesome features of owning a tiny home — you can move it anytime. Some of the homes are small enough to be towed with a one-ton truck but for a house like Sherry’s and Rick’s, you would need a mobile home toter.

Sherry and Rick say that they looked at builders in Colorado and California and there was no comparison to the quality that Dedmon puts into his homes. “He is willing to work with the clients and we have a lot of clients who want something a little different,” says Sherry. “A lot of builders will tell you that that’s the plan and that’s the way it is!” Steve says that, although they don’t allow customers in the warehouse while they are building, they can stop in and see how it is coming along. It took them less than eight weeks to complete Sherry and Rick’s home from start to finish. They chose a lot of upgrades but they did most of the work on the inside themselves and saved a lot of money. “Rick nailed my finger to a board one time,” says Sherry “right through the knuckle...but really we only had that ‘let’s go back to the Valley’ a few times and we managed to complete our home and ended up staying.”

Steve has done construction all his life. His career background, however, is in mortgages and financing. He has two really good carpenters who handle just about everything but he does a lot of hands-on work including the electrical wiring. When he moved up here, he was in real estate and had his own license but the one thing he didn’t know much about was land development. His contractor took him under his wing and taught him step-by-step; what they needed to do, how to do it and why they did it. Four years later, people are calling his phone, hitting his website and showing up at his doorstep inquiring about purchasing a tiny home. He does some in-house financing but is always looking for a bank or an investor to help with the financing.

Luxtyny encompasses about six acres with an option of increasing that to 23 acres. There is a community garden and plans to build a clubhouse with games, a gazebo, a walking path, a basketball court and they are planning to plant about a thousand more trees. (Another plus--only a short distance away is a great hike called the Ice Cave.)

You don’t necessarily have to live at Luxtyny. Dedmon will build homes that can be moved to any location. Right now, he is working on three homes for customers in Tucson.

Sherry loves the community which is exactly the feeling Dedmon is trying to create. “We have girls’ night every week,” Sherry told me “...and about 100% of our residents go to girls’ night,” Dedmon inserted. “What is girls’ night?” I asked. It consists of some of Sherry’s great appetizers, maybe some margaritas, and some great conversations. There is definitely a fun aura surrounding Luxtyny. While I was talking to Steve, Sherry and Rick and their neighbor, 10-year-old Alex, stopped by and joined the conversation. She is learning to cook from Sherry. About 10 minutes later, Alex’s mother, Hannah (Dedmon’s first resident), came in and, even though the entire home is only 399 square feet, we had plenty of room.

Sherry and Rick showcase their home about 10-12 times a day and on Memorial Day, they showed it to over 400 people who were curious about buying a tiny home. After Luxtiny aired on HGTV, they had about 3000 hits on their website in one day. About 50 people have made offers to buy their house but, although they are talking about building another one, they love the one they are in. This spring, HGTV is planning to film another episode that will feature Luxtiny. Look for the show called "Tiny Home Paradise," season 5, episode 8.

#### SIDEBAR

Are you ready to downsize? Here are some statistics from [thetinylife.com/what-is-the-tiny-house-movement/](http://thetinylife.com/what-is-the-tiny-house-movement/) that might help you make up your mind:

68% of tiny home owners have no mortgage compared to 29.3% of all U.S. homeowners.

55% of tiny home owners have more savings than the average American with a median of \$10,972 in the bank.

78% of tiny home owners own their home, compared to 65% of homeowners with traditional houses.

The average cost to build a tiny home is \$39,000 - \$79,000. The average cost for a standard-sized home is approximately \$272,000; add interest and that could almost double.

The average tiny house is 399 sq. ft., while the average standard home is about 2100 sq. ft. That adds up to about 5 tiny homes.

Two out of five tiny home owners are over 50-years-of-age; 21% under 30-years-old, 21% 30-40-years-old, 18% 40-50-years -old, 38% over 50-years-old

Tiny home owners are twice as likely to have a master's degree.

Tiny home living encompasses environmental consciousness, self-sufficiency, life simplification, sound fiscal plans and life adventures.