

The image shows the interior of a compact, industrial-style living space. On the left, a bright orange sofa is positioned against a wall with a window and a lamp. In the center, a white door is visible. To the right, a bar area features a dark countertop, two white bar stools, and a red corrugated metal backsplash. A cow print rug is on the floor in the foreground. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

***Serial
Entrepreneurs
Team Up, Launch
The Industrial
Hotel LLC***

Recent reports peg the Tiny Homes market at a [compound annual growth rate \(CAGR\) of over 4% through 2025](#). There are a number of factors behind growing interest in tiny homes. Rapid growth in housing prices and rents in many metropolitan areas have propelled unprecedented homeless rates. Most recently, the sudden economic downturn in certain sectors—an outcome of the COVID-19 pandemic—pushed some individuals and families into bankruptcy and loss of housing.

Tiny homes are seen as a partial solution for the problem. There simply isn't sufficient housing inventory on the market today, with prices up as much as 50% in [certain markets](#) over the past four years. The cost of new construction continues to spiral upwards, with lumber prices up [more than 500%](#) over

the past year. This perfect storm prices many new home buyers out of the market. In contrast, depending on the materials used, location, and other factors, the cost of a tiny house can be a fraction of the cost of a normal construction build.



Fremont County Entrepreneurs Meet and Form Business Partnership

Fremont County entrepreneurs, [Barna Kasa](#) and Wyatt Reed, both developed an early interest in home construction and renovation early in their lives. Barna launched a career in technology when attending Ohio State University as a computer science major. Yet, while

completing his degree, he decided to buy a house and completely remodel it. “I had no money, no skills, no tools, nothing,” he jokes. “But I figured it out, and it turned out that I was actually really good at it.”

And while Barna runs multiple businesses, including several in technology, his interest in real estate and renovation remains a key part of his professional life. His real estate and home renovation activities are subsumed under KDevelopers, LLC, a company he founded. Since moving to Fremont County in 2015, Barna has been actively involved in various real estate and construction undertakings—one being the full renovation of five 1950s to 1970s vintage mobile homes ([The Rosedale Vintage Mobile Home Park](#)), which he restored using recycled materials and lists on Airbnb as a Superhost and VRBO Premier Partner. When the housing market recently changed, Barna switched them over to long-term rentals.



Minnesota and started work in construction while in High School and continued while completing an undergraduate degree at St. Cloud State University. Wyatt has owned and operated businesses in and around Colorado Springs for a number of years. As his fiancée is from Fremont County, he decided to relocate from Minnesota to Florence in early 2019. “People joke with me about wearing shorts when everyone else is wearing coats,” he relates. “for me, it is a walk in the park.”

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Wyatt and Barna first met in 2014 at the Cañon City Hot Air Balloon Festival where the two of them had separate booths selling merchandise. “I remember walking around the booth area to check out other vendors and saw Barna’s booth for Salvage Antique Vintage Etc.,” Wyatt recalls. “He had all of this funky merchandise, including a hubcap clock.” The two of them struck up a conversation and a friendship formed that eventually led to a business partnership. “Our first joint effort was a pop-up retail store in Colorado Springs in 2015,” Wyatt says. “It was a big success, and we’ve worked on various joint business initiatives since.”

Idea for Tiny Container House Takes Form

The concept of tiny houses and their ability to address the housing shortage and affordability dates back a number of years for Wyatt and Barna. Wyatt's brother introduced him to shipping container housing several years ago. For Barna, his interest in tiny homes was spurred by his work restoring vintage mobile homes. "I was so intrigued with them that I attended several seminars on them," Wyatt relates. "But the

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approach they were taking lacked viability in my opinion, as they were still too expensive and did not include individual bathrooms—namely, residents in the tiny housing development would need to share a common rest room. The existing tiny house designs lacked storage as well."

When Wyatt moved to Fremont County, he needed a place to store his work

materials and household items. Barna had purchased an empty lot in Florence years ago and told Wyatt to drop the shipping container he was using there. With the container on the property and Wyatt now living in Fremont County, the two of them concluded that the time had come for them to bring their ideas regarding tiny houses to fruition. "When we build on top of containers, we get storage underneath and a super-efficient living quarters above it," Wyatt says.

At about the same time, Wyatt submitted his idea of a tiny container house into a "Shark Tank" like competition sponsored by the Fremont Economic Development Corporation and vetted by several Colorado-based venture fund leaders. A total of 13 new business ideas were pitched during the B2B Fall Roundup Bull Session—one of which was Wyatt's Fire Age Design Tiny Home concept. "I had two minutes and no props to present my idea," he remembers. He won third prize and \$2,500 for his time."

Building with Virtually 100% Refurbished Materials

In addition to the smaller lot where Wyatt placed his shipping container, Barna also had acquired a larger one—also in Florence. The two of them also had extensive renovation experience in construction areas that would aid them in designing and building out a tiny house prototype. Barna's salvage business in Florence—[Salvage Antique Vintage Etc.](#)—could provide them with most of the material needed to construct the tiny house prototype. In particular, Barna made a decision in 2020 to acquire special plastics recycling equipment to create unique items like light switch cover plates and commercial-grade tile.

"Recycling materials lowers our cost and gives us a unique differentiator that is environmentally friendly," Barna explains. "We're even harvesting material for the trim," Wyatt adds. "Barna will give me a stack of old barnwood, and I'll turn them into trim for the windows. About the only thing in them that wasn't refurbished are the toilets." With construction materials adding tens of thousands of dollars to many new homes and making it cost-prohibitive to remodel existing homes, the approach of Wyatt and Barna is advantageous; outside of higher shipping container costs, they are not impacted by construction material inflation.

Proving Out the Idea in a Four Unit Prototype

After working with the city planner and a local planning consultant in early 2020, Wyatt and Barna concluded that they should zone the two locations as hotel properties and branded them with the name [The Industrial](#). They purchased the remaining three containers planned for the smaller lot on South Union and commenced work on designing and

building all four containers. They plan to add one more to the lot within the next year. It took about nine months to build the infrastructure—septic tank and utilities. Occupancy permits were secured for the first two units in March, and the other two were permitted in June. Wyatt is currently using unit 4 while it is under construction, and unit 1

is listed on Airbnb and associated Airbnb Experiences. Units 2 and 3 are currently under construction, which Wyatt and Barna hope to have listed on Airbnb later this summer.

In addition to all of their planning work with the city and build out of the units, Wyatt and Barna launched a podcast show in late 2020 dubbed [“It’s Not a Tiny House.”](#) The difference shows a focus on Wyatt’s and Barna’s journey to create their own affordable tiny house project in Florence and blueprint elements others across the country can follow who want to follow suit.

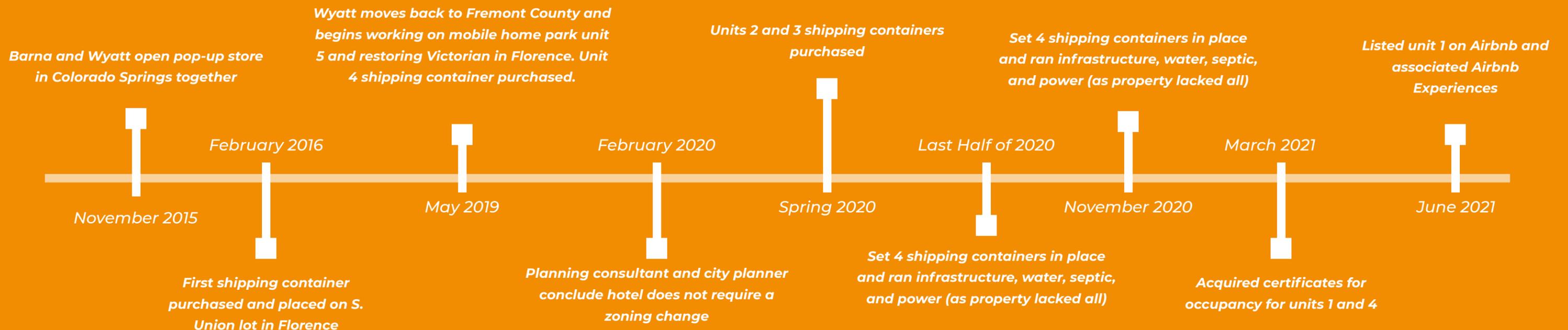
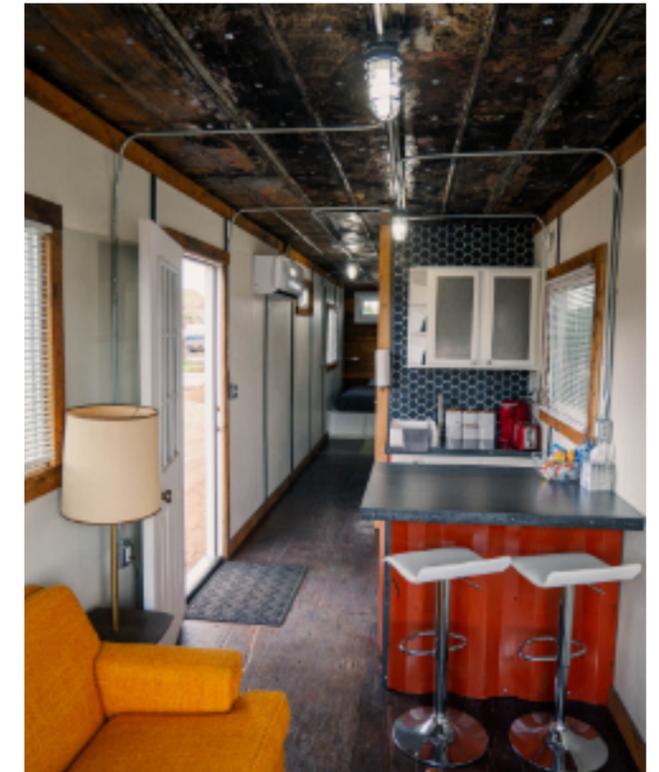
While the tiny homes in The Industrial currently are on grid tied power, Wyatt

notes that they have plans to create a completely off-grid capable shipping container home, that can ship all-inclusive (using the container with all additional parts included to hookup) through his own company, Fire Age Design, LLC. “These homes will have their own solar panel supply, waste and supply water tanks, basically everything from footers to finish nails, all in the box. Our final goal is to create a fully modular design that requires as little infrastructure work as possible,” Wyatt says.

“When we build on top of containers, we get storage underneath and a super-efficient living quarters above it.”

Getting their four tiny houses on the first property and listing them on Airbnb was just the start for Wyatt and Barna. “We can start building tiny houses on the second, much larger property in Florence and renting them out,” Barna notes. “We anticipate that we can get 20 to 30 units placed on it.” Wyatt and Barna also plan to begin building out tiny houses for shipment to other locations. For scale of operations, they expect to subcontract welding and other construction work to local professionals in Florence and Fremont County. Plus, as the container houses can be preconfigured on site, they can be loaded onto trucks and delivered virtually anywhere in the country. “We’ve already had discussions with a Florence-based trucking company

about subcontracting their services,” Wyatt adds.



Adding Up the Efficiencies of Scale and Cost

In contrast to a normal house that can take months and months to build, Wyatt and Barna expect to shrink this to less than 30 days for their tiny houses. “Customers will have the option of a white glove approach—from design to actual delivery and set up,” Barna says. “We will even do the plumbing and electrical hookups when it is delivered on location. As nearly all of the house is completely configured in Florence, very little needs to be done once it arrives on location.”

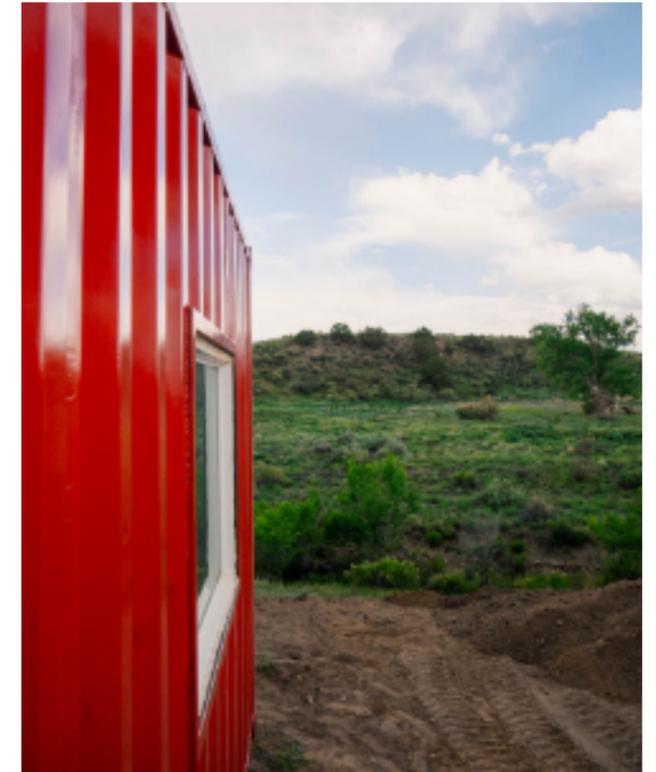
“We’re also planning to give them the choice to build it themselves—either in Florence or upon delivery to the location where they want it placed,” Wyatt observes. “For those wanting to do the construction themselves, we plan to

create a one-weekend training course where we give them hands-on training.” He also has put together training videos that will be hosted as part of the Off-Grid Academy. And while they are currently giving free tours of the tiny houses, Wyatt and Barna plan to begin charging for them in the near future. “Living in a tiny house is not for everyone,” Barna notes. “What we really want is for buyers to spend at least two days living in one before they make a purchase. This will give them a feel for what it is like.”

Being made of steel, the tiny container houses are very quiet—blocking off outside noise. The Corten Steel from which they are made has a way of scabbing itself. “They are also highly energy efficient,” Wyatt says. “We spray foam insulation to create vapor barrier. Our HVAC technician who added the heating and cooling units to our four tiny houses told us that he has never seen anything capable of producing their level of efficiency.”



Even with the spike in container prices in the past year, Wyatt and Barna believe they can deliver a 40-foot tiny house at a cost of \$48,000. “If we add an upstairs to the unit, the price increases to \$56,000—but so does the square footage of the space,” Barna observes. “This is dramatically less than other tiny homes on the market, where you’re often looking at \$100,000 once everything is added.” Wyatt and Barna are also playing with the concept of trying a design for a 20-foot container. “Shrinking the cost even further creates an even more compelling affordability case—which we believe could be used to house people experiencing homelessness.”



Building, Selling, and Shipping Tiny House Across the Country

Now that they have their initial prototype designs behind them, Wyatt and Barna are very excited about the future of The Industrial, LLC. Wyatt sums up, “We want to be building, selling, and shipping our tiny houses all over the country in a couple years—and The Industrial lays the groundwork to do so. We believe in the value our tiny container house design brings to the table, and that they address a very real problem.”

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About Fremont Economic Development Corporation (FEDC):

Fremont Economic Development Corporation is a professional economic development organization focused directly on business attraction, retention and expansion in Fremont County, Colorado. With an established and growing network of business, academic and governmental partners, we directly assist companies with competitive locations or expansion projects by connecting them with the right people, the appropriate resources and the most meaningful and relevant information.

FEDC directly manages or assists in supporting multiple sector partnerships across the Upper Arkansas region of Colorado, serving Fremont, Custer, Chaffee, and Lake Counties. www.fremontedc.com