

INTERVIEW



Genger Charles
*Managing Director,
Head of External Affairs
and Impact Strategies*

Modular Homes Boost Housing Attainability in Rural Communities

Modular homes first gained popularity in America when veterans returning home after World War II sought out affordable housing options. Today, the lack of construction workers and the high cost of building in rural areas make modular homes a popular housing choice for Americans in rural communities.

There are many reasons why modular homes can be a cost-effective pathway to homeownership. Modular homes can be built quickly off-site and the cost per square foot can be lower than that of a traditional on-site built home. Easier financing options are also available to home buyers in rural areas. NAHB's State and Local Team connected with Genger Charles, managing director, head of external affairs and impact strategy for StudioBuilt by Amherst, to share insights on how housing policies such as local zoning, permitting, codes and tariffs impact modular home construction.

Modular housing can **accelerate production timelines by up to 50%** compared to traditional builds, allowing faster infill of housing gaps in rural areas.

What are some ways StudioBuilt is working to break existing stigmas around offsite constructed homes?

A home is so much more than how it is built. And, given our housing undersupply, we think it is important to break stigmas assigned to any type of home so long as the property itself is safe and habitable. Amherst's StudioBuilt modular homes meet or exceed all traditional building codes and undergo a rigorous 140-point inspection process, proving their durability and quality. Our homes are also on a permanent foundation so, though much of the work happens off-site, the home is affixed to the land in perpetuity.

What are some challenges you face in this sector of the home building industry?

One consideration is addressing lingering misconceptions about modular housing, along with navigating differences in local zoning and permitting. We manage the logistics of delivering and placing homes, which can vary by community but are generally solvable with the right planning. To further support access, Amherst as a whole works to expand financing access for buyers, as many home buyers in rural areas also face credit constraints and limited lending options.

How can modular housing help address housing shortages in rural communities?

Modular housing can accelerate production timelines by up to 50% compared to traditional builds, allowing faster infill of housing gaps in rural areas. It also reduces reliance on scarce local labor by centralizing construction in dedicated manufacturing hubs.

What roles do local and state building codes play during the manufacturing of modular housing in rural communities?

StudioBuilt homes comply with all relevant codes, including the International Residential Code and International Energy Conservation Code, but fragmented local regulations can complicate deployment. We work closely with policymakers to streamline approvals and educate jurisdictions on the advantages of modular construction.