Speaker 1: The Missouri State Journal, a weekly program keeping you in touch with Missouri State University.

Nicki Donnelson: There's not a one size fits all when it comes to tiny houses. They're all different and they're extremely attractive to many people for a variety of reasons. I'm Nicki Donnelson. Today, I have Dr. Krista Evans as my guest for the second in a two part series about tiny houses. Today, she will tell us more about how Eden Village Springfield's tiny house community for the homeless has developed.

Krista Evans: Homelessness has increasingly been an issue across the United States and Springfield is no exception to that. David and Linda Brown became very aware of the homelessness issue several years ago and started an organization called The Gathering Tree, which was to get people off the streets and have a space to warm up or cool down. If it's the summer, hang out, then they would sometimes have meals and that has blossomed over time into an offshoot of The Gathering Tree called Eden Village.

Krista Evans: Their motto is a city where no one sleeps outside. They bought the land for Eden Village and put in a tiny house village of, I think it's 32 units and it's been wildly successful from the perspective of the community. So there's been a lot of volunteers. All of the units themselves have been donated by families and businesses. They have people come out and help in the gardens, serving meals, providing services. So in that regards, it's been very successful. It's been so successful in fact that they are now doing in Eden Village too, and they've purchased other land in Springfield and that will open in October of this year. And they are even thinking of opening up to five Even Villages in Springfield. Their hope is to have up to 200 tiny homes within six to eight years and having a city where no one sleeps outside.

Nicki Donnelson: Last week, Evans shared how much these villages vary nationwide. Some offer simply a roof without plumbing. She tells us what Eden Village offers residents.

Krista Evans: An important aspect of these tiny house villages is the concept of village creating a sense of community. So they offer or they have a community center and in that community center they have practitioners visit regularly for health services, mental health services. They have a common kitchen area for meals and for meetings such as AA. They have washers and dryers there, they have computers. So a lot of the things that we may not think about when we just think of the tiny house itself, but it's really important to have all these amenities as well to create that sense of community.

Nicki Donnelson: While conducting research about these villages, Evans learned about the drivers that caused some communities to support or fight against them. In theory, everyone would want to live in a community where no one sleeps outside. The record showed that many didn't want these villages too close to home. This is what is referred to as NIMBY or nimbyism, not in my backyard. Nimbyism is always an issue when you deal with the homeless and Springfield is no exception. An interesting finding from my recent research on tiny house villages for the homeless is that nimbyism is decreased when the tiny house village for the homeless goes into an area where the land use is zoned properly for a tiny house village for the homeless.

Nicki Donnelson: If a tiny house village for the homeless went into a place where they need to switch the zoning and alert all of the people in the neighborhood for public comment, it's very likely that it will be unsuccessful. I've looked at several sites throughout the country in this regard, but when they pick a place where you don't need to do that, it's a lot more chances of being successful. For instance, Eden Village searches for places that used to be trailer parks and they keep it as a trailer park. So if you take a trailer park and it's still a trailer park, you're not changing the zoning. There is no need to alert the entire community and so far that's completely legal and that reduces that outcry.

Nicki Donnelson: Well, many of these tiny house villages for the homeless across the country enforced time limits for residency. Eden Village exists to serve as long as the community expectations are met. Evans is especially pleased that it's meeting a need and she loves what it represents. We have a lot of negativity in the world right now, and this is something that is just gathering so much momentum so quickly across the country, and the overall goal is to help people. So it's really encouraging to see this catch on so fast as a way of, Hey, we see this as a big problem. We want to have a solution. And I think tiny houses for the homeless, maybe a really great solution. That was Dr. Krista Evans. I'm Nicki Donnelson for the Missouri State Journal.

Speaker 1: For more information, contact the Office of University Communications at 4178366397.