

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



74 Could 3D Printing Solve Guam's Housing Crisis?

Disruptive technologies, those that have the potential to bring about big changes, usually include some tradeoffs between benefits and drawbacks. How you feel about this will likely depend on which side of that you fall. I'm Jerry Roberts and we'll focus on one of those, today, on The Extra Point.

The cost of living continues to rise in Guam and more and more people cannot afford a decent place to live. That's just a fact.

A check of the multiple listing service a few nights ago showed that for single-family homes, there were only six priced at \$150,000 or less. Between \$151,000 and \$200,000, you only add 25 more. Just 62 more are added to reach \$300,000. Quick math indicated that 63% of available homes exceeded \$300,000.

The military buildup, finally under way, will likely cause home sale prices and rental prices to sharply increase.

The majority of people in Guam cannot take on a mortgage anywhere near \$200,000. We need to stop using figures like that in the same sentence as the word "affordable." The same holds true for condo and apartment rentals.

To solve Guam's mounting housing crisis, our leaders will have to look for unique solutions. Could a \$10,000 concrete house be one of them? What if I added you could build it in a day?

A startup company named ICON, out of Austin, Texas, has already produced them. The initial configuration is 650 square feet for \$10,000 and they think they can reduce the price to about \$4,000. They plan to erect 100 such homes in El Salvador this year.

It's a computer driven process and you can check into ICON and other providers if you Google, "3D printed concrete homes."

Are there questions? Sure. Will these concrete homes withstand typhoon-strength winds? Can you make houses twice that size? What would the computer and total mechanism cost if GovGuam wanted to buy one, or several? Can the government designate public property for some of these homes, plus get running water and power out to them? What will it mean for the housing market? Will values decline? I don't have the answers but I'll tell you this — every state and city will eventually have to figure it out because this is no longer a fantasy. The technology is here and Guam needs to find out if it can help us. Are you listening candidates?

If you could knock out 10 or 20 concrete homes per day, at prices between \$4,000 and \$10,000, or maybe even splurge for \$20,000, how fast could you solve the housing crisis for Guam's middle-, lower-middle-, and even low-income families?

What would it mean for Guam's economy if a lot of folks didn't have a mortgage or rent payment, and could spend on other things?

Not everyone will like this idea because it will take some money off their bottom line. But here's the thing, we need to keep our eye on the ball. This is not a small issue for our community. It impacts tens of thousands of people now, and it's only going to grow more severe if we keep throwing conventional wisdom at it.

That's The Extra Point. Get out there and make something good happen today. For 93.3, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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