

Boxabl and the Promise of Factory Mass Production for Any Building Type or Size

By: Rapid Access International, Inc.

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In June 2020, we wrote about about the increasing demand for accessory dwelling units (ADUs). This trend was accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, with many building ADUs in their backyards for work-from-home office space, to live in them, or to rent them out to others for the extra income.

Boxabl

Lately, there has been a lot of attention place on a company not mentioned in this earlier article: Boxabl. Boxabl has only built three ADU homes at this point, but one of these is the \$50,000 375 square foot prefabricated home that SpaceX CEO Elon Musk is living in at the rocket company's base in South Texas.¹

The attention gained by Musk's disclosure back in June that he was living in a Boxabl unit has contributed to a wait list for units that has now reached 50,000 orders.² With no running factory at this point, the company aims to raise \$50 million by crowdsourcing the funds from the public. Evidently, the publicity received is expected to translate into a means of raising funds outside of the typical approach of working with venture capital firms or other professional investors. This approach will allow cofounders Galiano Tiramani and his father, Paulo, to retain more control over their company.

Boxabl's 'Casita' Unit

The unit sold by Boxabl is called the Casita (Translation: cottage). Casita is especially unique because it solves a logistical problem that has long prevented the homebuilding industry from incorporating modular construction. Namely, the challenge of transporting prefabricated homes from the factory to the customer. While prefabrication offers cost efficiencies of mass production, these logistical issues have hindered wider adoption of prefabrication among homebuilders.

Tiramani says "What stopped factory-built housing from taking market share is it's not compatible with highways," Tiramani said. "Our core innovation is we fixed the shipping problem."³ Indeed, the Casita unit has a large hinge that enables Boxabl to fold it down to a width of 8 ½ feet. This means that it can be shipped in a standard shipping container and transported on roads just like conventional cargo.

Beyond the Microhome

With the logistical issue resolved, Boxabl offers the potential for significant cost savings. But, not just for ADU microhomes. Imagine if a multitude of Casita-like units could be mass produced, and then transported to the building site to be assembled, stacked, and connected. Boxabl's Tiramani explains

¹ Geiger, Daniel. "The startup that built Elon Musk's tiny house now has a 50,000-person wait list, even though its factory isn't running yet and it's only built 3 homes". Business Insider. July 29, 2021. Accessed on August 3, 2021. Available at: <https://www.businessinsider.com/elon-musk-effect-boxabl-tiny-home-prefabricated-construction-startup-2021-7>

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

that with this approach, they will ultimately be able 'to build any building you could imagine' in a video posted on the company's YouTube channel.⁴

In this same video, Tiramani claims that the company will be able to make any building type and size, to be assembled anywhere in the world. With these kinds of exciting claims, he begins to sound much like Elon Musk himself. It's no wonder that Musk has associated himself with the company. It's also no wonder that the company has garnered so much attention. If these claims are ultimately true, the promise of prefabricated buildings, with all their cost savings and simplified assembly, may help to alleviate issues such as the high cost of construction.

⁴ "Boxabl Factory Update 2021 - The future of housing is factory mass production". Boxabl YouTube Channel. November 24, 2020. Accessed on August 3, 2021. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qVV6CyGJgZo>