



20K DAVE'S HOME

AUBURN UNIVERSITY RURAL STUDIO

“Designing equitable affordable solutions to the rural housing crisis”

20K DAVE’S HOME

LOCATION

Newbern, AL

YEAR COMPLETED

2009

PROJECT TYPE

Residential

OUTREACH STUDENT TEAM

Charity Bulgrien, Ian Cook, Obi Elechi

FACULTY

Andrew Freear, Rusty Smith, Danny Wicke

AWARD

Fast Company Innovation By Design Finalist, Social Good Category for Rural Studio’s 20K Project





CONTEXT

20K Dave's Home was one of the first projects in Rural Studio's housing affordability research. Early Rural Studio home designs were idiosyncratic, one-off single-family homes built for a very specific family. In 2004, Rural Studio shifted focus to address the more complex and systemic challenges of rural housing and have a broader impact.

Students started to design and build homes iteratively, learning very directly from previous years homes to identify key challenges and develop the strategies necessary to create more appropriate models and prototypes. The Studio set ground rules for the designs: homes must be dignified, equitable, replicable, affordable to operate and maintain, easily built, but built to last, and of course be beautiful. They must also have porches, good natural light, cross ventilation, and tall ceilings.

20K Dave's Home provided a turning point in Rural Studio's research process. Construction techniques were standardized to shorten the build time, which allowed more money to be budgeted for materials instead of labor. These changes made the house more replicable and more easily modified.

MOTIVATION

Rural communities, particularly those in the American South, are experiencing a silent housing crisis. Although a higher percentage of rural residents are homeowners than their urban counterparts, those homes are valued lower and are often older and in need of repair. And, unlike their urban counterparts rural folks don't buy homes to flip or for wealth building, Occupancy is often for life and for life building. Key to creating intergenerational wealth, homes form an inheritance and must be designed with flexibility and adaptability to reflect this challenge. Rural Studio recognized these issues and in 2004, we challenged ourselves to build low-cost, beautiful, well-designed, and high-performing homes in West Alabama.





IMPACT AND RELEVANCE

20K Dave's Home would later become the first model home in the Front Porch Initiative's product line. The Front Porch Initiative is a collaboration between Rural Studio, community-based nonprofit rural housing organizations, and external government and industry groups. The Front Porch Initiative provides construction plans and technical support to housing partners throughout the Southeast for five Product Line Homes (iterations of Rural Studio's research homes) that can be adapted to each partner's local conditions. The goal is to transform rural housing and improve the economic, social, and physical well-being of rural communities.