

Abstracts vs. Annotations



©Tammy Strobel

While an abstract provides a brief summary of a resource, an annotation is designed to provide that summary as well as evaluate the quality and relevance of a source. It also will connect the source to your argument.

For example if researching the Tiny House Movement, you might use this article as one of your sources.

Citation:

Wilson, Alex, and Jessica Boehland. "Small Is Beautiful: U.S. House Size, Resource Use, and the

Environment." *Journal of Industrial Ecology*, vol. 9, no. ½, 2005, pp. 277-287. *Academic Search*

Complete, doi: 10.1162/1088198054084680.

Abstract:

As house size increases, resource use in buildings goes up, more land is occupied, increased impermeable surface results in more storm-water runoff, construction costs rise, and energy consumption increases. In new, single-family houses constructed in the United States, living area per family member has increased by a factor of 3 since the 1950s. In comparing the energy performance of compact (small) and large single-family houses, we find that a small house built to only moderate energy-performance standards uses substantially less energy for heating and cooling than a large house built to very high energy-performance standards. This article examines some of the trends in single-family house building in the United States and provides recommendations for downsizing houses to improve quality and resource efficiency.

Annotation:

The authors have various experience in relation to this topic. Wilson has spent multiple decades in the environmental construction field and green design while Boehland has a master's degree from Yale University's School of Forestry and Environmental Studies. The overall argument is that the building and promoting of smaller homes is important in reducing the country's energy and resource consumption. The article is written for readers who are researching smaller homes from a broad perspective of environmental public policy, or readers who are interested in specific design and economic questions in the construction of smaller homes. The authors build the argument through demographic information about home ownership and construction, a survey of the trade and popular literature on the home building industry, and their own perspective on effective home design. The authors found that home size in the US has drastically increased while the population has decreased. Smaller homes, even when built less efficiently use less energy and resources. Moreover, they found that the layout of a home, no matter the size, can affect energy consumption. The authors both write for *Environmental Building News*, and their primary concern is with the energy efficiency implications of single family home design. Although the findings in this article are not groundbreaking, they do provide a good overall view of the evolution of the housing market as well as how home design affects resource and energy consumption. Plus, many of the resources are interviews with green designers and home builders, which provides unique perspectives on the issue. Although not directly connected to the Tiny House movement, this article provides useful information that illustrates the changes in the housing market, establishes the relationship of house size to energy consumption, and relates practical design tactics for smaller spaces.

Annotation Breakdown:

Author

- **Who are the authors? What are their credentials?**

The authors have various experience in relation to this topic. Wilson has spent multiple decades in the environmental construction field and green design while Boehland has a master's degree from Yale University's School of Forestry and Environmental Studies.

Purpose

- **What is the main argument of the work?**

The overall argument is that the building and promoting of smaller homes is important in reducing the country's energy and resource consumption.

Reader

- **Who is the intended audience?**

The article is written for readers who are researching smaller homes from a broad perspective of environmental public policy, or readers who are interested in specific design and economic questions in the construction of smaller homes.

Research

- **How was the research conducted (methodologies used / data analyzed)?**

The authors build the argument through demographic information about home ownership and construction, a survey of the trade and popular literature on the home building industry, and their own perspective on effective home design.

Conclusions

- **What were the author's conclusions, and were they supported?**

The authors found that home size in the US has drastically increased while the population has decreased. Smaller homes, even when built less efficiently use less energy and resources. Moreover, they found that the layout of a home, no matter the size, can affect energy consumption.

Bias

- **Is the author biased?**

The authors both write for *Environmental Building News*, and their primary concern is with the energy efficiency implications of single family home design.

Assessment

- **How does this work compare to other scholarship in its field?**

Although the findings in this article are not groundbreaking, they do provide a good overall view of the evolution of the housing market as well as how home design affects resource and energy consumption. Plus, many of the resources are interviews with green designers and home builders, which provides unique perspectives on the issue.

Reflection

- **How does this source inform (e.g. support or contradict) your argument?**
- **How will it be used in your research?**

Although not directly connected to the Tiny House movement, this article provides useful information that illustrates the changes in the housing market, establishes the relationship of house size to energy consumption, and relates practical design tactics for smaller spaces.