

Compact Housing

Sustaining Communities and the Environment



Compact Housing Models

1. **Compact Single Family Detached**
7 – 21 units per acre
2. **Single Family with Secondary Unit**
17-24 units per acre
3. **Multiple Units, Single Family Appearance**
8-22 units per acre
4. **Rowhouses**
10-40 units per acre
5. **Multifamily Walkup Flats and Apartments**
16-51 units per acre
6. **Multifamily Elevator Apartments**
21-236 units per acre

Compact and Affordable Housing: An American Tradition



Through most of our country's history, there was a wide variety of housing types and prices in most communities, and the tradition of placing homes close together was perceived to provide many positive benefits. While this tradition was interrupted for a period after the second World War, there has been a resurgent interest in the mixed and compact housing patterns of older neighborhoods, to the point that many newer neighborhoods and homes are being built to resemble older ones. What people seem to like about both that old tradition and its new version are that one need not sacrifice a sense of privacy and security, or a loss of incivility, in order to gain the conveniences and public benefits of living in higher density buildings or communities.

A new generation of affordable and market rate developers are using good site planning and building design to turn the act of living close into the art of living well. Looking at the pictures of compact housing here, most audiences find the images attractive. Can you tell which of these examples from an American city is an older development, and which is recent? Which is affordable and which is market rate? The answer- upper left hand image is a recent all affordable low income rental townhouse, the upper right is turn of the century small lot Victorian homes, the lower left is a compact homeownership development with 15% low income buyers, 85% market rate, the bottom right shows a 1920's neighborhood with mixture of single family homes, three unit apartment building, and units over a corner store.

Compact Housing Benefits the Public

- **Compact Development Saves Open Space** – 1.5 million acres of farmland are lost each year for new development while many suitable urban sites are vacant.
- **Compact Development Saves Car Trips** – low density areas require resident to drive 20-40% more per day than compact communities.
- **Compact Development is Healthier** – low density communities have worse air and higher traffic and pedestrian fatalities than compact communities.
- **Compact Development Supports Communities** – local stores and businesses do best when more people live within walking distance or a short drive away.

Compact development provides advantages to the residents and also to the wider community. Consider the list of multiple advantages:

Compact Housing Benefits Residents

- **Greater Housing Choice** - Polls show many households seek more compact homes in neighborhoods close to jobs, shopping, schools, and local parks.
- **Greater Community Stability** – When more people work and live in the same town civic organizations are stronger and residents can participate better.
- **Sound Social and Economic Benefits** – Residents of compact communities spend less on cars and have more time and resources for families and communities

**The Opposite of Compact Housing is
Low Density Sprawl...
the real threat to our quality of life**

**Low density new development is consuming more land to house
fewer people than ever before**





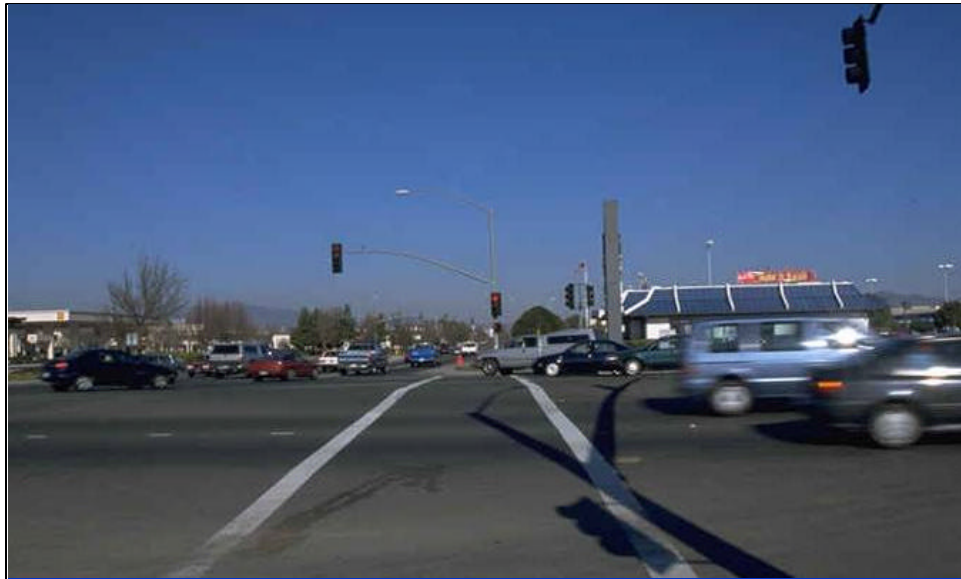
Standard lot sizes and wide street requirements plus poor design lead to land inefficiency and community anonymity like this



While most American metropolitan areas have historically contained a wide range of single family detached areas, the national trend since the 1970's has been for larger homes on larger lots as the predominant new construction type and the biggest user of former farm land and open space. Even in areas with a strong market over the last several decades for higher density apartments and condos, such as Washington, New York, Chicago, the San Francisco Bay Area, and coastal Florida, the average amount of land used for housing is fast outpacing population growth. As lots have increased and housing has spread further from jobs, the rise in vehicle miles traveled per person is also increasing much faster than the population. This new American landscape and its associated home type represents a very narrow spectrum of the single family home.



Commercial strips supplant older town centers and homes, while schools, jobs, and stores are spread further apart



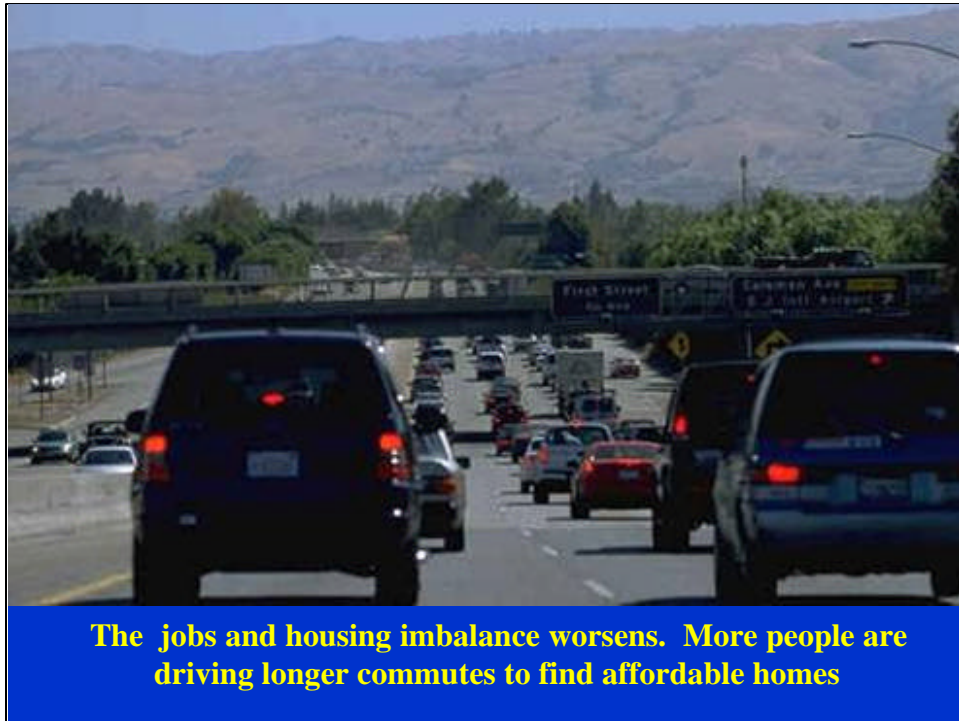
Development and road patterns discourage walking or bicycling . Car use for non-work destinations now accounts for 73% of all trips



Hotels and big box retail generate sales taxes, but they also require a large lower-paid workforce



Many infill lots that could become housing are zoned commercial to attract more sales tax uses



Compact Housing Can Meet Household Needs and Enhance Community Livability With:

- Diversity of Housing Types
- Efficient Land Patterns
- Neighborhood Compatibility
- Services and Programs
- Infrastructure Improvements
- Transit and Walking Choices
- Yes in My Backyard

