

Design Strategies for Affordable Housing

Port St. Lucie Affordable Housing Advisory Committee (AHAC)



Thursday, October 16, 2025

TREASURE COAST REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL



**Nobody Likes
Surprises!**
(at least not this kind)

Predictability and Compatibility

AFFORDABLE HOUSING SYMPOSIUM

FINDING THE MISSING MIDDLE

MODULE II

APRIL 26, 2024



OPENING SPEAKER:

THE POWER OF DESIGN IN AFFORDABLE
HOUSING



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Missing Middle Housing is a range of house-scale buildings with multiple units—compatible in scale and form with detached single-family homes—located in a walkable neighborhood.



MISSING
MIDDLE
HOUSING



ATTACHED/STACKED COURTYARD RESIDENTIAL



Harper Court (Seven Fountains), West Hollywood, CA, Architect: Moule & Polyzoides Architects and Urbanists, Developed by Boyd Willat/Angels Landing, LLC.

Gross Site Density: 35-55 units per acre
Minimum Block Size: 120'x200'
Lot Width: 60' (min.)
Threshold Land Value: \$30/SF; \$1,305,000/acre (estimated)

Construction Type: Wood, typically IRC R-2 Type V Sprinklered
Practical Building Height: 4 stories, 50 feet
Cost per GSF (2010): \$105-\$145/GSF (w/o land)
Cost per Unit (1,400SF avg.): \$185,000-\$255,000/unit (w/1.5 parking)
Erection Time: Average

Parking Solution: Garage; transit-dependent, on-street, parking podium underneath

Positive Attributes: Court becomes community amenity, allows for more density than two over two housing

Negative Attributes: Similar market acceptance to condominiums. Works better in warm climates.

This type succeeds by attaching stacked housing and conventional townhouses with well-considered courts above a parking podium to create a unique, dense, multi-family housing type that doesn't require the additional costs of conditioned corridors or elevator service. Requiring minimal space, the lush courts provide the sense of open space needed to drive value for these densely packed units. High-quality tactile finishes, lavish plantings and the acoustical benefits of fountains allow these small court spaces to achieve luxurious results commanding high prices.

Successful implementations of these court forms requires the modulation between interior and exterior space, segueing from public exterior space through private exterior and interior spaces in ways that provide definition between what is shared space and that which belongs specifically to a unit. The definition can be provided by railing, stoop, low wall, canopy, balcony, or posts. The shared space defines the "village cluster" to which all residents belong and which adds value to the whole.



West Hollywood, CA. This object building does not engage with its surroundings, and, in this sunny climate, continuously spreads glare across the street to its neighbors.



West Hollywood, CA. The courtyard form served as the predominant form of residential in the pre-airconditioned days of Los Angeles before World War II.



1"=500'



The courts provide the sense of place for what is a very densely packed set of stacked units and townhouses.

Design Consideration



The central areas serve as a room for community gathering.



The mix of units can be seen in the range of the wall over the main garage entrance. The spaces can serve small groups or provide a place to read.



Discovering and Developing Missing Middle Housing



TOWNHOUSE

- What it is
- Where it went
- And why it's a needed housing option for people of *all* ages



DUPLEX



ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT



MANSSION APARTMENT



COTTAGE COURT
SEE MORE HOME TYPES INSIDE!

AARP.org/MissingMiddleHousing

By AARP and Opticos Design



AARP

Achieve Affordability

Create Community

Housing For All Ages

Combats Loneliness

Healthy Options

So how do we get more affordable housing built in places where we most need it, ideally close to jobs and transit? Should we:

- A. Enact policies requiring the construction of deed-restricted affordable units (e.g. “set asides” or “inclusionary” zoning)?
- B. Enact policies that incent developers to provide affordable housing (e.g. density bonuses or fee waivers)?
- C. Enact policies that encourage the construction of more market-rate housing (i.e., aggressively increase supply)?
- D. “Go Houston”, (i.e., eliminate most zoning restrictions)?
- E. “Go Minneapolis”, (i.e., eliminate single family zoning)?

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Delray Beach Townhomes: How Dense?

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20.90 du/ac



The need is there...why aren't more builders building missing middle housing?

- They can't make money!
- Big Production Builders outbid smaller builders for land
- Smaller projects lack economies of scale in design and construction
- Process takes as long for a small project as a big one .
- LDRs usually require rezonings, variances, ZTAs, etc.
- Too small for many banks and investors
- Lack of comparables for “innovative” designs

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Stuart Multifamily: How Dense?



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Municipalities and developers can and should collaborate to create affordable housing opportunities

- Projects don't have to look institutional. They can be beautiful
- They don't have to be high rises, then can be human scale and between 2-4 stories.
- They can be mixed income, walkable and reduce auto dependency
- To do this in nearly every case requires some sort of regulatory relief
- In the current environment it likely requires some sort of financial "engineering"

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Key Planning Principles

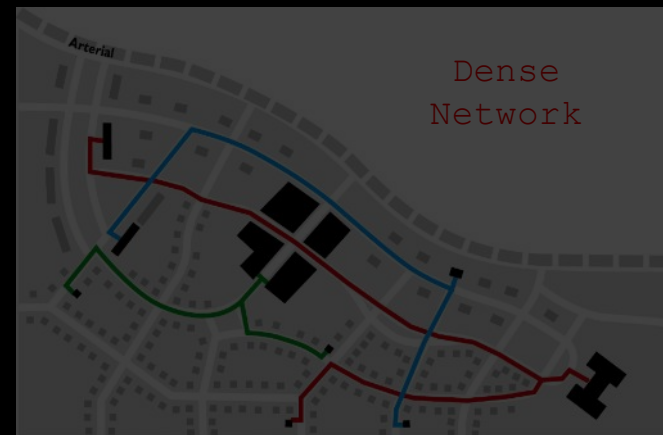


Circulation and Development Patterns

Trip Assignments in Two Patterns of Development



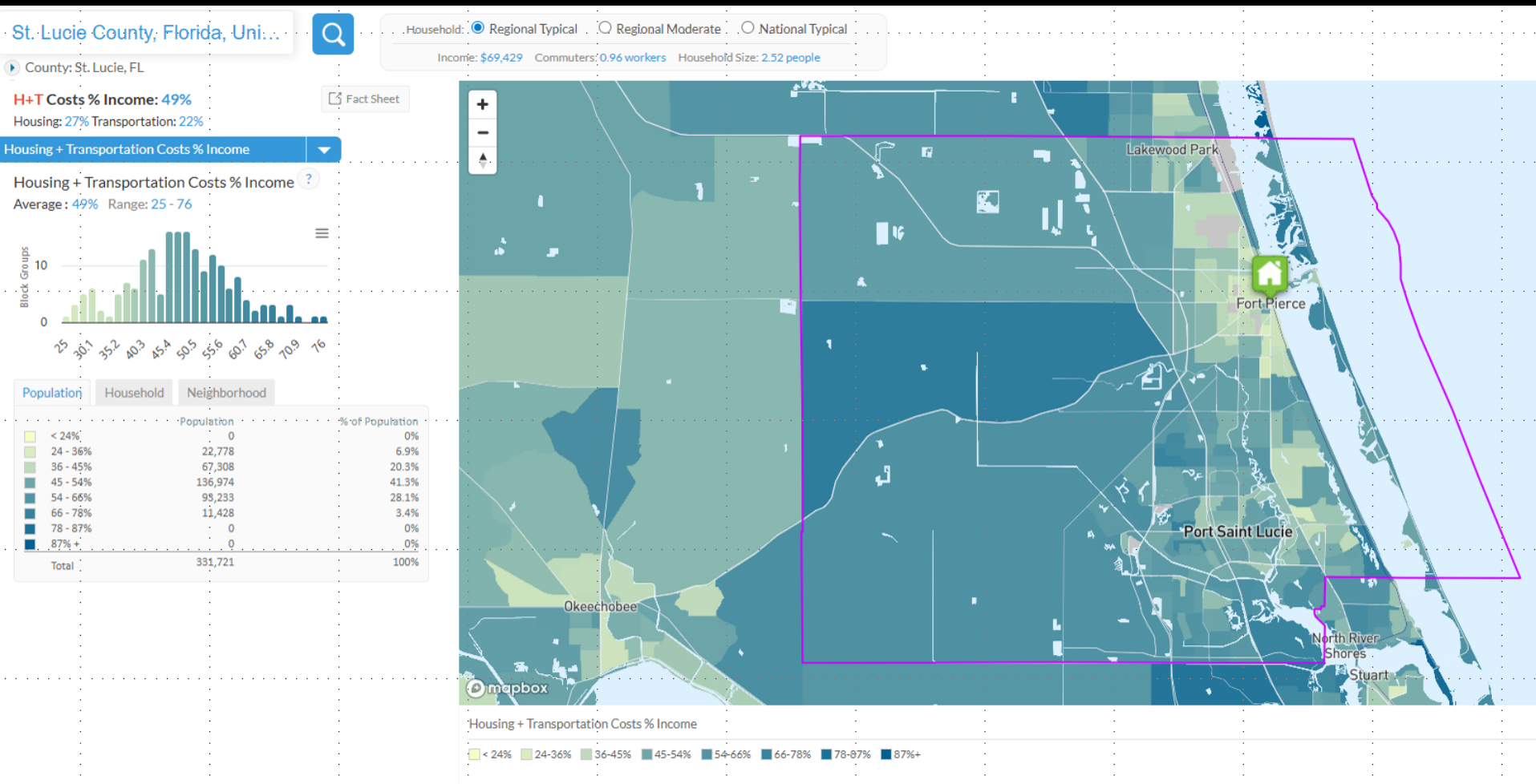
Growth Patterns Impact Affordability



Distribution of Uses

Roadway Network

Why is This Important?



SLC – Housing + Transportation = 49% Income

There are several ways to place Missing Middle-style homes

Distributed Throughout a Block

Missing Middle Housing types can exist along a street, standing side by side and intermingling with detached single-family homes. The blended pattern of detached single-family residences and Missing Middle Housing works well because these types are comparable in form and scale.



On the End of a Block

The streets that intersect the end of a block is often a busier corridor than the streets occupied by detached single-family homes. Placing Missing Middle Housing types on the "end grain" of a block allows for the use of slightly larger buildings because the structure isn't sitting directly next to detached single-family homes. In this placement type, the alley to the rear of the Missing Middle structure also allows for a good transition in scale to the single-family lots.



As a Commercial Corridor Transition

When a Missing Middle residence is located in an area that's adjacent to a neighborhood Main Street, the building itself provides a gradual transition point between residential and commercial or mixed-used properties. The nearness of residents provides a customer base for local businesses and services. By serving as a type of buffer, a Missing Middle-type structure can actually keep a single-family home in a walkable area from being located directly next to, say, a restaurant or bar (or a store or office building) and the parking lots needed by the businesses' customers and employees.



As a Transition to Higher-Density Housing

Another transition benefit of Missing Middle Housing is achieved by placing small to mid-sized multiunit housing on a few of the lots that transition from a residential side street to a more populated corridor, thus providing a transition in scale to the larger buildings on the end grain of the block along the primary street.



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Distribution of Building Types

Building Types



Rear-loaded Townhouses

Building Types



1 story multi-family

Building Types



Garage Apartment ADU

Building Types



Detached Cottage ADU

Building Types



2 Story ADU

Building Types



6-unit Walk-up Apartment

Building Types

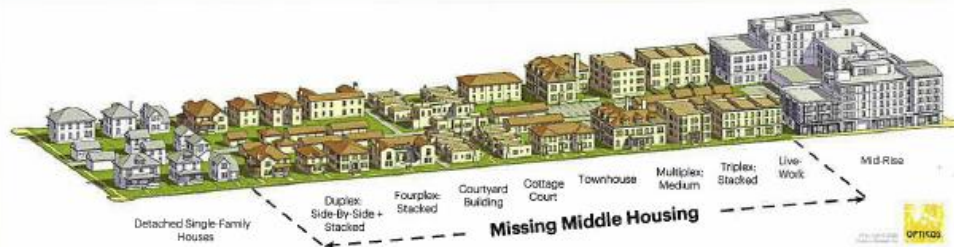


Architecture Counts TOO!

What we can do:

1. Allow ADUs by right
2. Increase densities along transit corridors
3. Revise Parking standards
4. Allow mixed use and mixed product types in more zones
5. Use Missing Middle and Increments of Neighborhood typologies to build beautiful density with a broader spectrum of product
6. Give bonus densities for inclusion of workforce units (carrot vs. stick approach)
7. Provide financial assistance
8. Lease or sell land with realistic WH conditions

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What Is Missing Middle Housing — and Where Did It Go?

Across the United States, there is a mismatch between the available housing stock and what home buyers and renters want and needs.

The nation is mostly missing (and needs) a set of residential building types that exist in the middle of the continuum from detached single-family houses to large apartment buildings. So-called Missing Middle Housing is a critical part of the solution.

Created by AARP Livable Communities and Opticos Design, **Discovering and Developing Missing Middle Housing** provides local leaders, building and planning professionals, and involved community members with information about what Missing Middle Housing is, where it still exists — and why it's time for communities nationwide to return this versatile residence type to America's housing portfolio.



LIVE/WORK



FOURPLEX



COURTYARD BUILDING

Find this publication and more at
AARP.org/MissingMiddleHousing

See the cover and inside pages for more examples of Missing Middle Housing.

Thank You!

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