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What are the characteristics of Missing Middle Housing?

Missing Middle Housing is not a new type of building. It is a range of building types that exist in cities and towns across the country and were a fundamental building block in pre-1940s neighborhoods. They are most likely present on some of your favorite city blocks—you may even have them in your own neighborhood.

Combined together (and usually with detached single-family homes), Missing Middle building types help provide enough households within walking distance to support public transit and local businesses, and they are found within many of the most in-demand communities in places like Denver, Cincinnati, Austin and San Francisco.

So what do Missing Middle building types have in common?

- **Walkable Context**
- **Small-Footprint Buildings**
- **Lower Perceived Density**
- **Smaller, Well-Designed Units**

- Smaller, Well-Designed Units
- Fewer Off-street Parking Spaces
- Simple Construction
- Creates Community
- Marketable



Development patterns in walkable urban neighborhoods make walking and biking convenient and support robust public transit. (Bouldin Creek neighborhood in Austin, TX.)

Walkable Context

Missing Middle housing types are best located in a walkable context. Buyers and

renters of these housing types are often trading space (housing and yard square footage) for place (proximity to services and amenities).

Small-Footprint Buildings

These housing types typically have small- to medium-sized footprints, with a body width, depth and height no larger than a detached single-family home. This allows a range of Missing Middle types—with varying densities but compatible forms—to be blended into a neighborhood, encouraging a mix of socioeconomic households and making these types a good tool for compatible infill.



Missing Middle housing types generally have a similar size footprint to detached single-family homes.

Lower Perceived Density

Due to the small footprint of the building types and the fact that they are usually

mixed with a variety of building types even on an individual block, the perceived density of these types is usually quite low—they do not look like dense buildings.

But one of the primary benefits of Missing Middle Housing is that it helps provide the number of households needed for transit and neighborhood-serving local businesses to be viable (typically about 16 dwelling units per acre).

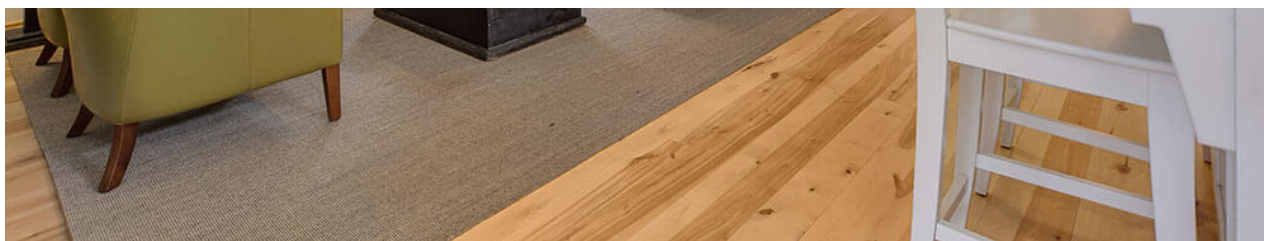
“From the perspective of my work, Missing Middle Housing has a natural complement in MMP (missing middle plan), a.k.a. a ‘hybrid grid’ or as named it in my work, a Fused Grid ... The Fused Grid proposes a set of neighborhood modular layouts (reminiscent of Savannah) that incorporate all the desirable elements—livability, safety, security, sociability, and delight—as do MMH buildings.”

— Fanis Grammenos, Director of Urban Pattern Associates and author of “Remaking the City Street Grid – A Model for Urban and Suburban Development”

Smaller, Well-Designed Units

Most Missing Middle housing types have smaller units. The challenge is to create small spaces that are well designed, comfortable, and usable. The ultimate unit size will depend on the context, but smaller-sized units can help developers keep their costs down and attract a different market of buyers and renters who are not being provided for in all markets.





One characteristic of Missing Middle Housing is smaller, well-designed units. Courtesy: [The Cottage Company](#)

Fewer Off-street Parking Spaces

Because they are built in walkable neighborhoods with proximity to transportation options and commercial amenities, Missing Middle housing types do not need the same amount of parking as suburban housing. We typically recommend no more than one parking spot per unit, and preferably less. In fact, requiring more than one parking space per unit can make Missing Middle Housing infeasible to build. For example, if your zoning code requires two parking spaces per unit, a fourplex would require eight parking spaces, which would never fit on a typical residential lot. In addition, providing that much off-street parking for each fourplex would create a neighborhood of small parking lots rather than the desired neighborhood of homes. Finally, requiring too much parking means that fewer households can fit in the same amount of land, lessening the viability of transit and local businesses.

Simple Construction

Missing Middle Housing is simply constructed (wood-frame/Type V), which makes it a very attractive alternative for developers to achieve good densities without the added financing challenges and risk of more complex construction types. This aspect can also increase affordability when units are sold or rented.

As providing single family detached sub-\$200,000 starter homes is becoming increasingly out of reach for builders across the country, Missing Middle Housing can provide **an attractive and affordable alternative starter home**.

Creates Community

Missing Middle Housing creates community through the integration of shared

Missing middle housing creates community through the integration of shared community spaces within the building type (e.g. [bungalow court](#)), or simply from being located within a vibrant neighborhood with places to eat, drink, and socialize.

This is an important aspect in particular considering the growing market of single-person households (nearly 30% of all households) that want to be part of a community.



Missing Middle housing types help to create walkable communities.

Marketable

Because of the increasing demand from baby boomers and millennials, as well as shifting household demographics, the market is demanding more vibrant, sustainable, walkable places to live. These Missing Middle housing types respond directly to this demand.

In addition, the scale of these housing types makes them more attractive to many buyers who want to live in a walkable neighborhood, but may not want to live in a

buyers who want to live in a walkable neighborhood, but may not want to live in a large condominium or apartment building.

Next: The Assembly of Missing Middle Housing...



If there is land for beautifully-designed homes that fill a gap between stand-alone houses and mid-rise apartments, the smart thing to do is to fill it with housing types we've been missing in our market for so long."

— Heather Hood, Deputy Director, Northern California, Enterprise Community Partners

Learn more about Missing Middle Housing



About



Market



Characteristics



Assembly



How to Regulate