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New Online Resource Dedicated to Helping Meet the Need for Walkable Communities

MissingMiddleHousing.com is a new online resource dedicated to helping planners, architects, and builders implement a diverse range of housing types within walkable communities.

Berkeley, CA: Opticos Design, Inc., the Berkeley, CA-based urban planning and architecture firm has launched a new website dedicated to Missing Middle Housing.

“We felt it was important to create an online resource to help people understand these housing types and what housing planning, zoning, and financing changes are needed to make it possible for these types of homes to be built again,” Opticos’s founder, Daniel Parolek says.

“MissingMiddleHousing.com will be a valuable resource for architects, planners, developers, elected officials, advocates, and community members—anyone working to build more great places for Americans,” says Lynn Richards, president and CEO of the Congress for the New Urbanism.

The website features clear definitions of the types of mid-density housing that are most effective for creating walkable neighborhoods, and pin-points the market demographic that demands them. There is an extensive photo catalog and documented examples from around the country with illustrations and tables that summarize lot sizes, setback, number of units, and densities. It also includes information on the unifying characteristics of these building types and how to integrate them into existing neighborhoods, explains how to regulate them, and serves as a collective resource for planners and developers seeking to implement these types of projects. Downloads of Powerpoint slides, articles, and images are available on the site as well.

The website will be live just in time for the American Planning Association and the Congress for the New Urbanism annual conferences April 17–19 and April 29–May 2, respectively.

The APA conference, held this year in Seattle, will include two sessions in which Missing Middle Housing topics will be covered. Parolek will discuss Missing Middle Housing as part of a session on Saturday, April 18, Deep Dive: The Future of Zoning, and Lynn Richards, president of the Congress for New Urbanism will present the concept in her session Leaving Behind 1950s Housing Codes on Sunday April 19.

At CNU23 in Dallas/Fort Worth, Parolek will lead a highly anticipated Missing Middle Housing walking and documentation tour, Wednesday, April 29 and a session on Missing Middle Housing Thursday April 30.

For additional information, images, or if you would like an original quote or to arrange an interview with Daniel Parolek, please call Natasha Sutton at (510) 558-6957 or email marketing@opticosdesign.com.

About Missing Middle Housing:

“Missing Middle” was coined by Parolek in 2010 to define a range of multi-unit or clustered housing types, compatible in scale with a single-family home, that help meet the growing demand for walkable urban living.

These types support walkable communities, locally-serving retail, and public transportation options, and provide a solution to the mismatch between the available U.S. housing stock and shifting demographics combined with the growing demand for walkable urban living, which has been poignantly defined in recent research and publications by the Urban Land Institute, the American Association of Retired Persons, and industry heavyweights Christopher Nelson and Chris Leinberger. Parolek's article, "Missing Middle Housing: Responding to the Demand for Walkable Urban Living," has since been cited and republished in several online and print magazines, including the National Association of Home Builders' magazine, Best in American Living.

"Missing Middle is the term I use to define a range of housing types such as duplexes, bungalow courts, and fourplexes, which provide diverse housing options along a spectrum of affordability and already exist in most pre-1940s neighborhoods. They are classified as "missing" because very few of these housing types have been built in the past 60 years due to regulatory constraints, the shift to auto-dependent patterns of development, and the incentivization of single-family home ownership," says Parolek.

Missing Middle housing types within walkable neighborhoods are the ultimate sustainability solution because they give more Americans access to transportation alternatives, and reduce the strain on our natural resources. The concept has resonated with the industry in recent years as a key solution to meet the need and demand for walkable communities.

"Far from bringing property values down, Missing Middle Housing is highly sought after—especially by millennials and empty-nester baby boomers, the two biggest demographic groups," said Ellen Dunham-Jones, professor at the Georgia Institute of Technology and co-author of *Retrofitting Suburbia: Urban Design Solutions for Redesigning Suburbs*.

The State of Michigan is using Missing Middle Housing as a key component of their state-wide placemaking strategy, MiPlace, and selected by the EPA's Smart Growth Network in 2013 as one of 20 important concepts needed in a national conversation about community development. Even production builders, like Holmes Homes in the Salt Lake City region, are using these types to diversify their portfolio beyond single-family detached homes to meet the growing demand.

"Of particular importance is the need to fully utilize the Missing Middle housing types to diversify our housing stock to address the increasingly diverse housing demand driven by the demographic changes in our community. The variety of housing types missing or poorly represented in our housing supply can begin to provide much needed housing in a scale appropriate for introduction into an existing built context without disrupting the rhythm of the block," said Rick Bernhardt, executive director Metropolitan Nashville-Davidson County Planning Department.

About Opticos Design:

Opticos Design, Inc. is a certified B Corporation and a California Benefit Corporation, dedicated to integrating environmental, social, and fiscal issues into its decision-making. From individual building design to neighborhood plans to regional master plans, Opticos creates custom-made solutions that directly address the architectural, cultural, and sustainable needs of communities, including Missing Middle Housing.

Connect with Opticos Design & Missing Middle Housing on social media:

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