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DESIGNING FOR PARTIES ON THE PATIO

NEIGHBORS GROW TOGETHER:
COMMUNITY GARDENS



Published by the National
Association of Home Builders
www.nahb.org



the. Missing Middle

Singles, childless couples and empty nesters have two things in common: They are growing in numbers, and they want a unique type of home. Here's how to take advantage.

Over the past 60 years builders and developers have done a great job of building housing at opposite ends of a spectrum: Single-family homes on one end, and stacked flats or garden apartments on the other.

But today, demographics are shifting. Childless and single-person households—in the form of empty-nester baby boomers and 20-something millennials—are growing continuously, and in large numbers. In 1970, 55 percent of American households had no children and 14 percent of

all households were single-person households. By contrast, in 2000, 67 percent of households had no children and 31 percent were single-person households.

Many of these 20-something millennials and empty-nester baby boomers want walkable

Cottage Courts: This cottage court in the East Beach project, designed by Allison Ramsey Architects, integrates several small, detached cottages around a green space, creating a strong community oriented around the space.

ALLISON RAMSEY ARCHITECTS

By Daniel Parolek, AIA

Marketplace



urban living and a different type of home. Duplexes, fourplexes, mansion apartments, and bungalow courts often fit the bill. Because they have long been largely ignored, these types of multifamily homes are often called the “Missing Middle.”

Missing Middle homes are intended for a different market segment than conventional multi-family products. These buyers prefer higher-quality, often smaller, multifamily options as an alternative to living in single-family homes. They are also willing to pay for quality. If done well, these housing types have little or no competition in their respective markets.

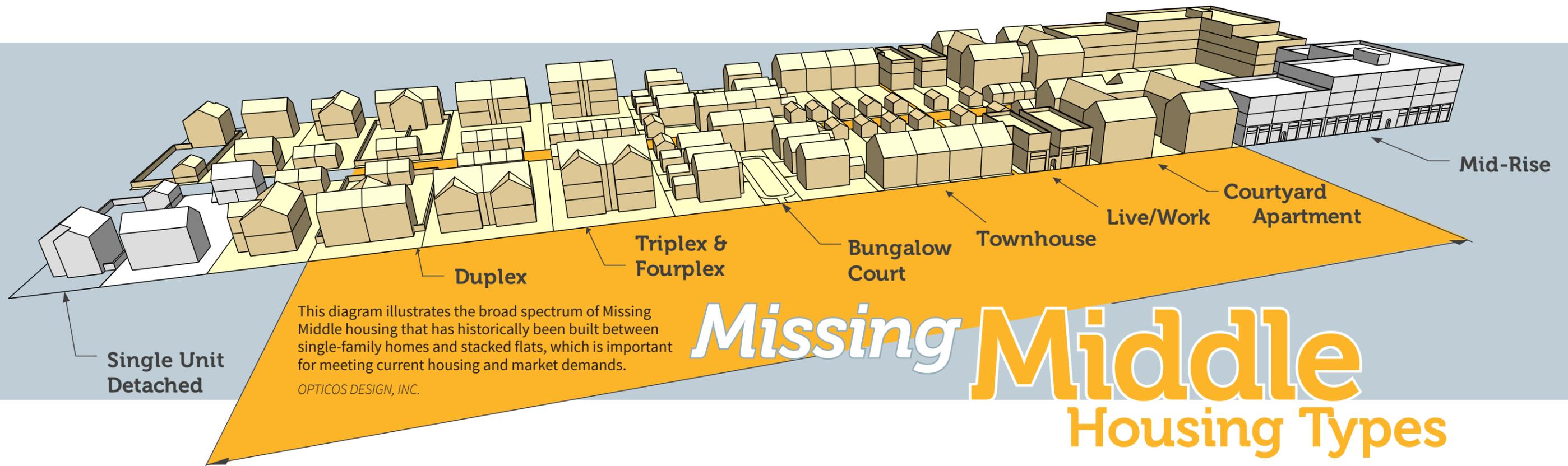
Live/Work Unit: This live/work building designed by Opticos Design in the recently developed South Main project in Buena Vista, CO, provides flex space on the ground floor with a separate entrance to the upper unit. The owner can use the space either to incubate their own business or rent it out to generate a monthly income.

JED SELBY, SOUTH MAIN.



Stacked Duplex: These two-unit buildings by Brown Design Studio in Habersham have one unit on the ground floor and a second unit above. Tall ceiling heights are an integral part of the design of these units.

HABERSHAM LAND COMPANY.



2 Smaller, **well-designed** units

HOW TO FILL THE VOID

These buyers, with their smaller and often childless households, will snap up homes that use the right formula, which includes these four elements:



Cottage Court: The Cottage Company's homes feature room-sized covered front porches. Danielson Grove, Kirkland, WA.

THE COTTAGE COMPANY



Interior: An open living room and kitchen provide high-quality, well-designed small spaces. Danielson Grove, Kirkland, WA.

THE COTTAGE COMPANY

1 A **walkable** context

Homes for this demographic work best in an existing or newly created walkable urban context. Buyers or renters of these housing types often choose to trade larger suburban homes for neighborhoods that fit their lifestyle. They will happily give up the space and privacy of suburbia for a shorter commute and proximity to amenities such as restaurants, bars, and markets. They love not having a yard to maintain. And they enjoy the sense of community provided by either the development itself or the larger neighborhood context. As Linda Pruitt, President of

the Cottage Company, which is building creative bungalow courts in the Seattle area, says, "The first thing potential customers ask is, "What can I walk to?" "Baby boomers are tired of mowing the lawn—they're looking for a more diverse environment," says Chris Leinberger, chairman of the Center for Real Estate and Urban Analysis at George Washington University School of Business. With this in mind, well-designed site plans are vital to the success of these housing types and must be carefully designed, not just engineered.

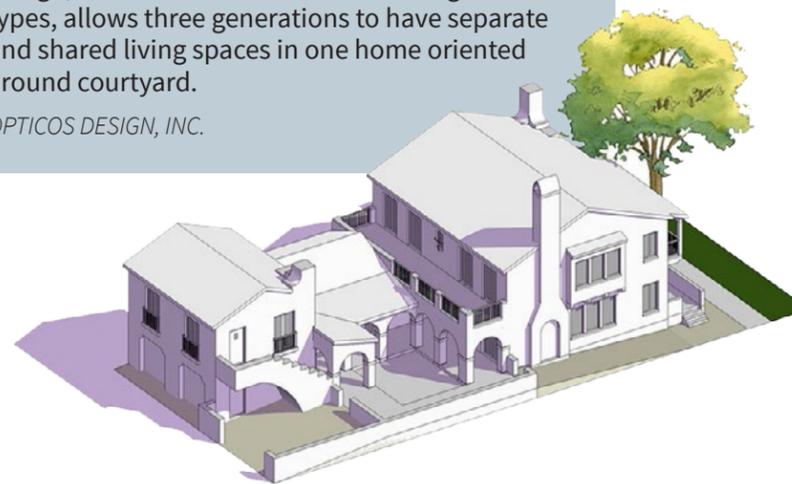
Architects and builders new to this market often try to force suburban-unit types and sizes into urban contexts. Instead they should think small—as small as 650 to 700 square feet. Though challenging to design, if small spaces are well laid out and

integrate features such as built-ins and tall floor-to-ceiling heights, they can be very comfortable and usable.

If unit sizes are too large, the developer will miss the market—based either on desired size, cost, or both. Smaller unit sizes enable developers to spend more per square foot to achieve a higher quality and hit a different niche market segment or to keep costs down, improving the pro forma performance of a project while making the homes appeal to a larger group of buyers or renters.

Three Generation House: This multigenerational home designed by Opticos Design, which also fits within the Missing Middle types, allows three generations to have separate and shared living spaces in one home oriented around courtyard.

OPTICOS DESIGN, INC.





Mansion Apartment: This mansion apartment in the East Beach project in Norfolk, VA, by Brown Design Studio, looks like a large home and is seamlessly integrated onto a block with large single-family homes.

OPTICOS DESIGN, INC.

3 Fewer parking spaces

Because of their walkable urban location, Missing Middle homes don't need as much parking. They serve as an attractive alternative for households that choose to own only one car or use their cars less frequently—and they often are oriented on streets that offer supplemental parking. As a starting point, these homes should provide no more than one off-street parking space per unit. One good example: The recently built mansion apartments in the new

East Beach neighborhood of Norfolk, Virginia. These homes include one off-street parking space per unit with ample street parking nearby. By contrast, when builders include more than one off-street parking space, the site plans cannot produce sufficient yields, shifting densities to less than 16 units per acre. Sixteen homes per acre serves as the general rule to support small, neighborhood-serving commercial amenities and existing or future transit alternatives.

4 They Feel Like a Home

Most important, Missing Middle housing must provide a similar experience and curb appeal of single-family homes. In the best examples, they face onto a neighborhood-scale, tree-lined street, and the buildings are of a scale similar to single-family homes. In addition, owners enter their home directly from a front porch, stoop or small courtyard, rather than down a long corridor to their unit. Providing a high-quality living experience, very similar to a single-family home, allows prospective buyers and renters to more easily shift to these multifamily homes than they would to garden apartments or mid-rise condominiums.

Missing Middle housing is an opportunity to think outside the box. Architects, builders, and developers can creatively address the mismatch between existing housing stock and today's market demands by designing and building these housing types. Those who do are creating vibrant, diverse, sustainable and walkable communities that buyers love.

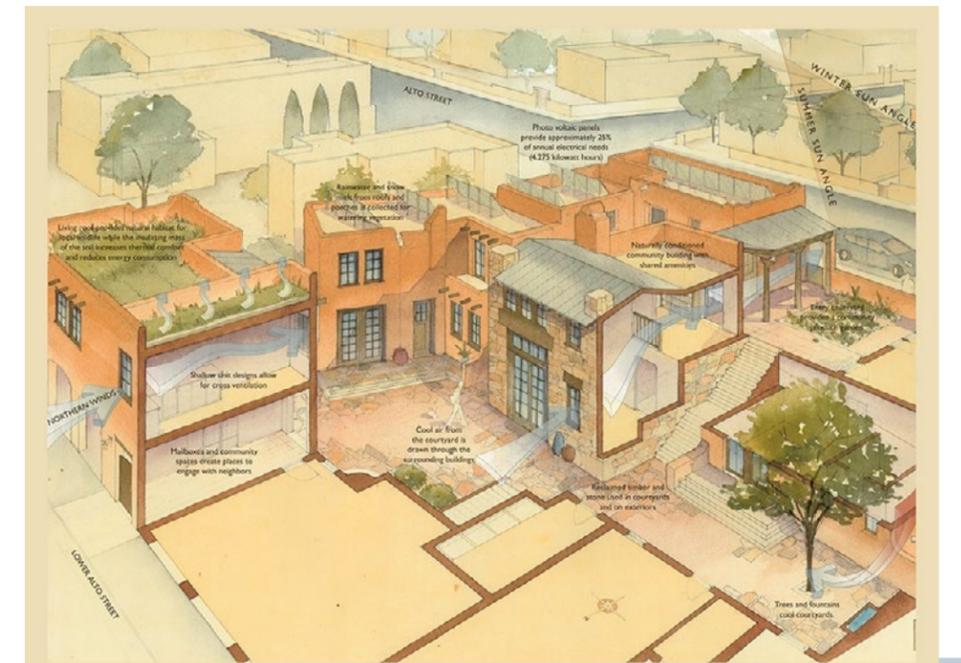
The market is waiting. Will you respond? 📌

Daniel Parolek, AIA, is Principal for Opticos Design, Inc.



Village Flats: These six-plex buildings by Brown Design Studio in Habersham, a new community in Beaufort County, S.C., are located adjacent to a new mixed-use town center.

HABERSHAM LAND COMPANY



Thoughtfully Integrating a Diversity of Green Elements

Santa Fe Courtyard Housing: This courtyard housing project in Santa Fe, NM, by Opticos Design integrates six units on a quarter acre oriented around a series of small courtyards. It is intended to serve as a model for green building and affordability.