

Cities Start to Question an American Ideal: A House With a Yard on Every Lot

By EMILY BADGER and QUOCTRUNG BUI JUNE 18, 2019

Townhomes, duplexes and apartments are effectively banned in many neighborhoods. Now some communities regret it.

Reader Comments (Reader Picks)

David Sadler

Minneapolis, MN Pending Approval

I also live in Minneapolis. We need to ask and answer the question - can we/should we keep and support the American dream of owning a single family home? It's been a fundamental part of the American dream forever and it is a vital piece of life that distinguishes us from all other parts of the world. Let's make it so everyone in America can have the dream!

Carol

Minneapolis 7 hours ago

I live in Minneapolis. Your maps are extremely misleading. 53% of land in Minneapolis is in single family homes, yet your map makes it look like it is much more. I live in one of those pink areas yet have multifamily housing a block away, something you can't tell from your map. The underlying assumption though is that poor developers just can't find enough space in the 47% of the land available to them so we should do away with single family zoning. Yet the City will sell you a lot for a dollar in North Minneapolis because there are so many vacant lots. In South Minneapolis, I have car dealerships within walking distance of my house. We are not short of developable land like you imply. We are short of land in the hot areas in Southwest while having massive amounts of available land in other parts of the City. Also, our projected growth is only 10% over the next two decades, something easily accommodated without demolishing single family homes. You also note that when Minneapolis did this, there were over 20,000 comments. You do not note that they were overwhelmingly negative. This is not a change Minneapolis wants.

- [Reply](#)

- 62Recommend

A P

Eastchester 9 hours ago

Cities need to be careful how they implement these zoning laws. An example is Glendale CA where I lived and worked for several decades. Much of the city near its downtown core had wonderful craftsman style single family homes with deep backyards. During the 1980s the city council changed zoning laws to allow developers to build condos in all neighborhoods except the most expensive. The result was a surge of construction which really met the need of greedy developers than it did families. The building boom became a big incentive to older homeowners to cash out to the developers. No thought was given to recreational or transportation needs. The streets became crowded with parked cars. Children that formerly would have had a backyard to play in now played on the concrete driveways or just stayed in, and this in a place known for sunshine and good weather. Many streets became eyesores as a mishmash of boxy ugly condos stood next to beautiful old craftsman houses.

- Reply

- 55Recommend

Sarah

Raleigh, NC 8 hours ago

How will placing all that rent revenue in the hands of the landlords help the middle class whose major asset, up to now are their individual houses? I fear that this is an horrendous decision on the part of the politicians, many of whom are related or employed in various real estate/development sectors. It is again the transfer of wealth from the middle class to the top 1%.

- Reply

- 50Recommend

poslug

Cambridge 10 hours ago

Septic systems in many exurbs limit density. Failure to build water treatment plants and sewers because of cost limits even additional rooms or in-law additions. Regan eliminated the federal funding for sewers which are far too expensive to build for tax bases (billions plus the road and right of way issues). Add to this old sewers needing to be replaced in the northeast. Without changes there new housing will be a challenge. No infrastructure spending is part of the crisis.

- Reply

- 42Recommend

Justin Chipman

Denver, CO 8 hours ago

The issue of increased and how to increase that density is one of the cornerstones of the New Urbanism that I was taught at RPI back in the eighties. Density isn't a new idea. However, the tools that are used to increase that density and the economics of creating that density are the real issues. Consider that the first homes to be purchased in a newly rezoned (say from R-1 to R-2, or from single family to duplex) will be the least expensive homes. This will be logical for the developers because that home will be scraped off of the lot and then two homes will be built. However, you just removed the most affordable home in a given neighborhood. Then, to maximize the return or to justify the destruction of the initial homes, the price point of the duplex sides will far exceed the value of the original home. Now an affordable home has been replaced by two relatively expensive homes. Then, as developers move in and repeat this process, the prices of the initial homes will rise and the upward tilt of the market will continue to drive out moderate income owners. Where will they go? In other parts of town large apartment blocks will be built, but they will be rentals. All of these buildings in Denver are rentals. I know of a small few that are for sale. Increased density is great for cities, but the goal needs to be one of increasing ownership and equity for the individuals and not the investors.

- Reply

- 34Recommend

Aubin

Paris, FR 10 hours ago

I am not American and just discovered single family zoning was a thing. It is quite surprising from a country thriving from capitalism and small government! In more socialist France, I have not heard of such things. We let the market work on the type of properties in the different areas. There are local laws about the maximum height of building and each new construction requires a permit but I do not think one type of construction can be made mandatory for an area.

- Reply

- 31Recommend

$$\begin{aligned}\nabla \cdot \mathbf{B} &= 0 \\ \nabla \times \mathbf{E} &= -\frac{1}{c} \frac{\partial \mathbf{B}}{\partial t} \\ \nabla \cdot \mathbf{E} &= 4\pi \rho(\mathbf{r}) \\ \nabla \times \mathbf{B} &= \frac{4\pi}{c} \mathbf{J}(\mathbf{r})\end{aligned}$$

SteveRR

CA 7 hours ago

So the apparatchiks of the world want to designate housing development in the face of clear market preferences. Let me guess part deux will be 'rent controls'. Let me also predict the outcome: housing investment will collapse - the middle class will flee the offending district and the apparatchiks will look at each other and proclaim "In theory it should have worked".

- Reply
- 30Recommend

Mon Ray

KS 7 hours ago

Without a doubt, the single family home owners' property values and quality of life will suffer when denser development is permitted in their neighborhoods. Shouldn't these owners be compensated when this occurs?

- Reply
- 27Recommend

Tim Rauwald

Durham, NC 7 hours ago

How wonderful! We will truly think that more housing units will solve the issues of no affordable housing in high cost areas around the country. Unfortunately, the real winners in this scenario will be developers. In Durham, changing zoning laws to allow (just an example) three units on the former lot of one house) will not do a single thing to aid in the problem related to housing. That home in Durham that would be torn down may cost the developer \$600,000 or more. Now, you have three homes that will sell for north of \$750,000 apiece, will look like a sore thumb on that street, and will only serve to increase average home costs in this city. Worse, put a four pleax up and sell each unit for \$400 to \$700k (this is already happening in our city with much higher prices than this). The answer isn't to increase density, its to have corporations create centers of employment outside cities that can then build "the city of the future" with the density and public transportation to match these new areas. Decrease opportunity in these overcrowded and congested areas by building away from them. Also, repurposing many retail mall areas into corporate business centers. These malls are amid many single family homes. Many of these occupants could find their employer offers work closer to their home, creating less burden on the highway transit systems in those areas. I can see in my city the beginnings of new issues that cities are not ready to comprehend or handle.

- Reply

- 26Recommend

Carol

Minneapolis 7 hours ago

Your presumption is that single family housing is bad. One out of every five persons in Minneapolis are under the age of 18. 80% of families with children in Minneapolis live in single-family homes. 98% of new housing is two bedrooms or less and 70% is one bedroom or less. The affordable housing crisis is first about housing for families with children and you want to make it worse. Families of color are larger, on average, than white families. They typically have more children and are more likely to be multi-generational. Minneapolis is literally tearing down housing that families of color need and building housing too small for them. That is systemic racism. You talk about duplexes and triplexes replacing single family homes but that is not true. Fulton Realty held a seminar and to make triplexes work, you demolish a single family home (median home price \$260,000 or about \$1250 a month) and replace it with three units renting at \$3000 to \$3200 a month. Instead, we are seeing developers assembling multiple lots and building dozens or even hundreds of units. One single family house is proposed to be replaced by 19 units. And Minneapolis is not New York or San Francisco or Seattle. We don't have a huge imbalance between supply and demand. The solution to reduce regulation on developers to produce more housing isn't a solution Minneapolis needs. We need to shape where development goes, something that has now been tossed out the window.

- Reply

- 24Recommend

Bob Krantz

SW Colorado 5 hours ago

It must feel both empowering and frustrating to have a righteous vision for the way people should live and then have to fight the people themselves to mandate that vision. In this case how fortunate we are to have leaders who want to correct the silly mistakes made by generations of families who prefer neighborhoods of detached homes, with some space between them. Far better to address the fantasies of crowds who move to the same select areas and then seem surprised that the cost of housing goes up. Letting people make individual choices is so inefficient; on to the Master Plan!

- Reply

- 22Recommend

mrpiscs

Loui 6 hours ago

This has nothing to do with quality of life or affordable housing and everything to do with city officials being bribed by construction companies that want to build as many apartments and houses in the smallest area possible. It is more profitable to build five homes in a specific area than just two. This is what turns neighborhoods into ghettos and slums. This is what causes the exodus of higher income families to the rural areas and into the hands of Trump.

- Reply

- 20Recommend

Jake

Minneapolis 3 hours ago

I am an architect who works in housing and what this piece doesn't explain clearly enough is the distinction in housing types. What we are seeing a lot in our cities right now are large 100+ unit, 6 level projects and that is where a lot of opposition stems from. What we are not seeing is small scale, organically developed duplexes and triplexes. This is referred to as the "missing middle" in planning. What that means is there are single family homes, usually expensive and out of reach to many, or there are large scale projects that drive gentrification and neighborhood change rapidly. What there isn't is moderately priced housing without all the bells and whistle amenities, but quality built for young professional, older downsizing couples, and people making a middle class living. Why? Because larger developers don't have an economic incentive to take risks at that small of a scale and in fact, many opposed the Minneapolis plan because it takes away their control over the market. These plans allow greater participation from folks like you and me to add an accessory dwelling to our neighborhood or a small developer to join in the market and do a more neighborhood sensitive, organic feeling, well scaled apartment that truly fills the void of the missing middle.

- Reply

- 20Recommend

Roberta

Virginia 6 hours ago

Currently living in the midst of a re-zoning like this, I see both sides. Yes, we need more affordable housing. What puts people off are some of the following: developers building multi-story (5-8 floors), instead of 3 floor, bland buildings, because this is cheaper and has a better return for the developer. No attempts at real landscaping. No additional traffic lights or sidewalks— not the developers' problem, it's up to the city or county to add those. No new schools, additional teachers in the present schools, no additional police or firefighters. And the little known fact that, at least here in VA, after 20 years, those affordable units revert to market-

value. And if you think the developers don't have their eye on that, you're dreaming. I'm all for mixed development, if it's done right. At the moment, it's done to make another quick buck.

- Reply
- 19Recommend



Matt Williams

New York 5 hours ago

As this recent infatuation with demonizing single family housing gains steam, it is useful to remember that there are some realities to people owning homes that are sacrificed when people rent. 1. Homeowners generally take better care of their property than tenants do. They are invested in the property and in the neighborhood. 2. Homeowners typically spend money on their property. Go to any Home Depot on a Saturday morning and see the money being spent on roofing materials, lawn mowers, hardwood floors, etc. Home ownership is a big driver of the economy. 3. Homeowners are more connected to their communities. Renters are more likely to pack up and leave if a more desirable opportunity appears somewhere else. There is a place for rental units and every community should have them. But before communities outlaw single family homes, they should understand that the effect of home ownership goes far beyond simply having a deed instead of a lease.

- Reply
- 18Recommend

J

QC 7 hours ago

Commenters here who complain about reduction of "property values" if single-family zoning is eliminated fail to reckon with a VERY fundamental proposition: Your "value" is largely created by government regulation. Current property owners persuaded government to create artificial scarcity that drives up the prices of their real estate. This is, in effect, generational and class warfare. Yes, zoning should ensure adequate green space, sewerage and parking. Yes, there should be reasonable height limits to prevent current residents from being cast into permanent shadow. But the argument that "my home might be worth less if you let other people also purchase homes" just isn't persuasive. (And look around urban and suburban areas in 2019. Those that have walkable amenities like restaurants, shopping and schools are typically the most popular.)

- Reply

- 18Recommend



Studiosroom

Washington DC Area 4 hours ago

Areas like Portland and Northern Virginia have been exploding with high density development but the new condos are priced about the same as an old house... there STILL is no affordability in the new condos and the old homes are a much better investment. This all just looks like a way for developers to make more profits. Where's the guarantee that affordable homes will get built?

- Reply

- 16Recommend

Dave

Michigan 4 hours ago

All my life America has defined by two things - cheap energy and single family homes. For awhile it really was the American dream of nice yards and the open road. Now we have climate change, traffic jams, unaffordable housing, and polluted cities. This endgame has been clear for decades, but in our folly we failed to act. It's not too late, but it's getting really close.

- Reply

- 15Recommend

Harriet

San Francisco 6 hours ago

Americans are sold--in their families, in the culture--the notion that owning a single-family house defines everyone's "American dream". Hogwash. I'm embarrassed that our national ambition is so unimaginative. I live happily in a 350-sq-ft studio apartment, and my American dream is education, freedom to vote, access to health care, nature and the arts. As for the anti-renter sentiment in this country, my involvement with my neighborhood includes voting, shopping, paying taxes and a LOT of volunteering. Americans are no more cut from an identical pattern in our definitions of the good life than in anything else. Don't buy someone else's ambitions. Thank you.

- Reply

- 15Recommend

Concerned Citizen

Anywheresville 6 hours ago

That's just turning a single family house into a duplex. What they mean HERE is a developer buying and tearing down your parents nice older home and replacing it with a high rise apartment that stuff people into tiny studio or 1-bedroom units, like a big sardine can -- and with no parking.

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 15Recommend

CB

Pittsburgh 5 hours ago

The current trend in my city has been blatant gentrification of the type proposed here; the knocking down of older affordable single family homes (which tend to be "small" in sq footage to the modern buyer) and public housing in neighborhoods that find themselves suddenly desirable and replaced or crammed in with "luxury" apartments or townhouses that rent or sell for 3-4 times the going market rate of other similarly sized housing in the city. And this is in a city that has an overabundance of space (i.e. still empty neighborhoods due to white flight), except in a few popular neighborhoods. Changing the rules to increase density is helping no one but the wealthiest and developers, at least here. When new attached homes sell for \$700,000 in a city where the median home price is something like \$90,000, it really makes you wonder who is buying those homes and what happened to those displaced.

- Reply

- 15Recommend

mpound

USA 5 hours ago

Yet another attempt by professional urban planners wanting to play God by trying to force people into a particular way of life - which is predictably dense apartment living in urban areas with no cars allowed - that few want. Nice try, but every place cited in this article is a medium to large city that is already "built out" (no more undeveloped land available within city limits) and

they also cannot expand because they are encircled by suburbs. They don't have any choice but to restrict single family homes if they want to keep growing and changing. The elephant in the room is that those suburbs surrounding cities won't be restricting single family housing at all because most of them don't face the same territorial constraints of the cities. Single house units on their own lots - along with a car in the garage - will continue to be built and are here to stay in the suburbs. That's the way most people like to live, no matter how much it enrages the professional "urban planning" industry.

- Reply

- 14Recommend



Forrest Chisman

Stevensville, MD 4 hours ago

People want to live in single family homes, so why shouldn't the aim of public policy be to make this possible for more people rather than to discourage it?

- Reply

- 14Recommend

Carol

Minneapolis 7 hours ago

Tim - what we know in Minneapolis is that new housing construction is too expensive for the marketplace to provide affordable housing. Non-profit developers can't produce affordable housing for less than \$200,000 a unit and the private market costs more. No affordable housing is being produced without government subsidies and none will. This is all about middle and upper income housing. In fact, in Minneapolis, almost all of it is about upper income housing.

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 13Recommend

thisisme

Virginia 7 hours ago

We need better urban planning but I also really like single family zoning. Despite living in a huge metropolis, I hate being crammed in with other people. Unfortunately as many have pointed out, these large cities are where the jobs are. I live outside of DC in a nice suburb and our neighborhood provides reprieve from the rest of the city and by city, I mean the congested traffic that accompanies a place from being way too overpopulated and infrastructure hasn't kept pace. I would say 99% of the time I never leave my neighborhood if I can help it. I don't want to live in a condo or be stacked on top of other people. I want a yard and some distance between us and our neighbors. I want some privacy. I've lived in a condo townhouse before and it was also nice-- highly regulated, not stacked up on top of one another, and they provided plenty of outdoor space so people can have some place to themselves. I think overall, depending on one's stage in life, we'll want different lifestyles. I don't think getting rid of single family zoning is good but I also don't want to look out of my home onto a condo complex either.

- Reply

- 13Recommend

Daniela Smith

Annapolis, md 4 hours ago

There's a difference between creating density and creating affordable housing that could have been addressed better in this article. New York is dense but it's not necessarily affordable!

- Reply

- 13Recommend

Concerned Citizen

Anywheresville 6 hours ago

There is no "scarcity". There is tons of housing where I live -- NE Ohio -- or in other Midwestern cities. The "scarcity" today is a whole lot of people cramming into a handful of Big Blue coastal cities. And they are destroying the quality of life there. There is no "scarcity" if people would move all around the country in equal proportions to more affordable areas. Also, it is not as simple as "old people who own homes" and "young people who can't afford homes". Some old folks are poor and don't live in houses, and some young people are tech millionaires who buy up all the houses as investments.

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 13Recommend

GenXBK293

USA 6 hours ago

Density and expanding supply is important, but there are a few problems to avoid as we go: We must preserve green space and enforce aesthetic upkeep. As it stands, multi-family properties in minneapolis' central areas tend to be much less well-kept than single family homes in residential areas, and the streetscape much more gritty. Why? -Absentee landlords have every incentive to neglect landscaping, maintenance, etc. -Lost of softscape: Lush backyards are paved over in favor or disgusting small parking lots paired to additional units. -Cars and traffic dominate the space.

- Reply

- 11Recommend



Justin

Alabama 5 hours ago

These comments are unreal. Many are excitedly defending single family housing as if people don't raise kids in a dense apartment in a city or don't want to be "stacked". Yet in those places, one doesn't need a car and a 15 minute drive to get basic groceries, you can walk to a beautiful park 5 minutes away, and a bar downstairs, and have access to a ton of cultural / shopping activities in minutes, and yes - you don't need to pay money to get physical activity cuz you are active naturally. Pretty much any European city is planned like this - and that's where many rich American suburban-ites run to in the summer time. The irony. And most people don't realize single family zoning was as a result of government subsidies and regulations. Americans really like "socialism" when it makes their house values appreciate, eh?

- Reply

- 11Recommend

Concerned Citizen

Anywheresville 5 hours ago

New York City is the densest residential city in the US, and very little single family housing at all. Yet it is not integrated nor is it affordable! in fact, it's the most expensive place to live in the US (perhaps except for San Francisco, which is tiny in comparison)!!! and despite a huge building boom....almost none of it is housing for the middle class, let alone the poor. NYC is the most segregated residential housing in any US big city, AND has the MOST SEGREGATED public schools of any city in the US. So in practice....what you suggest here, just leads to overcrowding and failure and more segregation and driving the poor and working classes further and further away from the city core (where the jobs are).

- Reply

- 11Recommend

Barbara

Boston 3 hours ago

What I'm struck by in these discussions is an apparent vilification of single family homeowners as beneficiaries of racism and deniers of opportunity for everyone else. In reality, single family home owners--of whatever race or ethnicity--are people who value peace, tranquility and low density. Another view is that they are in the way because they sit in their big houses that others believe are too much for them. So this hostility is pushing for more and more development, but I don't believe it will be affordable housing that will be built. I think gentrification will follow as single family homeowners will be targeted in communities that change their zoning. People will be pushed out of their homes. I imagine that we will be reading in the next several years about scams targeting homeowners, and this will follow in the wake of the zoning changes. This is what has happened in New York City neighborhoods that have experienced gentrification--older minority homeowners of valuable single family homes--as victims. But in New York City, the single family homes predated the zoning, so tearing them down was seen as getting rid of those pesky non-conforming homes (historical districts excluded, of course).

- Reply

- 11Recommend

Multimodalmama

The hub 7 hours ago

When I sold my late parents' home in Portland, OR, the property value was increased, not decreased, by the upzoning to 3 units from one. The person who bought it added to it tastefully, converted the large home into two 1100-1200 square foot units, and renovated it for sale as a two family. The world did not end.

- Reply

- 11Recommend

Bill Brown

California 5 hours ago

Mixed income housing won't work. It has been tried before. The results aren't promising. President Clinton's 1994 program called the "Moving to Opportunity Initiative," placed thousands of families from government projects to higher-quality homes in several counties across the US. The 15-year experiment bombed. A 2011 study by HUD found that adults using more generous Section 8 vouchers did not get better jobs or get off welfare. In fact, more went on food stamps. And their children did not do better in their new schools. Worse, crime simply followed them to their safer neighborhoods, ruining the quality of life for existing residents. Dubuque, Iowa, for example, received an influx of voucher holders from projects in Chicago & it's had a problem with crime ever since. A recent study linked Dubuque's crime wave directly to Section 8 housing. HUD tested this new theory in Dallas in 2012 with disastrous results. Starting in 2012, the agency sweetened Section 8 voucher payments & pointed inner-city recipients to the far-flung counties surrounding Dallas. As government-subsidized rentals spread in all areas so did the crime. Now Dallas has one of the highest murder rates in the nation & had to call in state troopers to help police control it. For the first time, violent crime has shifted to the bedroom communities north of the city. Although HUD's "demonstration project" may have improved the lives of some who moved, it's ended up harming the lives of many of their new neighbors.

- Reply

- 11Recommend

Jeff C

Portland, OR 2 hours ago

Here in Portland, the recently passed 20 year Comprehensive Plan already has excess housing capacity. So why this draconian push to ban single family zoning? Those wonderful close-in Portland neighborhoods (written about in so many NYT articles) are tempting fruit for builders. "Citizen" groups are popping up - backed by developers - that claim unproven affordability or environmental benefits (to demolishing homes built of old growth timber?) Already Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) are allowed on any single family lot, which effectively doubled the allowable density. Ironically, these are the rediscovered single family neighborhoods that helped put Portland on today's map of places to visit. Now after years of building new apartments at a breakneck pace, Portland's growth rate has plummeted. Perhaps it's the diminished livability. Perhaps it's clear our city doesn't have the resources to support growth - parks budget cuts and a shrinking police force. Perhaps its bulldozing the things that made Portland so attractive in the first place.

- Reply

- 11Recommend



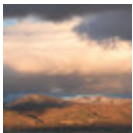
mlb4ever

New York 5 hours ago

"Townhomes, duplexes and apartments are effectively banned in many neighborhoods. Now some communities regret it." Wrong the developers regret it not the homeowners. Every multiple dwelling building or row of attached houses that I've ever lived in had rodents and cockroaches, every one. Our only escape from the infestation was when we were lucky enough to live the dream, a detached house with a fence on a little property. Please do not outlaw the American Dream.

- Reply

- 11Recommend



Craig Anderson

Oregon 5 hours ago

Having worked as a planner for various levels of government in California and Oregon for the past 30 years, I find this article extremely misleading. Although the mapping data lends a certain "scientific" quality to the article, your writers have completely ignored the financial calculus behind, not only the development patterns that accompany a slavish devotion to the single-occupant vehicle, but also behind the policy proposals we hear from developer-funded politicians like Tina Kotek and Scott Wiener. If your writers had done just a bit of digging, they would have found that Kotek and Wiener's campaigns (and the legislation they push) is being backed by the very same cast of characters who have given us publicly-subsidized urban sprawl for the past 50 years. Proposals from the likes of Kotek and Wiener are like Trojan horses covered in a patina of "housing affordability" and "smarte-growth" but concealing the same old greed that got us here to begin with.

- Reply

- 11Recommend



Ed Watters

San Francisco 5 hours ago

Now that they've turned the American Dream into an unaffordable nightmare, pols like Scott Weiner want to herd us into vertical housing complexes, a suboptimal situation for multiple reasons.

- Reply

- 10Recommend

Li Bai

Sacramento 4 hours ago

The biggest regret of my life has been buying into this American dream in the a suburb. (Thanks, Peter Lynch). Life consisted of wading through the traffic, working 60 hours and then spending weekends taking care of the house. 400% appreciation couldn't compensate for 15 years of my life wasted that way. I became about a million times happier since I sold the shackle and freed myself. I recently entertained the thought of moving back to suburb now that we are planning to adopt. After a few tours, I was grasping for the air at the thought of living in the middle of suburban desert where you have to drive everywhere. We are staying put, family and all.

- Reply

- 10Recommend

Kate

Minneapolis 5 hours ago

As someone who is living in a Southwest Minneapolis neighborhood that is being changed under the new zoning, most if not all houses have signs apposing it in their front yard. While of course I see how this could help make housing more affordable, in reality this is just another way for developers to make more money while ruining neighborhoods that are already full, instead of investing in other areas that should be built up and encouraged to thrive.

- Reply

- 10Recommend

SR

Los Angeles 4 hours ago

I live in an apartment building and I don't know the neighbors either. But I can smell their food and hear them arguing or having sex. Grass is always greener....

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 10Recommend

Carol

Minneapolis 3 hours ago

As you note, no one is building triplexes - it is just a land rush in Minneapolis for big developers. For triplexes and duplexes, Fulton Realty recently did a seminar for people who want to make money by demolishing single family homes and replacing them with triplexes and their numbers were you buy a house for \$260,000 (roughly a median value home with a \$1250 a month mortgage) and then demolish it and replace it with three units renting for \$3000 to \$3200 a unit.

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 10Recommend

Mike

NYC 7 hours ago

When I moved from Manhattan to Chicago for college, people would ask me what it's like there. My answer was always "Imagine lower Manhattan with a lake on one side and 15 miles of Queens in the other three directions." The endless sprawl of short structures made it hard to get to many standard goods and services without a car. This article makes clear that the poverty and violence that Chicago has never been able to shed are in part due to the physical structure of the place. Very interesting.

- Reply

- 10Recommend

FM

Home 3 hours ago

My middle class neighborhood in Portland, Ore was recently upzoned to allow for great urban density. With our Urban Growth Boundary, I support the need to grow up not out in order to preserve farmland. However, a disproportionate number of working class and poorer neighborhoods are up zoned while wealthy neighborhoods are left untouched, including the Mayor's neighborhood. Dozens of cranes fill the skyline constructing thousands of unaffordable apartments that sit empty and do nothing to help the housing crisis. It seems around here, the housing crisis isn't so much a crisis in lack of housing, but a crisis in greed.

- Reply

- 9Recommend

Larry

Richmond VA 3 hours ago

It's not really a return to the past, primarily because now there are so many more cars. In the early 1980s I lived in a house in Boston with six apartments, but it still felt like a house. It had a front yard and a back yard with trees and a vegetable garden. The only parking was on the street in front, but in those days that was enough. Now, any 6-unit apartment house would require a parking lot larger than the building itself just to accommodate 2-3 vehicles for every household. In many cities, that's even required by law. Add in the necessary access driveways and the whole lot is now mostly pavement. You see it everywhere, and for most single-family neighborhoods, it would be a radical transformation. I won't vote for Trump but if we get a Democrat who advocates aggressive federal meddling in local zoning, I'll just stay home.

- Reply

- 9Recommend

SR

Los Angeles 4 hours ago

We have declining birth rates in the US. If we shoot for zero population growth, or even a declining population, we will not need to build more housing. We can simply use the housing we have. Building more, even if it's apartments rather than houses, is not good for the environment. We are large enough as a country and need to move toward sustainability. This "movement" is largely driven by developers, with an assist from the politicians to whom they donate. And add in some naive social justice warriors who think it will solve homelessness or economic inequality.

We all need to push back against this; otherwise our towns will end up like Mexico City, Shanghai, or Sao Paulo: crowded, unpleasant, polluted.

- Reply
- 9Recommend

Carol

Minneapolis 6 hours ago

It actually isn't that simple here. The article is really misleading. In Minneapolis, the "single family home zoning" areas are not like they portray. I live in one of those pink areas and we have three duplexes on my side of my block, and a 20 unit and a 36 unit on a transit corridor a block away. I also have numerous restaurants, convenience stores and businesses within walking distance of my single family home. When these maps are made at this scale, it really obscures what is existing on the ground.

- In Reply to
- Reply
- 9Recommend

Peter Blau

NY Metro 3 hours ago

Minneapolis has no shortage of rental housing. Its rate of rent increase is .03% in the past 12 months, compared with a national average of 1.5% and 2.0% in NYC (per apartmentlist.com.) The percent of land zoned single-family has little if anything to do with rental housing shortages. Minneapolis, with 70% zoned single-family, has plenty of affordable apartments all throughout the city, while NYC, with 15% zoned single-family, has a perpetual shortage of them. The reason Minneapolis banned single-family zoning? Simple: the city is controlled by a left-wing regime believing in fashionable housing cures. (Despite the fact that the left wing people are the ones living in the nice single-family neighborhoods!) The cause du jour at the moment is converting single family neighborhoods to multi-family. A few years ago, it was building high-rise projects like Cedar Riverside on the outskirts of downtown to promote a "transit-oriented" lifestyle. Neither fashionable "cure" works, because it doesn't address the real social needs of real people -- which, in the case of Minneapolis, have nothing to do with housing shortages, and much more to do with the lack of good schools and an appalling crime rate in some of the poorer neighborhoods.

- Reply

- 9Recommend

J.T.

Vancouver BC 6 hours ago

In a city like Vancouver BC where land constraints are due to mountains and oceans geography, we simply had no alternative but to embrace a transit-oriented development plan (TOD) 40 years ago. Everything has gone according to that plan; it has been enthusiastically embraced by residents, and it works. While much NIMBYism remains, most here understand that the single family home in the City is an unaffordable dinosaur from another era.

- Reply

- 9Recommend



Dixon Duval

USA 4 hours ago

1. An article need not mention racial inequality each time it uncovers an example of economic disparity. 2. Apartments and townhomes have been around for ever and people in the same economic groups move around between each depending on what they want. 3. The US does need to address the homeless population but that's a much larger issue than housing. Although housing is incredibly important these individuals are not counting on mowing their lawn. 4. Equal housing for all is just a silly idea good for one thing - getting an article published by the NYTs.

- Reply

- 9Recommend

GRH

New England 4 hours ago

This is going to cause more sprawl as people are forced out of cities. There are multiple factors behind increased inequality, including some changes in policy and taxation during Reagan era. However, one large factor behind the increase in inequality is 2 decades of bipartisan policies of unlimited open borders, including illegal immigration, to encourage what Yale and MIT are now estimating is around 22 million illegal aliens in the United States. For whatever reason, the politicians wanted to increase inequality by bringing as many impoverished people to the United States as possible instead of supporting efforts to strengthen their home countries. The real estate

developers don't care who their tenants are and whether they are illegally here or not, so long as the developers and landlords getting their \$. They don't care if the \$ is earned legally or under the table and they don't care if it is not earned at all but paid for by other taxpayers via government housing vouchers. Unfortunately the Democratic Party today in many places is effectively controlled by their real estate developer campaign donors and thus support the turbo-charged population growth that destroys neighborhoods. What has become all too clear is Democratic Party has now abandoned all claims to supporting self-determination of property owners; zoning; protecting the environment; and protecting open space.

- Reply
- 9Recommend

mpound

USA 5 hours ago

"I don't find the argument that changing the zoning will cause the value of existing single family homes to drop." You have obviously never had the misfortune of owning a house and having a nearby apartment complex suddenly designated as Section 8 housing.

- In Reply to
- Reply
- 9Recommend

Carol

Minneapolis 2 hours ago

Let's be honest. The "new housing = affordable housing" was just a ruse to deregulate development and provide more profits to corporations. New housing is too expensive to be truly affordable. But it is a nice red herring to sell on-line to millennials hungry for a simple solution.

- In Reply to
- Reply
- 9Recommend

a

new york ,ny 1 hour ago

i'm currently considering moving because i live in a single family zone (just BARELY saved from student rentals by new zoning) that butts up against a small condo unit in a non-zoned area. guess what? constant rap music in my back yard. not to mention the head shop and porn store that are also in the neighborhood. suburbs, here i come. there's a reason why zoning exists.

- Reply

- 9Recommend

Dan M

Seattle 3 hours ago

Good article, but missing one big point: the relationship between eradicating single-family zoning and increasing affordability is beyond tenuous. The two most expensive markets in this graphic are New York and San Jose, the least and most single-family zoned. Upzoning is in many areas being sold as a way to magically increase affordability, when that has not been the actual experience in any market. I believe upzoning is a good idea on its own merits, but the idea it will somehow heal our racist pasts and allow teachers to live near their schools again is simply fantasy. In any growing land constrained city all over the world there is only one way to make housing affordable... and that is to actively make housing affordable through direct building and/or direct regulation.

- Reply

- 9Recommend

Shar

Atlanta 6 hours ago

In my dense, single-family neighborhood in close-in Atlanta, we have supported local businesses and parks which have made the area attractive to many people who live elsewhere. We have worked diligently to upgrade schools which has driven in-migration. We have changed zoning to permit denser housing in parts of the neighborhood to expand access. These initiatives have driven up property taxes, which the City happily laps up, while putting great stress on resources like streets, schools, water/sewer and police, which need expanding and which the City ignores. A developer recently attempted an end run around the neighborhood by quietly buying 5 single family houses on a small block next to a busy park and fronting on one of the most congested intersections in the City. They got a special deal pushed through secretly on a small but crucial piece of land and then announced plans to build a huge 11-story hotel/food court/condo development. The effect of this on the already massive traffic problems, the overburdened schools/water system/police resources and the intrusion into the neighboring single family properties was ignored. The City effectively colluded with the developer while refusing to

invest in the infrastructure to support greater density. Density has benefits, but current urban resources cannot handle the increased demands. Successful density requires first that cities invest in infrastructure in areas of greatest potential for development.

- Reply
- 9Recommend

John Binkley

NC and FL 9 hours ago

My Dad used to refer to driving fast as "going to town", because people in the typical rural area where he grew up couldn't wait until Saturday night when they could, literally, go to town and be around other people. So they drove to town fast, even in the horse and buggy era. What's happening in cities now is the same thing writ large. Lots of people used to be needed in agriculture, but agricultural technology has changed that so far fewer are now needed to grow what we eat. Rural areas no longer present opportunities for the young, who are looking elsewhere. People like to be around other people and engage in group activities of all types, and even modern communications haven't changed that. Cities are where the jobs are and where "the action" is. Rural areas are emptying out and urban areas are feeling the pressure. This is not a small or transient trend -- it is a fundamental and major change in our nation's spatial relationships. Cities have no real choice but to adapt.

- Reply
- 9Recommend

Purity of

Essence 5 hours ago

Get ready for a second round of flight to the suburbs.

- Reply
- 9Recommend

Imperato

NYC 4 hours ago

Some really dumb ideas.

- Reply

- 9Recommend

Carol

Minneapolis 6 hours ago

70% of new housing units in Minneapolis are one bedroom. Virtually all of the remaining 30% is two bedroom. No 3+ bedroom housing is being built in Minneapolis. But it is being torn down. When Millennials have kids, they are being driven out to the suburbs due to the lack of available family-sized housing in Minneapolis. This is exactly the housing being bulldozed in Minneapolis. Affordable housing is first and foremost about families and that need is not met through this kind of zoning change.

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 9Recommend

Vivian

Boston, MA 4 hours ago

I happily live in a six-family in Dorchester, an older residential neighborhood five miles South of downtown Boston. I don't have a yard, but it's a very worthwhile trade off as I have just about everything else I wish for; a very walkable neighborhood with lots of amenities, a subway station nearby and plenty of friendly neighbors and acquaintance I run into on a daily basis. Since I don't need a car, I don't need to spend the first two hours of my workdays paying for car expenses, which is what the average American worker does. I enjoy biking. In order to get out of the City, I have to ride thru vast swaths of suburbs. No matter the time of the week or weekend, I see endless lines of people stuck in traffic sitting in their cars. The only people I see in the yards are the landscapers. The homeowners are rarely enjoying their yard; they are probably too busy driving themselves or their kids from place to place or working to pay for those SUVs and big houses. And yet, the folks who fiercely defend single family zoning are often the same who complain endlessly about traffic. And that's before we even get into the the topic of how this super resource-intensive single-family home/drive everywhere lifestyle is completely environmentally unsustainable. I say: Ban single family zoning. Everywhere!

- Reply

- 9Recommend

Carol

Minneapolis 4 hours ago

Nothing in this article is about suburban sprawl. It is about demolishing existing homes scatter shot rather than concentrating new development into walkable neighborhoods.

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 8Recommend

Pat M.

Texas 6 hours ago

Has anyone considered that most single-family dwellings mean having a mortgage? And that a mortgage ties you down? My son and his wife are considering not buying and being renters instead, thus being able to change jobs more easily and go where the money is instead of being tethered to a house. At first I thought this was a very bad idea, but then I realized that buying a home doesn't necessarily mean in this day and age that it will appreciate significantly in value, especially given all the upkeep to the yard, trees, roof, exterior, etc.

- Reply

- 8Recommend

Concerned Citizen

Anywheresville 5 hours ago

TOTALLY YES! what you said! The reason these things pass by huge margins, even while CITIZENS protest...is the City Councils and mayors are totally in the hip pocket of developers and are taking bribes in one form or the other. They absolutely don't care about families, or ordinary people.

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 8Recommend

S

Chicago 6 hours ago

People like to think that "the market" demands we build single family homes, as this is what Americans are "accustomed to". But as is clearly illustrated here, the government makes policy that drives these decisions. These decisions prop up the property values of homes bought by people decades ago and force the rest of us to compete for small slices of land in increasingly popular cities, driving up the cost for renters (who cannot deduct any part of their rental expense from their taxes, like homeowners can through the interest deduction) while maintaining a nice cushion for people with homes. I hope more renters are educated about this and their potential political power, because every time I have gone to a community meeting about a denser apartment or condo development, everyone that shows up is a homeowner complaining about things like shadows or "architectural character" - sorry, if you want to prevent the development, you need to buy the lot and do nothing to it. If renters started pressuring their local officials as much as homeowners do, things might change faster, and we may all see some relief.

- Reply
- 8Recommend

Paul Zagieboylo

Austin, TX 7 hours ago

The city wouldn't be so congested if people could actually live there instead of having to commute 10+ miles in every day. DC in particular has a pretty good transit system, but it's useless if the people who need it have to drive to get to it. Here in Austin there has been a huge recent influx of mixed-use housing, which is AMAZING. If my office weren't so far out of town I would probably get in my car once a week, and traffic in the new high-density areas is quite moderate compared to the housing-deficient downtown area.

- In Reply to
- Reply
- 8Recommend

SR

Los Angeles 4 hours ago

So you're never going to invite friends over for a gathering? No holiday parties? What about a garage where your kid can practice his drums? Or a study where you can quietly read a book or gain some privacy? Just everyone crammed into a tiny apartment?

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 8Recommend

JY

USA 6 hours ago

The suburban lifestyle you describe and evidently prefer is neither environmentally sustainable nor responsible. Changes need to be made. If you prefer this lifestyle, then you need to pay for it, and not be subsidized for it and pass on the externalities to others. That's what this zoning change addresses--evening the playing field.

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 8Recommend

Concerned Citizen

Anywheresville 4 hours ago

Absolutely yes! this article is wrong wrong wrong on EVERYTHING.

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 8Recommend



A. Stanton

Dallas, TX 2 hours ago

I bought my house in 1983. When the real estate agent first drove up to it, I saw that it was surrounded on all sides by large oak trees. Before getting out of the car, I said to her "I'm buying this house." She said to me, "You're kidding, you haven't even been in it. I wasn't kidding. I need lots and lots of trees.

- Reply

- 8Recommend

Jack

Seattle 1 hour ago

New York has lowest percentage for single family homes...yet affordable housing shortage is worst...

- Reply

- 7Recommend

ROK

Mpls 5 hours ago

Thanks for quoting Lisa McDonald - she is spot on with regard to Minneapolis. We are selling this city to developers who have done nothing but bulldoze historic homes - many of which are already rentals with naturally occurring affordable housing and replaced them with "granite counter top" apartments for young professionals with no kids. Not one of these developers is building affordable housing, not one of these developers in building in anything other than higher end neighborhoods near the city lakes and all they are building studio and one bedroom apartments. If I thought for one minute sacrificing our historic homes and charming neighborhoods was going to help with affordable housing I would force myself to get behind it. Oh and not a single city council member ran on abolishing single family zoning - not one peep did they make about that until they got elected.

- Reply

- 7Recommend

RVC

NYC 6 hours ago

Yes to all of this. It often works like this: a wealthy developer pushes to build a 1000 unit rental housing development in the middle of a small suburban town, often nowhere near public transportation, adding 400 kids to the local schools. The developer has no obligation to pay for

the new school that now has to be built -- the town is required to do that by law. The developer forces the project through, using the fact that the town has insufficient affordable housing and there are technically a handful of "affordable" units in that development, to make the courts order the project to be built -- but 90% of the units aren't affordable housing, so the project increases the town's population enough that it's actually a wash in terms of meeting affordable housing requirements. Meanwhile, the new renters pay significantly less property tax per capita than home owners, so paying for all the new school children and building the new school requires that everyone else's property taxes go up. Who makes a profit? The developers. Who pays? Everyone else in town. There should be a better way to build affordable housing as needed without massive high-density building projects that the community don't want and can't support. Townhouses and smaller rental units are a much better choice for most communities, but they're never what developers push for.

- In Reply to
- Reply
- 7Recommend

Amy

Fayetteville, NC 4 hours ago

This is the real issue: you can't change zoning and not also regulate what gets built there. You want to turn what are now single-family neighborhoods into mixed-use, walkable neighborhoods with amenities that keep people out of cars? Prove that's what you're going to do, do it slowly by working your way through neighborhoods that need investment, and I bet you get more buy-in. What happens instead is that property owners are allowed to sell to developers who put up a big expensive building, and that's that. Everyone else has to adjust to the increased density, loss of trees and open space, and traffic issues, and somehow this is considered better.

- In Reply to
- Reply
- 7Recommend

mrpisces

Loui 6 hours ago

It does as it leads to more crowding. These local governments aren't making zoning changes because of people and affordability. They are making changes because construction companies are paying their campaigns to get them to build more houses and apartments in a same area. It is more profitable for a construction company to build ten homes/apartments in the same space than just two. These zoning changes are just changes on paper. There is not re-evaluation of the underlying infrastructure such as roads, sewage, aging water lines, schools, hospitals, police, and fire protection that will be needed to support more dense populations in the same area. The infrastructure we have is decaying and we need to be rebuilding it and not throwing more population at it so a few campaign contributing construction companies can profit off the zoning changes.

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 7Recommend

SR

Los Angeles 4 hours ago

Yup. Make everyone rent in crowded cities while a select few developers enjoy their mansions in the countryside.

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 6Recommend

hen3ry

Westchester, NY 4 hours ago

I'm single. I was never able to afford the American Dream. Rentals have been too scarce and unaffordable for a long time now. While owning a home is nice it would be even nicer if those of us who cannot afford to own a home (or a McMansion) could find affordable and decent housing without moving 30 minutes or more away from the jobs we have. And affordable doesn't mean a mansion or an estate or a luxury condo or apartment building. It means decent, not falling apart, where the landlord keeps the property in good repair and is responsive to the tenants needs. Somehow, in America, we've lost sight of what most people can reasonably afford. I think that

we're going to see the results of our housing policies very soon: more homeless seniors, more multigenerational households, and much less mobility.

- Reply
- 6Recommend



S North

Europe 3 hours ago

If people can't afford housing, the answer is not to change the zoning laws, it's to increase wages and salaries. Climate change is another matter, but again, I don't see why even single-family areas can't be encouraged to use buses and bikes - or electrical cars. New York is more like a city than any of these examples, probably because of density. But that hasn't made it any more affordable now, has it.

- Reply
- 6Recommend

Concerned Citizen

Anywheresville 4 hours ago

And apartment dwellers in high rises all know one another intimately? COME ON! The big cities I see are VERY congested and it is not all "commuters from the 'burbs". And seriously: you think the suburbs have more poverty and bankruptcies than the CITIES? hahahaha A small home in a suburb is not going to bankrupt anyone MORE than a condo in a Big Blue City that costs \$1.2 million.....

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 6Recommend

JS

Portland, OR 6 hours ago

While upzoning sounds attractive and reasonable in theory it's all about the execution. Which is being done poorly in Portland. Big apartment buildings are looming up all over the inner east side, adding to population density but somehow the enlarged tax base has resulted in a once lovely city becoming increasingly shabby. Potholes everywhere, slow or non-existent city response to nuisance problems, a parks department which is having to close several beloved community centers due to budget problems, a large homeless population, steadily increasing traffic congestion. Developers have sold the city a bill of goods based on the magical thinking that higher density equals affordability without the city enacting and enforcing actual requirements for a percentage of low income housing. And progressives pull the NIMBY card any time someone questions the pressure for more of the same.

- Reply

- 6Recommend



Justin

Alabama 6 hours ago

Why would anybody move to NE Ohio? Respectfully - we talk about capitalism and markets dictating where people move and what they earn. People want to move to the big urban coastal areas and not ohio precisely because of markets. So, why not build housing to accomodate them?

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 6Recommend

Concerned Citizen

Anywheresville 5 hours ago

Sorry, but it's not as simple as in the 1920s, where you perhaps moved from a remote rural farm or tiny rural village to "the big city". Most Americans LIVE IN SUBURBS surrounding larger cities. We see plenty of other people! we are not isolated AT ALL. Also: wasn't the promise of the internet and computers and connectivity that we DID NOT have to go to cities to socialize or hang out? or WORK? we could do it all from home? "Where the action is" is a pathetic excuse, and only makes sense for younger people who want to date, go to nightclubs or dance. It is not a big deal for young parents, or seniors.

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 6Recommend

stacey

texas 5 hours ago

Its all a lie. They are doing this in Austin, putting two homes on a one home lot. Nothing is affordable for most folks who live here. At the low end these places are 400,000 and up to a million and more. On my sons street there are at least 12 houses being torn down or added on to and most tower over the home next door. This is a neighborhood that homes are selling for 300,000 and way under. Slash, burn, build.

- Reply

- 6Recommend

SR

Los Angeles 4 hours ago

Most of Europe is also houses. There are centralized, dense areas, surrounded by suburbs. Just like here. You probably think it's all dense because most tourist spots are in the city centers.

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 6Recommend



JustInsideBeltway

Capitalandia 6 hours ago

Require adequate soundproofing when permitting multi-family buildings. Otherwise, developers will cut corners and create housing that people will find to be unlivable -- after it is too late. Make the laws very specific about this.

- Reply

- 6Recommend



gw

usa 3 hours ago

Increased density means increased impervious surfacing means increased run-off means increased flooding. Infill development that builds to property lines creates "flood thy neighbor" damages next door, and floods creeks, streams and eventually rivers downstream, with more resulting property damage. One of the under-appreciated benefits of low-density, single-family residential is trees and yards with absorbent vegetative surfaces that soak up and retain rain water. This is a very real issue, as climatologists predict "warmer and wetter" for my region, and that's exactly what we're seeing, at monumental property damage and economic costs.

- Reply

- 6Recommend

Multimodal

The hub 5 hours ago

One tug of war in the suburbs around Boston is the need for multi-generational living versus the single family uber alles ideal. Elders want independence but need proximity to their children for their wellbeing and a financial break on a huge house. Young adults want that independence, but are financially stressed. Yet time and again variances and permits for an extra kitchen, bath, or entry are denied based on the sanctity of the single family home. Something has to give.

- Reply

- 6Recommend

Jacque

Portland, Oregon 1 hour ago

I live in Portland, Oregon, and I can tell you that the data presented in this article is not correct. In NE Portland (where I live), most of the lots are zoned R2.5, which means that you can have one house on a 2,500 sq. ft. lot. Since the lots here are typically 5,000 sq. ft., developers can build two houses -- or a duplex -- on each lot. In addition, Portland lets you add one ADU (accessory dwelling unit). Does this zoning make Portland more affordable? No. Instead, I see developers bulldoze affordable bungalows and replace them with market-rate duplexes, some with built-in ADUs. These new houses are always more expensive than the houses that were demolished. If upzoning is adopted here without an affordability mandate, it will result in more market-rate housing. In NE Portland, increased density has caused the displacement of low-income renters (because they're the people who are living in the currently affordable homes that are being demolished), ugly modern buildings built next to historic bungalows, and escalating housing prices.

- Reply

- 6Recommend

John

NYC 5 hours ago

The core of the problem is US population growth. Without immigration, US population growth would stop. And that would be a very good thing - for the US and the Planet, Cause Americans use far more, per person, of the worlds resources than any other country.

- Reply

- 6Recommend

Cherry picker

Washington 5 hours ago

Seattle hasn't invested in increased sewer capacity or water capacity or put electrical lines underground or insisted that development pay for these costs. Cities want to upzone to increase their tax base but they aren't agreeing to build infrastructure to support it. It is a fool's folly.

- Reply

- 5Recommend



Hern

Harlem 6 hours ago

We shouldn't just be looking at this for cities but the suburbs as well. Build higher density housing along with high speed rail and high capacity internet in tandem with enough green space for people to enjoy being outside and the communities will thrive.

- Reply

- 5Recommend

Carol

Minneapolis 3 hours ago

In Minneapolis, more housing does not mean cheaper housing. Quite the opposite. New housing is much more expensive than existing housing and it is driving the price of surrounding housing up. Just because developers build swanky housing doesn't mean they are building affordable housing. And swanky housing doesn't magically become affordable. Prices are skyrocketing here because of this bad policy and making the housing market worse. That and corporate hedgefunds buying up low value homes in our poor parts of town.

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 5Recommend



scientella

palo alto 1 hour ago

The glaring omission in this article is overpopulation. The migrant crisis in Europe, the border crisis with Mexico, the slums of South America, and climate change itself all stem from overpopulation. If the world had one tenth the population, we could all live like kings. Or like China, through its one child policy, nurture a generation rather than abuse or ignore it.

- Reply

- 5Recommend

RVC

NYC 3 hours ago

More housing does not always mean cheaper housing, and that's where this gets frustrating. Look at Williamsburg, Brooklyn. High-density high-rise housing pushed by developers certainly didn't drive down the cost of living in that neighborhood. In fact, it drove it up. This is the core problem. The type of housing being pushed by the developers who are willing to build new housing is not the type of housing that is going to make things affordable for anyone. In many cases, homeowners are not just being NIMBYs. They are pushing back against that dishonesty in which "developer-friendly" is neither "neighborhood-friendly" nor "affordable-housing" friendly. It is deep-pocket friendly, and that's about it.

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 5Recommend

b fagan

chicago 3 hours ago

There are a number of reasons we should be shifting the overall housing stock towards multi-dwelling units, and no good reasons to continue favoring single-family, detached homes. -- Cost

of sprawl is high per-household - extending sewers, power lines, roads, delivery routes, miles driven are all more costly the fewer people served per mile. -- Walkability declines, since you need a certain density to support having things in walking distance - that increases obesity and car dependence. -- An aging, increasingly single population means single-family homes house fewer people (who pay alone), whereas multifamily dwellings can be more affordable. -- Single-family homes are also about as energy-intensive a way to live that can be devised. -- Flooding in places like Houston increases because of more pavement and buildings, so combine that with the increased intensity of rainfall and it's more trouble. Populations shift from place to place, too, so maintaining a spread-out infrastructure without population density costs more than taxpayers might afford - and increased flooding will exacerbate that in many areas of the country. Some places are now passing costs for maintaining low-traffic roads directly to the residents. How? Return paved roads to gravel. Taxpayers spend less on maintenance, people using the road pick up the difference with broken shocks and windshields, and dusty homes.<https://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2016/7/26/the-un-paving-of-american-roads>

- Reply

- 5Recommend

Grittenhouse

Philadelphia 5 hours ago

What doesn't show is that, in Minneapolis, many of the single-family dwellings are occupied by multiple generations or shared by housemates. One benefit of single-home zoning is more living space and greenery. But much of Minneapolis is built with small cottages, and preserving that as an esthetic definitely works against the need for higher density. One old solution is building a second house on the same lot, usually by the alleyway. A standard lot in Minneapolis is 40 or 50 feet wide and well over 100 feet long. Before World War Two, or even before World War One, quite a few houses had small houses built behind them. There was planning in the zoning, every quarter-mile, a corner lot is zoned for a corner store with apartments. It is good to see the city's population swelling once more; the parasitism of suburbs is ending. Greater density will also create a need for additional bus routes as well as additional service, which is already being acknowledged. But Minneapolis is also challenged by needing ever more land for the University of Minnesota to expand, it seems, as well as keeping land for industrial and transportation purposes.

- Reply

- 5Recommend

Peter

Houston 6 hours ago

This has been my realization as well. A few years ago, I thought about investing my monthly payments into something that would hold value, but realized that the costs associated with buying, upkeep, and selling, not to mention potential opportunity costs of being unable to move, were too great. Part of that, however, is the fact that I live in a renter's paradise. Folks in NYC or San Francisco may feel differently.

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 5Recommend

Miss Pae Attention

Caribbean 4 hours ago

As a younger boomer who just retired, with a very small monthly income, having a single family home with a mortgage is no longer an option. My husband and I sold everything and moved to a small home (1000 sq feet) that we renovated on our island in the Bahamas. We are directly on the beautiful beach with no neighbors on either side of us. It's quiet and peaceful. The cost of living is half of what it is in the states. For now, it is our solution to housing.

- Reply

- 5Recommend

Lars

NYS 6 hours ago

Re : Zoning Minneapolis may be a city with a relatively honest zoning board (Scandinavian heritage ?) but in my city, zoning is THE cesspool of corruption. Most members of the Planning boards are developers or linked to it. Once, when the planning board considered extending municipal water and sewer, members of the planning board started quietly buying up undeveloped land in the designated areas before the decision was made public, making them millionaires. Campaign contributions will get you exceptions to parking regulations (one parking lot per two apartment dwellers) and so on Unless there are strict regulations about conflict of interest that keeps developers and their allies out of zoning boards, the mess will continue. Also, there needs to be a rule, that city politicians can not get campaign contributions from individuals that have business interests subject to city regulation. If this is not done, the corruption associated with zoning will continue. There is far too much money at stake, to not to be invaded it by shady characters.

- Reply

- 5Recommend

Purity of

Essence 6 hours ago

Better than a non-functional, overcrowded subway. Chicago is like New York but actually livable for the non-super rich.

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 5Recommend

jazzerooni

CA 4 hours ago

Why do you get to decide what other families want or have?

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 5Recommend

Jack

Santa Clara, CA 2 hours ago

This piece brings to mind a question I've considered for some time now: Is owning a home still a cornerstone of the "American Dream?" For me, and many of my millennial peers, I would venture to say the answer is no. Granted, the vast majority of my peers do not earn enough to mortgage a home, do not need the space to raise a family, and have no desire to commute from the suburbs--this will likely change with time. However, I think it's worth noting cities like Phoenix, Austin, Denver, and Dallas have been building condos/apartments in and near their city centers at record pace to keep up with demand. It seems that the future is gearing itself toward an American Dream devoid of home ownership for many. Hopefully this future will be accompanied by increased public transit.

- Reply

- 5Recommend

Multimodalmama

The hub 6 hours ago

High rise? No. That's what ZONING is for. And the citizens decide and review the zoning in Portland. Besides, what is it your business if someone lives in a tiny one bedroom that you don't like? Explain.

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 4Recommend

SB

Falls Church, VA 6 hours ago

I don't find the argument that changing the zoning will cause the value of existing single family homes to drop. If a developer could put 6+ units on a lot where only 1 stands, how would this make the land less valuable? One item I'm surprised wasn't mentioned is the building of new schools. If millennials are truly going to live in multi-family buildings with their children then these cities are going to need to build new schools. In my neighborhood there aren't a lot of vacant areas lots to build them unless these communities abandon the idea of a 10+ acre school with multiple athletic facilities.

- Reply

- 4Recommend

Multimodalmama

The hub 4 hours ago

Not sure what planet you are a concerned citizen of, but both places where I own property are extremely tight on housing and it isn't changing. People cannot just drive all the time, either, because that is killing us in about sixteen different ways. You don't like cities - we get that - so don't live in one?

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 4Recommend

SR

Los Angeles 4 hours ago

Just because YOU like living this way doesn't mean we all have to. The whole purpose of having zoning is to allow for different choices. Dense areas for those who prefer that; spacious areas for those who prefer that. I'm sure you would not like it if we "ended dense zoning" and only allowed single family zoning, now would you?

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 4Recommend

Leigh

NYC 2 hours ago

Why not push back against this parking requirement and advocate for better public transit? Why can't this policy be changed?

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 4Recommend

Concerned Citizen

Anywheresville 4 hours ago

Come on, you know it is not for "elder living". The reason these cities block things like adding a suite or kitchen, is that those folks plan to use it as Air BNB rentals and fill the neighborhood with their short term rental clients! There are big, big bucks in this. A house or condo that rents for \$3200 a month can sublet to Air BNB for \$300 a night -- 3 times market value. Also, mostly untraceable and untaxable to cities.

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 4Recommend

Carol

Minneapolis 5 hours ago

Fulton Realty just did a seminar in Minneapolis on how to replace a single family house with a triplex. The numbers they used (so you have them) is that you would buy a single family home for \$260,000, about our median home value. You then replace it with a triplex. Each unit has to rent for \$3000 to \$3200 for the math to work. You would then sell it in ten years.

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 4Recommend

Mtnman1963

MD 4 hours ago

Pray tell when did Lake Calhoun in Minneapolis become "BDE MAKKA SKA"?

- Reply

- 4Recommend

MaryKayKlassen

Mountain Lake, Minnesota 1 hour ago

For Minnesota, it is more intact, and two parent families, so it makes sense to have a single family house with yard, as there are lots of children in the Twin Cities. Cities like San Francisco, New York have more single people, millennials, and single parents with one child, and not only isn't there room, as both San Francisco, and New York have high population, 1 million, and 9 million respectively, and high population density. If all females had only had two children the year I graduated from high school, 1966, we wouldn't even be talking about this issue, in this country, or around the world, as population is the driver of climate change, housing, unrest, land

decimation, etc. The population in America was 196 million then, and around the world 3.4 billion. Now, in this country, the population is approaching 340 million, and in the world 7.9 billion.

- Reply
- 4Recommend

me

US 5 hours ago

Speak for yourself. Many of us LIKE tranquility, nature, and room to breathe.

- In Reply to
- Reply
- 4Recommend

Ted UWS

New York City 1 hour ago

Cities can re-zone away from single-family homes all they want, but there is still an ugly catch not being discussed in the article: parking regulations that define a minimum space set aside for cars based on the density of housing. These regulations were perpetrated by the US auto industry in the 1950s to further dependence on automobiles. If denser housing is one part of a two part equation that also has public transit (streetcars) in it's scope, then the cities need to do away with this auto-preferring regulation. What's the point of building denser housing, duplexes, etc. if you have to then set aside 25% of the adjoining for parking spaces? This cancels out the whole value of increasing density to make public transit viable.

- Reply
- 4Recommend

Concerned Citizen

Anywheresville 4 hours ago

YOU of course may feel this way, and that's fine -- you may only need one room such as studio to eat, sleep, cook, watch TV, read, entertain friends. But PLEASE do not tell ME how to live. I have no problem with you living in a tiny high rise apartment in a big blue city -- just stop telling

ME and countless millions of other people that we are "living the wrong way" because we DO NOT WANT to live like you! BTW: I used by living room, dining room and other rooms ALL THE TIME.

- In Reply to
- Reply
- 4Recommend

Martino

SC 5 hours ago

For years we've been pretending that the US has utterly unlimited land for single family homes and in many areas it has lead to homes built too far away from jobs to make any sense leading to extreme traffic congestion in a lot of places. We really ought to stop selling everyone on a dream, "The American dream" that often leads to hidden poverty, bankruptcies and another little ditty often unseen is the hidden crimes able to be perpetuated when nobody knows your business from your little castle in an area where nobody knows their neighbors. I live on one such suburban area where we have no idea who lives two houses away and there is precious little communication between neighbors.

- Reply
- 4Recommend

Carol

Minneapolis 4 hours ago

For every condo built in Minneapolis, eight rental units are being built. Not a single affordable unit for purchase has been built in the last two years.

- In Reply to
- Reply
- 4Recommend

Ockham9

Norman, OK 1 hour ago

Nonsense. Paris and most other large cities in Europe have two-parent families with children. They do quite well without their own private yards. Spend any amount of time in a public park in Paris and you will find kids playing with one another, negotiating relationships, finding new friends. It works.

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 3Recommend

Grittenhouse

Philadelphia 5 hours ago

That is not so in Midwestern cities, for starters, where it may be a half-mile to a corner store, which is certainly not going to be affordable, and two miles or more to a supermarket, which may not be affordable either, and cultural activity is limited to downtown and maybe uptown and a few other areas, save for if there are still neighborhood movie theaters. That means you have to drive everywhere, regardless of transportation.

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 3Recommend

GRH

New England 1 hour ago

The Democrats are advocating aggressive federal meddling in local zoning. This was well-reported during Obama's second term. I voted for Democrats at the federal level in every election from age 18 until age 38 but stopped beginning in 2013, after helping reelect Obama. It is not just on this issue but on many other as well, the party (and some media that seems aligned with Democratic Party) began to go crazy during his second term.

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 3Recommend



K Henderson

NYC 7 hours ago

These cities will inevitably build up -- simply because they have to -- and developers will be happy to oblige as zoning laws change. The USA human population has drastically increased since the 1960's. The article glosses over that essential point, though it is a great article nonetheless. The larger issue is that young families cannot afford a detached house and that is going to change everything in the USA. Expect to see apt buildings where there was once suburban homes because that is all many could ever afford in their entire life.

- Reply

- 3Recommend

mpound

USA 4 hours ago

"Yet in those places, one doesn't need a car and a 15 minute drive to get basic groceries, you can walk to a beautiful park 5 minutes away, and a bar downstairs,...." I know this is hard for you to believe Justin, but some of us yokels just don't see the pleasantness of living above "a bar downstairs".

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 3Recommend

Multimodalmama

The hub 6 hours ago

This is why you need comprehensive statewide or area-wide land use planning like Oregon and Vancouver BC have had for decades. It makes a huge difference in planning ahead for demand on services.

- In Reply to
- Reply
- 3Recommend

txpacotaco

Austin, TX 3 hours ago

@GRH your comment reads like a page of speaking points from some sort of far right publicity sheet. That said, it is well written and does reflect a lot of opinion in our country. Sadly, you are terribly misinformed in ways that may seem small when called out to you individually, but which in aggregate conclude that there is a political conspiracy behind every corner -- all architected by Democrats, of course, for the sole purpose of winning votes or even just for no reason at all. That none of the 22 million people you reference would be able to vote seems to have slipped your mind, and you also clearly have no idea what kind of legislation has been proposed (or passed) by Democrats or with bipartisan support when it comes to immigration. I wish I knew the right words to convince you to learn more so that you would at least have an opinion, here, based on facts.

- In Reply to
- Reply
- 3Recommend

txpacotaco

Austin, TX 4 hours ago

I have no problem with density, but I want to see less focus on rezoning (or dezoning??) existing neighborhoods and more on planned high density live-work development on vacant suburban land. So far as transportation goes, we very much need investment in light rail and improved infrastructure for buses and bikes; our city (Austin) is investing in all of the above, and fairly recently went back to the drawing board when the community soundly rejected their proposed code/zoning changes plan. We are far from perfect (I hardly recognize some neighborhoods for the number of high dollar tear down/rebuild/sell jobs replacing our existing single family

homes), but there are high density solutions that work without impacting every home owner in a state.

- Reply
- 3Recommend

Purity of

Essence 7 hours ago

The big assumption in all of this is that the cities are going to continue to grow. But with the country turning against immigration, an almost total collapse in the fertility rate, and the decline of middle-class jobs thanks to automation there will be much, much less demand for urban housing than before. The great rush to the cities is over.

- Reply
- 3Recommend

Andrew

USA 4 hours ago

My partner and I live in a high density condo building in an urban core, I'm involved in my neighborhood association, and I am invested in my community. The money i'm not spending on leaf blowers i'm spending at local businesses, which are thriving near me. I can walk to work, walk to the grocery store, walk to my pharmacy, and when I have children they will be able to walk to the local school. Bike paths abound. I have to deal with the noise and bustle of living downtown, but I love it. I'm 30 years old, and I can't imagine moving to the suburbs. Maybe I'll eat my words, but all I see is long commutes, dying malls, and a complete lack of character or regional identity.

- In Reply to
- Reply
- 3Recommend

Concerned Citizen

Anywheresville 4 hours ago

Harriet, I have zero problem with YOU being happy in a tiny rental apartment. To each their own. But that is not MY idea of a comfortable home. I'd be miserable there. So why should YOUR desires trump MY desires? I don't see any of this impacting your ability to attend college nor vote. As far as nature...well good luck finding any of in SAN FRANCISCO which is built out and congested! and good luck driving to Marin or Oakland for some nature, with all the traffic, tolls and congestion! Nobody is "anti-renter", we just don't want to rip up EXISTING affordable housing to create very overpriced rentals so that developers can make \$\$\$\$\$.

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 3Recommend



Justin

Alabama 4 hours ago

Yea, building dense cities and urban areas really converted European capitals into ghettos and slums.

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 3Recommend

MK

New York, New York 4 hours ago

The perspective of the Jewish guy is interesting. It's true that most people in these types of neighborhoods have nothing against Jewish neighbors and probably nothing against Black neighbors either if they belong to the correct professional class. But does anyone believe that this opposition is not motivated by keeping the class character of the neighborhood? More housing means cheaper housing, and that means poorer people in the neighborhood than could have otherwise afforded to live there, which is fundamentally who these people are trying to keep out. Also the argument that expanding supply won't bring down prices is ridiculous. Clearly, the demand for housing is not infinite. If the 10 most expensive cities in America upped their

housing supply by 50 percent, of course the price of urban housing would go down, just like anything else. To a certain extent this is already happening in Brooklyn where prices have not been going up in the last couple years too much due to all the luxury buildings that were built. They absorbed the demand that would have otherwise gone into gentrification of neighborhoods that are further out, so for now prices are staying stable. It's really not rocket science.

- Reply
- 3Recommend

Concerned Citizen

Anywheresville 4 hours ago

THAT IS FALSE. I paid off my mortgage. My parents paid off their (early!). All my friends have paid off their mortgages. I even know a few lucky millennials who managed to pay off their mortgages. If you are foolish enough to continually refinance or take out home equity loans...that's YOUR problem, not mine. Also: living in the same neck of the woods as you....yes the building boom here is puzzling, as we are losing population! but the building is not by INDIVIDUALS -- it is by DEVELOPERS, seeking to make a huge profit. Last time this happened.....was 2008 and we know how it ended. The next crash will make 2008 look like a country picnic.

- In Reply to
- Reply
- 3Recommend

Scott B

Los Angeles 3 hours ago

Up-zoning is a good idea, but the devil is in the details. Appropriate multi-unit housing that is consistent with existing neighborhoods can be acceptable (i.e., granny flats, as well as design, height and square footage limitations are essential). Buildable land is at a premium in major metropolitan areas and "easy" commutes have largely vanished, making building within existing neighborhoods a necessity. However, builders will never build enough new housing at any given time, sufficient to drive down the cost of housing (they would go out of business if they did). As a result, housing will continue to be expensive in most major metropolitan areas. If we really want to lower the cost of housing, we will need to relocate more "good" jobs to less expensive communities. However, job relocation can only do so much as the real growth in incomes has lagged the growth in housing costs for decades. "Affordable" housing is a relative term, but

unless you have a job in a community that pays enough to buy a house, there will never be enough affordable housing.

- Reply
- 3Recommend

Carol

Minneapolis 4 hours ago

In South Minneapolis, most of our housing is small bungalows built in the 1920's. The typical layout on one side is a tiny porch, a small living room, dining room and galley kitchen on one side, a bedroom, a bathroom and a bedroom on the other side with an expansion attic which has been converted at some point over the last 100 years. It isn't extravagant living - my clothes are in the basement because my bedroom is too small to hold them and a queen sized bed.

- In Reply to
- Reply
- 3Recommend

SD

Detroit 3 hours ago

In the words of William J. Levitt: "No man who owns his own house and lot can be a communist. He has too much to do." Of course, "communist" there is really just code for politically radical or subversive (or active period).

- Reply
- 3Recommend

Multimodalmama

The hub 5 hours ago

Only after they pay back the costs of the subsidies that they get for having a single family property.

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 3Recommend

Mom of 3

Dallas, TX 4 hours ago

Hi Bill, I live in Dallas and was curious about your statistics, especially regarding my home city. As I suspected, you're absolutely incorrect about the murder rate in Dallas. According to the FBI, in year 2017, Dallas had a murder (and non-negligent homicide) rate of 12.48 per 100,000. That's well below St. Louis (66.07), which ranks number one. Dallas doesn't even make the top 30. Also, your contention that Dallas had an increase in murders in 2012, that's also false. The murder rate per 100,000 in 2010 was 12.4. That number in the following years was 11.0 (2011), 12.6 (2012), 11.6 (2013), 9.3 (2014), 10.5 (2015). None of these rates approached the 1991 rate of 48.8 and all follow a general national trend of less violent crime. The 2019 crime spike has been well documented, and was an issue dominating the mayor's race. It's cause? Surprisingly, it has nothing to do with HUD, but instead, with Police pension mismanagement and low salary. That is, our police force is not large enough to support the city's population. Please stop with the scaremongering - it's not based in reality and it sounds a lot like racism.

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 3Recommend

Concerned Citizen

Anywheresville 4 hours ago

Justin, that is a fantasy. Sure, there are some very wealthy "walkable areas" in places like NYC -- neighborhoods within neighborhoods -- but MOST urban areas are FOOD DESERTS with little shopping and you are trapped going to just the stores nearby. Parks are full of crime, and you can forget driving to OTHER parks or country areas, as YOU HAVE NO CAR, because you bought into the myth of "walkability". You may want to shop at ONE overpriced city grocery store, but I WANT a choice of where to shop and to be able to drive to various stores, malls, farmers markets and WHERE I WANT TO GO. Also, none of this "walkability" works if you are disabled...elderly....or a mom with small children in tow. If you prefer Europe....please go move there. I have no desire to live my life in a tiny government apartment with no car.

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 3Recommend



NYC Taxpayer

East Shore, S.I. 3 hours ago

And the apartment buildings in those dense urban cores will deteriorate as the ownership flips every few years and the tenants take little interest in their buildings.

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 3Recommend

David

Flushing 7 hours ago

I live in a rather typical 6 story building with fire escapes from the 1950s in an area where 41 such structures were erected at about the same time. Today, most of these could not be built as the zoning was changed in the 1960s. New buildings can be only 40 feet high. As the allowed smaller apartments would likely have only paved driveways and parking areas, our larger buildings are more "suburban" with lawns and gardens. Eliminating the single family zoning in eastern Queens will likely have little impact for the general housing picture in NYC. Many of these areas are in "transit deserts" with no subways---clearly car country. Those seeking affordable housing would likely look elsewhere.

- Reply

- 3Recommend

Concerned Citizen

Anywheresville 4 hours ago

If you vote for liberals and radical Democrats, and social engineers....the Sanders, Warrens, and AOC....you will have all your rights taken away and Big Brother will tell you where you can live, what you can eat, how to think and who you can vote for.

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 3Recommend

GRH

New England 2 hours ago

Who is saying a political conspiracy behind every corner? I am not arguing that. Just saying, based on experience, real estate developers tend to donate to the people in control. I live in a super-majority blue state & they donate to Democrats here. And Democrats have gone all-in and followed policies of supporting up-zoning, especially in recent years. Nationally speaking, yes, there has been a documented increase in poverty in areas with arguably increased illegal immigration. A.P. even yesterday just did story on this, about increased child poverty in California, Nevada and the Southwest, following report from Annie Casey Foundation. I have followed the immigration debate my entire adult life, beginning with the outstanding efforts of African-American, Democratic Congresswoman and civil rights icon Barbara Jordan, when she led President Clinton's Bipartisan Commission on Immigration Reform. After doing a deep dive on immigration policy and the impact on US at multiple levels, including economic, educational, labor, community and environmental impacts, she recommended chain migration reform; elimination of diversity visa lottery; reduction of legal immigration from the then 1990's average of 750,000 per year down to the 1980's average of 550,000 per year; stronger enforcement vs illegal immigration, including mandatory E-verify; and increased funding for civil society in Central America. Sadly, she died in January, 1996 and Clinton betrayed her.

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 3Recommend



Casey Penk

NYC 5 hours ago

Most families have little use for 90% of their living space. Why do we need a separate living room, dining room, family room, and entertainment room? Most homes could be drastically downsized without any impact to quality of life. In fact, I think families would be happier because they would have less junk to maintain and more money to spend on bonding experiences.

- Reply
- 3Recommend

cd

massachusetts 1 hour ago

Interesting article. It's a shame, though, that I couldn't make heads or tails of any of the graphics. For someone with red-green color-blindness you could scarcely have chosen a worse color scheme.

- Reply
- 3Recommend

Carol

Minneapolis 3 hours ago

A big part of why this got passed in Minneapolis was that Internet trolls sold it by saying that single family homes were fundamentally racist and anyone who opposed the plan was racist also. The funny thing is that some of the largest concentration of single family homes is in the part of town with the highest concentration of people of color. Actual real people of color opposed the

plan. But screaming racism is a really good way of engaging young white people on-line so it was a very effective tactic.

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 3Recommend

Jp

Michigan 3 hours ago

"The real estate developers don't care who their tenants are and whether they are illegally here or not," Try being a landlord and asking that question of prospective new tenants.

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 2Recommend

ROK

Mpls 5 hours ago

Because a single family home buyer does not want to buy a house next store to an apartment building the property value of the house as a single family home will decrease. Only the land is valuable and a homeowner who isn't a developer cannot capitalize on that by bulldozing their house and putting up an apartment building.

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 2Recommend

Jon

Minneapolis 4 hours ago

Please NYT get the information correct, do not just repeat another publications misleading headline. The 2040 Plan that was approved is a guide to future development NOT a zoning change (yet). I agree with Carol. Although they did not approve the 19 unit project (miracle) the city planners seem to think they know what is best for citizens who make up this fine city.

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 2Recommend

SR

Los Angeles 4 hours ago

Ridiculous. Poverty exists in Manhattan too. And in rural Mississippi. And as far as "getting goods," it's a lot easier to do that with a car than on a subway.

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 2Recommend

suomi73

Cleveland 5 hours ago

There is a mythology around home ownership that serves many people - other than the home owner - very well. Few people pay off their mortgages anymore, making a home part of a debt treadmill with a heavy tax burden. Americans' desire for more and bigger everything is part of a broader problem that props up our consumerist economy and accelerates some of the environmental problems alluded to here. It's even an issue in places where it really makes no sense. Greater Cleveland's population has been flat or declining for 50 years, and there is horrible sprawl all around it that's flattened forests and farms for McMansions and megamarts. We're killing ourselves for lawns.

- Reply

- 2Recommend



gw

usa 1 hour ago

"Flooding in places like Houston increases because of more pavement and buildings, so combine that with the increased intensity of rainfall and it's more trouble." The trees and yards of single family homes provide vegetative surfacing that soaks up and retains rainfall, as well as providing bird/wildlife/pollinator corridors. By contrast, density increases impervious surfacing, causing more run-off and flooding. Divide a lot with one house and build three (with mature trees torn out and homes built to the property lines, as is common today) and you've greatly increased impervious surfacing. Same with duplexes, triplexes, condos, apartments, etc.....developers want every square foot for interior living space they can get out of a lot.

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 2Recommend

Keegan

VT 4 hours ago

Opening up zoning laws isn't the government dictating how people should live. It's allowing the people to build what they want to build. They're not banning single-family houses. They're opening up laws so people aren't FORCED into living that way whether they want to or not. It's the current zoning laws that are government master planning going way too far. They were designed in the 1950s explicitly to discriminate against black people. If the government really wanted to let people live how they want and help end decades of housing discrimination, end these restrictive housing laws!

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 2Recommend

Carol

Minneapolis 3 hours ago

There is artificial scarcity in New York or San Francisco or Seattle but Minneapolis is not them. Our growth in housing units has been very close to population growth, except during the Great Recession. Our big problem is that it is too expensive to build affordable housing, not that zoning is somehow prohibiting it. Our city hands out building permits like candy.

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 2Recommend

SR

Los Angeles 4 hours ago

Same exact thing is happening in Los Angeles.

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 2Recommend

KevinCF

Iowa 1 hour ago

I've been involved with local govt for years. Zoning isn't the issue, though slightly increased density , such as infill duplex or triplex, can be quite compatible with single family zoning legacy areas. The issue is affordability. It's wages. It is people getting COLA or decent pay increases. We shouldn't over-think our issues, our issue is simple: the US system has favored wealth and the upper classes based on a flawed theory and the results are evidence of the flaw. Change course, don't create pretzel logic that the favored classes will all too eagerly play us all into. After all, the folks who have benefited from the flawed policies will not have their quality of lives changed by killing zoning codes nationwide. They live in the gated areas with covenants governing development regs. So, yeah, they'd love it if we all blamed something else, anything else, than the system that tilts the favor.

- Reply

- 2Recommend



Justin

Alabama 5 hours ago

The funny thing is these "apparatchiks" also decided that single housing zoning made sense, and look at the cities we have today. Don't hear you complain about what that reaped - inhospitable for anyone without a car, no urban density, food deserts, no real neighborhoods, no human scale living.

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 2Recommend

laurence

bklyn 52 minutes ago

Agreed. Here in Brooklyn new high rise and mid rise buildings are popping up like weeds. Have been for years. The rents have only continued to grow. Simply: Developers aren't interested in building anything "affordable". When the local owners get wind of how much these new places are going for they raise the rents on their units to match. It's just human nature, something the economists have a hard time with. And, as a result of all these tasteless "Modern" buildings the character of Brooklyn is forever lost. Only the real estate industry wins.

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 2Recommend

I want to leave this planet

but stuck on Earth 4 hours ago

In the US, the post-war suburbs were created by substantial government intervention in the market: Government-backed loans made homeownership affordable to the masses. Enormous infrastructure investments connected roads, highways, power lines, water pipes, and sewer service to these far-flung communities. Local zoning kept out the (undesirable) poor, while federal rules ensured that these communities remained racially homogenous. The American suburbs are an enormous publicly-financed gift to the white middle class, which seems to have completely forgotten this largess. This forgetfulness is demonstrated in the outcry of resentment whenever the rules change to benefit someone else.

- In Reply to
- Reply
- 2Recommend

thisisme

Virginia 4 hours ago

I agree with you and believe me, we pay for it--our property taxes are very high and we paid a ridiculous amount for a house built in the 60s and we get no subsidies. But, as many others have mentioned, there have been a huge increase of condos and townhomes in the DMV area. Condos that are further out than where I am start in the low \$600,000s for a 1 bedroom and can easily reach close to a million closer to DC. How is that helping anybody? It's not evening the playing field for any one. We'd like to think that changing the zoning laws will help people but the only people they're going to help are the developers.

- In Reply to
- Reply
- 2Recommend

Concerned Citizen

Anywheresville 4 hours ago

I agree with you 100%. This article is delusional. However, the "delusion" that the Federal government (under Warren, Sanders or AOC) will somehow "give" all these renters huge rent subsidies, so they can AFFORD that \$3200 a month (one bedroom) apartment (into which they

will shove a family with 3 kids and two adults somehow!). Also, since they are "low rise" for the most part, they have lots of stairs -- developers won't put elevators into 2-4 level buildings -- so they are unsuitable for the elderly or handicapped. You want to fill an **UNDERSERVED MARKET**? there is so little housing ANYWHERE, cities or suburbs, for seniors who can't do stairs and who need ranch-style houses or condos -- laundry on the first floor -- also for the handicapped. This housing can be "universal" -- it can be used by anyone -- but gives freedom and mobility to the elderly/disabled! yet almost nobody is building any of it at any price.

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 2Recommend

Jp

Michigan 3 hours ago

"These comments are unreal. " There are pros and cons to the arguments. But labeling dissenting views as "unreal" does lower the load on the brain.

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 2Recommend

Craig

DC 3 hours ago

Why would their property values and quality of life decline? What about all of the new amenities they will receive with the increased density? Restaurants, bars, shops, climbing gyms, doggie daycares, libraries, grocery stores, etc. all require a sufficient number of people to remain viable businesses. Small businesses have a much better chance in a high density area than sequestered in a mega shopping complex on the outskirts.

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 2Recommend

Grittenhouse

Philadelphia 5 hours ago

That is only partly true. Suburbs are themselves surrounded by other suburbs and cannot expand, and are built out until you reach the outermost ring of suburbs. The inner ring of suburbs of Minneapolis have realized that and begun to build dense urban core areas to become more city-like. Eventually, they, too, will have to increase density of housing. But with larger lots, homes can easily be expanded.

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 2Recommend

Metro West

Mass 5 hours ago

Did I miss if Houston, with no zoning rules, was mentioned. It would be interesting to see a map of that city since shouldn't that sort of show you what happens?

- Reply

- 2Recommend

SR

Los Angeles 4 hours ago

What's not sustainable is increasing our population. Whether we add more people in crowded apartments or comfortable suburbs, they all eat, go the bathroom, and use air conditioners.

Putting an apartment tower on top of what used to be a house doesn't make it more environmentally friendly. If you're THAT focused on helping the earth, shift your focus to birth rates and slowing (legal and illegal) immigration.

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 2Recommend

Multimodal mama

The hub 6 hours ago

It isn't bad per se - just massively overbuilt for the market and wasteful, polluting, unsustainable, car-oriented, etc. Even with blanket rezoning eliminating single family zoning, how long do you think it will take to flip over? A very long time in areas where demand for it is still high.

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 2Recommend

Ryan

Bingham 1 hour ago

Those apartments, hastily built, will become the slums of tomorrow. Who wants that?

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 2Recommend

George S

New York, NY 5 hours ago

"...except the most expensive." Now that is the most telling line in this excellent comment - and sounds oh so very believable.

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 2Recommend

d.e.

Washington, D.C. 5 hours ago

They'll blame not enough government intervention.

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 2Recommend

Concerned Citizen

Anywheresville 4 hours ago

First off, you are comparing MANHATTAN -- one borough of NYC and the richest, most congested part -- with ALL OF CHICAGO. That is hardly fair. Also, I've spent time in Chicago and there is excellent public transportation -- you can live there and not own a car if that's your goal. Most Americans love and want cars, however. I don't see any real enthusiasm from most Americans to turn every big city into MANHATTAN -- where an apartment rents for \$4000 a month and is tiny, and no hope of home ownership, ever. Also, the most income inequality....the most segregated neighborhoods!....and the most segregated public schools in the nation! Heal yourself, then lecture others.

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 2Recommend

c harris

Candler, NC 4 hours ago

Zoning creates gentrification it puts stress on people who work near areas that are zoned for single family homes which they cannot afford. Real estate markets drive the situation. Urban sprawl and the problems of air pollution and vast amounts of cars on the roads to get to areas where the work is has reached the breaking point. N.Virginia is the bell weather where cars swamp mass transit. Traffic on the major traffic arteries cause long back ups seven days a week.

- Reply

- 2Recommend

Carol

Minneapolis 1 hour ago

Jake - There have always been duplexes available and accessory dwellings. But the incentive is now to demolish single family homes and replace them with much higher density housing. It is not cost-effective to demolish single family homes and replace them with duplexes - you have to build much larger housing with many more units for it to be cost-effective.

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 2Recommend

Jake

Minneapolis 2 hours ago

To be clear, no one is banning single family housing. Just the zoning that only allows single family homes. In other words, you will always be able to build a single family home. Now you can just do a duplex or accessory dwelling etc...

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 2Recommend

MaryKayKlassen

Mountain Lake, Minnesota 1 hour ago

Those who own large real estate holdings, mostly rentals of apartment buildings across this country in the cities, have benefited from the real estate deduction, where they pay no taxes, so it just makes it easy for these people, like the Trump Organization, and the Kushner Holdings to drive up the cost of both rentals, and ownership. That deduction is mostly the sole driver of the higher cost of affordability for all people. It shouldn't of ever been passed by Congress.

- Reply

- 2Recommend

Carol

Minneapolis 4 hours ago

Unfortunately, Minneapolis is not New York or San Francisco. We did not build on a dense apartment model and we can't turn the clock back a century to build the way you want. We are Minneapolis and not the world you envision. The question is what do we do now. We have started working towards neighborhoods like you talk about in our downtown and by the University of Minnesota over the last 20 years. But now, instead of guiding more development into these walkable environments, developers are now going willy nilly anywhere they can slap together a couple houses. It is exactly against what you are envisioning. And we are projected to grow only 10% over the next 20 years so bulldozing great tracts of single family homes won't happen. Upzoning makes no sense for the world you envision.

- In Reply to

- Reply

- 2Recommend

GRH

New England 1 hour ago

There is a name for those fake "citizen" groups funded by developers. It is called "astro-turfing." Masking the sponsors and financial backing and their agenda. All too common in politics today, including not just nationally but at local level regarding development decisions, as you are unfortunately discovering in Portland.

- Flag
- In Reply to

- Reply

- 2Recommend

- [Share this comment on Facebook](#)[Share this comment on Twitter](#)



HapinOregon

Southwest Corner of Oregon 2 hours ago

The US has a housing problem for one basic reason: Wages have not increased as much as housing costs. Adjusted for inflation the average US wage in 2018 was equal to what it was in 1978. My town has a housing problem that reflects the national one. Brookings is a great place for retirement and prices reflect that. Many people (such as myself 19 years ago) are taking advantage of rising prices in the areas where they worked to buy smaller places in areas such as mine. However, the average wage in Curry County, Oregon is less than \$15/hour. That's ~\$30K a year. Present rental rates are close to 50% of wages earned. That is not sustainable. And, because of geography most buildable land has been built on. The only recourse is much denser housing which is not looked on favorably. Yet... Business is NOT going to increase wages so the only recourse, IMHO, is government subsidized housing. In today's social and political climate I really don't think that idea will gather much traction.

- Reply
- 2Recommend

Alex

California 1 hour ago

We desperately need more development. I live in the Bay Area now, used to live in DC, and I grew up in (and will someday return to) New York. All of those places have severe housing crises, with the Bay Area's being beyond extreme. A dense, transit-oriented, bike- and pedestrian-friendly future where people can walk to great restaurants and stores and jobs is the best and likely only solution to a number of major problems in our country. One problem many don't even consider is the crisis of community. Suburbanization has caused its fair share of social problems, but even worse is the problem of young people unable to afford to purchase homes. I'm a well-educated professional in my mid-20s and make a healthy six-figure salary, and yet I can't afford to buy ****ANY**** house here in the Bay Area while I set \$3k a month on fire in rent. My situation in NYC wouldn't be much better, unless I lived with my parents for ***two or three years*** to save up a down-payment, as a late-20s adult more than capable of renting on his own. Obviously this is a major financial and lifestyle problem for me as an individual, but looking beyond my own story, this is a major social crisis for our cities and communities. It's important for society that young people be able to invest in homes, establish roots, and build attachment to a local community. When even us yuppies can't afford houses because of supply constraints, who will buy your houses and lead local community institutions someday?

- Reply

- 2Recommend