



April 2017

Useful Community Development... quick notes

Making Friends With Housing Density

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Saying Yes to Housing Density

If you like to keep up with these things, YIMBY is a new acronym for you. Standing for "Yes, In My Backyard," this has become a catch-all phrase for mostly young people who want to advocate for urbanism even when it comes at the price of large-lot housing development and automobile-oriented transportation.

The acronym reacts to another, NIMBY (Not In My Backyard). NIMBY has been summing up opposition to dense or intense development plans and zoning, or undesirable neighbors or land uses, for a number of years now.

The basic reasoning behind the budding YIMBY movement is that construction of more housing is needed in cities and towns where housing has become too expensive. The desire for urban amenities and walkability also contributes.

An easy way to carry out YIMBY notions, with respect to the housing shortage in some areas, is to add taller and/or more dense buildings on redevelopment sites or vacant lots along arterial or major collector streets, often where obsolete commercial buildings once stood.

If our high-rise construction photo seems too large-scale for your city, simply moving from two-story commercial buildings to three-story townhouses, or townhouses above storefronts (shown below), also is a good move.



Recently we watched [Alex Steffen's keynote address](#) at a 2016 YIMBY gathering. He makes a compelling case that housing density increases are critical to doing our part to address climate change. It inspired action on our part; maybe you will want to rethink your attitude toward density too.

This trend, if it becomes one, counteracts nearly 70 years of suburban development in the U.S. The [newest page on our website](#) goes into more detail, for those of you who are interested.

But What About the Rest of Us...

Some of you are squirming right now because you live where overpriced housing isn't nearly as big a deal as the existence of whole neighborhoods where it's hard to convince anyone to move in. (If so, check out [neighborhood revitalization approaches](#) or [solutions to concentrated poverty](#).)

Oddly enough this less popular community also needs a metro area emphasis on density, coupled with aggressive strategies to repopulate vacant and abandoned properties. These communities benefit from regional initiatives to discourage sprawl development. When it becomes substantially more difficult or costly to move to the suburbs, demand for urban core and inner suburban properties intensifies and helps struggling neighborhoods work their way up.

We've written about smart growth, sort of the opposite of urban sprawl, recently. We won't repeat ourselves further, but you can read about [effects of suburban sprawl](#), or [solutions for sprawl](#), if you need to understand more.

Website Additions: New this month, in addition to the YIMBY page, are a visitor-submitted experience [Two Countries, Two Cities, Two Neighborhoods, and One People](#), as well as these visitor-submitted questions with answers from our team: [1960s Rental Unit Found Unpermitted](#), [Deed Restrictions Next Door Being Violated](#), [Additional Set of Deed Restrictions](#).

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