

TOPIC PRIMER:
Zoning

Expand housing choices by zoning for diverse housing types

Image credit:
The Cottage Company

What is zoning?

Zoning is a set of rules that determines what kinds of development and which land uses are allowed on different parcels.

What's the challenge?

Zoning arose in an effort to keep people safe by separating incompatible land uses, like homes and factories. Unfortunately, residential zoning today inhibits the production of a variety of housing types to meet American demand. In 75% of residential area in American cities, single-family homes are the only kind of housing that's legal to build. This leads to fewer housing choices that meet the needs of diverse community members.

What's the solution?

Change the zoning standards that prohibit a diverse mix of housing choices within neighborhoods to see where additional housing choices could fit well. Allow duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, and other small-scale multi-family units as neighborhood infill, and allow a mix of uses in neighborhood centers, like an apartment over a shop.

I'm a single person.

My studio apartment in a triplex is perfect for me as I build my savings. I love that I can walk to the grocery store and bike to work every day.

We are retirees.

We downsized to a ground-floor condo where we can age in place and say goodbye to yard work.



Community benefits

- Allowing a greater diversity of home types means that buyers and renters have more options that meet their needs.
- A mix of housing options creates attainable choices for the community's workforce, such as teachers and first responders.
- Buildings like duplexes, fourplexes and cottage courts can fit into existing neighborhoods while providing additional units to serve the needs of diverse demographics. Mixed-use development (where residential uses are next to or above compatible commercial uses) helps create a vibrant place.



Image: New triplex in South Jordan, UT

Places to Study

Minneapolis, MN
Permitting up to three homes on all residential lots

State of Oregon
House Bill 2001 allowing duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes, cottage clusters, and townhouses on all residential lots in large cities

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NAHB Creating Housing for All Toolkit

