



Variety of Housing Types

A population with a wide variety of housing needs and wants should have a wide variety of housing types to choose from. Most of the housing that has been built over the last 80 years, however, fits into one of two categories: detached single-family homes (usually on large lots), or big apartment complexes. Other housing types – cottage courts, duplexes, townhomes, courtyard buildings and the like – are few and far between. A major reason for this is that zoning codes often permit detached single-family homes almost everywhere while setting a few areas aside for apartment buildings. In many places, it is simply not permissible to build any other kinds of homes.

Those other housing types have come to be called “Missing Middle”: “Middle” because they fall between single-family homes and larger scale apartment buildings, “Missing” because they have been legislated out of our housing mix. Missing middle homes are compatible in scale with single-family homes and meet the need for more housing choices at different price points. Reviewing and modernizing codes to allow more types of homes in more places will not only result in more housing being built, but will increase the chances that young people, older people, and anyone whose needs may not fit into the narrow confines of “detached house or apartment complex” can find the housing they want.

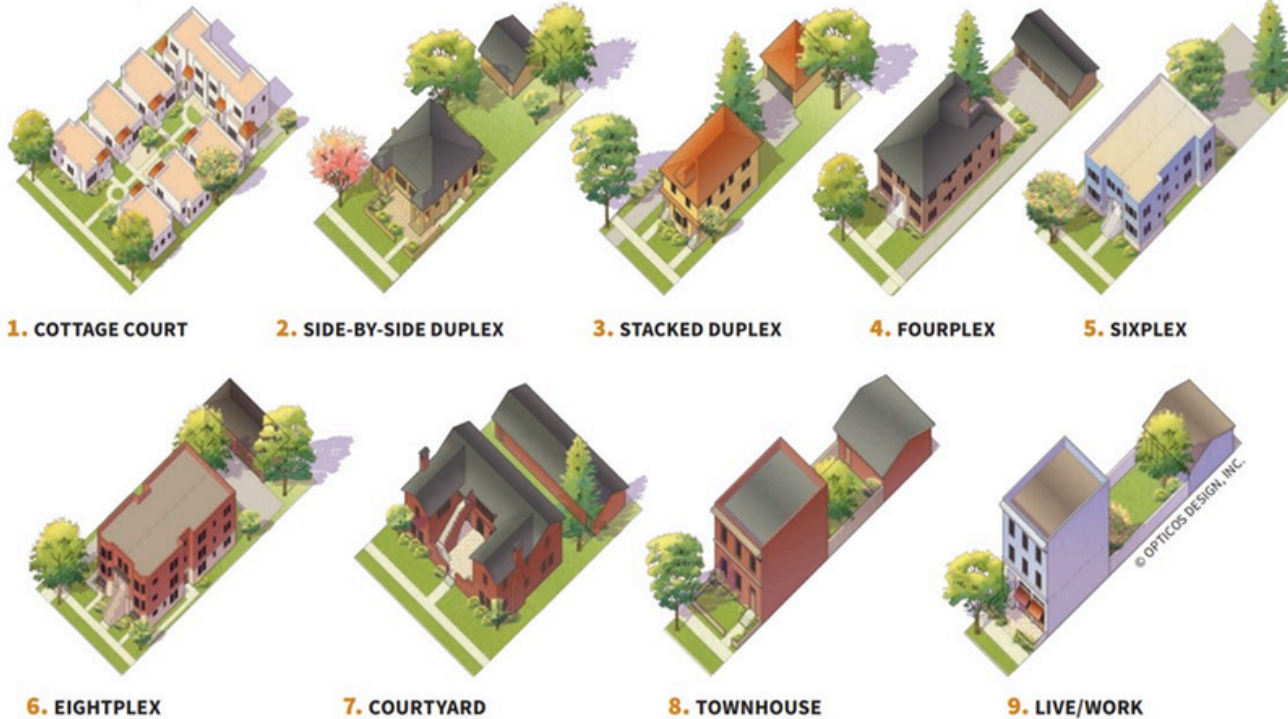
Benefits of Missing Middle Housing

- Provides a variety of housing options that allow people to stay within their communities as their housing needs change.
- Uses land more efficiently, reducing overall development costs and resulting in housing that can be more affordable to rent or purchase.
- Adds needed housing units to a community without fundamentally changing the physical characteristics of a neighborhood.





A Missing Middle Housing Sampler



Source: *Discovering and Developing Missing Middle Housing*, AARP and Opticos Design

Common Concerns

There are few if any developers doing these types of projects in our area.

- **Response:** Because economies of scale encourage large-scale multifamily development, and for the simple fact that smaller scale missing middle housing has been effectively illegal to build for the last half century, there is a lack of builders who specialize in this type of housing. Talk with your area contractors, real estate professionals, and lenders (for example, the Community Preservation Corporation) about building a network of developers who do small-scale housing.

Our community is worried about the negative impacts of increased housing.

- **Response:** Be upfront and transparent about the benefits versus costs of adding housing to your community. Host open meetings where residents can ask questions and raise concerns. Conduct surveys. Be an empathetic and active listener when talking to community members. Come prepared with information about trends in school enrollment and traffic, and share examples of other neighborhoods that have increased housing choice while maintaining or improving quality of life. Focus on the community benefits of increased housing, including supporting the local economy and providing housing that meets the needs of different demographic groups.





What could this look like in my community?

Despite how few missing middle housing units have been built in recent years, there are still examples across Dutchess County of missing middle housing integrating seamlessly into downtowns, suburbs and rural areas. In the Village of Rhinebeck alone, there are nearly 100 residential buildings with between two and ten units, many of which have been part of the fabric of the village for centuries. Each community has examples, including the following:

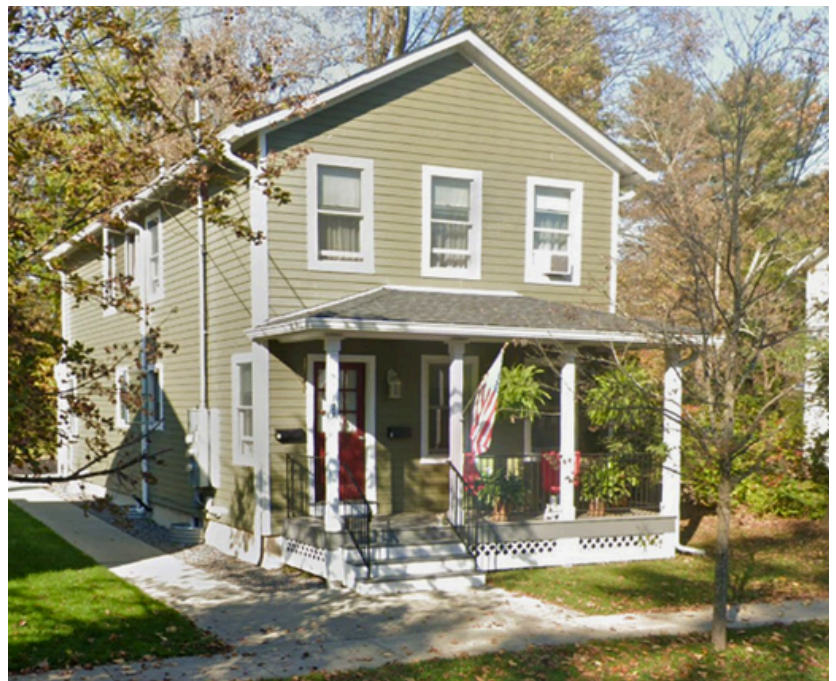
(images sourced from Google Streetview, accessed September 2024)



1-, 2- and 3-family homes line a street in Hyde Park



A 4-family home in rural Stanford



A new 2-family home in the Village of Rhinebeck





Strategies

- Identify where missing middle housing already exists in your community or neighboring communities. Organize walking tours or site visits to see how this type of housing already works in your region.
- Be clear about the desired degree of change in your area. Is your community looking for smaller, more incremental changes or opportunities for small-to-medium-sized projects? Think about where those opportunities exist in your community.
- Map where new missing middle housing makes sense in your community. Look for areas where this type of housing can seamlessly integrate within existing housing stock. Work with your municipal engineer and the County Health Department to understand any infrastructure limitations that might exist.
- Be thoughtful about how you speak about housing with the community. Opposition to development can make for a non-starter when considering adding missing middle housing. It is important to frame the conversation around the community's housing needs. Avoid using terms like "density" and "upzoning," and focus more on the form and scale of the housing itself (e.g. duplex, fourplex, cottage court, courtyard building), along with housing choice and accessibility (where will your community's teachers and police live; where will your children live?).



A 4-family home in Wappinger

Other Resources

- Missing Middle Housing: Thinking Big and Building Small to Respond to Today's Housing Crisis. (2020). Daniel Parolek
- [Discovering and Developing Missing Middle Housing \(AARP\)](#)
- missingmiddlehousing.com
- [How Six Cities Are Creating Missing Middle Housing \(RPA\)](#)

