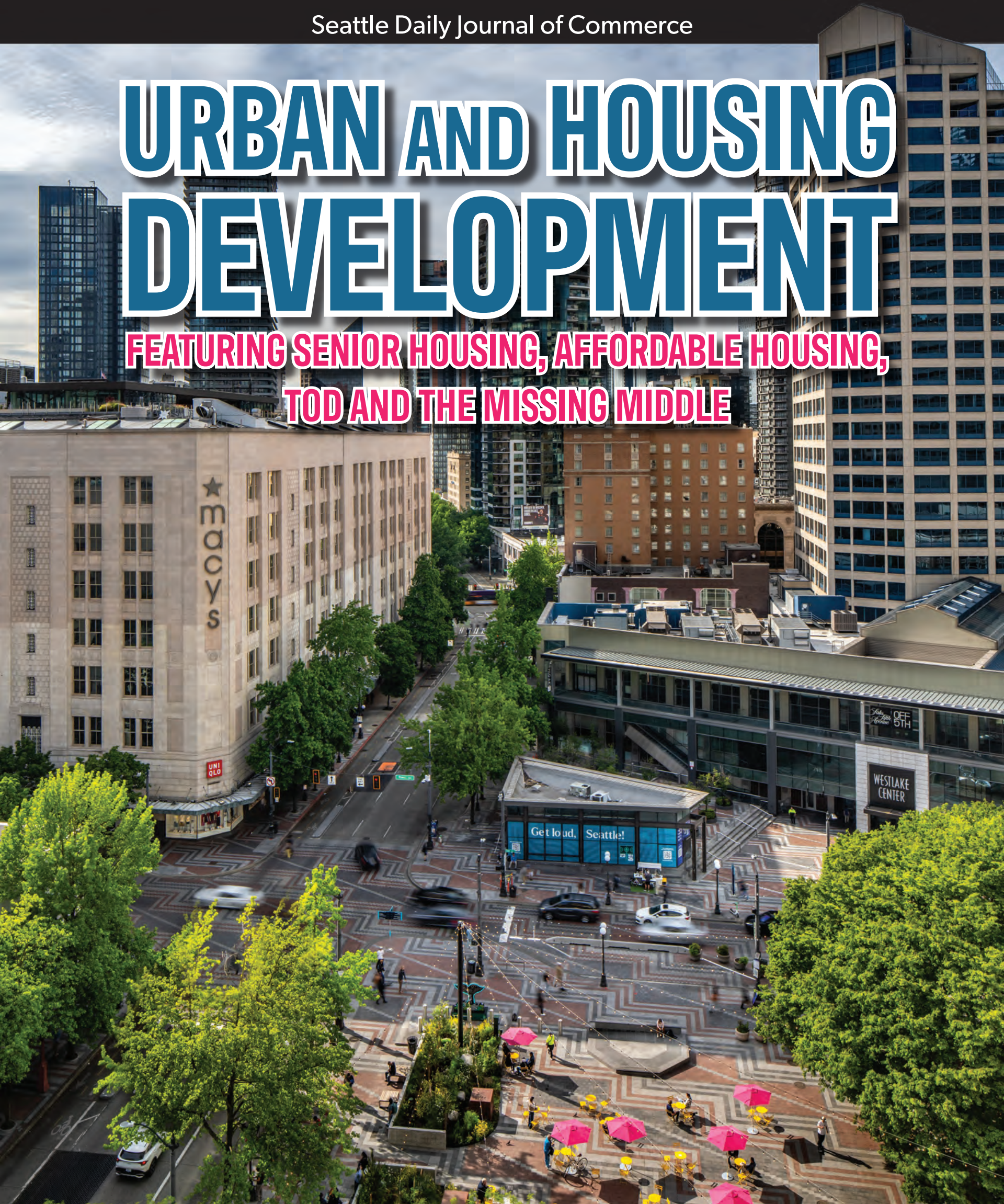


URBAN AND HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

FEATURING SENIOR HOUSING, AFFORDABLE HOUSING,
TOD AND THE MISSING MIDDLE



August 27, 2026

CONNECTING TO THE WORLD CUP: THE POWER OF TOD

Seattle's strong showing at the World Cup was in part thanks to the city's high-functioning, thoughtfully designed multimodal transportation systems integrated into the fabric of downtown life.

I had the good fortune of receiving World Cup tickets the day before the Egypt vs. Belgium match in Seattle. The match was scheduled for noon on a workday, and I had meetings until 11:30 a.m. I closed my computer right on time and headed out on foot from my downtown office, walking two blocks to the light rail station.



BY DYLAN JONES
GENSLER

By noon, I was in my seat at Lumen Field (rebranded as Seattle Stadium during the tournament), immersed in the global jubilation of the world's most iconic sporting event. A couple of hours later, I was making my way back downtown on foot, carried along by the energy of the international crowd. I was back at my desk and working again by 3 p.m.

Seattle has been, and continues to be, serious about transit-oriented development (TOD). The light-rail expansion program known as ST3 is one of the largest in the country. Trains are clean and modern, feel safe, and run frequently. Streets are designed to support pedestrians, bicyclists, micromobility users, buses and cars. Blocks are scaled for walking, crossings are manageable, and building frontages



222 Fifth sits at a highly trafficked downtown intersection where millions of people pass each year on their way to Seattle's South Lake Union, the life sciences hub, or while visiting the city's nearby museums, stadiums, and restaurants.

PHOTO BY HEYWOOD CHAN

and street trees create a comfortable, human-scaled experience. Development is actively supported in station areas.

This all matters, a fact reflected in our extensive

monitoring of fan experiences at World Cup matches. Time and again, people's experiences of major urban events are shaped by how they move to, from, and through the cities that host

them. Lumen Field, located in a highly walkable and transit-connected downtown, is so easy to access that there was no need to plan my trip.

I expected it to be easy, and it was. In fact, it was enjoy-

able. The excitement built during the short walk to the stadium, and multilingual celebrations filled the streets afterward.

Not surprisingly, Lumen Field was recently ranked the top World Cup venue by The Athletic (tied with Atlanta's Mercedes-Benz Stadium), whose reporters evaluated match experience, atmosphere, aesthetics, transportation, and location across all host cities.

What's interesting is how much the journey to and from a venue shapes the experience of the venue itself. Many stadiums on The Athletic's list received low scores for transportation and location. Numerous articles chronicled the cost and challenges of simply getting to matches in those cities. Even the best venue experience is diminished when a stadium sits far outside the urban core or lacks reliable transit connections.

Lumen Field and adjacent T-Mobile Park anchor a downtown that functions

Gensler's Unity Loop branding as part of Seattle's World Cup initiative,



PHOTO COURTESY OF GENSLER



The most desirable urban environments are walkable, safe, accessible, and integrated with natural landscapes. Transportation is foundational to supporting this vision in dense locations. Project: Confidential Master Plan, Santa Monica, CA.

DESIGN BY GENSLER

with remarkable ease. As we increasingly seek in-person events and experiences, perhaps as an escape from our digital lives, integrated sports and entertainment venues play a critical role in supporting downtown “stickiness,” Gensler’s measure of a downtown’s appeal as a destination.

Gensler’s 2026 City Pulse Survey ranks downtown Seattle fourth nationally in stickiness, reflecting how often residents visit and how long they stay. One of Seattle’s strongest assets is

its transit system: 76% of Seattle respondents reported satisfaction with public transit, compared with 58% nationally.

Many World Cup visitors were impressed by how easy it was to reach matches and fan zones without a car. According to reports from Sound Transit, Seattle’s downtown location, walkability, waterfront, and Link light rail connections were repeatedly highlighted as strengths. Record transit usage during the tournament suggests that large numbers

of visitors successfully relied on public transportation.

The highest reported transit ridership occurred on July 6, for the United States vs. Belgium match, when Sound Transit Link light rail carried approximately 309,000 riders, setting a new single-day record for the system. Sound Transit also reported a monthly ridership record of 5.4 million boardings in June 2026.

Other World Cup match days generated similarly impressive ridership:

- Egypt vs. Belgium (June 15): 221,000 Link riders
- USA vs. Australia (June 19): 297,000 riders
- Bosnia-Herzegovina vs. Qatar: 237,000 riders
- Egypt vs. Iran: 234,000 riders
- Belgium vs. Senegal: 246,000 riders

Across the broader regional transportation network, including rail, buses, ferries, and water taxis, transit agencies collectively carried more than 500,000 passengers on some tournament days, demonstrating the capacity and resilience of Seattle’s multimodal transportation system.

WHAT MAKES A SUCCESSFUL TRANSIT-ORIENTED COMMUNITY?

As Seattle continues to build out its ambitious transportation expansion program, it will be important to evolve land-use policies and zoning to support vibrant, sustainable, and economically viable transit-oriented communities (TOCs). These communities build on transit infrastructure investments

while incorporating mixed-use development and the civic and social infrastructure, including schools, community centers, grocery stores, and parks, that support health, wellness, and economic prosperity.

While every transit-oriented community is unique, the most successful TOCs tend to share several characteristics:

- Active public-private collaboration
- Robust first- and last-mile connections
- Meaningful community engagement throughout the planning process

Creating successful transit-oriented communities requires collaboration among transit agencies, municipal governments, private developers, and local residents to maximize the value created by transit investments.

As Seattle’s showing at the World Cup demonstrated, venues thrive when they are supported by high-functioning, thoughtfully designed multimodal transportation systems and integrated into the fabric of downtown life.

Building and improving transit systems is challenging, as is integrating world-class sports venues into dense urban environments. But committing to both strengthens our commercial centers and the communities that grow around them. The result is a city that is more desirable, more resilient, and ultimately much stickier.

Dylan Jones, is a principal and global mobility and transportation leader with more than 25 years of experience based in Gensler’s Seattle office.

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ON THE COVER

Westlake Park received a \$4 million renovation in preparation for the 2026 FIFA World Cup, upgrading its infrastructure, paving and site features.

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WELCOMING THE WORLD — AND SEATTLE — BACK DOWNTOWN

As Seattle prepared for the FIFA World Cup, the renovation of Westlake Park offered an opportunity to consider the role civic spaces play in the health of our downtown.

Some of Seattle's public spaces matter well beyond their footprint; they're the parks, plazas and streets that quietly stitch our neighborhoods together. Commuters weave through, neighbors gather, visitors form first impressions and events unfold. These spaces require calibration over time; continuous investment to keep them in tune with the needs of the city. Westlake Park had reached such a moment of need.



BY ANDY MITTON
BERGER
PARTNERSHIP

Completed in 1988, the park occupies one of the most prominent public spaces in downtown Seattle, sitting squarely between Pine and Pike on Fourth Avenue. The park had gradually fallen out of step with the city around it — aged infrastructure, limited technological amenities, trees maturing beyond the conditions they were planted in.

Community conversations revealed that while Westlake remained central to downtown, it no longer fully reflected how people wanted to use it. As Seattle prepared for the 2026 FIFA World Cup, the renovation of Westlake Park offered an opportunity not simply to refresh the park, but to consider the role civic spaces play in the health of our downtown.

Working alongside Seattle Parks Foundation, Seattle Parks & Recreation, Sellen Construction, Pine Street Group and a broad cross-section of community stakeholders, Berger Partnership led a design process that reconciled competing priorities: preserving what made Westlake Park distinctive while adapting it to meet the needs of a changing downtown.

"Westlake Park has an important dual role. It's the neighborhood park for a growing downtown residential community, but it's also Seattle's gathering place for major civic moments," said Rebecca Bear, president and CEO of Seattle Parks Foundation. "Our goal was to invest in the infrastructure, comfort and flexibility that allow the park to succeed in both roles, every day

Updated seating and improved paving help make Westlake Park more inviting for residents and visitors alike to stop and stay awhile.



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and during the city's biggest events."

The design focused on three priorities: reconnecting Westlake Park to the surrounding city, strengthening its ecological resilience, and upgrading the infrastructure needed to support everyday use and large civic events.

RECONNECTING THE PARK AND THE CITY

Removing the non-functioning fountain and reconfiguring the stage reconnected the park to surrounding streets, opened sightlines throughout the space, and created new green space for the community to enjoy.

LANDSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS

New native planting areas strengthened the park's green character while improving growing conditions for mature trees, allowing 34 of

the site's 35 existing trees to be preserved. New planting areas, composed entirely of native species, create seasonal interest while supporting the long-term health of the landscape.

INFRASTRUCTURE & IDENTITY

Upgraded electrical infrastructure, Wi-Fi, improved accessibility and new power connections created a park capable of supporting larger events and everyday programming alike. Carefully salvaging and replicating the park's signature basketweave paving preserved an important part of Westlake's identity while repairing decades of wear and accommodating healthier growing conditions for mature trees.

"Colorful chairs, tables, and ping pong games with eager players and onlookers have brought wholesome activity to what was a misused and sterile public space," said

Evelyne Rozner, a Downtown Seattle resident and park neighbor "I, with scores of other residents, property owners, retailers, and park goers participated in many public input forums hosted by the Seattle Parks Foundation. And the Berger Partnership and Sellen Construction brought that input to life."

"I'm delighted to see that a space defined by unrelenting hardscapes is now greener, safer and more welcoming," Rozner said.

Following a sharp post-pandemic rebound, Westlake Park saw steady year-over-year growth in visitation through 2023. With the renovation now complete and the park once again fully available for programming, there is good reason to expect that momentum to continue.

Since the park's completion, thousands have gathered there for World Cup watch parties and Downtown Summer Sounds free

concert series; with more events to follow in the coming months. The improved infrastructure and opportunity has been felt by many already.

"I think my new favorite thing about the Park is that I can really see the community's input: from the preservation and reinvention of the free speech stage, to adding green space with a holiday tree, to increasing safety," Julia Beabout, Downtown Core resident and chair of the Downtown Community Council. "The project is a great example of the power of public-private partnerships and the value of centering of community in that process."

What emerges is a reminder that successful public spaces are rarely defined by a single design gesture. They succeed because countless physical, operational and social considerations work together to support every-

day life. The infrastructure that powers a food truck, the seating that encourages someone to stay, the healthy trees that provide shade, the open sightlines that improve comfort and safety, the flexibility to host both a neighborhood lunch break and a citywide celebration – these are not separate investments. Together, they make up more than the sum of their parts, creating a park that contributes to the health of our downtown long-term.

Westlake Park's renewal also reflects the strength of the public-private partnership behind it. Seattle Parks & Recreation, Seattle Parks Foundation, the Downtown Seattle Association and the broader project team worked together throughout the design process, pairing long-term stewardship with operational experience and community input. DSA's years of programming and activating the park helped shape decisions that support both everyday use and major civic events, ensuring the renewed park would continue to draw people long after construction was complete.

That investment is already contributing to a broader downtown success story. During the FIFA World Cup,

The Athletic ranked Seattle as the No. 1 stadium experience among host venues, while Sports Illustrated ranked Seattle No. 2 among all 16 host cities, citing the downtown experience, transit access and surrounding amenities.

That momentum doesn't have to end with the tournament. Jon Scholes, president and CEO of the Downtown Seattle Association, has pointed to free and affordable events, from watch parties and walkable fan zones to Downtown Summer Sounds, as ways to sustain the energy that filled downtown during the World Cup. Westlake Park, renewed with the infrastructure and flexibility to support both everyday use and major civic events, is well positioned to play an important role in that future.

As cities continue to invest in their downtowns, Westlake Park offers an important lesson. Long-term urban vitality depends not only on creating new destinations, but on renewing the public spaces that connect them.

Andy Mitton is a principal at Berger Partnership in Seattle, specializing in culturally and historically significant landscapes and public parks.



Westlake Park received a \$4 million renovation in preparation for the 2026 FIFA World Cup, upgrading its infrastructure, paving and site features.

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DESIGNING FOR QUALITY OF LIFE AND CREATING SPACES FOR ALL GENERATIONS

Creating senior living environments that encourage children and grandchildren to stay means a healthier and happier life for residents.

Right now, it's all about Baby Boomers when it comes to senior living design. As the earliest of this generation reach 80 this year, we're seeing a surge in demand for senior housing. With 20 straight quarters of growth, and occupancy averages reaching 90% at the end of last year, demand is picking up. Those who have been



BY MONICA KNAPP
WEBER THOMPSON

successfully aging in place are transitioning to a higher level of day-to-day care, and it's only going to continue.

We are seeing many senior living facilities refresh their spaces to meet this influx, and whether we are renovating or designing for new developments, meeting the needs of this growing demand means appealing not only to residents, but to their families as well. Designing for resident families, consisting of multiple generations, means designing for a healthier and happier life for the residents.

The lobby and Grand Stair at University House in Issaquah is one of many informal spaces designed for family members of all ages to gather and connect.



RENDERINGS BY WEBER THOMPSON

DESIGNING WITH FAMILY IN MIND

Why focus on appealing to families and multiple generations? Conventional wisdom

in senior living design is to appeal to the eldest daughter. Statistically, she will do the lion's share of caregiving and decision-making when it

comes time to move parents into a senior living community. As designers, we must recognize the complexities of family dynamics in this

decision-making process and consider the adult children of future residents.

This is about more than smart marketing. Yes, a beautiful first impression is a must-have, but whenever my team helps a senior living client with a renovation or a new project, we're doing more than simply updating the materials and finishes of a space. We're designing environments that encourage family members to visit more often and stay longer, providing compounding benefits to residents' health.

When family members feel comfortable visiting their loved ones, they're likely to visit more often. Research links stronger connections made through consistent social visits to positive health outcomes for older adults, including mobility retention, cognitive resilience, and even increased lifespan.

While there are many variables to consider in determining why these close relationships play such a significant role, two recurring themes stand out in the research: informal caregiving and optimism.

Durable materials with an elevated, residential feel encourage residents and guests to linger over a glass of wine at the University House's Fireside Lounge.



INFORMAL CAREGIVING

Informal caregivers fill the gaps between the duties of paid care staff and the functional limitations of senior residents. Even in a fully staffed assisted living community, visiting family members contribute to a network of informal caregivers that provide additional monitoring, health advocacy, stress-buffering, and support for day-to-day personal tasks. For example, an adult child with a long-standing history with their parent and who's familiar with their idiosyncrasies is better-equipped to notice a subtle change that seems outside of the norm. This level of familial intimacy leads to earlier advocacy and improved health outcomes.

OPTIMISM AND RESILIENCE

Older adults with higher optimism have a greater probability of living to age 85 and beyond, and they're not just living longer; they're remaining independent longer and actively engaged. This doesn't have to be an embedded personality trait to see the benefits of its influence; in fact, it may look less like "everything will all work out" and more like, "I have the support of my family to weather this hardship."

There is a direct connection between the involvement of an older adult's support system, specifically with close family members, and their perceived resilience and sense of security in the face of medical events and long-term physical impairments. Optimism has a real impact on actual health; when we believe we can, we make choices that support our expectations.

DESIGNING FOR CONNECTION

So how does this tie back to design? As designers, we have an opportunity to create senior living communities that feel welcoming and comfortable for residents and visitors. That has been our goal from the beginning, and the research is clear: when we encourage friends and family members to visit loved ones in senior communities, residents live longer, better lives.

To support those connections, flexible spaces that are thoughtfully distributed throughout the community and programmed alongside other shared amenities are key.

Family members should not feel limited to the 800 square feet of their loved one's apartment when they visit. They should feel comfort-

The newly renovated bistro at Aljoia Mercer Island replaced the coffee bar with a lounge seating area that becomes an event stage to better accommodate the rotation of live music and other performers.



able lingering at a community bistro table, joining their dad in the theater, or perhaps enjoying a glass of wine with their mom at the piano bar. These spaces are designed to feel like home, but also withstand heavy use.

For example, in a fireside lounge, a variety of seating options and cozy groupings welcome people of all shapes, sizes, and mobility levels to sit and stay. With seniors in mind, furniture should be built to last with carefully considered dimensions and materials like beautiful velvet that can endure heavy use, clean easily, and still look residential. A space should feel elevated, but lived in.

Access to natural light is always preferred, and when selecting lighting, standardize as much as possible. Environments feel more comfortable when the lighting is even, the color temperature is consistent, and fixtures are adjustable to accommodate the varying needs of residents and families. It's also important to consider a mix of hard and soft surfaces to manage a room's acoustics. A little chatter can make a room feel activated and create a level of conversational privacy in a public setting, but a cacophony of sound can be disorienting; it's a balance.

MAKING VISITS FEEL JOYFUL

Creating a place that family and friends look forward to visiting is the first step in nurturing connection and improving the quality of life,

and longevity, for senior residents. The more we create compelling spaces that are comfortable for seniors and their families, the more we set up residents and loved

ones to experience the kinds of moments where visiting feels natural, meaningful, and joyful; for years to come.

Monica Knapp is an interior

designer at Weber Thompson, designing senior living environments that support dignity, comfort, and meaningful connection for residents and their families.



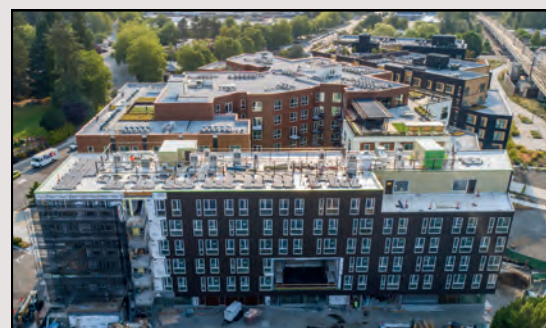
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GROWING STRONG COMMUNITIES THROUGH TOD

Lessons learned illustrate how thoughtful design and community-centered development can create complete, connected communities around transit.



BY ERIN ISHIZAKI, HEIDI OIEN,
& BRAD BARNETT
MITHUN

Transit Oriented Development (TOD) has become one of the most important tools for addressing the challenges facing Washington communities — from housing production and inclusive mobility to transit connectivity and economic development. As communities across the state update comprehensive plans and zoning codes to implement new housing and TOD requirements, they have an unprecedented opportunity to shape compact, connected and resilient neighborhoods around major transit investments.

Yet effective TOD requires more than adding density near transit. It requires careful coordination between community priorities, urban design, transportation and infrastructure. It often means taller buildings in low-rise neighborhoods that may be wary of change.

Growth can occur in areas that may not yet have the infrastructure, walkability or public services to support it. Coordinating transit delivery, public improvements and private development is also a major challenge, as each follows different timelines and funding cycles.

The following examples highlight lessons learned from TOD projects along the West Coast. Each example highlights a different theme, scale, and delivery approach. Together, they illustrate how thoughtful design and community-centered development strategies can help transform our communities into places that are connected, inclusive and resilient.

KAPUSO AT THE UPPER YARD, SAN FRANCISCO

Kapuso at the Upper Yard is a 131-unit affordable housing project on BART-owned land at the Balboa Park BART station in San Francisco. The project weaves together a complex transit environment that includes a BART station, multiple MUNI bus and light



Kapuso at the Upper Yard transforms a former BART parking lot into affordable housing, community-serving retail and a multi-modal transit hub.

PHOTO BY TOM FITZGERALD

rail lines, the 280 freeway interchange and nearby dedicated bike lanes.

One lesson from this project for Washington state is the importance of working closely with transit agencies to integrate transit functions and access into the design of the site. Ground-floor uses reinforce the transit-hub function with active, community-serving programming: a café, an arts hub, YMCA childcare and a community bikeshare (Bicis del Pueblo).

A plaza connects residents and visitors to a high-capacity bus stop and transit functions such as a passenger pick-up/drop-off loop are tucked into the site without disrupting pedestrian routes or access to other transit modes. Each of these features works together to transform this former parking lot into a community gathering place and mobility hub that connects the neighborhood to the region.

BYLINE AT PRESS BLOCKS, PORTLAND

Byline at Press Blocks demonstrates how higher-density

development can reinforce an evolving neighborhood through thoughtful urban design. Located adjacent to Portland's MAX light rail in the Goose Hollow neighborhood, the project breaks down a formerly inward-facing newspaper campus into a walkable, mixed-use district. The development adds 341 apartments, creative office space and neighborhood-serving retail, in a location supported by transit, walkable streets and nearby amenities.

Significantly increasing height for the area, the 24-story tower introduces the scale of development needed to support TOD while sparking community conversation about neighborhood change. The project responds with careful attention to the pedestrian experience, including active ground-floor uses, a public plaza, a midblock connection and a welcoming streetscape that integrates the two buildings into the neighborhood.

For Washington state, Byline demonstrates that well-designed TOD can evolve established neighbor-

hoods while strengthening the qualities that make them walkable, connected and distinctive.

SUSTAINABLE LITTLE TOKYO, LOS ANGELES

Sustainable Little Tokyo demonstrates that effective TOD is measured not only by new housing and density, but by its ability to strengthen existing communities over time. In anticipation of Los Angeles' Regional Connector light rail, a community-led vision plan responded to concerns that rising land values would displace residents, legacy businesses and one of the nation's last historic Japantowns.

Rather than resisting growth, the plan integrated higher-density development with affordable housing, public realm improvements, green infrastructure and cultural preservation. It also paired physical investment with neighborhood activation, heritage interpretation, wayfinding, cultural programming and coordinated support for legacy businesses. The vision directly informed

the First Street North project, creating 248 units of affordable and supportive housing for veterans and 40,000 square feet of community-serving commercial space, while influencing Metro's joint development process through community partnerships.

For Washington state, the key lesson is that TOD succeeds when it sustains the people, businesses, and cultural identity that make neighborhoods distinctive — not simply the buildings around transit.

LESSONS FOR WASHINGTON STATE

Putting these lessons into practice, the city of Kirkland's NE 85th Street Station Area Plan demonstrates how Washington communities are already preparing for a new generation of transit-oriented growth. Developed in coordination with Sound Transit and WSDOT, the plan aligns land use, transportation and infrastructure to support a future Bus Rapid Transit station while strengthening walking, bicy-

cling and regional transit connections.

It establishes a clear framework for growth through new zoning, a Tax Increment Finance (TIF) district to fund public improvements and affordable housing requirements that could deliver more than 600 income-restricted homes. Together, these strategies provide a framework for realizing the full benefits of the public's transit investment.

Transit-oriented development is ultimately about more than where growth occurs — it is about how communities shape growth to create lasting public value. These examples from across the West Coast, together with Kirkland's station area planning, demonstrate that TOD depends on integrating housing, mobility, public space, economic opportunity and cultural identity into complete neighborhoods through thoughtful planning and collaboration among communities, agencies and the private sector.

As Washington communities implement new TOD requirements, the greatest opportunities will come from pairing supportive zoning with high-quality urban

design, infrastructure investment and meaningful community engagement. When approached holistically, TOD can do more than deliver new housing near transit — it can advance equitable growth, reduce emissions, strengthen local economies and create connected, resilient places where people and communities can thrive.

Mithun partner Erin Ishizaki leads the firm's Districts, Neighborhoods, and Campuses integrated design practice, working with cities, agencies, institutions and developers to create people-first places through transit-oriented development, healthy housing and high-performance districts. Mithun partner Heidi Oien is an architect and urban designer who leads TOD projects ranging from significant mixed-use vertical developments to helping transit agencies understand the capacity of surplus land. Mithun associate principal and urban designer Brad Barnett works with cities and community organizations across the country to create strategies to reposition and reimagine urban sites and districts.



Byline is a new mixed-use development on the MAX light rail line in a rapidly transforming neighborhood.

IMAGE BY PLOMPMOZES FOR MITHUN



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FROM CORRIDOR TO NEIGHBORHOOD: THE LONG VIEW AT TOTEM LAKE

Designing individual projects that thoughtfully meet the street helps form a neighborhood one development at a time.

For decades, Totem Lake worked like most auto-oriented retail corridors in the region. You drove in, parked, shopped and left. Buildings faced the parking lot, not the street. There wasn't much reason to stay once the errand was done.



BY BEN GIST
CARRIER JOHNSON
+ CULTURE

That's changing, corridor by corridor. Evergreen-Health's medical campus, new housing, and the slow redevelopment of aging retail parcels are turning Totem Lake into something closer to a neighborhood.

It isn't becoming a downtown. It doesn't need to. It's becoming its own kind of place, shaped by the mix of uses already on the ground: a major hospital campus, retail anchors like The Village at Totem Lake, regional access along I-405, the Totem Lake Transit Center, and increasingly, housing.

Carrier Johnson + Culture's history in this corridor goes back to the redevelopment of the former Totem Lake Mall into The Village at Totem Lake, where the firm served as architect for two residential communities developed by Fairfield, North and Aspect, completed in 2021.

But the more useful lesson may be what came next. Roughly four years later, CJ+C continued its work with Fairfield on The Brynn, a 486-unit residential community along Slater Avenue, outside the original Village site. The difference between those projects says a lot about how auto-oriented corridors actually become neighborhoods: not all at once, but through later increments that have to extend the pattern outward.

HOUSING, ADDED IN INCREMENTS

Retail and healthcare anchor a district. Housing is what makes it feel occupied day to day. But in a corridor like Totem Lake, the timing and location of that housing matters.

North and Aspect anchor The Village at Totem Lake, the mixed-use redevelopment that transformed a long-vacant mall site into one of Kirkland's most active districts.



PHOTOS BY CHRIS EDEN

What's different about The Brynn is where it sits in the corridor's timeline. The Village at Totem Lake's build-out was a coordinated, master-planned redevelopment: hundreds of housing units delivered alongside a shared retail and entertainment plan, backed by city infrastructure investment and a public-private partnership years in the making.

The Brynn had none of that scale behind it. A portion of its units are income-restricted, part of a property tax exemption agreement with the city of Kirkland, administered through the region's affordable housing coalition, ARCH.

That's the shape most corridor redevelopment actually takes after the anchor project is done. Not one coordinated buildout, but smaller projects filling in over time, each one making its own case for how it meets the street. Not every project gets the benefit of a shared master plan, coordinated infrastructure

investment, or adjacent retail energy. Most corridor redevelopment happens more incrementally than that.

WHERE THE DESIGN WORK ACTUALLY HAPPENS

The larger point, that later increments have to earn their place without the scale of coordination the original redevelopment had, gets tested at a much smaller scale: the sidewalk, the entry, the edge of a parking garage.

At The Brynn, that meant locating parking behind and below the residential buildings rather than fronting the street, organizing entries along the pedestrian edge, and using courtyards and open space to create moments of arrival. The goal was a building that reads as housing meeting the street, not a parking structure with units wrapped around it.

The residential buildings step down in scale toward Slater Avenue, facing a lower-rise apartment building

across the street. The rest of the block, still storage, auto repair, and a driving school, hasn't turned over yet, a reminder that this corridor is mid-transition, not finished.

Aspect had a different job. It sits inside the Village, next to retail, dining, and a movie theater built to draw people in from outside the neighborhood. Its ground floor and entries could lean on that context, activated by a destination that already had its own pull.

The Brynn doesn't have that. Outside the Village's retail plan, it has to function as part of the everyday neighborhood rather than a piece of a destination. Entries, courtyards, and the street edge do more of the work on their own, since there's no adjacent retail energy to borrow from. That's not a case of getting it wrong the first time. That is what the long view looks like in practice: the same corridor, a different moment in its evolution, and

a different design problem depending on what the project has to stand on.

None of these moves are dramatic on their own. That's the point. A building that meets the sidewalk well doesn't announce itself. It just makes walking past it, stopping to sit, or crossing the street nearby slightly easier than it would otherwise be. Multiply that across a corridor, and you get a place that reads as walkable, not just a place that technically has sidewalks.

WHAT COMMUNITY-CENTERED DESIGN ACTUALLY TESTS FOR

That phrase gets used loosely enough that it's worth being specific about what it means in practice. It isn't a design philosophy so much as a short list of daily questions: Does this work for someone walking from the bus stop? Is there somewhere to sit that isn't a retail patio? Can you get from a residential entrance to the

grocery store without crossing a parking aisle? Does the building's scale feel proportional to the person standing next to it?

Those questions don't require an ambitious master plan. They require attention at the scale where people actually experience a building, which is closer to eye level than it is to a site plan.

A MODEL OTHER EASTSIDE CORRIDORS WILL FACE

Totem Lake isn't unique in the conditions it started with. Auto-oriented retail, strong transit access, land that's been waiting for the right combination of uses to turn over: those conditions describe a fair number of Eastside and suburban corridors, from parts of Redmond and Renton to older retail centers throughout the region.

What Totem Lake offers isn't a template to copy wholesale. It's evidence that incremental redevelopment, done with real attention to the street level rather than just the site plan, can add up to a more complete place over time. No single project does that alone. The Brynn is one piece of a longer process, and the corridor will



The Village at Totem Lake's central plaza integrates public art, green space, and active retail frontage, creating a gathering place at the heart of the redeveloped corridor.

keep changing after it. That process is still running: Nara, a 203-unit community underway with Alliance, is going up adjacent to the Village right now.

The lesson worth taking from it isn't really about Totem Lake specifically. It's that the difference between a corridor and a neighborhood gets decided in details

most people never consciously register: where the parking sits, how the building meets the sidewalk, whether there's a reason to stay once the errand is done.

Ben Gist is managing principal of Carrier Johnson + Culture's Seattle office, leading mixed-use, multifamily, higher education and urban redevelopment work.



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GREAT CITIES: GROWING OLDER WITHOUT GROWING AWAY

Thoughtful senior housing within walkable urban neighborhoods allows residents to remain connected to the broader life of the city – and that improves the fabric of our civic environment for all.

For years, Seattle has measured success in part by its ability to attract new residents, employers, investment and construction. And facing the challenges of accommodating a growing population, navigating a changing downtown and creating urban neighborhoods that stay vibrant around the clock, it's rightfully asking if it's building a city where people want to be.



BY ERICA
THRASH-SALL
HORIZON HOUSE

But as we look toward the future, we should also be asking ourselves another question: Are we building a city where people want to stay?

That question deserves more attention as Seattle's population ages. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, roughly one in eight Seattle residents is now age 65 or older, and the Washington Office of Financial Management projects that Washington's 65-plus popula-



Residents can socialize on the West Tower's 33rd floor, which will feature a restaurant, bar and lounge, and yoga studio.

IMAGE COURTESY OF MITHUN, COPYRIGHT BRICK VISUALS

tion will grow dramatically over the next two decades. These demographic changes require a shift in how we view housing in Seattle.

In many ways, housing has implicitly sorted people by

life stage. Young professionals gravitate toward urban apartments. Families move to larger homes. Empty nesters may hold onto the family home or move to condos. And older adults seek out

the quiet life of retirement communities, often outside of the city center.

Increasingly, that last assumption no longer reflects reality.

I am the CEO of Horizon

House, a 60-year-old non-profit Life Plan Community on First Hill. I meet people every day who have no interest in leaving Seattle. Indeed, I meet people from outside the city who, when stepping into the final decades of their lives, are seeking to leave the suburbs for a more urban environment. They want to remain close to the neighborhoods they've invested in, the cultural institutions they support, the volunteer organizations they serve, the healthcare providers they trust, and the restaurants, parks and streets that have become – or will become – a part of their daily lives.

Rather than riding quietly into the sunset, they want to step loudly into a community that reflects their values, one where they're surrounded by others who keep their lives interesting, intellectual and inspiring.

That distinction matters for older adults. And it matters for Seattle itself.

Cities are strongest when they reflect the full spectrum of life. A healthy downtown isn't defined solely by office occupancy or residential density. It's strengthened by people of different generations sharing the same neighborhoods, patronizing local businesses throughout the day, volunteering,



The West Tower's 33rd floor restaurant, overlooking the Seattle skyline and the Puget Sound.

IMAGE COURTESY OF MITHUN, COPYRIGHT BRICK VISUALS

attending performances, supporting nonprofit organizations, mentoring younger generations and contributing to civic life.

Where people live influences their connection to friends, community and culture. Just as importantly, where people live influences how they stay committed to purpose. Researchers increasingly distinguish between lifespan and “healthspan”: not simply how long we live, but how long we remain active, independent and engaged. Social connection has become recognized as one of the most important contributors to healthy aging.

That reality becomes even more important as the number of “solo agers” continues to rise. Many older adults will reach retirement without a spouse or family members nearby. Community itself becomes an increasingly vital part of the support system that allows people to thrive.

Thoughtfully planned housing can help foster that community. Locating it within walkable urban neighborhoods allows residents to remain connected to the broader life of the city rather than becoming isolated from it. And creating communities of active and engaged older citizens improves the fabric of our civic environment.

This isn't a conversation about one type of development or one housing model. Nor is it about replacing other priorities in Seattle's housing conversation, of which there are many.

It is about recognizing an

increasingly important segment of the market: older adults who want to continue living an active urban lifestyle and are looking for housing that supports independence today while providing confidence about tomorrow. Many have the financial means to do so, but they are seeking something quite different from traditional retirement communities or ultra-luxury developments. As this population grows, so too will the need for housing options designed around how they actually want to live.

At Horizon House, we're seeing that demand firsthand through the development of our new 33-story West Tower. While every project responds to its own community and market, the broader lesson extends well beyond a single building. Today's older adults increasingly expect the same things they've always valued: culture, lifelong learning, wellness, connection and the ability to remain active participants in city life. And, as they age and the relationships in their lives change, they're increasingly seeking new communities with which to grow.

That presents an opportunity for everyone involved in shaping Seattle's built environment.

Architects, engineers, developers and builders have long helped define what kind of city Seattle becomes. As demographics evolve, so does the opportunity to create places that serve people across every stage of life.

The cities that flourish over

the next several decades will not simply be those that attract the next generation, but those that work for every generation. For housing that serves older adults, that means recognizing their higher value as an essential part of a thriving urban future.

Ultimately, that may be one of the most important measures of a successful city. Not just a city that can attract people to come, but one that can create an environment where people will want to stay.

Erica Thrash-Sall is CEO of Horizon House, a 60-year-old Life Plan Community on First Hill, and serves on the Board of Directors for Leading Age, the Downtown Seattle Association, and the Clean, Healthy and Safe Committee of the First Hill Improvement Association.



Garden terraces offer urban green spaces for events, exercise and for residents to connect and build community.

IMAGE COURTESY OF MITHUN, COPYRIGHT PLOMP



The West Tower garden terrace connects Horizon House to the current campus.

IMAGE COURTESY OF MITHUN. COPYRIGHT PLOMP

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A BETTER WAY TO LIVE: THE STORY OF JAMIE'S PLACE

An intentional cottage-like care home in the Methow Valley helps elders feel at home and connected to their community.



BY RAY
JOHNSTON & MARY
JOHNSTON
JOHNSTON ARCHITECTS

The Methow Valley has always done things a little differently. This isolated rural valley in north-central Washington is, for permanent residents, a tough place to live. Those who grow old here face the prospect of slippery winter driveways, hot summers, isolation — and lack of caregivers.

Jamie's Place, an elder-care group home, was founded almost 20 years ago as a response to those challenges and as an alternative to the common end-of-life care institution. It sought to respond to the values of the community, a "we take care of our own" mentality, and it sought to create a home-like environment for elders to age gracefully in the place that they loved. After many years, Jamie's Place needed a major upgrade, and Johnston Architects was chosen to design a new facility that doubled capacity from 12 to 24 rooms for residents yet kept the home-like environment that made Jamie's Place so special.



Common space in the Mountain House at Jamie's Place.

RENDERINGS BY JOHNSTON ARCHITECTS

A new Jamie's Place presented a great opportunity for the designers. Typical assisted living institutions follow a formula: rooms are all identical, and room clusters are designated by level of care. Meals are at specific times and prepared by staff. In for-profit facilities, decisions are made with efficiency, and not necessarily resident preferences, in mind. This was not the Jamie's Place model or ethic. The

designers were tasked with making a home where everyone's needs were addressed, and the rhythms of daily life were respected and accommodated.

THE GREEN HOUSE MODEL

Jamie's Place was originally modeled on the Green House project, an alternative to a traditional nursing home setting, founded by Bill Thomas, M.D.

The project aims to replace institutional nursing homes with small "intentional" communities where elders and staff focus on living full and vibrant lives. Residents live in cottages with private rooms and baths, and the project has spread to 27 states.

The Green House Project is now allied with Aging In.

The primary goal of the Green House Project is to emulate as closely as possible the experience of "home". Rooms are aggregated in "houses," each occupied by 6-8 residents. Each resident has an ensuite bed/bath, and each "house" has a great room and other amenities.

Houses do not seek to lock residents in. Food is prepared by staff and residents who wish to participate, and residents can eat when they want. Staff are available to assist in basic tasks and to provide responsive care when problems arise. It is most commonly a non-profit model relying on a monthly fee and supplemental philanthropy.

THE PAST AND THE FUTURE

Longtime Methow Valley resident Jamie Finlan gifted her estate to The Cove, a food bank, with the inten-

tion of creating a meaningful project for her beloved valley. The Cove envisioned a care facility for local elders, so that they could remain near family and friends. The original Jamie's Place opened in February 2007, and Mountain View, a second house located on the same property, opened in February 2009. In 2013, the Methow Valley Family Home Center Association was established and is the non-profit organization operating as "Jamie's Place."

After a series of mishaps that typically befall aging structures — burst pipes, failing heating and cooling systems — the time was right to replace the original structures. The new Jamie's Place was relocated to a flatter site that was more accessible. The new facility consists of three houses with eight residents each, and provides training opportunities for local aspiring caregivers.

The three houses connect with the surrounding environments in various ways, incorporating views, outdoor courtyards and other amenities. They are named for their surroundings: the Mountain House, the Meadow House, and the River House. In addition to administrative staff, each house is managed by



Courtyard framed by Mountain, Meadow and River houses.

two caregivers available around the clock.

SUBSIDIZING COSTS

Cost is a significant factor for anyone needing long-term care, but especially in rural communities. Monthly fees at Jamie's Place are modest compared to for-profit facilities, but still, those who have been challenged by the cost of housing may not be able to afford the full cost.

To that end, the Jamie's Place board determined that it would subsidize a quarter of its resident rooms for Medicaid recipients. While those residents receive governmental contributions to cover fees, there is still a delta between what Medicaid provides and the actual cost of housing and care. At 24 residents, and with a supplemental endowment, Jaime's Place has balanced the equation.

BUILDING UP THE WORK FORCE

A perpetual problem for institutions like Jamie's Place is finding adequate staff to fulfill the mission. Jamie's



Place is committed to training staff for various caregiver certifications. Last year, without a true facility for this effort, leadership at Jamie's Place helped 30 individuals

receive certifications.

A PARTICIPANT IN TOWN LIFE

The new property is adjacent to the downtown core

of the town of Twisp and its emerging Creative District. Sited between this vibrant part of the valley and the Methow River, the location will help to integrate resi-

dents with citizens and visitors to Twisp.

Jamie's Place will incorporate the work of local artists into each residence and will include places for music and spoken word performances. The site is wrapped by a pedestrian trail. The arts program will include pieces that are visible from the trail, and that will extend the effective area of the Twisp Creative District to include the facility.

A FUTURE WE ALL WANT

As Baby Boomers age, there will be increasing demand for elder care, expected to peak in 2030. The Green House Project, the ethic that Jamie's Place is based on, is an appealing alternative to what we all fear — the warehousing of our elders, and eventually, ourselves.

It is said that a community is judged by how they treat their most vulnerable members. If that is true, then places like Jamie's Place can lead the way to a more just and kind future for us all.

Ray Johnston and Mary Johnston are the founding partners of Johnston Architects, with work spanning the Northwest including single-family, public, multi-family/mixed use, workplace and commercial projects.

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REDEVELOPING WITH ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING MEANS MOVING FORWARD WITH CONFIDENCE

Understanding environmental conditions early on helps affordable and senior housing teams better anticipate costs, coordinate schedules and secure funding.



BY SUZY STUMPF & TINA HUFF
FARALLON CONSULTING

Affordable and senior housing developers often seek sites that help residents stay connected to the services they use every day. Walkable neighborhoods, access to public transit, nearby healthcare, schools, grocery stores, employment centers, and other community amenities all contribute to housing that supports long-term quality of life. As housing needs continue to evolve, development opportunities are increasingly evaluated not only for the characteristics of the property itself, but also for how well a location will serve the needs of the people who will live there. Many of those opportunities, however, come with history.

Properties in established neighborhoods may have supported commercial or industrial activities long before they were considered for housing. While those previous uses are not always visible today, they can leave environmental conditions that need to be understood before redevelopment begins. The goal of environmental planning is to understand these properties well enough to redevelop them with confidence rather than block the opportunity to provide much-needed modern housing.

UNDERSTANDING WHAT'S BENEATH THE SURFACE

Documenting environmental conditions is often a requirement for financial institutions and investors and provides key information regarding potential environmental liabilities that may need to be resolved and integrated into the redevelopment process.

Before a property chang-



Altaire at Jackson Park included cleaning up a previously contaminated site before building a 207-unit affordable housing community.

es hands or design work begins, environmental professionals research its history by reviewing historical records, permits, previous environmental reports, regulatory records, and past land uses. This process, known as environmental due diligence, helps determine whether additional investigation is warranted to better understand potential risks and costs to cleanup and/or mitigate impacts to soil or groundwater from historical land use in conjunction with redevelopment.

Working with a local environmental professional who is familiar with regional history and has experience developing strategies to investigate, cleanup, and obtain closure with the local regulatory agency will increase your success in navigating a project with environmental impacts. Their local expertise can also help developers avoid project delays, better manage environmental liabilities, and navigate the broader development process.

The information gathered during environmental due diligence helps developers better understand a property's environmental condi-

tions before making major investment decisions. It also documents that appropriate steps were taken to identify potential concerns before acquisition, helping reduce project risk if previously unknown contamination is discovered later.

Because affordable and senior housing projects often rely on multiple competitive local and state funding sources, understanding environmental conditions early also helps project teams anticipate costs, coordinate schedules, and support funding applications. Environmental planning is most effective when it is integrated early alongside developers, architects, and engineers, rather than treated as a regulatory step after key project decisions have already been made.

PREPARING SITES FOR THEIR NEXT CHAPTER

Every property is different, but redevelopment can reveal environmental conditions associated with previous uses. Common examples include contaminated soil or groundwater associated with former underground fuel tanks, imported contaminat-

ed fill material, or releases of chemicals used in historical commercial or industrial activities. Identifying these conditions early allows project teams to develop strategies and budgets to clean up or mitigate environmental impacts while ensuring the long-term protection of human health and the environment.

One example is Altaire at Jackson Park, a 207-unit affordable housing community developed through a partnership between SRM and the Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle.

Working in tandem with the Washington State Department of Ecology, the project cleaned up a previously contaminated site by excavating contaminated soil and installing a barrier system to protect future building occupants and treat residual soil and groundwater impacts, transforming the property into affordable housing located near transit, schools, parks, employment centers, and other neighborhood amenities. As SRM describes the project, "Through the project's partnership with the Department of Ecology, we were able to transform a

contaminated landscape into a thriving affordable housing community."

The appropriate solution depends on the property. Some projects require contaminated materials to be removed. Others rely on engineered barriers, protective caps, groundwater treatment, or building systems designed to prevent soil gases from entering occupied spaces. Rather than becoming obstacles to redevelopment, these measures allow sites with complex histories to be safely prepared for residential use.

PROTECTION THAT EXTENDS BEYOND CONSTRUCTION

Environmental planning does not necessarily end when construction is complete. Some redevelopment projects include long-term monitoring to verify that cleanup systems continue to perform as intended. Depending on site conditions, monitoring groundwater quality, inspecting protective barriers, or evaluating other engineered systems over time may be needed.

Whenever possible, remediation strategies are designed to provide durable, long-term

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SRM

protection while minimizing future maintenance requirements. The objective is not simply to meet regulatory requirements at the time a project is completed; it also helps to ensure the property continues protecting the people who live there for years to come.

BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES FOR THE FUTURE

Affordable housing and senior housing ultimately serve people who expect their homes to be safe, healthy places to live — a requirement that extends beyond the building itself. It includes the ground beneath it, the outdoor spaces surrounding it, and the confidence that future residents can enjoy their homes without concern about the property's past.

Whether it is a courtyard where neighbors gather or a playground where children spend an afternoon, the success of redevelopment is measured not only by the housing that is created, but by the lasting protection that allows communities to thrive there for decades.

Demand for affordable and senior housing continues throughout the Puget

Remediation included excavating contaminated soil and installing a barrier system to protect future building occupants and treat residual soil and groundwater impacts.



Sound region, even as other areas of development experience slower activity. As the region's population grows and ages, redevelopment of previously developed properties will remain an impor-

tant opportunity to create housing in locations that are already connected to the services and infrastructure residents rely on every day. By integrating environmental planning early in the

development process and working with experienced local professionals, project teams can better position themselves to navigate complex funding requirements, manage risk, and move rede-

velopment projects forward with confidence.

Suzy Stumpf is a principal engineer and Tina Huff is principal regulatory specialist at Farallon.

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NAVIGATING THE COMPLEXITIES OF MIDDLE HOUSING DESIGN

Seemingly small design decisions in this housing type can change code and infrastructure requirements, with huge impacts on cost and design.



BY MEREDITH
EVERIST



LISA
LU

BAYLIS ARCHITECTS

Every middle housing project is fundamentally shaped by its site. Lot size, geometry, topography and access all influence how local land use regulations apply in practice. A parcel that appears capable of accommodating four or six dwelling units on paper may present constraints that substantially affect what can ultimately be built.

There is also a dynamic relationship between the building code and the selected middle housing typology. Fire separation requirements, for example, influence exterior wall construction, window placement, balconies and overhangs. Life-safety provisions affect building mass and circulation, while accessibility requirements can introduce additional design considerations as the number of dwelling units increases.

These land use and building code requirements are not obstacles in themselves. Rather, they exist to promote

neighborhood compatibility, protect public safety and ensure equitable access. The design challenge lies in integrating these requirements within small, often constrained residential sites originally planned and developed for single-detached homes.

As a result, many of the most consequential decisions in a middle housing project occur long before a building takes shape on paper or is constructed. By the time a design appears straightforward, much of its underlying complexity has already been resolved through the early stages of planning and design.

Successful middle housing design requires fluency across the full spectrum of residential building types, from single-detached homes to multifamily housing, along with a deep understanding of how early design decisions influence long-term value, constructability and building performance.

WHAT MIDDLE HOUSING IS, AND WHAT IT IS NOT

Middle housing is often described as a set of building types. Duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, sixplexes, townhomes, stacked flats, cottage housing and courtyard apartments are commonly included under the term. What these buildings share is a scale and character that integrates into the

At McCormick North, the fourplex demonstrates how multifamily housing can be integrated within a neighborhood designed around a diverse mix of residential types.



IMAGES COURTESY OF BAYLIS ARCHITECTS

previous single-family zoning while accommodating more households.

What middle housing is not, however, is simply “small multifamily.” These projects do not behave like larger apartment buildings, nor do they function like detached homes. They occupy an intermediate space, both physically and under the regulations that govern them. That in-between condition is where much of the complex-

ity arises.

While zoning codes may group these housing types together, building codes and life-safety standards often treat them very differently. Understanding those distinctions is essential to translating the land use policy into viable projects.

A FOUR-PLEX CASE STUDY

The International Residential Code (IRC) governs the design and construction of one- and two-family dwellings and townhouses. The International Building Code (IBC) applies to all other building types, including residential buildings with three or more dwelling units that do not meet the code definition of a townhouse.

The McCormick North Village 4 Plex is governed by the IBC, and is classified as a Group R-2 occupancy for permanent multifamily residential use. This classification triggers several important life safety and accessibility requirements.

The McCormick North Village 4 Plex incorporates the following code-compliant features:

Fire-resistive construction: Fire-resistance-rated exterior walls are provided where the fire separation distance is less than 10 feet. This helps protect adjacent properties when there is less

space between buildings. The 4-Plex is also protected throughout by an NFPA 13-compliant automatic fire sprinkler system to minimize spread of fire.

Means of egress: The second-floor exit access stair is separated from the adjacent dwelling unit by fire-resistance-rated partitions and a fire-resistance-rated horizontal assembly, providing the required protection for the means of egress.

Accessibility: Because the building contains more than three dwelling units, accessibility provisions are required. The McCormick North Village 4 Plex includes two Type B dwelling units designed to comply with ADA and Fair Housing Act.

THE RETURN OF A FAMILIAR HOUSING TYPE

The concept of middle housing is not new. Before the mid-20th century, many neighborhoods naturally evolved with a diverse mix of housing types, including duplexes, courtyard apartments, small walk-up buildings, and accessory dwelling units integrated alongside detached homes. Following World War II, however, federal housing policies prioritized single-family homeownership.



The townhouse building is a familiar application of multifamily housing compatible with the characteristics of single-family zoning.



MADISON
DOUBLE R

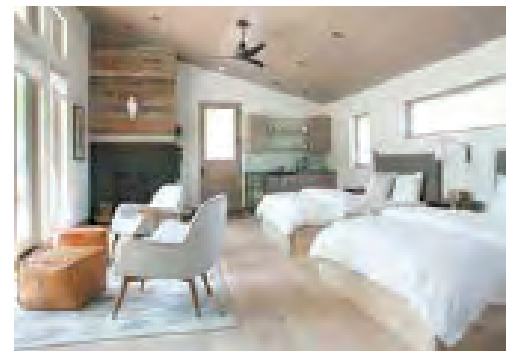
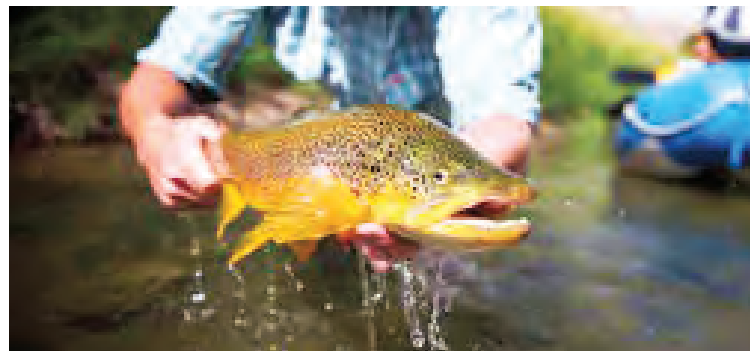
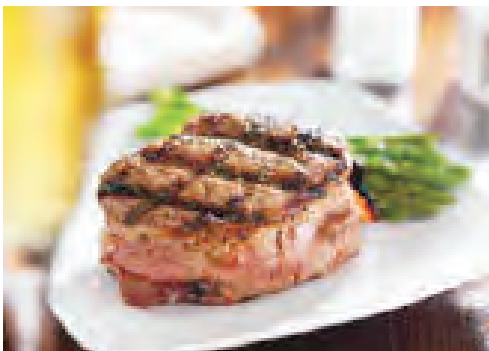
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DESIGNING AND BUILDING TO BETTER SUPPORT AGING IN PLACE

Thoughtful design and construction can extend independence without detracting from a home's beauty and comfort.

As more homeowners seek to remain in their homes later in life, aging-in-place design and construction are becoming increasingly important for architects, builders and residential remodelers. Rather than relocating to assisted living or other care environments, many homeowners now prefer to adapt to their existing homes so they can remain safe, comfortable, and independent as their needs evolve.

BY BORIS
GELFENBEYN
HAUS ATELIER

At Seattle-based design/build firm Haus Atelier, we are increasingly incorporating aging-in-place strategies into home-renovation planning. Thoughtful design can make a home more functional and resilient over time while preserving the beauty and character that make it feel like home.

When people think about aging in place, they often picture grab bars, wheelchair ramps, or wider doorways. But today's aging-in-place residential environments are about something much broader: being intentional and preventive in ways that protect and prolong your lifestyle.

The goal is not to make accessibility features the most noticeable elements of a home. Instead, successful aging-in-place design creates spaces that feel functional, empowering, and beautiful, with supportive elements that are there when needed without making a home feel institutional.

As we age, our bodies and minds often require more effort to perform everyday tasks. Thoughtful design can help reduce both physical and cognitive strain by creating intuitive, comfortable and safe environments.

Fall prevention is one of the most important considerations. Falls are a leading cause of injury among older adults, and recovery becomes more difficult with age. Design strategies that

Features such as pull-out shelving, soft-close hardware, and rounded countertop corners help reduce strain and injury risk while improving everyday usability.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF HAUS ATELIER

reduce fall risks — such as improved lighting, better floor transitions, and intuitive layouts — can significantly improve long-term safety and livability.

Design and construction considerations for aging in place typically fall into several key categories, including visibility, circulation, safety, building systems, and future-ready construction. When incorporated thoughtfully, these elements improve both functionality and overall quality of life.

INTERIOR COLORS AND VISUAL CONTRAST

Vision and depth perception often change over time, making visual contrast essential for judging distance and elevation. Poor contrast can contribute to missteps and falls.

Creative use of color and material contrast helps improve spatial awareness while also contributing to a home's overall mood and aesthetic.

FLOOR PLANS AND LAYOUT

As cognitive processing slows with age, intuitive lay-

outs become increasingly important. Homes designed for aging in place should support natural movement patterns and reduce the need for constant decision-making.

Clear circulation paths and logical spatial relationships allow residents to move comfortably and confidently through the home.

LIGHTING AND NATURAL LIGHT

Lighting plays a critical role in both safety and well-being. Natural light supports emotional health and circadian rhythms, while layered interior lighting helps reduce glare and shadows.

Particular attention should be given to areas such as hallways, bathrooms, stairways, and entryways, where improved lighting can significantly enhance safety.

SLEEP SUPPORT

As we all know, sleep quality often changes with age. Window treatments that effectively block light — and are easy to operate or automated — can help improve sleep conditions.

Locating lighting controls

near the bed is another small but impactful design improvement.

FLOORING AND TRANSITIONS

Smooth floor transitions and anti-slip materials are essential for reducing tripping hazards. Bathrooms benefit from features such as curbless showers, non-slip tile surfaces, and built-in seating that support both comfort and accessibility.

FUTURE-READY CONSTRUCTION DETAILS

One of the most effective aging-in-place strategies is planning ahead during construction or renovation. Small steps taken early can provide significant long-term benefits.

Examples include installing blocking in shower walls for future grab bars or fold-down seats, reinforcing handrail locations along hallways and stairways, increasing the number of electrical outlets, and installing conduit for future wiring. Many building systems still rely on hard-wired connections, so anticipating future needs during construction can simplify

upgrades later.

KITCHEN ACCESSIBILITY

Kitchens should be designed so that cabinets, drawers, shelves, and appliances are easy to reach and operate.

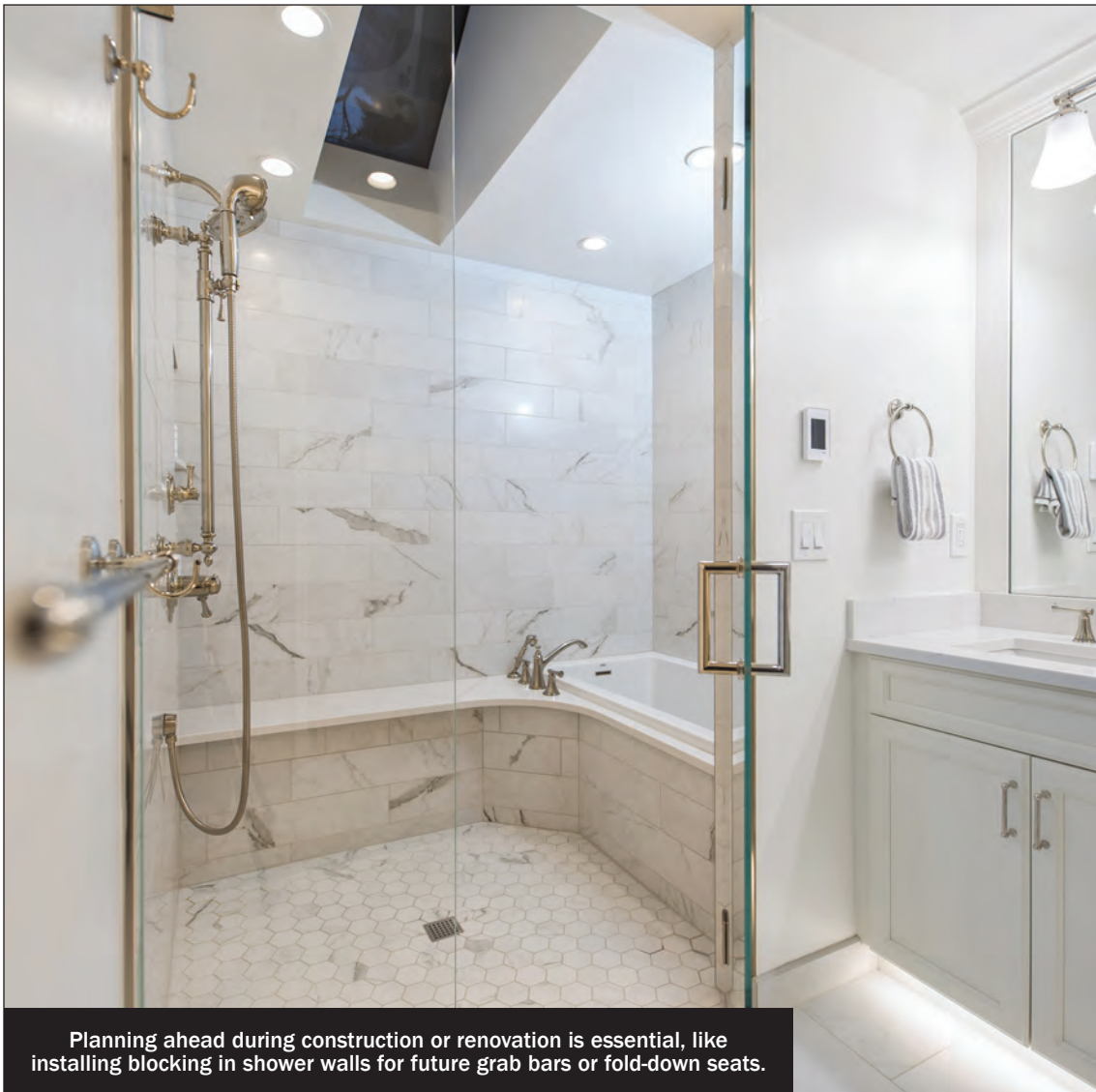
Features such as pull-out shelving, soft-close hardware, and rounded countertop corners help reduce strain and injury risk while improving everyday usability.

HVAC SYSTEMS AND THERMAL COMFORT

Sensitivity to temperature often changes with age. HVAC systems should provide reliable heating and cooling while operating quietly and efficiently. Zoned temperature control can improve comfort throughout the home, and backup systems may be valuable during power interruptions.

FIREPLACE SAFETY

Many gas fireplaces include battery-operated backup systems that allow them to function during power outages, but homeowners are often unaware of this fea-



Planning ahead during construction or renovation is essential, like installing blocking in shower walls for future grab bars or fold-down seats.



Creative use of color and material contrast helps improve spatial awareness while contributing to a home's overall aesthetic.

ture. Understanding how to operate these systems can provide an important layer of safety and resilience.

SMART HOME TECHNOLOGY

Smart home technologies can add another layer of safety and convenience. Sensors and monitoring systems can track temperature, motion and equipment operation. For example, some systems can alert homeowners if a fireplace has been left on or if interior temperatures are rising unexpectedly.

EMERGENCY READINESS

Homes should also be prepared for unexpected events. Backup power systems, accessible emergency supplies, and designated storage for important documents can all help residents respond more effectively during emergencies. Clearly marked exit routes and accessible ways to call for help — whether by phone, monitoring systems,

or emergency alerts — are essential.

In summary, aging-in-place design does not have to feel institutional. Many safety features can be seamlessly integrated into a unit's architecture and interior design. A well-designed shower bench, for example, can serve as both a safety element and an elegant architectural feature.

Thoughtful design allows people to remain safely and comfortably in the places they love while preserving the beauty and character of their homes.

When architects, builders and homeowners approach aging-in-place planning proactively, the result is not simply a safer home. It is one that continues to support independence, dignity, and quality of life for years to come.

Boris Gelfenbeyn is the founder of Seattle-area design-build firm Haus Atelier, formerly called Monsters Toolbox.

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LESSONS FROM MULTIFAMILY: HOW PROVEN DEVELOPMENT DISCIPLINE IS SHAPING BETTER AFFORDABLE AND SENIOR HOUSING

Developers who bring rigorous preconstruction, cost controls and construction know-how tend to deliver affordable and senior housing that comes in on budget, on schedule, holds up structurally, and thrives over the long term.

For years, affordable and senior housing was treated as its own specialized corner of real estate development — distinct enough from market-rate multifamily that experience in one rarely seemed to translate to the other.



BY ERIC SOLEM
EXXEL PACIFIC

That thinking is changing, and developers who have spent decades building multifamily communities are finding the fundamentals that made those projects successful — disciplined preconstruction and cost management, realistic scheduling, and a sharp focus on resident experience — apply just as directly, and just as powerfully, to affordable and senior housing. In recent years, these project types have been concentrated near Transit-Oriented Development sites due to our region's tremendous transportation infrastructure growth.

WHERE THE TWO WORLDS MEET

Affordable housing comes with its own layer of complexity: layered financing, tax credit compliance, public agency coordination, and long approval timelines

that market-rate projects often don't face. But the core development skill set — accurately underwriting a deal, efficiently sequencing construction, managing subcontractor relationships, and designing units that hold up over decades of daily use — is not unique to any one product type. It's the same discipline that separates a well-executed multifamily project from a struggling one.

Exxel Pacific has built that discipline over nearly 40 years of experience in multifamily construction across the Pacific Northwest and has applied it directly to affordable and senior housing projects with strong results. The lesson has been consistent: developers who bring rigorous preconstruction, cost control, and construction know-how to affordable and senior housing tend to deliver projects that come in on budget, on schedule, maintain quality, hold up structurally, and financially thrive over the long term. This matters enormously in a segment where every dollar saved in construction is a dollar that can go toward serving residents.

TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT RAISES THE STAKES

That discipline becomes even more important as affordable and senior hous-



St. Luke's is an affordable housing development in Ballard.

PHOTO BY MICHAEL WALMSLEY PHOTOGRAPHY

ing increasingly moves toward transit-oriented development (TOD) sites. TOD projects often mean tighter urban parcels, more complex site logistics, and higher public scrutiny — all factors that reward developers with strong project management fundamentals.

A team accustomed to navigating the tight sequencing and site constraints of urban multifamily construction is well positioned to handle the added complexity that comes with building near transit corridors, where construction staging, community impact, and coordination with public agencies all carry more weight.

PROOF IN RECENT PROJECTS

In partnership with a long-time client, Exxel recently completed construction on Ondina, a transit-adjacent mixed-use apartment project located in the BelRed corridor directly across from Sound Transit's BelRed/130th Link Light Rail station. This development posed many challenges and required consistent collaboration with the city of Bellevue and Sound Transit, resulting in a team well-equipped for the next TOD project.

Exxel also recently celebrated the completion of two multifamily projects in Shoreline, The Line and Verdant, situated on the same block as the city of Shoreline's

145th Street Corridor Project, which includes light rail access and improved travel to the nearby Sound Transit Shoreline South/148th Station.

A third project recently broke ground in this location called Leeway, situated adjacent to the 148th Street non-motorized bridge that will provide direct access to the Pinehurst infill Link light rail station that's expected to be complete in September. These developments are poised to further transform the area, offering residents unparalleled access to transit, and contributing to the community's growth and vitality.

Exxel Pacific has completed several affordable housing projects, with more currently under construction and in the pipeline. The St. Luke's affordable housing project in Ballard is situated near the RapidRide bus corridor. The project consists of 84 affordable housing units and meets Evergreen Sustainability Development standards.

Another ongoing affordable project in Bellevue will provide 234 units, and the



Ondina is a mixed-use, multifamily TOD in Bellevue's BelRed neighborhood.

PHOTO BY CHRISTOPHE SERVIERES (SHOT2SELL)

site is adjacent to Sound Transit's Operations and Maintenance Facility East, which required close collaboration with project stakeholders, including the developer, design team, the City of Bellevue, and Sound Transit.

Parkshore Juanita Bay is a prime example of a TOD senior housing community, minimizing vehicle reliance through immediate proximity to multimodal transit options. By placing high-density independent senior housing directly adjacent to public transit, the Parkshore project utilizes infrastructure that functions as an urban village.

These positive outcomes aren't accidents. They reflect a development approach shaped by years of multifamily experience — one that treats affordable and senior housing not as a fundamentally different product, but as a multifamily development that is enhancing communities with an additional layer of financial and regulatory complexity that rewards strong teams.

INNOVATION IN THE INDUSTRY

As demand for affordable and senior housing continues to outpace supply across the region, there's a real opportunity for industry leaders with strong multifamily backgrounds to step into this space — whether as general contractors, development partners, or consultants to organizations navigating their first affordable project. The barriers to entry are real, but they are not insurmountable, and the industry needs more experienced hands willing to bring that discipline to bear.

The path forward for affordable, senior and TOD housing likely won't come from reinventing development practices from scratch. It will come from applying what already works — proven multifamily discipline — to a segment of housing that needs it more than ever.

Eric Solem is a regional vice president for Exxel Pacific who specializes in affordable, senior, and transit-oriented development projects.



MIDDLE HOUSING

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18

ership over other housing types, contributing to a long-term decline in the construction of small-scale multifamily housing. This shortage is now commonly referred to as the “missing middle.”

The consequence was not simply lower residential density, but the loss of a diverse housing spectrum accommodating a wide range of household sizes, income levels and life stages. In response, many jurisdictions adopted legislation that reintroduces housing types that had been effectively excluded by zoning and land use regulations for decades.

This policy shift represents more than an increase in the number of allowed dwelling units. It reflects a fundamental change in how cities approach residential land use by reestablishing a continuum of housing types between single-detached and larger multifamily development. Rather than reinforcing a rigid distinction between single-family and multifamily neighborhoods, middle housing policies encourage compatible, incremental forms of residential density that integrate within existing communities.

WHERE POLICY MEETS PRACTICE

Zoning determines what is allowed on a site. Building codes determine how it must be built. Historically, these systems evolved along separate tracks for single-family and multifamily development. Single-family codes emphasize autonomy, separation, and simplicity. Multifamily codes emphasize shared systems, life safety, and accessibility.

Middle housing now occupies the space between those frameworks. A project may look modest in scale yet be subject to building code requirements typically associated with much larger buildings. Seemingly small decisions about unit count, and building configuration can determine which code applies, with cascading impacts on cost and design.

A seemingly small project may also trigger local infrastructure requirements, transportation, frontage improvements, storm water solutions and utility upgrades that may be costly.

This is why middle housing cannot be evaluated solely by unit count or zoning allow-

ances. The success of a project depends on how early design decisions interact with regulatory thresholds that are often invisible to the public.

ARCHITECTURE AS AN INTEGRATING DISCIPLINE

As middle housing becomes more prevalent, the role of architecture has evolved. Architects are no longer simply designing buildings within established categories. They are interpreting and integrating multiple regulatory frameworks to produce outcomes that are safe, feasible, fit within the context of the neighborhood, and are supported by the community.

This work requires proficiency across both single-family and multifamily systems, as well as an understanding of how early design decisions affect long-term performance. It also requires close collaboration with consultants, builders, and municipal staff to ensure that design intent is maintained throughout permitting and construction.

When approached successfully, this integrative process

enables middle housing to achieve its broader objectives. Thoughtfully designed projects can introduce new homes while reinforcing neighborhood character, improve housing affordability without compromising quality or durability, and respond creatively to site constraints rather than relying on one-size-fits-all solutions.

LOOKING AHEAD

Middle housing reform has shifted the conversation about what is allowed in residential neighborhoods. The work ahead will focus on translating those allowances into built projects. Success will depend less on additional policy changes and more on the quality of project-level interpretation and execution.

Meredith Everist is a principal at Baylis Architects, designing solutions that expand housing options and strengthen communities. Lisa Lu, associate principal at Baylis Architects, applies her knowledge of materials, building systems, and construction methods to create thoughtful housing solutions.



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buildings in the Spring District were on the market. Of the two, Block 5 remains

Runstad and Shorenstein Properties, who have sold other buildings there in the past. Last week, Broderick Group said in its fourth-quarter Eastside office report that Block 6 has sold for \$270 million. King County hasn't yet recorded any such deal at 1646 123rd Ave. N.E. (That's on the east side of the campus.)

Says Broderick, "The project garnered strong interest, numerous tours, and multiple offers."

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The apartments opened in phases, beginning in 2009, then first sold in 2015
Photo via

319 Redmond trade for \$147

By BRIAN MILLER

Giovanni Napoli, Phil.

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