

NEBRASKA PLANNING & ZONING ASSOCIATION



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Action Today,
Achieve Tomorrow

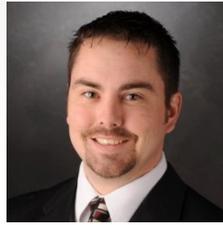


Newsletter Fall 2016



From the President...

How often do you look at the calendar in relative disbelief while thinking to yourself, "How is it November already?!" NPZA's 50th year as an association has flown by and 2016 is nearing an end. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have been involved with our 50th anniversary, whether you attended the annual conference or our other workshops, presented at one of these offerings, or assisted behind the scenes to make these events better year after year. Our 50th year was a terrific year for the association and we look forward to an even better 2017.



This September NPZA co-sponsored a Fall Workshop with the Nebraska Chapter of the American Planning Association. In an ongoing effort to bring together the land use decision makers from multiple levels of government, this fall workshop was geared to appeal to more than those who typically attend our annual conference. This year we had a variety of topics from nuisances to unique new housing styles that started a significant amount of good discussion that we believe was helpful to everyone in attendance.

We have also been working hard with the Nebraska APA on planning the 2017 Nebraska Planning conference. This coming year's conference will once again be held in the Younes Conference Center in Kearney and will cover an interesting list of topics for those attending. Districts have been also putting together successful workshops. So it's been a good summer/fall for planning training in Nebraska.

For more information, please check out the NPZA website or follow our activities on Facebook and Twitter.

--Christopher Solberg
President-NPZA

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Mark Your Calendars

December 9, 2016: NPZA Board Meeting
Hastings, NE City Hall; 10:30 am CST

March 8-10, 2017: Nebraska Annual Planning
Conference; Younes Center; Kearney, NE

The Missing Middle Housing: The Midwest Version

By Amy Haase, AICP, Senior Partner, RDG Planning and Design

Affordable housing has always been a concern across the country, but multiple factors over the past decade have raised more specific concerns for housing our workforce. The discussion in recent months has expanded to include not just the need for housing, but the *type* of housing units these particular households need, including rowhouses, duplexes, apartment courts, townhomes, live/work units, and smaller mid-sized houses. These affordable units have almost been non-existent in our local markets, yet many communities are feeling the growing need for them. The national discussion on these "Missing Middle Housing" units (www.missingmiddlehousing.com) has been focused on the nation's large markets, often leaving Midwestern smaller markets wondering how they fit into the conversation. While it can be argued that the need for the Missing Middle Housing exists in both large and small markets, the causes and solutions have both commonalities and differences.

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Spotlight Community: Burwell, NE



Left, Nebraska's Big Rodeo, held late-July. Right, Calamus Reservoir

David Sawyer serves as the Director of Burwell Economic Development-Chamber of Commerce-Visitors Bureau.

Community Overview

Located in the heart of Nebraska's Sandhills at the intersection of Nebraska Highway 91 and Nebraska's Scenic Byway 11, Burwell is a friendly and growing community of 1,210 residents. Burwell has showed a reversal of the population decline familiar to many parts of rural Nebraska and is increasing its population. Whether you're relaxing on the white sandy beaches of Calamus Lake (third largest lake in Nebraska and a top fishing destination nationally), tanking down the North Loup or Calamus rivers, or experiencing a guided hunting trip with one of the area Outfitters, you'll enjoy your adventure in Burwell. And you won't want to miss the many unique restaurants with great food and warm hospitality.

All are invited for a weekend visit, or to consider a long-term personal or business relocation. Recognized as a Governor's Showcase Community, Burwell is a community bursting with energy and personality – eager to serve and grow with you!

Economic Development and Tourism Activities – Sustaining a Vibrant Community

The City of Burwell has a local option sales tax of 1.5% to support economic development activities and business supporting city infrastructure improvements. Key successful activities for Burwell Economic Development

include its business facade improvement grants and housing demolition/new build grants, as well as several infrastructure projects. The facade improvement grants fund up to half of the cost of a qualified and pre-approved project up to \$10,000 (\$5,000 grant, \$5,000 match by business). The housing demolition and new build grant is available to property owners to receive funding for half of the cost for the demolition of a dilapidated structure to make way for a new home. When combined with the organization's new home down-payment assistance program and low interest business development loans and loan guarantees, Burwell Economic Development offers a nice suite of services/resources to support local business and needed new housing in Burwell.

While the Burwell economy is primarily based on agriculture, tourism has been one of the most important factors for stimulating the local retail environment. The community supports its attraction assets such as Calamus State Recreation Area and Nebraska's Big Rodeo via significant volunteer efforts and aggressive Chamber of Commerce and Visitor Bureau initiatives, such as parades, fishing tournaments, special events, holiday decorations, and rodeo support activities – all supported with a wide variety of social media and traditional marketing initiatives. Key economic indicators support the business success of the community efforts, including an 8% increase in local sales tax receipts last year, and an increase of 36% in the use of area lodging facilities during the same period (as measured by lodging tax reports).

Economic Development Management

David Sawyer has served as the Director of Economic Development for the City of Burwell since early 2009. In addition to being engaged in various business and community development activities, Sawyer is also the Director of the Burwell Chamber of Commerce, and the Director of the Garfield County/Burwell Area Visitors Bureau. Contact Sawyer via LinkedIn at www.linkedin.com/in/drsawyer.

Learn more about Burwell:

www.visitburwell.org

[Burwell Chamber of Commerce](http://www.BurwellChamberofCommerce.org)

www.Facebook.com/Burwell.NE/



Successful Fall Conference Held in Grand Island

By Char Carpenter, NPZA Recording Secretary

On Monday September 26 and Tuesday September 27, 2016, the Nebraska Planning and Zoning Association held a fall workshop in Grand Island at the Fairfield Inn. Approximately 65 people attended the workshop on Monday and 42 on Tuesday. Those attending heard Dave Ptak speak Monday afternoon on "Making Good Findings of Fact and Why It Matters" and "Problem Properties/Nuisances". Then Tuesday morning, participants heard from Harry Milligan on "Home Occupations & Home Based Business" and from Keith Marvin on "Housing Styles You've Never Thought Of". All sessions brought out good discussion from the participants.

Thank you to Judy Clark for getting the brochure out to everyone and taking care of the registrations, to the speakers for taking time out of their busy schedules to enlighten those that attended and to those that attended. Prior to the workshop the NPZA board held a strategic planning session update at the Fairfield. As there was not a quorum, no action was taken but a good discussion was had by those attending. The next meeting of the board will be December 9, 2016 at 10:30 am CST in Hastings. Agenda items will be sent out prior to the date. Those not able to attend will be able to call in to participate in the discussion.

City of Scottsbluff Adopts Tiny House Ordinance

By Daniel Bennett, Panhandle Area Development District

The city of Scottsbluff recently approved an ordinance providing for the regulation and development of tiny home community planned unit developments. The move comes at a time at a time when demand for Tiny Houses, which can be as small as 50 to 300 sq. feet in some communities, are gaining popularity nationwide as

alternative to traditional homeownership and a means to a simple lifestyle. Tiny homes are also gaining attention as possible solutions for homeless youth and the chronically homeless, who often are left to resort to shelters and group homes.

The impetus for developing an ordinance in Scottsbluff was receiving multiple calls in a short time span asking about the city's regulations for Tiny Houses. Annie Folck, Planner for the City of Scottsbluff, said the city did not allow for any homes less than 700 sq. feet to be built at that time. Folck said the requests came from a range of interests including people inquiring about Tiny Houses for personal use, older people looking to downsize, a developer, and public housing.

Folck said that once the ordinance began to be drafted, she was overwhelmed with the response, mostly positive, to the new regulations. "I didn't realize there was that demand in the community," Folck said.

Scottsbluff's newly adopted ordinance defines a Tiny House as a residential structure on a permanent foundation with a minimum of 200 sq. ft. and a maximum of 700 sq. ft. Tiny Houses must be constructed according to all building codes and life safety codes and Tiny Houses on wheels must be licensed as a recreational vehicle and may not be lived in year around.

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An example of a 144 sq. foot Tiny House in Olympia, WA, Photo courtesy Bruner Foundation.



Photo by Lindsey Yoneda, *The Daily Nebraskan*

New Faculty Member and Dean of Architecture at UNL MCRP Program

by Gordon Scholz, AICP; Interim Program Director, Masters of Community and Regional Planning (MCRP), University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Students and faculty in the Master of Community and Regional Planning (MCRP) program at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln began the 2016-2017 academic year with a new faculty member in the program and a new Dean for the College of Architecture.

Our new faculty member, Assistant Professor Daniel Piatkowski, comes from Savannah State University where he was assistant professor of urban studies and planning. Prior to that position he was an NSF-IGERT trainee, earning his PhD in Design and Planning at the University of Colorado Denver. Daniel had previously earned his Master of Urban and Environmental Planning degree and his BA in English degree from Arizona State University.

Daniel's research focuses on how land use and transportation planning can foster equitable and sustainable communities. He is particularly interested in the ways in which planning for walking and bicycling as

viable modes of transportation can transform communities. He has authored peer-reviewed articles that have been published in *The Journal of Travel Behaviour and Society*, *Transport Policy*, *Journal of Urban Planning and Development*, *Journal of Transport and Health*, *Urban Design International*, and the *Journal of Transportation of the Institute of Transportation Engineers*.

At UNL, Dr. Piatkowski is teaching courses in land use and transportation, urban design and research methods.

Our new Dean of the College of Architecture, Katherine Ankerson, was previously professor and head of the Department of Interior Architecture and Product Design at Kansas State University. UNL's College of Architecture includes degree programs in architecture, interior design, landscape architecture and community and regional planning.

Prior to her time at KSU, Kathy was a professor of interior design, as well as associate dean, in UNL's College of Architecture from 1996 to 2011. Before her first years at UNL, Kathy had held academic positions at Radford University and Washington State University after spending many years as a practicing architect and designer. She received her BS in Architecture and Bachelor of Architecture degrees, as well as a Master of Architecture degree, from Washington State University.

NPZA Board Update

The board last met on September 26 in Grand Island, NE. The board discussed three goals for the next year to include newsletter/advertising, educational videos, and regional workshops and continuing education.

The next meeting will be held on Friday, December 9th in Hastings, NE City Hall at 10:30 am CST.



Missing Middle *(continued from page 1)*

A recent Lincoln Institute of Land Policy article, "Gentle Infill", focuses on the issue, its causes, and the solutions that some of the nation's largest markets are exploring. The article notes a job/housing imbalance that exists in some of the nation's hottest markets, including Portland, San Francisco, Boston, Boulder, and Seattle. However this same imbalance and lack of housing variety exists in such markets as Carroll, Iowa; York, Nebraska; and the Lake of the Ozarks region. So what are some of the causes of this issue and what are the commonalities between the nation's larger and smaller markets?

The Road to the "Missing Middle"

For larger markets, numerous factors have come together to create the current housing dilemma. These include:

- Rapid Growth. Over the past 15 years hot markets have been growing at a rapid rate, faster than building has occurred. While this growth slowed some during the recession, the amenities these markets offer to millennials has continued to attract and retain the nation's largest generation.
- Well-paying Jobs. The "hot markets" across the country are not just driven by quality of life amenities but also well-paying jobs, often in the tech industry, that are driving up housing costs and putting housing out of reach for many locals and service-oriented employees.

- Impacts of the Great Recession. During the Great Recession, housing construction slowed to record low rates, especially in markets where housing prices were being driven to record heights. Pent-up demand coming out of the recession combined with growth rates that are still exceeding building activity are driving up costs across housing types and price points.
- Tighter Mortgage Credit. Following the 2008 housing crisis, mortgage lending practices changed dramatically. Lending became much tighter, and households that only a few years ago would have qualified for homeownership were finding themselves living in rental housing longer. This, along with the large millennial generation entering the housing market for the first time, created an overwhelming demand for housing units that are not the traditional single-family owner-occupied unit.
- Construction Costs. Basic economics says that demand drives costs. In markets with skyrocketing demand, the cost of construction services is following suit. Prime locations also demand higher prices, driving up the cost of land for new development.
- Zoning. For many cities, zoning has favored single-family homes resulting in little variety and housing within very narrow, often expensive price points.

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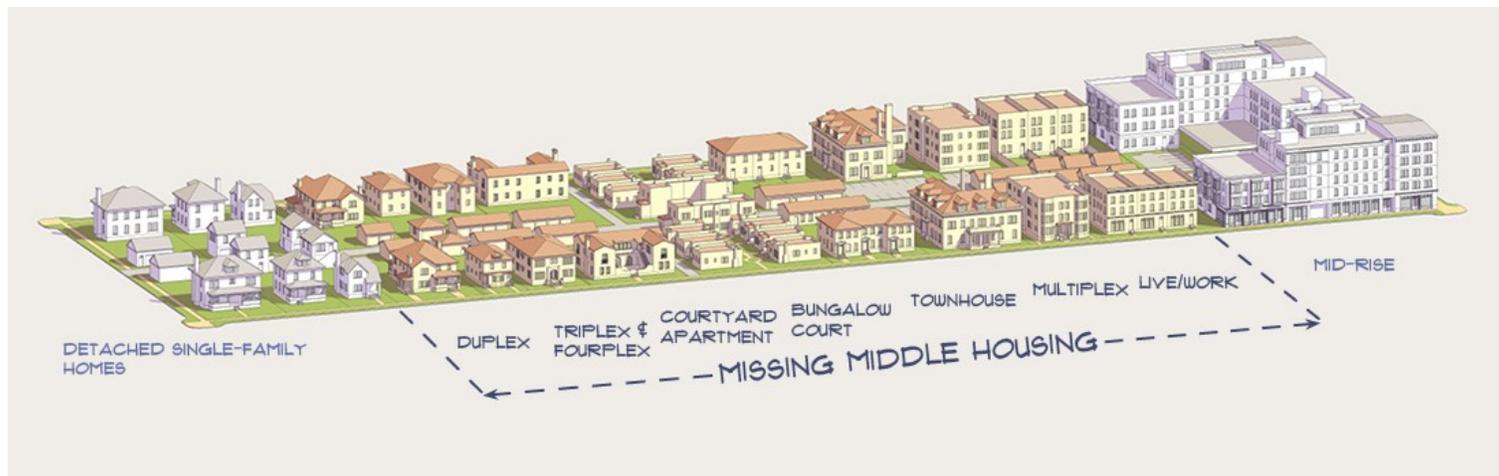


Image courtesy of missingmiddle.com; Opticos Designs



Missing Middle (Continued from page 5)

Many of these factors are also impacting communities in Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, and Missouri, with a growing demand created by strong job markets and pent-up demand. Common factors between the large coastal markets and our smaller local Midwestern markets include tighter mortgage credit, little construction activity during the Great Recession, and zoning practices that favor single family homes. However, there are also a set of factors that are slightly different in the Midwest. These include:

- **Builder Capacity.** During the recession the construction market slowed even in our strongest communities. Builders left the business while others neared retirement age and transitioned out of the business. In areas with already record low unemployment rates, the demand for contractors is greater than the capacity of skilled tradespeople to complete the work.
- **Specialized Builders.** Much like the zoning issue noted above, the emphasis has historically been on single-family detached housing. This highlights two important issues. First, the ideal housing and the definition of success for many of our community leaders is that of single-family owner-occupied housing. Second, this emphasis resulted in building patterns, and therefore builders, that have focused exclusively on this type of housing since almost World War II. Few builders in smaller communities are familiar or comfortable with doing other housing types and view the risk in an untested market as too great.
- **Smaller Profit Margins.** Building on the last point, these same builders have been very successful in building the custom single-family home with comfortable profit margins. Housing styles including infill smaller lot residential, townhomes, and live/work units are viewed as riskier with smaller profit margins.
- **Wage Stagnation.** For many in the Midwest, construction and land costs have not skyrocketed at the rates that have been experienced on the coast. In the Midwestern region there are markets

where more affordable housing can be constructed without significant incentives or tax credits. However, the income of many households stagnated during the Great Recession and have only begun to rebound with recent reports indicating the first rises in real median family income. This appears to have resulted in inflation rates for construction rising at rates greater than incomes. This combined with tighter lending practices is leaving many in the rental market longer than they were just a decade ago.

Where do we go?

Every community has its own special set of circumstances, and the need to address these issues varies; however, there are a few common elements that our communities need to begin thinking about and discussing.

- **Remove the Hurdles.** What hurdles have our communities put in place that limit the variety of housing that can be constructed? This may include zoning districts that do not allow for smaller lot residential; limiting the ability to do more mixed use projects; blanketing our communities in traditional single-family larger lot districts; or housing incentive programs that favor single-family, owner-occupied housing. Identification and removal of these hurdles is a good first step.
- **Share the Risk.** While the demographics in our communities indicated a growing demand for more diverse housing options, the market is often untested and perceived to be riskier. Additionally, we can no longer (if we ever could) assume that state or federal aid will help address the issue. Local strategies will have to be developed that can fill the gap, share the risk, and strengthen local economies.
- **Develop the Workforce.** In the coming years, workforce development will need to broaden its focus to include building and specialty trades. The average age of these workers is growing and

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Missing Middle (Continued from page 6)

during the recession few young people entered the trades at numbers necessary to replace their ranks.

- Educate Decision Makers. Over the past decade the connection between housing and economic development has grown in awareness. But the connection has focused mostly on the economic benefits of single-family owner-occupied houses. The need to educate our community leaders on the benefits of mixed housing that meets the needs of all generations still exists.

Changing demographics and economics are creating markets that are demanding more housing variety. Missing Middle Housing is clearly being felt in many communities and the solutions to meeting that demand may come from multiple sources, including lessons learned from some of our nation's largest markets.

Tiny Houses (Continued from page 3)

To protect against concerns of inconsistent neighborhood character and incompatible uses, Scottsbluff requires Tiny Houses to be developed in a 'community' in a Planned Unit Development (PUD). Tiny House Planned Unit Developments must be on a site of no less than three acres in area and are held to a maximum density of 10 units per acre. Tiny House PUDs are permitted in any Residential zone.

"I think we need to be careful as to how we allow for it in zoning so that we maintain the character of our existing neighborhoods," Folck said. "Time will tell if this is just a fad or something that is around for a long time."

While she admitted that a Tiny House may not be right for her, she believes they will be beneficial for providing a better range of housing options in the community.

Scottsbluff's Tiny House ordinance can be viewed [here](#).

Please submit any questions, comments, concerns, or ideas regarding the newsletter to Daniel Bennett at danielb@nepadd.com