Chapter 3

Above: Medina Square, Medina, Ohio.
(photo: Kirby Date)

Above Right: New neighborhood housing. Compact development is done at a density and scale that is similar to neighborhoods of the early 20th century.
(photo: City Architecture).

Compact development requires a relatively small public investment in roads, public safety, and other infrastructure costs, much lower than in low-density developments.

(Littman 2009)

COMPACT DEVELOPMENT

Background

What is Compact Development?

"Compact development" refers to development that uses land efficiently through creative and intensive site, neighborhood and district design. Compact development may be residential, commercial or mixed use, but most often approximates the intensity of development that was typical of Ohio communities in the first half of the twentieth century. The most common use of the term is in Traditional Neighborhood Development, which describes the development of mixed use residential neighborhoods within walking distance of commercial, retail, employment, school and institutional uses. However, compact development may also apply to smaller, more limited uses in certain districts of a community or even a small town. Typical densities in compact development residential neighborhoods are from six to eight units per acre; in commercial areas, two and three story buildings are typical, with building fronts right up to the sidewalk, and parking creatively arranged behind and to the side of buildings. Civic spaces are typically included, providing opportunities for civic participation, shopping, recreation, and socializing outdoors in all seasons. A range of housing and transportation options are supported, with an emphasis on improving pedestrian and bicycle circulation, reducing necessary vehicle trips, and providing a variety of housing options, enabling people to live in one community throughout their lifetime.

Houses with the above-average levels of walkability command a premium of about $4,000 to $34,000 over houses with just average levels of walkability in the typical metropolitan areas studied.

(Cortright 2009)

How does Compact Development relate to Balanced Growth?

As balanced growth encourages new development and redevelopment, the spatial layout of that development can have a major impact on the future of our watersheds. One of the ways to have the biggest impact is to encourage a compact development pattern whenever possible.

Compact development can fulfill many community goals, including creating a traditional small town character, providing quality places for families and mature adults to live, creating vibrant commercial places to shop and recreate, and supporting infill and revitalization of existing developed areas. At the same time, compact development codes support conservation goals and watershed protection.

Compact development requires fewer roads and less impervious surface; allows infrastructure, including storm water management, to be provided in a more efficient fashion; and permits a wider range of cost-effective transportation options. Compact development can allow for the conservation of open space as well as natural and other resources that can fit in to the development. It also enhances the efficiency of business, the quality of neighborhoods, and the relationships (such as schools and religious communities) that develop within them. For these reasons, all communities are encouraged to explore ways in which they can make development more compact where appropriate.

As discussed above, compact development principles apply in a wide range of situations that may not include traditional neighborhoods. Compact development will have a very different character, depending on whether it is occurring in an urban neighborhood, a small town center, a rural crossroads, or a major retail center. The example development regulations provided at the end of this chapter illustrate the possibilities that may be applied.

Easton Town Center in Columbus, Ohio.
(photo: C.Kennedy)

Issues

- **Mixed Uses:** One of the primary principles of compact development is providing a mix of uses. In a traditional neighborhood, this means that several types of housing, commercial, and office space are provided in close proximity to facilitate communication among them, good pedestrian access, and a balanced community. However, at the site level, a compact approach may be just as effectively applied to a single residential, commercial, or institutional development project.

- **Hierarchy of scales:** Larger compact development areas are generally designed to incorporate a hierarchy of scales, starting with sites and individual streets at the smallest scale and moving up through neighborhoods, districts, and the town or city itself. A town or city may have several districts, each with its own recommendations for types of buildings and uses, travel distances, streets, central focus areas (such as a main street or neighborhood center), and open spaces. Smaller compact development areas might be designed around one such district or neighborhood, with associated guidelines for streets, center focus, and open spaces.

- **Street Design:** Compact development projects rely on careful attention to traditional street design, with a hierarchy of rectilinear streets, including alleys, to meet practical access needs without impacting pedestrian scale. Blocks are short and provide maximum street frontage for uses. Buildings are often located right at the sidewalk or with a minimal setback, with more extensive parking provided behind the buildings.

Euclid Avenue, Downtown Cleveland, Ohio.
(photo: Gregory SJ Soltis)

- **Small scale commercial uses:** Usually commercial uses are provided at a fairly small scale, often a maximum of 10 to 25,000 square feet, although there has been exploration into providing larger scale retail uses in smaller spaces. The challenge is to provide a balance of pedestrian-friendly walking distances among establishments, while accommodating cars needed for some of the uses, such as major retail or residential parking.

- **Civic spaces:** Compact development design provides for civic spaces in the mix of uses, fostering a sense of community and providing opportunities for community interaction. Schools, meeting halls, parks, and recreation opportunities are woven into the fabric of the development area. Public waterfront access is often a keystone of these projects.

- **Parking:** Specific parking requirements are highly individual to each situation, depending on expected uses and their anticipated markets. Parking requirements should be calculated for each community or district using the models in the resources section below as an example only. Mixed uses take into account the potential for shared parking, which can greatly reduce the amount of space needed by various uses. For example, movie theaters can share parking with offices, one using the parking during daytime hours, the other at night. Restaurants can share parking with religious communities or schools.

- **Design Guidelines:** Design guidelines are critical to maintain compactness, consistency, local and regional identity, and a lively street character. Many compact development regulations have a full set of illustrations accompanying guidelines for building location, parking area design, façade treatments, landscaping, and signage.

Little Italy, Cleveland, Ohio.
(photo: Gregory SJ Soltis)

- **Complete Streets:** Many communities are incorporating complete streets concepts into their development plans. These address the potential for incorporating capacity for bicycle, pedestrian, public transit, and cars into street design.

- **Green Infrastructure:** Innovative storm water management techniques can be worked into an overall green infrastructure plan for a compact development area, either new development or redevelopment, resulting in improved stormwater management and reduced storm water impacts. Complete street designs, and vacant or underused lots and parking lots, can be components of an overall green infrastructure plan in development areas.

- **Cottage Development:** In built-out communities where small pockets of undeveloped land remain, "cottage developments" can be an innovative way to do infill development while incorporating open space. These "cottage developments" or "pocket neighborhoods" cluster small groups of houses with walkable and communal open space areas that engage neighbors, but still have privacy elements and vehicular access.

Recommendations

1. Identify areas for compact development: Use the comprehensive planning process to identify development and redevelopment areas that would benefit from a compact development concept.

2. Mixed Use Districts: Look for ways to incorporate a mix of uses into districts that have traditionally been single-use, such as office districts and major retail uses.

3. Planning Concepts: Develop specific planning concepts for individual districts or neighborhoods that address land use; street hierarchy and parking; retail, office and residential markets; resource protection opportunities; green infrastructure; and open space/ recreation needs.

4. Transportation Options: Develop a street design and parking strategy that incorporates a range of transportation options besides the automobile. Look for opportunities for shared parking. Ensure that adequate parking is provided for the typical condition rather than the peak. Ensure that parking does not compromise pedestrian accessibility, short walking distances, and access to public transportation.

5. Design Guidelines: Develop architectural and spatial design guidelines that enhance the vibrancy and quality of the development area.

6. Public Education: When compact development is new to an area, public education is important to provide an opportunity for input, and also to help people understand the design quality and intent of the compact development area.

7. Human Scaled Environments: Whether the area of compact development is supporting the character of an urban setting or creating a new place in a suburban setting, there should be an emphasis on making these areas pedestrian-friendly and making them connect with the surroundings.

Example Regulations

Urban: Columbus TND ordinance (Title 33, Chapter 3320)
http://library.municode.com/index.aspx?clientId=16219

Urban: City of Cleveland, Midtown Mixed Use Ordinance
http://www.amlegal.com/ *(Cleveland Compact Development Ordinances, Part three, Part IIIB, Title VII, Chapter 344)*

Urban: City of Cincinnati, Urban Mix District, Title XIV, Chapter 1410
http://library.municode.com/index.aspx?clientId=19996&stateId=35&stateName=Ohio

Small town: Wisconsin ordinance
http://urpl.wisc.edu/people/ohm/tndord.pdf

Rural/village: Mantua Village ordinance
http://mantuavillage.com/planning.php *(Scroll down to the section titled "MANTUA VILLAGE ZONING CODE TABLE OF CONTENTS" click on "TITLE III DISTRICT REGULATIONS" ; see "CHAPTER 320 VILLAGE CENTER DISTRICT".)*

Suburban Mixed Use: Shaker Heights Compact Development Regulations Part 12, Title 3, Chapter 1234
http://www.shakeronline.com/downloads/zoning
(Click on "Zoning Code")

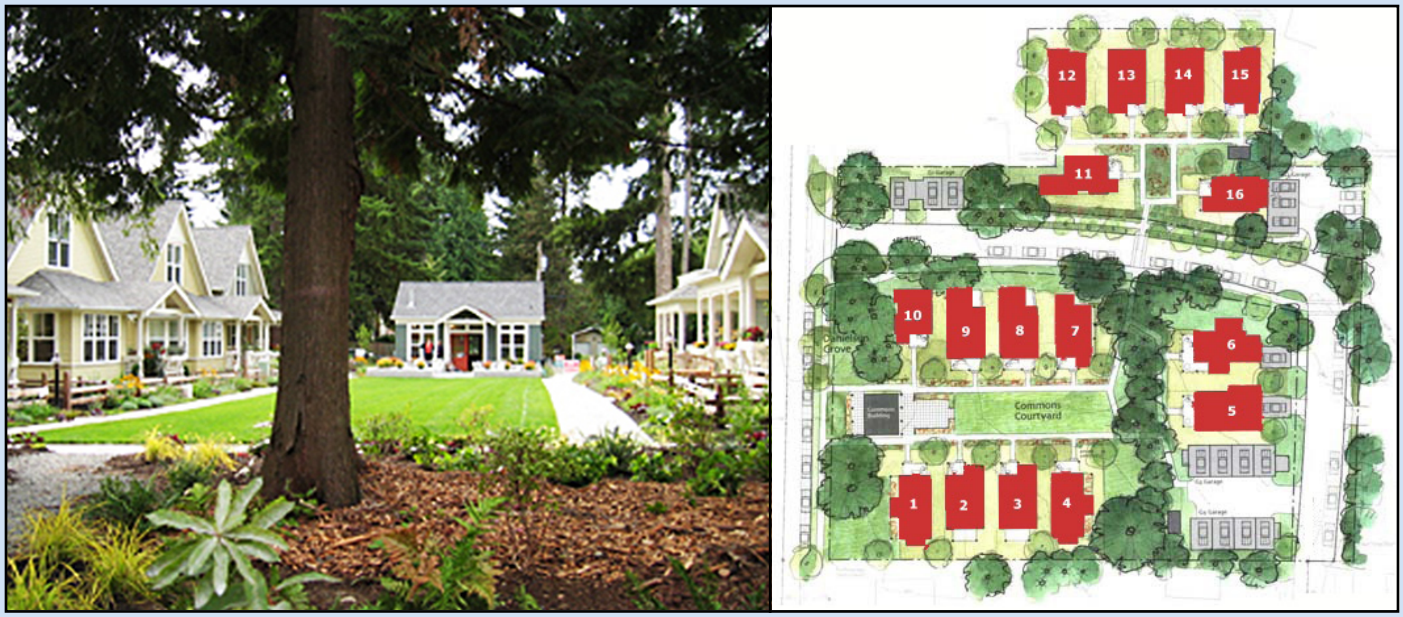
City of Dubuque, Iowa, Cottage Design Subdivision Code, Title 16, Chapter 11-13
http://www.sterlingcodifiers.com/codebook/index.php?book_id=803
(Click on "Codes Online" at the top of the page, then choose "IA" in the list of states, and "Dubuque" in the list of municipalities, and click the "Show Codes" button; then click on "Title 16 - UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT CODE" in

the list to the left, then click on "Chapter 11 LAND SUBDIVISION" in the list, and then click on "16-11-13: COTTAGE DESIGN SUBDIVISION" also in the list to the left.)

See the Example Regulations Matrix for this chapter at the Best Local Land Use Practices website for a comparison of example codes.

Use of the Guidance and Example Regulations

This example guidance and/or regulations **should never be adopted without careful legal review** to assure that they are adapted to fit the authority and needs of the specific governmental body. They may need to be adapted for use by the specific type of local government and must be independently evaluated against potentially applicable federal or state law. **The law director/ solicitor, county prosecutor or other appropriate qualified legal counsel should always be consulted prior to adoption of any enforceable measures** based upon this



Danielson Grove - Kirkland, WA Cottage Development. Developed by The Cottage Company/Designed by Ross Chapin
(photo & site plan: The Cottage Company)

Danielson Grove in Kirkland, Washington

Danielson Grove, Kirkland, Washington. Cottage Development – plan, 16 units on 2.25 acres. High quality design provides a neighborhood setting that is attractive to young families and mature adults. Typical sites are three to five acres and include small housing units (under 1500 square feet), central green space, and consolidated parking. Developed by The Cottage Company/Designed by Ross Chapin.

While compact development may show a smaller return than low-density development on a per unit basis, the lost revenue is offset by the larger number of units offered in the compact neighborhood. A developer of a compact neighborhood in northeast Ohio surrendered 10% of the purchase price of each unit by forgoing the low-density model, but the development as a whole generated twice as much revenue due to the higher number of units offered.

(Mikelbank 2008)

guidance document to insure compliance and consistency with any applicable state and federal law, and to consider potential legal ramifications and liability in the implementation of the laws or rules to be adopted. Questions about the models and guidance can be directed to the Ohio Balanced Growth Program.

Resources

Randall Arendt, Crossroads, *Hamlet, Village, Town: Design Characteristics of Traditional Neighborhoods, Old and New*, Report, American Planning Association Planning Advisory Series, No. 487/488, Planners Press, July 1999, ISBN No. 1884829333. Email: bookservice@planning.org

City of Fort Collins - Advance Planning Dept.; Tel: 970-221-6376 Website: http://www.fcgov.com/planning/

1000 Friends of Wisconsin; Tel: 608/259-9045; Website: http://www.1kfriends.org/

City of Columbus, Department of Development, Planning Division; Tel: 614-645-6556; Website: http://columbus.gov/planning.aspx

Mantua Village, Village Hall & Mayor's Office; Tel: 330-274-3199; Web: http://mantuavillage.com/

Municipal Research and Services Center of Washington, *Infill Development: Completing the Community Fabric* http://www.mrsc.org/Subjects/Planning/infilldev.aspx

Municipal Research and Services Center of Washington, Cottage Housing; http://www.mrsc.org/subjects/planning/cottagehousing.aspx

National Association of Home Builders, Mixed-Use and Compact Development; http://www.nahb.org/default.aspx
(Click on the grey button named "Housing Topics" at the top right of the page, then in the list to the left click "Land Development," and then choose "Community Design")

The Cottage Company, LLC.; Company that has built many Cottage Housing projects with site plans and example codes http://www.cottagecompany.com/default.aspx

Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission, Density By Design; http://www.morpc.org/pdf/morpc_density_brochure_CS3.pdf

Complete Streets resource:
http://www.completestreets.org/

Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission – Complete Streets resources:
http://morpc.org/transportation/complete-streets/index
http://morpc.org/transportation/complete-streets/toolkit/index

For additional references cited, see the Bibliography in the Appendix, http://balancedgrowth.ohio.gov/BestLocalLandUsePractices/BestLocalLandUsePractices2012.aspx

Oberlin mixed use compact development project.
(Illustration: Sustainable Community Associates, Urban Design Associates)