

Mixed-Use



Photo Credit: Cooper Carry-Greenville, SC

Noah
Penney

Canada's National Housing Strategy defines "Mixed-Use Development" as "the development of land or in a building with two or more different uses, such as residential, office and retail. Mixed-use can occur vertically within a building, or horizontally on a site" (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2022).

Why Mixed Use

Early 20th Century planning in North America sought to separate uses (residential, commercial, industrial, etc.) as it was thought to enhance safety and efficiency. In particular, industrial areas were separated from residential areas. This created a number of subsequent challenges; including leading to car dependence, as residents had to travel longer distances to meet basic needs and to places of employment. Mixed-use development can help achieve the following benefits (Grant, 2002):

- Creating a more active environment, optimizing use of infrastructure.
- Providing a greater range of housing options for smaller households.
- Improving affordability and equity by mixing housing types.
- **Reducing the dependence of older adults and children on cars by placing housing near commercial and civic activities.**
- Enabling people to live closer to the places where they shop, work, or play. Thus lessening car dependency, thereby reducing the environmental impacts of automobile use.

"Older adults living in mixed-use, better connected, and more compact neighbourhoods are more likely to be active."

(Chau & Jamei, 2021)



Photo Credit: Grant/flickr.com

Figure 1: Ground floor commercial spaces with residential units above on North Main Street, Princeton, Illinois.

Mixed Use In Smaller Communities

The benefits of mixed-use development can be enjoyed in smaller (rural and remote) communities and are not just for larger urban centres. Mixed-use development can be achieved through a combination of zoning and regulatory changes and direct municipal engagement in development.

In smaller communities, mixed-use development can enhance age friendliness, as per housing goals outlined by the World Health Organization (2007) by providing opportunities for older adults to live closer to services and facilities while increasing the range of choices for appropriate and affordable housing options.



Photo Credit: Miami University

Figure #2: High Street in Oxford, Ohio. Mixed use buildings front the street with ground floor commercial and upper level residential.



Photo Credit: Oxford Visitors Bureau

Figure #3: Looking toward downtown Oxford from the campus of Miami University.

Downtown Mixed Use Infill - Oxford, Ohio

Oxford, a college town in Ohio home to Miami University, faced the challenge of meeting housing demand resulting from the University's student population with development in a responsible and sustainable manner. In order to meet this demand, Oxford took the approach of adapting its zoning and building regulations to increase the development of new, student focused, housing in its downtown area.

Oxford's regulations require that development in the downtown area include a minimum amount of commercial space on the ground floor and permit the use of upper floors for residential use. Ground floor residential use is conditional, requiring specific approval and meeting condition. There are specific percentages of allowed residential use based on the lot area, which are less than the total allowed floor area, encouraging buildings to include both residential and other uses. Other regulations ensure that development retains the character of their downtown and that new development and redevelopment blend with historic buildings.

These regulations have resulted in the development of a number of mixed use buildings in the downtown. 97 new residential units and a total of 81,600 square feet of new ground-floor commercial space had been developed as of 2015 (Arendt, 2017).

199 East Pearl - Jackson, Wyoming

Through the use of zoning to encourage residential units above ground floor commercial, Jackson, Wyoming saw the development of 199 East Pearl. Containing a total of 22,000 square feet and 9 condominiums, this development was a result of Jackson's efforts to revitalize its downtown. Prior to changes, Jackson's zoning was outdated and prohibited mixed-use development in the downtown area (Arendt, 2017).

The Town's new regulations also incentivized the development in that the floor area was allowed to be greater if it met conditions such as building underground parking, including affordable residential units, and dedicating over half the floor space to residential use (Arendt, 2017).

"Mixed-use neighbourhoods are often more walkable and capture a larger share of local trips."

(Zhang & Zhang, 2017)



Photo Credit: Carney Logan Burke

Figure #4: 199 East Pearl located in Jackson, Wyoming



Figure #5: A proposed mixed-use redevelopment along Skyes Street South in Meaford, Ontario.



Figure #6: A proposed lakefront mixed-use development along Georgian Bay, in Meaford,

“Today, housing for seniors is more often integrated into places where residents can maintain their independence even after they give up driving”

(Schmitz, 2005)

Lakefront Mixed Use Development - Meaford, Ontario

A number of recent mixed use developments have occurred in Meaford, Ontario, located along Georgian Bay. These include, a redevelopment along Skyes Street South in the Downtown that replaced a commercial strip, and a lakefront development that includes townhomes, a hotel, and other commercial uses (Fell, 2014; Vance, 2022). The Town’s current building development applications contain other applications for mixed-use developments.

Meaford’s Town Plan highlights its desire to incentivize mixed-use development to reduce private automobile dependence and to conserve energy (Municipality of Meaford, 2014).

Sxw̓tpqyen Neighborhood - Missoula, Montana

Located in Missoula, Montana, Sxw̓tpqyen is a planned mixed-use development. The neighbourhood is intended to be developed in accordance with Missoula’s housing policy to achieve the goals of more diverse and equitable housing (Missoula Home Coalition, 2020). To achieve this, Missoula developed regulations for the development, including the following (Missoula Home Coalition, 2020):

- Requiring minimum parcel size and minimal setbacks.
- Addressing equity in land use through a mix of building and home types.
- Permitting apartments homes throughout much of the plan area.
- Promoting accessory dwelling unit (ADU) development by allowing by-right development and removing policies that limit use.



Figure #6: The West Broadway Square area of the Sxw̓tpqyen Neighbourhood development. Showcasing mixed-use buildings fronting onto the square.

Final Thoughts

These cases highlight a number of instances of mixed-use development in the context of smaller towns. The cases show how mixed-use development can be achieved and planned for in accordance with local housing needs and plans on various scales; through the implementation of zoning and regulation, as well as through municipal engagement in the development and planning process.

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