

Good Housing Policy IS Good Climate Policy

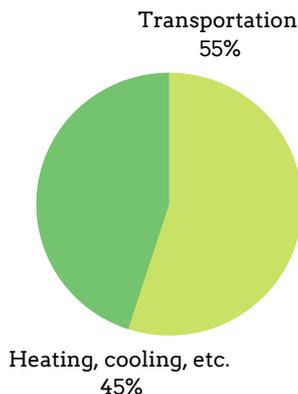
Here's the bottom line: Study after study shows that allowing for walkable, mixed-use, and multifamily housing close to public transit greatly assists us in reducing our carbon footprint and revitalizing our local downtown areas.

It will also help us with our housing shortage in Westchester, which is already hurting our local economy, our property taxes, our schools, our seniors, our millennials, our working families, and racial equity.

Did you know?

1. Single-family homes are less energy efficient than multifamily – and not for the reason you think!

According to the EPA, the average American home consumes **55% of its total energy** not on operating the home but on **transportation to and from the home**, most of it going to automobiles, and **only 45% for heating, cooling, lighting, etc.**[1] And modeling from a new study found that building a large number of new multifamily instead of new single-family homes would have reduced per-unit energy demand by 27-47% per household.[2]



2. Decades of suburban land use decisions haven't helped.

In its latest report, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) explained that between 1990 and 2019, greenhouse gas emissions from residential buildings **increased by 50%** through a combination of carbon-intensive building materials, an increase in electrical use from fossil fuel sources, and local land use decisions, including a heavy preference for single-family homes over more energy-efficient and affordable multifamily housing in local zoning.[3]

3. Reducing our communities' carbon footprint has a lot to do with our homes.

As reported in the U.S. Consumer Expenditure Survey, U.S. households generate **5.43 gigatons of carbon dioxide** equivalent emissions every year, with 33.6% directly related to our housing and another 29.8% from transportation.[4]



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What can you do?

1. Support more transit-oriented development



Transit-oriented development (TOD) doesn't only mean mid- or high-rises. It can be townhouses, duplexes, quadplexes, or other context-specific multifamily housing located within half a mile of Metro-North Railroad stations and built to be energy-efficient, affordable, and to promote walking and public transportation.

TODs boost our local economy and are a potential game-changer for young people and families who now work in Westchester but have trouble finding housing in their price range. It leads to less dependence on cars, more use of public transit, more walkable and revitalized downtown centers, more educational opportunities for children, and provides a reliable source of funding and ridership to the Metro-North Railroad that so many Westchester residents rely on.

2. Call out the climate impact of NIMBYism



Too often, attempts to build the housing we need get shouted down by local neighbors who say "Not In My Back Yard." Studies by the Welcome Home Westchester campaign and others have found that the multifamily housing built in Westchester has had a positive, not a negative, impact on school districts, on property taxes, and on the local economy. The IPCC's new report says that climate smart housing policy, like changing local zoning to allow mixed land uses, creating more transit-oriented, cyclist-friendly, and walkable housing, and improving and electrifying our new construction **"could reduce urban energy use between 23 to 26% by 2050**, compared to the business-as-usual scenario." [5]

3. Get involved in your city, town, or village

Decisions on what gets built in your community are almost entirely decided at the local level, often by volunteers. Decisions are made by those who show up! We need more affordable and climate-friendly housing options, of all shapes and sizes, for all of our neighbors. It's good for Westchester and good for the planet!



1 US EPA, OIA (2013, April 26). Smart Growth and Transportation | US EPA. USEPA. <https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/smart-growth-and-transportation>
2 Berrill, P., Gillingham, K. T., & Hertzwich, E. G. (2021). Linking Housing Policy, Housing Typology, and Residential Energy Demand in the United States. *Environmental Science & Technology*, 55(4), 2224–2233. <https://doi.org/10.1021/acs.est.0c05696>
3 Skeas, J. et al. (2022, April 4). Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Climate Change 2022 Mitigation of Climate Change. Working Group contribution to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Retrieved April 18, 2022, from https://reportipcc.ch/ar6wg3/pdf/IPCC_AR6_WGIII_FinalDraft_FullReport.pdf
4. PBS NewsHour. (2019, September 21). 5-charts show how your household drives up global greenhouse gas emissions. PBS NewsHour. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/science/5-charts-show-how-your-household-drives-up-global-greenhouse-gas-emissions>
5. Skeas, J. et al. (2022, April 4). Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Climate Change 2022 Mitigation of Climate Change. Working Group contribution to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Retrieved April 18, 2022, from https://reportipcc.ch/ar6wg3/pdf/IPCC_AR6_WGIII_FinalDraft_FullReport.pdf