

# PARADE OF HOMES HALTON HILLS & AREA

## Small Lot Housing Gaining Popularity

By Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation

Small lot housing, a concept which has been around for many years, is gaining new found popularity because of soaring land and house prices. The idea is a simple one: Make the best possible use of the least possible land.

In the so called "zero lot line" houses, one or more of the four sides of the house could be on the property lines. Conceivably, three of the four sides could be on the property lines. The premise behind this type and all other small lot housing is to use land more efficiently to make it possible for more people to afford single family homes by reducing development costs.

In recent years because of the increased costs of serviced land and the strong demand for single family housing, prices have risen to the point where many people cannot afford a home in a conventional subdivision. Because of this condition, zero lot line and other forms of small lot housing have been re-introduced to reduce servicing and land costs by providing smaller individual lots than those required for conventional housing.

Zero lot line developments built in various cities across the country have shown that this type of housing, while providing a residential environment comparable to large lot subdivisions, uses land and services more efficiently and economically.

The lots in small lot housing developments may be no more than half the size of conventional lots and yet, because of the way the units are placed on the lots, there are reasonable amounts of open space.

Small lot housing differs from conventional housing in that the design of each house and its location on the lot is a major part of overall design of the neighborhood.

This comprehensive approach means the houses

are sited on the land in relation to each other before the lot lines are drawn. Units are often clustered to provide the maximum amount of open space.

However through careful use of varied elevations, tree planting, plus the erection of screen fencing and variations in the external finishing of the units, a large degree of privacy and individuality is created for each home.

This same care is exercised in the design of the neighborhoods themselves. Most streets are laid out as a system of cul-de-sacs to eliminate through traffic, and wide roads. Narrower streets reduce street construction servicing and maintenance costs.

The amount of water and sewer pipe can also be reduced because of the closeness of the houses. One major sewer line and a single large watermain could serve a cluster of homes.

Lots in small lot subdivisions are graded so runoff drains into the street and from there to a storm sewer outside the cul-de-sac. All these cost-cutting methods could save up to 40 per cent in servicing costs.

Because of new CMHC criteria, Ontario's Urban Development Standards and the city of Winnipeg's new zoning category, federal and provincial housing agencies are taking a greater role in the planning and financing of small lot housing. The idea is also winning support from local governments across the country, although not without some reservations.

A principal fear of municipal politicians is the loss in municipal tax revenues. Since taxes are based on the lot sizes as well as home assessment, they feel the smaller homes will bring in less revenue. While this is true per individual house the municipalities will probably get the same amount of revenue since more houses will be built per acre than are built now with larger lots.

Another fear of politicians is that the housing which is touted as "low cost" may be so poorly designed, it will become a slum after a few years.

Where these fears have been expressed, the proponents of the small lot housing developments have usually been able to reassure the critics by giving them a more thorough understanding of the concept.

The design goal of small lot housing is building the house so that modifications can take place later if the family expands. The idea is to plan the unit and lot without restricting the residents' activities. With this in mind, planners are looking at rooms over garages and carports that are still somehow connected to the main house.

The needs of children must be considered too. Therefore, communal play areas for preschoolers, that can be supervised by several units, are included in the design of many small lot neighborhoods because of the small lot sizes.

Because the houses are so close together, some developers have taken innovative approaches to the preservation of privacy.

For instance, in a Windsor Ontario project, the houses were built without windows in the second floor rear rooms that would overlook a neighbor's backyard. While preserving the neighbor's privacy, the design restricted the homeowner's supervision of their own children in their own yards.

Some mistakes have been made with the early developments. But in time, with more and more small lot houses being built, these difficulties will be worked out. Small lot houses are achieving their principal aim: giving people a chance to own their own homes at affordable prices without going to condominium co-operative ownership.

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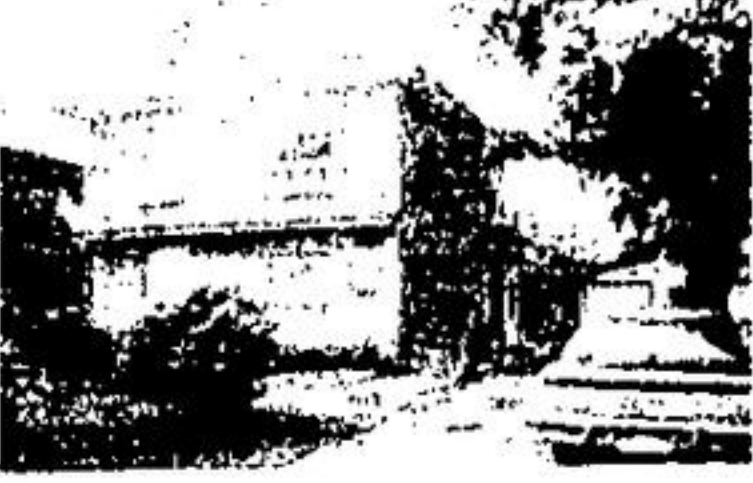
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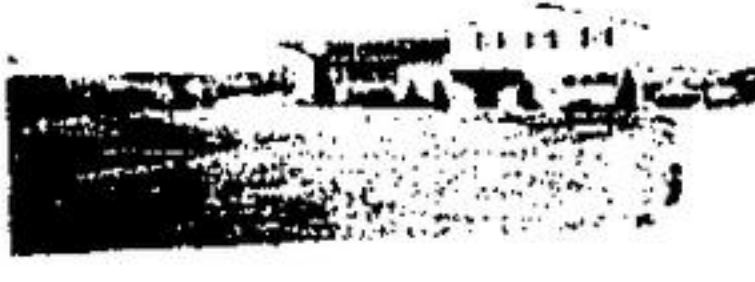
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