

### BUILT ENVIRONMENT

## Neighbourhood density

*Landsc. Urban Plan.* <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landurbplan.2018.03.005> (2018)



Credit: Trekandshoot/Alamy Stock Photo

We shape our buildings and then afterwards they shape us, says an old maxim about architecture. It could be argued that the same goes for the building of neighbourhoods and the types of activity and density they support, which have been linked to a wide range of socio-economic variables and outcomes.

Emily Talen at the University of Chicago and colleagues paired up US Census block data with neighbourhood typologies mapped through a geographic information system onto aerial images of six metropolitan areas that represent older and newer cities. They found that due in large part to the age and historical demographics of the individual cities, the urban experience for many residents can be wildly disparate based on their neighbourhood type, with significant variation within and between cities. Suburban tracts ('loops and lollipops') are racially and ethnically diverse in Atlanta, Las Vegas and Sacramento but much less so in Boston, Portland and Chicago. Further out, sprawling patterns on the urban fringe are the least diverse and the least dense, leading to a range of negative environmental impacts. Older built landscape types such as urban grids are denser and more diverse, and since they tend to also have lower rates of occupancy, there is an opportunity to house additional residents in relatively well-located, well-connected and diverse central portions of metropolitan regions.

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Published online: 16 July 2018  
<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41893-018-0110-4>