INTERPLAN

APA American Planning Association
International Division
Making Great Communities Happen

A Publication of the International Division
of the American Planning Association

2025 Summer Issue

INTERPLAN

American Planning Association
International Division
Making Great Communities Happen

A Publication of the International Division
of the American Planning Association

Interplan is the flagship publication of the *APA International Division*. The newsletter provides a space to share stories and information about international planning professionals, efforts, and events. It is published three times per year - once before the National Planning Conference (NPC), once after NPC, and once at the end of the calendar year.

To submit articles, news, and photos, please review the editorial guidelies at *https://international.planning.org/knowledge/interplan/*

Announcements

APA ID Monthly Meeting

Monthly on the first Thursday | 7:00 – 8:30 pm EST
Host: APA ID Executive Board
Please email jing@planning.community, if you are interested in joining the meeting.

CALL FOR PAPERS
World Planning Schools Congress (WPSC 2026)

The 6th World Planning Schools Congress (WPSC 2026) will open its Call for Papers in September 2025.

About the 6th World Planning Schools Congress (WPSC 2026)
Date: June 29 – July 3, 2026
Location: Helsinki & Espoo, Finland
Theme: Peripheral Visions – Rethinking Planning

The WPSC is organized by the Global Planning Education Association Network (GPEAN) and its 11 member planning school associations, including ACSP in the United States.

Please see the WPSC 2026 link here for more details and updates:

CALL FOR PROPOSALS
NPC 26 in Detroit

NPC 26 will take place in Detroit, Michigan | April 25–28, 2026
Online Program | May 27–29, 2026

Proposal submissions start on July 30.
For more information, please visit the APA website: NPC 26 Call for Proposals

We look forward to receiving entries from around the world — share your insights, experiences, and stories with the global planning community!

CALL FOR SESSION PROPOSALS
Consortium for Scenario Planning 2026 Conference

Submit by July 14, 2025
The Consortium for Scenario Planning 2026 Conference is now accepting session proposals!

Dates: February 4–6, 2026
Location: Salt Lake City, Utah

Please click here for more info & submission details

Last year's conference featured several international case studies. This is a great opportunity to share your work and insights about scenario planning with fellow planners and researchers.

Regenerative Bhutan Forum: Pathways to Regenerative Tourism.

🗓️ 18–20 August 2025
📍 Dungkar Dzong, Paro, Bhutan
https://dungkar.bt/

Organised jointly by Department of Tourism (DoT) and Association for Bhutanese Tour Operators (ABTO) under the EU funded SUSTOUR Bhutan Project, this forum opens the door to a different kind of regional cooperation—one rooted in care, reciprocity, and long-term regeneration.

Expect deep dives on:
• Carbon calculation methods for tourism
• Bhutan's national green standards
• Greener supply chains in hospitality
• Field visits to see theory in action
• And what "green branding" really means when culture and ecology matter

Bhutan offers more than just a destination; it shines as a guiding light for a regenerative and responsible tourism future for South Asia and the world.

See winners of Planning Excellence Awards announced at PIA's 2025 Conference in Darwin on May 29, 2025

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS
ICCAUA 2026 CONFERENCE

8th International Conference of Contemporary Affairs in Architecture and Urbanism
Venue: Oxford conference room, Nurol Tower, Istanbul, Turkey
Date: 7-8 May 2026
Abstract Submission Deadline: 7 December 2025
Early Bird Registration deadline: 7 February 2026
Website: www.iccaua.com
(Hybrid Conference: both in-person and online paper presentations will be available.)

61st ISOCARP World Planning Congress

Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia | 1-4 December 2025
Click here to register by August 31, 2025
Join leading urban professionals, researchers, and policymakers from around the world as we shape inclusive, sustainable, and resilient cities together. At the 2025 World Planning Congress, ISOCARP calls on 'Cities & Regions in Action', to analyze, discuss, and search for better pathways for urban and regional planning aiming at improving the quality of life of citizens beyond the current time of volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity of crisis convergence and building resilience.

Ukraine

Scenario Planning Model for Rebuilding a Displaced Community: The Case of Hirska Municipality, Luhansk Region, Ukraine

As Ukraine prepares for post-war recovery, a massive effort is underway to restore its infrastructure, revive its economy, and rebuild its cities and towns. Yet beyond the physical reconstruction lies a deeper and more complex task: restoring the social fabric of communities shattered by war. In hundreds of villages and towns across the conflict zone, people have lost not just homes, but also their sense of place, belonging, and future.

The work with Hirska Hromada (municipality) in the Luhansk region, a municipality currently under full occupation, presents a model for how scenario planning and community-driven methods can be used to prepare for long-term recovery, even in the most uncertain of contexts. It offers a replicable framework for planners, municipalities, and development professionals facing the challenge of rebuilding displaced or war-affected communities.

In 2014, the Hirska community found itself on the front line. Following the full-scale invasion in 2022, Russian forces occupied the territory, destroying residential buildings, mines, and social infrastructure. Today, the community remains under full occupation, while its administration has been relocated to various cities across Ukraine. Despite this displacement, the community has united, establishing humanitarian hubs in Bohdanivka, Khmelnytskyi, Kyiv, Poltava, and Korsun-Shevchenkivskyi. These hubs assist not only Hirska residents but also all those affected by the war in Luhansk Oblast.

Led by the Ro3kvit Urban Coalition in collaboration with Hirska's displaced administration and residents, the planning process was guided by principles of social cohesion, cultural continuity, and long-term resilience. Notably, this effort was conducted entirely without external funding, driven instead by the commitment of local leaders, professionals, and community members determined to preserve their home and prepare for its future. The result of this work can be replicated in different places that have experienced forced displacement, be it due to natural or man-made disasters.

Planning Through Uncertainty: The Role of Scenario Thinking

Displacement is not always a temporary condition. For many communities, it means years of disconnection, without access to land, clarity about return, or a clear starting point for recovery. In such contexts, urban planning must move beyond the conventional focus on physical reconstruction. Rather than centering on infrastructure modeling, the approach with Hirska Hromada integrates collective memory, scenario planning, and participatory engagement, treating the community not as a recipient of plans but as a co-author of its future.

This method offers a flexible, scalable framework adaptable to evolving realities. It is rooted in people, what they remember, value, and imagine. In situations where territory is lost or inaccessible, collective memory becomes spatial memory. Shared recollections create a common vision and reaffirm identity, anchoring people to place through relationships, routines, and landscape, even when physical access is interrupted.

At the core of the Hirska initiative is scenario-based planning—a methodology that allowed the team to develop strategies for multiple potential futures:

1. Continued full occupation
2. Partial de-occupation with ongoing risks
3. Full de-occupation and peace

This structured approach enabled the community to identify priorities, imagine possibilities, and maintain agency, regardless of the current reality. By preparing for several futures simultaneously, communities like Hirska can adapt quickly as conditions evolve, while ensuring that memory, identity, and needs remain central to decision-making.

Rather than postponing planning until conditions improve, this process demonstrates that imagination and action are also forms of recovery, critical steps in rebuilding collective capacity and restoring a sense of agency.

Community Engagement and Co-Creation

Despite displacement and fragmentation, the Hirska community remained connected—online, in temporary settlements, and through informal support networks. The planning team worked closely with residents through surveys, interviews, and participatory workshop, ensuring that priorities and values were defined by the people themselves.

The community engagement was done amidst the ongoing war, power outages, and logistical challenges, Despite this, the team was able to organize participation events to gather input from the Hirska community. These events allowed residents to voice their priorities for rebuilding. There were online and offline workshops, a survey that captured feedback and supplemented the workshops, in-depth interviews, and meetings with key industry and business representatives.

Residents consistently highlighted three key priorities before returning home: safety, employment, and housing. However, when asked what they missed most, answers shifted toward intangible, yet deeply rooted elements: nature, culture, and social life. These responses emphasized that rebuilding efforts must address not only infrastructure but also the emotional and cultural landscape that makes a place feel like home.

Memory Mapping and Visioning as Strategic Tools

The project introduced tools like memory mapping and future storytelling, allowing residents to reflect on their shared past and envision future daily life in Hirska. These exercises were not just symbolic—they informed tangible design and policy priorities, ensuring that the resulting plans reflected local identity, history, and aspirations.

Such activities also created space for healing, reaffirmed social bonds, and reconnected people with a long-term sense of place. By transforming memory into planning inputs, the team grounded their technical recommendations in the emotional truths of the community.

Rebuilding with Values: Housing, Economy, and Social Cohesion

The scenario plans addressed essential sectors—housing, safety, economic recovery, social infrastructure—through the lens of community-defined values such as belonging, dignity, and care for nature. For the scenario of peaceful conditions, long-term infrastructure, cultural centers, and housing rehabilitation were prioritized, while mobile services and digital supports networks were highlighted for scenarios under full or partial occupation. This flexible approach allowed the team to respond to both urgent and future needs, balancing pragmatic constraints with visionary goals.

A Scalable Model for Recovery-Oriented Planning

What makes the Hirska case particularly significant is that it serves as a scalable, community-based planning model for other war-affected or disaster-displaced regions. It shows that planning can, and should, begin even before liberation or reconstruction becomes physically possible. It reframes recovery not as a reactive process, but as a proactive, inclusive, and imaginative act of resilience.

Through collaborative governance, inclusive design, and scenario-based thinking, the Hirska experience offers essential insights for urban planners, policymakers, and international partners engaged in post-crisis recovery. ■

The following people were part of this Ro³kvit project: Fulco Treffers, Jolanta Zarzycka, Tetyana Samiliv (URAG Lead), Sofiia Bondar, Alisa Aleksandrova

The full project presentation can be found here: https://ro³kvit.com/projects/hirska-community

Indonesia

Indonesia's "One Million" Housing Question and the Global Housing Crisis

Housing unaffordability plagues cities around the world. While the obvious solution would be to construct more housing, the issue of housing provision goes beyond quantity. Providing proper housing support to target populations is a challenge because housing affordability not only relies on a unit's availability but also on accessibility and a fit with the target population's socio-demographic characteristics. For a multi-ethnic, archipelago nation like Indonesia, the challenge is massive. This article provides an overview of how Indonesia, the world's largest archipelago, addresses its housing issues and situates them within the global context of housing affordability.

Part 1.

"One Million" Housing in Indonesia, Briefly Explained.

A 2024 report written by the Institute of Economic and Social Research from the University of Indonesia mentions that Indonesia was experiencing a staggering 12.7 million home backlog in 2023.[1] Beyond the quantity backlog, housing unaffordability also persists as an issue, particularly in urban areas. Housing prices in cities are reported to range from 11.91 to 23.5 times the annual income of the average Indonesian[2] - with Medan (23.5), Surabaya (21.33), Batam (20.94), Makassar (19.78), and Jakarta (19.76) as the top five cities with the highest housing price to income ratio. Three of these cities, Jakarta, Medan, and Surabaya, are also the most populous in Indonesia. Only 65.25% of Indonesians are living in housing that complies with the national habitability standard according to the 2024 Central Statistics Bureau report. This means that more than one in three Indonesians are currently living in substandard housing units - either being overcrowded, lacking structural integrity, or without access to proper infrastructure such as clean water or sanitation.

While the issue of housing supply backlog, unaffordability, and substandard housing quality is not unique to Indonesia, the solutions might differ between regions. Indonesia has the unique circumstance of being the largest archipelago in the world, with 17,000 islands and a population of over 280 million. Beyond that, this article aims to question the response and dimensions of the state-sponsored housing program, seeking to address the social perspectives on fulfilling housing demand in Indonesia.

To overcome the staggering shortage of housing and prevalence of substandard housing units, the Indonesian government's flagship program

[1] Simbolon, Kurniawan, Desdiani, and Wahyuputri, 2024.
[2] Simbolon, et al. 2024

is the "One Million Housing" program. Initiated as a national strategic project through a Presidential Decree in 2016, the goal is to construct at least one million housing units nationwide by utilizing subsidies, government initiatives, or public-private partnerships. Since its establishment, the program has constructed over 9 million housing units across the country, with 1,199,557 units built in 2024 alone.[1] While this showcases the quantitative dimension of the project, there are still some questions that remain unanswered. For example, despite the ambitious progress that the project made, the housing backlog has persisted in the tens of millions over the last thirteen years. If the housing backlog persists, what is the actual take-up rate of the built units? Are there any other causes other than housing construction and the take-up rate that keep the housing backlog high? Are there any indicated mismatches between the social housing program itself and the characteristics of the people - or the market?

The most common perception of social housing in Indonesia are the ones built through the subsidized housing program. These are landed housing units, often intended for the occupation of single family households with units measuring from 21 to 36 square meters (± 220 to 380 square feet). Recently, the government even launched smaller units of 18 square meters (± 190 square feet), yet it faced significant controversy from the public. However, contrary to popular belief, the subsidy is not given directly by the government to developers. Instead, it was given to banks, in order to provide mortgages with flat or low interest rate, or to cover down payment assistance.

Out of the overarching 'One Million Housing' program, a significant portion of construction is done by developers through these housing mortgage subsidy programs. For example, the FLPP program—a financing liquidity subsidy program that offers a fixed interest rate of 5% for 20 years—took up over 200,000 units built in 2024, and other targeted developers built over 350,000 units through other mortgage subsidy schemes such as interest rate differential subsidies or down payment subsidies. These two programs accounted for over half of the approximately 940,000 housing units targeted for low-income communities in 2024. According to the Indonesian Ministry of Housing and Public Works in 2021, those who are eligible for these subsidized housing units or to receive mortgage or down payment assistance from the state include individuals earning below 6,000,000 IDR (± 360 USD) outside of Papua or below 7,500,000 IDR in Papua ((± 460 USD) or household earning below 8,000,000 IDR (± 490 USD) outside of Papua or below 10,000,000 IDR in Papua (± 610 USD).

It should be noted that this threshold is higher than both the average minimum wage and the cutoff for most government assistance programs. Those who earn just above the minimum wage lack access to other government assistance programs while still being considered as 'low-income' when it comes to housing.

Furthermore, having these units built through mortgage subsidies already limits the target population that can access the subsidy itself, namely those who can access banking or pay regular monthly or annual mortgage payments. This contrasts with the worker profiles in Indonesia, where the Central Statistics Bureau reported in 2024 that 59.11% of workers in Indonesia are employed in the informal sector. If we look at a World Bank study in November 2023, the reported proportion of informal sector workers can reach up to 75%.[2] Working in the informal sector often means lacking a regular monthly income and being more vulnerable to economic changes. Accessing a mortgage is exceptionally challenging for those who lack a regular income.

[1] The data regarding this project is available online and accessible to the public through their website: programsatujutarumah.pu.go.id - disaggregated by year, type of subsidy or assistance for which the unit is built and the province where the unit is built. For each province, the data also highlights the gap or surplus of units built during that target year.

[2] Ablaza, Alladi, and Pape, 2023

Instead of expanding the mortgage subsidy program, the Rumah Swadaya or self-help housing program seems to be a more promising option. Referring to the World Bank evaluation done in September 2023 of Indonesia's National Housing Program, 71% of the housing units in Indonesia are self-constructed. The Rumah Swadaya program acts through giving direct financial and technical assistance to individuals or families to self-construct or renovate their dwelling unit to fulfill their housing needs or habitability standards. While there is no exact blueprint that homeowners could design their unit through this program, the Indonesian government has provided a thorough standard of what qualifies as a habitable housing unit - based on the space requirement per person, structural integrity, ventilation, and access to clean water.[1] It also provides detailed technical specifications and guidance for construction of habitable housing units - ranging from choosing the site, the elements of a 'healthy home', as well as the materials and dimensions for construction.

A necessary critique would be regarding the allocated budget for the self-help housing stimulus assistance in conjunction with how well it could fulfill the prescribed standard of habitable housing. Given a budget of up to 20 million IDR per household in all of Indonesia except Papua and 25-40 million IDR per household in Papua, it is curious how much this actually reflects the construction cost variability across the nation. For example, in the East Java Province alone, the average cost of plywood per square meter in the metropolitan city of Surabaya can be 1.4 times that of the more rural regency of Blitar. Yet, we have not yet accounted for the differences among the 38 provinces and each individual island. Furthermore, the difference in access to decent water infrastructure would also create vastly different challenges in budgeting and construction to provide proper sanitation facilities and clean water for each household. Finally, the existing standard still mainly refers to landed, single-family dwellings, while the program might have a more significant impact if it were combined with designing for multi-generational or communal living space alternatives.

Therefore, expanding the self-help housing program should not be limited to increasing the budget, but also in tailoring it for a wider range of recipients. Policymakers should extrapolate results from quantitative and qualitative research in order to expand the program to its full potential, especially in aiding communities that currently lack access to mortgages.

Referring back to how the self-help housing program still mainly caters to improving landed housing units, lack of density is another driver in home price unaffordability particularly in urban areas. Coupled with a lack of urban planning, this exacerbates urban sprawl by creating a scarcity of urban land. An article written in East Asian Forum reported that Indonesians still have a high preference for landed housing,[2] and when the existing alternative is high-rise apartment buildings with hundreds of units, the contrast is too jarring to create a cultural shift to vertical dwellings. The alternative to this is to look at intermediate housing types and grassroots-level solutions.

Several community-initiated pilot projects such as Kampung Susun Akuarium, Kampung Susun Kunir, and the Menteng community flats represent alternatives to constructing high density housing that better accommodates the residents' needs.

Initiated by grassroots civic and volunteer organizations, community housing cooperatives serve as a means to pool finances for constructing and maintaining housing units, creating higher-density housing that is not only

[1] These standards are displayed in the Rumah Swadaya website and documented in the Standar Nasional Indonesia book, available through download in the website's publication page.

[2] Farrakhy and Bakri, 2024

affordable but also fosters a sense of community among residents. The Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR) wrote in its exposé about Kampung Susun Akuarium that the cooperatives not only provided economic benefits and assistance with housing provision and management, but also strengthened the legal and political standing of the redeveloped informal settlement and its relationship with the state[1]. Meanwhile, BBC Indonesia wrote an interesting piece about how the Menteng Community flat provided housing at below market rate for young, moderate-income Indonesian families in a location that is well-known to be an expensive, prime area for residence at the heart of Jakarta.[2]

The establishment of a cooperative enables the communities to have stronger legal standing and operates through economies of scale in establishing higher density dwellings, which would be challenging to achieve otherwise. However, despite the success and widely-published result of these housing alternatives, there has yet to be an extended effort to significantly scale-up housing cooperatives and communal living projects. This would require significant support from the public sector, as well as extensive research into the projects' long-term impacts and challenges. Furthermore, a push towards higher-density housing should also be accompanied by strengthening regulatory support for rental housing. The only existing regulation in Indonesia regarding rental housing was published well over 30 years ago in 1994 and it is long due for an update.

Circling back to the national strategic project of the One Million Home program, the current administration sets an ambitious target of constructing three million housing units in 2025. Though some are doubtful of achieving this target, especially due to the recent budget cuts for the Housing and Settlement Ministry, more important than just churning out millions of housing units is ensuring that the constructed units actually meet the needs of the target population. Therefore, this signifies the importance of addressing the missing qualitative evaluation of the project.

[1] Irawati and Muhammad, 2023
[2] Widadio, 2025

Part 2.

A Short Reflection on Global Housing Provision

If we zoom out through a wider lens, housing is a global irony - the problem is universal, yet solutions are tailored to the local customs and climates. Its global ubiquity means that we can reflect on the successes and failures of housing solutions in other countries, and examine the emerging patterns and variances that we can tailor according to our local needs. For example, when we look at the opportunity to expand collective housing in Indonesia, the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights has done significant reports on the expansion of collective housing projects from Thailand, Philippines, Bangladesh, and Nepal. Perhaps we can ask deeper questions regarding the communal housing expansion in these countries - for example: what are the organizations or community structures that allow them to expand the program? How are these community structures related to existing grassroots communities? Do they create something new, or emerge from existing societal organizations? How do they finance the projects, and how does it relate to the economic conditions of their society - and how much support is given by the state?

If we look at the United States, the concept of cooperative housing has been tried within the last century - yet it never quite achieved mainstream popularity. However, in the published study on decades of American Housing Cooperatives, Sazama (2000) cited Hays (1993) that in an increasingly market-

driven world, housing cooperatives could provide a relevant alternative through joint ownership of property. This joint ownership structure particularly could be empowering for low- and moderate-income families.[1] Through the historical study of cooperative housing in the United States, Sazama (2000) highlighted another benefit of housing cooperatives as an affordable housing option, which is that it could act simultaneously develop human capital among residents. Cooperatives are also noted to have lower operating costs and create a better social environment than conventional rental housing (Sazama, 2000). However, the research also pointed out that developing a successful cooperative would require training and follow-up technical assistance, for which the state could provide as support.

If we are to discuss state support for cooperatives, we can refer to research by Ganapati (2010) that compares housing cooperatives in India, Sweden, and the United States. India and Sweden are two countries that are reported to have a significant proportion of cooperative housing in their market - 10.8% of the housing market in India and 18% in Sweden in the year 2000. However, while the cooperatives in Sweden emerged from the social housing movement in connection with social democratic unions such as tenants and worker unions,[2] the cooperatives in India are state-imposed.[3] However, through the comparative study, Ganapati (2010) still concludes that in order to grow, housing cooperatives need to be embedded in the state to a certain degree. Yet how the state would embed these cooperatives would differ significantly based on the state's political economy - perhaps a greater challenge in the context of the United States than in Sweden's social democracy or India's democratic socialism.[4]

Another emerging form of collective housing and community empowerment is through Community Land Trusts (CLT). CLTs allow communities to provide affordable housing through the collective acquisition of land and/or developing housing on acquired land, while allowing individuals or families to own the housing units at an affordable price. This model seems to align with the American value of housing as means to acquire wealth, yet prioritizes affordability in housing development. The National League of Cities pointed out that the CLTs in the United States allow for modest gains in wealth building for individual households through the resale of the property - not the land - yet, through leveraging the land acquisition cost and limiting the price appreciation it allows for the provision of longer term affordable housing opportunities.[5]

While we have discussed the opportunities of expanding homeownership through collective means, we can also look back at how states expanded their housing programs by setting ambitious targets of home production.

Vietnam has a national program of building one million social housing units.[6] Established after the COVID-19 pandemic, the program aims to address the backlog of 2.6 million housing units in the country. However, in 2025 it is reported that the construction has only reached less than half of the aimed target, with approximately 456,360 units. The report cites of budget shortage and lack of prioritization by the state as the cause of construction lag, and suggests streamlining the administrative process, pushing for targeted subsidies, and better oversight of social housing pricing to make it more affordable.[7]

In the same presentation, Mexico tells a different story about its social housing program. Between 2018-2024, the country built 7.4

[1] Birchall, 1988; Cooper and Rodman, 1992; Heskin and Leavitt, 1995; Sazama, 2000
[2] Strömberg, 1992; Ruonavaara, 2005; Ganapati, 2010
[3] Catanach, 1970; Ganapati, 2010
[4] Ganapati, 2010
[5] Leonard & Lowery, 2021
[6] Reported in a presentation at the 2025 APA Conference. See: Zhang, Hoang Duy, Montes & Iman, 2025
[7] Zhang, et al., 2025

million subsidized housing units, albeit with limited resources. Also, in an interesting way that is quite similar to Indonesia, 57.3% of the housing in Mexico is self-built and has the challenge of limited credit access. When subsidies are channeled through credit access programs, most benefits go to high-income households. Self-construction occurs due to policy gaps, in which people rely on themselves as opposed to the formal system, and despite the high land prices, there seems to be a resistance to densification.[1] The national housing program also provided support for self-built housing - and while the social housing unit does not specify a minimum surface area, instead giving guidelines on what is qualified as habitable space. Yet, Mexico's national housing program does not limit itself to self-built housing support but also creates affordable rental housing. The country also highlights its successes despite working with limited resources and budget constraints.

Mexico and Vietnam are not the only countries with social housing goals in the millions. The BBC and Reuters report that to fulfill Britain's housing shortage, the government planned an ambitious 1.5 million housing target. An initial response to this might be: Why are these countries all setting these massive targets for housing? One reason is that there is a significant supply mismatch. For example, the BBC reports that there are around 700,000 empty and unfurnished housing units in Britain,[2] while 1.3 million households linger on the social housing waiting list. Another curious issue that the BBC report points out is that bringing abandoned properties into use would be a time-consuming and complex process. While constructing new housing units is necessary, what policy barrier makes renovating existing ones a more challenging process instead? Perhaps, like how it is in the United States, regulatory barriers hinder adaptive reuse projects for affordable housing provisions while it could potentially create an alternative that is more economically sound, more sustainable, and less time-consuming.[3]

Connecting back to Indonesia's ambitious housing construction goals, there is a slight irony in the focus on the new construction of landed, single-family homes while more financially and socially-sound alternatives are available. This changing norm to single-family occupations also perpetuates the challenge of densification when historically densification is a natural part of urbanization. Multi-generational households and other more communal living structures are naturally more dense. The question often becomes: how to overcome structural and regulatory barriers that prevent collective housing from becoming more widespread?

Furthermore, housing is not just a unit for habitation; it is tied to land, livelihoods, and social connections. Without looking at the social contexts of where and how the units are built - merely churning out units in massive numbers would only lead to creating empty, inhabitable units. A report from Kompas, one of Indonesia's leading news outlets, questioned several abandoned subsidized housing projects - which produced thousands of empty units. While it did not specify the exact number of abandoned projects, the report cited mistargeted credit assistance programs, the use of subsidized housing as an investment vehicle rather than a residence, lacking access to public transportation and inadequate infrastructure as reasons for the stalled or abandoned subsidized housing projects.[4] This strengthens the position that building suitable housing tailored to the needs of target populations is more than just building more housing. Perhaps, expanding on substandard housing improvement programs and investing in higher-density, collective housing in city centers, whether through redeveloping informal settlements or building new ones, in places where people already choose to live and work would be a wiser option for not

[1] Zhang, et al., 2025
[2] Wheeler, 2024
[3] Walk-Morris, 2021
[4] Grahadyarini, 2024

just Indonesia, but many other countries struggling with affordable housing. ■

Luna N. Iman is a PhD student in Sociology at the University of Minnesota. Her research areas are in urban informality, housing policy, community development and urban financing. She recently just graduated from her Masters degree at the University of Minnesota through the Fulbright scholarship

References:

• Ablaza, C., Alladi, V., & Pape, U. (2023, November). Indonesia's Informal Economy: Measurement, Evidence, and a Research Agenda [Policy Research Working Paper 10608]. World Bank Group. Retrieved July 10, 2025, from https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099435011152325553/pdf/IDU025ef01630fdd504ae5085e90437dc8b1c171.pdf

• Direktorat Jenderal Perumahan Kementerian Pekerjaan Umum dan Perumahan Rakyat. (n.d.). Tentang Klinik Rumah Swadaya. Klinik Rumah Swadaya. Retrieved July 08, 2025, from https://krs.perumahan.pu.go.id/tentang

• Farrakhy, S. D., & Bakri, M. R. (2024, June 26). Indonesia still searching for an answer to its housing crisis. East Asia Forum. Retrieved July 15, 2025, https://eastasiaforum.org/2024/06/26/indonesia-still-searching-for-an-answer-to-its-housing-crisis/

• Ganapati, S. (2010). Enabling Housing Cooperatives: Policy Lessons from Sweden, India and the United States. International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 34(2), 365–380. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2427.2010.00906.x

• Grahadiyarini, B.M.L. (2024, June 22). Mengapa Sejumlah Rumah Bersubsidi Mangkrak?. Kompas. Retrieved July 20 2025 from https://www.kompas.id/artikel/rumah-bersubsidi-mangkrak-jangan-terus-berulang

• Irawaty, D., & Muhammad, G. (2023, August). Case Studies of Collective Housing in Asian Cities Series: Kampung Akuarium. Asian Coalition for Housing Right. Retrieved July 15, 2025 from http://www.achr.net/upload/downloads/file_230824171816.pdf

• Kementerian Pekerjaan Umum. (2021, April 7). Keputusan Menteri Pekerjaan Umum dan Perumahan Rakyat Nomor 411/KPTS/M/2021 Tahun 2021 tentang Besaran Penghasilan Masyarakat Berpenghasilan Rendah dan Batasan Luas Lantai Rumah Umum dan Rumah Swadaya. https://jdih.pu.go.id/detail-dokumen/KepmenPUPR-nomor-411-tahun-2021-Besaran-Penghasilan-Masyarakat-Berpenghasilan-Rendah-dan-Batasan-Luas-Lantai-Rumah-Umum-dan-Rumah-Swadaya

• Leonard, N. & Lowery, L. (2021). What City Leaders Need to Know About Community Land Trusts. National League of Cities. Retrieved July 19, 2025 from https://www.nlc.org/article/2021/08/17/what-city-leaders-need-know-about-community-land-trusts/

• Sazama, G. W. (2000). Lessons from the history of affordable housing cooperatives in the United States: a case study in affordable housing policy. The American Journal of Economics and Sociology, 59(4), 573–608. https://www.jstor.org/stable/3487827

• Simbolon, Y. S., Kurniawan, Y. R., Desdiani, N. A., & Wahyuniputri, F. W. (2024, June). Special Report Juni 2024. In Ribut Soal Tapera: Kebijakan "Harga Mati" untuk Turunkan Angka Kekurangan Perumahan Nasional? LPEM FEB UI. Retrieved July 10, 2025 from https://lpem.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Special_Report_Tapera.pdf

• The World Bank. (2023, September 8). Implementation Completion and Results Report on A Loan in the Amount of US$450 Million to the Republic of Indonesia for the National Affordable Housing Program [Report No: ICR00006325]. Retrieved July 12, 2025, from https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099091223091011615/pdf/BOSIB0b0e738ff0a20a40708cbc11a3a04c.pdf

• Walk-Morris, T. (2021, May 1). How Adaptive Reuse Can Help Solve the Housing Crisis. APA Publications: Planning Magazine. Retrieved July 15, 2025 from https://www.planning.org/planning/2021/spring/how-adaptive-reuse-can-help-solve-the-housing-crisis/

• Wheeler, B. (2024, October 19). Why are we building homes when so many are standing empty?. BBC. Retrieved July 13, 2025 from https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c4g518le0r5o

• Widadio, N.A. (2025, July 6). Kisah sekelompok orang bisa punya rumah di Menteng Jakarta seharga di bawah Rp1 miliar. BBC Indonesia. Retrieved July 17, 2025 from https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/articles/cy0wygjke41o

• Zhang, J., Hoang Duy, N., Montes, S., Iman, L. (2025, March 29). Global Social Housing Survey [Presentation Session: National Planning Conference]

Colombia

Patrimony and the construct of identity in Barichara

Barichara is often touted as the most beautiful town in Colombia. A walk through the town is like visiting a museum of Spanish colonial architecture, where some three centuries later, tourists make the pilgrimage to be comforted by the rustic authenticity of the relatively simple homes built by peasants and put to modern use. The stone-paved streets are lined with white plastered walls and narrow,

sometimes very elevated, sidewalks. Everywhere, there is an abundance of shops selling artisanal wares, and a weekend farmer's market on the plaza that brings locals together.

The town is a good example of the long tradition of beautiful and functional urban design in which buildings and places communicate with each other to convey an almost mystical aura to a place that extends beyond any particular facade, plaza or alley. History here is experienced as an almost timeless rustic aesthetic that offers a reprieve from the hustle and bustle of globalization.

I spoke with the town planner, Gustavo Navarro, about some of the ways Barichara is planning for the future while preserving the past. When it comes to architecture, the town has implemented strong preservation ordinances to keep alive not just the colonial aesthetics, but the traditional building methods and materials. Historically, walls were made with tapia pisada, or rammed earth, and another local technique called Bahareque that mixes masonry, wood and adobe and is a fusion of Spanish and indigenous traditions. The building code requires new the adherence to these traditions, and allows for the inclusion of certain modern techniques and materials. During my visit, an active construction site could be seen with people packing the red clay earth into wooden forms on a second story high above the sidewalk.

Historic preservation efforts are relatively recent, with the town being declared a national monument in 1978. This move was as much an effort to recognize and preserve the architecture and artisan traditions of the town as it was a political effort to end the reign of violence that plagued the population for much of the 20th Century. Starting in the 1940s and '50s, in an effort to swing national elections to the right, areas populated by left-voting farmers and villagers were terrorized by military and paramilitary groups. This was followed by another 30 or 40 years of more chaotic violence involving not only the state, but other armed groups and clashes between local families acting like gangs or warlords, using violence to force people to sell cheap and leave their homes – much like what we witness today as Israel uses military or "settler" violence to displace Palestinians and take their land. Throughout this period, the population shrank as people took refuge in larger cities and no visitors came to appreciate the architecture and support local artists, and no outside capital was invested in the town. Thus the colonial architecture was protected from the incursion of modern infrastructure through violence, poverty, isolation and a prolonged assault on the social fabric.

Patrimony is always part of a project of creating a political identity by a state through curating a history to address contemporary problems. In the case of Barichara, designating the architecture and of some of the town's traditional artisan products as patrimony made them into symbols of a local identity with a unified historical narrative of shared Spanish colonial heritage. The narrative of a shared history is an effort to begin to heal (and ignore) the wounds of the 20th century. Likewise, the official narrative would be used to appeal to tourists and investors and to bring new migrants, talents and economic opportunity. Colonial heritage is used not only as the symbolic representation of a local identity, but of a national identity which outsiders and migrants could also claim. And it worked.

The first wave of migrants were people with money from bigger cities, many of them retirees, who saw the town as a nice place to live. A second wave of migrants included more investor types and people who bought second homes as well as people with few resources who came to work. While the first wave was welcomed and integrated into the community, the second wave was more complicated. For a time, artisans from other parts of the country would come to make and sell "traditional" products, and outside investors owned most of the restaurants and hotels, creating a tension seen in many destination towns between locals who found themselves feeling left out of the town's success,

abandoned by history. In an attempt to correct this, many artisan workshops today focus on training and employing local and underserved populations.

Gradually, new money, new talent, and for the first time in decades, new people began to breathe life into Barichara and the violence subsided. It is a story of gentrification with a twist of poetic justice.

In the case of Barichara, patrimony is being used, not to give a full and nuanced account or to take a stance on who were victims or perpetrators, and thus some of the ugly parts of the 20th century are ignored or erased in the official narrative. For example, as residents lost their loved ones to the violence, they began carving crosses in the paving stones where the bodies fell, but the stones were removed and lost before the tourists began to arrive in the 1980s.

In her thesis, Margarita María Durán explores how this part of history is silenced by omission from the official narrative, but still lives in the memory of residents. On the one hand long-time residents perceive the changes brought about with a sense of loss; loss of the sense of solidarity needed to survive those hard years, a loss of recognition of the community's experience, and of traditions like peasant festivals that are dwindling. Some locals feel like facades are being saved at the expense of the social fabric, and that the influx of new residents has diluted collective memories, such as how the community survived a great drought and built a system of cisterns and wells to adapt, which are now in disuse. On the other hand, despite the selectivity and incompleteness of the official narrative, the peace and stability brought about by the changes have created a space where, after a lifetime of silence, older residents finally feel safe and free to share their stories and memories of the years of violence with each other.

Shortly after the declaration of the town as a national monument, the town held a *fair and festival of solidarity and return*, giving those former residents who had been displaced the invitation and pretext to return to visit the town and reconnect with lost community ties.

Monumentalizing patrimony is part of the process of consciously creating a shared narrative that fosters a collective identity. In this light, the concept of world heritage sites recognized by UNESCO is a meaningful part of the mission of the United Nations to promote international peace through the concept of world heritage, in which a piece of our cultural identity is shared with other cultures and people. The withdrawal of the US can be understood as a patrimonial project in which US identity is being crafted as separate from the patrimony and heritage of the rest of humanity beyond its borders.

Land Use and Spatial Analysis

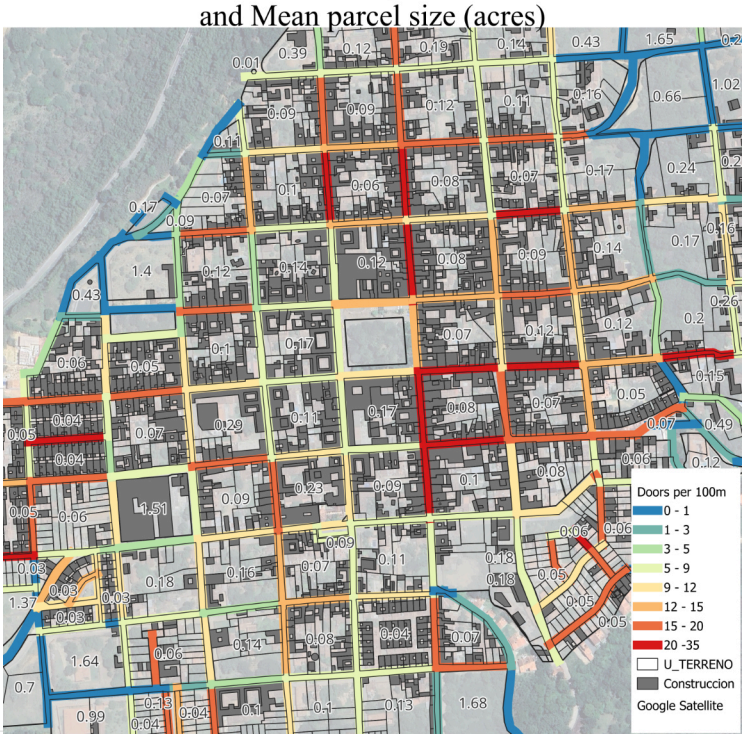
As planners, we might want to explore how our own zoning might allow or inhibit the kind of urban form that makes up the most beautiful town in Colombia. The contrast between Barichara and any nearby ¨modern¨ towns is stark; One notices the absence of noisy, stinky traffic, the aesthetics of the soft undulations in earthen walls, the traces of the craftsmanship of the human hands that shaped the material and designed each little detail of every facade.

From an urban design perspective, there are many things that work: The small block sizes are one of the first things that strike me. They range from 1.5 - 2 acres, or about 300 feet on each side. The narrowness of the streets is another noticeable feature, ranging from about 19 to 26 feet wide, with most around 22 feet wide, just enough for a row of on-street parking, a slow one-way travel lane and narrow sidewalks. Despite the narrow sidewalks, the streets have a default pedestrian orientation expressed in the abundance of tiny shops, and the slowness of vehicle traffic complements the pace of walking, allowing pedestrian and vehicular spaces to overlap. The lightness of traffic creates a sense of quiet punctuated by voices of people passing by, birds and music emanating from various shops.

Block size and the facade width, or the distance between doors, are recognized as important factors in fostering walkability. The blocks in Barichara (just slightly smaller than those in the historic center of Bogota) make it easy to choose different paths to cross the town; it takes just over a minute to walk a block, and the frequent intersections keep the flaneur wondering what might lie around the next corner. In his book, Cities for People, Jan Gehl states that for a street to be pedestrian "friendly," there should be at least 10 doors per 100 meters of frontage (average of 30 ft between doors), and to be an "active street, there should be a ratio of 15-20 doors per 100 meters. Streets with 6-10 doors per 100 meters get a passing grade, but below that there is not enough action and visual interest to support urban life.

Parcel Arrangement

Number of doors per 100 meters and Mean parcel size (acres)



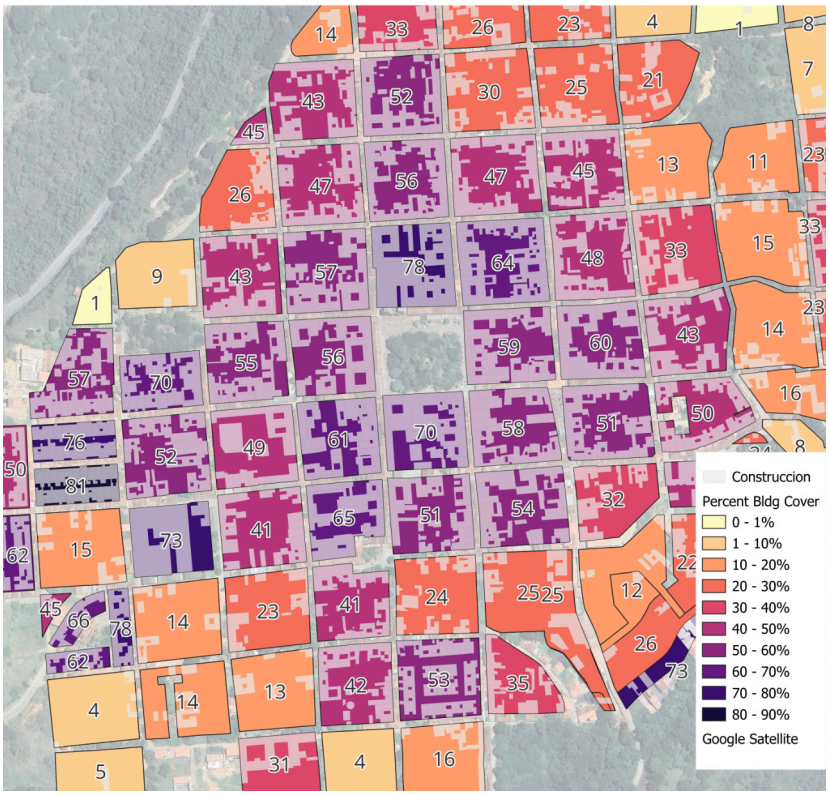
The doors per 100 meter map counts doors on both sides of each street, and indeed, the most lively and active streets in the town seem to reflect Gehl's rule of thumb, with several streets having up to 30 doors per hundred meters . This not only creates a lively, walkable environment, but from a Strong Towns perspective, it is a recipe for efficient infrastructure. The use of Zaguans, or entry hallways that connect larger uses to the street without taking up much frontage, as well as using courtyards to host various uses, helps to increase the diversity and density of uses, as does the allowance for small lots.

While the average lot size in the town center is 4,800 square feet, there is a significant diversity of lot sizes on each block. The average size of the smallest lot on each block is just over 1,100 sqft with the smallest being a mere 162 sqft. There is, as we might expect, a correlation between average lot size and the distance between doors. Regarding lot size, Barichara's ordinances limit the maximum size of a new lot to ¼ of the size of a block. This helps to encourage active street frontages without being overly prescriptive.

The arrangement of parcels on the historic blocks reflects a history of subdividing properties along interior walls of buildings. The pattern of parcels on each block is what has emerged from the diversity dreams as new people use old buildings and lots, and how inheritance to multiple siblings has led to a multiplication of uses. The parcel map of today

is an emergent palimpsest of evolving land uses. Adaptive reuse has dissolved all orderly, straight lines of regular rectangular lots. More recent additions are platted according to a developer's design and look like new additions that can be found anywhere.

Built Area



What can the messiness of the plats of these blocks teach us? Perhaps part of how we achieve a beautiful city is in how we allow and encourage it to evolve over time. What has evolved in Barichara is an architecture with varying degrees of publicness - even where there are commercial uses along the street, the depth of lots allows for more private and quiet residential spaces in the interior of each block. As many jurisdictions move beyond single-family zoning, moving beyond minimum lot sizes would allow for the plat map to evolve along the lines of Colombia's most beautiful city. For example, allowing for ADUs to be owned separately, where people could dwell as accessory to nothing, the parcel maps of our neighborhoods might start to take a similar form, eventually creating the foundation for more dynamic and walkable streetscapes.

Another notable feature of Barichara is that there are no gaps in the facade wall along the street. Where there is an empty lot, the land use code requires a wall at the property line. Creating continuity in the facade wall, even where there is a gap in development. This aesthetic coherence, further contributes to the district's walkability. Despite the continuous facade along streets, only about 45% of the surface area of historic blocks is built upon, with the remainder being gardens, courtyards, or vacant lots. Buildings take up the entire space of some parcels, but at the block level, there is a considerable amount of space unbuilt. With a maximum of two stories, this pattern of land use could not be achieved with floor-area ratios. While most American zoning codes include a maximum building footprint at the parcel level, a lesson from Barichara might be to look at ways of measuring this at the block level.

Preservation is not about holding onto something because it is old, we preserve those parts of our past that help us construct shared identities and address current social and cultural needs. On an aesthetic level, we are attracted to those relics that live only in the past, that highlight the distance between us now and us then. In beholding the artifacts of how our ancestors lived in a particular place, built communities out of local materials and adapted to nature, we can imagine ourselves doing the same, living together and sharing in the project of building society. In this modern world of displaced people, historic preservation can help anchor us to the earth and to each other, reminding us that we are all here as guests in the house of ancestors, both our own and of others. ■

Sky Tallman is the author of Metrocoalescence, a Zoning Paradigm fro Vibrant Cities and editor of InterPlan.

References:

• Cote Navarro, Luz Andrea. El patrimonio como espacio de conflicto: tensiones en la construcción del patrimonio cultural inmaterial en Barichara – Colombia. Trabajo de investigación Para optar al título de Máster en Gestión del Patrimonio Cultural. Universidad de Barcelona 2012

• Durán Urrea, Margarita María. Resonancias y disidencias en la patrimonialización de Barichara, 1978-2016. Universidad Nacional de Colombia,Facultad de Ciencias Humanas, Departamento de Antropología. Bogotá, Colombia. 2018

• Gehl, Jan. Cities for People. Island Press. Washington, DC. 2010.

• Gustavo Adolfo Navarro Luna. Town of Barichara planner. Interview 6-20-25.

• GIS data can be found at: https://www.colombiaenmapas.gov.co/#

If you would like to contribute an article to the Winter edition of Interplan, please submit to Sky Tallman at skytallman@hotmail.com by December 1, 2025. InterPlan will also be putting out a series of special issues on the topic of Regenerative Cities later this year. Editorial guidelines for submissions can be found here: https://international.planning.org/knowledge/interplan/guidelines/ Previous issues of InterPlan can be found at: https://international.planning.org/knowledge/interplan/