

Walk | Cycle | Connect | Transit | Mix | **Densify** | Compact | Shift



The best way to manage urban growth is for cities to grow vertically (densify) instead of horizontally (sprawl). With good planning, higher densities make sustainable transit less expensive and more effective, and help create walkable, livable neighborhoods with an active, mixed-use environment.

Urban density is a fundamental principle of sustainable development. As the world's population continues to grow and urbanize, the car-dependent model of the 20th century must change to accommodate a more populous and more prosperous world. Concentrating urban development within smaller geographical footprints is a first and necessary step to preserving natural systems and arable land resources from low intensity urban development and excess infrastructure. When designed for people on foot, and served by infrastructure and public spaces, urban density

Dense development, such as Central Saint Giles in London, UK, allows transit to operate much more efficiently.

supports economic and creative vibrancy, social integration, and a healthy, environmentally sustainable development model.

Urban density is key to integrated urban mobility systems at two critical levels: neighborhood walkability and citywide transport systems. It provides for daily destinations accessible on foot and generates the ridership demand that makes frequent, dependable, and efficient transit possible through increased fare box revenue streams and efficient public funding. Walking,

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cycling, and transit are fundamental to making car-free living possible and keeping the environmental footprint of urban lifestyles small.

Millions of people around the world cherish the opportunities and experiences of a dense and diverse urban environment. Some of the most



Dense public spaces, shown here in Guangzhou, China, work best when framed by attractive greenery, creating a pleasant environment for walking.

prestigious and prosperous neighborhoods are also among the densest of cities such as Tokyo, Seoul, Mumbai, Barcelona, New York, Rio de Janeiro, and San Francisco. High population density supports quality in infrastructure, amenities, services, and accessible public spaces, as well as the preservation of, natural, cultural, historic, and scenic resources. In turn these features are needed to support the livability of dense developments.

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Density Myths

MYTH

Urban density means everyone lives in high-rise buildings.

FACT

Density comes in many different forms. The core of Paris, which has a population density close to that of Manhattan, has virtually no high-rise buildings.

MYTH

Dense areas are congested and overcrowded.

FACT

If the density of development and the density of infrastructure, utilities, and amenities match the density of population, these areas can provide some of the best living conditions anywhere.

MYTH

Dense areas are dirty and unattractive.

FACT

The high density of the most famous and desirable urban neighborhoods in the world attests that living in such environments can be highly attractive.

Check out our video, *It's Smart to Be Dense*, for a quick, fun look at the benefits of development density on itdp.org and streetfilms.org.

