

American Households on (and off) the Urban-to-rural Transect

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ABSTRACT *The potential correlation of resident household types in the United States with the degree of urban intensity along the rural-to-urban transect is examined, both in its idealized form and in the reality of existing settlement patterns. Examined are: the failure of conventional survey techniques to measure accurately housing preferences; the use of an unconventional, target market methodology to predict market potential for housing types not currently available in a specific market place; the importance of defining American households in scores of very refined segments that take into account more than simple demographic and economic characteristics; the general disposition of broad household types along the rural-to-urban transect; how transect location, as much as economic achievement, influences household socio-economic status; and the role of housing and, by extension, transect location as components of American households' predilection for self-invention.*

Introduction

The urban-to-rural transect has been proposed as a means of organizing the built environment according to the level of urban intensity, addressing each particular element—including building types, lot disposition and setbacks, landscaping, streets and curbs—in a co-ordinated fashion appropriate to the specific transect location. The transect system is intended to instil order in the built environment while at the same time allowing for diversity and the accommodation of a wide range of urban elements differentiated according to transect principles. These principles have been laid out by others in this special issue (see Duany, 2002).

The urban-to-rural transect is not only an explanatory and organizational device for built urban forms, but could also potentially be applied to the human inhabitants of settlements fully realized according to transect principles. There should be, in effect, a discernible urban-to-rural arrangement of household types that corresponds to the array of urban-to-rural environments. However, America's confused settlement pattern built since the mid 20th century is mirrored in a corresponding confusion of household types, households 'off' the transect, as it were. It is this application of the transect to American households that we explore in the present paper.

We begin with a brief overview of the contrast between the current settlement pattern of disconnected single land uses and the integrated-use, walkable

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settlements appropriate to the urban-to-rural transect. Americans' limited experience with coherent environments that preserve a healthy relationship between the built and the natural realms is related to, and in some cases reflected in, studies of American housing preferences. We then present our methodology, which presents a much less monolithic picture of American household types—types that, in many ways, are more reflective of transect-based environments than conventional development patterns.

Housing Preferences and the Understanding of Place

Although we can place many household types within their typical location along the urban-to-rural transect, it is likely that most American households would have difficulty recognizing transect-specific settlements. Since the mid to late 20th century many, if not most, Americans have lived their lives in utter disregard of any concept of the wholeness of place—those 'immersive environments' that Andrés Duany (Duany, 2002) suggests should define our surroundings and continuously signal where we are on the theoretical urban-to-rural transect.

Anecdotal evidence—from survey results to public discourse—suggests that Americans can readily distinguish between the 'urban core' and the 'country-side', but simply lump everything else into 'suburbia'. This should not be surprising. It is a logical result of the confusion created by our current built environment, with dispersed, disconnected land uses, often at very low gross densities, that nevertheless have services provided at urban standards. Therefore it is not necessarily the case that Americans consciously choose this amorphous environment for themselves and their families; in many cases, it is all that is available if their preference is to live in a newly-constructed dwelling. There are few examples of newly-constructed, transect-responsive places that are recognizable to anyone other than the trained observer of settlement patterns.

Despite claims from apologists for the *status quo* that this type of development, disparagingly known as 'suburban sprawl', reflects market demand (Gordon & Richardson, 1997b), this pattern is primarily a result of the entrenchment of the current systems of zoning, financing, construction and marketing. It gets built because Americans know how to zone for it, how to finance it, how to build it, and how to sell it (Duany & Talen, 2002).

A primary organizational difference between settlements that are fully realized according to transect principles and those that reflect the current pattern of isolated, single-use real-estate assets, is their recognition and understanding of the contrast between the urban and the rural. Unlike the rational and co-ordinated transect-specific built environments, each appropriate to its place between the city and the country, conventional suburban development gives scant attention to the urban or rural character of physical elements. Until the modern era, of course, the distinction between city and country was all there was. The Roman lawyer Pliny the Younger (*ca.* 61–113 AD) described the pleasures of urban/rural contrast:

You may wonder why my Laurentine place is such a joy to me, but once you realize the attractions of the house itself, the amenities of its situation, and its extensive seafront, you will have your answer. It is seventeen miles from Rome, so that it is possible to spend the night

there after necessary business is done, without having cut short or hurried the day's work, and it can be approached by more than one route ... (Letter to Gallus)

As a result of the confusion between urban and rural environments, it is the middle ground—those places that are not urban cores and not rural countryside—that defies categorization. This middle ground is where the majority of Americans live. The disconnected suburban settlement that is without meaningful relationship to a city centre is not only a thoroughly modern phenomenon, but was initiated, refined and developed in America. So successful has this pattern become that it has overwhelmed the urban-to-rural transect, degrading the countryside and eviscerating the cityscape, and leaving the vast middle amorphous and without context.

All of this confusion and degradation is reflected in the seeming inconsistency in consumer preference studies. American households, in general, cannot respond reliably to hypothetical questions about neighbourhood form. Although surveys consistently suggest that the monocultural sub-division is the preferred form (Audirac *et al.*, 1992), buyers quickly bid up housing values within integrated-use, traditional neighbourhood developments when they are presented with that alternative (see, for example, Eppli & Tu, 1999). Some studies have found a marked inconsistency in the way respondents express disdain for 'suburban sprawl' but seem unaware of either its consequences or causes (Talen, 2001); many, if not most, households would even have difficulty simply defining 'suburban sprawl'.

Part of the problem rests with the surveys themselves. In a recent survey conducted by the National Association of Home Builders (National Association of Home Builders, 1999), when given the hypothetical choice between a "\$150,000 townhouse in an urban setting close to public transportation, work and shopping", or "a larger, detached single-family home in a suburban area, with longer commutes to work", over 80% of a random sample of Americans chose the detached house. The response to this question, and many others like it in similarly worded surveys, is often cited in support of the continuation of the current low-density sub-division pattern and the futility of residential revitalization efforts in urban centres. Yet these responses have less to do with preferences than with the survey language.

The language—'townhouse' versus 'single-family home', for example—has a powerful subliminal impact on responses. Even the word 'public', as in 'public housing', can carry negative connotations for many respondents. An additional complication is that, in many metro areas, and almost all non-metro areas, \$150 000 would be a very high price for a townhouse, but a reasonable price for a detached house, particularly when the detached house is 'larger' than the townhouse.

Because of television news, suburban households cannot conceive of an urban neighbourhood as a pleasant, much less a beautiful, place, even though millions visit cities across the country and abroad for vacations. The lack of real familiarity with various settlement patterns, then, has kept American households accepting of the *status quo*.

The *status quo* since the late 1980s has consisted of American housing producers delivering 'product' that targets the perceived middle of the market: the Baby Boom generation in full-nest stage, desiring large detached houses in

locations with low taxes and good schools. Lack of choice in the market place is largely due to the failure of producers to acknowledge the range of households represented in 21st-century America. The habit of thinking of the Baby Boomers as a monolithic group has been simply too hard to break.

The Differentiation of Housing Preferences

Thus the seeming uniformity of American household preferences is linked to both the undifferentiated environments in which most Americans find themselves living, and, correspondingly, an inability on the part of surveyors and researchers to differentiate clearly the complexities of housing preferences. This is where the transect idea can be of use; it is this idea that we explore in the remainder of this paper.

It must be re-emphasized that Baby Boomers are, in fact, quite diverse, and successor generations are even more so. Unfortunately, there is a failure to recognize and accommodate this diversity. As a result of decades of mass-market mania, the home-building industry is now led by a few lumbering giants that provide housing 'value' measured by size and novelty. Genuine housing innovations have been mostly limited to the areas of production efficiency and risk management, rather than any meaningful improvement of the product offered to the consumer (Volk & Zimmerman, 2001).

Target Market Methodology

The methodology described here is called 'target market methodology' and was developed by Zimmerman/Volk Associates, Inc. (Volk & Zimmerman, 2000). Target market methodology uses Claritas' PRIZM geo-demographic system to establish the optimum market position for residential development of any property—from a specific site to an entire political jurisdiction—through cluster analysis of households living within designated draw areas. This methodology was developed in response to the challenges that are inherent in the application of classical supply/demand analysis to urban redevelopment. Historically, many urban areas have experienced population loss, often severe; since conventional supply/demand analyses generally project the continuation of past trends, the projections of 'demand' in urban areas are often minimal, if not negative. Supply/demand analysis ignores the potential impact of newly introduced housing supply on settlement patterns, which can be substantial when that supply is specifically targeted to match the housing preferences and economic capabilities of the draw area households.

In contrast to classical supply/demand analysis, then—which is based on supply-side dynamics and baseline demographic projections—target market analysis determines the depth and breadth of the potential market derived from the housing preferences and socio-economic characteristics of households in the defined draw area, even in locations where no close comparables exist.

In geo-demographic segmentation, clusters of households (usually between 10 and 15) are grouped according to a variety of significant factors, ranging from basic demographic characteristics, such as income qualification and age, to less-frequently considered attributes such as mobility, lifestyle patterns and purchase preferences. Zimmerman/Volk Associates has refined the analysis of

these household clusters through the correlation of more than 500 data points related to housing, consumer and lifestyle characteristics.

As a result of this process, 41 target market groups have been identified with median incomes that enable most of the households within each group to qualify for market-rate housing, and an additional 21 groups with median incomes in which a smaller percentage of households are able to qualify for market-rate housing (see Table 1). Once the draw area for a property has been identified—through field investigation, analysis of historic migration and development trends, and employment and commutation patterns—the households within that area are quantified using the target market methodology. The end result is the optimum housing mix—by tenure, building configuration and household type, including specific recommendations for unit sizes, rents and/or prices—and projections of absorption within the local housing context.

A key point of the methodology is that the market groups are distinguished by demographic and economic characteristics in common—household composition and economic status, as well as age—but it is each group's preferred style of living that distinguishes their housing choices.

In 21st-century America, even a seemingly narrowly-defined socio-economic profile can yield a bewildering range of households with diverse characteristics and consumption patterns. When confronted recently with a housing provider quite sure that the market was pinpointed as two-person households, aged 25 to 34 with an income of \$50 000, we described five very different two-person households:

- Couple no. 1, the dual-income traditionalists. A married couple who are simply a traditional family in waiting; they might live in a rented suburban townhouse now, but they save most of her salary for a centre-hall colonial-style house in a good school district.
- Couple no. 2, the dual-career urbanites. This couple may or may not be married; one sure thing is that children are not planned. Their dwelling, usually a rented apartment, rowhouse or condominium, was selected for prestige and proximity to work.
- Couple no. 3, the gay dual-careerists. This couple has a rented apartment in the city for convenience and prestige, and a get-away place in the country.
- Couple no. 4, the single parent. Usually female, often torn between the convenience of an urban neighbourhood and the perceived family values of a suburban one. Housing location, however, is often dictated by economics and proximity to family for support, usually small cities and the suburbs.
- Couple no. 5, the siblings. A largely hidden, but increasingly common household, particularly in or near urban centres, in which a single adult is raising a younger sibling. A similar household type that, because of age, falls outside the target market, is the 'grandfamily'—one of the two million American households in which children are being raised by their grandparents.

Even though the mass marketers remain focused on traditional family households, non-traditional families have become an increasingly larger proportion of all US households. Non-traditional families encompass a wide range, from a single parent with one or more children, an adult taking care of younger siblings, a grandparent with both children and grandchildren, to an unrelated couple of the same sex with children. Even traditional families—a married man and woman with children—now come in various forms, including 'blended'

Table 1. Zimmerman/Volk Associates target market groups

<i>Empty Nesters and Retirees</i>	<i>Traditional and Non-Traditional Families</i>	<i>Younger Singles and Couples</i>
<i>Metropolitan Cities</i>		
The urban establishment	<i>Metropolitan Cities</i>	<i>Metropolitan Cities</i>
Rowhouse retirees	Full-nest urbanites	Urban elite
	Multi-cultural families	e-types
<i>Small Cities/Edge Cities</i>	Black urban families	Urban achievers
Middle-class move-downs	Latino urban families	New bohemians
Active retirees	In-towners	Soul city singles
Blue-collar retirees		Young Latinos
Hometown retirees	<i>Small Cities/Edge Cities</i>	
	Cosmopolitan families	<i>Small Cities/Edge Cities</i>
<i>Metropolitan Suburbs</i>	Unibox transferees	Twentysomethings
The social register	Mainstream families	University/college affiliates
Nouveau money	Smalltown downtowners	
Post-war suburban pioneers	Newcomer Latino families	<i>Metropolitan Suburbs</i>
Affluent empty nesters	Around-towners	The VIPs
Blue-collar button-downs		Fast-track professionals
Middle-American retirees	<i>Metropolitan Suburbs</i>	Suburban strivers
Grey-collar couples	Full-nest suburbanites	Generation X
	Kids 'r' us	
<i>Town & Country/Exurbs</i>	Blue-collar families	<i>Agrarian/Rural</i>
Mainstream retirees		PC pioneers
Retired miners and millworkers	<i>Town & Country/Exurbs</i>	
	Exurban elite	
<i>Agrarian/Rural</i>	Full-nest exurbanites	
Back country seniors	New-town families	
Rustic elders	Pillars of the community	
Aging farmers	Middle-American families	
Southern country seniors	Young homesteaders	
Hardscrabble seniors	Blue-collar ruralites	
	Military affiliates	
	Factory families	
	Norma Rae-Ville	
	<i>Agrarian/Rural</i>	
	Heartland families	
	Small-town families	
	Rustic families	
	Farmtown families	
	Rural families	

Note: Most market group names are unique to Zimmerman/Volk Associates proprietary target market methodology; the few groups with little or no data augmentation retain the Claritas PRIZM cluster names.

families, in which each parent was previously married to another individual and each has children from the previous marriage.

Households on the Transect

For convenience and ease of communication, we aggregate the 62 household types into three main categories: older, empty-nest and retiree households; family households, both traditional and non-traditional; and younger singles and couples.

The aggregate categories tell us something when placed on the urban-to-rural transect. Households are characterized based on where they live, in one of five geographic conditions, resulting in a bell curve of American settlement:

- metropolitan cities, 17% of American households
- small cities/edge cities, 20%
- metropolitan suburbs, 24%
- town and country/exurbs, 20%
- rural/agrarian, 17%.

Metropolitan cities are the most dense, urbanized locations in the country. Conversely, the rural/agrarian areas are the most sparsely populated. The other three conditions, taken together, make up the zone of confusion. Their titular descriptions, with the exception of 'edge city' and 'exurbs', describe conditions that in many instances may only be a memory. The 'town and country' pattern that used to be common in much of the country is now often obscured by the unrestrained growth of highway retail and other disconnected single-use developments. Hence, the theoretical logic of moving from the denser cities, through the less dense suburbs, to the countryside dotted with towns, is shattered by our current reality of centreless places and placeless centres.

Nevertheless, how these households are arrayed across this muddled transect is revealing, sometimes confirming, sometimes defying the common wisdom.

Younger Singles and Couples

Not surprisingly, the highest concentration of younger singles and couples is in the metropolitan cities. Conversely, they barely register in the rural/agrarian and town and country conditions. In these locations, the young either leave for the city and its suburbs or quickly move into family categories.

Younger singles and couples have a demonstrated propensity for higher-density, mixed-use environments. In city after American city, new neighbourhoods have been pioneered by young, trendy singles and couples, usually including significant percentages of *New Bohemian* households. If appropriate housing options are made available, these households will help populate or re-populate urban neighbourhoods. They are 'risk-tolerant' households that prefer living in a city for the cultural opportunities, the diversity, the restaurants, the nightlife, the stimulating pace of a genuine 24-hour city.

Once an urban neighbourhood has become established by these households—with its flavour and tone reinforced by *avant garde* shops, cutting-edge galleries, trendy clubs, and stylish eating and drinking establishments—the 'risk-averse' households follow, beginning the inevitable price escalation and resulting displacement of the original pioneers.

Even the changing housing options describe the trajectory from sweat equity to designer lofts. After the neighbourhood has been discovered by the New Bohemians, the first unit types offered by developers are often hard lofts—raw space units that can accommodate both living and work space. Next come the 'soft lofts'—more finished units designed to provide the illusion of a bohemian lifestyle, without the rough edges. The neighbourhood is now safe for opulent condominiums and lofts fit for *House and Garden*.

Even in suburban locations, many younger singles and couples seek out locations with clear centres—places for socializing. The quality of these places is

important for young households whose dwellings, often rented apartments, are small; younger people spend more time in the public realm.

Family-oriented Households

The highest concentration of family-oriented households is in the town and country/exurbs; this is the new frontier of growth where the conversion rate of cornfields to sub-divisions is the highest. Although family-oriented households are a significant presence in each of these conditions, the lowest concentration is in the metropolitan cities and suburbs, where they have either moved out or aged in place.

One family household type that has provided support for the *status quo* is the *Unibox Transferee* (see Table 2). These are conservative housing consumers who choose dwellings with as much concern for resale values as for the potential quality of life. They are seldom in control of the timing of moves from one area to another and, even though the resale of their house is usually guaranteed by their employer, they do not want to make 'foolish' housing decisions. They are very likely to buy a 'brand-name' production house as a safe bet.

The conservative nature of these transferee households was one part of the supply/demand equation in the late 1980s and early 1990s that established the value-oriented vinyl box as the predominant housing form in America. During the housing recession, transferees naturally accounted for a larger than typical percentage of buyers; after all, few owners were willing to move during a time of negative equity.

It was something of a surprise, then, when—in the course of conducting a reverse-target market analysis in 1996—we discovered that *Unibox Transferees* accounted for a significant percentage of buyers at the Kentlands, a pioneering example of traditional neighbourhood development (see Table 3). So finely-attuned to resale potential are these households that they determined that a Kentlands house would be likely to hold its value at least as well as the market in general.

They were correct. A recent (1998) study of 1850 sales in the Kentlands market area attributed a premium of approximately 12–13%—or \$24 000 to \$30 000—of the purchase price of single-family houses in Kentlands directly to New Urbanist principles (Tu & Eppli, 1999). The analysis used a hedonic pricing model in which size, construction quality and other variables were held constant. It identified a \$24 000 to \$30 000 price premium for Kentlands houses compared to the houses located in nearby conventionally planned communities. A subsequent study of three other New Urbanist communities found similar dynamics, with a premium ranging between 4% and 25%, or \$5000 to \$30 000.

Empty Nesters and Retirees

The highest concentration of older households is in the metropolitan suburbs, which, in the post-war to early Reagan years, were family-oriented neighbourhoods. Those family households have simply aged in place, changing the neighbourhood character and types of services required to support the neighbourhood. Hence, the adaptive re-use of under-utilized schools into seniors' housing is a fixture of many of these suburbs across the country.

Table 2. Unibox transferees. "They change their clime, not their disposition"
(Horace, *Epistles*, I, xi, 27)

Configuration

Families with pre-school and school-aged children
Average household size: 4 persons
Predominant age range of adults: 25 to 34; 35 to 44

Characteristics

Upper-middle-income younger families; both spouses work
One-third graduated from college
On the move; frequent transfers for better jobs, better pay
Career-oriented middle managers; many are computer literate with home offices

Housing preferences

Single-family detached houses in brand-new sub-divisions just outside suburban satellite cities
Two-storey uniboxes, easy to resell when the next transfer comes
More than 25% move every year

Consumption patterns

New Isuzu Trooper, Mercury Villager
Heavy business travel, both spouses
Cleaning service; laundry service; 18-hour babysitters
Soccer mums and dads
Watch *Frontline*
Read *Fortune*

Icons

Car phones; platinum frequent flyer cards

Source: Zimmerman/Volk Associates, Inc.

The popular perception among housing marketers is that affluent empty nesters—their houses dramatically increased in value, their mortgages paid off, their children gone—are flocking to downtowns. While this is a discernible phenomenon, it is not nearly as powerful as the continued lure of city life for younger households. Until recently, metropolitan cities have had relatively small concentrations of older households.

The concentrations of empty nesters and retiree households could change again, and dramatically, as the Baby Boomers move into these categories in very large numbers. As the newer suburbs are subject to ageing in place, their extreme auto-dependent form is likely to instigate a mass exodus of older households to more accommodating neighbourhoods; in their wake they could leave depressed housing values.

One easy prediction concerning the Baby Boomers is that they will not replicate the patterns of predecessor generations. Not many boomers are likely to congregate together in 'age-qualified' master-planned communities, willingly giving over their schedules to activities directors. Qualitative research has suggested that, when contemplating retirement, boomers are much more interested in 'all-age' communities, particularly those in the traditional neighbourhood form, although this is the generation that transformed our landscape by

Table 3. Buyers/renters by target market group: Kentlands 1992–1995

<i>Empty Nesters and Retirees</i>	29%
Nouveau money	10%
The social register	8%
Affluent empty nesters	3%
Others (seven groups)	8%
<i>Families</i>	42%
Unibox transferees	22%
Full-nest suburbanites	12%
Landed gentry	4%
Others (five groups)	4%
<i>Younger Singles and Couples</i>	29%
The VIPs	13%
Twentysomethings	3%
Fast-track professionals	3%
Yuppies and eggheads	3%
Others (five groups)	7%

Source: Zimmerman/Volk Associates, Inc.

popularizing the vinyl mansion—with value defined as the most interior space per dollar—and the sport-utility vehicle—the mass-market version of the monster truck.

Movement along the Transect

American households, perhaps more than any other nation's, have always demonstrated extraordinary mobility. In an average year, 15% of American households move from one dwelling to another. Annual mobility averages 20% in the Western states; a higher percentage of renters move than owners; and a higher percentage of younger households move than older. However, mobility can be measured against criteria other than simply change of dwelling.

The Zimmerman/Volk Associates household classifications are updated periodically to reflect the slow, but relentless change in American households. This aggregate change is the result of millions of moves, most of which can be characterized as changes of individual households from one classification to another. Because of the nature of geo-demographic segmentation, a change in classification is directly correlated with a change in geography, i.e. a move from one neighbourhood condition to another. However, these changes of classification can also reflect an alteration in one of three additional basic characteristics: age, household composition or economic status.

Age, of course, is the most predictable and easily defined of these changes. Household composition has also been relatively easy to define; recently, with the growth of non-traditional households, however, definitions of family have had to be expanded and parsed into ever-more-highly-refined segments. Economic status remains clearly defined through measures of annual income and household wealth.

A change in classification is rarely induced by a change in merely one of the four basic characteristics. This is one reason that the target household categories

are so highly refined: they take in multiple characteristics. Even so, there are some rough equivalents in household types as they move from one geographic condition to another. There is, for example, a strong correlation between the *Suburban Strivers* and the *Urban Achievers*; a move by the *Suburban Strivers* to the urban core can make them *Urban Achievers*, if the move is accompanied by an upward move in socio-economic status. In contrast, *Suburban Strivers* who move up socio-economically, but remain within the metropolitan suburbs, may become *Fast-Track Professionals* or *The VIPs*.

Households off the Transect

Americans have always been masters of self-invention, and often define themselves by where they live. At certain life stages, many households will seek a specific living condition because of what it says about them. The upwardly mobile household may aspire to the prestige of the country club or its present-day equivalent, the golf-oriented master-planned community. The child of upper-middle-class affluence, conversely, may seek an illegal space in the gritty warehouse district as a means of validating his or her authenticity. Both are means of self-definition by place.

But in a nation of amorphous sub-divisions where even affordable housing could easily carry the moniker 'estates', being defined by where one lives has become less certain. It is easier, and less expensive, to select a vehicle that will enhance or even define one's personal image. Unlike a dwelling, a vehicle travels with you virtually everywhere you go.

In recent decades, self-definition has become elevated to an act of personal merchandizing, self-branding if you will, and at a far lower cost than deriving identity from one's vehicle or one's neighbourhood. America's commercial institutions—particularly in the marketing and entertainment fields—have provided us with the tools for self-invention. It has even been suggested that brand identification has an even greater power.

In today's secular age, the brand has become a sort of surrogate religion. The British management consultant Peter York has even argued that Nike's 'swoosh/tick logo means precisely what the crucifix meant to an earlier generation in ghettos—it promises redemption, vindication and a way out.' (van Ham, 2001)

It may be that self-branding through the strategic display of logos and personal accessories may make self-definition by place obsolete and even seem vaguely quaint.

Conclusion

In this paper we have explored how American households could be distributed along the urban-to-rural transect and how the failure over the past few decades to establish rational settlements has lent confusion to households' preferences for settlement type. Supporters of the *status quo* maintain that if there was a genuine market 'demand' for urban housing and integrated-use, walkable settlements appropriate to the urban-to-rural transect, there would already be plenty of them. Apologists for the current leap-frogging pattern of low-density, narrowly targeted, single-use development still argue that the current pattern is simply

continuing “the relentless outward expansion of cities into suburbs and beyond” (Gordon & Richardson, 1997a, pp. 75–76). This thinking suggests that we are ultimately headed toward some sort of housing entropy, in which every household is equidistant from every other household, and all community and commerce is experienced in cyberspace out of necessity.

Yet ‘demand’ for new housing is often an illusory concept, particularly when applied to neighbourhood forms of which there are few newly constructed examples. The depth and breadth of the potential market for housing in a transect-specific settlement pattern, however, can be determined. Understanding the distribution of households in relation to both urban centres and the rural edge—in both clearly differentiated settlements and undifferentiated single-use monotypes—can illuminate one of the causes of seemingly ambiguous consumer preferences. With this understanding, surveyors of household preferences could obtain more meaningful responses that could ultimately provide significant support for the creation of neighbourhoods that are more coherent and sustainable.

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