



## PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**Michigan “Missing Middle” Housing Design Competition  
calls on architects and designers to create new versions of American Dream**

*First-ever nationwide contest offers \$20,000 for top 3 winning designs of 1940s-era housing*

Monday, Feb. 2, 2015 – Lansing, Mich. – Millennials, Gen Xers and senior citizens across the country are among the growing audiences talking about their needs for more diverse and affordable housing options that better fit urban lifestyles.

In Michigan, architects, designers and urban planners are being challenged to put this new version of the American Dream into action as part of an innovative contest that is believed to be a first-of-its-kind event nationally.

The goal of the 2015 Michigan “Missing Middle” Housing Design Competition – which is open to all contestants nationwide and offers a \$10,000 top cash prize and two additional cash prizes of \$5,000 each – is to promote awareness about the mismatch that exists between U.S. housing stock and shifting demographics combined with the growing need for walkable urban living.

The phrase “missing middle” refers to housing sites such as duplexes, fourplexes, bungalow courts, mansion apartments, live/work units and courtyard apartments. These types of housing have rarely been built since the early 1940s due to regulatory constraints, the shift to auto-dependent patterns of development, and the incentivization of single-family home ownership.

“As the demand for living in urban environments continues to strengthen across Michigan and throughout the nation, the need to accommodate the growing contemporary housing market has become much more apparent,” said American Institute of Architects (AIA) Michigan Public Policy Director Dennis King, FAIA.

“Missing middle housing types are a critical part of the solution and should be an integral part of every architect’s, planner’s, real estate agent’s and developer’s arsenal,” King said. “Our hope is that the ‘Missing Middle’ contest will spark a dialog, provoke thought and drive innovation to support new development of ‘missing middle’ housing stock.”

An elite lineup of jurors have volunteered to serve on the AIA Michigan panel that will evaluate the entries and select the winners:

- **Douglas Farr**, an architect, urban planner, author and president/CEO of Farr Associates in Chicago
- **Daniel Parolek**, an architect and founding principal of Opticos Design in Berkeley, Calif. whose practice is focused on these housing types
- **Mark Nickita**, an architect, urbanist and president of Archive Design Studio in Detroit and Toronto
- **Luke Forrest**, program manager and planner for the Michigan Municipal League (MML)
- **Amanda Harrell-Seyburn**, a project and urban designer as well as project manager for Sedgewick & Ferweda Architects in Flint, Mich.
- **James Tischler**, director of community development for the Michigan State Housing Development Authority
- **Mark Wyckoff**, a professor and senior associate director with the Michigan State University Land Policy Institute (MSU LPI)

“Michigan’s competition is open to everyone, everywhere,” Tischler said. “This is a call for architects, planners, designers and developers to think outside the box and begin to create immediate, viable solutions to address the mismatch between the housing stock and what the market is demanding – vibrant, diverse, sustainable, walkable and urban places.”

A Census Bureau report shows homeownership in 2014 fell to a near 20-year low of just over 64 percent. The decline is across the board, but it’s fallen most among Gen Xers – those between 35 and 44 – dropping from nearly 67 percent before the recession to 59 percent today. Ownership among millennials – those under 35 – also dropped, from 41 to 36 percent.

And a 2014 AARP report, which surveyed 4,500 people 50 years and older, showed that increasingly, the nation’s older citizens desire to “age in place” and have easy access to services and amenities, adding to an already increasing demand for walkable, urban, transit-oriented development.

Expanding the supply of “missing middle” housing inventory is long overdue to meet today’s homebuyers’ expectations and lifestyles, according to Parolek. Unfortunately, too many urban planners, architects and developers don’t understand the changing tastes of today’s homebuyers, he said.

“It’s time for our industry to rethink and evolve, reinvent and renew,” Parolek said. “We need a paradigm shift in the way that we design, locate, regulate and develop homes. Missing middle housing is designed to meet the specific needs of shifting demographics and the new market demand.”

Registrations and application fees should be submitted by 4 p.m. (EST) on Monday, March 16, although late registrations (with a 50% penalty) may be submitted by 4 p.m. (EST) on Monday, April 6. Entries are due no later than 4 p.m. (EST) on Friday, May 22. Winners will be decided by Friday, June 12.

More information about the contest is available on the [AIA Michigan website](#).

In addition to AIA Michigan, contest sponsors are MSHDA, MSU LPI, MML, Michigan Association of Planning and the Michigan Historic Preservation Network.

The American Institute of Architects | Michigan, headquartered in the historic Beaubien House across from the Renaissance Center in downtown Detroit, is dedicated to bringing public attention to the value and importance of architectural excellence and to recognizing those whose notable achievements encourage all to make excellence in architecture the standard.