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Author
Mendez, Michael

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Latino New Urbanism:
Building on Cultural Preferences

Michael Mendez
State of California

Abstract

With characteristics differing from majority households, Latino growth is occurring at a time when California is torn between several urban development models—developing compact cities, preserving the environment, or increasing urban sprawl and slums. The central argument of this article is that Latinos' cultural inclination to a lifestyle supportive of compact cities provides policy makers with a sustainable alternative that possesses a built-in consumer base. The development and advancement of compact cities in California may be dependent on the ability of policy makers to sustain and support the Latino lifestyle.

This article addresses city development policies that pressure Latinos to assimilate to the established US notion of appropriate space use and how they undercut the economic, social, and environmental benefits inherent in the Latino lifestyle. The article also illustrates the key role Latinos play in adapting and transforming existing neighborhoods to promote New Urbanist-type landscapes.

Key words: Latino, New Urbanism, Hispanic, Minority Sprawl

Synthesis of the Latino Lifestyle and the New Urbanism

For generations, Latino families have combined traditional values with modern ones. Present-day Chicano- or Latino-American families are a fusion of the social and cultural heritages of both Anglo and Latin America. That combination is continually being redefined, creating something different from either the traditional or Anglo forms (Pader 1994).

The fusion of Anglo and Latin cultures is compatible not only with cities of high-density housing and efficient transportation systems, but also with New Urbanist and Smart Growth communities. The Latino lifestyle represents an untapped resource that could enable the development of more sustainable communities throughout California. Latinos' cultural inclinations

for social interaction and their adaptive energies have created a de facto environment that already supports compact city and New Urbanist lifestyles.

New Urbanism, similar to the compact city, is an attempt to reform the sprawling pattern of suburban growth. Through a wide-ranging approach of architectural planning and design, New Urbanism seeks to replicate cities such as Charleston, South Carolina, and Old Town Alexandria, Virginia. New Urbanism favors residential development that includes small lots, short housing setbacks, alleys, front porches, compact walkable neighborhoods with abundant public spaces and parks, and a mix of land uses. Additionally, through the mix of diverse housing styles, land uses, and accessibility to parks, New Urbanist developments seek to construct a place that promotes social interaction and a strong sense of community (Hall and Porterfield 2001).

Such New Urbanist principles are already present in many established California Latino communities. Latinos have continually used adaptive methods to transform their communities to better suit their needs and to promote social interaction. This is most apparent through their adaptive reuse of homes, parks, and public spaces. The cultural predilections have created a Latinized model of New Urbanist communities.

Latino Assimilation and Implications for Planning

Latinos eventually will be the majority population in California, and their characteristics and lifestyle choices will have a direct effect on state planning functions and land-use patterns. Accordingly, this implies that policy makers should look beyond their prejudices and perceived conceptions of Latino characteristics and think of the desirable and beneficial outcomes of incorporating them into policy. It is the role of policy makers to enact policies that reflect the needs of residents within a jurisdiction and to deter the use of policies that divide communities along racial or ethnic lines. Therefore, as the composition of residents in California changes, existing and proposed policies should also change.

In a state as diverse as California, multiculturalism ideally should enable Latinos and non-Latinos to pursue lifestyles that support a variety of housing developments and styles. Multiculturalism would argue that those who prefer to live in compact cities should be able to do so, while those who prefer a lower density should be allowed to pursue a different option...it brings into focus a fundamental philosophical question that all planners and policy makers must confront: Am I advocating a pluralist or an assimilationist city (Myers 2001)?

Despite the multicultural nature of California, it remains uncertain whether Latinos and others who favor compact city lifestyles will be allowed to pursue them. The development of a more sustainable, compact California is largely dependent on enacting policies that are representative of the preferences and needs of current and future population groups.

Latino Evolution of American Homes

The adaptive reuse of homes is visible throughout California, but it is most evident in East Los Angeles, where a distinct spatial form represents the cultural, economic and regional solutions residents have developed to meet their criteria for the built environment. In East Los Angeles, as James Rojas (1991) has described, the residents have developed a working peoples' manipulation and adaptation of the environment, where Mexican-Americans live in small wooden houses, built by Anglos, that have evolved to what he calls the "East Los Angeles Vernacular."

In East Los Angeles, the urban landscape is a fusion of several architectural and cultural styles that are neither entirely Mexican, nor Spanish, nor Anglo-American. According to Rojas, the transformation of homes typically follows three stages:

1. Minimal changes in which the residents use what they acquire;

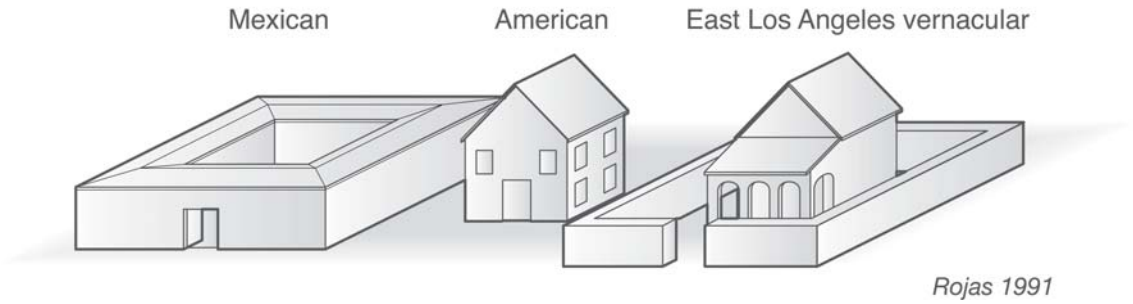
2. Minor changes, such as the addition of paint, stucco, and chain-link fences;

3. Major changes (investment in structural changes) such as adding or enlarging the front porch, changes in architectural styles, baroque-style wrought iron fences, fountains, and other amenities.

Furthermore, in East Los Angeles the vernacular coincides with what Daniel Arreola describes as the Mexican-American housescape–a detached, single-family dwelling and its immediate surroundings in the urban barrio of the Southwest. The housescape is a complex of elements that includes the front yard up to the fence or wall (Arreola 1988).

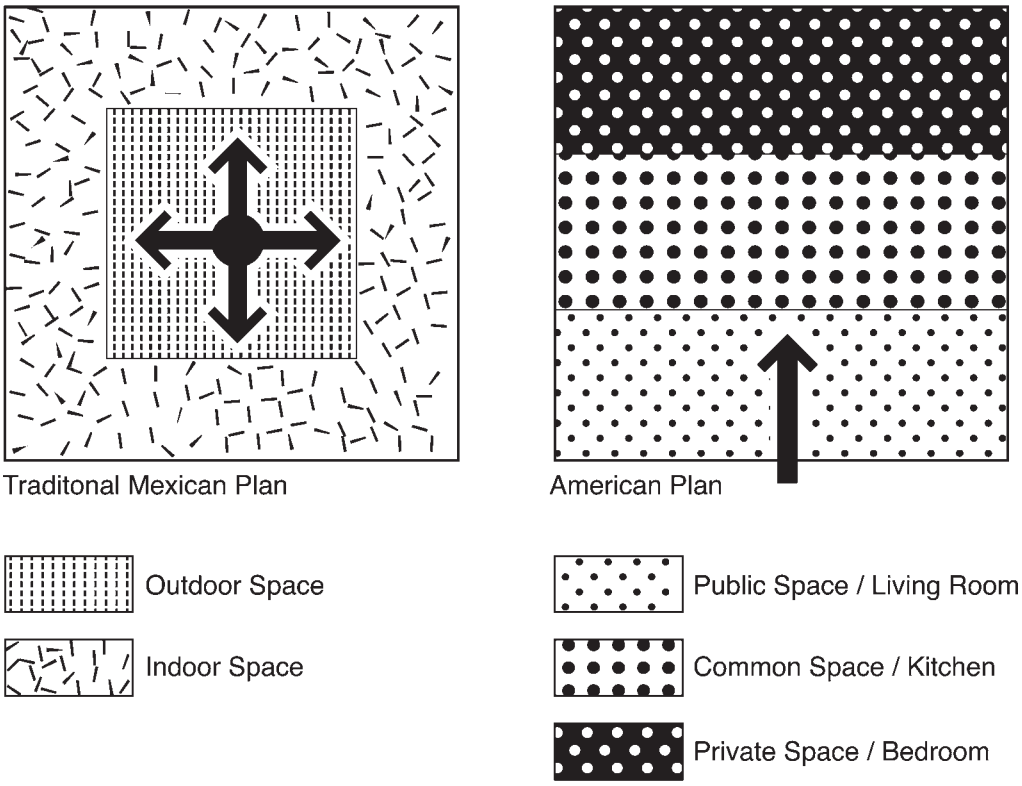
Moreover, the introverted American-style homes are transformed to extroverted, Mexicanized or Latinized homes. The Latino house expands to all four comers of the lot, allowing for a more efficient, maximum use of space. The evolution of American homes in East Los Angeles and other Latino communities in the Southwest presumably derives from attempts to emulate the traditional Mexican courtyard-style home, built to the street line and designed with a patio or courtyard in the center or front of the

Evolution of East Los Angeles vernacular



Rojas 1991

Diagram of Circulation Patterns of Homes



Rojas 1991

house (Rojas 1991). The Mexican home, as explained in Ellen Pader's research, is not designed for privacy, but to maximize social interaction among household members (Pader 1994).

Driveways and porches are also important elements of the housescape in Latino communities. In Mexican courtyard-style homes, patios are used for social functions. In the United States, the driveway is used as a substitute to accommodate parties, barbecues, and other social festivities. Porches in the Latino housescape, specifically in East Los Angeles, are often enlarged and expanded, reinforcing the front yard as an integral spatial location for family and social interaction (Rojas 1991).

According to Rojas, most porches in East Los Angeles are modified architecturally to suit the needs and preferences of the residents. The majority were originally constructed in a Victorian or California Bungalow style. Residents have transformed the wooden banister and column fixtures to a Mexicanized style, with baroque wrought iron railings, Spanish arches and stucco. The evolution of the front porch creates sociability within the home and surrounding neighborhood (Rojas, 1991). The front porch in the East Los Angeles vernacular corresponds to the objective of New

Urbanist developments, in that the porch invites neighbors to gather.

In New Urbanist developments, porches are a hub for social leisure activities. According to Daria Price Bowman (1997), the porch is a neutral territory that provides a natural link to the neighborhood. In New Urbanism and the East Los Angeles vernacular (coupled with the use of the driveway), the porch is used to increase living and entertaining options (Bowman 1997).

Latinization of Parks and Public Space

The appropriation of park spaces to facilitate social activities provides another example of how Latinos adapt the built environment to meet their physical and social needs.

There is an obvious carryover from Latin America to the United States of the preference for parks and plazas to serve as the core social setting of a community or city. Academic work has acknowledged the importance of plazas and parks (public spaces) for Mexicans and Mexican-Americans. Social historian Charles Flaundrau, awed by the significance of plazas and parks in Mexico, wrote

> There are city parks and squares in other countries, but in none do they play the same intimate and important part in the national domestic life that they do in Mexico ...the Plaza is in constant use from morning until late at night ...by eleven o'clock the whole town will, at various hours, have passed through it, strolled in it, played, sat, rested, or thought in it (Flaundrau 1964).

As a result, the US park serves as Latinos' primary social space outside the home. The neighborhood park's usefulness for social interaction offers a surrogate for the misplaced plaza and meets the objectives of many New Urbanist developments. New Urbanism attempts to create a greater sense of community by rethinking the "public realm," especially public spaces and recreational facilities. The Congress of the New Urbanism, the leading organization for the movement, believes cities and towns should be shaped by physically defined and universally accessible public spaces, and community institutions (Fulton, 1996).

Extensive survey work on park usage among different ethnic and racial groups in four metropolitan Los Angeles parks shows that Latinos are the most active and frequent users (Loukaitou-Sideris 1995). The survey found that Latinos at parks were involved in sociable activities including parties, picnics, and celebrations of birthdays, baptism, and communions. Their group behavior involved talking while sitting or standing, eating, breaking piñatas, playing sports, and keeping an eye on their children. This is a great contrast to Anglos, who primarily participated in mobile, solitary activities such as jogging, walking, bicycling, or dog walking. The study concluded that Anglos valued the park more for its aesthetic qualities and natural elements while Latinos valued its opportunities for social interaction.

Latinos also were more likely than other racial and ethnic groups to

actively appropriate the neighborhood parks. If no soccer fields were present in the park, players would modify the space to fit their needs. According to Robert Garcia of the Center for Law in the Public Interest, the discrimination against soccer as an "immigrant sport" resulted in a shortage of soccer fields compared to fields for baseball and other sports (Garcia 2002).

Latinos, Parks, Housescapes, and their Implications

In sum, for the Latino culture and lifestyle, housing, and parks are much more than buildings and open spaces. They are vital components of social and ethnic identity. These spaces facilitate social interactions and activities. As the East Los Angeles vernacular and park usage statistics demonstrate, the fusion of Anglo and Latin cultures produces manifestations compatible not only with compact cities, but also with New Urbanist and smart growth communities.

The Latino lifestyle represents an untapped resource that can facilitate the development of sustainable communities throughout California. Latinos' cultural preferences for social interaction, their adaptive reuses, and their lifestyle choices have created a de facto Latinized version of New Urbanism and smart growth communities. However, the pressure for immigrants and minorities to assimilate to the dominant US notion of the proper use of domestic and public spaces limits utilization of Latinos' cultural propensity for compact and New Urbanist lifestyles.

Latino Assimilation and Compact Lifestyles

Literature on immigrant adaptation and assimilation is based primarily on the assumption that there is a natural process in which diverse ethnic groups develop a common culture and achieve equal access to all of the opportunities society offers. This process consists of slowly abandoning old cultural and behavioral patterns in favor of modern ones. Once it has begun, the literature argues, this process moves inevitably and permanently toward assimilation. Thus, diverse immigrant groups, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, are expected to eventually discard their old ways of life and to become completely "melted" into the mainstream through residential integration and occupational achievement in a series of subsequent generations (Hirschman, Kasinitz, and DeWind 1999).

Consequently, assimilation literature suggests that immersion into the dominant society is a voluntary, effortless action. However, for many Latino immigrants in California it is often a forced process. California cities have adopted measures that are direct assaults on Latino lifestyle and cultural behaviors. These measures are designed to evoke an environment that is inhospitable to the Latino propensity toward a compact city lifestyle.

Latinos, particularly recent immigrants, have brought new life to derelict inner cities and suburbs in the metropolitan areas of California. Their efforts have created vibrant Latino versions of New Urbanist communities and have revitalized distressed commercial districts. However, their contributions

are often swept aside by local governments that choose to invest large sums of tax dollars for redevelopment programs that encourage displacement of Latino residents rather than creating programs that support their revitalization efforts.

As Urbanist Mike Davis (2000) has explained, throughout California there exists a "third border" that creates a labyrinth of laws, regulations, and prejudices that inhibit, and even criminalize, Latino attempts to develop vibrant communities:

> ...the worst enemies include conventional zoning and building codes (abetted by mortgage lending practices) that afford every loophole to developers who airdrop over-sized, "instant-slum" apartment complexes into formerly single-family neighborhoods, but prevent homeowners themselves from adding legal additions to accommodate relatives or renters. Although medium-density infill, with rental income accruing to resident homeowners, is obviously a better solution, even ecologically, for housing the rising low-income populations in Southwestern cities, it is hardly ever accommodated by law or building practice. As a result, there is a proliferation of bootlegged, substandard garage and basement conversions that keep Latino homeowners embroiled in costly conflicts with city building inspectors.

Such border tactics have included an effort by the city of Santa Ana in Orange County to amend the square-footage-per-person standards for residences, asserting that the existing regulations promote over-crowding. However, the court struck down the proposed change in regulation because existing standards corresponded with state regulations, while the new ones would discriminate against individuals living in the city, particularly many Latino families, who would not be allowed to live legally in their current homes[1]

Similarly, the City of Anaheim, also in Orange County, attempted to bar Gigante, a Latino-oriented super-market, from a mall the city wanted to redevelop, claiming the store was "too Mexican for the surroundings" (Yoshino 2002a). According to the 2000 US Census, the Anaheim census tract where Gigante wanted to open had a population that was more than 60 percent Latino. The city warned the mall's owners that Anaheim could withdraw a city subsidy because Gigante was too specialized. A city letter said the supermarket "does not cater to the public at large...product selection is catered primarily to the Hispanic market...store signage and music are predominantly in Spanish." The city urged the mall owners to seek more mainstream grocery store tenants (Yoshino 2002a). Despite the city's objections, Gigante was able to sign a lease at the mall. However, the Anaheim Planning Commission unanimously rejected the company's

[1] Brazen v. City of Santa Ana, 1992, California Superior Court No. 659206.

application for a liquor license, a vital element for any major supermarket. There was strong opposition by both Gigante and Latino advocates, who accused the city of racial profiling and violating the North American Free Trade Agreement, which prohibits cities from holding Mexico-based companies to different standards than their US counterparts. Anaheim finally agreed to grant Gigante a liquor license (Yoshino 2002b).

Hence, in California cities, the "third border" separates non-conforming Latino communities from established Anglo communities. Assimilation into mainstream society dictates that immigrants abandon their cultural inclinations, including their preference for compact city lifestyles.

Assimilation and Compact City Promotion

Compact city behavior, principally mass transit usage, is not a permanent characteristic of immigrants. As recent arrivals conform and assimilate to California society, they improve their economic status and begin to commute like their native-born counterparts. From the standpoint of immigrant upward economic mobility, this is an ideal result, but in terms of sustaining regional transportation networks and decreasing traffic congestion and air pollution, it poses major obstacles for policy makers.

In the next several decades, newly arrived immigrants will comprise a smaller portion of California's total population. Upward mobility will decrease greatly the current client base for compact cities. These changes will require policy makers to expand the consumer base for compact cities through reverse assimilation of the middle-class and native-born. Reverse assimilation describes the conversion of non-Latinos from established, environmentally harmful California lifestyles to those more compatible with compact cities.

A variety of residential options must exist so that the middle-class and native-born will have a choice other than low-density housing. Currently, due largely to political opposition and zoning regulations (caused by existing homeowners' desires to maintain high home values along with the fiscalization of land use), most new housing production in California is low-density. Due to the durability of housing and zoning regulations, the residential choices of future California residents may be limited. These consumers likely will be forced to live in housing that was developed to meet the preferences of past population groups.

Policy makers should take notice of cultural preferences in housing, since the majority of California cities will be multicultural metropolises in the future. The household preferences of Latinos could become an attractive model to help address the irrational growth patterns in the state. However, as Myers (2001) suggests, for the planning of compact cities to be successful, other population groups most convert to lifestyles consistent with the model.

For the planning of compact cities to be broadly acceptable, participation needs to include non-Latinos. To do otherwise would build a divided city. In forging a new California lifestyle built

from multiple cultures, non-Latinos will need to adopt a portion of the compact lifestyle of Latinos. What is required, in essence, is a redefinition of what constitutes the desired middle-class lifestyle in California, so that when immigrants assimilate they have models other than suburban sprawl (Myers 2001).

The development of compact communities for middle-class non-Latinos must first overcome governmental regulations and perceptions that dense residential communities are associated with lower incomes, noise, and crime. This can be partly achieved through more fashionable and innovative designs. The next section assesses the current preferences of Californians and evaluates whether there is a significant demand for establishing compact developments.

Californian and Latino Preferences for Compact Cities

The survey results presented here gauge the current opportunity to build compact cities, highlighting the attitudes among the general California population and Latinos. The survey data assesses California residents' attitudes toward conventional norms for land use and suburban development in the state. Conventional thought dictates that most consumers prefer low-density, single-family housing. However, the survey results show that the public's views on housing and land use often conflict and do not reflect the various trade-offs encountered over a lifetime.

California/Latino Mixed-Use and Higher Densities

The Public Policy Institute of California's (PPIC) 2002 survey of 2,010 adult California residents on "Growth, Land Use, and the Environment" supported conventional thought and showed that the majority of California residents have strong preferences for dispersed, suburban development. Sixty-five percent of Californians want to live in a single-family detached home. However, the same data also underlines a significant demand for alternative housing types under certain circumstances.

Nearly half of all respondents said they would prefer a smaller house if it meant having a short commute. Similarly, 46 percent of Latino respondents said they prefer a smaller house and shorter commute. Fifty percent of California respondents said they would rather live in a residential-only neighborhood and drive to stores and services, versus 47 percent who said they would choose to live in a mixed-use neighborhood where local amenities were within walking distance. Latinos were more likely to prefer a mixed-use neighborhood (52 percent to 46 percent) than non-Hispanic whites.

Additionally, Latinos were more willing to choose high-density neighborhoods with public transit than non-Hispanic whites, 39 percent to 24 percent respectively. Nevertheless, both groups strongly favored low-density neighborhoods over any other type (59 percent for Latinos and 72 percent for whites).

Latino Values and New Urbanism Approaches

The PPIC survey demonstrates that many people hold conflicting preferences about California housing development and the formation of its cities and suburbs. Moreover, the standard preferences of California respondents may represent only ideal preferences, which are not reflective of the various trade-offs encountered over a lifetime. Ideal preferences are likely to differ when factoring in practical considerations and realistic conditions.

Most revealingly, the PPIC survey shows that there is a significant client base to support compact cities. However, based on current zoning regulations and development patterns, creation of compact cities may be unlikely. Zoning regulations manipulate the supply of housing by telling developers where and how they can build.

A visible supply of high-quality, compact city developments may be required for consumers to discover appealing alternatives to the conventional low-density, single-family home. Visibility is important because it may stimulate even more preference for compact cities, particularly among the non-Latino and middle-class population groups that are usually less likely to prefer such cities.

Latino Drivers for New Markets and New Urbanism

The stimulus for an increase in the visible supply of high-quality housing models requires the home building industry to recognize that Latino home buyers present the greatest driver for market growth of any demographic group in California. In 2001, Latinos represented 15 percent of total purchases of resale homes in the state (Tomas Rivera 2002). By 2020, Latinos will demand over 1 million housing units, and by 2030 they will represent the largest share of all prospective home buyers.

These projections may pressure the home building industry to understand the unique characteristics of this burgeoning client base. Financial, insurance, and real estate professionals are already changing product advertising and promotion by using the Spanish language to cater to the growing Latino housing market. However, more than Spanish language translations of documents and services is required. Builders interested in capitalizing on this potentially lucrative market must recognize the housing preferences and needs of Latinos and develop housing models accordingly.

When developing housing models and marketing approaches for Latinos, the building industry must understand the degree to which families play a dominant role in Latino society and how they influence individual behavior. For Latinos, what is in the best interest of the family dominates any decision, including home selection, school proximity, neighborhood safety, and projected monetary appreciation of a particular home (National Association of Hispanic Real Estate Professionals 2001).

Such dominance is supported by recent survey research from the Davenport Institute of Public Policy at Pepperdine University, which found

that nearly 40 percent of all Latino homeowners indicated that "more room for a growing family" was the main reason for purchasing a home. This greatly overshadowed the second strongest reason, homeownership as a form of financial investment, identified by only 22 percent of survey respondents (Kotkin and Tseng 2002).

Latino family dominance in consumer spending can best be explained by marketing analyst M. Isabel Valdes' (2000) "ecosystemic" model, which approaches consumers from the perspective of the individual and his or her relationship with society. This model enables evaluation of how individuals from different cultures interact between and within the various layers of society.

The ecosystemic model reveals several important aspects of the Latino decision-making process. The Latino individual attempts to make his or her decisions consistent with the needs of the family, whereas the Anglo individual tends to make decisions unilaterally. Latinos are more likely to focus on relationships, while Anglos are inclined to be task-oriented. For Anglos, individual achievement dominates, whereas for Latinos, family interdependence takes priority.

The ecosystemic model demonstrates the need for the home building industry to acknowledge that interactions within the Latino family are different than those of Anglos. Family interdependency may explain why more Latinos have multiple generational households, adult children remaining at home longer than non-Latinos, or why Latinos adapt their homes to facilitate social interaction.

Correspondingly, since Latinos tend to form strong bonds within the family and are supportive of their communities, housing developments should be produced that reflect these cultural values and preferences. As discussed with houses and parks, Latinos are already adapting the built environment to maximize social interaction and activities consistent with compact city lifestyles. However, housing developments should also acknowledge the external variables influencing Latino households, specifically housing affordability, and develop methods to effectively address those variables.

Latino Economic Constraints

Various reports and publications cite the enormous purchasing power of Latinos. *Hispanic Business* magazine reports that the purchasing power of US Latinos reached $540 billion in 2002, and their purchasing power in California has been estimated at around $171 billion with a projected increase of up to $260 billion by 2007 (Kotkin and Tseng 2002). Though the estimates of Latino purchasing power are impressive, they overlook the realities and constraints Latinos encounter in California's home purchasing market.

At present, fewer than 15 percent of Latino families can afford the state's median priced home at $321,121. On the other hand, 43 percent of white families are able to afford that same home. A family earning the state's median Latino family income of $35,000 would need an additional

$64,500 in annual income to afford the state's median-priced home.

New Urbanism, Affordability, and Latino Lifestyle

A development model that can address Latinos' cultural values and economic constraints is New Urbanism. New Urbanist communities provide affordable housing by developing single-family detached housing and attached homes on smaller lots. The compactness increases affordability because basic services can be provided with less infrastructure. Economic studies by legal analyst Andrew Dietderich (1996) show cost savings of 24 percent with higher-density construction of compact subdivisions and 50 percent cost savings from compact development of townhouses.

Consistent with Latino housescapes and cultural values, New Urbanism also encourages strong social interactions. A study by social psychologist Barbara Brown (2001) has shown that New Urbanist designs are in accordance with the behavioral and social goals they are intended to support. Brown tested the behavioral and social interactions of residents in a New Urbanist Subdivision (NUS) and a more Standard Suburban Subdivision (SSS) in Salt Lake City, Utah. The results of the study validated most New Urbanist design goals. The NUS had gridded streets, smaller lots, homes with front porches, and back alleys with accessory apartments; the SSS lacked these characteristics and had cul-de-sacs and 47 percent larger lots. After controlling for income, price, and age of homes, the NUS residents reported more neighborly activities, outdoor use, and more positive reactions to alleys and apartments than SSS residents.

New Urbanist designs are also consistent with Latino compact commuting characteristics through the incorporation of mixed-use and transit-oriented development. These development types encourage walkable communities by reducing car impact with more accessible and pedestrian-friendly street forms. Hence, New Urbanist communities provide for the production of affordable homes that are consistent with Latino propensities for compact city lifestyles. Moreover, New Urbanism affords the home building industry the prospect of capitalizing on the enormous projected Latino housing demand that would not be possible under conventional housing development patterns.

Despite the opportunities New Urbanism offers to satisfy Latino housing demand, housing developers may not be able to completely satisfy that demand if New Urbanism is marketed and presented to Latinos in its current manifestation–principally as a revival of New England and Victorian town living.

As we have seen, Latinos are transforming homes and communities to meet their criteria of what the built environment should encompass. This synthesis generates an environment that is familiar and hospitable to Latinos.

Accordingly, a new development model may be needed that acknowledges Latino architecture and designs that maximize social interaction. Such a model could

integrate California Mission style or Southwestern adobe designs with courtyards or patios in the center of the home, and verandas situated in front of the residence. Incorporating these designs would be consistent with the charter developed by the Congress for the New Urbanism. The charter states that urban places should be framed by architecture and landscape design that celebrate local history, climate, ecology, and building practice (Fulton 1996). Correspondingly, the California landscape has historically incorporated Latino motifs and they remain popular facade options in newly built communities. Communities could also be developed to enable sociability among residents by dedicating space for community plazas and parks.

Through the dynamics of what can be termed "Latino New Urbanism," an environment can be compatible with Latino preferences and customs. Latino New Urbanism facilitates the development of an alternative model that captures and promotes the environmental, social, and economic benefits of the Latino lifestyle. Hence, this new synthesis can provide the home building industry with a development style that is more appealing and satisfying for Latinos.

Conclusion: Latino New Urbanism and its Implications for Future Planning and Development

In the next several decades, racial diversity will dramatically alter the physical and cultural landscapes of the state. California will become a multi-ethnic society with few national comparisons. These projections suggest that the future of California is unmistakably tied to that of the Latino community.

The Latino population boom will place dramatic demands on services, particularly those associated with housing. This large projected population growth will pressure governments and industries to modify the methods by which they develop cities and suburbs. The ability of California and its housing industry to create innovative models to support a sustainable state will principally be determined by how they choose to configure people into communities and housing units.

If regulations and other "third border" tactics continue to undermine Latinos' cultural propensity for compact and New Urbanist lifestyles, they will hinder any prospects of leveraging those attitudes into new kinds of communities. Forcing Latinos toward dispersed housing rather than encouraging non-Latinos to place greater value on compact cities could produce detrimental effects not only for Latinos, but for the future of all California residents.

As the composition of residents in California changes, existing and proposed policies and housing strategies should also change. However, despite the multicultural nature of California, many individuals who favor compact lifestyles may not be allowed to pursue them. Currently, due largely to political opposition and zoning regulations, most new development in California is low density, hindering the possibility for individuals (particularly non-Latinos and the middle class) to adopt compact city lifestyles.

As a result of unreflective policies and models, Latinos are adapting existing neighborhoods to their own definition of New Urbanist communities. The production of Latino New Urbanist communities provides an affordable development model that acknowledges Latino architecture and designs that maximize social interaction and compact lifestyles. Latino New Urbanism also permits individuals to pursue their propensities for compact cities in a way that is compatible with achieving success in America.

Latino New Urbanism, moreover, offers non-Latinos, the middle class, and upwardly mobile Latinos an opportunity to live in an alternative environment with various residential types and amenities that satisfy their needs and incomes. The incorporation of Latino motifs and designs in Latino New Urbanism does not radically digress from architectural styles currently produced in California. Throughout California, high value is placed on Latino motifs and they are incorporated into a widely accepted architectural style in upscale communities. This preference for Latino motifs allows Latino New Urbanist communities to be marketed as compatible with California middle-class lifestyles. The integration of Latino New Urbanism in housing development models provides both the home building industry and local governments with a housing alternative that can be offered to a wider range of demographic groups than conventional models.

In sum, California has entered an era of multiculturalism and the state's housing patterns should mirror that diversity. The commercial real estate industry and some local governments are realizing the profitability of multiculturalism and consumer consumption and are developing innovative initiatives to support them. Such progress, however, requires the home building industry and government to provide a housing model similar to Latino New Urbanism. This model should increase the quality of life for all residents, accommodate population growth, reduce environmental impact, and offer developers a viable model to profit from the enormous housing demand projected over the next several decades. However, it remains to be seen whether the industry will continue to sustain conventional housing models or if additional cities and suburbs will zone more land for Latino New Urbanist developments.

Author

Michael Mendez is Senior Legislative Assistant to California Assembly-member Cindy Montañez. This article was drawn from his Master's Thesis at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

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