

# Tall Towers are Not the only option

The fatal flaw in planning estimates

Wrong Assumptions

Affordable

Green

Healthy

Alternative numbers and proven approaches

# The Missing column !

Halton region joint best planning estimates  
are the "root of the “problem”.

Per sq km	Per buildable Sq. KM.
32000	64,000 ++

Oakville Population and Employment Totals, 2021 to 2051  
Preliminary Draft Joint Best Planning Estimates, v3.02\_refined

Policy Area	Population (people)				Employment (jobs)			
	2021	2031	2041	2051	2021	2031	2041	2051
Oakville	220,143	295,939	378,469	444,000	110,839	147,198	183,555	212,788
<b>Strategic Growth Areas (SGA)</b>								
Midtown UGC	639	11,710	24,140	32,472	5,459	7,376	12,801	17,268
Bronte MTSA	-	609	1,990	4,555	1,048	1,456	2,779	5,349
Uptown Core	6,567	9,384	12,098	14,404	1,969	4,685	6,197	7,453
Trafalgar Urban Core (N)	4	4	8,151	17,673	-	-	1,746	3,817
Trafalgar Urban Core (S)	3,642	18,168	31,378	45,082	-	1,416	6,891	10,127
Hospital District	-	1,034	2,372	4,062	4,328	5,829	6,692	7,232
Palermo Village	4,672	6,740	13,176	19,634	1,711	2,661	3,576	4,715

# AFFORDABLE - Wrong

“The higher a building rises, the more expensive is the construction. Thus, the tallest buildings tend to be luxury units, often for global investors”

“Tall buildings inflate the price of adjacent land  
they increase inequality”

Suzanne H. Crowhurst Lennard, co-founder and director of the Making Cities Livable International Council

# AFFORDABLE - Wrong

Building **attractive homes in walkable neighbourhoods of up to five or six storeys is wildly more popular** than the suburban sprawl or high-rise towers favoured by the development industry, for good and obvious reasons.

It also costs far less in land than the former (suburban sprawl) **and far less in money than the latter (high rise towers).**

The problem is that **the development system is not currently capable of building these neighbourhoods**, except in the rarest of circumstances where a philanthropic landowner is prepared to forgo **the allure of easy money** and spend 20 years painstakingly building out to a master plan.

*The Times of London*

# “Residential towers as containers of speculative wealth”

Matthew Soules: “Icebergs, zombies and the ultra thin architecture and capitalism in the twenty-first century.”



# Green - Wrong

“High-rise buildings are subject to the effects of too much sun and too much wind on their all-glass skins.

And all-glass skins are, despite many improvements to the technology, inherently inefficient

High-rises, according to BC Hydro data, use almost twice as much energy per square metre as mid-rise structures.

[Patrick Condon of the University of British Columbia](#)

Wood 100% better than concrete and steel

30 metre separation: **Minimum!!!** ([City of Toronto building standards](#))



# Support a healthy community - Wrong

“high-rises keep children and the elderly from getting the exercise they need. The extra effort it takes to get outside encourages them to stay at home and flip on the TV”

“deprive people and especially children of neighbourhood peers and activities.”

“Level of alienation and isolation, things that have been proven to negatively impact health and even shorten people’s lives, increase with the height of the building”

Psychologist Daniel Cappon; [Canadian Journal of Public Health](#)

Constantinos Doxiadis, [quoted in Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat of the 21st Century, Ali, Kodmany, University of Illinois](#)

“High-rise buildings work against man himself, because they isolate him from others, and this isolation is an important factor in the rising crime rate.

Children suffer even more because they lose their direct contact with nature, and with other children.

High-rise buildings work against society because they prevent the units of social importance—the family, the neighborhood, *etc.*, from functioning as naturally and as normally as before.”



# More Assumptions - Wrong!

1. No province cap on height - therefore “20 storey limit just not feasible”.

???

**Wrong!**

We can build as high, **or as low** as we want

## **“Satisfy competing interests”**

Stakeholders: **Public, Developers and Landowners, TAC**

**Wrong!!**

True stakeholders are:

- a)The province
- b)The people who will live here,
- c)The public (us) who want to build a liveable future of our town
- d)The elected representatives of the public and their staff

As landowner I have no right to expect meetings to consider my desire to build  
40 storey tower

Commercial risk does not give a company rights to demand a profit on its land  
transaction

“Tall buildings can project a sense of socio-economic power and promote the city as a leading and modern commercial center.

...human ego has a role in building tall. The skyscraper offers pride to citizens and politicians”

[Ali, Kodmany, University of Illinois](#)

**“I have towers as tall as Mississauga now”**

# There are Alternatives for Midtown!!

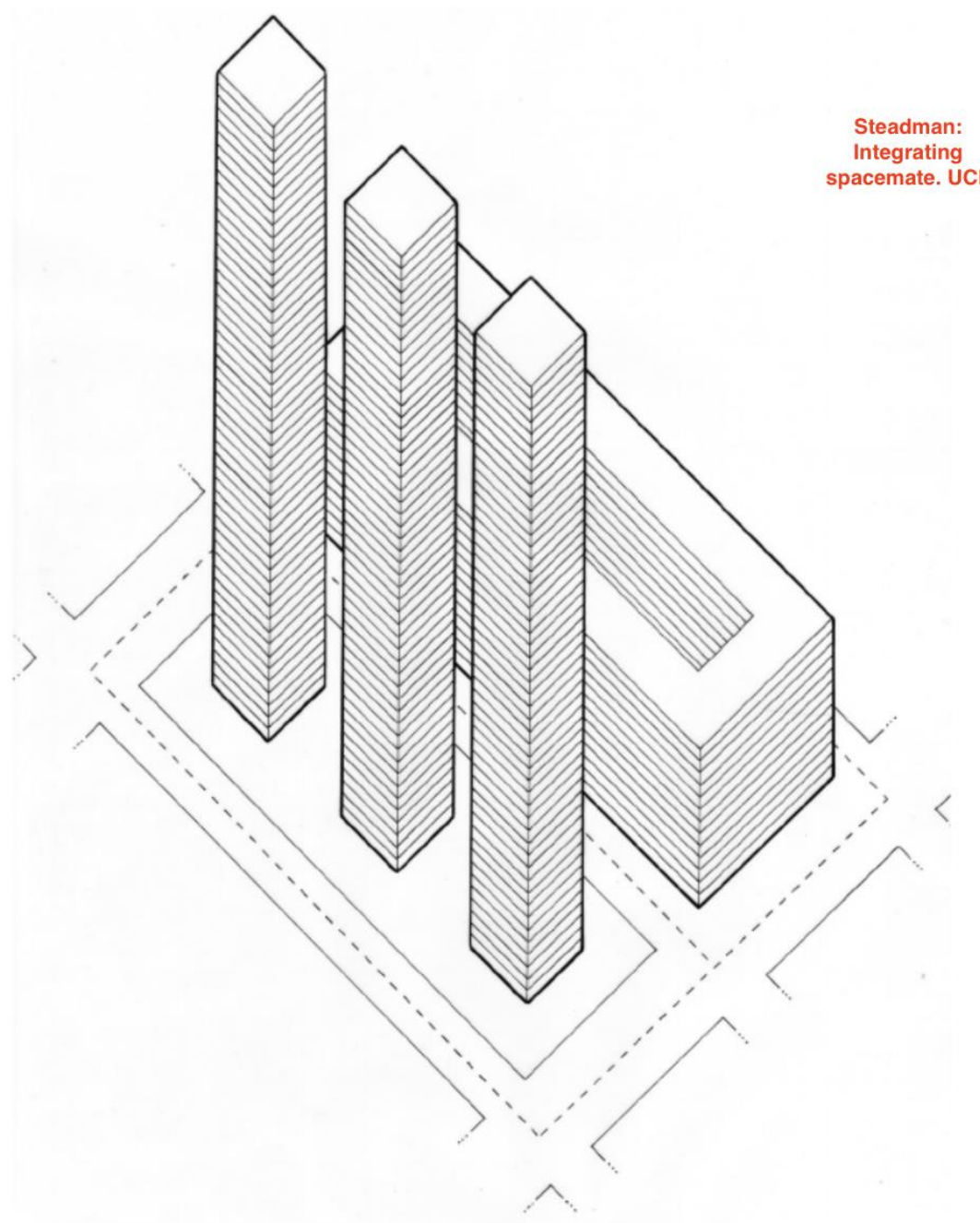
- Community - not investment opportunity
- Tall Towers
  - Not the only option for density
    - Leslie Martin and Lionel March [Urban Space and Structure](#)
  - Courtyard model optimal

**June 6, 2023: Paris' city council votes in favour of limiting the height of new buildings to 12 storeys**

**'Plan Local d'Urbanisme'**

# 13 storey courtyard replaces three 50 storey towers at 5.7 FSI

Steadman: University College London



**Figure 2.** Three fifty-storey towers on a Manhattan block measuring 60 m × 180 m, similar to Hood's scheme in figure 1, compared with a thirteen-storey court building on the same size block. Density as measured by floor space index is 5.7 in both cases. Ground coverage is 11% and 44%, respectively.

# Three tall towers, replaced by 12 storey open courtyard

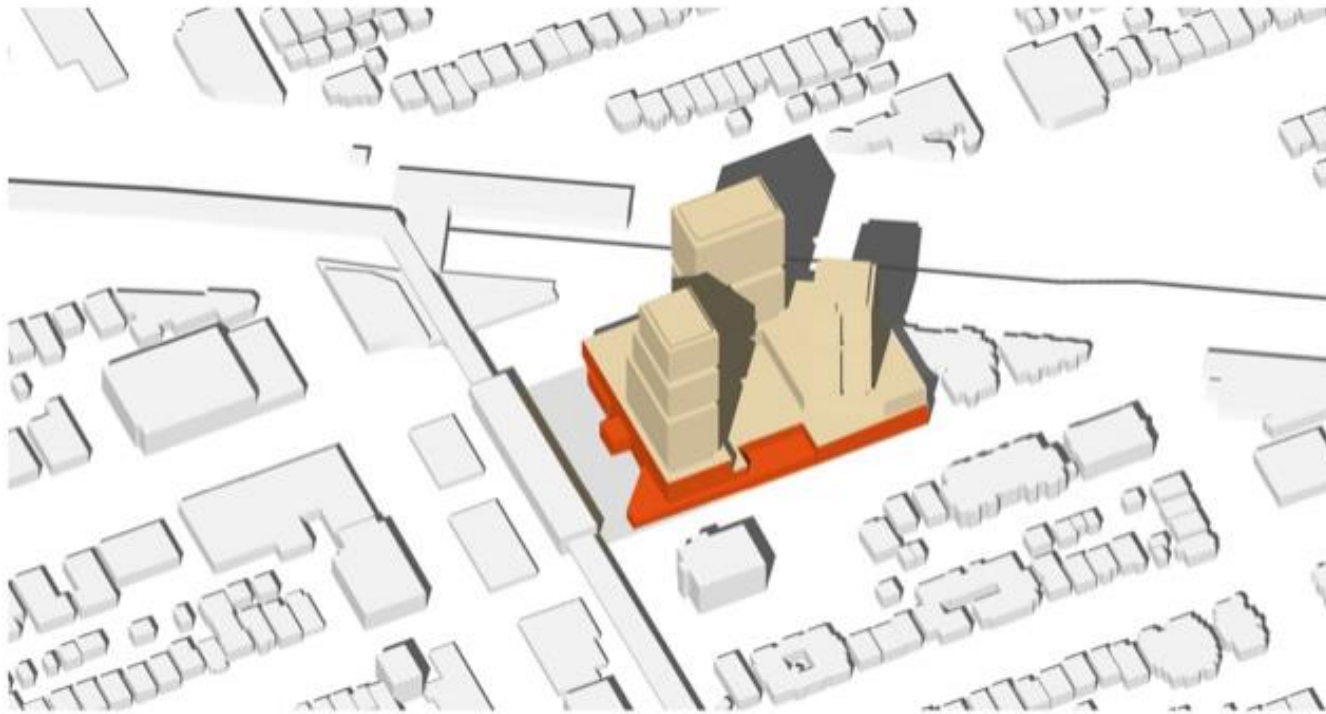
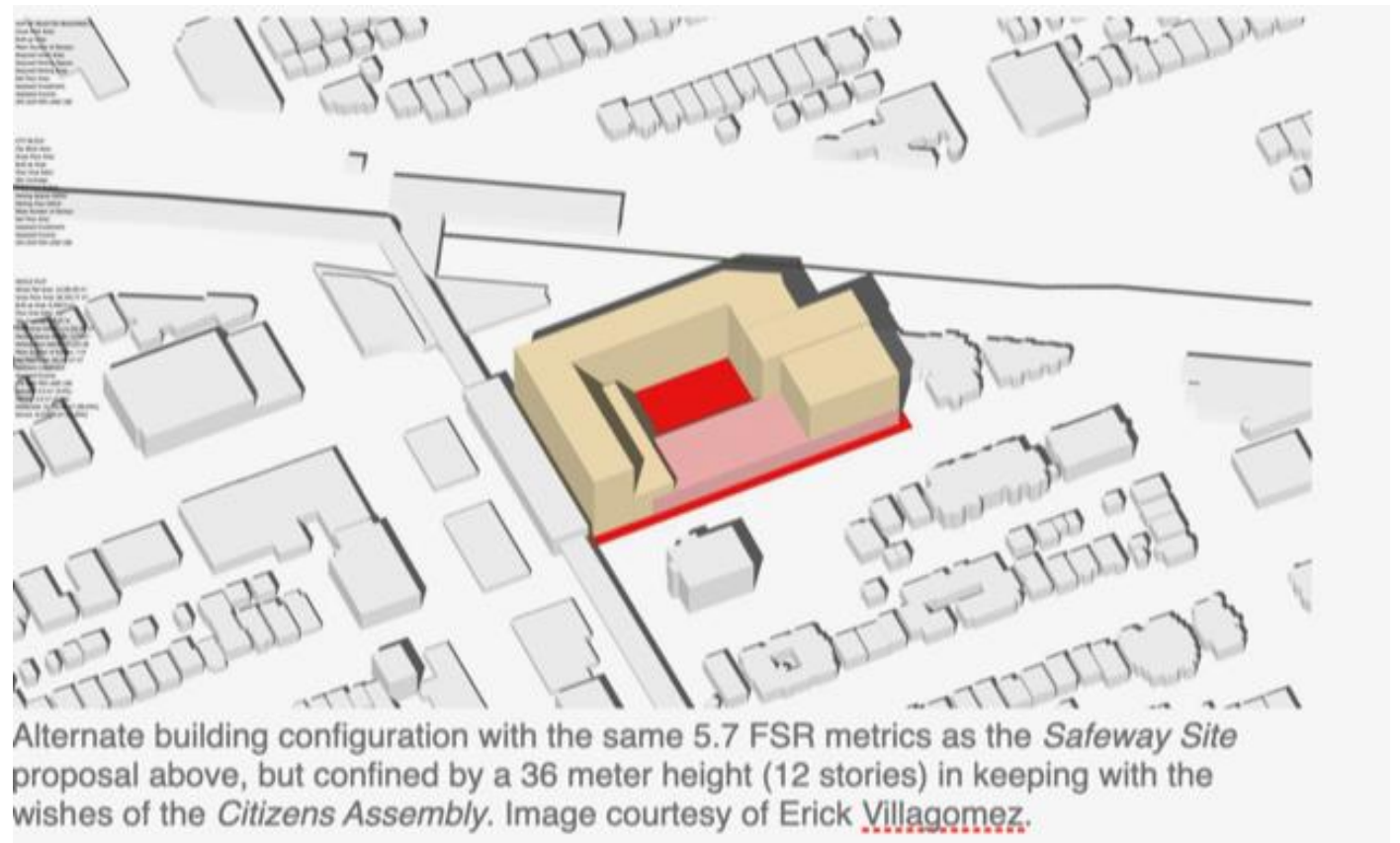


Image of the Safeway Site proposal with a 5.7 Floor Space Ratio (FSR) based on the submission for the July Public Hearing (since postponed). Image courtesy of Erick Villagomez.



Alternate building configuration with the same 5.7 FSR metrics as the *Safeway Site* proposal above, but confined by a 36 meter height (12 stories) in keeping with the wishes of the *Citizens Assembly*. Image courtesy of Erick Villagomez.



## Upper East Side

### Neighborhood of Manhattan



East 69th Street between Park and Madison Avenues in the Upper East Side Historic District

Nickname: UES

#### Area<sup>[2]</sup>

• Total 4.6 km<sup>2</sup> (1.76 sq mi)

#### Population (2020)<sup>[2]</sup>

• Total 183,986

• Density 40,000/km<sup>2</sup> (100,000/sq mi)

Manhattan: 40,000  
per sq km

Equates to about  
20,000 per sq km of  
buildable Midtown

## Alternative numbers

	Province minimum	Planner proposal	Alternative Midtown
<b>Hectares</b>	103.0	103.0	103.0
<b>People and jobs per hectare (Province given, others calculated from people and jobs).</b>	200.0	485.5	291.3
<b>Total people and jobs</b>	20,600.0	50010.0	30,000.0
<b>Ratio (65%) people to jobs (as per planner proposal)</b>	0.65	0.65	0.65
<b>People</b>	13,472.4	32,706.5	19,620.0
<b># of units @ average 2 persons per unit (People / 2)</b>	6,736.2	16,353.3	9,810.0
<b># units per buildable hectare (units / 43)</b>	156.7	380.3	<b>228.1</b>
<i># units per buildable hectare including railway lands (units / 58)</i>	<i>116.1</i>	<i>282.0</i>	<i>169.1</i>
<b>Hectare in sq metres (100 x 100)</b>	10,000	10,000	10,000
<b>Assume 25% building cover of hectare in sq metres</b>	2,500.0	2,500.0	2,500.0
<b>Average unit in sq metres (1,000 sq ft)</b>	90.0	90.0	90.0
<b>Assuming building covers only 25% of the lot area Units per 25% hectare (2500 / 90)</b>	27.8	27.8	27.8
<b>Units required (people / 2 per unit)</b>	156.7	380.3	228.1
<b># floors required (Units required / units per 25% of hectare)</b>	5.6	13.7	8.2
<b>Add retail and office floors for jobs target</b>	2	2	2
<b>Total # storeys</b>	7.6	15.7	10.2

People and jobs



People



# of units



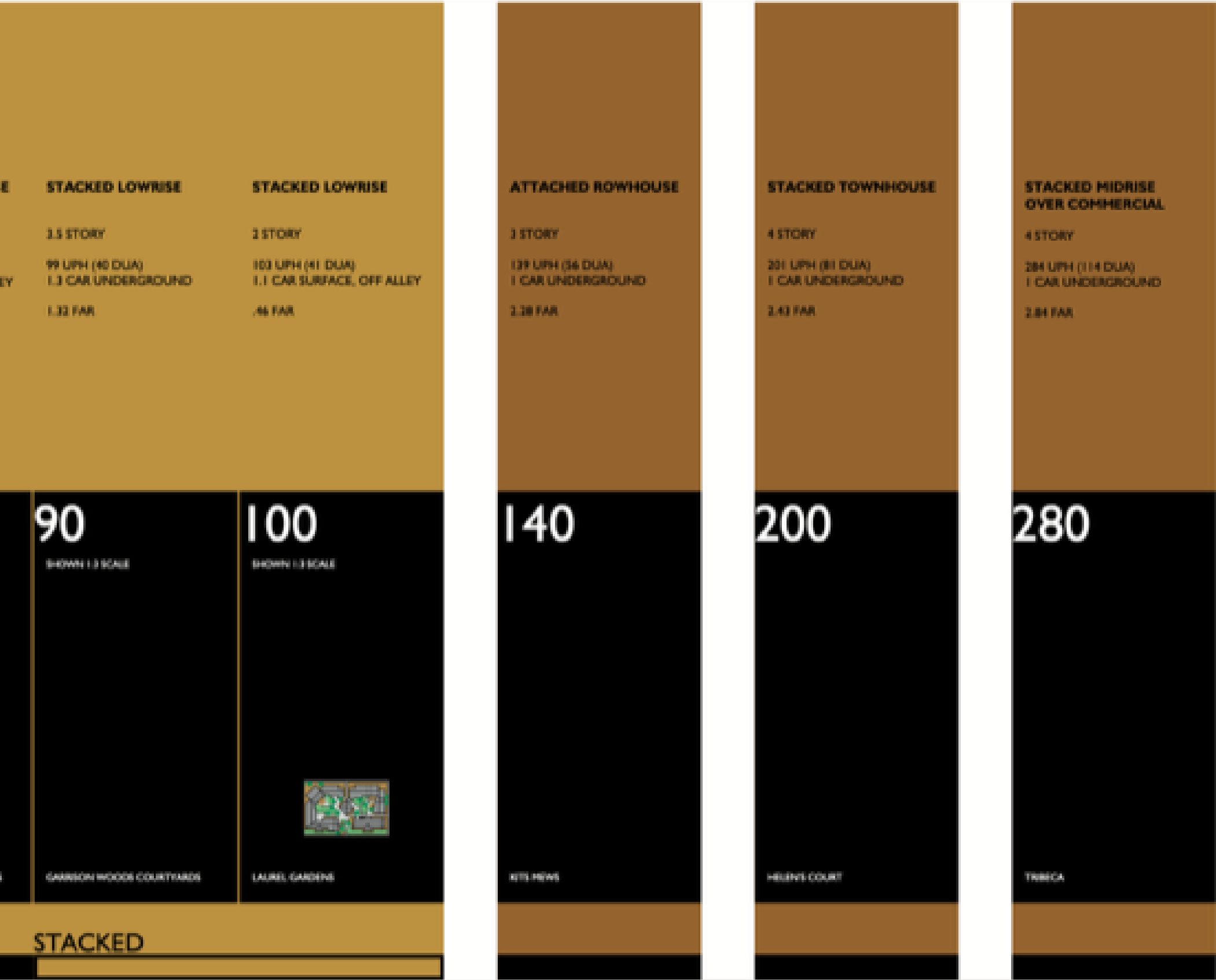
Average unit size



Units per 25% of a hectare



# of livable floors





# But - how to get from 30,000 to 50,000?

Grand Boulevard concept -  
along commercial corridors



Already legislated into law in  
California

Win - established  
neighbourhoods unchanged

Win - Land-owners of low-  
rent commercial property

Win - Quick low cost homes

Win - Tax revenue

Win - environment

Win - Transit

**But - how to get from 30,000 to 50,000?**



2,3,4 storey on top of one storey shopping malls

# Mid to Low rise alternatives deliver:

- **More Homes Faster**
- **Address housing crisis now**
- More affordable
- More human scale
- Less new infrastructure required
- Increased tax revenue
- Works in practice





