

## Study: New Models Needed For Housing Development

*REAL ESTATE: Yesterday's Home Style Not Suited for Smaller Households*

BY **RAY HUARD**

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SAN DIEGO COUNTY – Developers are too often stuck in a design mindset that no longer works – the big house with a two-car garage, large yard, and three or more bedrooms – according to “The America at Home Study,” now in its fourth year.



*Teri Slavik-Tsuyuki Co-Founder, America at Home Principal, tsk ink*

“The real crisis is that we’re building the wrong product. Homes and communities no longer match how Americans live,” said Teri Slavik-Tsuyuki, co-founder of America at Home, principal at tsk ink, based in Encinitas, and co-chair of the Global Wellness Institute’s Wellness Communities & Real Estate Initiative.

Taken in April and May 2025, in partnership with the Housing Innovation Alliance and the University of Pittsburgh’s Mascaro Center for Sustainable Innovation, the study surveyed nearly 16,000 people across the U.S. in four waves since March 2020 about their attitudes toward housing, with 6,002 people responding to the latest survey.

Among the key findings in the 2025 survey was that one and two-person households now account for 64% of U.S. residents, yet many new housing projects are built for larger households, according to the study.

“It’s time for the (development) industry to reckon with that disconnect, stop recycling outdated models and start meeting consumers where they are right now,” Slavik-Tsuyuki said. “The takeaway is we can’t just build what we historically built, which is one size fits all.”

People in 2025 are more concerned about what’s around them in their neighborhoods, like the proximity to community amenities such as coffee shops and casual dining restaurants, according to the survey.

The study found that financial concerns were rising among those who responded to the survey, with 44% citing economy and jobs as their top concern, up from 36% in 2024, and 27% listing housing costs and availability, while 23% were worried about high interest and mortgage costs.

## **Utility, Insurance Costs a Concern**

Home operating costs, such as insurance and utilities, were seen as barriers to buying a home by 24% of those surveyed, 41% said it’s too expensive to buy a home where they want to live, and 30% said they can’t find the right home at the right price.



*Nancy Keenan, Co-founder, American Home Study  
CEO, DAHLIN Architecture*

“Housing isn’t only unaffordable at purchase, it’s also unaffordable to live in,” said Nancy Keenan, co-founder of American Home Study and CEO of DAHLIN Architecture. “The long-term cost of maintaining a home has gone up astronomically. Who predicted what was going to happen with our insurance costs?”

Keenan said that part of the solution may be to focus less on building traditional single-family homes, or to build small cottages, similar to those in some of San Diego’s older neighborhoods, and multifamily projects like townhomes.

“Multifamily costs are more predictable,” Keenan said. Another answer could be giving people the option to rent-to-buy, Slavik-Tsuyuki said, adding that, “We heard a growing number of people were open to different models of home ownership.”

Builders also need to focus on providing flexible space, with 32% of those surveyed reporting that they work at home at least half of the time, Slavik-Tsuyuki said.

Within the homes, people also want things like air and water filtration systems, according to the survey.

## Ray Huard

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A native of New England, Ray Huard has been a reporter at newspapers in California, Florida and New England, including The (Jacksonville) Florida Times-Union, the Miami Herald, the Palm Beach Post in West Palm Beach, the San Diego Union-Tribune, the North County Times, and the San Diego Business Journal. He has covered a wide variety of beats including real estate, politics, science, the environment, state and city government and courts.