

 Buildings

Can we endlessly increase the number of single-family detached homes ?

The majority of the French population wishes to live in detached houses, thereby leading to a faster growth of single-family housing compared to apartment buildings. Yet this trend is growingly considered as unsustainable, notably because single homes increase travel distances, and thus energy consumption. However, large housing estate programs of the past have also proved unsatisfactory, notably in terms of quality of life. In this context, is it possible to envisage housing solutions supporting both individual well-being and a balanced population density ?



Posted on 19 November 2015
Last modified 8 January 2016

Detached houses have higher energy, material, and space requirements than apartment buildings, and have a heavier weight on household budget through higher heating and transport fuel bills. They also require more public spending on infrastructures, and swallow more agricultural land.

As shown by statistics from the French Ministry of Agriculture, among the 491,000 hectares of fertile soil turned into developed areas in the country over the 2006-2014 period (nearly 1/100 of the French territory), 46 % were used for single houses, and only 3 % for apartment buildings.

The French passion for individual houses could be directed instead toward quality multiple dwelling solutions offering several benefits : less widespread residential areas, pooling of certain equipment, increased access to public services and public transport, as well as increased social life opportunities.