

Intensification

by BRIAN LOCKHART

Every once in a while, someone will post a photo on Facebook of some small town in Italy, or Portugal, showing some small fishing village built on a cliff overlooking the ocean.

The houses are usually painted in bright colours and built on top of each other like some kind of giant pile of Lego creation.

For some reason, someone always posts, "I would love to live there."

Yes, it is somewhat picturesque, when you see an aerial view of the village.

However, the reality of living in a giant Lego project is probably much different than the romanticized version of everyone eating bread and cheese and never having to go to work. Who wants to open their front door, only to see their neighbour's front door five feet away? Do you really want to live in a house built with solid brick construction inside and out, with no insulation or air conditioning and no basement recreation room?

Forget about driving because the roads are too narrow for cars. So, if you're the kind of guy who likes to have a summer sports car for fun? forget it. And don't even consider buying any kind of recreation vehicle.

Everything is so jam packed there isn't even enough room to have some fun and throw a frisbee.

I think anyone who grew up in North America and moved to a picturesque fishing village would soon regret it after the first few times bringing home your groceries in a small wagon you have to pull up hill.

For the past few years, the province has been jamming the word "intensification" down our throats. They are insisting that more people should be jammed into smaller areas. This, in a province that is 842,000 square kilometres in size, in a country that is over 9-million square kilometres in size.

This theory of intensification came from Europe where someone came up with the idea that you should have all your needs met, within 15 minutes of your home. And that's 15 minutes of walking.

They figure you should be able to work, shop, socialize, and take in recreation all within walking distance of your neighbourhood.

Where is the benefit of that? For starters, I really don't want a butcher shop, factory, or medical office across the street from my urban house just so I can walk there.

There are already too many ridiculous developments going up where a couple of older houses are torn down and replaced with 20 or 30 townhomes that lack any real property or adequate parking? and that leads to other problems like people parking on the street or their own front lawns because they have nowhere else to go.

I like driving to different towns. Different towns have different places and different people. Why would I want to spend every single day within the confines of my own neighbourhood?

Not everyone wants to live in a house. Some people prefer a condo life because it eliminates things like yard work and shoveling snow. So yes, sometime intensification is preferable.

However, forcing people to live in some giant box of a neighbourhood so a municipality can bring in more taxes per square metre

defeats the purpose of why municipal taxes are collected in the first place.

I attended the ground breaking of a new development in a fairly large urban centre a couple of years ago. The developers were quite proud of this planned neighbourhood, but at the same time, I'll bet not one person who worked for the development company would actually live there.

The development is a huge block of attached housing forming a giant square of cement. When you leave your front door, you step directly onto the sidewalk in front of your house.

The whole thing is an abomination in a city which is surrounded by hundreds of miles of open space.

There are now a lot of conspiracy theories about why the government insisting we live like a bunch of ants. I'm not sure if any of them make a lot of sense, but Doug Ford's notorious Etobicoke bungalow is certainly not limited to one parking space and six square feet of lawn.

North America is a big place and much of it was designed around the automobile, which is, whether you like it or not, the main way of transport.

If you're a true environmentalist, I guess you can take your kids for the 20km walk to the next town to visit your relatives.

Intensification is not necessary.

Just go on Google Earth and have a look at this province from space.

We don't have a shortage of land and don't need to live on top of our neighbours all the time.