LIVING GREENER BY LIVING CLOSER

How apartment living quietly supports a more sustainable future

The type of housing you choose to live in is one of the most powerful and often overlooked drivers of environmental impact. A growing body of research consistently demonstrates that multifamily apartment living delivers measurable environmental advantages over detached single-family housing. From lower per-household energy use and reduced heat loss to fewer miles driven, preserved green space, shared infrastructure efficiency, and lower material consumption, apartment living supports sustainability, often without requiring significant lifestyle change or sacrifice.

Smaller spaces use fewer resources | Lower Energy Consumption Per Household

Smaller average size in apartments directly reduces baseline energy use. The U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) Residential Energy Consumption Survey (RECS) consistently shows that single-family homes consume substantially more total energy per household than apartments in multifamily buildings. Single-family homes are larger on average and have more exterior wall exposure, increasing heating and cooling loads.

Shared walls increase energy efficiency | Reduced Heat Loss

Multifamily housing benefits from shared walls, floors, and ceilings, which reduce exterior walls and surfaces exposed to the weather. According to efficiency analyses from the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy (ACEEE), multifamily housing can achieve lower energy use per apartment compared to single-family housing, even before high-performance retrofits.

Density protects land and ecosystems | Reduced Land Consumption and Urban Sprawl

Density reduces land use per household. Research from the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy confirms that multifamily housing communities accommodate more households per acre, lowering per-capita land consumption. Globally, the United Nations Environment Programme links urban density with reduced per-capita infrastructure footprint and lower material demand for roads and utilities.

Living closer reduces transportation emissions | Fewer Miles Driven

Transportation is one of the largest sources of greenhouse gas emissions in many countries. Data from the U.S. Department of Transportation show that residents in dense urban areas drive significantly fewer miles annually than suburban counterparts. Research from the Brookings Institution and the Urban Land Institute demonstrates that proximity to jobs, retail, and transit reduces car ownership rates, commute distances, and vehicle emissions.

Shared infrastructure means less waste | Centralized Systems and Reduced Duplication

Shared infrastructure reduces material duplication and improves system efficiency. Multifamily housing often incorporates centralized heating and cooling systems, shared water heating, shared amenities (laundry, recreation space), and district energy connections. The International Energy Agency (IEA) identifies centralized systems as more efficient due to their larger scale and optimized distribution of energy.

Renting discourages overconsumption | Lower Renovation and Maintenance Costs

Fewer renovations, less lawn maintenance, and lower material demand support more sustainable living. Data from the Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University show that homeowners spend substantially more on renovations and remodeling than renters, while also requiring lawn maintenance equipment, exterior structural upkeep, and driveway and fencing materials.

Sustainability without lifestyle overhaul | Built-In Efficiency Without Behavioral Changes

Apartment living builds efficiency into daily life. Organizations such as the Rocky Mountain Institute emphasize "efficiency by design"—reducing energy demand through design choices rather than relying on individual behavior alone. Apartment living embeds sustainability into daily life through smaller heated and cooled spaces, shared walls, transit proximity, and centralized systems. No lifestyle overhaul is required to achieve many of these benefits.

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