When I graduated college, my goal and that of most of my peers was to be able to afford a new car and eventually save up enough money to buy a big house. For many, that is how we measured success, happiness, and achievement of the American Dream.

Until recently, little attention was paid as to whether achieving these goals actually provided more happiness. In many cases, the location of the big home relative to where one worked or liked to play was irrelevant as long as it was as big as one could afford within a decent public school district. Whatever lengthy commute this caused to work or play was an accepted consequence.

Well, I can tell you that for much of our new millennial generation and for some of those that are older, this mindset is changing greatly.

Today, happiness for many is gained through experiences, interactions, and convenience; not material things. For example: Instead of setting a goal to buy one’s first car, or first fancy handbag, the goal for many may instead be going on one’s first summer trip to Asia or eating at a top Michelin star-rated restaurant.

For many, where we live is becoming far more important than the size of our home. In a society where everything has ramped up to almost lightning speed, the one thing that has not gotten any faster is commuting to and from work and play. Very close proximity to work and play, the elimination of the commute, and the great stress and barriers it causes, have now become, to many, of paramount importance. Being home for dinner, walking to the park or coffee shop instead of driving, or having time to watch the kids’ soccer game is far better than sitting in traffic for an hour to get out to the big house. Being able to walk to yoga, the gym, or take a class, instead of wasting that time on a dreaded commute absolutely contributes to a happier life.

When one lives, works, and plays all within very close proximity, a lot more walking happens and one tends to have a lot more discretionary time. There are many healthy positives to this, both mental and physical. When one has this lifestyle, his or her odds of interacting with other human beings increases exponentially. There have now been many studies that show that people that tend to have many random interactions with others on a regular basis may be happier and more creative. Knowing this, Steve Jobs centered the cafeteria, restrooms, and the gym in the middle of the Apple campus to foster interaction. Tony Hsieh consolidated all of Zappos operations from many buildings into one building in the center of Downtown Las Vegas. All Zappos employees have to enter and exit through one main entrance. He has made a major commitment to the “downtown project” creating a major live, work, play environment for his employees all around Zappos headquarters. Why? To deliver happiness. In fact, Tony wrote a book call “Delivering Happiness” where he studied what makes people most happy. One of the main drivers he discusses, is, you guessed it, the more positive random interactions one has with other people, the happier they may be and the more creative they may become.

Having everything conveniently nearby increases the probability of this happening. How much more often would you visit the coffee shop, the local pub, the park, the community garden, the great restaurant, etc. if it was just downstairs or a short walk away?
**About the Author:**

**Andrew Schultz** has been a Financial Advisor at Morgan Stanley and its predecessor firms for over 25 years. He is one of approximately 300 Private Wealth Advisors, a group within Morgan Stanley Wealth Management who focus on Ultra High Net Worth individuals, families and foundations. Andrew has recently been recognized by Barron's as one of the Top 1200, by Forbes as one of the Top 200, and by the Financial Times as one of the top 400 Financial Advisors in the country.

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