

FRAMEWORK FOR CNU CLIMATE CHANGE INITIATIVE

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Many individuals within the Congress for the New Urbanism including members of the Board have been working to develop a CNU response to Climate Change. These various efforts need to be brought together into a coordinated Initiative that can engage the entire membership of the CNU. Therefore, we propose the following program:

- 1. URBANISM IS OUR FOCUS:** We are urbanists with a set of principles that have guided the creation of tools for actually making urbanism. These principles were designed for use by the broadest possible range of people involved in building our buildings, streets, neighborhoods, cities and regions. We are constantly working to add to the tools and improve them as we do actual work.
- 2. OPPORTUNITIES FOR URBANISM:** In the course of our history, there have been a series of opportunities (sometimes in the form of crises) which the CNU has embraced and joined in partnerships with other organizations to solve using our principles and tools.

A prime example of such a response was the HOPE VI program:

The Cisneros administration proposed a collaboration with the CNU to help transform the federal public housing program into a means for revitalizing cities and re-establishing the great American tradition of mixed-income neighborhoods.

Our role was to create a set of operating principles for the HOPE VI program that would become design criteria for the projects. The Charter makes general statements about social equity and mixed-income neighborhoods (just as it does about the environment and sustainable design). CNU members identified those principles in the Charter which were relevant to the program and amplified them for use in the evaluation of projects. We developed a curriculum for the HUD staff members who would be evaluating funding proposals, which expanded into a regular series of workshops for developers, architects, planners, city officials, residents, and citizens.

Through application in real situations and incorporation in projects that were built, the techniques became understood and absorbed by the CNU membership as an integral part of New Urbanism. In taking on the Cisneros challenge, our own understanding of the principles was greatly enhanced and we added a whole new series of tools. And it became a more central focus of the organization as a whole.

The same Charter and its core principles have served a similar role in other initiatives such as the Urban Thoroughfares program, the Highways to

Boulevards program, the Greyfield to Goldfields publications, the Gulf Coast Recovery programs, and we hope many more to come.

3. **CNU AND CLIMATE CHANGE:** In this increasingly severe crisis, there are many calls around the world for reducing carbon emissions by certain target dates, particularly the year 2030. Each of them includes recommendations for part of the solution. Some focus on the technology of building design, others on finding alternate sources of energy, others on improving vehicle efficiency and reducing vehicle miles traveled.

But it is clear that it takes all of these plus a major change in the way in which the world builds its human settlements. It is essential to create walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods, towns, and cities at urban densities to replace current patterns of sprawl. To succeed these must be attractive, congenial places which people love and care for.

The CNU is in a unique position to offer its principles, techniques, and design talents in order to help communities meet the goal of carbon neutrality through design. Having partnered over the past five years with the United States Green Building Council and Natural Resources Defense Council to create the first national standards for green neighborhoods, CNU will now build on this experience with a CNU Climate Change Initiative to include:

A. Embrace the 2030 Challenges:

CNU recognizes the importance of challenging our organization, membership, and broader constituencies to meet specific carbon-reduction goals. In 2007, Ed Mazria presented his Architecture 2030 Challenge for building energy use and the CNU adopted his challenge as a guidance to members. But recognizing that the climate impact of the larger built environment is as large or larger than that of buildings alone, CNU will now challenge members and supporters to commit to a similar goal of measurably reducing the driving associated with their projects (as measured by vehicle miles traveled or VMT) and overall in the communities in which they practice.

We also recognize that more than 800 mayors have committed their communities to a climate protection agreement advanced by the US Conference of Mayors, requiring reducing emissions in their jurisdictions, including transportation- and building-related emissions, by the amounts set by the Kyoto Protocols. CNU will position itself to offer tools to these mayors and other public officials to help them meet these goals.

B. Develop a set of Principles, Tools, and Models for meeting the Challenge:

1. The Charter and Canons: The Canons are analogous to the operating principles used in the HOPE VI program. The current draft could be tested over the course of the next year in a series of workshops and seminars and by their use on actual projects. Another group in the

membership has been advocating the addition of amendments to the Charter, which could also be tested and forwarded for adoption to clarify the commitment to sustainability inherent in the Charter.

2. Models: Compact mixed-use development patterns that make higher densities attractive to the majority of people, set within an interconnected pedestrian-friendly and transit-served network of circulation and open space, can make a difference. But they need to be illustrated and calibrated with performance measures to be convincing to a market and general public that is still interested in vehicle-dependent development patterns.

Therefore, CNU will conduct a coordinated program to collect good models, review them through the case study methodology, and publicize them widely through a media campaign.

3. Testing: The models must meet certain criteria for energy efficiency including density, connectivity, and transit. The models would be evaluated on the basis of VMT and other measurable methods. The results would be documented and made available.

C. A Program for Transforming Current Development Patterns:

1. Curriculum: A unified curriculum for a program of training seminars, workshops and seminars should be developed. New programs focusing on climate issues would include the presentation of techniques and models, but also be a venue for reviewing existing projects, such as form-based codes, transportation reform, emergency response and many others. Using the criteria developed through the Canons and other tools, the results would add to the State of the Art.

New models and case studies will continually be added to the curriculum. A full inventory of CNU venues, closely related organizations such as the Seaside Institute, Prince's Foundation and Reconnecting America, and organizations working on climate change from different perspectives, would be developed.

2. Chapter-Based Climate Programs: CNU's expanding network of regional chapters has the opportunity and ability to take on the increased responsibility of disseminating the information and strategies created by the CNU climate initiative and advocating for their adoption. In their regions, these chapters also face unique climate change issues that will require unique ways in which to approach them.
3. Policy Campaigns: CNU will influence public policy (local, regional, national), with representatives from the membership and board carrying the message to policy makers. Inspired by Geoff Anderson's call for a campaign to directly influence public policy, CNU should

participate in such a campaign both of its own initiative and in partnership with groups such as Smart Growth America and the Surface Transportation Policy Partnership.

The climate initiative should also inform related work to remove the financial barriers that impede the implementation of New Urbanism. As part of these efforts, CNU should oversee the collection, evaluation, and dissemination of data to illustrate the inherent economic value of new urbanist projects and that the market is moving toward NU development models.

NEXT STEPS: If this meets with the Congress's approval, there are many challenges including the need for more financial and staff resources, for a research and development program, and for a formal Initiative Team with leaders. Ideally this would include one or two members of the organization from younger generations than the Board and a Board member.

CNU XVII: The next Congress is called Experiencing the New Urbanism: The Convenient Remedy. The challenge for us is to be able to present the results of this Initiative at that Congress. Therefore, we have a deadline to meet.

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