



NEW URBANISM



# Surviving a Zombie Apocalypse: A Case for Urbanism

*Dense, mixed-use, highly connected street networks, urban spaces, walkable towns, neighborhoods, and cities (without zombies).*

**Special points of interest:**

- The Dangers of sprawl.
- Urbanism offers centers for the living.
- Transforming streets for the living.
- Sprawl of the living dead.
- Highways to zombieland.
- Street smarts—safety in numbers.

“The world we have created today as a result of our thinking thus far has problems which cannot be solved by thinking the way we thought when we created them.” – Albert Einstein

## Volume 2 Special Halloween Edition

### How might Urbanism help one survive a zombie apocalypse?

This is a question that will surely cause most in academia and accomplished urban planners throughout history to shake their heads at the absurdity. Yet for the sake of argument in the context of the zombie genre and entertaining pure fantasy we want to examine how the living would be able to prevail in these circumstances by living in dense, walkable, mixed use communities, towns, and cities.

Suburbia offers the living the illusion of continuity of life—the absence of death or the reminders of mortality.

In other words, from this author’s perspective one is not as likely to see a cemetery on your way to church, the shopping center, or work.

Cemeteries in the suburbs may be hidden away in far flung out of the way places even if funeral parlors are still ever present.

To go even further, sirens from ambulances and fire trucks may

not wail inside subdivisions, perhaps for fear they might scare the residents or remind them of such a thing as death.

Yet, reminders of our mortality are present as evidenced by road side memorials dedicated to the tragic loss of loved ones involved in an automobile accident.

Automobile death statistics

reveal important facts about the nature of suburban environments versus urban centers. On

this life or death topic of safety, the Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU.org) has developed comprehensive approaches that support initiatives in the design of safe streets for vehicles and pedestrians such as

CNU’s Emergency Response & Street Design Initiative.

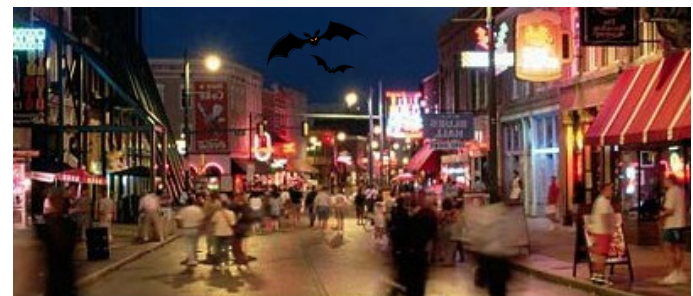


Photo Credit: Google Images  
Ghostly figures walking in the night; not a paranormal sight.

### Suburban Sprawl and Death Zones

#### Un-walkable places and streets

The main idea of New Urbanism’s be characterized in its endeavor of making cites, towns, neighborhoods, and streets livable walkable places.

Sprawl has come to be defined as the strict separation of single land uses —(single family homes, multi-family housing, shopping centers, schools, busi-

ness centers) typically composed in low density pods.

The main theme of suburban sprawl pattern is its automobile dependency. In a typical suburban layout short trips are directed to arterial roads, creating traffic congestion. Longer and more frequent trips are required as a result of sprawl growth. Suburban sprawl cre-

ates the worst possible environment for walking as access between homes and other destinations usually requires travel through hostile environments such as major arterial streets or parking lots. The act of walking is made impossible if not difficult where sidewalks are not provided, making walking a risky proposition.



Zombies in midtown Manhattan? Not likely in dense highly connected urban street patterns found in New York City.

*Living Communities—“Streets designed for pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers also encourage the casual meetings among neighbors that help form the bonds of community.”*



Zombies can attack you from anywhere in isolated, fragmented, and low density dispersed communities.

## Suburban sprawl and the living dead.

Other organizations such as Transportation for America ([www.t4america.org](http://www.t4america.org)) have published Dangerous by Design a comprehensive National Report covering 52 major metro areas. Orlando-Kissimmee being ranked number 1 in the top ten list of most dangerous metro areas.

Transportation for America works for solutions that may prevent pedestrian deaths after decades of neglect in the realm of pedestrian safety. According to [t4america.org](http://t4america.org) “In the last decade, from 2000 through 2009, more than “7,700

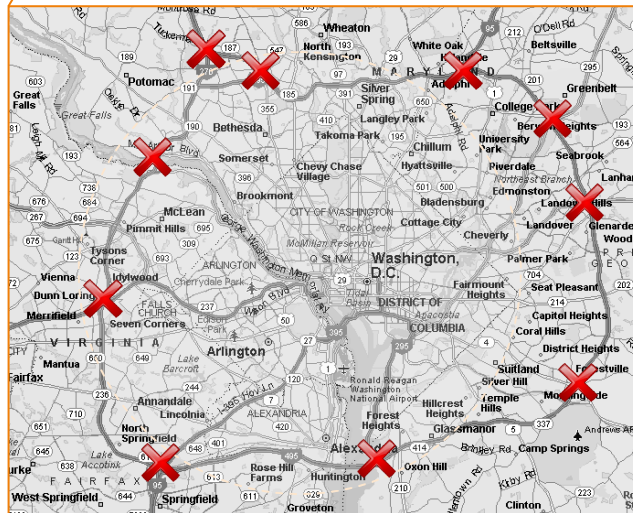
pedestrians were killed in the United States, the equivalent of a jumbo jet full of passengers crashing roughly every month.” Transportation for Americans argues that despite this sobering statistic little public attention and even less public resources have been committed to reducing pedestrian deaths and injuries in the United States.

Business as usual policies by transportation agencies may have made the situation worse by “typically prioritizing speeding traffic over the safety of people on foot or other vulnerable road users” such as

children, the elderly, and those without access to a variety of transportation options. Part of the problem inherent in these policies is the continuance of road widening efforts, ever more elaborate highway expansions, and less consideration to expanding funding for transportation alternatives.

The walking living have a chance at survival— with the help of organizations such **Walkinginfo.org** and the **National Highway Traffic Safety Administration** who are excellent resources for pedestrian safety statistics. Read the Traffic Safety Facts: Data 2010 released in August 2012 available at <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/Pubs/811625.pdf>.

Walkinginfo.org is sponsored by The Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center (PBIC) which supports solutions for improving access to transit, help develop plans and policies, advocate the benefits of walking and health, and help implement these initiatives. Strategies and available tools available through traditional neighborhood design provide proven solutions that improve our chances for the walking alive rather than the walking dead.



### Living Communities—“ No Zombieland”

The Beltway,, Washington, D.C.

A defensive strategy against a zombie threat or a congestion nightmare?

Communities that favor the living such as the one pictured above tell a different tale. Dense concentrations of the living allow for society to more efficiently bring in goods and resources safely into the city by railway Systems and grids that provide multiple routes in the case that you should ever be threatened by a zombie attack. Furthermore, being among higher concentrations of the living will better your chances of survival as there is safety in numbers. Goods and services such as food, milk, or guns and ammunition are more available in living communities where residents can walk to them without the need for a car.



## On the subject of Zombies and places.

How do we fare, so far we have briefly discussed some detrimental effects of suburban sprawl and some benefits of traditional neighborhood design in the unlikely scenario of a zombie apocalypse.



### Urban Zombie Tip

We know that zombies do a lot of walking and conventional sprawl zoning only allows them to walk aimlessly in chaotic dispersed patterns of separated uses with poor access for zombies or the living to get from one place to another if they don't drive a car.

### Highway to Hell

During a zombie apocalypse the last place you would want to be caught dead is a highway. The main reason being highways and freeways would not be safe since people would not have access to fuel, cars would run out of gas and therefore one would not be able to get very far even as roads are empty and abandoned. The risk and danger of running into a zombie attack on an isolated and deserted highway is reason alone to justify the destruction of urban highways within city limits.

A solution CNU advocates is Highways to Boulevards—the destruction of highways in urban centers and their replacement with vibrant thoroughfares that stimulate local economic growth through dense mixed use walkable neighborhoods with rich transportation alternatives.

Other remediation's that emphasize the transition to traditional neighborhood design from conventional suburban development are contained in sprawl retrofit initiatives.

Creating edge cities with functional and discernible boundaries and establishing urban nodes with polycentric regions are part of solution—DPZ.

A good example where these principles have been implemented successfully is Mashpee Commons, Mashpee MA.

CNU, its members, and affiliates have demonstrated many examples of successful sprawl retrofitting showing that is possible with proven strategies to building communities that perform better and create better quality environments.

Developments where mixed uses in highly inter-connected dense patterns of streets and blocks creating walkable neighborhoods are more predisposed to making viable economic, livable places. In a less car dependent environment we have far less chances of becoming a statistic or becoming a zombie as it related to our theme.

Zombies are less likely to thrive in communities with traditional communal places such as the town squares, village greens, town centers, or other traditional gathering places that facilitate social contact—the essential key in harboring social interaction, diversity, and long term economic vitality and growth.

Human interaction plays an important role in improving the livings' chances of survival from a zombie attack through strength in numbers.

The principles of Traditional Neighborhood Design (TND) make is possible to encourage the positive characteristics of human settlements all over the world.

We recognize the horrors of sprawl coinciding with a “zombieland” culture threaten the existence of human settlements with dys-

functional characteristics that can make anyone shrill. Like zombies, sprawl has been a major issue for cities and planners since the term first appeared in 1957 in an essay by William Whyte.

Common horrors include increased traffic congestion in an ever more car dependent

society, severe environmental consequences, the ever increasing economic costs of infrastructure, and negative public health impacts are but a few notable ones. The overall arching affect over the last 50 years has led to community decline in many instances across the nation.

The destruction of downtown urban centers as places, the separation and isolation of populations by age and income disparity, decline in social interaction and diversity, and in some cases the decline of economic vitality.

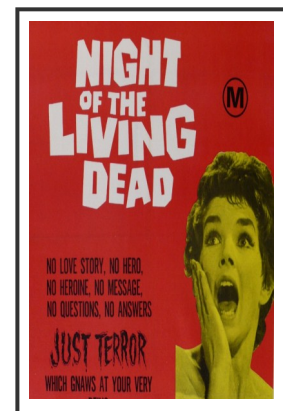


Zombies and Sprawl: two mid-century phenomena's that developed in the 1950s and became widespread as part of American cultural society through present day.

*“Think of a city and what comes to mind?*

*Its streets.”*

*Jane Jacobs*



Filmmaker George Romero coined the term “zombie” in his first movie “Night of the Living Dead” 1969.





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**Sol Architecture + Partners LLC, a Florida CBE, MBE**

A Florida native practice offering a full range of professional architectural and interior design services including planning and urban design.

Our Vision: “To serve our communities and support them by advocating and developing sustainable, livable, walkable, and diverse compact mixed-use neighborhoods, and towns.

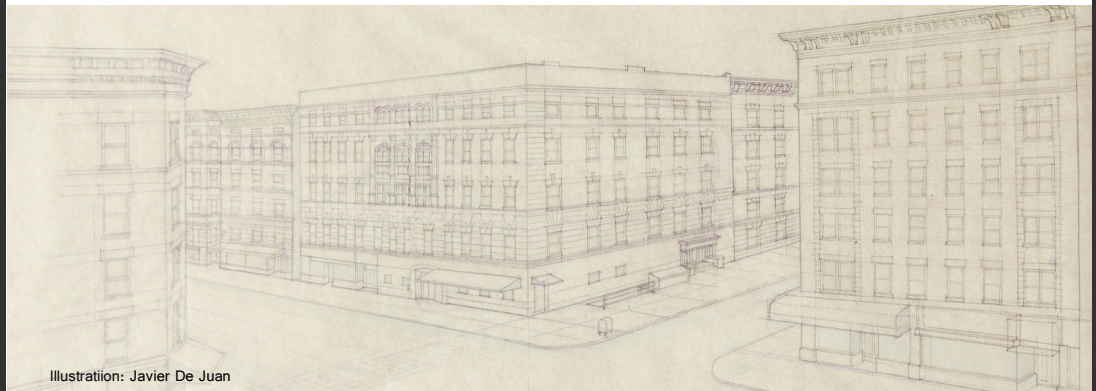


Illustration: Javier De Juan

**Smart Growth**

**Smart growth initiatives**

The establishment of great communities is the driver for the Smart Growth movement. Communities that choose smart growth strategies can create new neighborhoods as well as support existing ones; safe, and diverse, with vitality. Smart growth design encourages social, civic, and physical activity and promotes more choices and personal freedom.

Smart growth seeks to foster greater protection of the environment while acknowledging the necessity of stimulating economic growth in our local communities and regions.



**New York City:** an historical model. Smart growth opportunities abound in the U.S., taking a lesson from under our noses—and thinking with our feet.

**Smart Growth Principles**

- Mix land uses
- Creating walkable communities.
- Compact building design.
- Foster strong sense of place.
- Encourage community and stakeholder participation in development process.
- Preserve the environment.
- Expand opportunities for housing choices across all income levels.
- Provide a variety of transportation alternatives.



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