BETTER! CITIES & TOWNS

The decision maker's bridge to stronger, greener communities

APRIL-MAY 2013—VOLUME 2, NUMBER 3

Residential properties in 'transit sheds' held their value better

Yet many transit sheds in poorer parts of cities and in auto-oriented suburbs underperformed their regions from 2006 to 2011. Neighborhoods served by transit are divided between those that are prospering and those that are not.

ROBERT STEUTEVILLE

A new research paper determined that residential properties near transit stations in five major cities across the US maintained their values significantly better during the housing downturn than properties outside of transit sheds. "Across the study regions, the 'transit shed' outperformed the region as a whole by 41.6 percent" from 2006 to 2011, according to *The New Real Estate Mantra: Location Near Public Transportation*.

Transit sheds were defined as areas within a half mile of fixed-guideway transit stations, including rail and bus rapid transit. The study of the Chicago, Minneapolis/St. Paul, Boston, San Francisco, and Phoenix areas was commissioned by the American Public Transit Association and the National Association of Realtors, prepared by the Center for Neighborhood Technology.

Although transit sheds as a whole did significantly better, the pattern across regions was surprisingly uneven. More transit sheds lost value than gained value in some regions. In Chicago, for example, more than 60 percent of the region's 388 transit sheds underperformed the region as a whole. The transit sheds that did better than the region tended to have high densities and rise startling amounts. One station in Evanston, near Northwestern University, outperformed the Chicago region by 550 percent. In San Francisco, one transit shed did 287 percent better than the region, while a transit shed in Boston outperformed the region by 316 percent.

The pattern that emerged is one of revitalization downtown and in other highly walkable, desirable urban places in cities and suburbs. Neighborhoods in many poorer sectors of cities languished, as did automobile-oriented outer suburbs.

SEE 'TRANSIT SHEDS' ON PAGE 6

A mixed-use building designed in accordance with a form-based code in Ventura, California. See article on page 12.

PHOTO BY KAIZER RANGWALA

Market-responsive form-based codes

Form-based codes voluntarily adopted by developers show how this kind of land-use regulation can offer high market adaptability while assuring a better public realm.

Richardson, Texas, an affluent inner-ring suburb of Dallas, and home to many telecommunications corporations, wants to remain attractive to employers in coming decades.

Key to that goal is becoming more walkable and connected to transit, qualities that many of today's young and talented professionals are seeking. There are five Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) stations in Richardson, and unfortunately not one is in a walkable neighborhood. Such areas are in short supply in Richardson, which grew up entirely after World War II.

But a 100-acre previously undeveloped parcel adjacent to one of the stations will establish a new pattern: The site was rezoned recently for 3,200 residential units and up to 6,000 jobs. State Farm Insurance Company, which could have located anywhere in the region but was looking for a walkable urban center, chose this site.

As long as builders adhere to a new form-based code (FBC), no further public hearings are required. "We eliminated the risk of NIMBYism for a theoretical maximum buildout within a wide range of uses," says Scott Polikov of Vialta Group, LLC, A Gateway Planning Company. "There's nothing more market-responsive than that."

A February report by real estate consultant Robert Charles Lesser & Co. (RCLCo), called "Market Pitfalls of Form-Based or Smart Codes," criticized some FBCs for market inflexibility. Although the report cited no specific codes — and so was difficult to refute —it stung some new urban practitioners who take market demand seriously.

SEE 'MARKET-RESPONSIVE' ON PAGE 3

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The Evanston "net zero" Walgreens.

Why retail design is important

ROBERT STEUTEVILLE

Recently I criticized the design of a supposedly nonpolluting, "net zero" Walgreens in Evanston, Illinois. Aside from the raft of solar panels on the roof, the store looks like it could be located by any Interstate interchange. The store is, in fact, in a walkable neighborhood, one block from a Chicago Transit Authority station. The claim of "net zero" strikes me as flimsy — note the SUVs in the parking lot and that much of the merchandise will be shipped from Asia — but mostly I object to the parking in front. The store design diminishes the walkability of the neighborhood, which cancels out the energy savings of the building itself.

An urban designer and architect whom I respect implied I was making too big a deal of this issue. While he agreed that the city and Walgreens should do better, he wrote on a professional listserv that "in the world of fish to fry, I think we can find bigger ones."

Here's why I don't think this issue should be diminished. The world of retail is changing, fast. The business model that national retailers followed in recent decades was turned upside down by the housing crash. The retailers, which must build stores each year to increase revenues, have long developed at the suburban fringe — confident that growth will bring new customers to their stores.

Now that sprawl has slowed considerably, retailers are faced with a lot of underperforming, low-value stores in the suburbs. These stores were built cheaply and they get old, fast. They must be refurbished periodically to remain viable. While some retailers will choose to maintain suburban stores, many will not if the investment value is low.

According to *Reshaping Metropolitan America*, 50 billion square feet of nonresidential property in the US — much of it strip commercial retail — will be ripe for redevelopment in the years 2010 to 2030. This huge redevelopment potential could be used to transform the built environment in the US.

The national retailers will need in the coming years to build more and more in redeveloped and infill locations. They are changing their formats when they are required to, but not otherwise.

WHAT'S AT STAKE

At stake are mediocre streets that are connected to street networks and need to become complete streets, sites near transit that are marginally walkable now and should be improved, and strip malls with the potential to be redeveloped into mixed-use urban villages. Much of the future built environment will be determined by how commercial sites are developed.

Cities like Evanston, with density and transit access in major urban markets, are where retailers must locate in the coming decades. But in order to avoid typical suburban buildings, cities usually must reform their zoning. That's the only way that officials can make a corporation like Walgreens change their format to appeal to pedestrians.

National retail chains are laggards when it comes to buildings that promote walkability. They are looking for urban sites, but they still want to build the same suburban formats. In the Evanston location and similar places all across America, city officials should demand better. If they don't, they are selling themselves short and undermining walk appeal. When enough cities change their codes, Walgreens and other retailers will create better urban formats.

To get cities and towns to demand better retail stores, we will need to "fry some fish," or even turkeys. I'm planning some barbecues, and everyone is invited. ◆

Market responsive

FROM PAGE 1

Developers who wanted to reduce political and business risk initiated the code for the Bush Central TOD, as the Richardson site is called. The city gained assurances that the public realm would be built out in a way that is walkable and mixed-use, while the developers got flexibility and "by-right" entitlements, Polikov says. The master developers Bush/75 Partners sold all the land, at a premium, within a year and vertical construction is underway at a rapid pace. Zale Corson Group is developing an urban multifamily project designed by JHP Architects, and KDC Development Company has purchased the remaining land for a mixed use, live-work-play project.

"We made the argument that this kind of development is required to keep attracting corporate citizens," he says. "They wouldn't be able to bring in the cool, echo-boomer development without a form-based code."

City entitlements allowed higher densities without micromanaging uses, he adds. Within the 18 urban blocks that make up the site, uses are mostly flexible. On some streets, buildings must have first floors that accommodate retail — but other uses can occupy these areas if the market for retail lags.

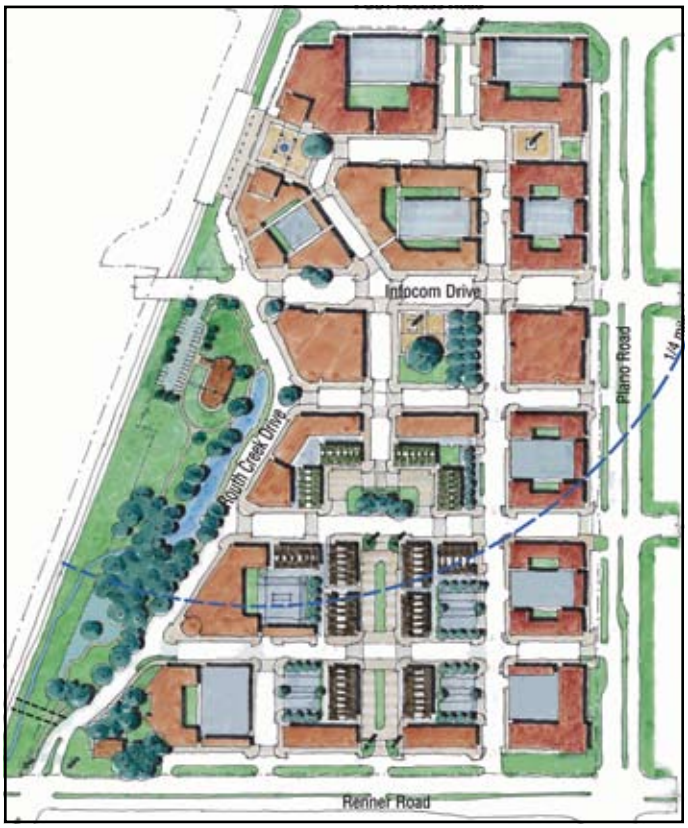
"The form-based code allowed us to get a richer building envelope and enabled development to evolve over time," Polikov says. "That's a big story that the RCLCo criticism misses."

The Bush Central TOD -- named after a nearby highway that is named after the first President Bush — is laid out on a simple grid to be built out intensely. Public spaces are plentiful and a large natural park with trails along a creek will provide a connection to nature. The project will create a regionally significant urban center for the north side of Dallas.

TRINITY LAKES

Across the metro area on the East Side of Fort Worth — a far less affluent part of the region -- a form-based code was approved in December 2012 for a 175-acre transit-oriented development called Trinity Lakes.

This project is in the middle of suburban sprawl with a diverse Latino/white/African-American population. An existing commuter rail line between Dallas and Fort Worth borders the site, but a station needs to be built. A high-speed thoroughfare, Trinity Boulevard, bisects the site and must be transformed into



PLAN COURTESY OF VIALTA GROUP, LLC, A GATEWAY PLANNING COMPANY

Bush Central TOD plan

Return of the greenfield TND?

Traditional neighborhood developments (TNDs) on greenfield sites, a key part of the New Urbanism 10 to 20 years ago, have had a tough time in recent years. Some have survived and continue to build out, some have gone through foreclosure and bankruptcy, but few new ones have been proposed in recent years.

Real estate analyst Christopher Leinberger contends that greenfield TNDs will not be a big part of the urban real estate revival going forward because of the high levels of investment and risks required to create an urban place from scratch.

On the other hand, new single-family housing is demanded in walkable neighborhoods — a demand that is hard to meet through infill development alone. The three projects profiled in the accompanying article are all new, greenfield developments on the scale of a neighborhood or several neighborhoods.

When developers build such projects they will most likely have to confront issues that were not dealt with in TNDs prior to the housing crash. One is minimizing investment and risk — and that probably means more efficient layouts built in smaller increments. The Saddlewood plan by Vialta Group is a good example. It's basically a simple grid, with straight geometries. Placemaking is achieved through squares and the development can be phased in replicable modules that can be financed and built with minimal infrastructure investment. The plan takes maximum advantage of the site to create developable parcels — much like the urban street grids of old. Even the frontages on the primary thoroughfares bordering the site are developable.

Another issue is external connectivity, a trait that was not often achieved in the pre-crash TNDs (which mostly have excellent internal, but not external, connectivity). The Saddlewood plan is highly connected.

Sometimes to achieve that external connectivity, highways going through or adjacent to TNDs will have to be tamed. The Trinity Lakes project addresses that issue by using TIF (tax-increment financing) funds to rebuild a suburban highway as a boulevard, connecting the development to the outside world.

Linking greenfield new urban projects to rapid transit, like Trinity Lakes and the Bush Central TOD, will also make neighborhood-scale new urban developments more financially viable.

RENDERING COURTESY OF VIALTA GROUP, LLC, A GATEWAY PLANNING COMPANY

Trinity Boulevard in East Fort Worth is currently a highway but will serve as a town center

a complete street.

The city, having adopted a FBC for an area adjacent to downtown, has experience with this type of regulation. The Trinity Lakes FBC was the first proposed by a private developer in Fort Worth. Residents of a large adjacent development, who have nothing but commercial strip retail nearby, were all for it. "They are sick of driving out of East Fort Worth for amenities that other neighborhoods have," Polikov says.

Fort Worth is an area that gets a lot of development: In 2013, more than 4,000 residential building permits were issued in the city, about a third of them for multifamily units. But nothing like this has been attempted outside of the downtown core, let alone in a working-class neighborhood.

The city agreed to tax-increment financing (TIF) for $75 million in infrastructure to build the rail station, convert the highway into a multiuse boulevard, and pay for street, stormwater, and other improvements. The city and county will get a portion of new taxes for 20 years and then 100 percent thereafter.

The site links into the Trinity River Trail system in addition to the regional rail network.

The FBC is similar to the Richardson project. As long as the form-based aspects are adhered to, the developer has by-right entitlement to build out the project. "Form-based coding provided the vocabulary to communicate the benefits to neighbors, and it was the analytical vehicle to estimate a much higher tax-base capture," Polikov says. Planned development in Trinity Lakes is estimated at $750 million, and it could transform this part of East Fort Worth.

HIGH DESERT SAVANNAH

Affluent or working class, the Dallas-Fort Worth metro area is a fast-growing region with 6.5 million people, and what works there may not work in other parts of the US. Clovis, New Mexico, with a population of 37,000 and located 90 miles from Lubbock, Texas, the nearest city of any size, could not be more different. Yet a market-based FBC could work there as well, Polikov says.

Cannon Air Force Base, a big part of the town's economy, is expanding with a special operations command headquarters. Many officers and enlisted personnel have lived in Europe or big cities. A 640-acre project by local developers Jeff Watson and Sid Strebeck is designed to create the kind of environment that would appeal to the service men and women.

The project takes up an entire square mile section north of town, and the first neighborhood will be anchored by a middle school and park for which the developers are donating the land.

Saddlewood is designed around 20 squares, much like Savannah, Georgia, and each square will be a module for development that includes a full range of housing types. The housing surrounding each square is, in effect, a phase of development that allows market flexibility, Polikov says. "We looked at historical places that allow variety but replication and we were influenced by Savannah," he says. "There's a predictable amount of infrastructure investment and we can build as much as we need," he says. ◆

Saddlewood in Clovis, New Mexico, takes inspiration from Savannah, Georgia

PLAN COURTESY OF VIALTA GROUP, LLC, A GATEWAY PLANNING COMPANY

Downtown Wichita takes off

Master plan gives the city clear vision; Helps spur redevelopment at a torrid pace.

Downtown Wichita has had $372 million in development in since 2010, with another $112 million underway or about to break ground in 2013. As of December 2010, when the new plan was adopted, the city had 1,350 housing units in its 800-acre downtown — that number is expected to more than double by the middle of this decade.

Compared to larger metro, Wichita is a relatively small real estate market and not known as a "creative class" mecca. Yet the city is seeing many of the same trends that downtowns are experiencing nationally with a rise in demand and revitalization.

Prior to the recent activity, Wichita's downtown had "epicenters of vitality, but they weren't connected," says Jeff Fluhr, president of the Wichita Downtown Development Corporation. The city, under mayor Carl Brewer, hired Goody Clancy to create a downtown plan and brought in market experts to get a precise picture of the development potential.

"The plan clarifies the design concepts we are striving for, such as connectivity, infill development, creating a walkable, pedestrian-friendly city, how we shape the public investment," Fluhr says. Key investments made in connection with the plan were streetscape improvements, conversion of one way streets to two way, planting of street trees, traffic signalization, and a parking garage, he says.

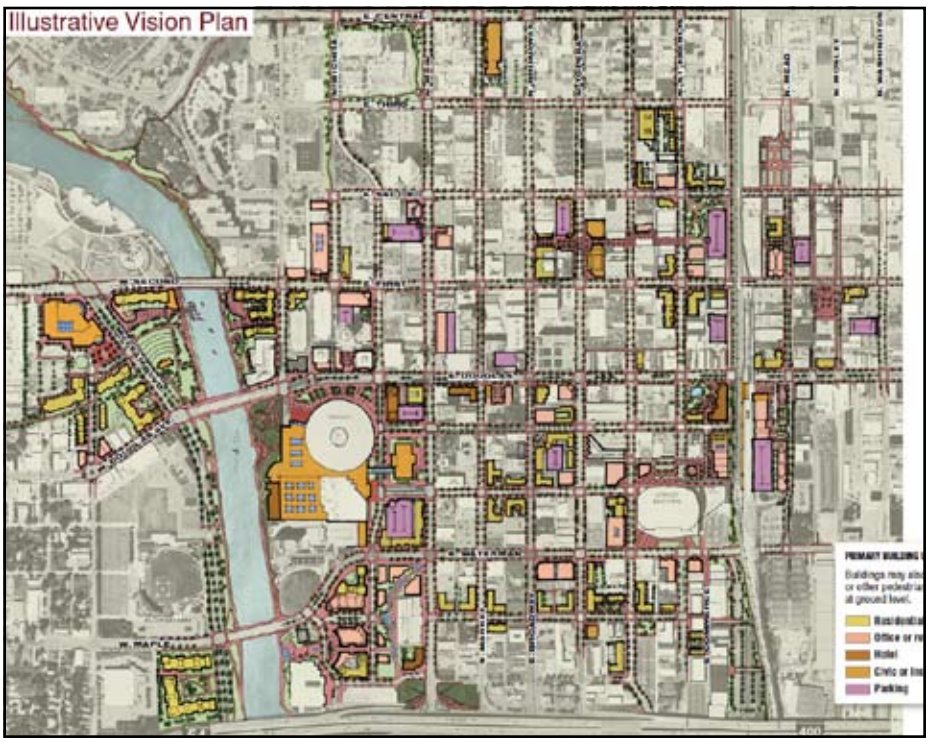
A single block, which the city has dubbed Block 1, has seen over $40 million in investment, including the adaptive reuse of a 12-story building that had been vacant 12 years, a 117-room boutique hotel, the $9 million expansion of the Kansas Health Foundation headquarters, and a mid-block passage that is a new public space.

Sarah Woodworth of W-ZHA did a hospitality study that helped to bring two new hotels to the city. Laurie Volk of Zimmerman/Volk Associates (ZVA) "challenged our developers by saying they could get more per square foot. That's what's happening," Fluhr says.

Much of this is fueled by younger adults, 20-something to 40-something, who want to live downtown, which is also fueling the restaurant activity and nightlife. But there is also a cross-section of people moving downtown, including some families, he says.

Corporations are moving downtown as well. Airbus located in a revitalized area of downtown called Old Town. Cargill made a significant investment in a research and development center. The

SEE 'WICHITA' ON PAGE 11



PLAN COURTESY OF DOWNTOWN WICHITA PLAN, GOODY CLANCY

Illustrative plan for downtown Wichita includes mixed-use residential, office, hotel, and civic.

A rougher version of the French Quarter, Mobile plans resurgence

The Alabama city is poised for a new round of growth with construction of an Airbus factory, guided by a plan and code.

Mobile, Alabama, has a scale of blocks and historic architecture that is not so different from New Orleans — only its city leaders were more efficient in dismantling its urban fabric in the middle part of the 20th Century.

Some of the architecture is still in place and "good bones" allow for redevelopment on a walkable scale even as educated young people are rediscovering downtown living. A new plan and form-based code by Duany Plater-Zyberk & Co., commissioned by the Downtown Mobile Alliance, sets a framework for transformation. A charrette was held in the fall and a draft code is now being prepared for submission to the city planning commission.

"Mobile is a wonderful city: It's smaller and more damaged than New Orleans, but absolutely taking off and full of young people," notes Duany. About half of downtown's urban fabric has been demolished over the years — so redevelopment sites are abundant, he notes.

The plan covers two hundred blocks, including the central business district and surrounding residential and mixed-use areas. A warehouse district of about 25 blocks, which could house high-tech firms, is part of the plan.

The Alabama Department of Transportation has budgeted the removal of a massive cloverleaf feeding I-10 on the southern edge of downtown, which will open up a new development district

envisioned by planners. The plan also calls for a miniature version of the "High Line" — an elevated park that pops over a surface highway — to connect downtown to an underused waterfront. Beyond that, the plan mostly avoids grand gestures.

"It is about many smaller moves, like maintaining the perfectly embedded theater where Yo-Yo Ma played the week of our charrette—and which brought out a most impressive array of cultured people, who were then able to walk to art galleries and enjoy the restaurants and after-show urban experience," says Duany.

The city has 195,000 people in a region of just over 400,000. Mobile peaked in population in 1960 and has dropped by less than 10,000 since — and the city is poised for a new round of growth now that Airbus plans to start construction this year of an aircraft factory 2.5 miles from downtown. The city retains a strong shipbuilding industry.

"To be competitive in the future it will not be enough to have the jobs, it will also require a thriving downtown to attract the talented workforce that attracts the corporations that create the jobs," Duany says.

In order to make the downtown a regional and perhaps national attraction, the quality of the public spaces and walkability of streets must be enhanced. Three downtown streets are identified for conversion from one-way to two-way to improve access and calm traffic. Retail corridors and "A" streets, where the pedestrian experience must be first-rate, are identified so that redevelopment can be focused. Bicycle corridors, as well, are proposed — because that expands the potential for nonautomotive travel.

"It is one of the greatest amenities for those who are considering living downtown that they be able to walk to most of their daily needs, and perhaps even to dispense with the burden of having to own a car," the planners note.

Mobile should also solicit federal funding for a streetcar system of the low-tech variety such as those in Portland, Houston, or Dallas, the plan recommends. Streetcars are durable and can last 50 years, compared to the 7-year lifespan of a bus, planners note. The downtown could have 10 streetcar stops, bringing the majority of downtown within a quarter-mile walk of rail transit. ◆

PHOTO FROM *DOWNTOWN MOBILE: KEEPING IT EASY*

A street in Mobile, Alabama

Transit sheds

FROM PAGE 1

Where transit sheds are perceived as safe, and they have great urbanism, they are going up in value — often skyrocketing. But many are losing value and depopulating — even in neighborhoods with a well-connected street network and streets that would be highly walkable given more and better destinations.

As a whole, the data shows the rising appeal of transit access, which bodes well for walkable neighborhoods. Yet in many cities, walkable neighborhoods seem to be moving in two directions. Transit-served neighborhoods in desirable areas are becoming even more popular — others, not so well placed, are losing population.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

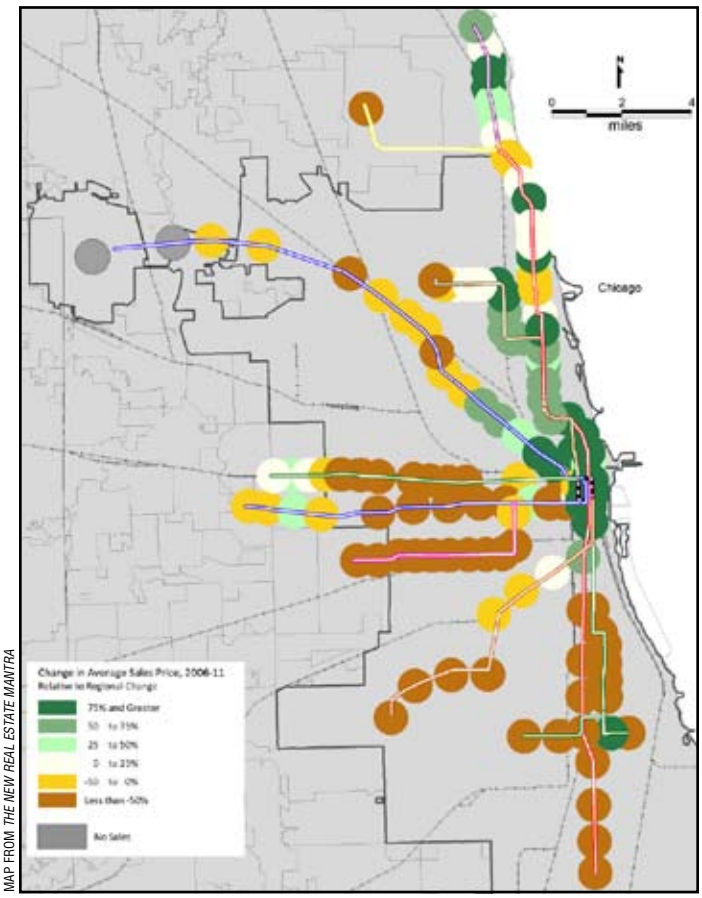
No city can afford to put tons of money into places that are losing value — so what can be done on a limited budget? One strategy would be to improve destinations. Neighborhoods need stores, particularly grocery stores and pharmacies, selling daily necessities to serve current residents and appeal to middle-class households. Neighborhoods also benefit from a connection to nature that can be enhanced through street trees. On Google street view, one noticeable characteristic of value-gaining transit sheds is that they tend to have more street trees. Planting trees in languishing neighborhoods with good "urban bones" and transit access could spark a revival in values and give an immediate impression that these places are cared for. Trees also enhance walkability by providing shade and slowing down traffic.

As the Knight Foundation's "Soul of the Community" study pointed out, art and culture are key factors attaching residents to their communities. An emphasis on arts and culture would benefit the struggling neighborhoods.

A more expensive approach, but effective, is placemaking. Areas around transit stations tend to be neighborhood centers that could benefit from a strong identity. A great public space near a transit station creates a real estate "center of gravity," raising property values and potentially turning a neighborhood around.

To do it properly — by creating a new square, plaza, or other civic space — is usually only possible with new development. The Project for Public Space's approach of "lighter, quicker, cheaper" is a less expensive option. "We often start with Amenities and Public Art, followed by Event and Intervention Projects, which lead to Light Development strategies for long-term change," the Project for Public Spaces explains on pps.org. Lighter, quicker, cheaper champions "use over design and capital-intensive construction."

Another idea that could be helpful is complete streets. Transit and walkable streets are amenities. Combining those qualities with a sense that a neighborhood is reviving can spark a turnaround. Complete streets projects can be implemented along corridors that also have fixed-guideway transit. These projects are funded by Department of Transportation dollars and can be justified on many



MAP FROM *THE NEW REAL ESTATE MANTRA*

Transit sheds in the Chicago Transit Authority system are shown above. Yellow and orange areas lost more value than the region. Green and white sheds outperformed the region.

grounds — from safety to repair to economic development.

If Arthur C. Nelson is right in his book *Reshaping Metropolitan America* (see "Where the Market is Heading" on page 8), then transit sheds, particularly those in the central city and inner-ring suburbs, should gain value through 2030. That means that the transit sheds that lost value from 2006-2011 — and where real estate is a bargain today — could be investment opportunities in the years to come.

VALUES AND TRANSIT SERVICE

The higher values in transit sheds overall ranged from 30 percent in Chicago to 129 percent in Boston. The effect was most strongly associated with transit providing a high and frequent level of service. In addition, households living in transit sheds had better access to jobs and lower average transportation costs than their regions offered generally. The jobs per square mile in transit sheds is two to three times higher than the regional average. Household transportation costs in transit sheds are $3,600 to $4,200 a year lower in the Boston, San Francisco, Chicago, and Minneapolis-St. Paul regions. In Phoenix, with fewer walkable neighborhoods, those in the transit sheds saved merely $2,100 a year.

In addition, transit sheds were correlated with much smaller block sizes and higher density. The transit sheds consist of, to a greater extent, walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods. The higher the walkability, the better the sheds appear to perform. Many factors — access to transit, transit type, walkability, access to jobs, and even lower transportation costs — possibly contributed to the superior real estate performance of the transit sheds.

Overall, there was a substantial decline in real estate values across these regions in the period studied. Residential properties in the transit sheds lost significantly less value compared to their regions. But it's not just the higher values that are interesting, but that the higher values appear to be growing. This report correlates with other research, like that of Christopher Leinberger and Nelson, who report growing demand for walkable, transit-oriented neighborhoods compared to automobile-oriented suburbia.

For some, but not all, regions, every residential property type in transit sheds, including single family, outperformed regional averages. In Phoenix, the least walkable region, single-family housing in transit sheds did not perform as well. ◆

Defining Baltimore's 20-Minute neighborhoods

How do they relate to the highest-frequency transit network? Where the two do not connect reveals opportunities for revitalization.

STU SIROTA

NOTE: The term "20-Minute Neighborhood" originated in Portland, Oregon, and is really a simple idea: identify, promote, and connect places where it's convenient to walk (or bike or take transit) to most of life's daily needs within 20 minutes from home. The following is an analysis that could be applied to any city.

Just how walkable is Baltimore? The "heat map" from Walkscore.com (See below; Also available for many other metro areas throughout the US) indicates the neighborhoods that are walkable, and those that are not. Walkscore

A "heat map" of Baltimore, with more walkable areas in green. Frequent transit service is superimposed on the map.

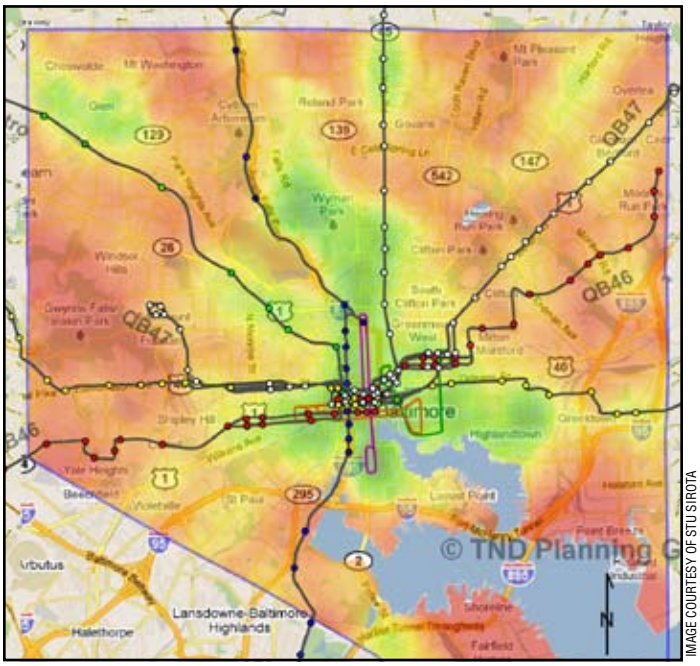


IMAGE COURTESY OF STU SIROTA

measures how many destinations and amenities — such as grocery stores, banks, post offices, schools, etcetera — are within walking distance of any address.

A clear pattern emerges of the most intense walkable "hot spots" (shown in green), emanating from Downtown Baltimore. Downtown itself, and surrounding close-in neighborhoods such as Mt. Vernon, Federal Hill, Fells Point, Highlandtown, Charles Village, Pigtown, and Hampden, all shown as very walkable.

Yet, large swaths of the city are not very walkable — despite the presence of sidewalks and pedestrian-friendly street patterns — because they lack the mix of uses or amenities that provide the incentive or reasons to walk.

So, what does Walkscore tell us about where 20-Minute Neighborhoods in Baltimore are (or could be)? Walkscore shows the relative degree of things available to walk to, and this is one of the essential ingredients in the 20-Minute Neighborhood concept and an important part of what makes a place livable.

Walkscore does have its limitations, however. The current Walkscore methodology does not take into account street design or urban design factors that affect the quality of the pedestrian environment. Despite this, it's still a good surrogate and starting point for showing where existing 20-Minute Neighborhoods are. An improved version of Walkscore, called Street Smart Walk Score, is being beta tested, which provides a more accurate picture of walkability to include true street routing to destinations (as opposed to the current "crow-fly" method) and analysis of "intersection density" which provides a relative indication of pedestrian friendly street networks. Walkscore.com also includes Transit Score, which calculates the relative transit-friendliness of an address based on its proximity to transit stops.

Applying Transit Score to a particular address in conjunction with Walkscore may provide some additional insight, but it only tells us where transit is available — not how frequent, well-connected, or far it is from job centers, destinations, and other amenities. What is perhaps more useful is to overlay the Walkscore heat map with the "frequent transit" map.

This gives a pretty clear view of where walkable neighborhoods are in relation to frequent transit routes (the Primary Transit Network). While there is some alignment between the frequent transit and walkable neighborhoods, particularly in the downtown core and immediate surrounding area, the overlay image reveals the neighborhoods that are walkable but aren't served by frequent transit, and the neighborhoods that are served by frequent transit but aren't very walkable. This can be useful in identifying opportunities for 20-Minute Neighborhoods. ◆

Stuart Sirota, AICP, is principal of the TND Planning Group in Baltimore. This analysis was posted on Envision Baltimore (envisionbaltimore.org)

Where the market is heading

In the March 2013 issue we reviewed Arthur C. Nelson's book, *Reshaping Metropolitan America*, but some of the numbers in the book are worth further consideration and analysis.

One of Nelson's main findings is that a demographic wave of Millennials, who are delaying having children and strongly prefer urban places, combined with the downsizing Baby Boomers, will transform the character of the housing market in the next two decades.

There will still be plenty of households with children in America — Nelson forecasts more than 38 million in 2030. But these households will make up a very small share of the nation's growth — and therefore a small share of the growth in the housing market. The table at upper right presents the data. The majority of the growth will be single-person households.

"The bottom line is that a new reality has emerged: The future of American planning and public policy will be geared to meeting the needs of households without children, with half the new market being single-person households," Nelson says. "Yet, our planning, zoning, and development codes remain rooted in reality that no longer exists — that of mass family and child-oriented markets."

HOUSEHOLD TYPE SHIFTING

The market share of household type will shift dramatically in this time period — see the graph at right. While the period 1990-2010 saw the market dominated by Baby Boomers in their peak buying period, 74 percent of the market going forward will be downsizing households, Nelson writes.

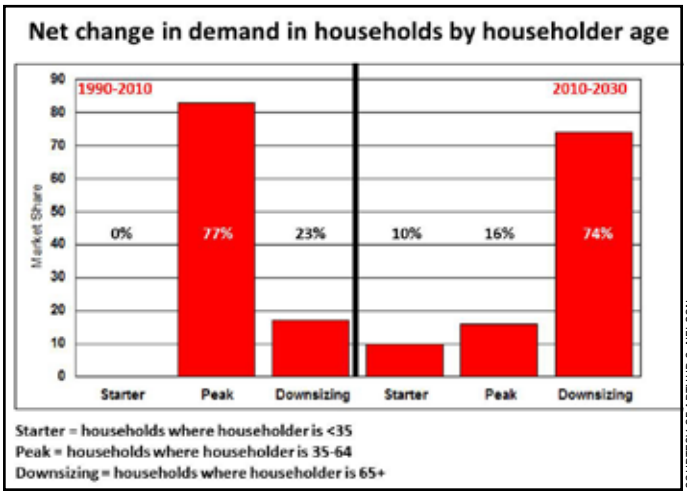
US households by type, 2010-2030 (figures in thousands)

Measure	HHs 2010	HHs 2030	HH change 2010-2030	% change 2010-2030	Share of change %
Total households	116,945	143,232	26,287	22	-
HHs with children	34,814	38,358	3,544	10	13
HHs without children	82,131	104,874	22,743	28	87
Single-person HHs	31,264	45,081	13,817	44	53

Source: Arthur C. Nelson, Reshaping Metropolitan America, Island Press, 2013.

Because the nation will add 64.5 million people, and some houses eventually wear out, burn to the ground, or are abandoned, the demand for new housing will be considerable this decade and the next — especially the 2020s — Nelson writes:

"Between 2010 and 2030, the nation will need to add about 22.7 million homes to its inventory, or about 1.3 million annually. During this period, another 10.9 million units will need to



COURTESY OF ARTHUR C. NELSON

Housing projections for the US and census regions, 2010-2030

Area	Total units built (000s)
Census region	
Northeast	3,901
Midwest	4,986
South	17,930
West	9,927
Census divisions	
New England	1,249
Mid Atlantic	2,653
East North Central	2,972
West North Central	2,014
South Atlantic	9,552
East South Central	2,233
West South Central	6,146
Mountain	3,931
Pacific	5,996

New England includes CT, ME, MA, NH, RI, VT; Mid Atlantic includes NY, PA, NJ; East North Central includes WI, MI, IL, IN, OH; West North Central includes ND, SD, NE, KS, MN, IA, and MO; South Atlantic includes WV, MD, DC, DE, VA, NC, SC, GA, FL; East South Central includes KY, TN, MS, AL; West South Central includes TX, OK, AR, LA; Mountain includes MT, ID, WY, NV, UT, CO, AZ, NM; Pacific includes WA, OR, CA, AK, HI. Source: Arthur C. Nelson, Reshaping Metropolitan America, Island Press, 2013

be built to replace units existing in 2010 that will be removed from the inventory. Total new housing construction for the nation over the period 2010 to 2030 comes to about 36.7 million units, or about 1.8 million units per year. Given the excess supply and that several hundred thousand units were built annually during the early 2010s, this level may not be reached until the late 2020s.

Yet this growth will not be evenly distributed. It's not just that there is an oversupply of large-lot single family houses and an undersupply of multi-family and small lot housing, especially in walkable neighborhoods. That's the case nationally, remaining so through 2030 at least. There's also a huge difference in demand depending where in the nation you live.

It's clear in the table at left that much of the demand for new house construction is centered in three regions: South Atlantic, which is the east coast from Florida through Maryland; West South Central — Texas along with Louisiana, Arkansas, and Oklahoma; and the West Coast.

That has implications for urban planning. In New England, where only 1.25 million residential units are forecast to be built through 2030, infill can likely handle the demand. In the South Atlantic region or Texas, we are much more likely to see substantial greenfield development.

Nelson acknowledges that greenfield development will be part of the growth picture, and, it is hoped, part of a sustainable mix of development. "I am optimistic that new development may indeed occur as infill and redevelopment, and as mixed-use, higher density, master-planned development within urbanized metropolitan areas," he concludes.

The table below shows Nelson's house value expectations, which are placed on a matrix. There are two key factors — the distance from downtown and the rate of growth in a metro area. A subdivision built in the 1990s will have far different value prospects in, say, the Washington DC area, than in Buffalo, New York. Regardless of region, that subdivision will not do as well as a walkable, inner-ring suburb or downtown. ◆

Home value expectation

	Growth rate			
Location	Faster than US	Same as US	Slower than US	Stagnating or declining
Downtown/near downtown	Highest value rise	Increasing value	Holding value	Losing value
Elsewhere in central city	High value increase	Increasing value	Holding value	Weak market
Suburbs built before 1980	Holding value	Holding value	Weak market	Little or no market
Suburbs built 1980-2000	Holding value	Losing value	Little or no market	No market
Post 2000 suburbs	Little or no market	No market	No market	No market

Source: Arthur C. Nelson, Reshaping Metropolitan America, Island Press, 2013

Unrecognized assets: Low-density commercial buildings

According to *Reshaping Metropolitan America*, about half of all nonresidential structures in the US will be "ripe for redevelopment" in 2030. Many of these are commercial strip retail buildings with large parking lots or dated office buildings on suburban sites. The annual report *Emerging Trends in Real Estate* notes that many suburban retail and office properties across the US are languishing in value and may not be worth refurbishing.

All in all, 50 billion square feet of commercial space in the US will need redeveloping by 2030, says author and researcher Arthur C. Nelson. One of the challenges to redeveloping such sites, however, is that they are often located on commercial strip corridors that are not appealing for mixed-use development. That challenge could be addressed by "complete streets" projects on major thoroughfares that need to be rebuilt anyway, setting the stage for redevelopment.

So, public investment is required. Nevertheless, Nelson makes a strong case for why these sites are likely to be reused.

"Although parking lots and deteriorating low-rise structures may sound more like liabilities than assets, I believe they provide America with an unprecedented opportunity to meet emerging market needs by simply reshaping what is built," he says. Here are seven reasons, as reported in Nelson's 2013 book *Reshaping Metropolitan America*:

- "They are flat and reasonably well-drained," and often have stormwater retention infrastructure in place, "so this part of the development process is already finished."
- "Almost all of the sites sit along major highways" and are transit-ready.
- Large-scale utilities are already in place. Upgrading these utilities is a lot cheaper than building them from scratch.
- They've already been zoned for something other than low-density residential development, which makes NIMBY opposition to mixed-use projects a lot less likely.
- The sites are generally owned by a single entity that is motivated to maximize their return, removing impediments to redevelopment from multiple ownership of small sites.
- As these sites age, their deteriorating condition "compromises the value of nearby residential properties."
- Nearby residents may be motivated to deflect development pressures away from their neighborhoods to these properties.

Promoting New Urbanism through roadway design

JACK CAREY

It may seem counterintuitive to focus on roadway design when talking about creating New Urbanist communities. After all, one of the primary goals of New Urbanism is to de-emphasize the role of vehicles in downtown areas. But planners and designers who have worked with New Urbanism understand that effective roadway design is crucial.

In fact, roadway projects can be a significant catalyst of New Urbanism. Our roads and highways have grown as a federal priority in recent years, with the federal transportation budget growing to $105 billion. Much of the budget is provided to states and municipalities for transportation infrastructure development and can be put to use to create a transportation base out of which New Urbanism can grow.

Planners must first recognize that roads aren't just necessary evils: roads can actually serve as the foundation of New Urbanist planning. Through the implementation of Complete Streets and related approaches, roadway designers can create an accessible and safe environment where motor vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists share roadways equitably. This philosophy can be a seed from which New Urbanism can grow, creating walkable communities that are less congested and more livable.

MORE ACCESSIBLE AND SAFER STREETS

In recent years, Complete Streets has become one of the hottest trends in road and highway design because of its emphasis on equally promoting all modes of travel. The idea has gained significant traction with State Departments of Transportation and municipal Departments of Public Works. Although incorporating this concept has sometimes taken a push from state legislatures, designers should no longer assume that roads are for vehicles, and any extra use, whether for pedestrians or bicycles, is secondary.

Complete Streets turns traditional roadway design on its head. In the past, extra roadway and right of way space was a valued commodity and thought to make highways safer. This thinking was based on the idea that the more room a driver had to recover from his mistakes in operating his vehicle, the safer the roadway. While this may be the case on expressways, in urban conditions, excess pavement and open roadsides are felt to contribute to higher speeds and motorist inattentiveness.

PHOTO COURTESY OF WADE WALKER

Median islands placed in the middle of busy roadways help reduce vehicle speed and provide a refuge for pedestrians who are crossing the street.

While every community is unique, American roads tend to be inefficiently designed. They generally provide more space than is necessary to accommodate vehicle traffic, with excess pavement that isn't properly utilized. As a result, this excess pavement becomes a burden that must be maintained, while typically going unused. For instance, it isn't unusual for vehicular traffic lanes to be up to 15 feet wide, which is much more space than is typically needed for safe driving. Through Complete Streets, this excess width can be reduced, creating space for the development of sidewalks or bike lanes.

Similarly, the main streets of many community downtowns are four lane roadways with two lanes provided in each direction. Due to uncertainties regarding the presence of left turning vehicles, the inside travel lanes in this kind of roadway arrangement are typically underutilized, resulting in more driving space than is needed. This excess driving area tends to encourage unsafe motorist behaviors such as speeding and unsafe lane changes, both of which make these roads less attractive to pedestrians and bicyclists. One Complete Streets strategy that can be very successful in this type of downtown area is the introduction of the "lane diet". Under this strategy, the four through lanes are replaced by a three lane cross section consisting of one through lane in each direction of travel and a middle two-way left turn lane. This approach slows down traffic, reduces side-swipe crash potential, and provides a much safer environment for turning traffic while freeing up some of the former roadway space for the creation of sidewalks, on–street parking, and bike lanes.

Complete Streets can also promote New Urbanism by improving streetscapes and the overall downtown experience. Reducing the width of roadways permits planners to reclaim underutilized space for the addition of landscaping and sitting areas or wider sidewalks that can accommodate outdoor seating for restaurants. Some communities choose to use the space to create larger and safer bus stops or similar areas that encourage people to congregate.

One effective strategy for slowing—or calming—traffic in congested areas is the addition of raised crosswalks. By raising crosswalks, planners can provide a clearer and more recognizable delineation between crosswalks and the rest of the road, while at the same time

compelling drivers to moderate their speed. Similarly, speed tables, which are essentially wider versions of the raised crosswalk, are often used to influence moderate driving speeds.

Another safety strategy that can be extremely effective in more congested communities is the addition of median islands in the middle of busy roads. Depending on size, such islands can provide a refuge for pedestrians who are crossing the street. They can also impart a narrowing effect on the motorist, which can reduce vehicular travel speed and serve as the ideal location for signage since their placement in the middle of the roadway falls more readily within drivers' natural sightlines.

In fact, effective signage is a major challenge for designers. Road and crosswalk signs are typically placed on the right side of roadways, either adjacent to or upon curbs. The problem is that, because drivers steer from the left side of their vehicles in the United States, it is easy for them to miss signs that are located to the far right of their field of view. This is a particularly acute condition on busy roads because drivers are more likely to be focused on oncoming traffic approaching on their left and the fact that sign visibility can be further obscured by the presence of on-street parking.

CULTURE SHIFT

A barrier to using roadway design approaches like Complete Streets to promote New Urbanism is the traditional culture of municipal planning, public works, and transportation departments. Too often, planners and administrators see roadway design as a byproduct of downtown planning, rather than a tactic for promoting planning goals.

For instance, urban and town planners often view transportation planning in the context of how transportation supports the local development plan. As such, they may content themselves with merely maintaining roads and repairing them when necessary. All too often, they miss the important role that roadways can play in promoting the planning goals they wish to pursue.

Likewise, public works and DOT administrators don't always consider the role transportation plays in overall urban planning. Sufficient oversight is required to ensure that the DOT engineer is not just designing around a standardized template. Standards must allow the designer enough flexibility to integrate the existing or planned land use with the roadway. Additionally, a Complete Streets approach can be overlooked when a roadway project's purpose and need don't specifically call out Complete Streets elements. For example, does your transportation agency have a Complete Streets mentality when it designs a bridge deck replacement? Does it evaluate the proposed temporary detours needed to construct the deck for bicycle compatibility? Are the designers leaving no stone unturned when it comes to expanding the deck to include a sidewalk?

Instead, Complete Streets and New Urbanism must run throughout the very DNA of a city or town's planning, public works, and transportation departments. Whenever there is as new project, planners and engineers should ask themselves, "How does this adhere to Complete Streets? Whenever a maintenance project such as pavement striping is undertaken, DPW administrators should begin by asking, "How can this project enhance Complete Streets? Ultimately, for transportation planning to truly impact New Urbanism, there needs to be a top-to-bottom culture through which all planners, engineers, and public works personnel see themselves as promoters of Complete Streets.

AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT

Roadway Design is an essential element of successful New Urbanist development. After all, reducing the impact of vehicles on downtown areas isn't likely to happen by accident. If communities want to truly create more walkable, livable communities, they need to have a strategic transportation vision that actively balances the needs of drivers with the interests of pedestrians and bicyclists. ◆

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Lane diets slow down traffic, reduce side-swipe crash potential, and provide a safer environment for turning traffic while freeing up some of the former roadway space for the creation of sidewalks, on–street parking, and bike lanes.

PHOTO COURTESY OF WADE WALKER

Wichita

FROM PAGE 5

city would like to see a major multitenant office building, a building type that has not been built in downtown Wichita since the 1980s.

The existing downtown land use code did not need to be revised to implement the plan, Fluhr says, which is not the case in many cities.

ZVA listed the assets of downtown Wichita that make it attractive from a market perspective:

- Historic buildings, many of which are architecturally significant
- Employment: Downtown is a regionally significant jobs center
- Culture and entertainment
- Shopping and dining
- Walkability
- Central location and access to the rest of the city ◆

Assessing criticisms of form-based codes

KAIZER RANGWALA

Market share is a common metric for measuring success of a product. Since their resurrection in Seaside 30 years ago, roughly 300 form-based codes (FBCs) have been adopted. Many of these codes are for small specific areas, not the entire city. Overall, less than 0.2 percent of US cities have adopted FBCs. Why have we not gone to scale with these kinds of codes?

By their very nature FBCs faces many hurdles. Over the last century, we have separated zoning standards from physical planning, leaving out place-making. FBCs are now trying to make up for this all at once. The planner's concern is we don't have the capability to do it in-house and the money for consultants has dried up. We have to overcome the legacy of the planning system we have inherited and undergo a generational shift.

Bureaucracy and inertia make it difficult to escape from entrenched old ideas that are hard to change. While Euclidean zoning was born before the depression, it came to age in a rapidly growing post-war economy. FBCs are much more difficult to institute as they seek to replace an existing system in a much slower economy.

PHOTO BY KAIZER RANGWALA

Office building recently completed with a form-based code

CRITIQUE OF FBCs

One premise is that if people are attacking, you are probably making a difference. Change requires revolution, which tends to be rough and takes time. However, codes inherently are not perfect. The latest FBCs are better than the last one we wrote and we are constantly learning and making adjustments. It is in this spirit that we seek to understand some legitimate complaints against FBCs from the points of view of various stakeholders:

Designer's perspective: FBCs are ideologically based and overly prescriptive. Some fear that a one-size-fits all, a FBC template may not address community context and character.

Even if the community desires it, some codes are overly restrictive, controlling too much — leaving little room for discretion and creativity. Supporters of FBCs should decry such codes -- they are just as bad as a loosely written code. Codes should balance predictable results with flexibility and creativity. FBCs regulate most of the same elements designers must address under Euclidean codes, but with emphasis on the form of the public realm rather than compliance with abstract numerical ratios. Euclidean zoning offers token participation in the form of a public hearing at the end of the process. In contrast, FBCs are developed under an open participatory process that begins with the meticulous study of the existing physical context and character of a place. The most critical instrument of FBCs is the regulating plan, which unlike the land use zoning map, is based on development intensity and character, on a block-by-block and lot-by-lot basis.

Engineer's perspective: Like Steve Job's did at Apple, FBCs put good design before technical constraints thereby challenging the engineers to do their very best and not just rely on pre-ordained liberal safety nets such as the AASHTO Green Book, created by the professional organizations. "Transportation should be a means to an end, not the end in itself," is a common adage at Nelson\Nygaard Associates, a transportation planning firm. The early and often participation from technical experts during the drafting of a FBC encourages the spirit of working together and breaking down silos.

Property owner's perspective: Incremental redevelopment, the transition between old and new, can be awkward and painful. Requiring additions to viable uses and structures now deemed non-conforming by the new code to comply with a new system and standards, for example, is always a tough sell politically. Codes must be calibrated to accommodate transitional markets that can over time attract and evolve to the final desired market.

Planner's perspective: Skepticism about success and training poses an uphill challenge. FBCs are seen as a tool developed by architects for planners — the two groups that were long separated by the universities and their differences reinforced by professional organizations. Further, the tool is perceived as largely consultant-driven, generating higher fees for more complex codes.

Municipal planning and engineering staff are trained in Euclidean zoning with its restrictions and check lists. A FBC relies on the implementer being more of a generalist. The generalist has an appreciation for architecture, engineering, urban design, landscape architecture, project programming, and retail and commercial economics. Younger professional staff members are beginning to be exposed to this approach through education, seminars, and conferences and are generally more receptive to FBCs.

Planning educators perspective: Planning schools don't find it necessary

to teach physical planning as a core competency for a professional planner. A few years ago the Planning Accreditation Board debated removing urban design as a core requirement for planners. In cases where planning schools are housed with architectural schools, the architects don't teach FBCs because it constrains creative process of object buildings.

Professional organizations: Most members within professional organizations use Euclidean zoning so switching to FBC would be going against the norm. However we have tried the Euclidean framework for almost 100 years. It has failed to produce places of lasting value and is not likely to repair and restore the failing commercial corridors, office parks, shopping districts, and subdivisions. Codes are the number one tool for implementation and planners are in charge of the codes. Professional organizations can provide leadership in the field of regulatory reform.

MISCONCEPTIONS

The failure to understand the purpose and technique of FBCs cause many to stand on the sidelines. Common misunderstandings include:

FBCs are too restrictive

FBCs' focus on physical vision is perceived to force a narrow range of design options. However, both FBCs and conventional codes establish controls on development. FBCs emphasize standards that shape the collective public realm and offer a great deal of flexibility in the individual private realm. Standards for the public realm are based on community's vision. Conversely, Euclidean codes control the use of the private realm with vague standards that fail to conceptualize a cohesive public realm. FBCs' clear and precise standards, streamlined and predictable process, and predictable outcomes have opened development potential within numerous communities.

They ignore market realities

It is a widely known best practice to study the market potential before developing regulations. Market studies are more common with form-based than conventional Euclidean codes. In form-based coding, it is much easier to align the form, uses, building types, and infrastructure with market potential. Why? Because FBCs are an end-to-end integrated product that brings together the various disciplines of planning, design, economic development, engineering, and public safety early on to perform in unison. It becomes possible to analyze the community-supported vision from every point of view, to figure out the cost, and understand how various public and private partners can implement that vision. The results are therefore more predictable. At the same time, a lighter focus on use allows buildings to be nimble to the market.

Form-based grocery store in Ventura, California

PHOTO BY KAIZER RANGWALA

A one-trick pony

A common misunderstanding is that FBC practitioners use the same playbook with one protocol, method, and template for every situation. Some critics find FBCs appropriate only for greenfield sites, and not appropriate in urban areas.

While the language of coding is common, practitioners employ different syntax and dialects. FBCs can be used to protect or transform an area. The applications range from the region to the neighborhood, integrated by a common thread to creating authentic, livable and lasting places.

Conceivably, FBCs could be written to facilitate sprawl. Similarly, the integrated platform of FBCs is better equipped to address the natural environment, affordable housing, and historic preservation. But if for some reason a community decides to not address these issues in their codes, this is not a weakness of the tool, but operator's error.

Hybrid just sounds better

Hybrid implies the best of both worlds with more flexibility and less controversy. The term "hybrid code" confuses people as it has been used in a couple of ways. The first use of hybrid code is the method in which design guidelines or standards are added to a Euclidean zoning format. Despite the attempt to introduce design, the focus of such codes continues to be on control of density and uses. This option leaves lots of room for subjective judgment when the codes are applied thereby compromising clarity, and predictable outcomes and processes. Avoiding tough issues for more flexibility fails to produce the results imagined in the vision and disillusions the public to question the efficacy of coding and planning.

In the second preferred option, also referred to as hybrid codes, FBCs are adopted for small areas within a city where walkable urbanism is desired. These FBCs are carefully integrated into the existing citywide Euclidean zoning platform. This option really does offer the best of both worlds.

What can we do to fix it?

We should ensure that the different professional organizations, media, conference organizers, seminar instructors, and the public get the facts correct. People will report what they hear, so it is important they have the correct information and easy access to the experts who understand form-based codes. Plenty of factual information exists and should be channeled to get proper media coverage.

FBC practitioners should refrain from overselling FBCs. It's only a tool — not a panacea for the absence of good planning. Overselling hurts the product, as focus shifts to what it cannot do versus what it can do. People resist agenda-driven influences, if offered "fixes" they do not want or need. It's more effective to influence than persuade. Our focus is to inspire lasting buy-in and commitment by painting a picture of a better place. In addition, practitioners must be prepared for lengthy follow-up sessions with implementing staff. This may include training sessions and assistance with project review.

Planners should reclaim their heritage in physical planning

and design and lead this effort. Unlike conventional Euclidean codes, FBCs require multidisciplinary skill sets. Overcoming the usual disconnect between planning and design, large cities such as Nashville, Portland, Seattle, Boston, Los Angeles, Chattanooga, Charlotte and many others have urban design studios that are involved in design of spatial elements for short- and long-range planning projects. Smaller cities can bring attention to the design and coding of the public realm by bringing on a staff urban designer, landscape architect, or town architect.

Planning organizations and universities should offer urban design as a core course and the planner's certification exam should test for competency with physical planning.

CONCLUSION

Market share is not the only metric for measuring success. Easy to use great products that have the ability to change people's lives prevail in the long run. In 2010, Apple surpassed Microsoft as the world's most valuable technology company. It had just 7 percent of the personal computer market but it boasted 35 percent of the operating profits. The market for PCs is shrinking while Macs are growing. As fuel prices soar over the next few decades, municipalities must be prepared to shift to a much more sustainable urban form. This can be accomplished with FBCs.

The good news is that the majority of these codes have been adopted in the past 10 years, so there is momentum. "As the economy recovers and more built results can be seen, this will likely cause an escalation of demand for FBCs," says Carol Wyant Executive Director of the Form Based Code Institute. In recent years, a number of big cities have either adopted or are developing FBCs — this has raised the FBC profile and is inspiring others to follow suit. ◆

Kaizer Rangwala, AICP, CEcD, CNU-A, is the founding principal of Rangwala Associates, and a member of the board of directors of the Form-Based Codes Institute, which seeks to advance the knowledge and use of form-based codes.

Suburban infill development connects with nature

New Urban Builders, based in Chico, California, had big development plans prior to the housing crash — but those plans were put in indefinite hold. Now the firm is dipping a toe back into single-family housing with a 24-unit suburban infill project called Forest Park.

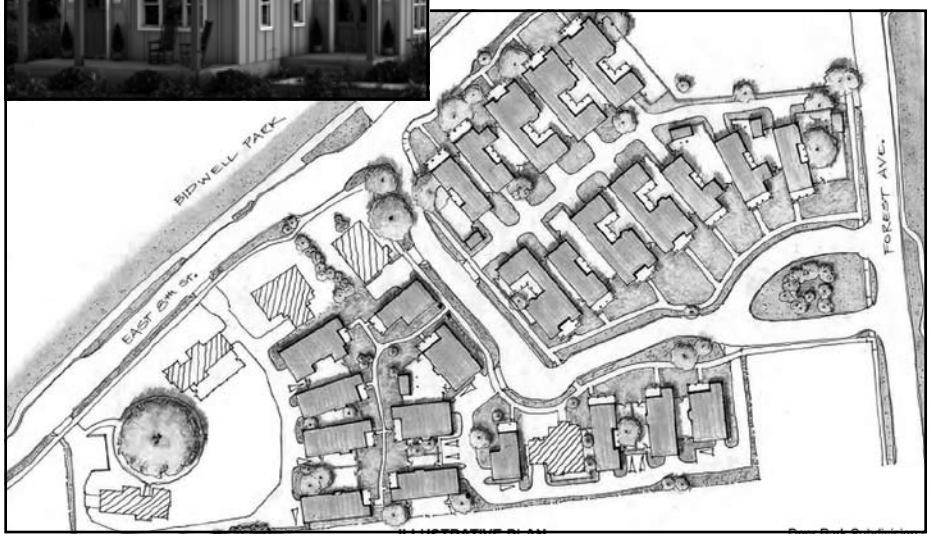
The project is adjacent to a nature center and Chico's Bidwell Park, one of the largest municipal parks in the US. The layout, which includes bungalow courts and small lot houses with single-car garages in the back, is designed in a naturalistic style. The single new street meanders around existing live oaks.

There's not much single-family New Urbanism these days. Where it is happening, it is often small infill projects like this one. John Anderson, of Anderson | Kim Architecture and Urban Design, has mostly worked on attached dwellings and mixed-use of late. "If you told me a little while ago I'd be doing single family in Chico now I'd have said you're crazy," he told *Better! Cities & Towns*.

Prior to the crash, New Urban Builders specialized in nicely designed and constructed production housing in a traditional neighborhood development (TND) format. The firm was about to embark on a 1,500-unit development with a full-scale town center — designed by Leon Krier no less — but now this 4-acre infill development seems like a more realistic increment.

Chico is a steadily growing town — population rose by 42 percent from 2000-2010. Chico State University keeps on growing, and the city is the major center between Sacramento and Redding. And the weather is really nice.

Park Forest plan, below, and typical house, at left



PLAN COURTESY OF JOHN ANDERSON

The project is about two miles from downtown in a part of town that was developed in the latter half of the 20th Century. It has a Walk Score of 48. But it does have potential for densification and mixed-use, which would make it more of a complete community. An important artery that runs by the park (and the Forest Park project) called 8th Street, was retrofitted and traffic-calmed recently. Traffic speed has slowed from 45 mph to about 30 mph, and a bicycle lane installed.

For now, the major amenity for the site is Bidwell Park, which will allow residents to bicycle downtown or to facilities like a playground or athletic field in a few minutes, removed from city streets. The project positions itself as "Bidwell Park at Your Doorstep." ◆

REVIEWS

Building the New Urbanism

Places, Professions, and Profits in the American Metropolitan Landscape

By Aaron Passell

Routledge, 2013, 148 pp., $125 hardcover

REVIEW BY ANDRES DUANY

I don't normally read all the way through books on the New Urbanism. There are several reasons for this: 1) I know the story already, 2) They tend to be woefully inaccurate because of careless research, or 3) They have an axe to grind—usually coming from the ever-popular academic prerogative to dump on success. I must emphasize that I am speaking ill only of books by academicians. Those by Kunstler, Dutton, Langdon, etc., have been quite good.

Now we have a new one by an Aaron Passell, professor of sociology at Furman University. It is called *Building the New Urbanism.* This one is different. These are the reasons: 1) Professor Passell can REALLY write well. There is nothing painful about getting through it. 2) He has visited several new urbanist communities and has actually observed them and spoken to residents. As we know, urbanism cannot be judged from a photograph—which is the reason most critics seem to be imbeciles. 3) He is unique in his profession in not expending any ink quoting other professorial texts; thereby avoiding polluting both his prose and his facts. 4) He picks up quite a few aspects of New Urbanism that are not normally dragged into the discussion, such as HOPE VI, the Mississippi Renewal Forum, the early days … These passages are very interesting, even to those of us who were there. Being seen by outside eyes is bracing.

Then again, the book suffers from a few problems. First: it is in my (humble) opinion overly centered on the work of DPZ and the East Coast—although I suppose this only balances those books that are overly centered on the work of the West Coast.[1] The second is that he underestimates the technical achievements of codes, standards and protocols like Rapid Fire.[2] Third, the last chapter runs a very cursory critique of the New Urbanism, which is doubtless a sop to the skepticism requisite of professors.[3] It is wholly incompatible with the evidence presented in the rest of the book.

Above all, the book is short and crisp and to the point. It is very much worth reading, as we often neglect to look back with satisfaction on what we have done. We are our own best critics—but perhaps we go too far in that regard.

In any case, Professor Passell is well intentioned and

REVIEWS

comes through as one of those worthy members of the human race hard to find within the academy. This work deserves our attention as much as did Langdon's, Kunstler's, and Dutton's.

This was shown to Aaron Passell and he responded with the following:

[1] *"I agree with you about the East Coast focus of the book. Not to excuse, but rather to explain, this was a matter of access. Most of those founders and key actors not represented in the book were people who never responded to repeated attempts to include their voices. I hope it is clear throughout that I am writing on the basis of those conversations I did have, not obscuring the fact there might have been others to have."*

[2] *"I'm sure you are right about the technical achievements of the various innovations you mention – their evaluation is beyond my expertise, but they deserve further attention going forward."*

[3] *"Though I admit to feeling some pressure from fellow academics to maintain a degree of neutrality in regard to the New Urbanism, I think a "sop to skepticism" is slightly unfair. Rather, and this refers back to further attention to technical innovations, I was primarily concerned with comprehensively establishing a baseline for the study of the New Urbanism and its development. That necessarily included identifying some shortcomings."* ◆

Andres Duany is an architect and planner with Duany, Plater-Zyberk & Company in Miami, Florida.

UPDATE

Metro Centre rendering

■ **Metro Centre at Owings Mills, Maryland,** is a mixed-use, transit-oriented development (TOD) that, upon completion, will support more than 1.2 million square feet of commercial office space; 300,000 square feet of retail; 1,700 residential units; educational facilities totaling 120,000 square feet and a hotel offering up to 250 rooms. Two parking garages are planned to support the project and commuters who use the station.

The project recently got underway with the opening of Baltimore County's largest branch library there.

The TOD is located on the Metro stop in Owings Mills, outside Baltimore. Although more than 4,000 commuters use the station on weekdays, the site is challenging for sprawl repair: It is outside of the city's I-695 beltway, which means it is not in the denser first ring suburbs.

The site is in the worst kind of sprawl — bisected by major transportation infrastructure, and with nothing to connect to. The Walk Score is 35, and that score is elevated by an adjacent regional mall. The average block size in the area is 78 acres.

This area desperately needs some mixed-use urbanism. More than 160,000 people live and 65,0000 people work within a five-mile radius of Metro Centre at Owings Mills. More than 110,000 vehicles pass the site each day from Interstate 795. Downtown Baltimore is about 20 minutes away.

In the long run, the huge adjacent mall will likely be redeveloped, offering further opportunities for urbanism. Proposed 15 years ago, the county and state have poured $58 million into the project, paying for the campus building, parking garages and infrastructure, *The Baltimore Sun* reports. It's the Baltimore area's first full-scale TOD, says the *Sun*.

■ Chicago downtown residential population surged 36 percent in the last decade. The city handled 134,000 residential building permits, many in the Loop and the Near North Side, the two downtown neighborhoods that have experienced the most growth.

Although much of Chicago is losing population, development downtown is busting out toward nearby neighborhoods, like the Near South Side. This area has big facilities like McCormack Place and Soldier Field and a smaller population than other parts of downtown, but it is revitalizing.

Motor Row in the Near South Side, which has many old loft buildings and automobile showrooms from the early part of the 20th Century, has big development potential.

The area is seeing significant public infrastructure investment, including $5.8 million in tax-increment financing funds for

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streetscape improvements, and improved connections between a soon-to-be-built transit station and McCormack Place, according to the *Chicago Sun-Times*.

■ The US won the Cold War through generating demand for its industries by building suburbia, but that strategy no longer works in the 21st Century, writes Patrick Doherty, Deputy Director with the New America Foundation, in *Foreign Policy Magazine*. Now the US is facing long-term unemployment driven by weakness in aggregate demand for goods and services that our economy is providing. Doherty argues for a new **"grand strategy"** based upon new sources of demand, including New Urbanism. "Fortunately, due to large-scale demographic shifts over the past 20 years, the United States is sitting astride three vast pools of [demand]." These include:

"Walkable communities: The first pool of demand is homegrown. American tastes have changed from the splendid isolation of the suburbs to what advocates are calling the 'five-minute lifestyle' — work, school, transit, doctors, dining, playgrounds, entertainment all within a five-minute walk of the front door." The Baby Boomers and Millennials "will converge in the housing marketplace — seeking smaller homes in walkable, service-rich, transit-oriented communities. Already, 56 percent of Americans seek this lifestyle in their next housing purchase. That's roughly three times the demand for such housing after World War II."

The other pools are **regenerative agriculture** — sustainable farming techniques —which could help bring greater prosperity to the Midwest, and **resource productivity.** To bring 3 billion new middle-class aspirants into the global economy requires that ... "Energy and resource intensity per person will have to drop dramatically — while simultaneously delivering on the improved income and lifestyle expectations that come with global connectivity.

"That revolution will drive ... innovation in material sciences, engineering, advanced manufacturing, and energy production, distribution, and consumption," bringing prosperity to the middle class for decades, Doherty writes.

■ *Streetsblog* posted a piece called **"sprawl madness"** about two houses

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PHOTOS COURTESY OF JOHN MASSENGALE

South Portland Avenue, at left, named the best street in New York City in a poll, has magnificent, towering street trees, shown here in early spring. The city (and many cities) now typically plant shorter varieties such as those in the photo above.

with adjoining backyards in suburban Orlando, Florida. "If you want to travel the streets from point A on Anna Catherine Drive to point B on Summer Rain Drive, which are only 50 feet apart, you'll have to go a minimum of seven miles. The trip would take almost twenty minutes in a car, according to Google Maps." This may be an extreme case, but the situation is not unusual in recently built suburbs. Early suburbs were curvilinear and less dense than cities, but their streets were mostly well connected.

Over the decades, planners and engineers, aided and abetted by NIMBY attitudes, severed every connection possible until we get to the current absurdity reported here. This neighborhood in Orlando, mostly built out, has a Walk Score of 12 and average block size of 69 acres. From social connections to sustainability, health to livability, walking/bicycling to transit, everything is harder in such a place. Getting back to a connected network in the suburbs may require time travel — or at least decades of

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reverse engineering.

■ A recent blog from *Twin Cities Sidewalks* highlights growing evidence that vehicle miles may have peaked. Young adults, who may set the direction for generations to come, are on a downward trajectory. The Federal Highway Administration recently reported that only 67 percent of 16-to-24 year olds had driver's licenses in 2011, the lowest level since statistics have been kept. For cities, where more alternative transportation options are available, the trend is potentially stronger: from 2005 to 2009, as the population of Washington, DC, grew by 15,000, car registrations in the District dropped by 15,000, according to Jeff Speck in *Walkable City*. This adds impetus to getting rid of policies like minimum parking requirements.

■ **More than 13 percent of the US population is over 65,** and by 2030, that figure will be 20 percent, according to a recent real estate trends article. That means that the US today has about 42 million senior citizens, and that figure will rise by at least 25 million by 2030. Many of those Baby Boomers plan to age in place, and many others will move to smaller houses or multifamily buildings. It's unlikely that Boomers will be moving to retirement communities in large numbers. "The primary reason is they want to be near friends and family," Nancy Thompson, spokeswoman for the AARP, said. "The image that people move when they retire to Florida and Arizona are inaccurate. Some people do that, but for the most part, Baby Boomers will turn the suburbs gray." The nation will need more active living, and more complete, communities to accommodate this massive demographic shift. That probably means a Walk Score of at least 70, in a safe neighborhood, ideally with access to transit. We can produce these neighborhoods by repopulating cities and towns that have emptied out, transforming suburban areas, and making new development more sustainable.

■ Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, the DC region's transit agency, is looking to lease 11 prime spots in the District, Maryland, and Virginia, for **transit-oriented development (TOD)**. The sites are mostly 4-6 acres, but two sites in Prince George's County are 25 and 36 acres, big enough to support

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major TODs, *The Washington Post* reports. "Although many Washington real estate firms are bracing for the effects of federal budget cuts related to sequestration, Washington remains one of the country's strongest apartment markets. Builders are at work raising new buildings on 14th Street in Northwest Washington, on H Street NE, and in Silver Spring, Arlington, Tysons Corner and elsewhere," says the *Post*. Much of the demand for multifamily is in walkable urban locations, especially near Metro stops. For some of the stations, the walkable environment will have to be created from scratch, with new TODs.

■ The **City of Portland**, Oregon, recently reestablished minimum off-street parking requirements. The city eliminated parking requirements in some parts of the city in the 1980s and expanded that policy to include areas served by frequent transit service, but few developers took advantage until recent years. "Since 2006, 55 buildings with 1,266 units have been built or planned without parking – roughly 50 percent of the total units built during that time," reports *The Daily Journal of Commerce*. Now that a multifamily housing boom is underway in Portland, developers say that not providing parking allows for affordable housing and meets a market need, but it has also generated neighborhood opposition. The new off-street parking requirements are not likely to make a difference to developers or affordability. Buildings that are 40 units or less will continue to have no minimum parking requirement, which will encourage small-scale development. Projects greater than

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40 units will have to provide one space for every four units, a modest requirement that can be reduced through car-sharing and can be provided in off-site locations no more than 300 feet away.

■ Even in San Francisco, **gentrification is more tolerated** now, according to a *San Francisco Chronicle* article. San Francisco has a low crime rate, and, like New York City, it has grown steadily in population since 1980. It is considered one of the Big 6 real estate markets in the US — along with New York City, Boston, Washington DC, Chicago, and Los Angeles — all cities tied into the international economy. Although the Big 6 generally have problems with gentrification, most other US cities are awash in affordable housing. Housing in Philadelphia, the nation's fifth largest city, averages $110,000. In large sectors of the city a rowhouse costs $40,000 or less. Large swaths of Philly, Chicago, and other major cities are still depopulating, and need an influx of people in general and the middle-class in particular.

■ **Michael Bloomberg has added or extended more historic districts** than any previous New York City mayor, according to an article in *The Wall Street Journal*. This policy has provided a counterpoint to an otherwise aggressive development ap-

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First Canadian CNU chapter launches in Ontario

New urbanism has reached the Great White North: a group of architects and planners in Ontario are close to reaching the fifty-member requirement to become an official CNU chapter.

"There's been some support locally for new urbanism since the 1997 international CNU conference in Toronto," says urban designer Eldon Theodore, MUDS, MCIP, RPP, LEED AP of MHBC in Ontario. "A lot of grassroots involvement came together over the past couple of years to become official."

Adrian Cammaert is chair of the nascent Chapter, and in a recent writeup in *Novae res Urbis* (a new publication out of Toronto), Cammaert said that Ontario already promotes many aspects of good urbanism. "These concepts of smart growth, transit-oriented development, mixed-use, compact communities, promoting neighbourhood centres and edges – all of those are fundamental components of new urbanism," he explains. Cammaert also has a string of credits to his name, including a CNU-A accreditation.

"New urbanism flows into everything we do," adds Theodore. "I see CNU as an organization that can add a much-needed voice to the Ontario landscape. There is some great work happening in the States that we can learn from, such as excellent examples of transit-oriented development. But we're also doing some great things in Canada that we can share with CNU. We hope that we can encourage a sharing of ideas."

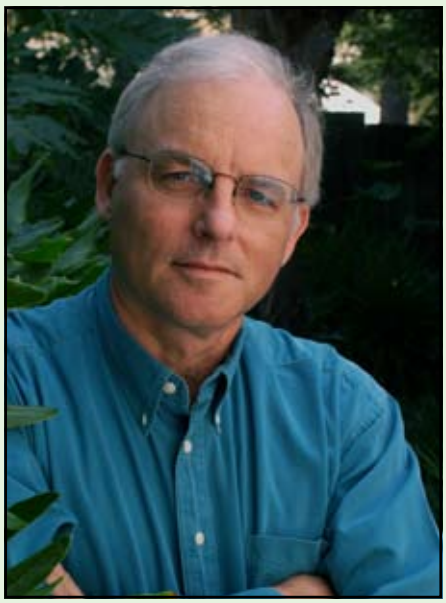
The Ontario CNU group hopes to become a full chapter before CNU 22 in Buffalo. Cammaert says that one of the first orders of business for the Chapter will be to identify what is a uniquely Canadian form of new urbanism. "As the design principles get absorbed into the mainstream, we see a lot of projects that reflect new urbanist ideas. As a chapter, we want to work to push the envelope further and really address what we can do better and what is particular to Ontario." ◆

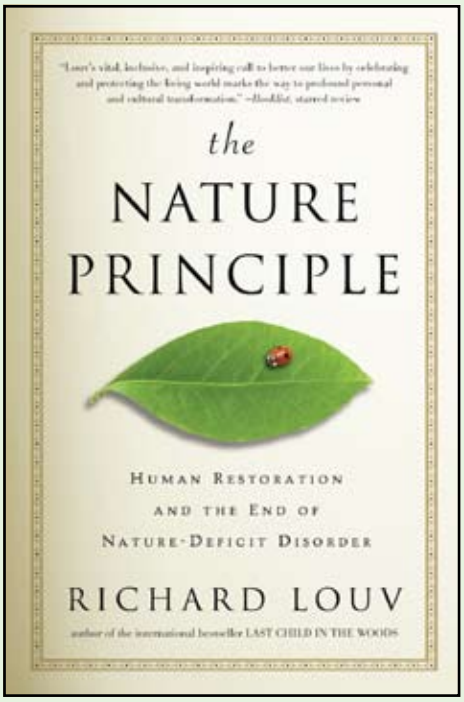
Eldon Theodore

"Lean Urbanism" and the environment featured in CNU 21 Plenaries

Every year, CNU selects innovative thinkers on key topics to headline the Congress' plenary sessions. This year's speakers are looking deeply at the challenge of creating a "Living Community," connecting people to a place and balancing the physical, social, economic and environmental values of a community.

Richard Louv, celebrated author of *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children From Nature-Deficit Disorder,* kicks off the Congress. Louv's new book, *The Nature Principle,* says that the adults also need to learn to reconnect with the natural world, and those that do will build smarter and more sustainable businesses, communities, and economies.





Richard Louv and his book

NEW URBANISM IN THE 21ST CENTURY

On Thursday morning, Andrés Duany—founding principal at Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company (DPZ), a widely recognized leader of the New Urbanism, and a founding member of CNU—takes the stage to discuss the prospects for the New Urbanism in the 21st century. Under the theme of Lean Urbanism, he outlines several promising techniques suitable for adaptation to climate change and economic constraints, including Tactical Urbanism, Code-Free Zones, Original Green, and Light Imprint. Duany suggests that planners in the 21st century have a lot to learn from the Mormons, a group that has inaugurated and sustained over five hundred successful cities, towns, and agricultural villages in just the fifty years from 1855 to 1905—the Congress convenes in Salt Lake City, after all.

And on Friday, residential architect

Sarah Susanka talks about how she has connected her "Not So Big" philosophy with New Urbanist principles. Her latest publication, *The Not So Big Life*, extends her outlook into the surrounding community.

ADDING VALUE TO CITIES

"Adding Value to Cities" is the theme of the closing plenary, featuring Charles Marohn, the voice behind Strong Towns. Marohn is a civil engineer who once advocated for and built oversized roads, taxpayer-subsidized development and wasteful utility extensions. Today, he speaks out about these wasteful practices that have driven many towns toward bankruptcy.

CNU's CEO and author of The *Wealth of Cities* John Norquist joins Marohn to moderate the discussion, along with investor and entrepreneur Mark Gorton. Gorton is taking his entrepreneurial acumen and applying it to cities – transportation in particular. Gorton believes in the importance of designing our world around the needs of people rather than the automobile, and saving money in the process.

Sarah Susanka

Join us at this year's plenaries for what will sure to be a series of stimulating presentations! ◆

Tactical (New) Urbanism comes of age @ CNU 21

Short term actions that lead to long term change.

Tactical, Guerrilla or DIY Urbanism — whatever you call it, the concept is catching on like wildfire. A number of factors have spurred the quick rise of the idea — citizens energized by new technologies and trends that more easily facilitate civic engagement; locals frustrated with municipal inaction; and governmental funding shortfalls caused by the economic recession that have made "change" and "progress," in their traditional forms, hard to come by.

Tactical Urbanism is loosely defined as inexpensive, individual projects that make small places more lively and enjoyable. Whether done by individuals, local organizations or fostered by local governments, tactical urbanism engages people directly, in the public realm, to visibly and quickly enhance some aspect of their community. The major advantage is that the improvements don't take years of planning and public meetings to get done: it's "rendering in real time" and "planning without the preponderance of plans."

CNU 21: Living Community features leaders of the tactical urbanism movement in a number of breakout sessions offering best practices and new approaches. In the eponymous breakout session **Tactical (New) Urbanism**, Mike Lydon (Street Plans Collaborative and lead author of *Tactical Urbanism: Short-term Action, Long-term Change Vol.1* and *Vol. 2*) is joined by urban and tech pioneers to examine the latest tools of civic engagement and practical urban design. Together they explore case studies and explain best practices for this nimble and efficient form of urbanism.

In **Tactical Urbanism 202,** a 3-hour workshop on Wednesday, May 29, Lydon is joined by leading tacticians to share insight into what Planetizen and Urban Times named one of the top planning trends of 2012. Beyond presenting an overview of the history, trends, and leading case studies, workshop leaders will train participants to undertake their own tactical urbanism initiatives, from ideation to funding, implementation to evaluation.

Tactical Urbanism allows many local actors to iteratively test new concepts before making long-term political and financial commitments. It's the "new New Urbanism," as Andrés Duany has suggested, and perhaps the embodiment of urbanism in times of austerity and innovation.

Tactical Urbanism is also featured as the theme for two Academic Paper sessions at CNU 21. Attendees will also get a chance to explore the Granary, a former industrial space that is in the process of transforming into a retail and public urban space through sessions, tours and at the CNU closing party. ◆

Public art at The Granary in Salt Lake City

PHOTO COURTESY OF RDA

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proach, the *Journal* notes. Perhaps 10 percent of Manhattan is designated, but no more than 2 percent of the entire city. Preservation has played a key role in neighborhoods that have revitalized from Greenwich Village to SoHo to the Meatpacking District, according to the report. For a long time, the designations focused on Manhattan. But most of the designations in recent years have been in the other boroughs. While there is plenty of room for unrestricted new development, the historic designations are helping to preserve an aspect of the city that is appealing to residents and visitors alike.

■ **Joel Kotkin** launched an assault on **Richard Florida's "creative class" concept** in *The Daily Beast* in March. Kotkin argued that the creative class or catering to them doesn't benefit cities very much and doesn't help a broad swath of the population. "Among the most pervasive, and arguably pernicious, notions of the past decade has been that the 'creative class' of the skilled, educated and hip would remake and revive American cities," he writes.

Kotkin concedes that the "creative class" has helped to revitalize downtowns, but argues that this trend has been overblown. Areas within a two-mile radius of the downtowns in the 51 largest US metro areas gained only 206,000 people from 2000-2010, he said. Yet a 2-mile radius is 12 square miles, much larger than actual downtowns. It includes a lot of neighborhoods that are not attractive to the "creative class," while simultaneously excluding many that are.

Florida responded: "Cities are back, as much as Joel Kotkin wants to deny it. They have turned the corner and are growing and flourishing again. People with skill, knowledge, and creativity, entrepreneurial businesses, and small shops are returning to places that were once given up for lost. Our suburbs are being transformed bit by bit into more walkable, denser mixed-use places. A new urban revolution is upon us, driven in large part by the returns to density, skills, and creativity." ◆

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