

CITIES & TOWNS

*The decision maker's bridge
to stronger, greener communities*

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Walkability, but hold the red tape

Urbanists must adopt less bureaucratic approaches so that the next generation can build and grow the economy, Andres Duany says. Hence the proliferation of "lean" codes that emphasize only the essentials of shaping community.

ROBERT STEUTEVILLE

The new millennium is newer than you think. The 21st Century began in 2008 with the financial collapse just as the 20th Century truly began with the first World War, Andres Duany declared in a stirring plenary session at the Congress for the New Urbanism in Salt Lake City.

Three crises of the new century -- the dearth of capital, the slow-motion calamity of climate change, and the ongoing high costs of petroleum -- have changed the prospects of the next generation of urbanists, he says.

Town centers will be built successionaly, starting with single-story buildings. High-tech environmentalism will fail and low-tech "original green" sustainability will flourish. Flex buildings designed to change uses and interim buildings that fill needs while waiting for a permanent replacements will be key, he says. Tactical Urbanism, the next generation's mantra, is all about retrofitting streets and public spaces with grass roots energy and limited resources.

Finally, Duany touted "code pink," or a highly simplified new urban code. Other code experts are developing similar "pocket codes," or "minicodes" that boil form-based standards down to bare essentials that are easy to understand and facilitate quicker, cheaper, more pain-free approvals.

New urban codes began as very basic documents, Duany explains, — like the four-page code for Seaside, Florida, that governs urban design, materials, and architecture.

"We have been complicit in allowing codes to get fatter and fatter and they are virtually indistinguishable from conventional codes," he says. "We need to come up with a new generation of codes that can be called pink codes — reference to light red tape." In reference to the unusual name, he says, "I like terms that are not self-explanatory. They ask you what you mean. You tell them your version of the story."

The new urbanists can turn the pall of today's crises into virtues, he says. "The the virtue of opening a window, or a beautiful sweater, or a front porch, or walking to things, or localized agriculture," he says.

At a recent nine-day series of design sessions in High Point, North Carolina,

SEE 'LEAN URBANISM' ON PAGE 10

Recently built houses with photovoltaic power and modern styling in Daybreak, Utah. See a report on the largest traditional neighborhood development ever on page 4.



COURTESY OF GARRETT HOMES

Tactical approach leads to grand vision

Providence, Rhode Island, seeks to transform its major plaza — now compromised by buses and other vehicular traffic — into a gateway to the city. Getting to this point required a series of small steps.

Times Square in New York City, where temporary pedestrian areas were created in places once reserved for automobiles, is a high-profile example of tactical urbanism. Success led to big investments that revitalized the internationally renowned space.

A new exemplar may be emerging in Providence, Rhode Island, where a primary public space is coming back to life — first with tactical urbanism, and now with more formal planning.

Tactical urbanism tends to work best in places with "good bones" that have been compromised by automobile-oriented design. Providence has a wealth of historical architecture and human-scale streets that have been reviving in recent years.

Kennedy Plaza in Providence was "once a stately civic plaza bookended" by important civic buildings, the Providence City Hall and a Federal Building/US courthouse, but has been compromised in recent decades by disjointed uses, according to Union Studio, a Providence architecture and urban design firm.

The civic space occupies nearly 12 acres and the entire project could cost \$20-25 million, but it is planned in phases that could start with significant improvements at far less cost than the total. Federal, state, city and the private sector/business community funding sources are being employed or explored.

The most prominent Art Deco skyscraper in Providence, the "Superman Building," so-called because of its re-

SEE 'KENNEDY PLAZA' ON PAGE 6

**BETTER!
CITIES&TOWNS**

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COMMENTARY

Why are young adults returning to the city?

ROBERT STEUTEVILLE

Much has been said about Millennials — the generation born from 1980 through the late 1990s, sometimes called Gen Y and Echo Boomers — choosing downtown living. Two-thirds of this cohort believes it is important to live in walkable neighborhoods, the consultant Robert Charles Lesser & Company has reported. As downtowns revive, Millennials often account for the lion’s share of the market.

In June we reported that the nation’s Driving Boom, which last six decades, is over — largely because Millennials are driving less. “Between 2001 and 2009, the average yearly number of miles driven by 16- to 34-year-olds dropped a staggering 23 percent,” wrote Brad Plumer in *The Washington Post*. Rising costs of driving, barriers to teenagers getting licenses, technology that makes car-free living easier, and preference toward urban living are reasons for the trend, the article explained.

The latter factor may be the most important, but Plumer doesn’t explain that preference. Millennials apparently drive less because they prefer walkable places and they prefer walkable places because they drive less. Let me take a stab at answering why.

Millennials are the children of the Baby Boomers — America’s first suburban generation. When Boomers came of age, a few revitalized urban places like SoHo — but for the most part they embraced the suburban lifestyle. Why aren’t Millennials doing the same? One possibility is rebellion — but I think it’s more than that.

HOW SUBURBS AND CITIES HAVE CHANGED

Consider that suburbs and cities have changed dramatically. Many Boomers grew up in the Leave it to Beaver suburbs of the 1950s and 1960s, which still held on to the memory, at least, of strong community ties. Other Boomers grew up in cities before the economic and social disintegration of the urban core. Yet when Boomers flew the coop, in the 1970s, cities were in free fall. Residents were leaving in droves, crime was skyrocketing, and neighborhoods were in decay. This reality permeated popular culture. To choose urban living then was to swim against a powerful tide.

By the 1980s and 1990s, when the Boomers were raising the Millennials, the suburbs had lost most vestiges of traditional community that they retained in the 1950s. According to a market study for the reviving downtown of Wichita, Kansas:

“Younger singles and couples comprise 71 percent of the market for new dwelling units within the Downtown Study Area,” wrote Zimmerman-Volk Associates, the authors. “This generation—the Millennials—is the first to have been largely raised in the post-’70s world of the cul-de-sac as neighborhood, the mall as village center, and the driver’s license as a necessity of life. In far greater numbers than predecessor generations, Millennials are moving to downtown and urban neighborhoods.”

This generation looked around their home towns and saw something missing. They found that something in neglected historic urban centers. After 2000, when the Millennials began to leave home, cities had hit bottom and were on the way up. Crime had peaked in the early 1990s and was dramatically falling off in many cities.

Moreover, the Echo Boomers went to college. Millennials are the most educated generation in history. As Christopher Leinberger has reported, Washington DC has the most educated populace in the nation, and the highest demand for walkable urban centers. The higher the education level, the greater the demand for urban living, he says.

Millennials grew up in far suburbs in the 1980s and 1990s, and then lived in walkable college neighborhoods for four years. Along with a taste for urban living, they also had acquired the highest levels of student debt in history, which puts a damper on their appetite for car and house loans.

But the biggest incentive may be their peers. They want to go to walkable places, because that’s where their friends are. The tide has shifted and it’s carrying 80 million people inward. This generation doesn’t want to go back to the ‘burbs. ♦

Major transit-oriented project begins in suburban Long Island

An overhaul has begun for one of the most distressed neighborhoods in the New York City inner-ring suburbs.

The Albanese Organization of Garden City, New York, is breaking ground on the first phase of a \$500 million redevelopment in Wyandanch, a community of about 10,000 in the Town of Babylon, Long Island.

The regulating plan and code by Torti Gallas and Partners recently won the annual Driehaus Award from the Form-Based Coding Institute (FBCI) in Chicago.

The project breaks new ground for transit-oriented development in the suburbs of densely populated Long Island, which make up most of the 1,400 square mile land area. The community is an inner-ring suburb that has been in decline for many decades.

The area has an unusual combination of urban blight, automobile-oriented commercial buildings and thoroughfares, a commuter rail station, and an old, human-scale street grid.

“The Code is intended to transform the existing 142-acre suburban corridor and transit station area characterized by odd-shaped parcels, brownfields sites, surface parking, blighted buildings and lack of open space into a cohesive, pedestrian-friendly downtown,” notes the FBCI.

The revitalization effort, called Wyandanch Rising, is designed as the kind of dynamic mixed-use environment that is rare on suburban Long Island, all focused on the Long Island

The plan for Wyandanch, with mixed-use buildings shaded red and shaded blue, civic buildings, and various types of residential uses.



The first mixed-use building in Wyandanch, above. The Straight Path, below, a commercial strip arterial that will be rebuilt as a main street.



Rail Road (LIRR) station.

Wyandanch was named the most economically distressed community on Long Island in 2001 by the Suffolk County Planning Department. It is “a place where even McDonald’s closed up shop several years ago,” the Wall Street Journal reports.

The first building is a five-story structure featuring 17,000 square feet of ground-floor retail and 91 rental units above. A second building, with 30,000 square feet of retail and 86 apartments, is scheduled to break ground later this year. Sixty percent of the units will be affordable and financed by affordable housing tax credits.

Although a number of similar town centers are planned around Long Island, Wyandanch is the first to move forward, says the Journal. Significant public investment -- especially to make the streets walkable and create attractive public spaces -- helped make Wyandanch Rising possible.

According to the *Journal*:

“Babylon spent about \$26 million to buy up the properties where the new downtown is supposed to take root and \$17 million to install sewers in Wyandanch The town plans to spend about \$20 million more on roads and a plaza for the first phase of the project, and the county recently approved \$1.7 million for parking, sidewalks, lighting and other site-preparation work. Federal and state grants, as well as low-interest loans, help the municipalities bear some of those costs, officials said.”

Despite the blighted condition of some of the parcels, Albanese doesn’t have major concerns about market demand. More than 300,000 people live within a three-mile radius of the site, and many people on Long Island would like to live in a walkable community connected by transit to New York City.

The town center includes about seven new plazas, squares, and greens — public space amenities that are entirely missing from the area currently. Streetscape improvements will link

the town center to two regional parks -- the closest about a half-mile away.

More commercial and office development is planned -- in addition to rental and for-sale residential. When completed, Wyandanch will be a regionally significant walkable urban place (WalkUP) -- the kind that is gaining real estate value in

many urban markets. Christopher Leinberger studied WalkUPs in the Washington, DC, area, where they have accounted for 48 percent of the commercial development since 2009.

The 134-acre project is within walking distance of thousands of existing households. Completion time is estimated at 15 years. ♦

Daybreak makes no small plans

The biggest TND ever is the exception to the rule that small projects thrive in this economy.

Even as the New Urbanism is retooling itself as 'lean' and 'tactical,' the biggest traditional neighborhood development (TND), by far, is taking shape in South Jordan, Utah, near Salt Lake City.

Daybreak began in 2004 and hit a peak, prior to the financial collapse, of sales of 700 houses per year. After the crash sales dipped, but the project's market share increased to 20 percent for the entire Wasatch Front. "Great master planned communities are usually at around 8 percent," says Stephen James, manager of planning and community design for the developer, Kennecott Land.

Daybreak now has more than 3,000 housing units built with a small commercial center, two elementary schools, and about 10,000 residents. But with 20,000 housing units entitled, Daybreak is in its early stages. Sales are currently more than 400 a year, plus leasing of multifamily units. The entire site is 4,100 acres on reclaimed mining land.

At the current average of 3 to 3.5 people per household in Daybreak, total buildout could yield an urban center of 60,000 people, with up to 13 million

square feet of commercial space, in mid-century. About 60 percent of residents are families with children, with the rest empty nesters, married couples without children, and singles. Marketing focuses more on "psychographic groups" that prefer community than demographic groups, James says. "Parents feel comfortable letting their kids out on their own. They are attracted to places where kids don't need play dates."

TND IN AN INFILL ERA

In these days of development focused in infill areas, how does a huge TND on open land meet the goals of the Charter of the New Urbanism? Housing starts nationwide now top 900,000 per year, more than 60 percent of which are single-family units. In most communities with open land there is no network of streets, so single-family houses are built in disconnected subdivisions.

Daybreak is being built on a connected network of streets (see plan) with plentiful parks and civic spaces, laid out by Calthorpe Associates of Berkeley, California. Few places in the Wasatch Front, outside of Salt Lake City itself, have such a network of streets on which to build a town. In the core city, there's not a lot of room for new single-family housing.

The region's light rail line, TRAX, was

launched in 1999, and now serves 60,000 riders daily. One of the lines terminates at Daybreak — although the station is mostly surrounded by undeveloped land. Eventually two TRAX stations will be immersed in Daybreak.

Even with 10,000 people, Daybreak can feel sparse at times, especially in its mixed-use town center. But Daybreak currently represents one of the best opportunities to organize suburban growth in the region into something that is multimodal and walkable.

South Jordan, with 50,000 people, was recently identified as the second-fastest growing city in the nation. Prior to Daybreak, the suburban market in the Wasatch Front was centered on one-third-of-an-acre housing, James says. Daybreak has achieved market acceptance of up to up to 13 units per acre. In order to build its full entitlement, Daybreak will need 30 units per acre in its town center, which will contain to 8,000 housing units.

The town has given the developer substantial flexibility. Daybreak is entitled to develop at any density that the market can support up to the maximum units, James says. The commercial can be built in any combination of office, retail, health care, light industrial, or other uses.

LIGHT BUREAUCRACY

City officials in South Jordan saw Daybreak as an opportunity to advance the vision created with Envision Utah, an influential public-private coalition that conducted surveys and formed a regional plan in 1999 and 2000. "There was an attitude of 'let's see how we can make this happen.'" They recognized that in a project this size, many unexpected things will happen. "The planned commercial zone is very flexible. It allows us to do what we have to do to keep the ball rolling. There's very little bureaucratic overlay on the project."

Daybreak was originally entitled for 13,000 units and 9 million square feet of commercial, but each figure was increased approximately 50 percent.

Townhouses built and under construction in Daybreak



PHOTO BY ROBERT SEUTEVILLE

With freedom comes responsibility, James says. "We have to demonstrate that we can meet the expectation of that vision. As a result of what we were able to accomplish, we received the additional entitlement. We could probably get more if we need it."

"A lot of what we do is figure out to get to where we need to be," in terms of density, James says. "We are proactively pursuing multiple higher density deals. We think about what the market will accept now and how do we lead in such a way that the market is conditioned to a higher density pattern."

Kennecott also pursues niche market segments. One such segment consists of senior citizens attracted to an age-restricted community. For that, Daybreak created the 550-unit Garden Park, covering 20-plus blocks near the town center. "We had misgivings about building an age restricted community," James says. "But it is turning out all right -- it does not feel like an enclave."

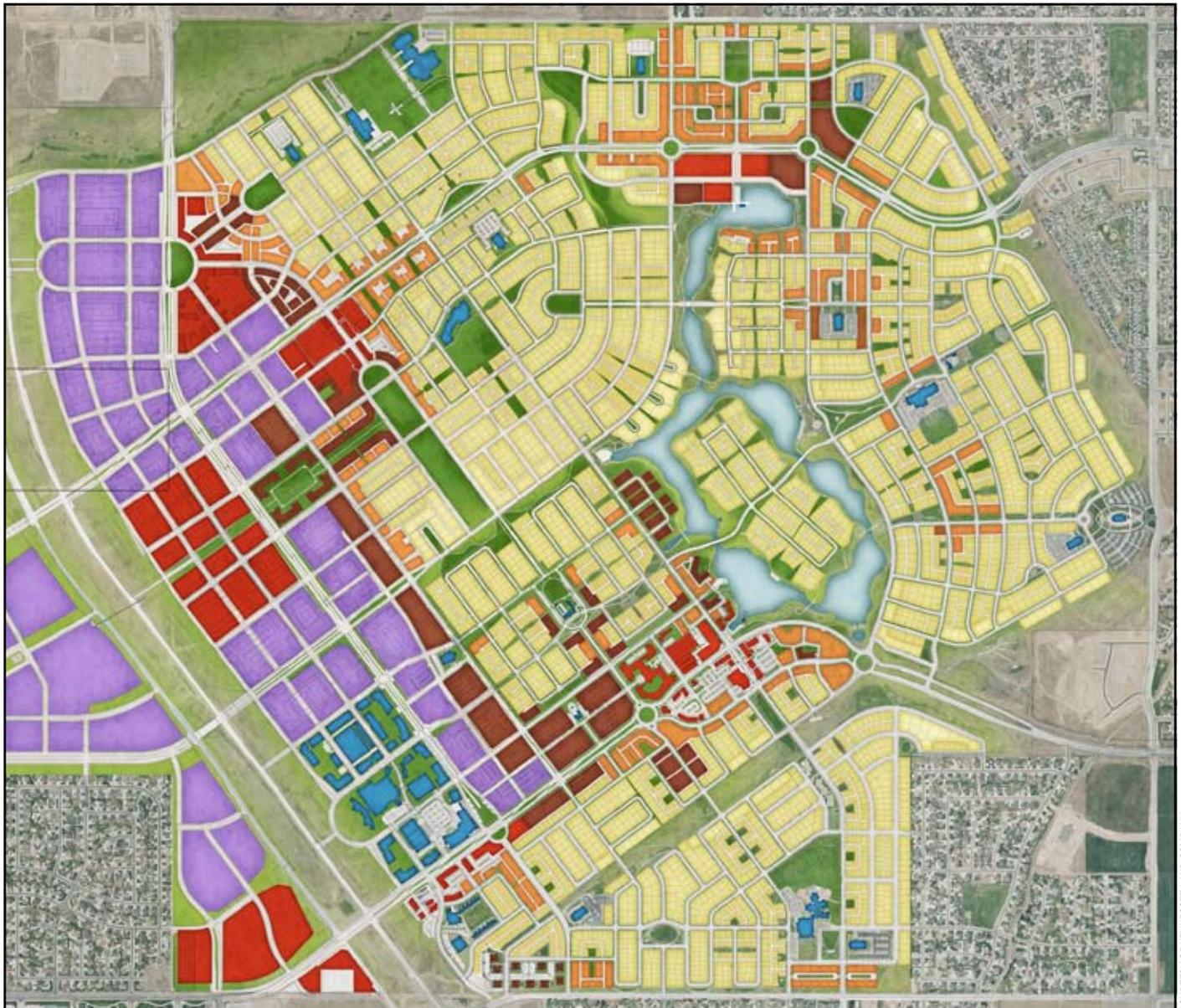
The builders said that people attracted to this kind of housing demand gates. They were unacceptable, so the developer compromised by snipping the grid down to four automobile entrances (see plan on page 6). Pedestrian connections are

unimpeded. A narrow edge of green space surrounds Garden Park. More than 200 houses are built or under construction in the area. "Absorption probably isn't as great as if we had gated it like the adult builders asked for, but it is good enough," he says. "We opened right at the downturn, and it has still taken off and the fight is to keep lots in front of builders."

Daybreak has a wide range of prices for units, including condominiums as low as \$150,000, townhouses for up to \$240,000, and single family from \$220,000 to a million-plus. Some of the mixing is fairly radical for a master planned community, with \$200,000 houses close to \$800,000 houses, James says. At first, this was a challenge for appraisers, who were only used to seeing such ranges in a historic urban setting.

The project is opening three new development areas this summer. Some of the housing is designed with a more modern feel -- as compared to the traditional houses based on a pattern book by Urban Design Associates in most of the project's current neighborhoods. Some houses also feature solar photovoltaics, tankless hot water, and ultra-efficient insulation

The Eastside master plan for Daybreak in South Jordan



COURTESY OF KENNECOTT LAND COMPANY



COURTESY OF KENNECOTT LAND COMPANY

Garden Park, where some of the blocks end at green space, is at the center of this plan.

as standard features. Despite that, they are reasonably affordable, starting in the low 200s.

The town center for Daybreak, at bigger than two square miles, has a 50-plus year development horizon. Daybreak will be one of four regional urban centers identified in the 2040 plan. “Unless we create quadrants within the valley, the transportation network would come to a standstill. Daybreak would be the center for the southwest valley,” James says.

Many types of mixed-use and commercial projects could be built in the town center — including a 50-acre health campus for the University of Utah. The first 200,000 square foot building of this center opened a year and a half ago, about a block from the light rail station. The building, which is on the street, includes an emergency room, primary care, specialty care, and out-patient surgery. The master plan calls for a medical research center, a school, and a full-scale hospital. “We think it will be a good anchor for the town center,” James says. ♦

Kennedy Plaza

FROM PAGE 1

semblance to the *Daily Planet* building in the old Superman comics, is located on the plaza.

“Around 2000, the plaza became a central hub for the RI Public Transit Authority’s passenger terminal, a move that brought thousands of people through the center of Downtown Providence per day — providing vital access to public transit — but doing little to create a place where visitors *wanted* to spend time,” reports Union Studio, which is leading the design team. The plaza is also the location of a skating center and a green space, but these uses are divided by roads with significant vehicular traffic, interrupting the experience of people on foot.

The goal is “to make Kennedy Plaza the number one destination in Downtown Providence ... and the best public square in New England,” says Union Studio, which is leading the design team.

The plan has come about after a series of tactical urbanism steps that have proven the potential for the space as a gateway to the city. “In recent years, the Downtown Providence Parks Conservancy has successfully activated the



COURTESY OF UNION STUDIO ARCHITECTS

When completed, Kennedy Plaza will have many parts, including: Civic plaza by the city hall; Market square; Formal gardens/judicial square; Burnside Park; Bank of America City Center; Biltmore Plaza and Gardens.

space through public events, demonstrating the potential of Kennedy Plaza as an urban gathering place and setting the stage” for larger investment, says Union Studio. Among the steps was setting up cones to eliminate lanes. “It

worked – traffic did not come to a standstill, says Russ Preston, a Boston-based urban designer. The space was activated through street fairs and arts projects, he says. In the spring of 2012 the FirstWorks festival was held in Kennedy Plaza, at-

tracting 40,000 people.

“The whole city got it. This was their public space, and it all started with Tactical Urbanism,” Preston says.

Funds for the design came from a National Endowment for the Arts “Our Town” grant. City and state funds will be used for the first stages of renovation, the *Brown Daily Herald* reports.

DESIGN SOLUTIONS

Decentralizing the Buses. Several big moves are incorporated into the overall design solution, the most significant of which is decentralizing the bus berths so that the heart of the plaza can be opened to other uses with increased emphasis on pedestrians.

Unifying the Plaza as a Whole: Reducing the number of vehicular throughways and altering the traffic pattern will maximize the park’s cohesion as public open space. Strategic grade changes, such as raising Washington Street so that it is level with adjacent grading, will improve visual and physical connections within the plaza.

Establishing clear lines of sight through landscaping and architectural design will create visual linkages through the park to surrounding landmark buildings and public art.

Creating Nine Distinct “Destinations” within the Plaza: Greater Kennedy Plaza, in its best long-term execution, can serve multiple public needs. The team envisions nine ideal destinations:

1) Central Square — A central meeting place with unobstructed flexible space that can be used for entertainment and events. It will be active, with food trucks, seating, signage, art, and performance.

2) Civic Plaza — This will be the “front porch” of City Hall, used as a venue for political events and speeches. The area will be improved with added seating and plantings.

3) Market Square — Envisioned as the economic engine of the revitalized plaza, with an active market featuring indoor and outdoor cafe seating and entertainment.

4) Judicial Square/Formal Gardens — Sited in front of the federal building, this area will feature formal botanical gardens with moveable seating.

5) Bank of America City Center — The area will retain its function as a skating rink, and new recreational uses will be ex-



Kennedy Plaza now, above, and according to the plan, below



plored. The area will be designed to make the space more welcoming and amenable to alternate events. New retail buildings will be added to support diverse activity.

6) Burnside Park — Physical improvements will make this park, part of Kennedy Plaza, a destination for families or individuals looking for daily relaxation and recreational activities. Additional programming options being considered include a wading fountain, bocce courts, expanded children’s play area, exercise circuit and public art.

7) Biltmore Plaza and Gardens — Landscaping and programming improvements in this section of the plaza will transform it to a quiet, lush garden

with a gazebo that can be used by the adjacent hotels, businesses and individuals for special events (like wedding receptions) or simply as a quiet reading area.

8) Terrace — A series of terraces will be created as a means to host retail and restaurants, such as a beer garden, at Exchange Terrace, while the terraces will also provide a setting that overlooks events at the Bank of America Center.

9) Gateway — This area serves as the visual connection facing the Providence train station, and should be better utilized as a gateway to the park through signage, wayfinding, and interactive sculptures. ♦

Three steps to downtown economic renaissance

Redwood City, California, brought a humdrum business district back to life by creating better public spaces, adding an anchor, and reforming codes to unleash the private sector.

One of the most dramatic downtown comeback stories is taking place in Redwood City, California. Since a new form-based code was adopted in 2011, more downtown housing development is underway than the previous five decades combined.

All of the development in the last two years is privately constructed. From 1980 to 2010, most development required assistance from the redevelopment agency (see table). In addition to nearly 1,200 units going up or in the pipeline downtown, 1,200 more units are moving forward in neighborhoods adjacent to downtown. As of 2010, the city had a population of 76,000.

Housing demand is high in Redwood City — like the rest of Silicon Valley. Yet other municipalities in the region make development approvals expensive and time-consuming, notes Dan Zack, the Downtown Development Coordinator. “Redwood City promises quick approval, no hassle, if they meet the code,” he says. “It’s a tough code, but the developers would much rather have that certainty. Once a couple of projects went through and the code lived up to its



An event at the town square, created by tearing down a courthouse annex

promise, the flood gates opened up.”

Formerly ridiculed as “Deadwood City,” Redwood City has revived due to code reform, a strong investment in public spaces, and a strategy of using entertainment as a catalyzing force, says Zack, who blogs at plannerdan.com.

Founded in 1852 as a port on a creek leading to San Francisco Bay, Redwood City took its name from the redwood lumber that was shipped from there to build Gold Rush-era San Francisco. Redwood City became the county seat of San Mateo County and grew into an impor-

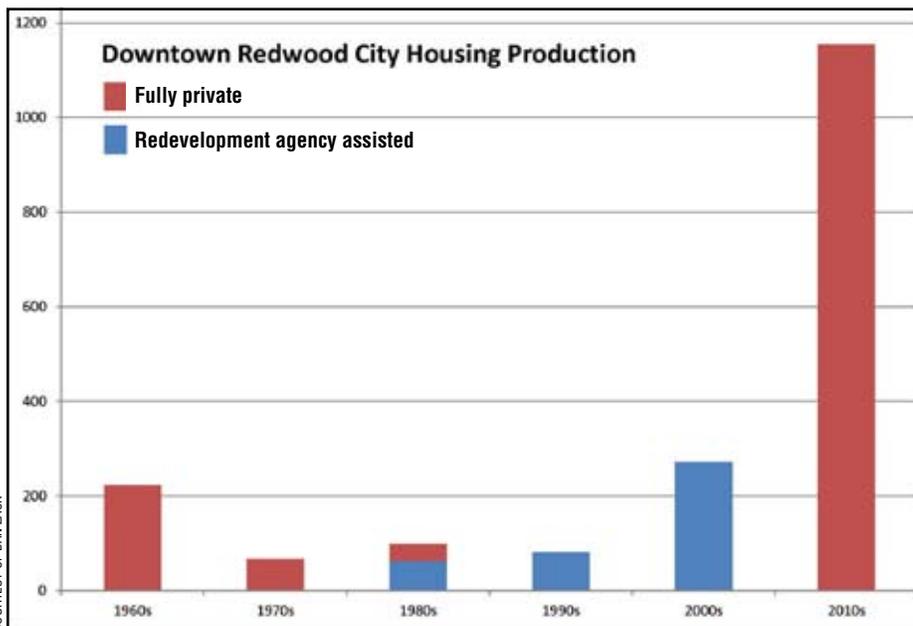
tant business and governmental center with a downtown that remained strong until the middle of the 20th century.

As with many American downtowns, Redwood City declined when nearby malls and shopping centers were built. A redevelopment plan was drawn up in the 1960s to completely demolish historic districts, impose superblocks, and pedestrianize primary streets. “Thankfully, this plan was never implemented, and Downtown Redwood City limped through the late 20th century struggling economically, but physically intact,” Zack says.

After many small steps and a few failed attempts at a turnaround, the revitalization began in earnest after 2000 in a three-step process.

ACTIVITY GENERATORS

Phase one was the creation of activity generators and great public spaces. Businesses at the time struggled to survive due to a lack of foot traffic. It was clear to city leaders that the district needed a burst of activity. An attraction was sought that could create a similar effect to an anchor store in a shopping mall: Bring in large numbers of people who could then patronize nearby businesses. A cinema fit the bill. Movies attract people fairly steadily throughout the year, and Redwood City was underserved. The City had one 12-screen cinema, and the next closest were about 10 miles away to the north and south.





COURTESY OF DAN ZACK

The new cinema is helping to activate streets

The City's Redevelopment Agency assembled a site and issued a Request for Proposals. A development firm with excellent local experience, and a partnership with the only local theater operator, was selected. Selecting this developer not only helped to ensure that a good building would be built, but that the existing Redwood City cinema would be closed, making the Downtown cinema the only place to see movies for miles around. A city-operated underground parking garage, ground floor retail, and dramatic streetscape improvements were important parts of the project as well.

At the opposite corner of the same intersection was another important key to Downtown's future. The historic San Mateo County Courthouse was built in 1910 in the Beaux Arts style and featured the largest glass dome west of the Mississippi. It was hidden, however, behind a Depression era annex which not only obscured the front of the building, but sat on the site of the city's former town square. The Redevelopment Agency, in cooperation with the county, demolished the annex, reconstructed the facade of the Courthouse, and created a new Courthouse Square designed to serve as the community's living room. It is a simple hardscaped space that is flanked by fountains and pavilions and that has been used as an additional entertainment venue for Downtown, hosting hundreds of events every year.

ZONING REFORM

Phase two was the complete reconstruction of the zoning regulations and planning approval process for Downtown development. City officials knew that thousands of office workers and residents would be needed to support the retail amenities that the community desired, to nurture a vibrant streetlife, and to create healthy property values and tax receipts.

So the planning staff, with the support of New Urbanist firm Freedman Tung & Bottomley (now Freedman Tung & Sasaki), moved forward on a new form-based code designed to allow privately financed development to be profitable. After the expense of Courthouse Square and the cinema, the City's Redevelopment Agency didn't have any capacity left for additional tax-increment financing. If the desired development was to occur, developers needed to be able to purchase sites on their own, construct the buildings, lease them out at the going rate, and achieve the necessary profit margins.

This forced the city to deal with the traditionally sensitive

subjects of height, density, parking, and architectural style. First, a plan was created with plenty of public input. The city used workshops to not only get a reading on the public's tastes and desires, but to educate them about what makes downtowns tick. "In the end, density wasn't an issue, because people understood the benefits that extra people would bring, and they understood that the most important factor in creating a nice place was the form of the buildings and public spaces, not a number," notes Zack.

The final plan included features the public requested such as heights which stepped down toward single family neighborhoods and design guidelines requiring traditional architectural character in the areas with the highest concentrations of historic buildings. It also required active frontages, base-middle-top compositions to facades, and hidden parking.

The Downtown Precise Plan was adopted in early 2007 with broad community support. An unhappy property owner sued under the California Environmental Quality Act. The lawsuit alleged that the plan's Environmental Impact Report (EIR) did not adequately evaluate the impacts of the plan on historic resources and on shadows. The judge hearing the case agreed and required the plan to be repealed. The city created a new EIR for the plan, including an extensive shadow analysis. City staff also reworked the Downtown Precise Plan to reduce maximum permitted heights near historic buildings and public spaces to reduced shadow and aesthetic impacts. "Since we were modifying the plan anyway, we reorganized it to be easier to use and improved some regulations which had caused confusion," Zack says. The new Downtown Precise Plan was adopted on January 24, 2011 and was not challenged.

DEVELOPERS GET BUSY

Phase three, private development, is now underway. Four hundred and twenty-one residential units are under construction, 280 more units have been approved, and 471 more are under review — a total of 1,172 downtown units in the two years since the Downtown Precise Plan was adopted. On top of that, 300,000 square feet of office space is under way. All projects have received Planning approvals in six months or less without opposition.

"This success has come about because developers understand that Downtown Redwood City is place where they can eliminate a lot of the uncertainty that can undermine them in other cities," Zack says. "NIMBY battles don't exist, because the public meetings to figure out what kind of development was right for our downtown happened before the plan was created and we are holding developers to it. The regulations in the plan are tough, and often push developers to do things that they otherwise wouldn't do, but they are very clear, so everybody knows what they are getting into before they submit a development application."

Downtown Redwood City is more active than it has been in decades. Retail vacancies have fallen and an eclectic dining and pub scene has materialized. The city has emerged as one of the entertainment centers of the region and the cinema is one of the busiest in the area. Summer events bring in thousands of visitors each week. "Tech startups are flocking to the district and expanding within Downtown as they grow and prosper," Zack says. "There's more work to be done, but the public feels great pride in what has been accomplished so far." ♦

Lean urbanism

FROM PAGE 1

Duany unveiled the idea of “code pink.” The next generation is drowning in bureaucracy, he says.

“Just starting a business at all is so difficult that it has driven half the kids to be artists, because they can’t cook anything without a permit. Because they can’t sell anything they cook without a permit. Because they can’t repair a damn thing without a permit,” he says.

In the three decades and a half since Duany started his practice, he told High Point residents, “I have seen a very efficient country become a very inefficient one. And it drives me crazy.” Of all of the ideas presented in the charrette, the reduction in bureaucratic process got the most enthusiastic reception.

A city of 104,000 in the North Carolina piedmont, High Point is internationally known for its furniture industry, which is in a slow decline. In the five years since the housing crash, residential construction in the city has taken a nose dive.

The city is working on a new zoning code, but Duany held up just the preamble — a thick document. Then he held up the code out of the charrette, about eight times thinner.

“Just pass it,” he said, to applause from the audience. “Don’t discuss it. You can actually understand it. The other one you can’t. Also, there are about 300 of these (form-based codes) in the United States working perfectly well. ... You can test it. If you need to adjust it, fine. Use it for the two years it would take to get you that (new) big one. Maybe by that time you decide you don’t need it.”

The City Project, a city-funded non-profit organization, raised most of the \$410,000 fee for the team, headed by Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company (DPZ), but also including transportation and civil engineers, and economic experts.

While the design session was underway it already bore some fruit. The city changed plans for a downtown traffic intersection, adding on-street parking and designing a roundabout to slow traffic.

The High Point workshop series ended in mid-May, and now efforts are underway to move the ideas forward. “The city is forming a committee to develop a master plan based on the team’s suggestions and plan to have it in place by September,” the *High Point Enterprise* reported.



IMAGES COURTESY OF DUANY PLATER-ZYBERK & COMPANY



Sea cans fitted out as retail and residential space, activating a street, above. The exterior of the proposed High Point Auditorium, with walls built of shipping containers, at left.

But Duany suggested that appealing to 242,000 college graduates annually within an hour drive of the city is a way forward. “We need to enable the unemployed young people just to act. They are dying to do things and we are preventing them,” he said.

BUILDING WITH ‘SEA CANS’

Many of the DPZ plans for High Point involved the use of “sea cans” or shipping containers. These 40-foot cargo holders can be finished as residential units or retail spaces and can hide vast parking lots downtown. They cost about \$5,000 each, and finishing them is more expensive — nevertheless they are a cheap and quick alternative to balloon-frame or masonry construction. Young people can take these containers and fit them out as places of business or living quarters.

Shipping containers are designed to be bolted together up to eight high, Duany explains, and can hold enormous weight. The team designed a full-size event hall for the community using, cleverly, sea cans as structural walls

“as thick as the cathedrals of Europe.” In between the sea cans, windows are designed with deep shadow lines — but there would be no exterior indication that the building is made with shipping containers. Some of the containers could be finished as bathrooms, storage rooms, and offices off of hallways.

The new urbanist team focused on walkability throughout the planning areas. Themes included how to fill parking areas with other uses, slow traffic to make the city more walkable, create more appealing public spaces and use landscaping to give comfort to pedestrians.

One plan showed how to turn a vast downtown parking lot into a major public space while not sacrificing parking spaces.

OTHER MINICODES

Sandy Sorlien, one of the authors of the SmartCode, recently released what she called the “Pocket Code,” which is six pages long. The purpose is to provide “the essentials according to your neighborhood Transect,” it says. “Where

SEE ‘LEAN URBANISM’ ON PAGE 13

Dialing-in your zoning to fit your community

TONY PEREZ

You pop in the bread expecting nicely toasted slices. But no, out come two overtoasted slabs of hard bread. But what if you could adjust how long you toasted the bread instead of leaving it up to the machine? Well of course. Who wouldn't want the ability to adjust the machine? That's why as soon as it was possible, toasters began to feature dials. But this ability to adjust the machine is exactly what's missing from conventional zoning. Ok, you can adjust it. It's just that conventional zoning is very difficult to adjust to the realities of a community. In fact, it's adjusted too often and in ways that don't improve it. So why keep something that's difficult to adjust when form-based codes (FBC) exist?

Some keep such a system because it's what they know or feel comfortable using every day. Working with what you know despite the limitations can be very comforting. Never mind that it may not serve the community but it can be comforting and maintain administrative tranquility nonetheless. Others keep such a system because they're not sure about FBC. Others want to try FBC but see it as an all or nothing trade. By the way, whether or not you apply FBC citywide is optional and different for every community. So, let me explain why you should transition away from the conventional zoning system to a form-based zoning system.

Ability to see the parts

Remember those cool 1970s electronic devices called equalizers? They were an innovation for the general public because

the device let you adjust sound to your liking. If you liked a song with a bit more treble, you turned the dial. If you wanted less base, you turned the dial. What an invention! Until this point, unless you had access to a recording studio or were an electronics wizard, the general public wasn't able to adjust sound in this way. Generally, this innovation was made possible because of two key factors: a) sound has a identifiable structure called frequencies, and b) the equalizer was set up to directly recognize that identifiable structure. If you had the basic equalizer, you had 3 to 5 'bands'. The more bands, the more divisions of the frequencies you can make to adjust to your hearing, giving you more control over the sound.

That's essentially how FBC's work: Each community and the places that comprise it have an identifiable structure: a physical structure. Yes, there are many other non-physical factors such as land use but overall, it's the physical structure that accommodates everything. Historic communities are the most obvious examples of this fact but your community doesn't have to wait to be historic to embrace this approach. The FBC is set up to directly recognize and respond to the physical structure of your community. FBC's respond to the needs of real places, whether large, medium or small, in the desert or plains, in the mountains or along the coast.

In contrast, conventional zoning was never set up to recognize the actual structure of a community. It was set up with the best of intentions: to keep negative things from happening. However, these rules were applied to physical objects - communities - with little to nothing addressing the repeat-

Example FBC Approaches and Scenarios

	Degree of Change	Greenfield Neighborhood	Infill Neighborhood	Regeneration Corridor	Preservation Corridor
	Level of Expectations	Basic	Moderate	Moderate	High
Components	Regulating Plan	X	X	X	X
	Block Standards	X		X	X
	Street Standards	X		X	X
	Streetscape Standards	X	X	X	X
	Civic Space Standards	X			X
	Building Placement Standards	X	X	X	X
	Parking Placement Standards	X	X	X	X
	Building Height Standards	X	X	X	X
	Adjacency / Massing Standards		X	X	X
	Building Type Standards			X	X
	Frontage Type Standards	X	X	X	X
	Land Use Standards	X	X	X	X
	Architectural Style Standards				X
	Signage Standards	X		X	X
	Public Art Standards				X
Other Standards identified by you	?	?	?	?	
Sustainability is addressed within each relevant code topic					

COURTESY OF OPTICOS DESIGN

ing structure of which they were a part. Conventional zoning arrived after many of the places that it now regulates were built, creating a huge disconnect between the well-intended protection that is conventional zoning and the physical place being protected. Across the country, numerous examples exist where the conventional zoning system rendered the very places it was designed to protect as ‘non-conforming’ because the very system did not recognize the places it was regulating. Communities tried to address this by applying procedures or exceptions without really getting to the issue: the physical realities of the place.

Repeating physical structure

Communities, large, medium and small, are made of the same basic parts: neighborhoods, corridors, districts, natural areas, and civic spaces. Some communities have less parts while others have more parts with some of the parts more complicated than others. That’s how real communities occur. For example, Manhattan, NY and central Pasadena, CA are extremely different places but both share the physical realities of having downtowns with large and intense buildings. Both have a wide variety of activities along busy, pedestrian-oriented streets with wide sidewalks and transit. Both places use the same parts but arrange their individual components differently through scale and intensity: In Manhattan, the dials are turned all the way up while in Pasadena, the dials are over the middle setting but very far from the top setting. Conventional zoning tries to make better places by applying more process: the idea is that somehow more hearings and reviews will get it right. Such processes typically take participants through a subjectively based endurance test only to repeat it on the next participants. And, such processes exist in spite of the fact that much of what is trying to be addressed is an identifiable, repeating structure that can be translated into settings on a dial.

Responsive zoning system

A primary strength of FBC is its inherent ability to be adjusted to local conditions and community policy direction. There’s a misperception that somehow it’s applied the same throughout a community, regardless of policy intentions. That’s just not the case. Upon identifying where in your community you want to apply FBC, your community direction or vision then needs to provide three key pieces of information to set the FBC’s dials:

a) Degree and Type of change: Will the next investment cycle be directed toward keeping the pattern of an area, slightly adjusting the pattern to allow some new things, or to entirely regenerate a new pattern? For example, is one area looking more for sensitive infill and completion of a very stable pattern while another is looking for transformation from a pattern that the community doesn’t want? The degree of change for each area of your community is critical to identify in order to apply the appropriate amount of regulation: turning the dials up or down to your needs. Otherwise, as in conventional zoning, the requirements will not be aware of what patterns the community does and does not want.

b) Range of desired outcomes: What is the range of appropriate results across all topics? Information is needed on civic spaces, streetscapes, sufficient areas for different types

of development, the variety of buildings and their individual scales, to how each area deals with parking and land use. The key word here is ‘desired,’ as the FBC focuses on what you want the zoning to support and generate. Sure, there are things you don’t want to allow. But after that, what are the results that you want? Your vision needs to be realistic about this range and it needs to articulate it across the different areas of the physical landscape. Different solutions for different areas: Turning the dials up or down to your needs.

c) Level of expectations: This is about the ambition for each area of your community. By ambition, this does not imply that lower quality results are acceptable for your community. It’s about being clear that expectations for one corridor may be moderate because of its role and location while expectations may be quite high for another corridor. Your vision needs to provide that direction to inform the code writer about which components to apply in the FBC. In the areas with moderate expectations, you will tend to regulate less components and have lesser requirements than you will in the high expectation areas: turning the dials up or down to your needs.

Flexible system of components

Upon identifying your community’s repeating physical structure, dials can be applied and informed by the above three aspects of your community’s vision and direction. The dials can be further adjusted by the actual requirements you choose to apply for each component. As the equalizer that can control as few or as many frequencies as you like, FBC’s respond to your community in as little or as much detail needed to implement the community’s direction. For example, the same code can utilize an array of components for a high expectation, preservation area of historic buildings while utilizing fewer components for a moderate expectation, infill corridor. The table below illustrates the versatility of FBC to respond to the community’s policy direction for four very different scenarios.

Test your system

Take a look at your conventional zoning system to see if it is consistently delivering the results that the community wants. This is distinct from whether or not you’re comfortable using the system. Also, see how easy it is or is not to adjust the system to the very community it is regulating. If it’s doing well on all points, wonderful. It’s working for the community. If it’s not, consider moving away from the conventional zoning system to one that reprioritizes the purpose of your zoning to make walkable and adaptable places that hold and increase in value. FBCs have come a long way. I know that the codes I’ve written in the past several years are much better than the ones I first wrote 14 years ago. Upgrade to a form-based system that keeps the conventional zoning for those areas not likely or desired to change soon along with FBCs for those areas that want it. In this way, the FBC becomes the norm and readies you for the future without needing to apologize for recognizing and responding to the very community it is serving. ♦

Tony Perez is director of form-based coding for Opticos Design, Inc. This article appears courtesy of the Form-Based Codes Institute, which seeks to advance the knowledge and use of form-based codes.

Cincinnati adopts a new form-based code

The Queen City is part of a trend of big cities that are reforming their zoning. The next step is to apply the code to neighborhoods via regulating plans.

In 2010, vice mayor Roxanne Qualls of Cincinnati introduced a motion to adopt zoning that supports mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly development around transit stations. This project has grown into city-wide form-based code with the help of a \$2.4 million grant from HUD, part of which was used to hire consultants.

The code was adopted in May, but it is not yet implemented. Each city neighborhood must be mapped and have regulating plans approved. Maps have been created for four neighborhoods — College Hill, Madisonville, Walnut Hills, and Westwood — and the code has been applied to business districts and key vacant parcels. These plans are under review by neighborhoods councils. The plan is to map 42 neighborhoods in the near term, according to Daniel Parolek of Opticos Design — the Berkeley, California firm that authored the code.

The city hopes that the new code will spur redevelopment of neighborhoods that have been in decline or stagnating for a long time. A report following a citywide charrette explained why the city is optimistic despite the history:

The city has lost 40 percent of its population since 1950, leaving suburban densities in the city's formerly urban neighborhoods. Many residential buildings and lots sit vacant or are not being maintained, with over 10,000 historically contributing units in need of renovation. Neighborhood main streets have withered due to lack of people, competition from nearby big box stores, and bad thoroughfare design that speeds cars and potential customers through these neighborhoods, rather than to them.

But Cincinnati has a tremendous opportunity. In these urban neighborhoods they already have what other cities want and are trying to build: a variety of urban housing types; a network of neighborhood main streets ready to be revitalized; a rich, diverse, and well-built collection of historic architecture; and easily accessible open space networks created by topography that weaves throughout these neighborhoods.

Millennials, who are just moving into the housing market, and Baby Boomers, who are nearing retirement, are driving the resurgence in demand. “The Queen City is positioning itself to capture this demand and to put a strategy in place that makes these neighborhoods Complete Places with everything urban neighborhoods have to offer,” the report notes.

Cincinnati follows Miami, Denver, Nashville, and El Paso — other medium to large-sized US cities that have adopted form-based codes in recent years. Philadelphia has also approved zoning reform with many form-based elements, and other cities such as Buffalo, Los Angeles, and Austin are in process of changing their zoning.

The city planning department lists four reasons for zoning reform in Madisonville, one of the four initial neighborhoods that have been mapped for the new code.

1. Form-Based Code will allow the development of the vacant land at Madison & Whetsel into a mixed-use development,



A rendering of a T4 mostly residential neighborhood in Cincinnati.

where housing, retail, and office space can co-exist in the same development—just like Madisonville used to be!

2. Form-Based Code primarily focuses on the form of the buildings, and the use of the building is secondary. Madisonville’s Code, created by Madisonville stakeholders, shows developers the type of new construction we want to see here. This zoning was initiated and created by Madisonville community members with the assistance of City staff.

3. Form-Based Code emphasizes people and public spaces. The neighborhood leadership believes that if Madisonville is rebuilt for people, we’ll get more people, as opposed to building for cars and traffic, which results in more cars and more traffic.

4. Form-Based Code will streamline the development process and provide more predictable results for both the community and developers. ♦

Lean urbanism

FROM PAGE 10

walkability matters, the human scale matters; thus maximums are more important than minimums. The Pocket Code reduces many of the usual minimums to zero.” The code has no minimum parking requirements, for example. For street standards, the Pocket code references a SmartCode module.

The Pocket Code provides basic standards for building types, signs, and frontages in each of the Transect zones that are found in a settlement. It is downloadable at smartcodelocal.com.

Urban designer and developer Andrew Burlison of Houston — a city that is known for lax land-use regulations -- has created what he calls the Adaptive Code, a concept that focuses on the street network as the most essential element. A Transect of street types is established, and building scale and disposition are regulated for each street type.

According to Burlison, The Adaptive Code avoids micro-

management while focusing on a vibrant public realm. “It seeks to return freedom to the marketplace, making the traditional American building pattern legal again. Second, it seeks to put motorists and non-motorists on equal footing, to create freedom of transportation choice. Lastly, it seeks to reconcile the tension between liberty and justice, to prevent any party from externalizing negative impacts on any other with simple, predictable, and fair rules.”

Although minicodes are more simple than conventional codes or most form-based codes, they are more detailed than the earliest land-use regulations from the 19th Century that

shaped many of the best cities. These codes often included just a building height limit and a right of way dimension for specific streets. Cities and towns at that time were very specific about something that they usually leave to developers now: They specified the layout of the streets — ensuring a human-scale street network.

Duany uses the word “lean” to describe the approach of light codes, successional development, and tactical urbanism. This is similar to the earliest new urban plans, he says. “Code-writing was the least cool of the uncool, but those incredibly lean early new urbanist codes were glamorous.” ♦

The best neighborhood in North America

Welcome to Jacobsburg, which offers many lessons for other communities to follow

JAY WALJASPER

A strong sense of neighborliness makes Jacobsburg a happy place to live and work. (Photo courtesy of Project for Public Spaces.)

It’s no coincidence that the words “commons” and “community” spring from the same linguistic ancestor—which some researchers trace back beyond Latin and Greek to “kommenin,” a word that in Indo-European languages means “shared by all.”

Several years ago I wrote the *Great Neighborhood Book* (together with Project Public Spaces) to offer fresh ideas about how to increase conviviality in our lives and strengthen valuable social bonds with neighbors. Since then almost everyone I meet asks: What’s your favorite neighborhood?

To settle the matter once and for all, I wrote up a list of all the wonderful neighborhoods I’ve had the pleasure of visiting. Then, with great deliberation, I began to cross off names until only Jacobsburg remained. It is, in my opinion, the Great North American Neighborhood. To keep the suspense going, I will let you figure out the city where Jacobsburg is located. But here are the things I love about it.

Jacsburg grew up slowly in a variety of architectural styles between 1890, when streetcars first reached this wooded spot along the river, and 1920, when the boom in automobile sales opened up distant suburban tracts for development. Buses now ply streets where rails once ran, but the corner business districts that popped up to serve trolley riders are still the heart



COURTESY OF PROJECT FOR PUBLIC SPACES

A strong sense of neighborliness makes Jacobsburg a happy place to live and work

of the community. Butcher shops and haberdasheries, however, have now given way to ethnic eateries and vintage clothing shops.

One of the traits I most admire about Jacobsburg is a knack for being old-fashioned and cosmopolitan at the same time. At one of my favorite street corners in the world, 19th St. and Holly Avenue, a delicatessen run by an old guy named Dom looks out across the intersection at Crazy Kat Comics, a used and rare comic book store. Within a few steps you’ll come across a Reconstructionist synagogue, the largest fan belt dealer in the state, a Caribbean seafood restaurant once written up in *Food + Wine* magazine, and a laundromat made famous in an R&B song.

WHAT I LIKE ABOUT IT

What do I like most about Jacobsburg? Well, I could mention plentiful trees shading the sidewalks or the pleasing sequence of three- and four-story buildings with front stoops where people sit out to socialize on warm evenings. Then

there’s Riverwood park (which everyone says was designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, but wasn’t) with a swan pond, skateboard ramps, a weekend farmers market, summer band concerts, and a café with better pastry than you’ll find in Copenhagen.

And how could I ignore the invincible spirit of neighborliness, apparent even to a casual visitor? Current residents explain that the neighborhood set aside its own ethnic tensions in the 1970s and came together to fight a freeway that would have essentially leveled the place. That sense of civic engagement endures to this day. The local business association sponsors an annual Spring Festival with a 30-foot maypole in the playground of St. Stanislaus School. Meanwhile a VFW Post, a commedia dell’arte theatre troupe, a Baptist congregation, a Mexican motorcycle club, and a gay men’s chorus are among the dozens of local organizations that collaborate to raise money every December for the neighborhood food shelf.

One last thing I want to mention

REVIEWS

Charter of the New Urbanism, Second Edition

Edited by Emily Talen

McGraw-Hill, 302 pages, \$60 softcover

REVIEW BY ROBERT STEUTEVILLE

The Charter of the New Urbanism is the most enduring statement of land-use planning and design principles of recent decades, at least.

It's been 17 years since the Charter was signed in Charleston, South Carolina, and 14 years since the first book based on the Charter was published. As Andres Duany recently noted, "You are not a new urbanist if you don't believe in the Charter. And by the way, you are a very weird person if you read the Charter and say 'I don't agree with this.' That's the nature of the document. It really screws with your head."

Other planners and developers may design or build according to fashion, or the prevailing winds of public opinion, or merely for the fee. To a point, new urbanists do the same. But if you hire a new urbanist, the Charter will always anchor their design at the regional, neighborhood, and block/building scales. And the Charter has helped to shape the built environment.

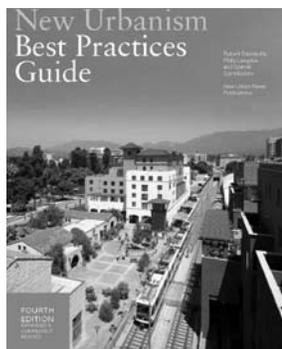
about Jacobsburg is the wealth of great pubs, which live up to an older sense of the word—meaning "public house." Families encompassing three generations can be found in the booths at corner taverns like Rufus & Bessie's or The Lisbon Inn eating supper right alongside laborers celebrating quitting time and students commemorating the end of another day of classes. The great majority of these pubs share a virtue that English novelist George Orwell lauded as "quiet enough to talk," in a 1946 essay about his favorite London pub, The Moon Under Water.

But The Moon Under the Water existed only in Orwell's imagination, a composite of the qualities he found in great pubs across England. And the same is true of Jacobsburg, a neighborhood that I dreamed up out of wonderful experiences I've had on the streets of many cities. I named it after urbanist visionary Jane Jacobs. (The photo you see here is actually Chapel Street in New Haven, Connecticut—an urban success story all on its own, where 95 percent of the area's buildings were vacant in the early 1980s.)

But rather than being uselessly Utopian, I see Jacobsburg as the future that's possible for neighborhoods everywhere as people apply the spirit of the commons to make great communities. ♦

This article was published in the new ebook: How to Design Our World for Happiness: The commons guide to placemaking, public space, and enjoying a convivial life by Jay Walljasper & On The Commons. Download at onethecommons.org

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REVIEWS

The brief statement consisting of a preamble and 27 principles — a total of 1,103 words — has helped to spawn form-based codes, the Transect, complete streets, the proliferation of true transit-oriented development (not just transit-adjacent development), the trend of new mixed-use urban centers, and more.

“We stand for the restoration of existing urban centers and towns within coherent metropolitan regions, the reconfiguration of sprawling suburbs into communities of real neighborhoods and diverse districts, the conservation of natural environments, and the preservation of our built legacy,” reads the second paragraph of the preamble. That has become the mainstream goal of planning and urban design reform in the last two decades.

Now *Charter of the New Urbanism, Second Edition* has been published. The editor is Emily Talen of Arizona State University in Phoenix, a city that needs work based on the Charter more than most places. (Luckily, transit-oriented projects based on Charter principles are being planned along the city’s new 20-mile light rail line).

WHY THE SECOND EDITION IS NEEDED

The first *Charter Book* was published 1999, when the world was a different place. Few were thinking about climate change — that subject is never mentioned in the first edition. In this second edition, it is front and center. “Suburban sprawl is nothing less than the principal cause of climate change,” writes planner/architect Duany, one of the *Charter’s* original authors.

The term form-based code was not yet invented in the 1990s, and now more than 300 municipalities have adopted them. There was little or no study, at the time, of the connection between the design of communities and health outcomes. That subject has been a major course of study over the last 10 years. The terms “sprawl repair” and “suburban retrofit” had yet to be coined, although the ideas were being developed in various projects.

The real estate markets in the 1990s were far different. Suburban sprawl was exploding; we were a decade away from the housing crash. New urbanists’ infill projects focused on public housing and downtown plans, but new towns in the suburbs were getting most of the media attention for New Urbanism. The Millennials, the new generation that is now the biggest market for downtown revitalization, were mostly still in grade school — largely in the distant suburbs.

Yet much has stayed the same. “In fast-growing suburban areas, communities continue to try controlling immense new developments with zoning and subdivision codes that were probably enacted in the 1950s to shape smaller projects,” writes Jonathan Barnett in his Second Edition essay.

Some cities are doing well, but others continue to struggle because “the increasing popularity of older urban neighborhoods is still not enough to offset lost jobs from vanishing industries, the growing need for social services, problems with the school system, and dysfunctional housing projects,” Barnett says. The suburbs themselves are changing — inner-ring suburbs in particular are starting to experience many of the social problems that were previously found in the nearby city. “What continues to be new about the New Urbanism is the assumption that solutions to these problems require that

they be all worked out together,” he concludes.

The cover of the new *Charter Book* is has turned from red to green — appropriate given how ecological ideas have permeated New Urbanism, and new urban ideas have taken hold among some environmentalists. The book is filled with many more, and better, images. They accompany dozens of new essays.

The text largely focuses on practical strategies rather than theory. “Some superb know-how has been rescued from the dustier shelves of libraries, but the real achievement [of the New Urbanism] has been the creativity applied to encountered situations,” Duany notes. These include, he says, the precise market studies of Zimmerman/Volk Associates, the surrogate governing protocols of Daniel Slone and Doris Goldstein, the clever retail hybrids of Robert Gibbs and Seth Harry, and the manual on thoroughfare design by the Institute of Transportation Engineers and the Congress for the New Urbanism.

New urbanists have been accused, Duany says, “of being impossible to debate because we instantly assimilate all good ideas. And why not?” he asks.

That seems an apt statement of purpose for the *Charter of the New Urbanism, Second Edition*. ♦

Robert Steuteville is editor and publisher of Better! Cities & Towns. His commentary piece, Market Support, is included on page 114 of the Charter of the New Urbanism, Second Edition. For more on this book, see also page 22 of this issue of Better! Cities & Towns.

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Seaside town center at buildout — the cover image for *Visions of Seaside*.

Visions of Seaside

By Dhiru A. Thadani

Rizzoli, 2013, 608 pp., \$75 hardcover

REVIEW BY THOMAS J. COMITTA

A new book examines the principled past and visions for the future of the town that inspired New Urbanism.

When Sir Raymond Unwin proclaimed “do not make roads wiggle aimlessly,” Robert Davis, Daryl Davis, Andres Duany, and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk got it. In fact, if you close your eyes and think about the memorable features of Seaside, the orderly street network may come into focus. If his treatise *Town Planning in Practice* (1909) were ever updated, Seaside would be showcased along with Unwin’s chronicles of Letchworth, Welyn, and Hampstead Garden Suburb. As Seaside begins a fourth decade, countless future visions for this 80-acre place evolve. All the while, the elegant thread of the street network will continue to sustain the urbanism that is at once serious and playful.

Dhiru Thadani lights a candle for us in *Vision of Seaside*, so we can see the flicker over time of this town, resort, learning laboratory, playground, (and if Phil Bess gets his wish – Benedictine Monastery). Thadani unveils with artistry the complete history of Seaside, from the plans when the roads wiggled, to the efficient street and lot plans, to the evolution and transformation of spaces as places, to futuristic views of an even more sustainable and venerable town. Actually, *Visions of Seaside* is five books in one – with weighty chapters on Foundation, Evolution, Built Architecture, Unbuilt Projects, and Imagination. When I purchased Thadani’s magnum opus, I began to marvel at the impressive composition of diagrams, sketches, plans and photographs, each of them a tribute to Thadani’s respect for all who have contributed to the success of Seaside.

WHY SEASIDE MATTERS

On the back of the book jacket Doug Farr indicates: “If you are interested in sustainability you need to understand the New Urbanism. To understand

New Urbanism you need to understand the history of Seaside. And if you think you understand Seaside chances are you don’t.” I have visited Seaside four times (first in 1994 when Christopher Alexander won the Seaside Prize, when he said: “This Place lifts my spirits”, and last in 2002 before CNU 10 in Miami, when one could truly visualize the missing links to adjoining Watercolor). Therefore, I thought I had a good feel for the place. After reading the stories of Seaside by more than 70 authors, architects, urbanists, and civic advocates through the lenses of town planning, sustainability, new urbanism, architecture, civic art, and placemaking, I now realize that it is time to go back to gain a better appreciation of Robert and Daryl Davis’s treasure. Perhaps on the next visit to Seaside, we can ask ourselves how we feel about Krier’s Tower in place of the Seaside Post Office, or Robert Stern’s beach pavilion in place of Michael McDonough’s West Ruskin Street Beach Pavilion.

The name for “Seaside” was hatched after “Seagrove” and “Seagrove Beach” were rejected. Even in the early 1980s, NIMBYism of Sea Grove caused a diversion, but enabled the name to evolve. Thank goodness. With its new identity, the streets were aligned to run perpendicular to the shoreline, channeling the prevailing breezes deep into the site. The beach pavilions serve as portals to the beach and sea, and terminated vistas for all to enjoy.

Thadani, like a Maestro, has conducted a symphony of text and images that coherently tell the story of the diverse and complex place. Among the highlights: Vincent Scully explains how the Pursuit of Happiness finds its home at Seaside, while Robert Davis reminds us of the numerous ways that the Public Realm provides places from the plaza, to the piazzetta, to the playground.

Other notable viewpoints in the book explain how the town has informed mainstream New Urbanism, by:

- Providing the model and impetus for form-base coding;
- Creating block characteristics that are bent, squeezed, stretched, chopped, or deflected to expediently suit terrain, orientation, and public space;
- Contributing to the realization that urban design needs to precede architec-

REVIEWS

ture, and that the space between buildings is at least equally important to the buildings themselves;

- Demonstrating how civic spaces become civic places when they serve as centers of gravity, of fun, and of the many moods and activities that citizens enjoy sharing with others;

- Offering a model for lean urbanism, incremental urbanism, and successional urbanism; and

- Through the final realization that Seaside is always evolving and as a work in progress it is just like every other town in history.

As founders, designers, organizers, managers, gatekeepers, pioneer residents, historians and visionaries of Seaside, Robert and Daryl Davis see a value-added future. A Seaside Conservancy would provide the needed care and stewardship for the civic realm of the spaces that have grown up from the sands of the Florida Panhandle.

Yet with all the energy that the Da-

vises have brought to Seaside, and all of the unbuilt designs yet to be realized, they have taken the time to smell (and consider the replenishment of) the roses on Rose Walk. They forever see Seaside as a place to work less, and play more. Seaside is a place of wonder and joy, and *Visions of Seaside* captures its heart. ♦

Thomas Comitta is a planner and landscape architect with Thomas Comitta Associates in West Chester, Pennsylvania.

The Just Right Home Buying, Renting, Moving — or Just Dreaming — Find Your Perfect Match!

By Marianne Cusato

Workman, 2013, 372 pp., \$12.95 paperback

REVIEW BY ANDRES DUANY

Some 20 years ago, Christopher Alexander, when discussing the New Urbanism, explained why he

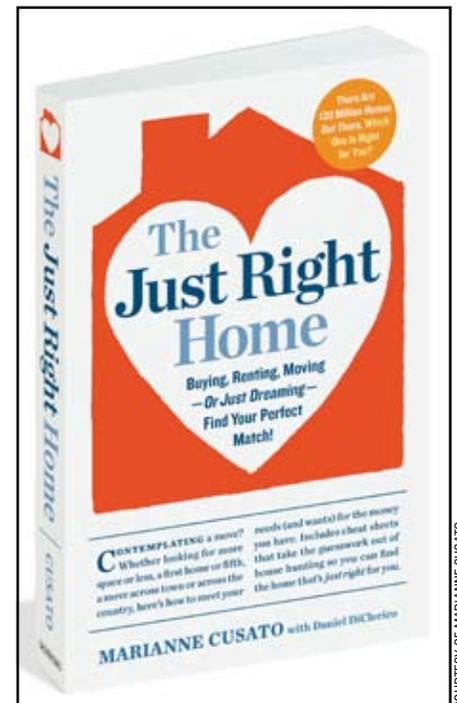
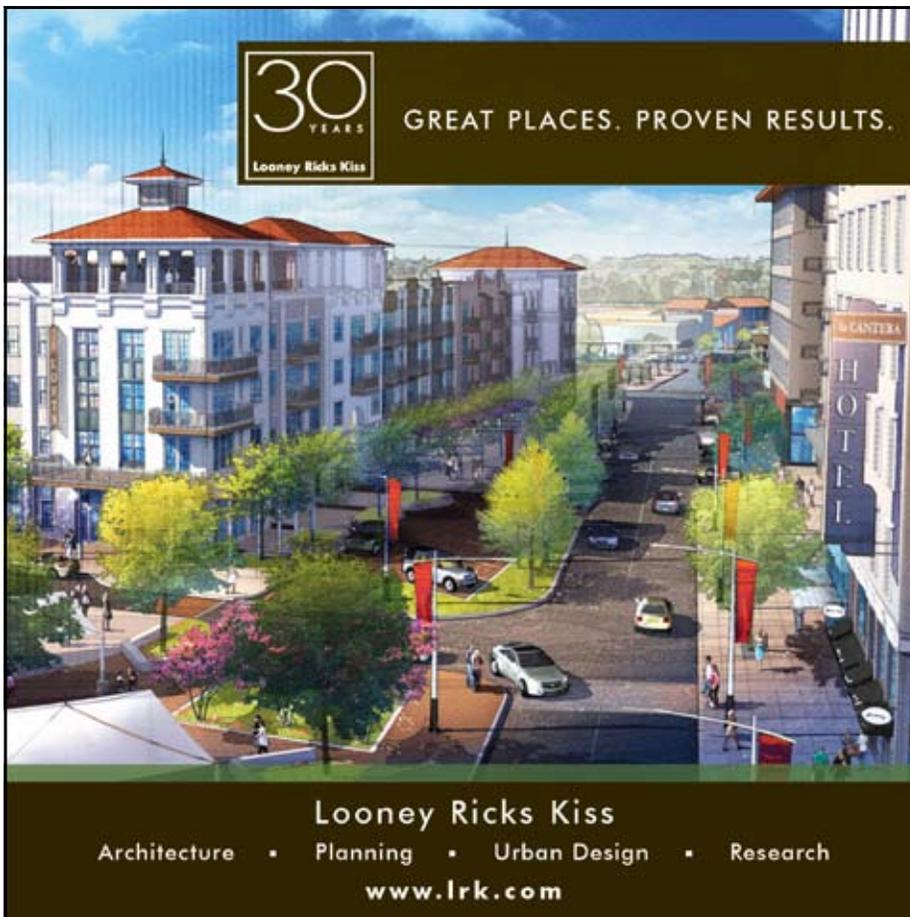
was more interested in Seaside’s code than in the town itself. He said, “We all know what the appliance is. We must now design the plugs that connect to the existing power grids.” (Note the plural.)

The new urbanist “appliance” is not terribly innovative—neither the greenfield work nor the infill (sprawl repair and retrofit being a notable exception). But the new urbanists should receive major credit for are the numerous “plugs” we have devised.

The codes and standards that Alexander admired have evolved to become the paradigms of their type, but they are only part of the achievement. Equally effective have been the dozens of books written by new urbanists, from Geography of Nowhere to The Next American Metropolis. Their number and quality is truly impressive (I have on my bookshelf almost six feet of them). At the core of this protean achievement is the Charter, which maintains the discipline of the discourse, allowing so many to lap their local shores, writing without seeking approval from the CNU.

New urbanists have devised effective “plugs” with developers, engineers, architects, elected officials, environmentalists, and lenders, among others. Generally these plugs have been technical. And there have been books connecting

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REVIEWS

with the interested public—the perennial Suburban Nation and Jeff Speck’s recent Walkable City—but there has never been a “plug” directly connecting people shopping for a home. This procedure, we must not forget, is the heart of the new urbanist success; without the homebuyer and the renter, none of the other “plugs” would matter. Nothing much would have been built.

It is amazing to me that such an important void was unperceived for so long. But now Marianne Cusato has written *The Just Right Home*. First, analyze the cloying, infantile cover. It is instructive to know that it was expertly designed to attract the attention of the maximum number of people. By contrast, inside, in perfectly clear language, is the most rational step-by-step system ever conceived to connect regular folk to the New Urbanism.

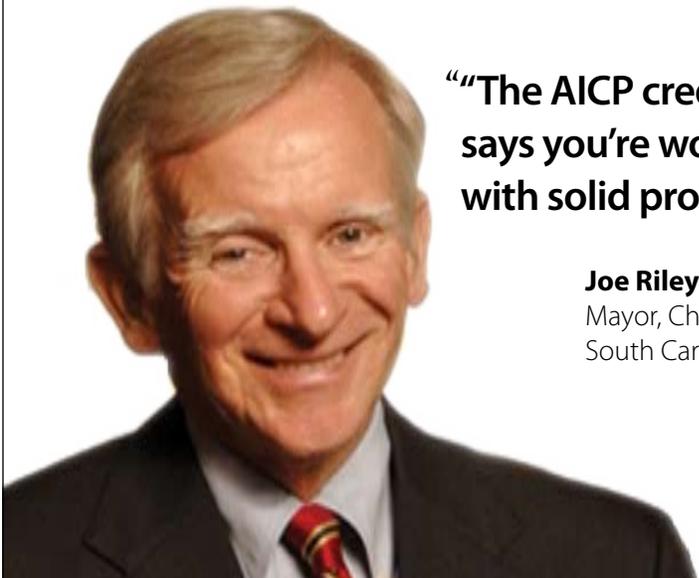
Those of you who know the precision of Cusato’s *Get Your House Right* will realize that what she first did for architects, she has now done for homebuilders. This book allows people to think for themselves; to bypass the marketing, the Realtors, and the assorted experts that are complicit in the unsustainable junkscape that the American real estate industry has produced.

Plug this book into your sales force—and give it to your mother who has long suspected her kid’s sanity—raving away about New Urbanism. ♦

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

UPDATE

■ I-579 plus an urban renewal project involving a large arena separated downtown Pittsburgh from city neighborhoods to the east (the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers are natural barriers on other sides). A partial fix is proposed to create eight new city blocks and install a small cap over the highway — costing \$20 million — to connect those revitalizing neighborhoods to downtown again, according to the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. “It marks a first step in trying to re-establish the Hill-Downtown link that was severed when most of the lower Hill was demolished to make way for the arena construction in the late 1950s and early



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1960s," the paper reports. The Pittsburgh Penguins, owners of the site, are planning 1,192 residential units; 200,101 square feet of retail space; 691,962 square feet of office space; a 150-room hotel; and 2,957 off-street and 330 on-street parking spaces.

New urbanists, particularly the Pittsburgh firm Urban Design Associates, have been designing repairs to the damaged Hill District for years, including HOPE VI public housing redevelopments and other low-income projects.

■ **The Sightline Institute in Seattle** has published an e-book that advocates three policies for affordable housing: Re-legalizing rooming or boarding houses; uncapping the number of roommates who may share a dwelling; and welcoming accessory apartments, such as in-law flats or garden cottages.

Accessory dwellings have long been promoted by new urbanists — but they are still illegal in many jurisdictions. The other two recommendations are novel in 2013.

"Over time, cities have effectively banned what used to be the bottom end of the private housing market," says author Alan Durning. "By striking a few lines from city law books, we can—at no cost to the public—revive inexpensive housing in walkable neighborhoods." The book, *Unlocking Home: Three Keys to Affordable Communities*, can be downloaded at sightline.org/unlockinghome

■ Homicide charges were dropped for **Raquel Nelson**, the Marietta, Georgia, woman who became a cause celebre for

pedestrian activists. Nelson was convicted of vehicular homicide in 2011 after her 4-year-old son was killed by a hit-and-run driver as the family attempted crossing an arterial road in suburban Marietta, Georgia.

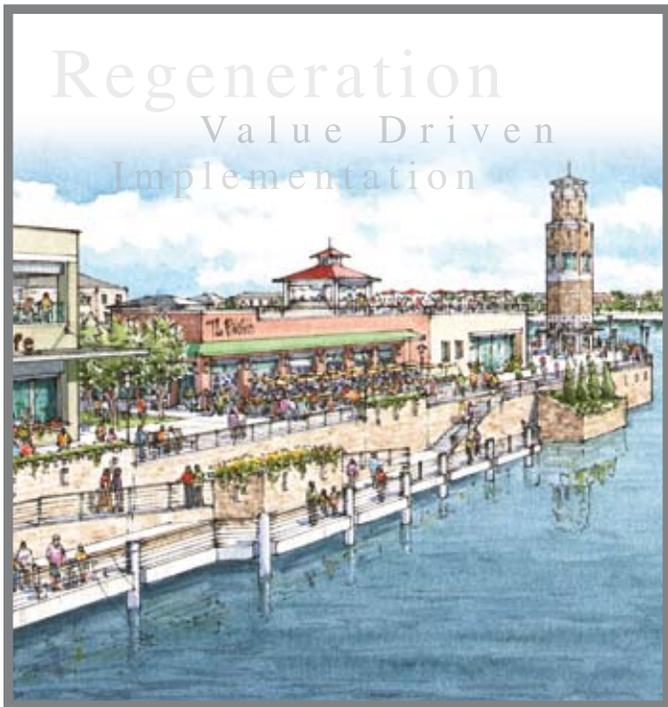
The Cobb County prosecutor dropped homicide and reckless behavior charges. Nelson pleaded guilty of jaywalking and paid a \$200 fine. A petition on change.org, started by new urbanist planner Eliza Harris, collected 160,000 signatures. "Raquel Nelson went through hell but if there is any silver lining it is that this case seems to have put a spotlight on the plight of people that don't have cars," says Norman Garrick, an associate professor in civil and environmental engineering at the University of Connecticut.

Nelson's home has a Walk Score of 23 out of 100, and the average block size is 26 acres — way beyond walkable dimensions. Cobb County is now reevaluating the crossing and the bus stop, but the larger issue of people living without cars in areas that are dangerous to pedestrians is, if anything, growing more serious. The suburbs are diversifying racially and economically: Poverty is rising twice as fast in US suburbs as in cities.

■ A study recently argued in the *Journal of Transport and Land Use* that locating a **big box store near downtown** can reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) significantly in a particular community.

Davis, California, a college town of 65,000, may be unusual

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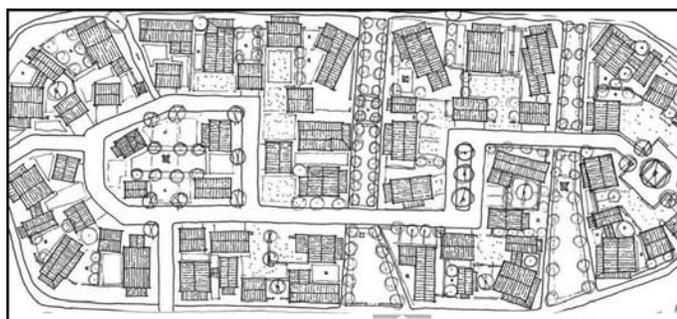
in that all of the pre-existing big box stores were a long distance away from the city. The study looked at driving habits of Davis residents only — ignoring possible increased car travel of people living outside of the community. The study found a reduction in 18.9 miles per month per adult age 25 or older, totaling over 7.5 million miles of VMT per year.

Assuming that overall car travel has been reduced by this in-town store, it would still be better if the store had an urban design that promotes walking and bicycling. The new Target is conventionally designed and does not make any attempt to fit into the urban fabric.

■ **Young adults are moving to Washington, DC**, in much greater numbers than suburban counties. About half of the District's 30,600 population growth from 2010 to 2012 consisted of people 25 to 34 years of age, according to a report in The Washington Post. In exurban Loudoun County, Virginia, by contrast, only 6 percent of the growth was 25 to 34 years old. Compared to Loudoun, the District attracted more than tenfold the Millennials — or Echo Boomers, as the Post refers to them. Close-in suburbs did much better. Arlington County grew by 13,418, and 5,590 (42 percent) were in the Echo Boomer group,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24

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Charter of the New Urbanism book released

New edition now available, with 62 new commentaries

The original Charter for the New Urbanism, published in book form in 1999, was a groundbreaking document aimed at reclaiming cities and towns from the destructive force of suburban sprawl. Thoroughly updated to cover the latest environmental, economic, and social implications of urban design, *Charter of the New Urbanism, Second Edition* features insightful writing from 62 authors on each of the Charter's principles. Featuring new photos and illustrations, it is an invaluable resource for design professionals, developers, planners, elected officials, and citizen activists. Real-world case studies, plans, and examples are included throughout.

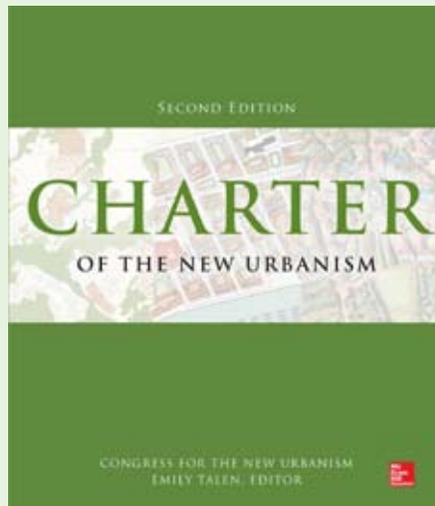
This pioneering guide illustrates how CNU works to change the practices and standards of urban design and development to support healthy regions and diverse, complete neighborhoods.

"In the first edition of this book, I wrote that I did not expect the Charter to be a stagnant document, that the ideas and strategies of New Urbanism would need to mature and evolve," writes Shelley R. Poticha, former president of CNU and now Director of the Office of Sustainable Housing and Communities with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, in the book's foreword. "They have. Included here are new and better ways of building and rebuilding – a progression of ideas."

NEW COMMENTARY

The new edition includes commentary from some of the most prominent architects and authors of this movement, including Andrés Duany, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, Peter Calthorpe, John Norquist, Galina Tachieva, Douglas Kelbaugh, James Howard Kunstler and Ellen Dunham-Jones.

"Addressing climate change clearly and forcefully was one of the most important updates to the book for me," explained book editor Emily Talen, a professor of in the School of Geographic Sciences and Urban Planning and the School of Sustainability at Arizona State University. "The original Charter of the



New Urbanism laid the groundwork beautifully for changing our communities to be more sustainable, even before there was widespread recognition for climate change. In this version, we've included essays that push those ideas further."

Charter for the New Urbanism, Second Edition is available now at Amazon.com and bookstores everywhere.

If you are a member of the media and would like to request a review copy, email your request with your physical address to thalbur@cnu.org. Editor Emily Talen and CNU President John Norquist are available for interviews.

See review on page 15. ♦

Rainwater-in-Context: An interview with Paul Crabtree and Lisa Nisenson

CNU's Erika Strauss recently interviewed Paul Crabtree and Lisa Nisenson, leaders of CNU's Rainwater-in-Context Initiative, to catch up after CNU21 and hear what they have to say about the recent developments in the delayed EPA stormwater regulations.

CNU: I know you've been working with the EPA to develop new stormwater regulations, which have been further delayed. What is the status?

Paul Crabtree and Lisa Nisenson (P&L): It is disappointing that the new rules have not been issued yet. The Rainwater initiative has been working diligently with EPA to get the next generation of regulations that support better urbanism and water management at the same time. We've been talking with EPA reps and environmental groups in Washington DC. The proposed rule was to have been issued on June 10 under terms of a consent decree. Some of the challenges with getting the rule out are opposition from Congress members and details on the financial impact. We imagine EPA could issue a proposed rule at any time - they have put several years into developing the proposal to date.

CNU: Can you explain the shortcomings in the first rule and what types of improvements are needed?

P&L: The first rules, issued in 1999,

basically inserted national stormwater rules into local codes and introduced new concepts like low impact development for many smaller and medium sized cities. While this larger concept is still valid, one of the biggest shortcomings is that the rules did not apply until a municipality hit certain population thresholds. One of the comments EPA received from cities and states was that developers gravitated towards areas with fewer regulations. As such, the delayed rules were expected to level the playing field.

Another shortcoming is that using zoning codes to implement water regulations has resulted in lot-by-lot management. Hence large lot subdivisions could check all the boxes and ignore larger impacts related to pattern and location.

CNU: I think the connection between high-densities and stormwater is really important, what do you think are a few key Best Management Practices (BMPs) for all cities to employ?

P&L: Water regulators need to study

Pages 22 and 23 are provided to Better! Cities & Towns courtesy of the Congress for the New Urbanism, The Marquette Building, 140 S. Dearborn, Ste. 404, Chicago, IL 60603. 312/551-7300; fax: 312/346-3323. www.cnu.org, cnuinfo@cnu.org

how innovators have taken control of parking. For parking, as on-site parking excesses are reduced, market mechanisms, shared parking and “found” spaces have emerged. The same has to happen for stormwater: shared stormwater BMPs, fees for stormwater handling, and “finding” water in otherwise underused city spaces.

CNU: How has CNU been influential?

P&L: CNU has enabled the Rainwater-in-Context (RIC) to be successful on a variety of platforms. The support of CNU led to RIC’s strong presence at StormCon, the publication of a variety of Stormwater Magazine articles, webinars and PechaKucha sessions from CNU20. The initiative also aided in another of CNU’s initiatives, LEED in Neighborhood Development by playing an integral role in developing the crediting system for rainwater. Individual initiative members have also developed and implemented numerous rainwater solutions, including a design that won the Charter award for Salon de Refuses.

In addition, John Norquist has been building coalitions to develop a strong voice on water and cities. In 2010, this coalition sent a letter to EPA listing both shortcomings and potential fixes. EPA has been a great partner; they are under pressure on costs, regulatory scope, and the issue of mandatory retrofits.

CNU: How would you like to see CNU assist you in going

the next step?

(P&L): First, we need members to get viral. We will be developing kits soon on letter writing, blogging and local action. Second, we need to move forward as if a new rule never comes about. There are opportunities to amplify elements of existing rules that are good for urbanism, but got overshadowed by the rush for Low Impact Designs (LID) for individual properties. For example, a working guide that describes the economic benefits, design and maintenance of shared stormwater management in a planning area would be extremely valuable. We will be developing a grant for this.

Practitioners in the field need a relief from the extreme regulatory over-burden. Rules and manuals that are hundreds of pages long are simply ridiculous. The focus for the working guide will be on good design versus regulations that stand in the way of what we are ultimately trying to achieve.

Finally, one of the things CNU does best is tie the elements of great placemaking together. We need to cross train so the transportation people are talking rainwater while the rainwater people become more conversant on sizing rights of way.

For more information on CNU’s Rainwater-in-Context initiative, visit www.cnu.org/rainwater. ♦

URBANISM+2030, A collaboration for the climate

In March 2012, CNU Cascadia Chapter partnered with the Seattle 2030 District in a half-day workshop, which included about 30 participants from across the region to identify opportunities and best practices for achieving low-carbon, resilient communities in existing neighborhoods. The workshop discussed perspectives on development, policy, and design in 2030 Districts, which are neighborhoods that commit to meet sustainability goals.

At the time of the workshop, CNU Cascadia Chapter was helmed by Erin Christensen, an architect and urban designer at Mithun and a recently elected CNU board member. Erin forged a collaboration between CNU and Architecture 2030 at the workshop to help expand the effort nationally.

In a recent interview with CNU, Erin explained the effort more fully: “The name URBANISM + 2030 represents a collaboration between CNU and Architecture 2030. Initially, Architecture 2030 began as a nonprofit focused on reducing greenhouse gas emission from buildings, but has since broadened its focus to neighborhood issues like transportation and water that also have significant impact on the environment. The goal is now for an entire neighborhood to become carbon neutral, which is the focus of the



Erin Christensen

2030 Challenge. This is strongly aligned with CNU’s Charter to restore existing urban centers and towns, reconfigure sprawling suburbs into communities, and preserve natural environments.”

Though still nascent, this collaboration is already thinking long-term, looking to work with an assemblage of experts “to pilot a professional education series, which would ideally be located in a city with both a committed 2030 District and a CNU chapter,” says Erin. But in the interim, the focus is on drumming up interest and building out an advisory group. “We want to get in the habit of asking ourselves: How can we change what we’re doing in our daily process as professionals to reach these goals?”

With one report putting global CO2 levels at or near 400 parts per million, larger-scale strategies like Urbanism +

2030 are increasingly necessary. While climate change may appear overwhelming, Erin finds it useful to remind herself everyday: “How do we make the change we want to see?”

Stay tuned to cnu.org for more information about Urbanism+2030. ♦

Take CNU on your commute

CNU is pleased to announce the new, reformatted and retitled *Official Congress of the New Urbanism Podcast*. Each podcast in our series will explore a definition from Dhruv Thadani’s *The Language of Towns and Cities*, recap the latest CNU news and events, and feature an in-depth interview with prominent thinkers and urbanists. In the first episode, CNU President and CEO John Norquist talks with architect R. John Anderson about the challenges of funding mixed-use development. The new podcast will be open to all, members and non-members, and easily streamed on cnu.org or downloaded via iTunes.

Be sure to watch videos from CNU 21 on our Youtube Channel. Visit Youtube.com/Congress4NewUrbanism ♦

UPDATE

FROM PAGE 21

the *Post* says. The report supports market research that young adults prefer the urban lifestyle.

■ Although the US is a long way from Europe in terms of **bicycling**, it has made progress in recent years — especially in cities. *The Christian Science Monitor* recently reported:

- Commuting by bicycle was up 47 percent in the US from 2000 to 2011.
- 18 new cities will set up bike-sharing networks in the US this year—a 50 percent increase over 2012.
- Some cities have made relatively more progress. In Portland, Oregon, bicycle commuting has risen 250 percent from 2000-2011, while it has gained 166 percent in Washington, DC, and 140 percent in Anchorage, Alaska.

• Biking fatalities as a percentage of overall traffic deaths have risen, but only because traffic fatalities as a whole have dropped. Bicycle fatalities peaked in 2005 at 786 nationwide, even as the number of bicyclists on the road has risen.

The wave of bicycling is being driven by public policy in cities, the Monitor reports. One reason is that investing in bicycling increases mobility without breaking the bank.

■ **Matthew Yglesias** in *Slate* recently called attention to a “regulatory scourge so ubiquitous as to be nearly invisible: Regulatory parking mandates that tax the poor to subsidize the rich while damaging the environment and the broader

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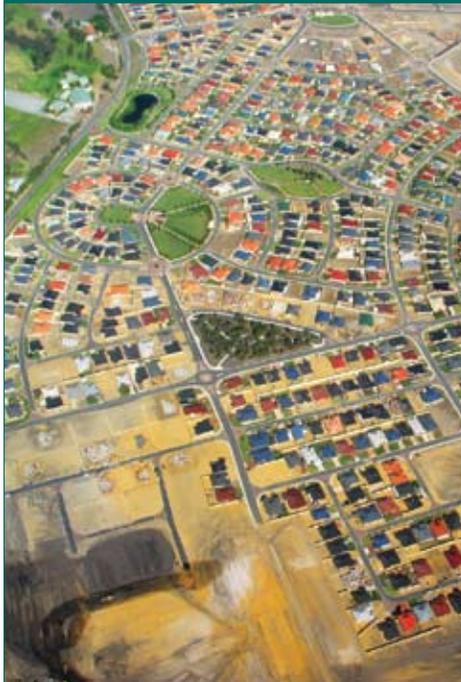
economy.” Many cities are reducing their parking requirements, but few are eliminating them entirely.

Boston, Yglesias reports, is considering cutting its parking requirements. Specifically, “in most cases, officials are allowing the ratio to slip to 0.75 spaces per residence,” rather than the one or two spaces that had been the previous rule.

“Boston officials should be commended for this. But what they really ought to do is something radical, and it’s the exact same thing every other city and suburb in America ought to do: reduce the number of required spaces to zero,” Yglesias notes. ♦

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