

# CITIES & TOWNS

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

MARCH 2013—VOLUME 2, NUMBER 2

## City returns to its streetcar roots

The plan to transform Somerville, Massachusetts, and connect it to an emerging economy also honors and enhances old neighborhoods.

ROBERT STEUTEVILLE

A city of 75,000 in the core of the Boston region, Somerville, Massachusetts, is poised to be a leading example in the transformation of urban places. Only 15 percent of residents currently live within a half-mile of a train station. In a few years, that percentage will rise to 85 as the Massachusetts city returns to its roots as a community of rail transit neighborhoods.

The demand for housing that is accessible to transit is growing nationwide, and by 2030 the supply of such housing needs to grow by 25 million units to meet demand, according to University of Utah researcher Arthur C. Nelson (see article at right). Supply can increase through new transit-oriented development (TOD) or by connecting existing housing to transit — both of which are occurring in Somerville. The city's transformation has regional implications as Boston tries to retain its economic edge as a high-tech leader. New places for growth are needed — ideally imbedded in the urban fabric.

Five new stations — due to an expansion of the busiest light rail line in the US, the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA) Green Line — are set to be built in Somerville by 2016. An additional station along the MBTA Orange line is under construction in one of the biggest current TODs on the East Coast — Assembly Row (see *Better! Cities & Towns*, June 2012).

"Somerville is getting in front of the change," says planner and author Jeff Speck, who was commissioned by the city to plan three of the station areas with Russell Preston. "The message I am giving to residents is that the 'gold standard' of trolleys is about to hit your neighborhood. Your neighborhood will change. Let's have it change the way you want it to change."

Three of the stations will serve new urban centers with room for significant

SEE 'STREETCAR ROOTS' ON PAGE 6

This park is planned as part of the redevelopment of The Blairs apartment complex in Silver Spring, Maryland, into a mixed-use transit-oriented place. Providing green space for the community is part of the design strategy. See story on page 11.



## Shift toward urban lifestyles forecast to 2030

A new book, *Reshaping Metropolitan America*, explains regions will take a more compact, mixed-use form in the next two decades, especially in the suburbs.

REVIEW BY PHILIP LANGDON

In April 2011, Arthur C. Nelson startled a gathering of journalists at the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy by predicting that this entire decade would end up as a calamity for homebuilders. Builders had begun suffering by 2007 during the lead-up to the housing crash, but Nelson emphasized that the difficulties from 2007 to early 2011 were only the beginning—the pain would continue all the way to 2020, thanks to a confluence of important demographic and economic forces.

Now Nelson, a professor of city and metropolitan planning at the University of Utah, has written a book that elaborates on his forecast and extends it through 2030. His conclusion: Conventional residential development in the outer suburbs will remain troubled throughout this period, while by contrast, compact, walkable, transit-oriented development—much of it in close-in suburbs—will be in great demand.

The market, Nelson asserts, has radically changed, in ways that will make it difficult for detached houses on large lots at the metropolitan fringe to gain in value. The nation is in the process of turning away from sprawl. Homeownership rates in 2020 and 2030 will be lower than those in 2000 and 2010.

The chief reasons for these shifts:

- Gasoline could cost \$8 a gallon by 2020, and it may shoot up to \$15 by 2030. These figures are predicated on gasoline prices continuing to rise as they did from 2002 to 2012—roughly 10 percent per

SEE 'URBAN LIFESTYLES' ON PAGE 8

**BETTER!  
CITIES&TOWNS**

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Robert Steuteville, editor and publisher

Lisa A. Rosenthal, production associate

Sarah K. Brown, advertising and accounts manager

**MAILING ADDRESS:** *Better! Cities & Towns*, PO Box 6515, Ithaca, NY 14851 (ph) 607/275-3087 (fax) 607/272-2685 Email: mail@newurbannews.com web: bettercities.net

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**CONTENTS**

**Volume 2, No. 2, March 2013**

**City returns to its streetcar roots, Page 1**

**Shift toward urban lifestyles, Page 1**

**Reports of sprawl's death are exaggerated, Page 2**

**Housing boom for the creative class, Page 3**

**What about regions that lack the young and well-educated? Page 4**

**Hipster havens in the suburbs, Page 5**

**The prospects for retail space, Page 9**

**The 'Main Street' of the Bronx is restored, Page 10**

**Silver Spring project brings green space to transit, Page 11**

**Transit-oriented, multigenerational affordability in Southern CA, Page 12**

**Architecture of place rather than time, Page 14**

**New Urban Update: Pages 16-21, 24**

**CNU Update: FNOLA inches closer to historic freeway redevelopment, More to learn at CNU 21 breakout sessions, CNU holds first statewide workshop for transportation professionals, Charter Awards jury convenes Pages 22-23**

COMMENTARY

**Reports of sprawl's death are exaggerated**

ROBERT STEUTEVILLE

At the start of his new book, *Reshaping Metropolitan America*, Arthur C. Nelson asks whether the US will continue its sprawling development patterns this decade and the next. Due to monumental shifts in the housing market and significant redevelopment opportunities, the answer he gives is "no."

That's plain and simple — except for a few caveats and qualifications. "Will developers and planners take advantage of this opportunity? Only if the accommodation of market trends is facilitated through a range of federal, state, and local policy initiatives," Nelson says.

A continued "sprawl by default" is possible, he explains, because much depends on the political will to change. Not only do zoning codes and street patterns encourage sprawl, but so do a range of federal and state tax and finance policies.

There's no question that the American sprawl machine has slowed considerably since the start of the Great Recession. Single-family building permits are less than a third of what they were in 2005. The fastest growing housing type is multifamily, and the strongest markets for this housing are in the urban core. *Emerging Trends in Real Estate* reports that developers are looking for infill, urban sites for single-family dwellings.

Looking may be the key word here. More than 500,000 single-family building permits were issued in 2012, an increase of 23 percent over the year before. The vast majority of these houses have two or three car garages, and two-thirds are sited on large lots. The locations are mostly typical suburban subdivisions. If it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it's probably sprawl.

Meanwhile, we see lots of smart growth activity in urban cores, around transit sites, and in urban centers in the suburbs. The vast majority of the housing in these places is multifamily.

**WHAT ABOUT SINGLE-FAMILY?**

So how do we make single-family development sustainable? We did it routinely in cities all across America prior to World War II. The new urbanists have created models for it in recent decades. Yet sustainable single-family requires interconnected networks of walkable streets — complete streets — and a mixture of uses and housing types. Cities lack land for new neighborhoods of this sort (in city sectors where land is plentiful, there's often no market for housing of any kind — think Detroit). In the suburbs, there's plenty of land, but the policies often prevent walkable neighborhoods.

Too many suburban municipalities have zoning codes that prevent mixed-use neighborhoods and lack "complete streets" to connect to. Until we change these codes and thoroughfares, and until suburban leaders call for street networks — builders will keep doing what they have been doing.

To meet future market, economic, and sustainability needs of the country, we need to build less large-lot single-family housing and more small-lot single-family housing (along with multifamily). And we need to build it in walkable places.

New urbanists have been successful at teaching many builders how to put the garage in the back and how to make the fronts of houses more appealing and human-scale, but they haven't made it much easier to provide the street network necessary for livability.

Production builders will not provide their own street grid if it goes against zoning and street standards. But if the system makes a connected network easier than typical sprawl, I maintain that builders will adapt in short order.

Like Nelson, I am optimistic that our development patterns will be different in the coming decades than they have been in the last six. Cities and historic towns are making a comeback.

But those who think that sprawl is dead are wrong. We've got a lot of work to do before the majority of new development is sustainable. ♦

# A housing boom for the ‘creative class’

The US housing industry bounced back a bit in 2012, with 31 percent more building permits issued than 2011. Multifamily units led the way, rising 46 percent. Single-family permits increased 23 percent and are still less than a third of what they were in 2005.

Yet some parts of the industry are very strong, and those include housing in cities with a highly educated workforce — the “creative class,” so-named by Richard Florida. Metro regions with the most young adults with a college degree are listed in the graphic below — Boston, DC, San Francisco, and the Research Triangle of North Carolina (Raleigh and Durham-Chapel Hill) lead the way.

San Jose (Silicon Valley) and Minneapolis-St. Paul are also major metro areas that attract the creative class — and for sheer numbers of educated workers, no place matches New York City. Charlottesville, Virginia, and Ann Arbor, Michigan, are two small metros that make the list because they are also college towns — which contributes to their high education level.

This ‘creative class’ group has put up some impressive housing numbers in the last two years, according to an analysis by *Better! Cities & Towns* (see table at upper right). Building permits in these cities rose by 194 percent from 2010 to 2012 — more than 5 times the national average. Nearly 9 out of 10 of the permits were issued for multifamily housing in the the core cities of these regions — and most of them in very walkable neighborhoods. Development is booming in 8 of the 10 top creative class cities — all of the major metro areas on the list.

The only exceptions, at first glance, were Charlottesville and Ann Arbor. These places don’t attract a lot of development because they are relatively small, but even so there are signs of significant growth in 2013 and beyond. “Charlottesville has a

## Building in ‘Creative Class’ cities

City	Permits 2012	Permits 2011	Permits 2010	Change in Permits 2010-2012	% Multifamily in 2012
Boston, MA	1,776	785	351	Up 405%	98
Washington, DC	3,823	4,612	739	Up 390%	93
San Francisco, CA	3,317	1,818	779	Up 325%	99
Raleigh, NC	5,010	2,307	1,250	Up 300%	82
Durham, NC	2,593	1,243	1,168	Up 122%	67
San Jose, CA	3,498	1,045	2,422	Up 44%	95
Charlottesville, VA <sup>1</sup>	331	672	631	Down 48%	0
Manhattan, NY	2,320	2,535	704	Up 229%	100
Ann Arbor, MI	14	309	141	Down 90%	14
Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN	4,072	691	900	Up 352%	97
<b>Total</b>	<b>26,754</b>	<b>16,017</b>	<b>9,085</b>	<b>Up 194%</b>	<b>88</b>

<sup>1</sup> Figures not available for Charlottesville, so these are for Albemarle County as a whole. Source: US Census

sudden rush of developers turning dirt on projects that stalled for years during the economic downturn,” reports *NBC29.com*, a local news source, on February 13. “A chart in the city’s planning office lists more than 860 residential units under construction right now, including homes, townhouses and apartments. Another 541 are under review or approved.”

Downtown Ann Arbor has three mixed-use high-rises in planning or construction.

## A FORCE IN SHAPING CITIES

Reconnecting America’s recent report on urban America, *Are We There Yet? Creating Complete Communities for the 21st Century*, identified the creative class as a major force shaping the built environment. “Much has been made in this country of the changing preferences of the younger generation of workers called the “Millennials” or “Gen Y” — the children of Baby Boomers born between 1980 and 1995 — who show a preference for living and working in dynamic urban settings. Many Millennials qualify as members of the “creative class,” the main players in the knowledge-based economy,” according to the report.

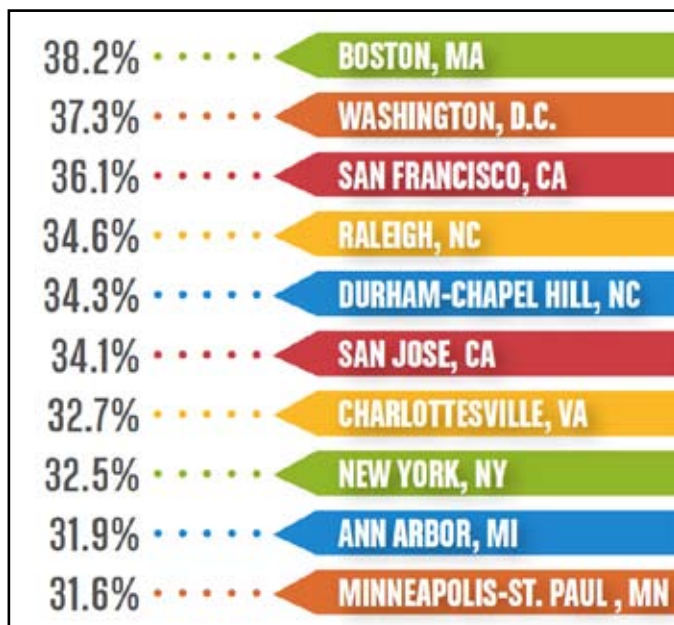
Creative class workers include scientists, engineers, artists, musicians, university professors and other educators, architects, and designers, *Reconnecting America* writes. They certainly appear to be shaping the housing market.

**This mixed-use development including 66 residential units was approved in 2012 in the Roxbury by the Boston Redevelopment Authority.**



SOURCE: BOSTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

## Top 10 regions with the most highly educated 18-34 year olds



Graphic credit: *Reconnecting America — Are We There Yet? Creating Complete Communities for the 21st Century*

Populations of educated young adults are increasing twice as fast in close-in neighborhoods, according to a 2011 study by CEOs for Cities. Many Millennials don't own a car. The presence of the creative class is an important indicator for growth, especially in multifamily housing.

How many metro areas in the US attract a significant number of the creative class? *Are We There Yet* lists 40 metro areas — see tables at right — that are in the top 10 for most educated young adults in each size category. Most of the nation's largest metro areas — New York, Chicago, San Francisco Bay area, DC, Philadelphia, Atlanta — make the list. Nearly every metro area above 1 million has significant numbers of the creative class regardless of percentages. The job prospects in these cities attract the talented young adults. Here are some other observations:

- The creative class is all over the US. Whereas most of the development in the US in recent decades has tended

### Metro areas above 3 million population: % of 18-34 year olds with college degree

Boston-Cambridge-Quincy, MA-NH	38.25
Washington-Arlington-Alexandria	
DC-VA-MD-WV	37.34
San Francisco-Oakland-Fremont, CA	36.07
New York-N. New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-PA	32.50
Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington, MN-WI	31.64
Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA	29.07
Chicago-Joliet-Naperville, IL-IN-WI	28.09
Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington, PA-NJ-DE-MD	28.00
Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Marietta, GA	26.19
San Diego-Carlsbad-San Marcos, CA	23.82

### Metro areas 1-3 million population: % of 18-34 year olds with college degree

Raleigh-Cary, NC	34.56
San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara, CA	34.10
Austin-Round Rock-San Marcos, TX	29.21
Baltimore-Towson, MD	28.93
Columbus, IN	28.70
Pittsburgh, PA	28.37
Charlotte-Gastonia-Rock Hill, NC-SC	28.09
Denver-Aurora-Broomfield, CO	27.74
Kansas City, MO-KS	26.83
Hartford-West Hartford-East Hartford, CT	26.35

Source: *Are We There Yet?* by Reconnecting America

### Metro areas 500,000-1 million population: % of 18-34 year olds with college degree

Durham-Chapel Hill, NC	34.25
Madison, WI	30.89
Bridgeport-Stamford-Norwalk, CT	30.68
Des Moines-West Des Moines, IA	30.31
New Haven-Milford, CT	28.63
Omaha-Council Bluffs, NE-IA	26.34
Albany-Schenectady-Troy, NY	26.26
Charleston-North Charleston-Summerville, SC	26.15
Worcester, MA MSA	25.84
Portland-South Portland-Biddeford, ME	24.77

### Metro areas less than 500,000 population: % of 18-34 year olds with college degree

Charlottesville, VA	32.73
Ann Arbor, MI	31.91
Boulder, CO	31.38
Rochester, NY	30.61
Iowa City, IA	29.49
Columbia, MO	28.56
Trenton-Ewing, NJ	28.26
Manchester-Nashua, NH	27.96
Ithaca, NY	27.58
Burlington-South Burlington, VT	27.46

Source: *Are We There Yet?* by Reconnecting America

## What about regions that lack the young and well-educated?

There's a flip side to the "creative class" trend — for every city at the top of the list there's one at the bottom of the list for this demographic. Being on the bottom may have a profound effect on a city's built form, but that doesn't mean the city can't successfully pursue smart growth.

See the list at right for metro areas with the least educated 18-34 year olds. They are mostly small urbanized places. Five of them are in California's central valley, and the rest are in other parts of the South and Southwest, from North Carolina to Arizona. The built pattern in these communities is mostly sprawl, and they have tended to grow fast in recent decades. Since the housing crash, growth has slowed considerably. What growth has occurred in these places in 2011 and 2012 has mostly consisted of single-family, auto-oriented housing.

The one town with strong growth now is Odessa, Texas, in oil country.

Changing the building patterns in these communities that offer little attraction for college-educated young adults will be a challenge. That's too bad, because these are typically metro

### Metro areas with smallest % of 18-34 year olds with college degree

Hanford, CA	5.6
Madera, CA	6.0
Jacksonville, NC	6.1
Yuma, AZ	6.7
Visalia, CA	7.0
Merced, CA	7.3
Farmington, NM	7.8
Odessa, TX	8.1
Hinesville, GA	8.1
Bakersfield, CA	8.5

Source: *Are We There Yet?*, Reconnecting America

areas with relatively low wages, and sprawl tends to raise family transportation costs significantly.

Lancaster, California, is one example of how smart growth can take hold in a community without a strong "creative class" demographic. Lancaster is not on the list above, but it is similar in some ways to those cities. Lancaster is a small-to-midsize inland city in California. Its higher education facilities are paltry compared to the top "creative class" cities. Yet Lancaster rebuilt its main street and spawned a downtown renaissance in recent years (see the January-February 2013

issue of *Better! Cities & Towns*). The \$11.5 million investment has yielded \$273 million in economic output so far. The project was completed in 2010.

With some vision, these metros could adopt a cost-effective version of smart growth that makes use of a simple street grid or "complete street" transformations. Along the way, they may attract more college-educated young adults.

**A primary thoroughfare in Lancaster, California, was transformed from a dreary five-lane arterial to a premier public space, attracting mixed-use development and people, and giving the city a new identity.**



COURTESY OF THE CITY OF LANCASTER

to take place in the South and Southwest and has focused on major metro areas, the creative class is distributed in every region and every size category. The smallest cities on the list are college towns, but the presence of high-tech and biomedical industry is a big factor in many of the larger metro areas.

- The creative class has implications for transformation of the suburbs. The Washington, DC, region has 43 “regionally significant” urban centers, mostly outside of the city proper, and the vast majority were developed in the last two decades. Researcher and real estate expert Christopher Leinberger finds that the educational level of the region has been a big factor in its transformation. Many educated young adults are heading for the suburbs, but they are still looking for urban lifestyles. Metro

areas with a high numbers of creative class workers will likely find it easier to make suburbs more walkable — both in terms of political will and development pressure in that direction.

When these young adults start having children — and many of them already are — most won’t just buy a house on a cul-de-sac like their parents. They will be looking for the walkable niches in the region (see story below).

**IMPACT ON COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

- More than housing is affected. Since 2009, nearly half of commercial development of all kinds in the DC region was directed to the major mixed-use centers, Leinberger reports. The walkable housing may be key to attracting high-tech and research-oriented businesses that

want to locate near talented employees, some urban planners have told *Better! Cities & Towns*.

- Just because a region has the most educated young adults doesn’t mean it is always successful in attracting this demographic group. Only 14.2 percent of the population in Boston is between 25 and 34, a couple of percentage points less than New York City, DC, and Austin, TX, according to *Emerging Trends in Real Estate*. One possible reason: Boston’s high housing prices.

- For some metro areas — e.g. Baltimore — the ability to attract Millennials has been a bright spot in an otherwise lackluster real estate economy. Number four on the list for metro areas with a 1-3 million residents, Baltimore has a 10-year record of attracting “Echo Boomers,” notes *Emerging Trends*. ♦

**Hipster havens in the suburbs**

Upwards of 1.6 million young adults have college degrees in the New York City metro region, and many of them have grown fond of urban, walkable living. *The New York Times* reported in February on Hudson River towns like Hastings, Dobbs Ferry, Irvington, and Tarrytown where the hipsters head to when they leave the city to raise families.

“I don’t think we need to be in Brooklyn,” Marie Labropoulos, who recently moved to Dobbs Ferry and opened a shop, Kalliste, selling artisanal vegan soap, told *The Times*. “We’re bringing Brooklyn with us.”

The young professionals are making a cultural impact on these “pedestrian-friendly towns, filled with low-rise 19th century brick buildings and non-chain shops,” *The Times* reports. They may have a political impact as well.

Noted one urban planner on an architectural listserve: “There’s a lot of discussion about the inertia that New Urbanist planners and architects encounter when they work with townspeople. I don’t think it would be far fetched to suggest that the makeup of townspeople in many suburban areas may profoundly shift over the next 20 years in a pro-urbanism direction, as the people who will attend town hall meetings in the future may be more enthusiastic about street life than their parents.”

Although these historic towns, and others in the region, have ready-made culture and character that appeal to the former New Yorkers, they are in short supply compared to the wave of Millennials. The region has many more suburbs that have the potential for retrofit. Suburbs built in the first two decades after World War II, with connected street networks and canopies of trees, could be made more walkable with complete streets and mixed-use development on arterial roads. That could be the next project for hipsters after they inhabit the old towns. ♦



The center of Hastings-on-Hudson, above, and a Google Earth view of the town, below.



SOURCE: GOOGLE EARTH

# Streetcar roots

FROM PAGE 1

new development, some relating to high-tech and research — Assembly Row, and the Green Line’s Washington Street and Union Square stations. The other three stations can support little new development but will connect, via transit, thousands of households to jobs. Placemaking is important — planners are creating a strong identity for each neighborhood (see image below).

With the inevitable “creative class” development, Somerville’s land values are bound to rise. Preserving the city’s working-class character is a challenge when at least 50,000 residents will be newly connected to transit. “The goal is for Somerville to become more vibrant and more walkable, with better access to jobs,” says planning director George Proakis. “At the same time, the city needs to be a model of diversity, sustainability, and innovation. Somerville is unique and we want to remain the



**Green Line expansion: The five stations from Union Square to Ball Square are in Somerville. Weekday ridership on this section of the Green Line is expected to be 52,000.**

interesting place we are.”

At 4.3 square miles, Somerville is small yet among the most densely populated cities in the US. Most of the city consists of close-together houses on tight, walkable streets. The city borders Boston, Cambridge, and Medford in

the core of the metro region — one of the strongest real estate markets in the US for commercial development. Boston also has one of the most educated populaces in the US — 38 percent of 18-34 year olds have college diplomas. Employment gains in high-tech and biomedical research are driving much of the commercial development. Adjacent Cambridge is a hotbed of that growth — especially areas around Massachusetts Institute of Technology. This development could spark growth in underutilized areas of Somerville, a little over a mile away — if the right urban environment is created.

“This could be a logical place for life sciences research to jump, but it will only do that if the kind of people who work in Cambridge’s mixed-use, walkable Kendall Square would want to live in this new area,” says David Dixon of Goody Clancy, which is designing a large TOD around the Green Line’s planned Washington Street station. Somerville already has a strong “creative class” component, and the city has seen a number of former industrial buildings redeveloped as artists’ lofts in an area called Brickbottom.

## BRICKBOTTOM/INNER BELT

Brickbottom and an adjacent area called Inner Belt, both gritty and industrial, total 180 acres — the largest potential TOD district in Somerville. Most of the city’s new development will go into these areas and a few others that comprise 15 percent of the city’s land. Brickbottom and Inner Belt will be transformed in the coming decades in



**Transformation planned for the Gilman Square area. Rearranged street pattern and infill buildings create a distinct public space to define the neighborhood. The station is across the street from the new square.**



SPECK & ASSOCIATES WITH RUSSELL PRESTON / CARRICO ILLUSTRATION

the wake of the Green Line’s Washington Street station, which will serve the area.

Brickbottom has a street grid and residents would like to see the area retain its funky mix of uses, including light industrial and even a school bus parking lot, according to Ben Carlson, the project manager for Goody Clancy. Some of the streets lack sidewalks and street trees, and streetscape improvements will be key to bringing development and walkability to the area. One of the planned new public spaces is a loft parking lot that could, with some infrastructure investment, be suitable for “pop-up” festivals and markets. A walking path will enter the area along the Green Line and serve as a new amenity linking residents to nature and to destinations like the transit stop.

Cut off from the rest of the city by railroad tracks and the elevated, limited-access McGrath Highway, Brickbottom nevertheless has immediate potential, especially the parts that are adjacent to the planned new station. Replacing the McGrath Highway, which serves no critical purpose, with an at-grade thoroughfare is a long-term idea that would make this neighborhood really take off, planners say.

Across the tracks, the Inner Belt has no street grid and urbanism will have to be created from scratch — but the area has some advantages. The northern boundary of Inner Belt is Washington Street, where the new transit station will go. That street already has a Walk Score of 86, which is “very walkable.”

A major Boston developer, Corcoran Jennison, owns a strip shopping center and affordable housing complex aimed at senior citizens on Washington Street. The firm is looking to redevelop the site as a mixed-use TOD, doubling the density and adding market-rate housing while preserving the affordable units, says Carlson. With the transit service, the parking ratio could be cut in half and higher rents charged for the market-rate units — which makes the numbers work for redevelopment.

Washington Street needs to be “brought to life” as a complete street, according to Goody Clancy, which should get development moving at the edge of the Inner Belt. Other parts of the neighborhood will require major infrastructure investments to improve connectivity and build walkable streets. That’s a long-term opportunity that may take 20 years to complete.

**THE NEIGHBORHOOD SQUARES**

Beyond Washington Street, the Green Line will have three stations in Somerville — Gilman Square, Magoun Square/Lowell Street, and Ball Square. The final stop is at College Avenue and Tufts University in Medford.

The three Somerville stops are planned in densely populated neighborhoods, where design will promote placemaking and infill development. The current “squares” are intersections that historically served as neighborhood hubs. At Gilman Square, Speck worked with the city to design an actual square. The current intersection is rearranged to shape a small public space bounded by small new buildings — the city has money to acquire sites for building (see image).

At Lowell Street, the plan is to improve the visual connection to Magoun Square, a couple of short blocks away. Key to that plan is a new building to create a terminating vista and orient people from the station to the square.



Existing buildings in Brickbottom/Inner Belt, above. The plan below is a long-term buildout that will require major connectivity improvements. The circle with the ‘T’ is the planned Washington Street station.



PLANS COURTESY OF BEN CARLSON, GOODY CLANCY

Ball Square has a strong commercial core but a huge intersection that hampers walkability. The city plans to tame that intersection, making it more pedestrian friendly, while fostering some infill development.

Overall, Somerville is a community with more residential units than jobs by a 2-to-1 margin, planners say. One big idea is to bring more jobs to change that ratio. Up to 5 million square feet of workplace development could be built at Brickbottom/Inner Belt and up to 1.75 million square feet at Assembly Row, says Carlson. Assembly Row is being developed by Federal Realty Investment Trust, which is doing retail and office, and Avalon Bay, which is doing residential.

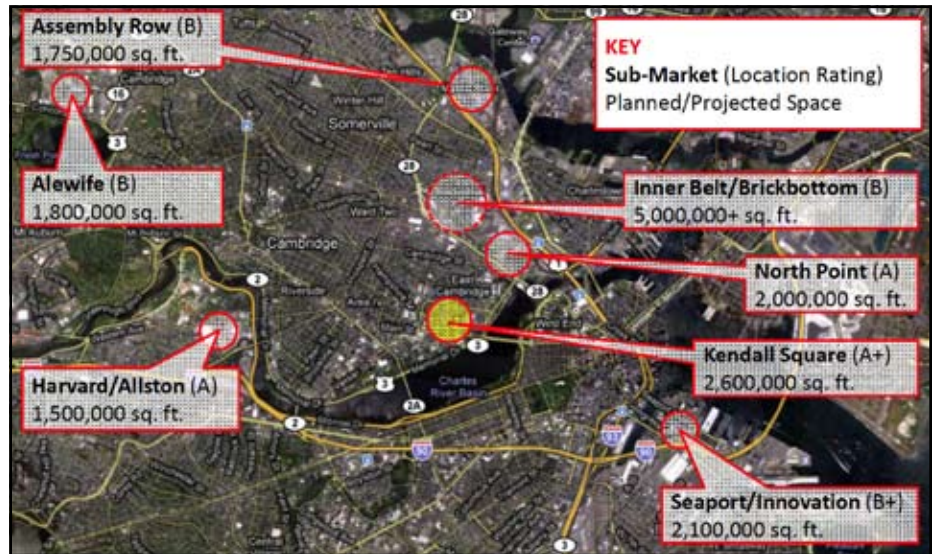
**GOALS FOR AFFORDABILITY**

Maintaining affordable housing is a priority for the city. Somerville was the recipient of a \$1.8 million sustainable communities grant in 2010 from US Housing and Urban De-

velopment — which made the whole plan possible, Proakis says. Of that money, \$600,000 was allocated toward planning and \$1.2 million to property acquisition for permanent affordable housing. The plan is to buy land, sell to developers who are good at affordable housing, and create a land bank. A zoning provision was put in place to require that a percentage of new units be built as affordable housing. The comprehensive plan calls for 6,000 new housing units, 1,200 of them long-term affordable, and 30,000 new jobs, Proakis says.

The city is reforming its zoning code to make sure the development creates an appealing urban environment. A form-based code is being drafted for Brickbottom and around the three squares. The Inner Belt will have more flexible planned-unit development regulations, but these will also include graphic urban design standards, Proakis says.

Union Square in Somerville—an area that is already transforming to a hip urban center with significant development potential—will get a station on a branch of the Green Line. The city has already completed substantial planning



Major urban research centers, planned or underway, in the Somerville, Cambridge, North Boston subregion.

for this site.

New Urbanism in Somerville will take the form of intense commercial development with multifamily residential near transit. The older, finer-grained parts of the city will acquire stronger centers and better public transit. Yet

the changes require little or no historic fabric be demolished. The big changes planned to help knit the city back together are a far cry from the careless urban renewal of the middle 20th Century. ♦

## Urban lifestyles

FROM PAGE 1

year compounded, or three times faster than inflation in the overall economy.

- Both the income and the accumulated wealth of the median household are falling. In the 1980s the top fifth of US households possessed 80 percent of the nation's wealth, but by 2010 the top 20 percent had 99 percent of the wealth, reducing the size of the for-sale housing market.

- Unemployment will remain higher than it was during the long postwar boom.

- Institutional support for homeownership is waning—evidenced by higher credit-score standards, higher downpayment requirements, and the tightening of other mortgage underwriting standards. This will crimp the ability of Americans to buy houses.

Taken together, these trends will impel many Americans to live more thriftily—at higher densities, in more walkable neighborhoods, closer to jobs, services, and public transit. *Reshaping Metropolitan America* predicts that from 2010 to 2030, 74 percent of new housing demand will be for small homes on smaller lots than were the norm in the previous two decades. Attached housing

and rentals will proliferate. Boomers will be unloading their large detached houses.

Choice of location will become more constrained. "There may be little or no demand for homes in exurban or suburban fringe areas of slow-growing or stagnating metropolitan areas," he suggests. For homebuyers, Nelson says, the bottom line is that "values will be preserved and possibly enhanced only by purchasing homes in closer-in urban and suburban locations."

### OPPORTUNITY BECKONS

Given the economic distress that Nelson sees as a persistent element in our future, I was surprised by the large volume of development he forecasts. More than 30 million new or replaced residential units, he says, will be created between 2010 and 2030. That's equal to about a quarter of all the housing that existed in 2010. Why so much? There are two main reasons: First, the US will grow by 65 million people, or 21 percent. Second, recent surveys show that "about half of Americans want to live in walkable communities with mixed housing

#### Home value expectation

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

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



and other mixed uses.”

Nelson says a monumental shift in housing preferences, already under way among baby-boomers (born 1946-1964) and Gen Y (born 1981-1995), could allow much of the coming development to take a relatively compact form. “Rising energy prices and increasing congestion will increase the demand for locations and real estate developments that offer live-work options, less driving, or enhanced opportunities to work at home.”

Much of this urban-style redevelopment will take place in the suburbs, where cheaply built stores and large parking lots present attractive development opportunities, he says. “Multifamily development demand will focus around public transit stations and near suburban centers. Over time, single-use commercial strips will be turned into mixed-use corridors.”

More of the country’s households will contain multiple generations. Average household size dropped for more than a century, but the decline seems to have ended recently, and it may start to reverse. Extrapolating from trends recorded between 1980 and 2010, Nelson says that “about 20 percent of Americans will be in multigenerational households by 2030.” The number could be even higher—closer to household composition in 1900, when approximately 24 percent of dwellings were occupied by multiple generations.

The chief vulnerability of *Reshaping Metropolitan America* is that its forecast depends heavily on trends that aren’t guaranteed to continue. If energy were

## US population changes by region, 2010-2030

Geographic area	Population (figures in 1000s)				
	2010	2030	Change	% change	Share of change (%)
United States	309,350	373,924	309,350	21	
<i>Census regions</i>					
Northeast	55,361	60,490	5,129	9	8
Midwest	66,976	74,374	7,398	11	11
South	114,866	147,794	32,928	29	51
West	72,147	91,267	19,120	27	30
<i>Census divisions</i>					
New England	14,457	16,234	1,776	12	3
Mid Atlantic	40,904	44,256	3,353	8	5
East North Central	46,439	50,747	4,309	9	7
West North Central	20,537	23,626	3,089	15	5
South Atlantic	59,923	77,435	17,512	29	27
East South Central	18,458	22,153	3,695	20	6
West South Central	36,485	48,205	11,721	32	18
Mountain	22,137	29,723	7,587	34	12
Pacific	50,010	61,544	11,534	23	18

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

**Source:** Adapted from Woods & Poole Economics in *Reshaping Metropolitan America*, Island Press, 2013

to become cheaper and more abundant, or if cities were to become as angry and dangerous as they were 40 years ago, or if popular preferences were to shift in unanticipated ways, Nelson’s predictions could be thrown off. Nonetheless, his forecast seems well-supported by current economic and demographic facts.

From the perspective of New Urbanism and smart growth, the biggest concern is whether the US will be able to seize the huge, emerging opportunities. By Nelson’s calculations, about 10 million households now have the option of living in “mixed-use, amenity-rich, transit-accessible” locations. By 2030,

fully a quarter to a third of the nation’s 143 million households will want those options. To meet the explosion of demand, the supply of housing in walkable, mixed-use settings will have to grow by *at least 25 million units—in less than two decades.*

That’s a tall order. “For the most part, planners and public decision makers do not comprehend the magnitude of changes that will occur in the housing market to 2030,” Nelson warns. “By the time market realities become evident, many options may have been foreclosed.”

The challenge, then, is to rapidly start framing and implementing strategies that can address the coming needs. Parking standards will have to be altered. Local governments should authorize accessory dwelling units. Infill development and conversion to new uses will require favorable municipal policies. Zoning in many places will have to be reformed. Infrastructure improvements—roads, sidewalks, transit, parks—will be needed.

## RESHAPING AMERICA INDEX

To propel progress, Nelson has devised the Reshape America Index (RAI), which estimates how much additional residential and nonresidential space will be needed in various parts of the nation. The Index is based on the idea that many existing residential and nonresidential buildings will have to be razed and replaced by denser (and in many instances

## The prospects for retail space

Nelson projects that between 2010 and 2030, nearly 80 billion square feet of nonresidential space will be replaced or redone in the US. Retail structures have a short lifespan, he points out. The rapid obsolescence opens substantial opportunities to build retail in a more walkable, mixed-use, transit-supported fashion.

Nelson doesn’t think retailing will make a huge shift to the Internet—at least not enough to make physical retail space a thing of the past. Web-based retail sales, even after increasing

by more than 10 percent a year between 2002 and 2012, “still accounted for less than 5 percent of all sales” last year, he notes. At this pace, e-commerce will account for under 13 percent of retailing by 2030, and, he says, “I do not expect much if any reduction in retail space demand in the United States.”

“Some retail activities defy e-commerce, especially restaurants, coffee shops, bars, and beauty salons,” he says. “Moreover, the best way to comparison shop is by seeing, touching, and in some cases, trying on the goods.”

mixed-use) development.

"Given the vastness of [current] low-density suburban development, the RAI assumes that the average land-use intensity of existing metropolitan-wide development can be doubled without triggering major design solutions for parking and access," Nelson explains. The book contains a table showing how much new construction will be needed in the nation's nine Census divisions.

With supportive governmental policies, all but two of those Census divisions—the South Atlantic and West South Central—could accommodate the needed housing and non-residential development without consuming any farms, forests, or other natural terrain, he maintains. A more detailed breakdown, which adapts figures from Woods & Poole Economics, shows the redevelopment potential of 124 Combined Statistical

Areas, 365 Metropolitan Statistical Areas, and 575 Micropolitan Statistical Areas. The detailed study is not in the book but can be downloaded at [www.ReshapeMetroAmerica.org](http://www.ReshapeMetroAmerica.org).

If the Index spurs governments to take action, it will have performed an important service. Certainly the book as a whole is a boon to intelligent and efficient development. Nelson has a keen eye for trends and possibilities. The kinds of development he favors are what this country should be working toward. ♦

*Reshaping Metropolitan America: Development Trends and Opportunities to 2030, by Arthur C. Nelson, is published by Island Press, 2013, 168 pp., \$70 hardcover, \$35 paperback.*

*Philip Langdon's latest book is The Private Oasis: The Landscape Architecture and Gardens of Edmund Hollander Design.*

## The 'Main Street' of the Bronx is restored

The Grand Concourse in the Bronx is undergoing an \$18 million renovation, one of the largest complete streets projects in the US — and perhaps the one that directly affects the most people. Much of the renovation, from 161st Street to 171st Street, is complete. The project includes new landscaping, lighting, wider medians, bicycle lanes, a plaza redo, and major infrastructure improvements.

The Grand Concourse is a boulevard, about five miles long, designed and built in the 1890s through the first decade of the 1900s. It includes primary traffic lanes bounded by tree-lined medians and slower-moving local lanes. Four rows of trees, wide sidewalks, and on-street parking line the thoroughfare. The part of the street undergoing reconstruction is about 1 mile long, from Yankee Stadium (one block away), extending north.

The Concourse is bounded by neighborhoods that are still fairly poor and mostly Hispanic. Although the South Bronx went through severe decline in the late 1960s and 1970s, few buildings were abandoned on the Concourse, which is still lined with residential and mixed-use buildings, six floors and taller. The thoroughfare looks much the same as it did a half-century early.

Since plummeting in population in the late Sixties and Seventies, the Bronx has bounced back, gaining 200,000 in population since 1980.

The area within a half mile of this section comprises approximately 1.8 square miles, with about 175,000 residents. Most of those residents walk to the Grand Concourse and access its transit, commercial

activity, and culture. The price tag for the project amounts to about \$100 per the resident within walking distance.

There are three subway stations, plus frequent bus transit along the section. The renovation will make the thoroughfare more walkable and bikable. It will improve the lives of the people who live along it.

A large public space, Lou Gehrig Plaza, was improved, helping to connect the thoroughfare with Yankee Stadium.

While 20th Century transportation engineers made the street more of a barrier, the improvements turn it back into a seam — linking neighborhoods back together.

This being New York City, there were costs that an ordinary complete street

project would not incur, such as replacing an arch structure for an underpass at 161st Street.

New York City Department of Transportation commissioner Janette Sadik-Kahn said they project puts the "'grand' back into the Grand Concourse." ♦



People on the revitalized Grand Concourse



# Silver Spring project brings green space to transit

Moderate and high-density urban environments are more appealing when residents can connect with nature through access to green space. Transit-oriented developments (TODs), best designed around public spaces that provide surrounding neighborhoods with an identity, offer an opportunity to create parks.

That's the central idea behind a redevelopment plan for 27 acres in Downtown Silver Spring, Maryland. Proposed are 2,800 residential units, office space, retail (including a grocery store), and a hotel. The \$625 million project yields 100 units to the acre one block from the Metro station, in the form of urban blocks with a series of outdoor rooms.

Currently the site is an anomaly downtown — a superblock that *Greater Greater Washington* columnist Dan Reed called “a suburban relic.” It includes a strip mall with a Giant store, residential high rises, and a large surface parking lot. The block forms a barrier to neighborhoods southwest of downtown walking to Metro and other amenities. There are 1,400 residential units currently in The Blairs high-rise development, many of which are preserved in the new plan.

The project could start as early as 2014 — but will likely take at least 20 years to complete because the Giant has 15 years remaining on its lease.

The market is strong — DC and its close-in suburbs, particularly those walkable to transit, are booming with multifamily rental development now. A highly educated workforce is fueling the demand for walkable TODs. DC's market continues to be one of the strongest for commercial development, according to *Emerging Trends in Real Estate*.

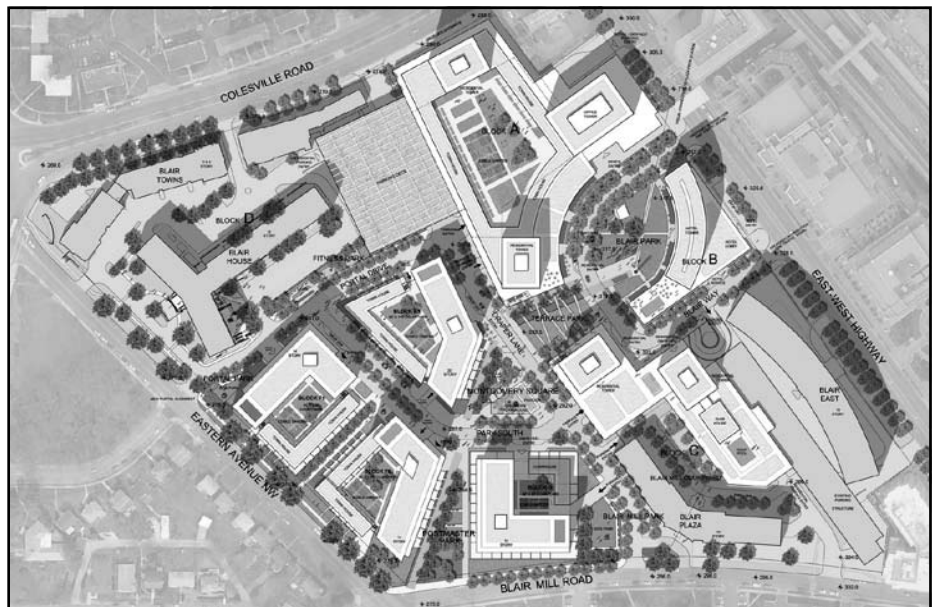
Silver Spring developed as a historic town on the outskirts of DC. Its downtown declined as sprawl swept around it in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Several blocks downtown were demolished to build an automobile-oriented shopping mall that ultimately failed — leaving a hole at the center of town. Downtown began coming to life in the 1990s on a new urban model — a catalyst was redevelopment of the mall site — and is now a popular and regionally significant urban center.

The town's revival is part of a broad trend toward mixed-use urban centers



SOURCE: SASAKI ASSOCIATES

Green spaces planned for The Blairs, above, and the redevelopment plan, below.



SOURCE: SASAKI ASSOCIATES

in the suburbs of DC — several dozen have sprung into being in the last two decades.

## EXISTING PUBLIC SPACES

Downtown Silver Spring has many urban plazas. Several parks are four or five blocks away from The Blairs — just distant enough that downtown residents complained about a lack of green space, which is why Montgomery County planners wrote *Silver Spring Green Space Guidelines*. The guidelines emphasize the social importance of green space, offer guidance on design, and make the case for how developers can benefit. Case studies document higher housing values around green spaces in Kentlands and King Farm — new urban developments in nearby communities Gaithersburg

and Rockville.

In response, the proposal by The Tower Companies, owners of The Blairs, offers five new small parks and better pedestrian linkages while expanding the size of downtown. “The first objective is to integrate the community, not just our community but the surrounding communities also,” the firm's development director, Edward Murn told the *Washington Business Journal*. The parks will be programmed with cultural activities.

The project will go through review, including an analysis of the green space. One urbanist on a professional listserv commented that the public spaces — shown in images above — are overdesigned. “There are too many zig-zaggy pathways, unnecessary walls, grand staircases to nowhere,” he said.

The commenter raised concerns about future maintenance costs and the usefulness of so many features. Nevertheless, the green spaces — as designed or with modifications — will be amenities that contribute to the identity and character of the neighborhood.

The urban design uses the “Vancouver model” of towers — some as high as 200 feet — on top of parking podiums wrapped by either townhouses with ground-floor entries or street-facing retail. The townhouses will provide an urban single-family option that is in short supply downtown.

Bing Thom Architects Inc., based in Vancouver, British Columbia, and Boston-based Sasaki Associates Inc. drafted the plan. Sasaki Principal Alan Ward told the *Business Journal* that the layout was shaped by designing open spaces first and integrating the new buildings around them. Many of the old high-rises are preserved without compromising the urban block pattern.

At the corner nearest Metro, the site already has a Walk Score of 97, called “walker’s paradise.” This project will make the site even more walkable.



SOURCE: SASAKI ASSOCIATES

An eye-level view of a plaza in The Blairs

See [www.montgomeryplanning.org/community/ssgreenspace/index.shtm](http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/community/ssgreenspace/index.shtm) to download the Silver Spring Green Space Guidelines. ♦

## Transit-oriented, multigenerational affordability in Southern CA

*LEED platinum apartment building brings seniors and children together in a downtown infill location.*

LARRY SCHROEDER

Claremont, a leafy, academically oriented city of about 35,000 at the base of Southern California’s San Gabriel Mountains, takes sustainability and affordable housing seriously. Those priorities are exemplified by the Courier Place Apartment Homes, a multigenerational development on 3.4 acres adjacent to the transit station and the Claremont’s Village Expansion downtown area.

Close to shopping, schools, parks, and entertainment, this workforce housing completed in 2012 provides a much-needed residential component to the city and to downtown.

At a density of 22 units per acre, the three-story Courier Place encompasses 75 affordable apartments arranged in three residential buildings and a 3,000 square-foot recreation center including a multipurpose room, kitchen, restrooms, and computer lab. Outdoor amenities include a swimming pool, patio dining area, a tot lot, and covered parking with photovoltaic (solar) panels. The property also features an internal network of landscaped courtyards, a walking path, and resident common areas.

Built by Jamboree Housing Corpora-



COURTESY OF THE CITY OF CLAREMONT

Courier Place in Claremont

tion, one of California’s largest nonprofit affordable housing developers, Courier Place has been certified LEED for Homes Platinum by the US Green Building Council, one of only a few LEED Platinum affordable housing developments in California.

Courier Place’s green design includes optimum water efficiency, increased wall insulation, highly efficient windows and glass slider doors, energy efficient lighting, and ENERGY STAR appliances in each apartment — helping to reduce residents’ utility bills. Most of the energy for the property’s common areas is generated by photo voltaic cells situated atop the carport roofs.

Courier Place has low-VOC carpet-

ing, underlayment, and adhesives, and no-VOC interior paint for healthy interiors. Low-flow plumbing fixtures and tankless water heaters in all apartments ensure water conservation. The site uses less than half the water of traditional landscaping — 66 percent of plants are drought tolerant — coupled with highly efficient drip irrigation in many of the plant beds.

To control storm water runoff, the Courier Place site is served by an underground water retention/detention system that consists of three plastic pipes that measure 60 inches in diameter and 112 feet in length that are buried contiguous to one another about 25 feet under the parking lot. All storm water runoff

from the Courier Place site drains into the system, which is designed to accommodate a theoretical 50-year storm. The polyethylene pipes contain the water, which drains through perforations into a six-foot deep gravel bed, and then into the ground.

### MULTIGENERATIONAL LIVING

Courier Place is one of only a few affordable, multigenerational, multifamily housing developments in California. It is also the first affordable, multigenerational project developed in the County of Los Angeles and the City of Claremont.

Multigenerational living is an increasingly popular lifestyle concept based on the idea that the blending of families and seniors builds a stronger community and offers a lifestyle that enhances health and happiness. In a mature community such as Claremont, with thousands of long-term residents who want to age in place, the mix makes perfect sense. "It is only recently that we have started to see these projects become more popular in California and only a few have been affordable," says Laura Archuleta, Jamboree's president.

The property includes a distinctly designed apartment building for senior citizens and two buildings for families — as well as a shared community center and pool. Seniors live in 38 one-bedroom apartments in their building with a

third-floor deck patio and a two-story recreation space. Family apartments are encompassed in two buildings with 36 two- and three-bedroom, two-bath apartments.

The average age of seniors in this new TOD property is 75 years, and the 36 families living here include 66 children. Residents earn between 30 percent and 50 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI).

Because seniors have their own building, they can live quietly or interact with families in the community center, playground, pool, or patio dining areas.

Unlike other senior communities that limit children's visits or access to common areas, the "separate yet integrated" multigenerational design of Courier Place gives seniors the opportunity to invite their children and grandchildren to enjoy all the amenities.

To enhance interaction between the generations, programs include shared field trips to museums and cultural attractions for educational purposes; mentoring programs for seniors and youth to work together; and classes for seniors that are led by teens to help seniors better understand and utilize technology.

### A PROTOTYPE FOR FUTURE HOUSING

Former Claremont Mayor Sam Pedroza, who was mayor during the en-

titlement, planning and development of Courier Place, emphasized at the grand opening, noted that the city wants to share its experience in building this prototype project.

Courier Place also exemplifies redeveloping an infill site that might otherwise sit unused. The site was previously occupied for many years by the Claremont Courier community newspaper, hence the name (the newspaper relocated.) Courier Place's proximity to employment helps reduce local and regional traffic congestion by allowing low- and moderate-income workers to live closer to their jobs. Courier Place is currently home to 22 residents who work in Claremont, several of whom can walk to work.

The development's transit-oriented location also responds directly to California's greenhouse gas law SB-375 that requires new residential projects to be built near public transportation to reduce vehicle miles traveled and therefore carbon emissions. More than 350 bus or Metrolink commuter train rides are available daily to residents within a half-mile of the site.

With its distinct design and many positive sustainable and lifestyle attributes, Courier Place has earned accolades from the National Association of Home Builders, the Pacific Coast Builders Conference, and the city's Architectural Commission.

### A PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP

The \$21.36 million financing is the type of public/private investment that can create new opportunities for affordable housing development, especially in light of the loss of redevelopment funding in California.

Courier Place received \$2.75 million of HOME/City of Industry Funds from the Los Angeles County Community Development Commission, and the City of Claremont provided \$4.91 million. Other financing consisted of 9 percent Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) from the California Tax Credit Allocation Committee (TCAC) purchased for \$13.3 million by WNC & Associates, the equity investor; and a \$13 million construction loan from US Bank. Jamboree purchased the land from the Claremont Redevelopment Agency and Golden

## Claremont sustainability initiative

The City of Claremont and its residents have dramatically increased their use of solar energy and significantly reduced water consumption. Specifically:

- From 2009 to 2011, all new non-residential construction with more than 20,000 square feet of useable floor area was designed to meet LEED standards. All project developers have indicated that they are seeking Silver LEED Certification or higher for these projects.

- With 16 buildings either LEED certified or seeking LEED certification, Claremont has a very high number for a city of its size. The city and residents increased production of solar electricity generated in the city by nearly 50 percent. Photovoltaic systems were

installed on 61 homes and one city facility.

- The city's broader goal is to reduce citywide energy usage by 20 percent by 2015, water usage by 40 percent by 2017, and greenhouse gas emissions by 20 percent by 2020.

A key component of achieving these and other goals that are part of the sustainability initiative is public/private collaboration as represented by the Claremont Home Energy Retrofit Project, which promotes energy efficiency improvements in private homes. In 2011, the city invested more than \$6,500 in incentives for this program in addition to the \$75,000 invested by the regional electric utility and the County of Los Angeles.

State Water Company.

**STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION**

Claremont citizens also played an important public role in allowing Courier Place’s design and development to move forward. Generally, small design-related projects are reviewed and acted upon by the planning staff. Larger projects such as Courier Place are reviewed and acted upon by the City’s Architectural Commission. ♦

*Larry Schroeder is mayor of the City of Claremont*

**An architecture of place rather than time**

JOHN MASSENGALE

*Note: The following piece is a response to the question, “Where do you stand on the traditional versus modern debate, and why? Is there a contemporary compromise?” that was posed on the blog Glass House Conversations (glasshouseconversations.org) associated with Philip Johnson’s Glass House.*

**M**y interest here is not about style. I like all sorts of towns, cities and buildings, but what I design are Classical buildings and traditional towns and cities.

“Classical” does not mean “traditional” (or “neo-traditional”), and Classicism is a way of designing rather than a style. Most of the market doesn’t want ideological purity, and when it does, the bias is likely to be towards traditional.

More to the point, I grew up in the suburbs but I live in Manhattan, and what I’m most interested in is the design of walkable places. To talk about that in the context of this discussion, I think it’s better to talk about an architecture of place versus an architecture of time, rather than about style.

The architecture of time is the architecture of the Zeitgeist, the theory that has sustained Modernism for well over 100 years. Frank Lloyd Wright was born just after the Civil War and designed important houses in the 19th century, and Modernism was the dominant cultural expression in America as soon as World War II ended. I think that time has ended.

The architecture of time has produced many great buildings, but it comes with two large caveats. One, its rate of return is terrible: for every Ronchamps or Bilbao there have been hundreds, if not thousands, of very bad buildings. Great Modern design is hard to teach, and the emphasis on experimentation and “unprecedented reality” produces many experimental failures (“Architecture is invention. All the rest is repetition and of no interest,” Oscar Niemeyer said). Moreover, the architecture of time also includes all the Modernist shopping centers, strip malls, spec office buildings and the like.

Second, the architecture of time is more about making objects than places, and Modernism has produced very few great places, and absolutely none to rival the great places like the Piazza San Marco in Venice or even New York’s Park Avenue or the typical residential street in Park Slope, Brooklyn (built almost entirely without architects or urban designers).

Periodically, publications like *Time Out* will ask its readers



South Portland Street, Brooklyn

to pick their favorite street, and the winner is always a street like South Portland Avenue in Brooklyn, a street laid out by a surveyor that is straight as an arrow, with simple repetitive row houses built on speculation without the assistance of architects. Enlarge the area of discussion to the creation of towns and cities, and there’s no contest. After more than 100 years of trying, during the wealthiest period in the history of the world, where is the great Modernist city, town or neighborhood?

Modernism also tends to work best in a traditional context. The Seagram Building on Park Avenue was a glass gem in a traditional masonry setting that added variety and interest to Park when it was built.

Lever House, almost across the street, was the same. But go there today and walk south to the blocks that where glass boxes have entirely replaced the earlier masonry buildings and the street loses much of its appeal to pedestrians, even though the wide street itself brings variety and sunlight to midtown Manhattan. Richard Florida’s Creative Class, which chooses the character of where it wants to live and work before taking a job, is why Silicon Alley is located downtown in neighborhoods where Modernism is still the exception rather than the rule. Like most people, Millennials like both Modernist and traditional architecture, but they clearly prefer traditional urbanism.

**TIMELESS PRINCIPLES**

The architecture of place is about creating and reinforcing places where people feel good, making a public realm with comfortable outdoor “rooms.” It uses the “timeless principles” described by Christopher Alexander and Jane Jacobs to do that. These principles work across what New Urbanists call “the Transect,” the range of patterns from the densest downtown like New York’s Wall Street to the smallest walkable village or hamlet. In the 21st century, one of the most important uses for those principles is the creation of walkable, comfortable places that entice us to get out of our cars. “You can’t spell ‘carbon’ without ‘car.’” they say. Before the hegemony of the architecture of time, all architects thought their first responsibility in designing a building was reinforcing that public realm.

The object buildings, the expression of technology at the heart of the architecture of time, and the emphasis on the expression of originality usually fight against that. And the

so-called “avant grade” side of the profession that dominates the academic and media discussion pursues goals that by definition means their buildings can’t play well with others. “Great buildings contradict everything else,” fashionable architect Gregg Pasquarelli said in a discussion in *New York* magazine about the best buildings in New York. “Maybe that’s what a city is: confrontation and complication. In New York, the name of the game is to have one’s own envelope,” his former Dean at Columbia replied. The builders and architects who made the New York we love—like the developers of Park Slope and the architects like McKim, Mead & White who built our great monuments like Penn Station—believed exactly the opposite.

I was born in New York and the suburbs I grew up in were less than 10 miles away from Philip Johnson’s Glass House. After I got my driver’s license, I used to sometimes go peer over the wall at the edge of the property, and once or twice Johnson came out and shook his fist before I drove away.

The Glass House is a great work of architecture, and one of my favorite buildings. It is a folly in the woods that draws on lessons of history, but it is also an object building and resolute expression of the zeitgeist of the postwar time when it was built. I should say that Johnson’s zeitgeist is not mine, and one has to ask if Modernism, an architecture of time, expresses the current zeitgeist, or if it is just a style.

We are the first generations in the history of the world who realize that the way we build will determine the future of our



Buildings in ‘Silicon Alley’

planet, for better or for worse. We need walkable and sustainable cities, towns and neighborhoods, and that is overwhelmingly what the young want. They’re happy with many styles, but they want cities and towns where they can lead their lives without cars. More important than the style of second houses for the rich in the Hamptons is the construction and reconstruction of urbanism where people want to be.

Towards that end, at this time Modernism needs to overcome its obsession with the expression of technology and the creation of controversial objects. The fixation on the aesthetic perfection of the energy-wasting glass curtain wall is irrespon-

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sible towards future generations, and the idea that the style of a design by Jean Nouvel for obscenely expensive Manhattan pied-a-terres for the super-rich is somehow a progressive action is delusional, anti-social, and anti-urban. The discussion of how to make and reinforce places that are environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable is much more important than talking about architectural style. But style in the broadest sense, the style and character of buildings that people love and that make good urbanism, can be a big part of that discussion. ♦

*John Massengale is an architect and urbanist in New York City who is the coauthor of New York 1900, Metropolitan Architecture and Urbanism, 1890-1915 (Rizzoli, 1983), with Robert A.M. Stern and Gregory Gilmartin. He blogs at <http://massengale.typepad.com>*

## UPDATE

■ A study of 205 blocks in high-crime areas of Los Angeles suggests that **increasing residential zoning in blocks that are otherwise zoned for commercial can reduce crime**. The study, published in the February issue of *University of Pennsylvania Law Review*, finds that city blocks zoned exclusively for residential uses, as well as those zoned for residential and commercial (mixed) uses have less crime than blocks that are zoned solely for commercial use. The research shows that single-use commercially zoned blocks have expected crime rates that are about 45 percent higher than blocks with residential uses mixed in.

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## UPDATE

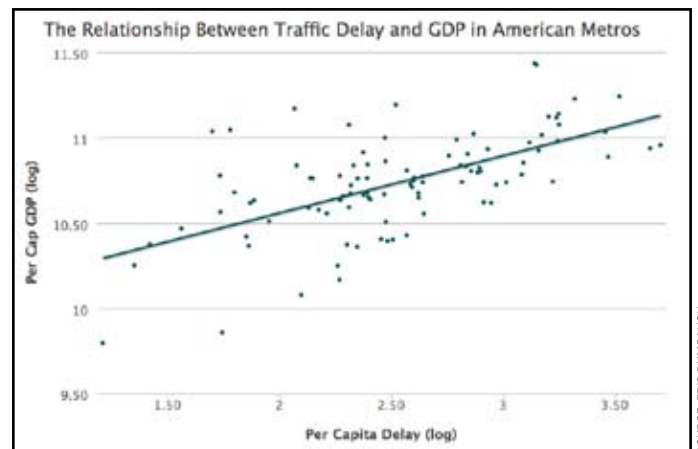
■ Pittsburgh has developed software to calculate **the value of street trees**, and found that it gets far more benefit than it spends, according to *Next City*. "Pittsburgh found that the city's street trees — strictly those planted in sidewalks and medians — provided \$2.4 million worth of environmental and aesthetic value every year ... Given the city's annual expenditures of \$850,000 on street tree planting and maintenance, Tree Pittsburgh concluded that the city received \$3 in benefits for every dollar it invested in street trees." Trees filter air and water, sequester carbon, offer habitat and shade, reduce the urban heat-island effect, boost property values, buffer storms, and even provide a source of energy through waste wood and mulch, among other services, *Next City* reports.

■ **Too much parking hurts cities**. University of Connecticut researchers compared a dozen small cities in which the shares of residents getting to work by automobile range from 43 to 91 percent. The study, "Automobile Use and Land Consumption: Empirical Evidence From 12 Cities," found that cities with higher rates of driving have fewer people — a difference of more than 4,000 people per square mile for each 10 percent change in automobile use. The difference in population is connected to the amount of space used to store cars, according to researchers Norman Garrick and Chris McCahill: "What we found was shocking. In cities with higher rates of automobile use (roughly 30 percent more driving), about twice as much land is committed to parking for each resident and employee."

Further analysis revealed that the difference in parking has to do with policies: Cities like New Haven and Hartford, CT, and Lowell, MA, built a lot of parking and required developers to do the same. Cities like Cambridge, MA, Arlington, VA, and Berkeley, CA, have strictly limited parking. Policies that favored plentiful parking were put in place for economic development reasons, but "the data suggests they were abysmal failures. The number of people and jobs dropped by as much as 15 percent and the median family incomes fell by 20 to 30 percent in some places. Today, these places still struggle to compete in their regions," the researchers write.

■ **Increased congestion is related to stronger economies**, according to Florida Atlantic associate professor Eric Dumbaugh. Dumbaugh's research counters the Texas Transportation Institute's annual congestion index and

### Dumbaugh: More traffic delay, higher productivity





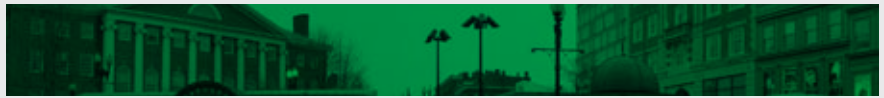
**UPDATE**

the economic justification for adding freeway lanes, widening roads, building commercial strip arterials, making streets one-way, and other routine congestion-mitigation efforts. One reason for Dumbaugh's finding is that many of the congestion-mitigation projects destroy value and therefore economic activity. Another way of saying this is that every great place is congested.

■ **Ray LaHood** announced in February that he is stepping down as US transportation secretary. A former Republican Congressman, LaHood is a champion of livability. He defined livability as "a community where you can take kids to school, go to work, see a doctor, go to the grocery store, have dinner and a movie, and play with your kids in a park, all without having to get into a car." That's a surprising statement coming from the head of the DOT, where most of the money has always been spent on roads.

LaHood teamed up with Housing and Urban Development secretary Shaun Donovan and Environmental Protection Agency administrator Lisa Jackson to form the Sustainable Communities Initiative. This may have been the first time that these agencies, located within a stone's throw from one another, worked formally together on a regular basis. The best transportation program to come out of this initiative was the competitive TIGER grants, where the silos were broken down and innovative projects were funded like transit-oriented development and complete streets.

■ The Ohio Kentucky Indiana (OKI) Regional Council of Governments, which represents Greater Cincinnati, released the findings from its 2012 "**How Do We Grow From Here**" survey. The results show strong public support for compact, walkable communities, *UrbanCincy* reports. OKI has authority over federal transportation funds in the region, and thus has substantial power in influencing future growth patterns. The organization got a larger than usual response from its survey — 2,474 responses and 1,200 comments. Large majorities responded that "It's important to have the option in my community to safely walk or bike," and "urban revitalization and redevelopment efforts are paying off," but only 38 percent said

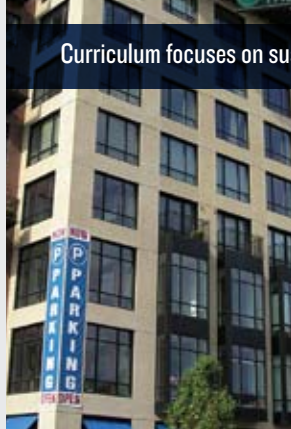


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Making Great Communities Happen

Photo by Joe Szurszewski

UPDATE

the region is growing in a sustainable way.

■ **Building contributes to the public realm.** A six-story, 273-unit apartment building with ground-floor retail is proposed near a transit stop on Connecticut Avenue in Washington, DC. The Torti Gallas and Partners building, called Park Van Ness, has an appealing design with nods to Art Deco,

**Park Van Ness**



notes the blog *Greater Greater Washington*. Even better, this building creates a terminating vista at the end of a cross-street, Yuma Street, with an archway leading into a plaza overlooking a park. The building acknowledges the vista with a view of nature framed by architecture and makes the pedestrian experience more interesting by breaking up the large building into two halves. It is not clear whether the plaza will be private or public, but this single building contributes to the public realm more than usual.

■ Transportation Alternatives, a nonprofit based in New York City, is declaring 2013 the “**year of the complete street.**” The group identifies four “critical elements” in the campaign for complete streets in New York City. 1) Bicycle lanes protected by a row of parked cars, planters, bollards, or other barricades. “Streets with protected bike lanes have been shown to have extraordinary benefits, dramatically reducing speeding, crashes, fatalities and the number of bicyclists on the sidewalk.” 2) Small public spaces, often created from asphalt. “New York City’s newest pedestrian spaces come in all sizes, and these days, we can tuck a place to take a break into the smallest street corners.” 3) Improved bus service. “On 1st and 2nd Avenue, the M15 bus is 20 percent more efficient than it was just two years ago. ... Select Bus Service is a key element of how a complete street makes a street as useful as possible for every user.” 4) Not one more death. “The most

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UPDATE

important part of a complete street is the demand that no one is killed by traffic — a community pledge against dangerous traffic's carnage called 'Vision Zero.' "

■ *Urban Cincy* reports on the **Cincinnati Central Riverfront Plan**, which in 15 years has transformed the city's waterfront and received the APA's National Planning Excellence Award for 2013. The plan was spearheaded by then-mayor (now vice mayor) Roxanne Qualls, who also is a past board member of the Congress for the New Urbanism. The city hired Urban Design Associates of Pittsburgh — one of the early influential new urban firms — to create the plan. Given the area was in a flood zone, and consisted of a vast mess of underutilized land plus an outdated baseball stadium, the success so far is remarkable.

Two stadiums were built, and land in the middle was prepared for the most ambitious part of the plan, called *The Banks*, now well underway. At buildout, this will have approximately \$600 million in mixed-use development, 3,000 residents, and a new park. The first phase is built, and another is in the works. "While design elements may not be of the same caliber as those originally envisioned, the urban form of the private investment appears to be as desired. But even more gratifying than that, for many of the early people involved in the planning, it is that the project has happened against all odds and skeptics," says *Urban Cincy*.

■ A plan by **Detroit Mayor Dave Bing** to concentrate services and resources into compact urban centers and allow other parts of the city to depopulate has been on hold for more than two years, but the idea got a shot in the arm from a \$150 million Kresge Foundation gift. Kresge, based in Troy, Michigan, made the gift specifically to get the plan moving again. It includes \$120 million in new funding beyond previously announced programs. The money will be distributed over five years. The foundation has invested more than \$100 million in Detroit in the past decade to fund a new trolley line, build a riverfront promenade, and construct greenways, the *Wall Street Journal* reports. Detroit lost a quarter of its population in the last decade

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alone, and is now stands at around 700,000 people — down 62 percent from its peak in 1950. The city can no longer afford to maintain services over its 139 square miles, Bing says. Never a very densely populated city, many neighborhoods are now virtual ghost towns. Nevertheless, the city enjoys tremendous historic and cultural assets. The Detroit Future City plan calls for focusing growth in seven to nine population centers. “It is a fundamental belief on our part that every dollar we spend simply has to reinforce the spirit, the letter and the intent of this plan,” Rip Rapson, CEO of the Kresge Foundation, told reporters.

■ **The federal government subsidizes sprawl to the tune of \$450 billion a year** for real estate loans and grants, largely toward single-family housing, according to a report. The report by Smart Growth America (SGA), “Federal Involvement in Real Estate,” excludes investments in transportation that greatly influence development, federally owned property, and even Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac loan guarantees. About 84 percent of spending surveyed by SGA goes to support single-family housing, and only 16 percent to rental (despite the fact that 35 percent of US households are renters). It also favors the rich over the poor and middle class in some ways (most of the benefit of the \$80 billion annual mortgage interest deduction goes to higher-income households). SGA

calls the federal programs “a finger on the scale” of the real estate market. Many of the programs are old, and should be reviewed to see if they favor current priorities, SGA says. “Federal real estate spending is stuck in the past,” real estate analyst Christopher Leinberger told reporters. “It’s not what the market wants today, it’s what the market wanted in the ‘70s and ‘80s and into the ‘90s.”

■ **How “border vacuums” hurt the city.** Marc Szarkowski, writing for *Envision Baltimore*, mapped “border vacuums” in that city. Jane Jacobs described these areas and the problems they pose in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*.

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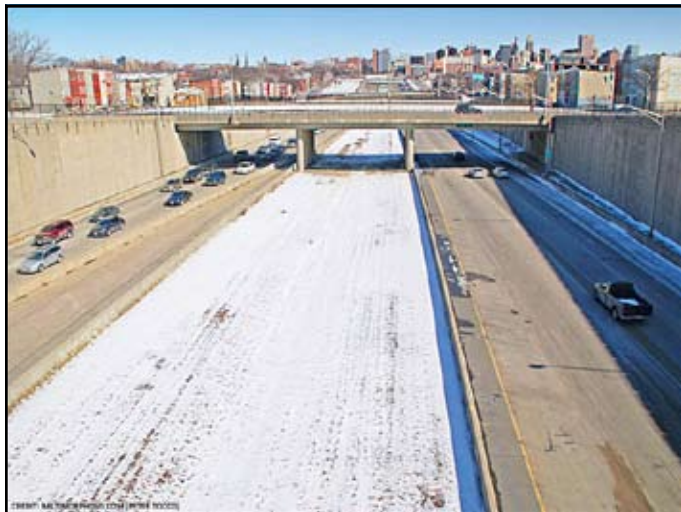
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**UPDATE**

The worst borders appear to be transportation corridors like highways or streets that are dangerous for pedestrians. Large single-use institutional areas, like housing projects or hospitals, can also create problems. Parking lots can create smaller border vacuums.

“Some borders eventually behave like gangrene, gradually

**A sunken highway that is a notorious “border vacuum” in Baltimore.**



SOURCE: BALTIMOREPHOTOS.COM (PETER TOGGO)

deadening the streets and blocks around them, Szarkowski says, and he quotes Jacobs: “The root trouble with borders is that they are apt to form dead ends for most users of city streets. Consequently, the streets that [go to] a border are bound to be deadened places.” Often, the spread of revitalization is stopped because of border vacuums — and entire neighborhoods languish.

Institutions and transportation corridors serve important purposes, however. Again, he quotes Jacobs: “The point is

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24

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## NOLA inches closer to historic freeway redevelopment

In February, the City of Niagara, NY announced it would be tearing down much of the Robert Moses Parkway and at last giving residents a sterling view of the Niagara Gorge.

As CNU applauds this victory, we continue to advocate for urban freeway removal.

This month in New Orleans, more than 130 gathered to hear teardown advocate Peter Park speak on tools and opportunities for New Orleans citizens as the City continues to execute its Livable Claiborne Communities study. Park stressed the importance of community vision and showed examples of redevelopment projects across the nation that harnessed community input to enact transformative change.

CNU members, Tulane University

students and historic preservation professor John Stubbs and members of the Claiborne Corridor Improvement Coalition toured Claiborne Avenue. Dwayne Boudreaux, owner of the iconic and historic Circle Foods, gave the group an inside look at the store, which has remained closed since Hurricane Katrina. Boudreaux recalled the important role the store played in not only providing grocery and dry goods to the Tremé neighborhood, but also serving as a social focal point along Claiborne.

Between the historic community assets and more recent efforts to claim the land under the freeway, the Livable Claiborne Communities study is a tremendous opportunity to revitalize the corridor and showcase the rich cultural identity of the neighborhood. ♦

Nelson are from the University of Utah.

We invite you to browse through the breakout session descriptions and design a course that suits you!

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While in Salt Lake City, we want you to experience one or more of the 16 guided tours at our annual conference, which give comprehensive, personal looks at SLC's historic progress and legacy. Mountain bike Park City slopes, stroll through New Urbanist developments, or simply explore a myriad of locations in and around SLC, all along the stunning Wasatch Front.

Tours cost between \$20 to \$50 for CNU members.

Several tours focus on Salt Lake City's widely lauded New Urbanist community, Daybreak. In "Daybreak: Developing Sustainable Open Space Infrastructure in The West", participants casually bike through the community, witnessing firsthand how Rio Tinto transformed a prior mining site into a landscape ecosystem framework.

In "Park City Mountain Biking Hi Ho, Hi Ho, It's Up the Mountain We Go!" participants join experienced guides on a mountain bike tour through world-class ski resorts, learning about the challenges of preserving open space, view sheds, and wildlife corridors. And in "Live Life Like an Olympian!" participants take an affordable housing tour after exploring the Skis & Olympic Games museum and taking the ride of a lifetime down

## More to learn at CNU 21 breakout sessions

CNU is pleased to announce more than 25 breakout sessions for **CNU 21: Living Community**. Our annual Congress will be organized around the program tracks, with more than 50 concurrent sessions that make up the heart of the programming on Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

Breakout sessions offer first-time attendees and seasoned New Urbanists alike a way to create a personalized agenda that suits their interests and sates their curiosities.

This year's Congress is unique in offering an entire regional track, which emphasizes the rich history and successes of our host, Salt Lake City, and much of the West. Breakout sessions for this track include "Lessons from Envision Utah and Beyond" recounting the nation's first, long-term regional plan's successes and lessons learned. Additionally, the tactical urbanists' pride and joy, Salt Lake City's Granary District, gets its own session—one of many that examine tactical urbanism, crowd-sourcing neighborhood development, and digital technology integration.

Other breakout sessions

include: "Integrating Our Aging Population into Mixed Use Communities," which demonstrates ways to address the social, physical, and economic needs of our elderly; "Mixed-Use Developments: Less Traffic, Better Analysis" featuring Reid Ewing and Reshaping Metropolitan America, a unique demographic exploration with Dr. Arthur C. Nelson. Ewing and

Salt Lake City downtown, with the dramatic Wasatch Mountains in the background



the Comet Bobsled.

Numerous other tours will highlight the charm and social capital of SLC. From the grand and vibrant street grid intersections to the Central Business District at The City Creek to the arts and foodie paradise of the crowdsourced Granary District; this year's guided tours are essential for attendees who want more from the host city. Sign up, and we promise you'll experience more.

Register for CNU 21 now at [www.cnu21.org/register](http://www.cnu21.org/register) ♦

## CNU holds first statewide workshop for transportation professionals

Early in February, CNU partnered with the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) to host one of a growing number of workshops focused on the *Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares* manual – coauthored by CNU with the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE). This was the largest workshop of its kind with more than 80 participants in two days – including members of the Illinois Department of Transportation (DOT), county DOTs, municipal agencies and private firms. Similar events have been held in Elgin, IL, Blue Springs, MO, and Atlanta.

The most recent workshop familiarized designers in the Chicago area with the principles and impacts of walkable thoroughfares in order to advance the region's comprehensive

**Norman Garrick, standing, directs a small group of Illinois engineers at CNU's transportation workshop.**



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plan – GO TO 2040 – and the state's context sensitive solutions policy.

Stacey Meekins of Sam Schwartz Engineering in Chicago led the event with help from CNU Board Members Marcy McInelly and Norman Garrick and Past ITE Presidents Rock Miller and Ken Voigt. The event's leaders focused heavily on the impacts of design decisions on safety and on economic vitality.

Garrick, associate professor of civil engineering at UConn, emphasized the importance of protecting the roads' most vulnerable users or "those who take to the street without armor," quoting the World Bank's Stephen Plowden. Miller – a transportation engineer with Stantec Consulting – reminded participants that the standards intended to assure safety sometimes fall short, encouraging them to rely also on their judgment.

On the first of two days, Mayor Larry Morrissey of Rockford, IL, joined CNU President and former Milwaukee Mayor John Norquist to stress the important role that transportation design plays in urban revitalization.

For part of the workshop, participants were asked to brainstorm in small groups and propose ways of improving safety, enhancing economic opportunities and meeting the needs of pedestrians and bicyclists. This exercise focused on two communities just outside of Chicago – Alsip and Blue Island. Both communities are receiving local technical assistance from CMAP. Some participants struggled to reconcile the ITE recommended practice with their existing guidelines and practices. However, most participants indicated the workshop would help them better plan and design safe, vibrant thoroughfares for a wider variety of road users.

The workshop was supported by a grant from the Chicago Community Trust as part of an ongoing effort to implement a wider range of transportation and land use strategies in the Chicago area. CNU will continue to work with workshop participants in their continued efforts to implement the *Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares* and other urban design principles.

An upcoming workshop is scheduled for City of Twinsburg, Ohio, as part of the Livability Solutions coalition program.

For more on past and future *Designing Walkable Thoroughfares* workshops, visit [cnu.org/streets/illinois](http://cnu.org/streets/illinois) ♦

## Charter Awards jury convenes In Chicago

The 2013 Charter Awards Jury Weekend (February 21-23) kicked off in style with a welcome reception Thursday night at the Chicago Architecture Foundation. The Charter Awards Jury convened in Chicago, at the Blake Hotel, to privately deliberate and judge almost 100 Charter Awards submissions in 3 categories: Region, Neighborhood, and Block. All submissions were judged based on their adherence to the principles of New Urbanism.

2013 Jury includes: Doug Farr (chair), Colleen Carey, Chris Coos, Mike Lydon, Jason McLennan, Shelley Poticha, Vanessa September, Rick Bernhardt, Vivian Fei Tsen.

Winning projects will be presented at CNU Charter Awards, held during CNU 21, Thursday, May 30 at 5:30 p.m. ♦

UPDATE

FROM PAGE 20

hardly to disdain such facilities or to minimize their value. Rather, the point is to recognize that they are mixed blessings. If we can counter their destructive effects, these facilities will themselves be better served.' ”

Border vacuums can be repaired — and this has potential to spur development beyond the vacuum. On the smallest scale, this means building something that nourishes street life, like a pedestrian-friendly building, in a former parking lot. On a larger scale, this may mean transforming an automobile-oriented corridor into a boulevard or main street.

■ A study by the **universities of Washington and Maryland** researchers adds further weight to the notion — now confirmed in many studies — that smart growth (higher density, mixed-use, walkable urban form) significantly reduces vehicle miles traveled (VMT). The study, published in *Transport and Land Use*, emphasizes that reducing block sizes is a more important factor than density and mixed-use in some cases. The study looked at subareas of the Washington DC, Seattle, Baltimore, Richmond VA, and Norfolk VA metro areas. The Virginia metro areas are smaller than the others, and the subareas studied there are lower-density and more sprawling (as measured by block size). In Washington, Seattle,

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and Baltimore, where the urban pattern is well established, an increase in density and mixed-use had a greater effect on VMT. “Reducing the average block size turns out to be the most effective in the Virginia case with the largest existing average block size,” note the authors of the study “How built environment affects travel behavior: A comparative analysis of the connections between land use and vehicle miles traveled in US cities.” ♦

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