

**Thursday Night Session, CNU XIII, Pasadena**  
**Opening Remarks, Hank Dittmar, CNU Chair**

The CNU is at an important juncture. Under John Norquist's leadership and with the guidance of the Board, we have increased membership to over 2500 people, started to build a growing network of chapters, and begun to realize that we are no longer the permanent opposition party. We have the chance to craft a movement that can transform the built environment in this country, and worldwide, if the recent formation of the Council for European Urbanism, the Movement for Israeli Urbanism and CNU Australia/New Zealand is an indication of our global potential.

Yet we sometimes lack the confidence expressed in our charter, and we need consensus on a model for success. Perhaps we are too used to being oppositional characters, as the embittered defender of the scriptures against the rampant infidels can be quite a fun role to play. It is a challenge – albeit a welcome challenge -- for the organization called the Congress for the New Urbanism to contain and manage this diversity, and some appear to long for the elegance and simplicity of the days of Alexandria or the first Los Angeles Congress, before the rowdy multitudes pushed their way into the tent.

At the same time, though, there is danger, that the Congress for the New Urbanism, which has always looked at the world through a lens called design, will lose that focus and that emphasis. And so there remains a need to ensure that our signal design contributions

-- the principles contained in the charter, the implementing standards and techniques – remain at the core of our movement.

A third tension is generational, as new urbanism becomes a multi-generational movement. We have to deal with issues of mentorship, succession and the laudable tendency of new people to question received wisdom and orthodoxy. And we have to do this in a way that balances the need to refresh with the need for continuity and institutional memory. This year has been about transitions for the Board, and two founders – Stefanos Polyzoides and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk – and one two-term Chair of the Board – Robert Davis – have taken emeritus status. Could you join me in thanking them for their immense contributions to the movement, to the CNU, and to the quality of life in this country?

I want to also acknowledge contributions of another long term Board members who have stepped down this year after years of service to the organization: developer Art Lomenick.

The challenge before the Congress for the New Urbanism is a simple one: to recognize that we have the opportunity to win the war we are engaged in, and create a framework for victory that is flexible, embraces diversity of opinion and debate, yet resists dilution and cooption. I think there are four keys to answer this challenge.

First, to recognize that CNU as an organisation has limited capacity, and reserve for it the tasks that it does best:

- serving the members, Task Forces and Chapters,

- using John Norquist and Board members as visible spokespeople for the movement, and helping new leaders emerge,
- providing forums like the Congress, and
- tackling key issues that affect all, as John is doing with federal housing policy, and as the Environment Task Force is doing with LEED Neighborhood Development, and the Transportation Task Force with respect to street networks.

CNU can't do it all, and anything it does do, has to be accomplished through the volunteer efforts of its members. And we have to get better at tapping into our membership networks.

The second key to conquering and holding the territory before us is simple: let a thousand flowers bloom. Rather than attempting to control and manage the boundless energy of the new urbanist movement, the CNU needs to embrace that diversity and welcome the fact that members are building the infrastructure for success. We are UNIX, not Microsoft, and we seek to build open source software for the built environment, not the secret handshakes and specialities of the professions.

We must welcome and embrace the contributions of new urbanist organisations including:

- The National Charrette Institute;
- The New Urban Guild
- Center for TOD
- Local Government Commission
- Next Generation of New Urbanists

- Publications, such as New Urban News, the Town Paper and New Urban Living

These organisations are creating the tools and the networks that will take the movement to the next level, and we need to find a place for them within our annual Congress, and explicitly affirm their important contribution to the growth of the movement. At the same time we applaud the growth of CNU chapters around the country.

Third, the Congress for the New Urbanism needs itself to more seriously engage the volunteer energies of its members. We have begun to take steps in this direction, dedicating professional staff to our Task Forces – Heather Smith has joined us this year to take on that effort – and to chapter formation – the job of Payton Chung – and reviewing our web site in preparation for a major upgrade to include more resource and make it more interactive. Two Board members, Ray Gindroz and Andres Duany, have also volunteered to become liaisons to the Task Forces.

Fourth, we need to continue to infiltrate the academy and the professional associations. I am happy to announce the launch of the academic journal *The Urbanist*, a new peer reviewed publication co-edited by Charles Bohl and Emily Talen, and cosponsored by CNU, the Prince's Foundation, the Council for European Urbanism and INTBAU.\

I don't want to spend all of my time on internal issues, so let me just conclude by reminding everyone why we are here together, and what the promise of this movement is.

New Urbanism improves the lives of real people; New urbanism works better for families and especially for those who can't afford the inefficiencies of sprawl and those who depend on the public realm for recreation and social interaction. Good urbanism creates convenient opportunity for all people without burdening the economy with cost-- rather NU reduces waste and inefficiency. To quote our leader John Norquist: "Our cause is right - we know our cause is just and we have a duty, therefore, to succeed."