An aerial, hand-drawn sketch of a city. The buildings have prominent red roofs, and there are many green trees scattered throughout the urban landscape. The drawing style is loose and artistic, with visible pencil or charcoal lines and washes of color.

PLACES

The Promise of New Urbanism



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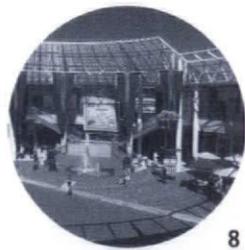
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Aerial view of Orenco Station, Hillsborough, Oregon. The town center is just beyond Central Park, with a light-rail station in the background. Orenco Parkway runs up the center.
Photo: Pacific Realty Associates

To build is to pursue a promise.

The promise may be simply one of economic gain, a speculation; it may be a promise of civic glory, of sacred space, of corporate identity; or it may be a personal vision of splendor. For the builder the promise must always include economic value; for the support of society, the promise must be more.

A house built for an individual seeks to secure particular domestic pleasures, the stuff of individualized dreams. Homes built on speculation promise their purchasers inclusion in a lifestyle, the semblance of community.

“Once upon a time” our towns were built house by house, institution by institution, assembling a complex sense of community as they were built. That founding image remains engraved in the back of our minds. But for the most part now places are no longer built that way. Houses, indeed, whole tracts, are commodified, built as objects to be acquired, to be stepped into and appropriated as one’s own. This is not unlike living within existing towns, where we reside in compartments of a larger built fabric consisting of structures that we have had no part in building, and a spatial pattern of roads and public spaces that are owned by, but seldom designed by, the community. Such places have, however, usually developed over time, they have been adjusted and varied in ways that offer real diversity and choice.

Alas, our extended world is filled with many buildings that promise little and achieve less. Vast areas of land have been consumed in the pursuit of individualized, trivialized ambition, absent of the mix of activities and institutions that create community. Great housing tracts, built all at once, have advertised ambitions for the good life, ambitions often

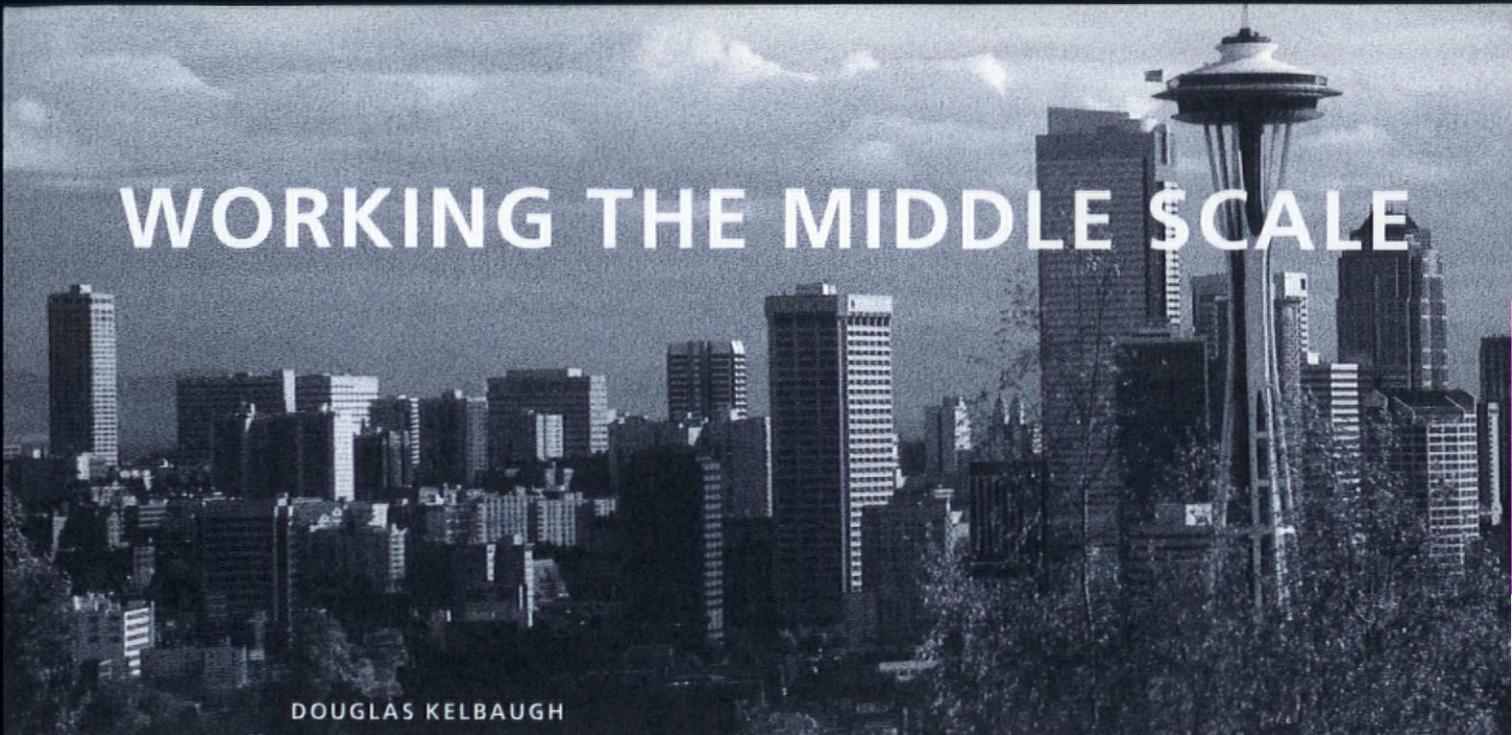
proved to be based on hollow imagery. They offer false promises and usually fail to deliver what they project or, worse, they simply project too little.

The Congress for the New Urbanism is a remarkable organization dedicated to promoting and achieving a promise — the promise of communities that are considered whole; communities that are sensibly located, socially diverse, comfortably secure, include many activities and are architecturally rewarding. Most fundamentally, they promise places, not simply rows of home-builder products; assemblies of streets that you can enjoy being in, configured open spaces and monuments that lend variety to the structure and experience of the place and localized opportunities for shopping, gathering and (often) work.

New Urbanists postulate that these qualities can be approached through careful, critical examination of traditional communities throughout the United States and that attention paid to lessons embedded in the past will provide guideposts to sensible development of the present, even as the modes of production, finance and marketing have changed. At their most profound they ask us to examine the conditions under which we build and to seek out those practices that support human dignity in its many guises, giving them priority over those that are abstractly formulated, by government and industry, to serve the values of production and dispersal.

As purveyors of promise the New Urbanists have attracted great attention, both favorable and skeptical, often unnecessarily hostile. This issue of *Places* examines New Urbanism and some of the promises it makes, as well as some evidence of how these promises play out on the ground — how architects, planners and builders have structured the life within places that incorporate principles labeled New Urbanist. Our purpose is to further debate and exploration, to help sort out the valuable, achievable promises that architects, builders and communities can pursue, and to listen carefully to cautions regarding the hazards of false vows or misleading assurances.

— *Donlyn Lyndon*



WORKING THE MIDDLE \$ SCALE

DOUGLAS KELBAUGH

Downtown Seattle skyline
Photo: Todd W. Bressi

This essay was prompted by a request to do a review of Mark Hinshaw's book, *Citistate Seattle*. More specifically, I was asked to contrast and compare the smaller-scale focus of his book with the larger-scale focus of my book, *Common Place*. This is a worthy and timely question as Seattle soars to new economic and cultural heights, and I will engage it obliquely in a letterly way.

Mark Hinshaw's book (and David Sucher's earlier *City Comforts*) has highlighted for me and perhaps others the difference between a strategy of urban microsurgery and one of grander planning. This dichotomy is not unique to Seattle, but it does make for an interesting discussion as this good and livable city transforms itself into a great and distinguished city—if, indeed, it wants to be great and distinguished. That may be the bigger question, because I contend that it is different and more difficult for a place to become great than to become livable.

First, let me say that Seattle is doing as well as any American city at making itself livable, attractive and vital. Hinshaw has uncannily, with sensitive antennae and writing skill, put his journalistic finger on exactly where and precisely how it is succeeding and failing. He hasn't missed a place or subject and his debunking of five myths about Seattle—rain, coffee, company town, flannel shirts and its phobia for Californians—in the introductory thumbnail sketch is brilliant.

But is Seattle acting and thinking big enough for all its recent wealth and energy? Certainly, its private sector leaders at Microsoft, Boeing, Starbucks, Nordstrom and REI are thinking big about market share if not dominance. But they are thinking big in ways less and less local and more and more global. Corporations that come to the metropolitan area to mine its favorable lifestyle may later move on to greener pastures elsewhere after they have consumed this

latter day resource—much as entrepreneurs and speculators once depleted the area of fur, coal, timber and fish.

Mayor Schell is eminently capable of thinking big about the public sector. But the Lesser Seattle syndrome, so passionately moderate and resistant to making bold or visionary moves, continues to hobble efforts to build a city that exceeds the sum of its parts. It has allowed a city to develop a strong chorus but few world-class soloists, i.e. a relatively high average in its architecture and neighborhood fabric, but few masterpiece buildings, streets or squares.

There are some fine individual buildings to be sure, but I can only think of a few truly memorable streets (parts of Broadway, lower Madison, Lake Washington Boulevard, Alki Avenue, Fifth Avenue, First Avenue, in Pioneer Square and around the Public Market, which, ironically, is the only place downtown where the view corridor to the bay is blocked). As for larger-scale unity and coherence, I can only think of the University of Washington campus, the Olmsted necklace of parks and possibly Seattle Center (more a family room than a living room, as one of Hinshaw's essays generously calls it). The city's infrastructure of great bridges, locks, stadia and highrises are essential but insufficient elements of a great city.

As Hinshaw points out, the state and region have thought and acted boldly and courageously about growth management and environmental issues. The Vision 2020 proposal remains a model for modern citistate planning. The Sound Transit project is regional in scale and mode, as is the mountain-to-sound greenway. Regional governance may be a long way off, but a regional mentality is emerging. The next step is some sort of regional revenue sharing, which will allow the metropolis to concentrate on competing against other citistates rather than be distracted and drained by local municipalities fighting each other for tax base. There is also a

TRANSECT → SEATTLE



healthy devolution of municipal power to its neighborhoods, of which Seattle has good reason to be both defensive and proud. And there are the myriad smaller-scale urban and architectural moves that *Citistate Seattle* chronicles so well.

It is the middle scale that is weak—the scale of the erstwhile, ill-fated Seattle Commons (which wouldn't have cost the public much more than the sliding roof at Safeco Field) or the scale of the Interbay 2020 proposal in my book or even the scale of Sand Point. Other middle-scale projects might include robust plans for the city's variegated edges, where the land meets the water, e.g. the central waterfront, the shores of Lake Union and the ship canal, which could become a major live-work corridor.

Working the middle scale is very different downtown than in the neighborhoods. Downtown needs more institutional, honorific buildings that are figural at eye level, as opposed to the highrises that cut a strong figure from a distance. The new city hall and library will presumably relieve the grid of commercial buildings, which real estate pressure to maximize rent fortunately pulls out to street, where they belong urbanistically. Surface parking should be taxed or zoned out of existence.

Many Seattle neighborhoods, on the other hand, work well at the middle scale. Each of us finds a niche on the continuum of order to chaos, some liking more uniformity and some preferring more variety. Residential areas in America, alas, come in two extremes: the architectural riot of most older neighborhoods with houses of completely different styles and massing or the architectural monotony of a color-coordinated subdivision or garden apartment complex. In Seattle, you often get a balance of coherence and surprise. Parts of Queen Anne, Ravenna, Wallingford, Capitol Hill, West Seattle and Mt. Baker achieve that leafy American har-

mony without being as repetitive as, say, Georgian London.

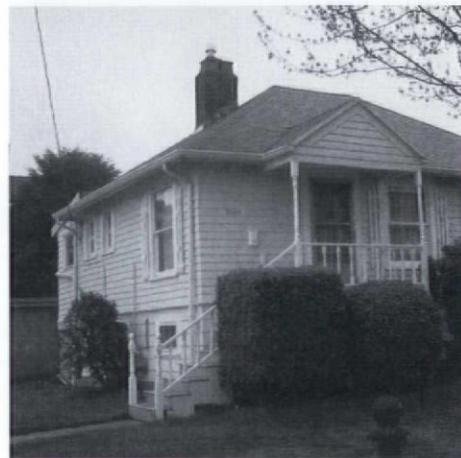
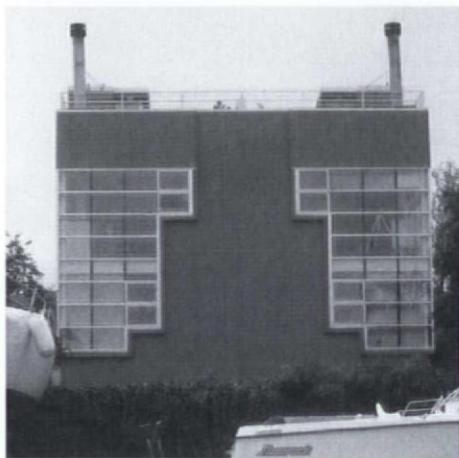
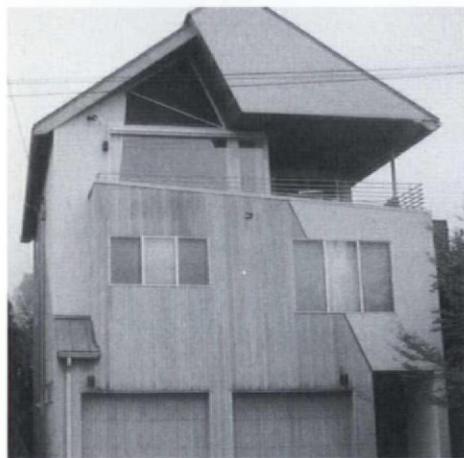
Why can't civic leaders muster a majority of the citizenry to go for and pay for something bigger than a single building? Is it because endless rounds of citizen participation cancel each other out? It reminds me of my least favorite personal shopping habit—continuously buying lots of little things rather than saving up for a major purchase. Nibbling is so much easier when shopping; and urban nibbling is so much safer than dining on risky, ambitious and comprehensive projects. Seattle is rich enough to build high quality, architecture and invest in long-term urbanism. It's a city with developers rich and enlightened enough to break the stranglehold of insidious contemporary investment attitudes, born of discounted cash flow, net present value and internal rate of return.

In future columns, I urge Mark to take a tougher angle of attack on his beloved city—more meat and less sweet. This may be easier said from afar than done in your hometown, but Seattle's design community, the friendliest and most convivial I've ever experienced, could handle more public candor. His chapter five, "Why Aren't There Any Great Buildings in Belltown?" is the kind of thing the readers need more of as Seattle develops the cultural confidence to bar less holds in its public discourse.

I, too, love Seattle; I miss it, still feel invested and someday want to live there again. Nonetheless, I'd like to see it aim higher in the planning, design and construction of its built environment. It can't leave all its small moves to the market and all its grand moves to nature, whose beauty and grandeur have left many people feeling that such thinking is either hopeless or pointless or just plain too difficult. Seattle, if you want to join the ranks of great cities, it's time to think big, invest long-term and act decisively at all scales, including the middle.

I live in a neighborhood that most people, upon hearing a description of it, would identify as traditional.

EVERYDAY URBANISM



East Fairview neighborhood
Photos: Todd W. Bressi

MARK L. HINSHAW

My neighborhood has a grid of streets that create rectangular blocks divided by alleys. The streets are narrow; there are sidewalks lined with mature street trees. Parking occupies both sides of most streets, and, given the narrow curb-to-curb width of most of the streets, the uninterrupted, two-way flow of vehicles is difficult. Frequently, one must pull off to the side to await the passage of an oncoming car. This calming of traffic speed allows people to walk across at almost any point without fear of being run over.

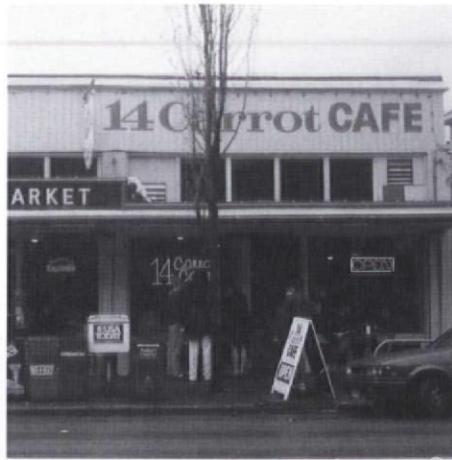
Most of the lots and buildings in my neighborhood are relatively small, although there are a number of sizable structures containing apartments and condominiums. On any given block, homes can range from eight decades to eight months old. There are wood-frame houses, stucco and masonry apartments, duplexes, row houses, courtyard houses, tandem houses (one in front, one in back) and diminutive cottages. Some are set close to the street; others are set back. The variety in size, style and cost allows for many different household types, incomes and ways of living.

Within a five-minute walk are several small groceries, a half-dozen restaurants and cafes, a couple of

pubs, the ubiquitous video store and a popular espresso vendor. Because the neighborhood lies next to Lake Union, a string of marine supply and boat repair businesses line one street. You might not be able to purchase a sofa here, but you can buy most of what you need on a day-to-day basis without needing a car to do it. If you commute, buses pass along the main avenue every ten minutes.

All of these characteristics are dear to the hearts of New Urbanist planners and designers. But look more closely at this neighborhood and my street and you will find some significant departures from the dogma that seems to accompany this increasingly popular movement.

There is no elaborate "code" for buildings. Far from it. The range of housing types and designs is far more varied than in many developed New Urbanist communities, even those that are "urban" New Urbanist. The community supports this diverse melange. While a number of basic regulations govern development, variety is valued much more highly than uniformity. Some buildings have porches, others do not. Some have pitched roofs, while others have flat



*This suggests three lessons
for us New Urbanists:*

1. Lighten up.

2. Be modest.

3. Power to the people.

tops. Some show the hand of good designers; others are entirely unremarkable. A handful of carefully restored Victorian era homes are scattered among more modern structures.

My own street has neither sidewalks nor curbs. It still has parking—parallel, perpendicular and angled, depending on where you are. This random array of parking produces a setting that is well suited to casual strolling: Drivers must watch out for maneuvering cars, joggers and ambling walkers who feel free to use any portion of the street surface. Drivers often creep along, threading between streams of people on foot. Neighborhood cats lie fearlessly in the middle of the street, knowing that they will have plenty of time to get out of the way.

This rich mixture of structured and unstructured physical forms fits our culture—a culture that values individuality as much as community. In fact, my neighborhood is but one of several dozen in Seattle each of which has its own, idiosyncratic character. We seem to share a common value: the ability to shape a small, individualized space within a loose framework that holds it all together.

So, perhaps we need to pare back the rules. Narrow streets with parking, yes. Reverse the standard notion of lot size: no minimum size, but instead have maximum limits to keep the increments of development small. Use floor area ratio (somewhere between 0.5 and 0.75) to prevent bloated buildings. As to land use: allow small businesses at major intersections and certainly home offices. Maybe that's all that is necessary to produce neighborhoods that are lively as well as livable.

This suggests a few lessons for those of us who put ourselves in the New Urbanist camp:

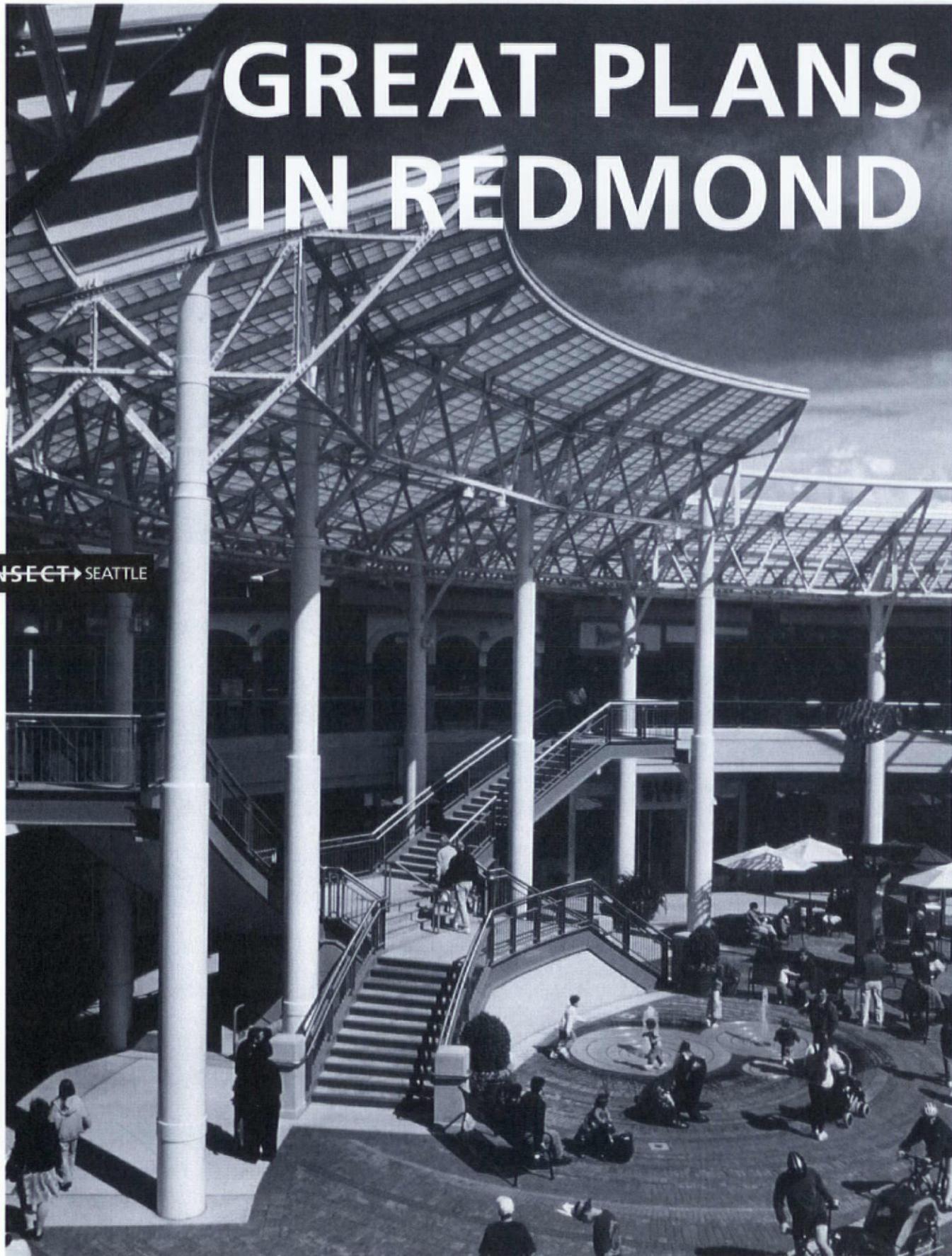
Lighten up. Codes don't always need to be complicated. A handful of simple ideas can net a lot of good, and more varied, results.

Be modest. Encouraging existing ordinary places to thrive is just as important as building new large-scale projects.

Power to the people. Making places that nurture small entrepreneurs, those who do one or two buildings at one time, can be a driving force for change and innovation—rather than top-down planning and capital-intensive approaches.

GREAT PLANS IN REDMOND

TRANSECT → SEATTLE



ROBERT S. HARRIS

Redmond, Washington, lies east and north of Seattle along the Sammamish River. Its economy is thriving as a result of the presence of Microsoft's main office and related enterprises. Yet it remains very much a Pacific Northwest town whose residents enjoy magnificent landscapes, outdoor sports and a rather gentle life.

Redmond's remnant of a downtown is situated along a one-way couplet rather than any semblance of a main street. Yet its mayor and many of its citizens hope to see downtown become more of a center for the community, both socially and economically. A major force for centralization is the city's economic vitality, which is pushing against regional growth policies that limit urban boundaries.

Two important new projects are interesting in the context of this political agenda for townmaking and land conservation. Lion's Gate is a relatively dense, mixed-use project of 200 housing units that includes live-work arrangements, small commercial street

fronts and two restaurants. Redmond Town Center is a 120-acre shopping and office complex designed as if a grid of streets continued through it. Lion's Gate provides much-needed housing and Redmond Town Center attempts to fill a vacuum as a town center.

Such urban intentions ought to be celebrated and enjoyed, and these projects are indeed celebrated within Redmond. They are already successful enough to be evaluated in terms of their catalytic capabilities for generating community life and real estate development around them. As projects intended to embody New Urbanist principles, they should also to be evaluated in terms of authentic urban place making.

Lion's Gate

Lion's Gate is a gated community. Although its internal geometry is aligned with the geometry and position of the streets that serve it, nothing passes through Lion's Gate without the proper access code. It is the tension

Opposite page: Redmond Town Center, central plaza
Photo: LMN Architects

Below: Lion's Gate housing, with live-work space that faces the street and terraces above
Photo: Robert S. Harris





Lion's Gate housing

Above: Aerial view

Photo: GGLO Architects

between making a secure inside and being connected to the town that is the project's genius and its dilemma.

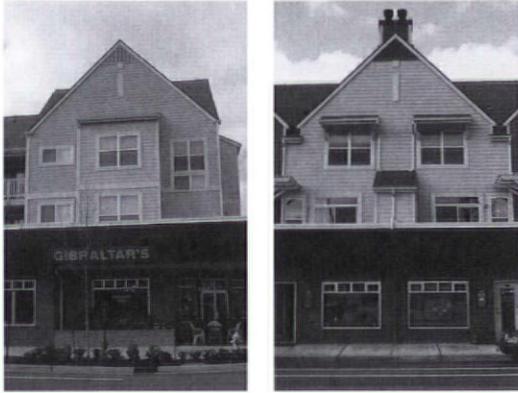
Lion's Gate is a super-block development formed by gluing together what would have been four ordinary blocks. It forms the streets around it by building to the property line, investing in sidewalk improvements and opening small-scale commercial fronts on its southern and eastern edges. It is designed as if it wants to be part of its community—indeed, to help make its neighborhood—yet it is also closed to ordinary neighborhood passage.

South and east of the project, just across the street, are two large, undeveloped parcels. The imminent development of these sites will further define the streets and embed Lion's Gate in a district. Meanwhile, nearby to the south is a pre-existing shopping center with a full range of everyday services, a grocery store and the usual large parking lots. To the northeast is a more elegant and more specialized center that includes day-care and professional services. A new library is just being completed to the north as part of the city's campus-like civic center. Several banks are nearby, and a new residential complex of greater density than Lion's Gate is being completed only two blocks away. Thus Lion's Gate residents can walk to places of everyday necessity and interest, and may expect in the near future that other amenities will become available as development occurs on the parcels directly across the street from them to the south and east.

It seems fair to assert that the almost instant success of Lion's Gate has already spurred similar developments in Redmond and will be a factor in adjacent development. Thus the project will someday soon be part of the place it has helped to make, and its own qualities will be further enhanced.

Along with its townmaking role, Lion's Gate is also a condominium complex with internal place-making responsibilities. The site plan is essentially a U-shaped bar of units that line three of the surrounding streets. Within this peripheral wall of residences is a series of parking courts from which entrance is gained to the center zone units. Each of the courts has a central green whose use appears to be primarily visual; the greens soften the appearance of the parking courts and provide enough space and view to allow the residential units to look out on a more agreeable scene than would otherwise occur.

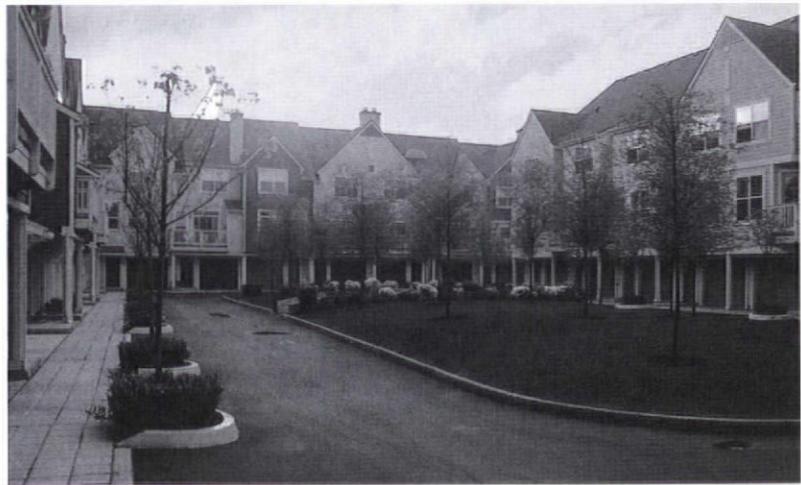
Life within these courts is poorly supported, except for a few benches and a lawn that must be eternally wet in the rainy Northwest. There are no pavilions, no barbecue pits, little possibility for playing ball or washing cars or engaging neighbors. (One court does have a swimming pool and hot tub and is used on good occasions for events and gatherings.) So while the interior courts are pleasant and in proper order, they await the same quality of imagination that the project presents about the life of a town. With a makeover, they could better support the neighboring and the formation of community.



The architectural qualities of Lion's Gate also deserve attention. The brick and clapboard facades and the gabled roofs are clearly intended to imply the close packing of independent dwellings. The enhancement of this pattern with projecting store-fronts and awnings results in a significantly three-dimensional frontage with distinct entries and trellised upper-level terraces. This layering of elements makes an especially valuable transition from the hoped-for activity of the street to the residences above and back.

Some of the effectiveness of this architectural strategy is undermined by the symmetry of the whole and the incessant repetition of the parts. The gable ends seem to continue indefinitely. Also, they appear to be wasted inside as they enclose neither high-ceilinged upper-floor rooms nor lofts. Behind the terraces and their trellises (which animate the facades and provide real places for activity) are windows of ordinary flatness, the inexpensive constructions that are found in new residential developments everywhere and fail to be window-places for the rooms they serve.

The intentions of Lion's Gate are ambitious and worthy. The catalytic potential is good and town-making may thrive. But placemaking within the courts and within the units is more conventional and disappointing.



Redmond Town Center

Any discussion of Redmond Town Center must consider the city's history of town disassemblage. Some time ago, apparently, Redmond thought that the way to develop a civic center was to spread its smallish civic buildings across a large campus north of its original downtown. This tragic decision brought no distinction to Redmond's place of civic activity. It is unimpressive architecturally and spatially, remote from everyday life and has no potential for encouraging the development of a more vital town center.

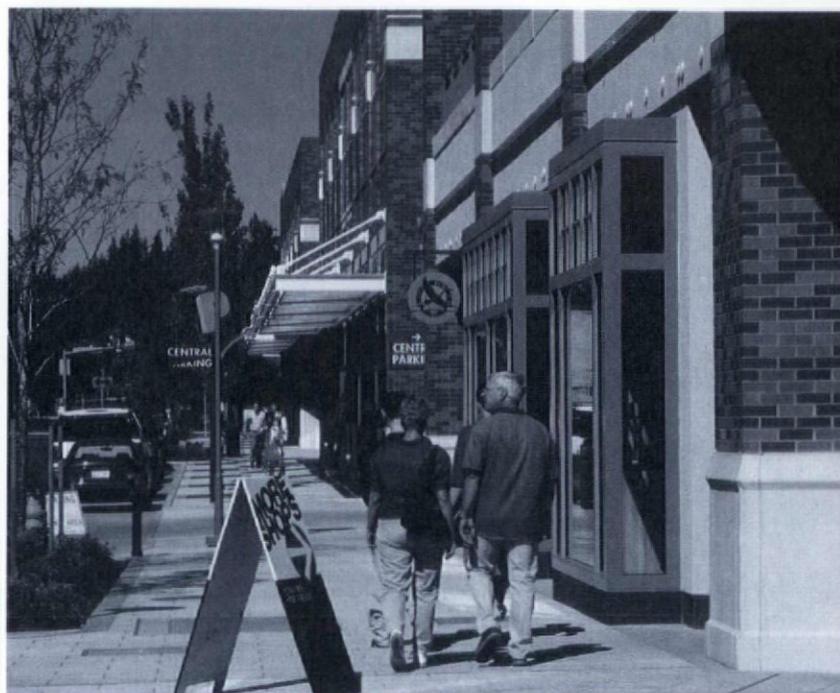
In one sense Redmond Town Center continues that disassemblage. It occupies what was essentially a greenfield site south of downtown and is separated from downtown by a rail line. But the center clearly is attempting to maximize its accessibility to downtown and generate potential for catalytic reaction. Though the street grid in the older town is fragmented by accidents of topography, ownership and land use, the plan eagerly extends the few streets available into the new center. Also, the rail corridor may soon become a transit line and provide additional connections of

Lion's Gate housing

Left: Business entrances along an exterior street
Photos: Todd W. Bressi

Top: Entrance gate, interior court
Photo: Robert S. Harris

Above: Interior open space
Photo: Todd W. Bressi



Redmond Town Center

Retail street and aerial view

Photos: LMN Architects

value to both the town and the center.

The strategy for organizing the shopping center involves creating a new grid of streets, including those extended across the tracks from the older town. New buildings face these streets and parking is placed behind them, in the centers of blocks or on the outskirts of the site, away from the town. As the development is completed, the streets will be lined with commercial buildings, some with office space above retail floors, some with offices above a parking structure, some with only office space. A hotel, positioned along one of the streets leading from town, is important to the center and the town. Housing is missing now but could be included in later phases.

Redmond Town Center does already look like a town and will do so even more in the future. It is an up-scale town with no surprises and no exceptions. It is already pleasant and successful, lively and cheerful. And it is literally self-centered, both in plan and in name.

Perhaps Redmond's elected officials had no authority regarding the name of this place. But a name such as Redmond Town Center would seem to belong to the town and its citizens, not to a private enterprise. "Town Center" might imply the central place for generations of people who settled the town and invested in its future. It might imply a center of civic and social life. Yet, no new possibility for such centering of peoples, interests and history has any chance of growing in this new shopping center, its

undistinctive streets and its pretentious central plaza.

The Redmond Town Center, organized as a rather regular grid of streets with a public court embedded at its center, misses looking like a town because it is so self-conscious about form and because of its ever-present overhead walkways, which remind us of all the shopping centers we have ever known. Meanwhile, the overall plan is roughly symmetrical and the principal streets are very similar to each other in character; the plan lacks an appropriate differentiation of street and open space types, making the project seem more routine, more disconnected and less vital than it should be. For example, instead of giving each of the central north-south streets the same section, one of them might have been designed as an avenue extending into the town, as a principal street, perhaps with a promenade.

A new cross street, central to the project and its court and known poetically as N.E. 74th Street, intersects our proposed avenue and promenade. It is all right as a street, with a roadway narrow enough to slow traffic and sidewalks wide enough to support active pedestrian life. However, it lacks memorable form. Were the north side (open more to the sun) wider and more furnished, this street would better support urbanity.

The centering court denies the significance of the streets, bringing attention only to itself. A small square serving the inevitable cineplex might have been located strategically near the intersection with



the avenue. The Saturday Market, which is currently relegated to a backside, out-of-sight locale, could be located along the promenade, or perhaps in the square or, best of all, along the avenue but within the older town.

These cross hairs of avenue and street are needed to provide a framework for the remaining grid of minor streets and a setting for worthy architecture. Then, all that would be required would be imaginative entrepreneurship towards making attractive retail and commercial destinations. The image I am trying to generate is of a coherent and memorable district, with distinctive streets that are both local and part of an extended network and that provide settings for distinctive spaces and buildings. The image should not include a self-centering court.

At Redmond Town Center, as at Lion's Gate, the preoccupation with symmetry and the idea of center immediately contradicts the intent to be connective. Connectivity requires the idea of multiple centers, each with its own distinction. It requires the continuity of memorable streets, each with its own array of memorable sites and landmarks. For example, a promenade may be more about gathering and community than a center-marking court. Every promenade has tentacles and the possibility of extending into adjacent districts; the center court tends to be too much just about itself.

Meanwhile, Redmond's civic center is well north and on 160th Street, as is Lion's Gate; thus, 164th



Redmond Town Center

Left: Office complex adjacent to retail area

Photo: John A. Gallagher

Top: N.E. 74th Street, the main east-west route through the town center

Above: 164th Street, a possible connection to the older downtown

Street (with a little help from the right cross streets in the older town) might be coaxed over time to knit distinct places together. On the other hand, the making of a strong central court promises no advantage for town making. It is simply self-serving and it is architecturally inflated in scale and in decor as if to herald a significant place in the public realm. But it is not that. Indeed, the market place of another time and the Main Street of the older town are also commercial places, but they were made by friends and neighbors and thus were genuinely places of the town. We have little ability to promote such meaningful commercial sites these days except in the town where numerous local ownerships may continue to exist. Economic development must look equally for such opportunities to support the investors who have made the town as the investors whose new energies are so needed.

Like Lion's Gate, the Redmond Town Center is



[Lion's Gate] is influencing new development around it and thus may very well have initiated the making of a genuine neighborhood.

Lion's Gate housing
Interior street
Photo: Robert S. Harris

a rather courageous project. It breaks the mold of completely encased shopping centers that shield themselves from their towns as well as from nature. This one is connected by surface streets and has streets through it. It is open to the air and accessible by car and bus and even by bicycle and by foot. If its success leads now to the addition of housing then its residents would begin to provide a more complete sense of "town" and community. And if the city will not agree to allow more retail expansion, then perhaps that expansion will occur in the older town nearby. Its renaming as Redmond New Town would continue its identity as Redmond Old Town comes back into presence.

Origins of Authentic Placemaking

Large projects seem destined to seem contrived. Of course, they must be contrived if they are to find their journey through the processes of approval and construction. They are contrived to find favor and to be popular. They are contrived to be successful investments. When we ask them also to support values and places beyond their property lines we add immensely to the burden of getting them built. Yet such attention

to the future well-being of their contexts is an essential aspect of enlightened self-interest.

Lion's Gate provides a positive case study in this regard. It is unusual in plan and character for Redmond, yet gained approval and is successful in place. Its location provides its residents with easy walking access to a variety of nearby destinations. It is influencing new development around it and thus may very well have initiated the making of a genuine neighborhood.

The word "genuine" is used instead of "contrived" because the new developments that will make the neighborhood are not controlled by one owner or by any master plan. Whatever is built will come into existence by many sponsors as they determine the opportunities at hand. As they contribute to the neighborhood in their own ways, a place may come into existence that is somewhat unpredictable. It will have its own life. What Lion's Gate has already contributed to shape this neighborhood is a successful model of relatively dense housing and street level enterprises that is almost certain to be replicated.

Similarly, the street-side architecture of Lion's Gate is scaled to the expectation of neighborhood commerce and sociability rather than to any pretense



It is harder at Redmond Town Center to feel the mind and authority of deep intentions. Every element seems both familiar and contrived.

of a more heightened urban center. And so it supports small enterprises such as hair salons, a hypnosis center, medical billing services, Internet marketing specialists and its two neighborhood-scale restaurants. It reinvents the qualities of an older residential district in the context of highly wired turn-of-the-millennium Redmond.

Less authentic at Lion's Gate is the housing itself and the interior courts. These places are less adventurous than the urbanistic aspects of the project. They are contrived to be sold in familiar terms and break no ground rules. The project's organization and street-level architecture offer important lessons; the rest is merely warmed-over, effective housing practice. Not so bad, we might say, but also not enough.

It is harder at Redmond Town Center to feel the mind and authority of deep intentions. Every element seems both familiar and contrived. Nothing has been invented here out of the necessity of life and commerce, but good practices have been imposed. The celebratory practices seem like usual commercial hype. The gateway stair sheds lack any sense of place and care and seem simply to be a lot of stairs to climb and

a lot of metal to see. The center court and its fountain and its skywalk bridge are in every book on 50s-80s modern shopping center design, except these are outside. If only the very elements of place matched the intentions of organization, this center would be important to us. But there is more needed for the life of any place than its plan alone can provide.

In the end, architecture matters. The architecture that is needed stems from insights about life itself, both the heights of human experience and the qualities of everyday existence. As the residential enclave of Lion's Gate seems ordinary, and the retail domain of Redmond Town Center is similarly prosaic, both places miss their opportunity to reach our minds and hearts. They are convenient and pleasant. These days we are too grateful for such qualities as they are so missing in many of the places we inhabit. Yet we pray for more.

Redmond Town Center
Retail street and upper-level
walkways
Photo: LMN Architects

Practice Theory Project Place

Fairview Village Orenco Station

Jennifer Hock

The next generation of “smart growth” may look very much like two projects currently being developed on greenfield sites at opposite ends of the Portland metropolitan area.

Orenco Station, a new neighborhood at a light-rail stop in the western suburbs, and Fairview Village, in the city of Fairview in the eastern suburbs, are both compact projects, with a mix of residential types, a number of commercial and civic uses, prominent green spaces and well-defined streets.

Both are good examples of how the Portland region’s planning strategies — coupling a strong growth boundary with new transit infrastructure to limit sprawl and focus new development — are being translated through private development into actual places. Both are experiments in types of New Urbanism being developed nationally — “Transit-Oriented Development” and “Traditional Neighborhood Development” — whose successes and shortcomings say something about the movement’s future.

Opposite page:

Above: Orenco Parkway, Orenco Station Town Center
Photo: Fletcher Farr Ayotte Architects

Below: Fairview Village
Photo: Holt and Haugh



Location of Orenco Station and Fairview Village in the Portland metropolitan area

Graphic: Congress for the New Urbanism



Last summer, Congress for the New Urbanism task force chairs toured the two projects, met with the developers and designers, and talked about the lessons the projects offer. These conversations, focusing both on the current health of the projects as financial endeavors and their long-term viability as communities, form the basis of this article.

Although some residents and commercial tenants had moved into Fairview and Orenco, both are still ten or fifteen years away from becoming real communities. Nevertheless, they offered preliminary insights into how New Urbanist projects in the suburbs can be designed and developed to be successful investments and strong communities that contribute to the larger region's well-being. They also suggest some of the difficulties that are encountered in the long, complex evolution from project to place.

“Orenco focused on the eye, the image, the brand; Fairview on the hand, the touch, the feeling of place. Orenco did a really good job of creating an image, and it seems to have made a difference in the financial performance. Fairview’s spaces were much more picturesque and informal—less memorable as a precise image, but more powerful in their emotional impact.” – Ellen Dunham-Jones

Public Realm: Designing for Community

New Urbanism advocates a publicly oriented physical environment that encourages residents to use streets and parks as places to interact with one another. Such places, New Urbanists believe, can promote community stability and reinforce community identity.

Both Orenco Station and Fairview Village use the public realm to produce the image and texture of community. Streets are detailed and scaled to the pedestrian's expe-

rience, and parks and civic structures are located carefully to serve as gathering points and landmarks. Both projects feature these design strategies prominently in promotional material. Now it remains to be seen if residents take advantage of these spaces and invest in the public life of their neighborhood.

Encouraging use of public places. At Orenco Station, streets and parks are clearly calculated selling points, as well as places designed to encourage walking and social interaction. The main street, Orenco Parkway, which runs from the light rail station through the town center to a large central green, is designed to resemble a traditional commercial main street, and its image is used on the project's logo.

The block of Orenco Parkway that passes through the town center is flanked by wide sidewalks, streetlights and three-story buildings with brick facades, prominent cornices, bay windows and balconies. These elements effectively create the sense of a well-defined outdoor room, providing a space where walking and lingering are comfortable.

The central green, which is adjacent to this block, is less successful at fostering such casual social interaction. A four-acre space lined with single-family houses, it is the largest of several neighborhood parks scattered throughout the project. It is clearly seen as an asset by home-buyers (houses adjacent to the green command a \$25,000 to \$30,000 premium) but its size raises questions about the role it will play.¹ It is big enough for small fairs and festivals, but may be too large to be an effective neighborhood park for everyday use and it may divide neighbors on opposite sides. Treeless and unprogrammed, it appeared vacant, though it may become busier as more residents move in and as homeowners, now largely young professionals, begin to raise families.

Creating a sense of place. At Fairview Village, carefully located parks and preserved stands of mature trees highlight the site's unique natural qualities. Pedestrian-scale details contribute to a public realm that is more visually complex than that in typical new suburban neighborhoods. Developers have marketed these



aspects effectively by describing Fairview Village as a neighborhood with a sense of place.

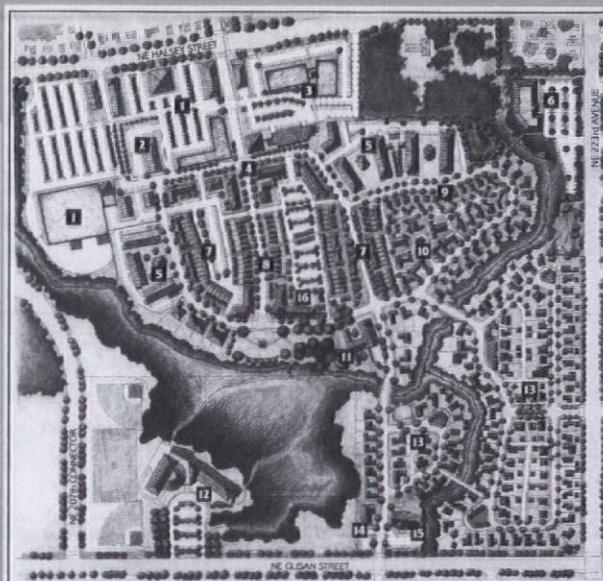
The residential streets, more complete when we visited than the commercial and mixed-use areas, are narrow and lined with old-fashioned light fixtures. They often terminate in small parks and natural areas or follow the contours of the terrain along two creeks that run through the project. Craftsman-style houses and row houses pull up to the street to create enclosure, though in certain places the designers created vistas by manipulating building setbacks and street contours, sometimes subtly. One of the town center's main streets, for example, bends just before City Hall, creating better views of the building and making it seem more prominent.

Residents attracted by these well-designed public spaces will need to develop their own relationship to their neighbors and their neighborhood, but the early attention to the design of the public realm may encourage the residents' own investment in their physical surroundings and their community.

Building for Diversity

New Urbanists define the long-term success of projects like Orenco Station and Fairview Village not only by the sense of community and belonging they engender, but also by the socioeconomic diversity and sense of inclusiveness they promote. New Urbanists advocate design and policy strategies that support diversity within a community, particularly the inclusion of a broad range of housing types in a single neighborhood, which can provide opportunities for renters and homeowners, young and old, and families that are well-to-do or of more modest means.

Both Orenco Station and Fairview Village indicate the market for housing, even in the suburbs, may not be as limited as conventional marketing and financial wisdom believes. But they also suggest that socioeconomic



diversity is not very important to developers concerned with short-term profits and may be difficult to encourage, even with a diverse range of housing types.

Seeking an economic and social mix. Orenco Station, located near five high-tech campuses and 24,000 high-tech jobs, is clearly positioned to benefit from west Portland's economic boom. Recognizing this, its developers sent market surveys to local high-tech employees and tailored their product accordingly; all homes, for example, have high-speed Internet connections. Not surprisingly, nearly half the first phase of homeowners work nearby at Intel's campus. Most of them are young professionals; only three children live in the first 100 houses sold.

"It was interesting how developers spent their extra money. Orenco focused on articulating the outside, pushing and pulling the facade, working with entrances and carefully considered viewpoints. Fairview paid attention to the details inside, the mouldings, the finishings."

— Stephanie Bothwell

Orenco's range of housing types is limited to single-family houses, a few townhomes in the town center and granny flats.² While the residential areas are a commercial success — last summer, single-family houses were selling at a rate of nine to ten a month — the decision to orient the project to a narrow and relatively wealthy segment of the population precludes significant socioeconomic diversity among this first generation of homeowners.

Yet Fairview Village demonstrates that even a community with a wider mix of housing types may not guarantee, at the outset, a socioeconomically diverse neighborhood.

Left: Orenco Station site plan
Graphic: Congress for the New Urbanism

Right: Fairview Village site plan
Graphic: Holt and Haugh



Left: Live-work row houses along Orenco Parkway
 Right: Retail-residential buildings along Cornell Road
 Photos: Fletcher Farr Ayotte Architects



Though it incorporates single-family houses, row houses, duplexes, apartments and auxiliary units, prices were relatively high at the time of our visit. Fairview may only attract relatively affluent homeowners who are in different stages of their lives and need different types of housing. The planned construction of a new phase of moderately-priced condominiums may make this community affordable to more people.

Selling smallness. Both developers contended that one challenge of building a relatively dense New Urbanist project is selling small houses, lots and yards. Both projects effectively used design and marketing to compensate for the lack of square footage, and the smaller units turned out to be surprise sellers: town houses, flats and small-lot houses outpaced larger single-family houses in sales.

“The height of the houses and the width of the central park are such that you have no sense of place; it seemed almost a throwaway space. That was a place for town-homes, to keep density close to the center.” – Gianni Longo

The houses at Orenco Station, with shallow setbacks, small lots, front porches, garages along back alleys and Craftsman detailing, are reminiscent of those in Portland’s older urban neighborhoods. High ceilings and efficient floor plans seem to enlarge the small spaces in the interiors, and designers have made effective use of the tight, intimate spaces between the houses.

At Fairview Village, houses are less complex, less dramatic spatially and more traditional in their layouts than those at Orenco. The developers compensated for the small floor plans in the town homes and single-family houses by making extra investments in construction quality, built-in furnishings and better materials, especially for windows, stairs, banisters, fireplaces and

cabinetry. The success of the auxiliary units, however, demonstrates that space may not be the most important consideration for all home-buyers or renters.

While the variety of smaller units does not guarantee socioeconomic diversity, it does offer the possibility that the residents of Fairview and Orenco can age in place, moving within the neighborhoods as family needs change. It also suggests that the community itself need not be made up of residents in the same stage of their lives. The commercial success of these smaller houses and auxiliary units indicates that other developments could offer a wider range of housing options. Over time, the mix of housing types may, in fact, begin to provide for a more diverse suburb.

**Commercial and Civic Spaces:
 Mixing Uses, Centering Community**

Both developers spoke frankly about the significance of the town centers to the vitality of their projects. Although both felt that commercial and civic uses added to the value of the residential areas and created a sense of community among residents, the town centers differed dramatically in size, their mix of uses, and the arrangement of civic and commercial spaces.

Creating main street retail. Orenco Station’s seven-acre town center is focused on a main street with four buildings: two with ground-floor retail space and office and residential space above, two with live-work units with sublevel space for offices. Developers have



attracted moderately priced, locally owned restaurants to the town center in an effort to create both a place for Orenco Station residents and an evening destination for Portland residents, who can come by light rail. The town center has also attracted dentists' and attorneys' offices, a fly-fishing shop, a cigar and wine shop, and a Starbucks — most of which are specialty stores that will depend on the town center's ability to attract shoppers from other neighborhoods.

Residents still need cars to reach the grocery store, which is located in a big-box shopping center at the edge of the project. This conventional shopping center may have been an exit strategy for the developers, who were initially concerned about the viability of the mixed-use town center, but its location effectively creates two distinct retail areas. Neither stands to benefit from the other's success, and residents will be inconvenienced by the division.

Drawing the existing town to the new neighborhood.

Fairview Village is centered around Civic Square, to which Fairview's city hall will relocate, and Market Square to the north, which will include restaurants, offices, studio apartments and a library branch. Another, more conventional, retail complex north of Market Square will front the arterial that divides Fairview Village from the old town of Fairview.

Besides city hall and the library, the project has also attracted a post office, all public institutions that not only provide valuable community services but also should attract retailers and other commercial tenants. Two of the commercial tenants already established at the project, a day care center and a gym, are also likely to attract regular users from both Fairview Village and the surrounding area. This interaction should help build community.

Because most of Fairview's ten acres of commercial and office space were under construction at the time of our visit, it was difficult to tell if this ambitious civic and commercial program would coalesce as a place, creating a sense of a center and allowing various activities to benefit from each other. Civic buildings will be scattered throughout the western half of the project, while large commercial buildings are located at the edges of the development, facing outward onto well-traveled suburban arterials.

Transit and Pedestrian Connections: Alternatives to the Car

New Urbanists argue that metropolitan regions should offer a range of transportation choices — transit, pedestrian and bicycle — to maximize access and mobility while reducing dependence upon cars. This can provide greater freedom to those who do not

Left: Typical single-family house, Orenco Station
Right: Neighborhood park, Orenco Station
Photos: Pacific Realty Associates

Orenco Station

The story: Orenco Station is the brainchild of a major commercial and industrial developer, Pacific Realty Associates (PacTrust), that had never built a transit-oriented development before. The master plan called for a mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented community at a new light rail station—a community focused around a town center and parks with residences within a half-mile walk from the station.

Started: 1995
Size: 190 acres
Site: Greenfield site, approx. 20 miles west of downtown Portland
Residential build-out: 1,835 du, including 425 single-family houses
Residential constructed: approximately 165 single-family houses
Price range: \$165,000 to \$187,000 for attached town homes, \$196,000 to \$224,000 for small-lot houses, \$225,000 to \$300,000 for large-lot houses.

Commercial space: 21,000 s.f. retail, 23,000 s.f. office in town center
Master Developer: Pacific Realty Associates
Residential Developers: Costa Pacific Homes (single family), Fairfield Development, Simpson Housing (multifamily)
Master plan and town center architecture: Fletcher Farr Ayotte Architects
Residential architect: Lee Iverson (single-family houses)



Fairview Village preserved several acres of natural landscape and invested in pedestrian infrastructure.

Photos: Holt and Haugh



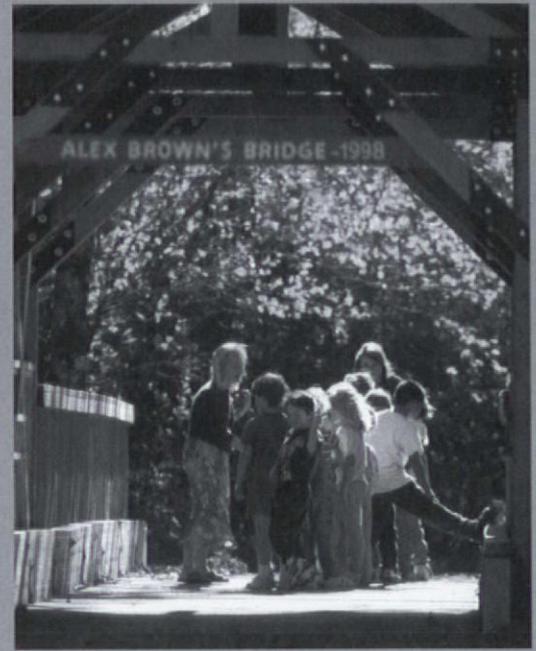
drive, conserve energy and make moving about the region a civic, rather than an individual, act.

Both town centers will depend, to some extent, on attracting not only local residents but also people from a wider area. This is especially true for Fairview Village, which includes plans for much more civic and commercial space than Orenco Station, with only a third of the dwelling units. It is likely that the services there will survive only if they can attract people from surrounding areas.

“It’s great that the creeks were seen as assets, not as development problems. I only wish they had gone further and faced houses to the creeks and run the trails alongside them.” – Daniel Williams

This raises questions about access: How will the pedestrian nature of these centers, their character as a place for local residents, change if others need cars to get there? And how will the pedestrian and transit orientation of these projects affect residents’ movement patterns?

Providing a pedestrian realm. Developers at both projects have made significant efforts to improve the pedestrian experience, providing ample sidewalks, dedicated pedestrian paths and other design elements scaled to pedestrian movement.



At the Orenco Station light-rail stop, a park-and-ride lot was reconfigured so that pedestrians can walk directly north from the station to the town center. Multifamily housing and retail is planned for an undeveloped area between the station and the town center, and the programming and design of the edge that faces the walkway will be critical (guidelines are in place). Within the small town center, federal funds helped pay for pedestrian improvements, including traditional light fixtures, special pavers and benches. One challenge remains: Cornell Road, a busy arterial that will carry 40,000 vehicles per day, passes along the edge of the town center and makes walking to the light rail station difficult.

At Fairview Village, a network of public paths connects commercial and public buildings near the edge of the project with residential areas and the village center. It also connects conserved lands in Fairview Village with adjacent lands that are owned by the city and an elementary school. Significant early investments have been made in pedestrian infrastructure, including two stone bridges and a wooden bridge that connect. Already, the developer told us, this neighborhood has become a place for other Fairview residents to come and walk.

Encouraging transit use. All Orenco Station residents will be within a few minutes’ walk from a stop on the new Westside MAX light rail station, and, from there, half an hour from downtown Portland. Although new residents receive a year’s transit pass, they are more likely to use the rail line as a convenient way of going



downtown in the evening or on weekends than for daily commuting, since most are high-tech employees who work at nearby suburban campuses.

At Fairview Village, developers have made an effort to move two bus stops to more convenient locations along the arterials at Fairview Village's edge, but service is infrequent and the connection to the Eastside light rail line a mile and a half away is time consuming. Thus it may prove difficult to encourage transit use among residents of and visitors to the town center.

Regionalism: Finding Place in the Built and Natural Environment

Just as it emphasizes the interdependence of residents in a neighborhood, New Urbanism promotes connections between new developments, surrounding communities and the larger region. Orenco Station's connection to transit is one of the most obvious ways of establishing larger-scale connections, but Fairview Village demonstrates that environmental features can be the tissue that connects a project to its surroundings.

Fitting into the urban fabric. Although both projects may form ties to neighboring communities by attracting shoppers, joggers or walkers, or other visitors who come to use the public and civic spaces, neither demonstrated especially effective physical connections to surrounding neighborhoods.

At Orenco Station, this is due in part to development decisions that fragmented the project. Early in the process, the developers sold off two key parcels. One site, east of the town center, was developed as a fairly



conventional apartment complex, inwardly focused with streets that make few connections to the rest of the project. The other parcel, to the south, was undeveloped at the time of the visit.

Fairview Village, surrounded by high-volume arterial roads and a connector to a nearby freeway, turns inward. Most of the residential and commercial buildings relate to new streets in the interior, and the project's edges are bounded by a wall. Several streets lead across the arterial into existing street system, which extends into the older town of Fairview at the northern edge of the project.



Above: Proposed multifamily housing, Fairview Village.
Below: Typical single-family houses, Fairview Village.
Photos: Holt and Haugh

Fairview Village

The story: Fairview Village is a mixed-use, neotraditional neighborhood added to the city of Fairview in the eastern suburbs of Portland. In 1993, developers Holt & Haugh contracted to buy the land, zoned industrial, from a high-tech company that had once planned to expand on the site. Half a year later, a three-day charrette engaged 75 stakeholders, producing a regulating plan, zoning

code, architectural guidelines and a vision for a mixed-use, walkable neighborhood that, along with a new mixed-use development code approved by the city, continues to guide the development.

Begun: 1994
Size: 95 acres
Site: Greenfield site approx. 13 miles east of downtown Portland
Residential build-out: 550 du

Residential completed: Approx. 200 du
Price range: \$140,000 to \$360,000 for single-family houses, \$140,000 to \$296,000 for town houses and row houses
Commercial space: up to 150,000 s.f. retail (projected), 150,000 s.f. office
Civic space: 31,500 s.f.
Developer: Holt & Haugh
Master Plan: Lennertz Coyle & Associates
Architects: Sienna Architecture, Lennertz Coyle and Group Mackenzie



Park at north end of Orenco Parkway in the town center
Photo: Fletcher Farr Ayotte Architects

One significant exception here is a pedestrian path that leads from the project's main park to the local elementary school.

Emphasizing the environmental context. Fairview Village suggests ways in which a project can be connected to its region through environmental strategies. Roughly thirty acres adjacent to the site have been preserved as woodlands and wetlands, and a trail system will connect these city-owned lands to preserved spaces within the project.

"Because of the rail line, there were hundreds of thousands spent by local government at Orenco, tremendous political leverage with the 2040 plan and the city really wanting the rail line." – G.B. Arrington

The project also sets aside four acres for conservation and maintains eleven acres of conservation easements along two creeks. Native plants and shrubs have been replanted in protected areas along the creeks, and stands of mature trees have been preserved throughout the project.

A water retention park, a sunken green space intended to collect and recharge run-off, lies along one of the creeks. Though its design, similar in shape and size to nearby house lots, is somewhat awkward, it suggests how parks could contribute to the long-term functioning of landscape systems.

These measures are modest, but taken together, they promise improved water quality, preserved wetlands and sustained habitat, all of which will improve both Fairview Village and the surrounding areas.

Using transit to connect to the region.

From the outset, Orenco Station's relation to the region has been defined by its proximity to the new light-rail line, which runs on a former freight rail

right-of-way through suburban Beaverton and Hillsboro. The project is located on former agricultural land that had been zoned for industrial use. The region's Metro 2040 growth concept mandated a light-rail station and high-density town center at this location, so the planning associated with the light-rail line was a catalyst for the project. This ensured cooperation from local municipalities and regional consensus on issues like density and land use; in particular, it helped promote residential development in a part of the region where high-tech industry has created a demand for more housing.

From Theory to Practice, Project to Place

Although construction was still under way at both projects at the time of our visit, Orenco Station and Fairview Village already clearly illustrate several design and planning issues that New Urbanists must address better:

- Connections to surrounding communities and activities must be worked out to make the transit and pedestrian orientation of these projects more viable.
- Large retail stores, such as supermarkets, must be integrated better with other commercial uses in the town center to insure that the center attracts daily users from the immediate neighborhoods and surrounding communities.

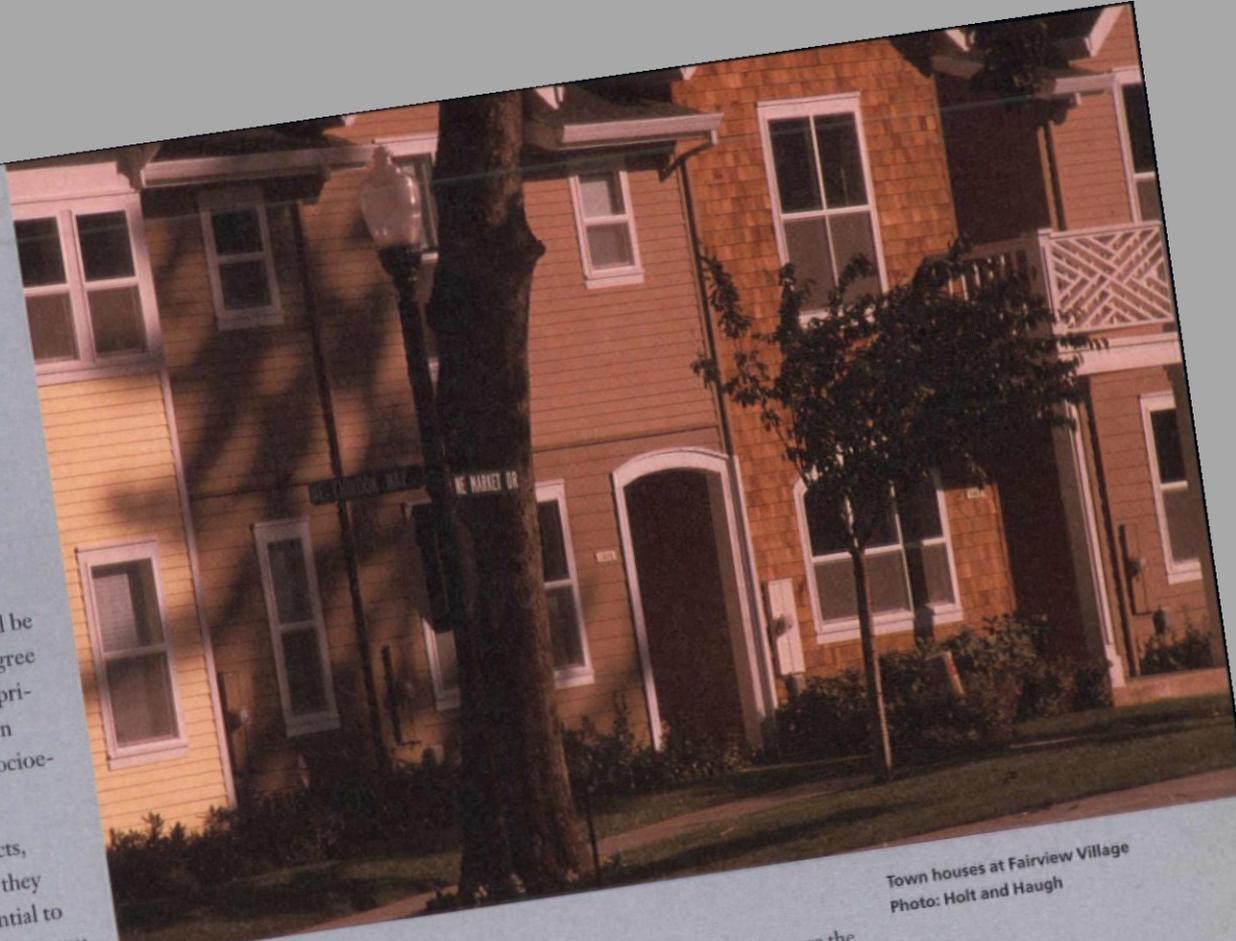
- New Urbanists should be realistic about the degree to which design and private development can address issues like socioeconomic diversity.

These are young projects, works in progress, but they seem to have the potential to grow into diverse, vital communities. Will parks and streets become community gathering places? Will a variety of housing types ultimately allow for a balanced, diverse community? Who will use the town centers — residents or visitors — and how will they get there? Will the light-rail access and pedestrian realm re-orient transportation patterns and lifestyles?

Orenco Station and Fairview Village are located on two of the last greenfield sites of their size within the metropolitan Portland growth boundary. As examples of transit-oriented and traditional neighborhood development, they may ultimately serve best as models for redeveloping older, existing suburban areas. Already in Portland, infill development is strong: since 1986, the city's share of the region's housing has grown from less than eight percent to more than eighteen percent.

Orenco Station and Fairview Village also offer important lessons about the roles of the public and private sectors. Private development, often criticized for its inflexibility, can and will incorporate change when it seems to improve the financial health of a project as well as the long-term viability of the community. The public sector can play an important framing role, as it did in establishing development expectations at Orenco Station, and make strategic, catalytic investments, as it did with pedestrian amenities at Orenco and the city hall, library and post office at Fairview.

Thus in several significant ways, theory has been put into practice at these two projects. But we must wait to see what sort of community, and what sort of urbanism, emerges in these places.



Town houses at Fairview Village
Photo: Holt and Haugh

Notes

1. Ironically, the City of Hillsboro, which would manage the green, initially considered it too small; only after significant negotiation were the developers able to reduce the city requirements.
2. Overall, at Orenco Station, 450 single-family homes are planned out of a total of 1,835 residences. Orenco is unique for the price range it offers in this market, from \$160,000 for the least expensive home to \$437,000 for the grandest townhome.

Participants

G.B. Arrington, Transportation Task Force, is with Parsons Brinckerhoff, an engineering and planning firm, and was Tri-Met's director of strategic planning.

Stephanie Bothwell, Community and Social Equity Task Force, heads the American Institute of Architects' Center for Livable Communities, in Washington, D.C.

Ellen Dunham-Jones, Education Task Force, is an Associate Professor of Architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, in Cambridge.

Gianni Longo, Best Practices Task Force, is a Managing Principal in American Communities Partnership, a consulting firm in New York City.

Randy Lyon, Developers Task Force, is Chief Executive Officer of Lake Nona Property Holding, a development firm in Orlando.

Richard McLaughlin, Standards and Precedents Task Force, is a Principal in the Town Planning Collaborative in Minneapolis.

Daniel Williams, Environment Task Force, is the Managing Principal of Daniel Williams, Architect, in Coconut Grove, Fl. Todd Zimmerman, Implementation: Finance and Marketing Task Force, is a Co-managing Director in Zimmerman/Volk Associates, a consulting firm in Clinton, N.J.

New Urbanism as a Counter-Project to Post-Industrialism

Ellen Dunham-Jones

In Phoenix, residential development has sprawled against the base of South Mountain Park.
Photo: Todd W. Bressi

New Urbanism's unusual combination of neotraditional styling and progressive attempts at social reform has made strange bedfellows out of its liberal and conservative critics. Bashed from the left as conservative nostalgia and bashed from the right as liberal social engineering, New Urbanism has an uncanny way of attracting uncommon enemies and advocates.¹

Urbanism, "new" or otherwise, is far too complex to advance purely right- or left-wing agendas, and critiques of New Urbanism that attempt to dispose of it neatly on ideological grounds tend to be grossly oversimplified. New Urbanism has been able to attract a surprisingly diverse following precisely because it cannot be easily reduced to a single agenda, as its critics claim. As a forum and a model, it merges popular, pragmatic, critical, idealistic and subversive strategies, allowing for many interpretations.

I find myself attracted to New Urbanism not for its traditionalism, but for its radicalism; not for its capitulation to market forces, but for its critical defiance of them; not for its formulaic responses, but for its truly multi-disciplinary approach. I admire New Urbanism's commitment to a political process of mobilizing and empowering communities to challenge the pattern, regulations and financing of seemingly out-of-control sprawl.

Where many of my academic and architect colleagues see Luddite reactionaries resisting progress by indulging in nostalgic simulations of the past, I see committed reformers critical of the status quo debating and sharing multiple strategies and scales of alternative forms of development. In a post-industrial world dominated by

the placelessness of digital media and global transactions, I see New Urbanism as a counter-project to post-industrialism.

How do we determine if such a position is reactionary or revolutionary? Assuming continued advances in computer and telecommunication technologies, post-industrialism promises peace and harmony through global economic interrelationships and unlimited access to information. These, in turn, will presumably lead to abundant goods equitably distributed, laborless leisure and self determination. This view portrays the decentralized and dematerialized post-industrial world as a very progressive place.² Architects like Frank Gehry and Bernard Tschumi make extensive use of digitally mediated design processes that expressively endorse the promise of a post-industrial future of unlimited possibilities. Similarly, Rem Koolhaas and Peter Eisenman embrace the freedom represented by the speed, mobility and malleability of digital, nomadic, post-industrial culture. Koolhaas argues for a "lite urbanism" that ridicules traditional preoccupations with matter and substance.³

But post-industrialism has a dark side as well. The pace of innovation in digital technologies has been matched by an ever-widening income gap between rich and poor. As the economy has become more integrated globally, it has become increasingly decentralized locally. In u.s. metropolitan areas, sixty to eighty-five percent of real estate development during the past thirty years has occurred on exurban peripheries.⁴

The resulting landscape of decentralized, disconnected

If sprawl is the post-industrial landscape of private investment, the insistent now, speed and disposability, New Urbanism emphasizes that which is public, pre-existing and enduring.

pockets of office parks, malls, strips, condo clusters, corporate campuses and gated communities clipped onto suburban arterials reflects the values and policies of mobile capital, the service economy, post-Fordist disposable consumerism and banking deregulation. This pattern, expanding at the periphery in ever lower densities, further exacerbates the spatial segregation of rich and poor, consumes open space, requires more and more driving and degrades air, water, land and habitat in the process.

New Urbanists see the environmental and social impact of the post-industrial landscape as regressive. They have turned away from this future to promote diverse, compact, mixed-use, mixed-income, transit- and pedestrian-oriented communities. While their critique and concern for social and environmental goals may indeed be viewed as progressive (though hardly new), the prevalence of neotraditional styling in New Urbanist projects that perpetrates the cultural dominance of traditional elites means they are generally viewed within architectural discourse as conservative.

Can New Urbanism open itself more to the progressive aspects of post-industrialism? Can it recognize the positive impact of the global and the digital, and use these to induce more inclusive expressions of design, place and power? I will argue that New Urbanism's continued development as a progressive force would benefit from a greater recognition of its role in the shift from industrial to post-industrial culture and development. Instead of providing a retreat from the post-industrial present, New Urbanism's promise lies in creating stronger interchanges between physical neighborhoods and digital networks, in not simply countering post-industrialism but urbanizing it.

New Urbanism Versus Sprawl

During the 1970s and 80s, while the American economy was hard at work producing sprawling beltway boomtowns and edge cities, architectural discourse focused on issues of stylistic theory and professional journals highlighted the individual buildings of star designers. New Urbanism emerged in the early nineties as one of the few organized forums for discussing alternatives to

conventional exurban development. Various approaches coalesced and diverged, from reconfiguring exurban patterns into townlike forms to filling in underdeveloped locations in existing cities. All recognized a common enemy in the regulations and development practices that perpetuated sprawl.

The movement grew as it took on the rewriting of regulations and the partnering with various institutions and other disciplines involved in development. The involvement of diverse professionals focused increasing attention on the non-physical aspects of city design, such as community-building programs, affordable mortgage policies and financing structures. Initially recognized for its concern about greenfield new towns, New Urbanism has expanded its attention to urban and suburban infill, most notably through work on HOPE VI public housing projects.

[NEW URBANISM RESEARCH]

If sprawl is the post-industrial landscape of private investment, the insistent now, speed, disposability and the temporary contract, New Urbanism counters that by emphasizing that which is public, pre-existing and enduring. New Urbanism urges people to slow down, to get to know their neighbors and to become more connected with their environment.

New Urbanists have proposed a now-familiar alternative pattern that recasts the isolated office parks, strip malls and housing developments into mixed-use, walkable, transit-served districts and neighborhoods oriented around public town centers. Wide culs-de-sacs and wider arterials are replaced with gridded networks of narrow streets that calm and distribute the flow of traffic. Sidewalks, street trees and architectural codes governing the basic profile of the building front treat the space of the street as a figural public space or outdoor room. Front porches or stoops (depending on the regional architectural history of a place) are intended to promote sociability among neighbors; the close mixing of lot sizes and building types is intended to encourage socioeconomic diversity. Densities from eight to forty dwelling units per acre are sought both as means of increasing social interaction, preserving unbuilt land and wildlife habitat, and supporting shops and transit service.

There is a disconnect between what is exciting New Urbanism and the places claimed as successes. The elasticity and ingenuity of design is being sacrificed to the need for formulas, easy answers and a recognizable marketing image.

This is more than an alternative template. New Urbanist developments seek to build on the existing identity of a place, rather than allowing it to be determined by ever-changing stores and short-term uses. Unique landscapes, whether streams, forests or wetlands, are preserved and made into identifying or recreational features. Regional building types, materials, landscape and planning strategies are called upon to further link the present to that which has endured in a place. Codes and covenants are intended to sustain this character, emphasizing predictability to post-industrial flux and changeability.

Stuck in the Past or Moving into the Future?

New Urbanism arose out of its founders' reformist impulse to improve situations through design solutions. They rejected the design autonomy sought by post-structuralist theorists and neo-avant-garde designers. Instead of critiquing culture, New Urbanists engage and redesign it. Moreover, they fervently believe that design is not autonomous but synergistic: Each individual design decision matters in terms of how it triggers social, environmental and economic effects within the urban whole.

This belief in the power and meaningfulness of design has helped attract many designers to the movement, myself included. It has helped to empower designers and non-designers alike to refuse to accept sprawl's logic of autonomous development as inevitable. Instead, through the power of design, new development becomes an opportunity for radical re-imagining. From Seaside to the New York Regional Plan Association's aerial views of conventional versus reconfigured development patterns, the early New Urbanist designs were startling precisely because they so radically broke with conventional expectations.

Even more revolutionary was the New Urbanists' willingness to work on regulatory and procedural issues in order to empower their designs. The coalition building with allied organizations, the reaching out to other

professions involved with city building, the drafting of model ordinances and the promotion of policy changes at agencies like the Department of Housing and Urban Development, Environmental Protection Agency and Fannie Mae are remarkable achievements. They could not have happened without the New Urbanists' strong convictions about the need for change, the possibility of change and the viability of their alternative.

Sadly however, in fighting for change and in winning over converts, New Urbanist principles seem to have stiffened into rules. Types have become models.⁵ The elasticity and ingenuity of design is increasingly being sacrificed to the need for formulas, easy answers and a recognizable marketing image.

There is an odd disconnect between what is exciting about the ambitious New Urbanist agenda and the places New Urbanists claim as successes. While the agenda looks forward to a world of vital neighborhoods and diverse communities, the places themselves seem increasingly frozen in a very singular image of the past; there seems to be little recognition of the value of ongoing change. Even where regional characteristics help particularize the architecture, there is a generic quality to designs that draw almost exclusively on white upper middle-class traditions, and the quiet gentility and formal civic behavior associated with them.

As New Urbanism has become more successful, its designs have become more reactionary and less revolutionary. What happened to the spirit of invention and discovery that the changing of the regulations was meant to empower? Has New Urbanism become a part of the machine it set out to resist, simply another formula to replace the earlier one?

New Urbanism is premised on the idea that designers armed with strong knowledge of good precedents can translate the movement's simple principles into a master plan and images from which to generate design codes in a relatively short time—during a seven- to ten-day charrette, for example. The expectation has been that the charrette introduces urban variety through the inclusion of many hands, and that the execution of the design by many builders over a period of time will introduce architectural variety.

However, as New Urbanism moves into the mainstream, production builders and financing entities seek to

undertake projects in ever larger increments. Developing in larger increments means more repetition of models, rather than development of typological variations. The bigger New Urbanism gets, the more it repeats itself.

Seaside is an expensive resort hotel. It cannot be the poster child for New Urbanism. But, in fact, it got so many things so right. It is infused with a respect for tradition and feeling for place, but never allowed those lessons to squelch a love of design and innovation. Even though a non-coded common interest in Victorian architectural language has settled into the place, it still speaks in varied voices. Resembling post-Fordist mass customization, each house riffs jazzily on familiar themes. There is a far greater balance between individual expression and a unified communal identity than in many later New Urbanist developments.

Conversely, at projects like Celebration, the use of pattern books, intended to raise the quality of the work of production builders while keeping costs down, has resulted in far greater uniformity than at Seaside. Designers' efforts to tweak, change, customize and improve the world no longer seem welcome. I worry that as New Urbanism becomes more focused on formulaic recreations of the past, it will lose its commitment to design and fall short of providing for the post-industrial future.

The challenge, it seems, is to simultaneously address the larger scale of the region, where characteristics of the land and ecosystems might dictate broad development patterns, and the smaller scale of the neighborhood, in which varying degrees of variety and individual expression might be encouraged.

Grasping the Post-Industrial Future

Perhaps New Urbanism has written off the promise of a post-industrial future too quickly. Do the digital and the global have to work against placemaking and result in decentralized, economically segregated, consumerist sprawl? Certainly not, and this is where there remains room for design innovation.

Many New Urbanist developments are heavily wired and are already attracting the digerati who can choose to live anywhere. New Urbanism can offer people working all day at computer screens easy opportunities to take a break from technological interfaces. People-filled places and natural habitats would be a short walk away, accessible without using

a car. Many of the increasing number of telecommuters are likely to embrace the social, environmental and transit possibilities of New Urbanism.⁶

But New Urbanism could go much further in imagining how telecommuting, computer software and digital networks might more radically reconfigure buildings, neighborhoods and regions.

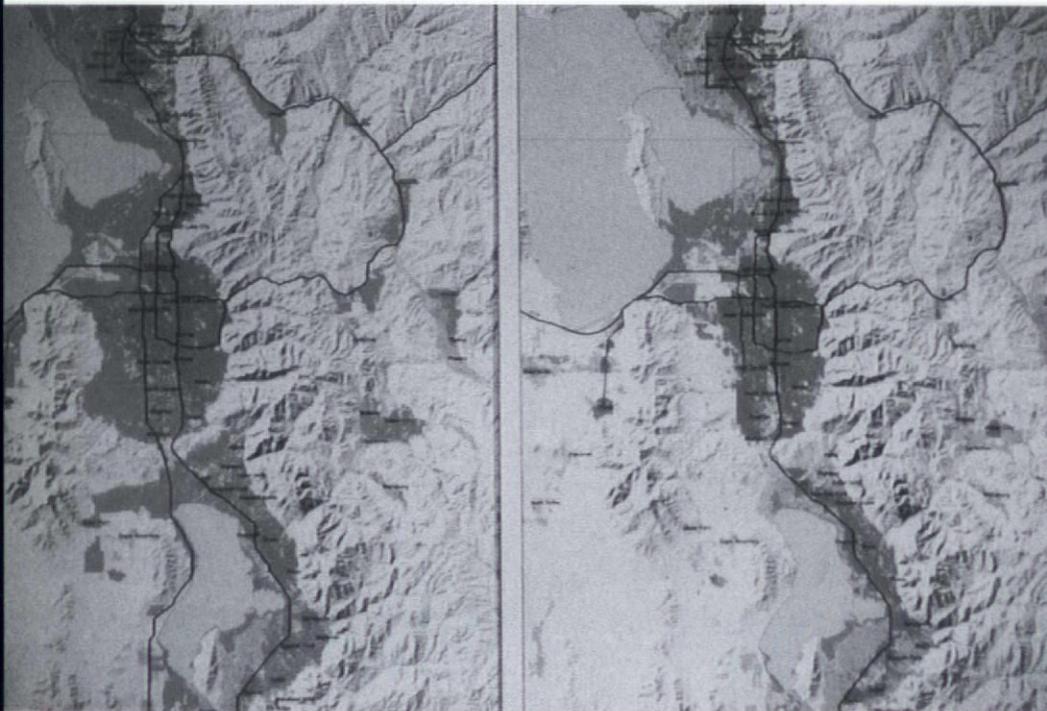
As sociable, local neighborhoods become overlaid with highly-used global information networks they are likely to foster ever-more flexible, hybrid building types—such as new combinations of retail and services, entertainment and education facilities, and living and working. This mixing and integrating of activities is consistent with New Urbanist principles and in many cases can be easily woven into traditional neighborhoods, but it requires new approaches to flexible building design, development financing and land-use regulation.

Taking full advantage of the new technology and economy requires a willingness to further adapt neo-traditional typologies, even to develop new ones. For example, New Urbanists have done a better job at integrating retail and residences than workplaces and residences. More though could be given to converting office parks into mixed-use urban neighborhoods, using skinny floor plate buildings with incubator office space in neighborhood centers, and designing live-work units that allow for the running of a small business (with dual entries, accommodation of delivery services and variously sized office suites/workshops). And just as New Urbanists think about the benefits of the corner store, they could consider providing neighborhood-based telecommuting, delivery coordination and business support centers.

While analysis of regional vernacular building materials



Armonics, an Indianapolis-based architecture firm, has used computer tracking to diversify the number of builders involved in a HOPE VI project, providing more opportunities for small firms and local workers, and allowing for more fine-grained design variation among homes. Photo: Armonics



Calthorpe Associates used the Internet to assess the preferences of residents of the Salt Lake City region for various growth alternatives.
Graphics: Calthorpe Associates

and typologies can go a long way toward helping New Urbanists design in relation to climate and place, New Urbanists would also do well to consider the newer digital tools that allow designs to be more specifically responsive to their particular places. Innovative uses of geographical information systems, computational fluid dynamics modeling and traffic modeling programs can be used to better understand the specific wind, sun, drainage and transportation patterns of places. Such digital information can be extremely useful in designing plans and green building designs that are more place-specific and environmentally responsible.⁷

Some New Urbanists are already finding innovative ways to use digital technology to empower local voices in the process of design and construction. Peter Calthorpe recently posted growth scenarios for Salt Lake City on the Internet and got 17,000 citizens to vote their preferences.

In recent decades, many sectors of the industrial economy have employed computers to better coordinate supply and demand and produce more consumer-responsive high-quality, automated, small-batch, varied product lines. Sophisticated market monitoring and analysis enabled this kind of "mass customization" to be linked to consumer preferences. Though these techniques have been used to develop niche markets where fashion serves to differentiate consumer identity, exacerbate class and economic differences, they

might also be put to the service of New Urbanism.

In a small step toward "mass customization" in housing construction, Armonics, an Indianapolis-based architecture firm, has used the computer to diversify the number of builders involved in a large housing project. They adapted "Expedition," a program commonly used for construction management, to enable them to monitor numerous contracts (fifty seven in all, ranging from \$2,000 to \$2.8 million) on a 200-unit HOPE VI housing project. Many of the contractors were from the local area and consisted of one- or two-person teams. In addition to contributing a significant amount of variation in finishes and details to the completed homes, this process

recirculated dollars in the community and provided opportunities for disadvantaged businesses.⁸

New Urbanism is not a one-size-fits-all model. It is a forum for sharing strategies about a variety of models that implement the principles of its charter. As such, the Congress of the New Urbanism already is a post-industrial information exchange. The challenge for New Urbanists is to continue seeking ways of looking not just to the past, but to the future, to open design back up to the positive, innovative and inclusive aspects of post-industrialism.

New Urbanism's critique of the destructive and regressive aspects of post-industrialism and sprawl provide the movement with tremendous strength. New Urbanism's privileging of local places, connecting to existing conditions, face-to-face communication, communal interaction and preservation of unmediated landscapes and natural habitats, resonates especially effectively at a time when these seem threatened by post-industrial forces.

However, as a counter-project to post-industrialism's doctrine of speed, mobility and malleability, New Urbanism should be wary of being overly committed to replicating the slow, the fixed and the enduring. The more perfect the recreation of the past, the more inflexible it becomes for dealing with the future, with diversity, and with less perfect neighboring conditions.

New Urbanism was initially proposed as a forum for promoting democratic tolerance for difference, not a tyrannical consensus. Instead of the absolute order and lockstep conformance of perfectly unified seventies-vintage planned urban developments, New Urbanism was premised on a somewhat looser process of incorporating multiple voices into the system, with the intent of producing more variety—albeit within strict constraints at the interface between public and private space.

In confronting the realities of working-with production builders, public agencies and consumers' and bankers' expectations of predictability, New Urbanism has lost much of that original flexibility, diversity and choice. New Urbanists would benefit from remembering that there is a virtue in the inclusion of the imperfect and the unfixed; a bit of peeling paint and the occasional purple house remind us that we are not slaves to consensus and conformity.

Similarly, a fervent and creative embrace of post-industrial opportunities and tools may help New Urbanism avoid becoming a slave to consensus and conformity. Enriching the interface between neotraditional neighborhoods and the internet may provide the opportunities for New Urbanism to better connect the past with a progressive and diverse future.

Notes

1. For liberal critiques, see comments by Margaret Crawford, Detlef Mertins, K. Michael Hays and Michael Sorkin in *Exploring (New) Urbanism(s), Proceedings* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, Department of Urban Planning and Design), CD-ROM. For conservative critiques, see "Sprawl Brawl," *Reason Online* (8 April 1999), <www.reasonmag.com>.
2. See, for example, Daniel Bell, Marshall McLuhan, Alvin Toffler, George Gilder, Thomas Friedman and William Mitchell.
3. Rem Koolhaas, *S M L XL* (New York: Monacelli, 1995), 971.
4. From 1980–1990, cities with strong downtown markets captured about forty percent of regional office growth; cities with weaker downtown markets captured as little as fifteen percent. See William C. Wheaton, "Downtowns Versus Edge Cities: Spatial Competition for Jobs in the 1990s," *Working Paper 45* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Center for Real Estate, 1993).
5. In his *Dictionnaire* (1832), Quatre-mère de Quincy distinguishes between the *type*, of which many permutations are possible, and the *model*, which is repeated precisely. The shift from interpretable design codes to pattern books exemplifies this distinction.

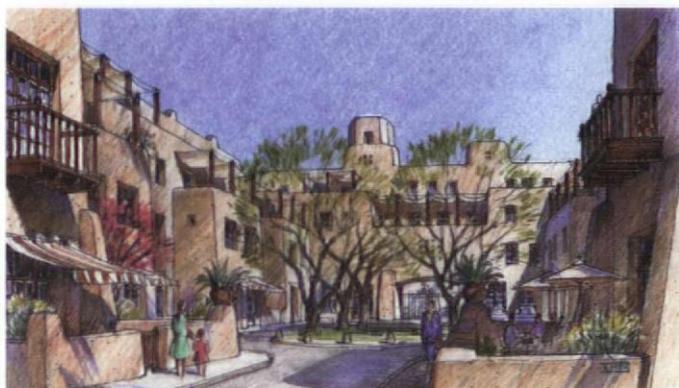
Do the digital and the global have to result in economically segregated, consumerist sprawl? Certainly not. But New Urbanism must go further in imagining how telecommuting, computer software and digital networks might radically reconfigure buildings, neighborhoods and regions.

6. The growth in telecommuting may be greatest among people who telecommute some days and work in offices on others. For these people, who still must live within commuting distance of their workplace, the availability of transit may be especially important. See "Alternative Workplace Strategies," *Wharton Real Estate Review*, 1:1 (Spring, 1999).
7. "Ped-GriD," written by Mark Futterman, layers information about pedestrian activities onto a GIS database. It uses diverse data, such as traffic counts and park usage, to predict which locations will best support pedestrian activity and where community-building development should be directed. He hopes to make Ped-GriD available to individuals, who could conduct their own research as a form of teledemocracy. See Dan Damon, "Driven to Despair," *Guardian Online* (15 July 1998) <www.guardian.co.uk>
8. Rick Holt's failed attempt to create a "contractors guild" at Fairview Village (see "Theory Practice Project Place," elsewhere in this issue) would have been an example of using mass customization to raise quality and bring down costs.

Strategies for Albuquerque

Urbanism

Todd W. Bressi



Critics of New Urbanism argue the movement is preoccupied with suburban-scale development, especially on greenfield sites. From the earliest days, however, New Urbanists have been concerned about and working in urban settings as well.

Recent downtown plans for Albuquerque and Milwaukee, presented as New Urbanist exemplars at CNU's congress in 1999 and illustrated on the following pages, provide an opportunity to assess how New Urbanist projects might influence redevelopment in urban areas.



Top left: Illustrative drawing, "podium housing" along Second Street, downtown Albuquerque

Top right: Illustrative drawing, town houses along Silver Avenue, downtown Albuquerque

Bottom: Illustrative drawing, "hybrid building" along Central Avenue, downtown Albuquerque

Albuquerque graphics courtesy Moule & Polyzoides, Architects and Urbanists

and Milwaukee

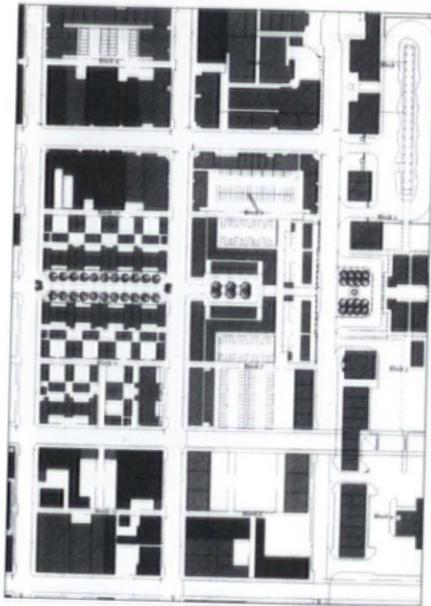


Downtown



Highly rated images from Milwaukee visual preference survey. Clockwise, from top right: City Hall, parking garage with ground-floor retail, residences with marina access in Third Ward, a wide residential sidewalk, a facade with well-defined structure, River Splash festival along Milwaukee's River Walk.

Milwaukee photos and graphics courtesy Nelessen Associates

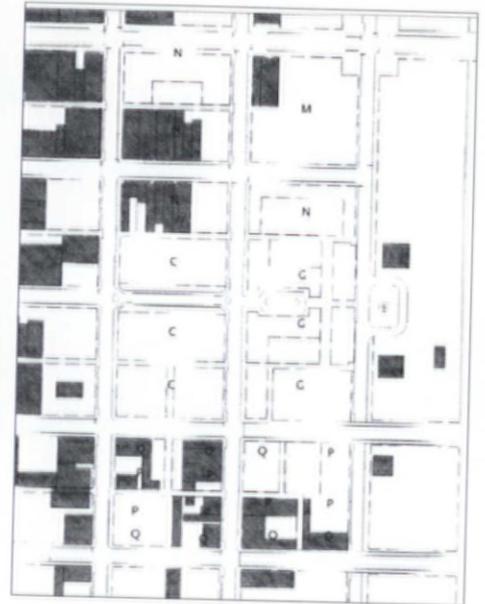
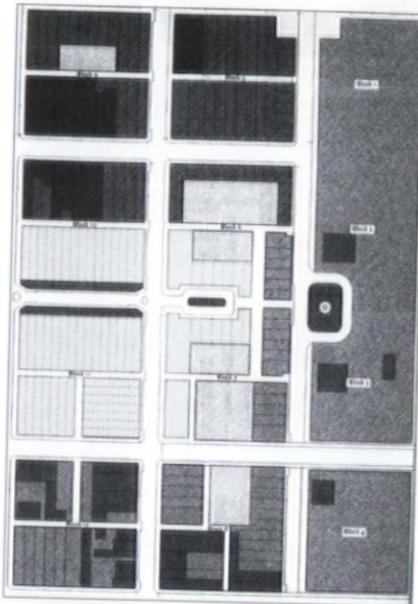


Left: Illustrative plan, showing possible build-out scenario

Center: The regulating plan sets out what building types are desired in what blocks.

Right: The development code provides, for six building types, detailed massing requirements. Civic buildings are not coded.

Below: Proposed market hall-learning center



Albuquerque's Alvarado Transportation Center Master Plan

Albuquerque, commonly thought of as a post-World War II boomtown, actually dates to 1706, and has been marked by bursts of growth in both the late 1800s and the first half of the twentieth century.

The Alvarado Transportation Center project is located about a half mile from Albuquerque's original settlement, in a gridded addition that was platted next to a train station in 1880 in the expectation that it would emerge as the new city center.

The area, designated for urban renewal some thirty years ago, has lain fallow since then. The current plan was commissioned by the Historic District Improvement Company (a spin-off of the Arcadia Land Company), which had been designated master developer for the site, and was prepared by Moule & Polyzoides, Architects and Urbanists.

The master plan covers twelve square blocks straddling Central Avenue, downtown's main street. It envisions two anchors, civic and commercial, with the rest of the area filled in with retail, office, entertainment and residential space in a mix of building types.

The plan was developed over three months in 1998. The first stage included twelve meetings with neighborhood groups, business owners and city officials; during this time the design team also met with developers of individual sites to refine plans that made sense from financial, architectural and urban design points of view. Then HDIC organized a four-day public charrette, which

attracted more than 1,000 people and at which the plan was finalized.

The plan first proposes several types of civic infrastructure—squares and streetscapes; streets that balance various uses; and parking areas. Each element was mapped for the entire district as well as for various development sites.

A regulating plan and development code control the uses and urban form allowable on each property. The code calls for six residential and commercial building types (such as podium, townhouse and full-block structures), which vary based on intensity and scale, and whose urban design specifications were calibrated based on the emerging requirements of the various building developers.

Each type can accommodate mixed uses; a "half-block" structure, for example, could be used for parking, cinemas, big-box retail, offices, hotel or residential. The design requirements for each type are configured to define public realm of shared space; the concentration of similar types and intensities in plan helps to create recognizable district character.

Finally, the plan offers an illustrated build-out and phasing plan, outlining a preferred sequence that would start with the construction of a theatre block. Next would come a hybrid building (with retail and housing) and a garage, then podium housing and townhouses, and, finally, a market hall, learning center and transportation center.

The plan is still awaiting city approval.



Type N
Half Block

TYPE DESCRIPTION
Large floor plate structure surrounded by low-scale "wrapper" buildings at street frontage located on a half-block lot.

URBAN REGULATIONS - WRAPPER BUILDING

PLACEMENT

- 1 Lot Width: 300'
- 2 Street Frontage: 90 percent minimum, articulated at 25', 50' or 75' increments
- 3 Lot Depth: 145' to alley
- 4 Building Depth: 20' minimum, 40' preferred
- 5 Recessed corners shall not exceed 10 percent of street frontage

PARKING

- 1 Interior surface lot, interior garage, and/or park-once garage allowed
- 2 Access: Through alley

HEIGHT AND PROFILE

- 1 Street Frontage Height: 3 stories at center, 5 stories at street corners
- 2 Setback: 0'

USE

- 1 Commercial / Retail on street frontage, mixed use housing/office lifts above

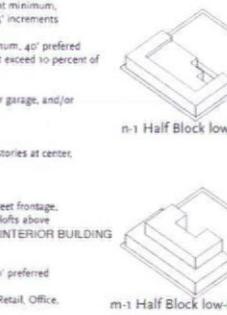
URBAN REGULATIONS - INTERIOR BUILDING

HEIGHT AND PROFILE

- 1 Height: No restrictions
- 2 Setback: 20' minimum, 40' preferred

USE

- 1 Parking, Cinema, Big Box Retail, Office, Hotel, Residential



n-1 Half Block low-rise

m-1 Half Block low-rise

Type C
Townhouses

TYPE DESCRIPTION
Zero-lot line town housing with rear yard garages and studio apartments.

URBAN REGULATIONS

PLACEMENT

- 1 Lot Width: 20'-50'

PARKING

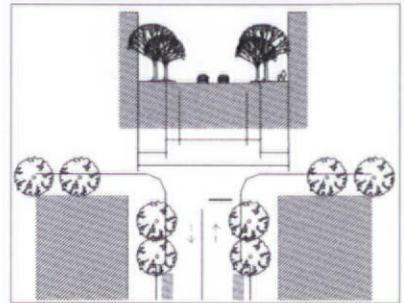
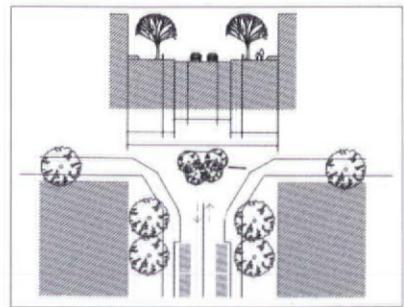
- 1 Rear yard garages
- 2 Access: Through alley

HEIGHT AND PROFILE

- 1 Height: 3 stories maximum

USE

- 1 Residential and Professional Office; Studio Apartments, guest cottages, and workshops above garages

New Urbanism, New Ground?

The Albuquerque and Milwaukee plans are marked by significant differences: they operate at different scales, were prepared for different types of entities, and intervene at different moments of opportunity. Nevertheless, it is worth considering what makes them good examples of "New Urbanism," or new examples of good urbanism, and what lessons they offer.

Both plans express a primary concern about the interface between the public realm and private development. Both imagine a framework of civic elements, the most pervasive of which are streets and blocks; both suggest how that civic framework should be designed, and how the design of buildings and spaces should relate to it. In that regard, the plans take an important step toward solving the common problem of establishing coherent connections in spread-out, unevenly developed city centers.

Both plans, as well, balance many issues, such as land use, circulation, public infrastructure and private development standards. Significantly, both go further, providing for flexibility of uses at every scale — the district, block and building — and of "mixed-use" streets that balance private vehicles, transit, parking, pedestrian movement and landscaping.

These urban design attitudes are hardly particular to New Urbanism. In fact, Milwaukee's plan follows a long tradition of areawide physical planning that has

evolved from the City Beautiful era (and, if anything, stops short of the offering the detailed prescriptions found in many zoning and urban design documents, including the Albuquerque plan).

The Albuquerque plan, on the other hand, is very much a New Urbanist document in its tone and strategy. It offers a more polemic recitation of the city's history, a more aggressive stance toward collaborating with developers in working out urban patterns, a stronger focus on the massing and architectural design of buildings, and a more direct approach toward embedding its recommendations in city codes.

Like many recent urban design plans, New Urbanist or not, these plans elide a number of analytical frameworks. Neither conveys a strong sense of the visual or perceptual structure of the areas they are considering, such as views of and the character of important landmarks or the sense of progression along movement corridors. Rather, both rely on carefully calibrated architectural imagery — suggestive in character but generic in representation — to convey a sense of place.

Nor are the plans communicative about landscape character; they are mute on matters of topography and terrain, light and color, or even climate. Though Milwaukee's plan clearly regards the Milwaukee River and Lake Michigan as primary elements of the civic framework, it fails to consider the possibilities embedded in the grade changes between the water level and the city.

Left: Half-block building type

Center: Town house building type

Right top: Silver Avenue street section

Right bottom: Central Avenue street section

Below: Proposed garage with "liner building"



Like any plans that seek support through public process, these plans only challenge aspects of conventional planning that are safely within the revisionist canon. Thus, while they suggest mixed uses, tamed streets, affordable housing and “park-once” environments, and while they accede to the public a role in setting visions, they do not question who controls the levers of development, or how capital should be used.

Milwaukee’s plan proudly leaves private development decisions to the market, without explaining convincingly how the outcome may be different from that which the market has already produced. The Albuquerque plan, made in collaboration with regional and national developers, does not suggest a role for community-initiated, capitalized or managed development.

Both plans acknowledge that downtowns are developed through incremental steps, and suggest that process is more realistic from a development point of view and more likely to allow for genuine urbanism to flourish. However, the Albuquerque plan, even though it does not drive toward a specific development outcome, does convey the sense that the plan will lead to a finalized state. One wonders how further evolution and adjustment, which are inevitable, would be possible without revising this tightly fit coding regime.

The two projects raise intriguing questions about the role of centers in urban regions. Both suggest that even large areas, like downtowns, can be thought of as neighborhoods or villages for perceptual and functional reasons – thus using New Urbanist theory to reinterpret the structure of existing urban areas. Yet Milwaukee’s approach, depicted by a matrix of same-sized circles laid over city maps, seems abstract and removed from the texture of the city. Why are the cir-

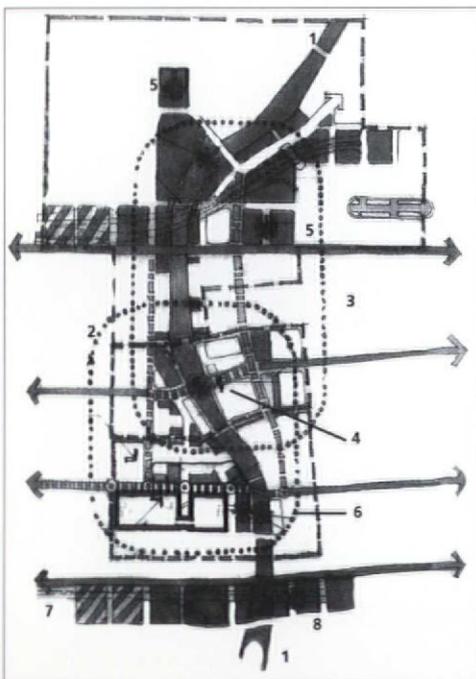
cles the same size? Why are the centers located where they are? More generally, neither plan suggests what thresholds of scale or intensity might be required for these areas to function properly or comfortably.

The plans also raise questions about the capacity of infill in central places to shoulder the burdens of regional growth. What proportion of the region’s growth will the 27,000 new residents of downtown Milwaukee comprise? Is there some new pattern of urbanism, derived equally from local conditions and characteristics as well as regional concerns, that might be more appropriate?

Similarly, do these plans offer lessons about how infill might occur elsewhere? The urban neighborhood concept elaborated in Milwaukee’s plan prepares the city conceptually for retaking the middle ground, the area between downtown and the newer suburbs; Albuquerque’s typological approach may offer a strategy for configuring growth in other underused areas.

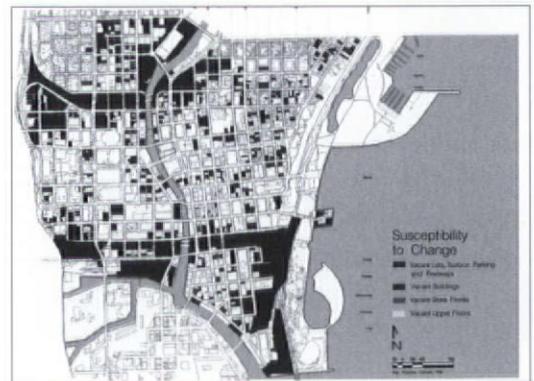
What aspects of these plans might comprise “New Urbanism” as opposed to sound, and often innovative, city design and planning? For the most part, it is more accurate to say New Urbanism brings a clearer focus to certain urban design principles, such as creating a civic realm and a fine-grained mix of uses, and that some New Urbanist practitioners have proven deft at melding this concerns with development realities.

Unfortunately, one of New Urbanism’s strengths, its view of regional patterns from center to edge, is not evident enough in these plans. Both offer mechanisms that could be extended more broadly, but one hopes that the formal strategies tested in plans like these could be ultimately be transmitted to suburban and edge settings.



FRAMEWORK RECOMMENDATIONS FOR "NORTH-SOUTH CORE"

1. Riverfront
2. Daytime Zone
3. Nighttime Zone
4. River Civic Center District
5. Catalyst: Entertainment Attraction
6. Catalyst: Water/Marina Attraction
7. Catalyst: Freeway Demolition, New Development Sites
8. Catalyst: Open-air Market (on former freeway right-of-way)



Background: Downtown Milwaukee

Above: Map of sites susceptible to change

Milwaukee's Downtown Plan

The Milwaukee plan starts from a stronger foundation: In the mid-1990s, several large cultural, commercial and civic projects were completed—including the celebrated "Riverwalk"—and city leaders wanted to assure continued redevelopment. In 1997, the city (along with the state transportation office and the local convention bureau) asked A. Neessen Associates to prepare a broader downtown plan.

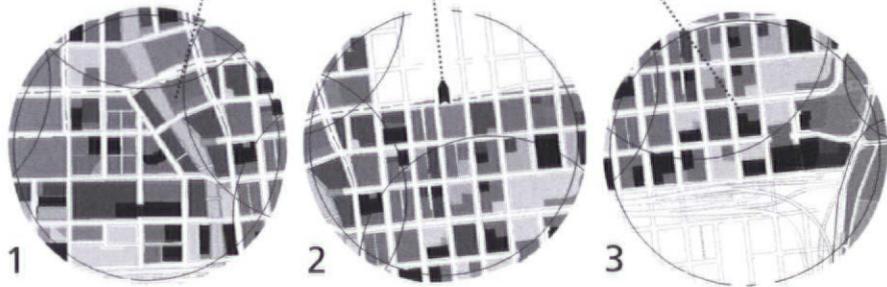
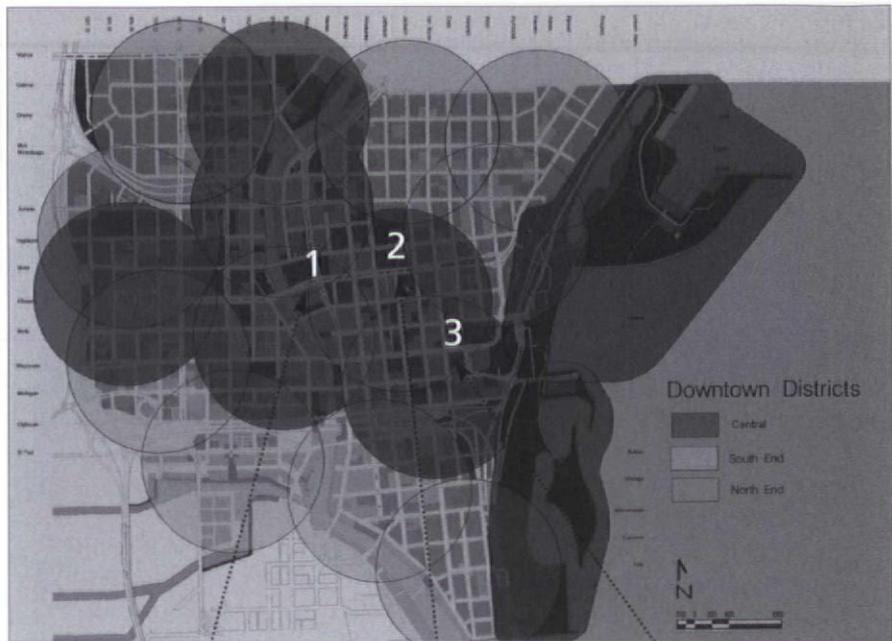
The team began with interviews and field analyses. It then elicited citizen participation through the Neessen's trademarked "Visual Preference Survey" approach, a questionnaire about marketing and policy options, and public workshops.

In the Visual Preference Survey, planners showed some 230 images, mostly from downtown Milwaukee, to about 1,600 people, asking them about potential land-use patterns and transportation issues. Another 1,000 people answered the questionnaire. Together, the responses helped suggest the program for and character of redevelopment downtown.

In public "vision translation" workshops, small groups considered the survey and questionnaire findings and recorded further ideas and suggestions onto maps. Small groups took on specific tasks, such as identifying and distinguishing daily, weekly and seasonal activity generators; suggesting locations for infill housing; or proposing bus, trolley and bike routes.

Finally, the planning team synthesized the research findings and workshop results into proposals, which were refined through presentations to various city staff, citizens and interested groups. The plan's recommendations include:

- Allowing a broader mix of uses at the block and building scales, and structuring activities to create seventeen compact "urban neighborhoods"—each of which has a mix of residential, retail and office space yet maintains its own character and planning objectives.
- Combining underutilized surface parking into garages, freeing up space for development, while ensuring parking is distributed in a fine-grained pattern and supports a "park-once" environment downtown.
- Creating a range of mobility options, from regional buses and light rail to bike routes and water shuttles, and relating transit routes to neighborhood centers.
- Establishing a hierarchy of streets that combine auto, pedestrian, parking, bikes, landscaping and property access in various configurations.



The plan includes design guidelines that make recommendations for urban form; the guidelines are based on the most strongly liked images in the Visual Preference Survey, which "indicate principles, proportion, scale and character of desired appearance" that should guide the form and experience of the public realm.

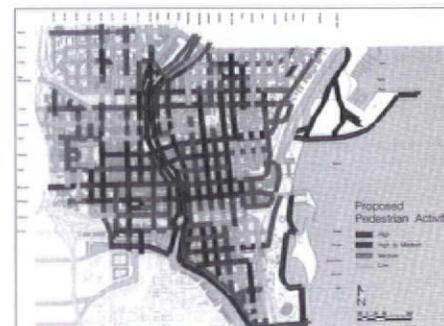
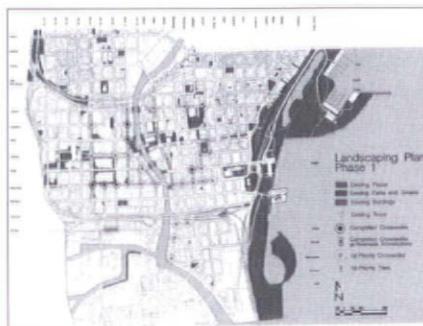
The plan concludes by suggesting thirteen catalytic projects, such as the revitalization of Wisconsin Avenue, Milwaukee's most active street. The plan was approved in June, 1999, and has spun off a number of projects, such as a streetscape program and the purchase of trolleys for the first phase of the "park-once" concept.

Top: Downtown planning areas

Above: Detailed plans for sample planning areas

Below left: Landscaping plan

Below right: Projected pedestrian activity



Proof of Goodness

A SUBSTANTIVE BASIS FOR NEW URBANISM?

Anne Vernez Moudon

As a theory, New Urbanism is notably and refreshingly free of the grand statements and obscure rationales typical of many urban design theories. As a movement, its focus is practical and didactic, providing simple, clear and hands-on directions and guidelines for designers, planners and builders making towns. As a manifesto, its charter is readily understandable, basically saying, "let us make or remake traditional towns."

New Urbanism has learned from the past, in both its outlook and strategy. Contrary to Modernist design and planning theories, which were based on the premise of breaking with building traditions, New Urbanism seeks to revive practices that had been discarded in post-war suburban development. Unlike theories that overlooked the practicalities of common development processes (for example, Christopher Alexander's *A Pattern Language*), New Urbanism involves the different actors who have a role in making cities and towns.¹

New Urbanism's timing could not be more propitious, in terms of its resonance with popular sentiment. New Urbanism comes just when contemporary suburban development practices are being criticized, seemingly, from all sides and on multiple grounds—functional, social, economic and aesthetic. In this context, New Urbanism provides a needed alternative.

Not surprisingly, critics have emerged, probing the theory in opposition to contemporary suburban development and often denouncing it as aesthetically and socially anachronistic, as dysfunctional and economically unfeasible. The battle is on and it is not clear who will win the war. How well New Urbanism fares in the long term, I believe, will depend on how it decides to measure itself and validate its claims.

Normative Versus Substantive Theory

New Urbanism positions itself squarely within the evolution of ideas and theories about city design (its closest relative is the Garden City movement). It defines itself as a normative theory, projecting a vision of what cities should be in the future. This type of theory falls in the realm of advocacy, both professed and practiced in hope of promoting a better future.¹ However, normative design theories have been notoriously short-lived; since they are based on belief, rather than proof, they are highly dependent on, and typically the eventual victims of, the vagaries of ideological fashion and economic cycles.

Urban design and planning theorists have long warned that normative theories are only statements of belief in "goodness" on the part of professional elites.³ These theories demand that followers make a leap of faith and simply trust in the beneficial outcomes that they claim will occur. To survive, these theories must ground themselves in substance, and provide the necessary "proof of goodness"—explicit and compelling evidence that their claims will have the intended effect. Proof of goodness thus takes normative theory from a state of conjecture and advocacy to one of greater certainty.

Idelfonso Cerdà, Patrick Geddes and Constantinos Doxiadis are the most famous advocates of building substantive theories of city design and planning. Kevin Lynch prefaced his own normative theory with an acknowledgment that it needed a substantive basis; indeed, his inimitably elegant writings often straddled between norm and substance. Recently, educators like Jon Lang and myself have argued that an explicit knowledge base about the process of city

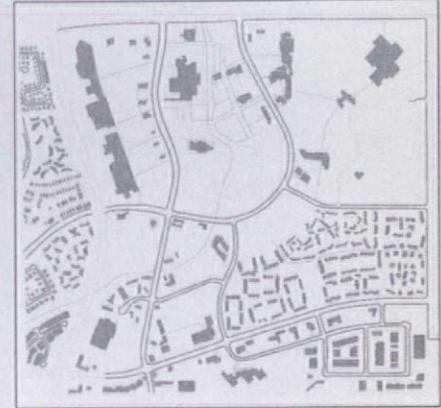
building—one that addresses why cities are the way they are, and how they work or do not work in given circumstances—is essential for teaching urban design and planning.

Many theories advocating new ways of making cities have foundered, at least in part, because their advocates have not had the time to accumulate a large enough body of built work, and to apply, test and adjust their theories in a sufficient number of contexts before they fell into disregard (as in the cases of the Bauhaus or Alexander's *A Pattern Language*).

In contrast, the characteristics of New Urbanism are such that it could, relatively easily, test its claims and ground at least some, if not all, of them in proof of validity. Because New Urbanism wants to emulate common urban forms and common urbanization processes, it can draw upon the entire gamut of towns and cities built so far as precedents composed of many (though clearly not all) of the elements and features advocated by its charter. Existing towns and cities represent a vast laboratory of forms resulting from actions taken under a great variety of circumstances and contexts. As forms that have been and continue to be lived in, they hold all the data necessary for appropriate research, providing a long-term empirical foundation of applied planning and design principles.

Transportation planners have already tapped into the opportunity afforded by existing cities to test some of the claims of New Urbanism. A significant number of research projects have sought to measure the effect of the different street layouts and designs on traffic patterns and travel mode choices by using existing pre-World War II neighborhoods and contrasting

Suburban Mixed-Use Morphology



This study compared mile-square sections of four mixed-use districts in Scottsdale, Arizona. Clockwise from top left: an older neighborhood commercial district, a newer district with power/retail and offices, downtown and a light-industrial/corporate district. Illustrated here are pedestrian networks; the study also documented block patterns, property lines, building figures, surface parking and clusters of similar building types. The project replicated methods done by

other researchers in other cities so the findings could be compared among cities as well as among the various districts. The findings are being used as the basis for urban design and redevelopment recommendations for these areas.

Graphics: Todd W. Bressi, Dan Sirois, Chris Magnuson; City of Scottsdale Redevelopment and Urban Design Studio

them with contemporary suburban designs.⁴ The research suggests that suburban street layouts devised to accommodate the automobile do so quite poorly (while excluding other modes of transportation), while the small street-block layouts found in pre-war neighborhoods (and, by extension, those advocated by New Urbanism) support pedestrian travel and reduce traffic congestion.

Similarly, developers and urban policymakers tested some of New Urbanism's principles in the marketplace by conducting consumer preference surveys on neo-

traditional and contemporary suburban designs.⁵ Though these surveys were limited to a sample of potential new home-buyers, the results are unsettling. Respondents showed affinity for New Urbanism's approaches to town center design. But they opted for the large lots typical of contemporary suburban development practices, not for the small residential lots advocated by New Urbanists—effectively rejecting New Urbanism's push for compact neighborhoods.

Urban Morphology and New Urbanism

A befitting knowledge base for New Urbanism could come from a little-known body of research and theory emerging from the field of urban morphology. Literally the study of urban form, urban morphology began as a branch of historical human geography. Because it focuses on the built landscape and uses a language already familiar to urban designers and planners, this field holds promise as a framework to evaluate New Urbanism's achievements.

Urban morphologists ask several basic questions: How did or does the built landscape come about? How did or does it function? How has it been adapted, or is it adapting, to changing needs and circumstances? As they seek explanations for the processes that affect urban form, urban morphologists turn to traditional social sciences, typically sociology, anthropology, psychology and economics.

Hence urban morphology provides a designer-friendly, interdisciplinary and integrated methodological framework. It centers the study of the city on its physical environment, but also explicitly links the spatial and material elements of the city to the social and economic forces that shape them.

The recent formation of an association, the International Seminar on Urban Form (ISUF), has broadened the interdisciplinary dimension of urban morphology, specifically including architects, urban designers and planners.⁸ ISUF's mission is to assemble a body of integrated knowledge of urban forms and urbanization processes across cultures and disciplines. In this context, geographers, archeologists and historians using the morphological approach seek to develop

substantive theories of city building, architects and designers look at these processes to develop normative theories of design; others study urban form to evaluate critically the effectiveness of past normative design theories.

ISUF's work is still at an empirical and inductive stage, but it is beginning to provide a forum for exchanging knowledge about city design and development. The continuing survey and synthesis of past and ongoing research indicates that New Urbanism's reliance on building types, street and block patterns, land subdivision and land-use mix within small areas and hierarchies of public space mirrors both traditional spatial arrangements and the processes of formation and transformation that continue to shape parts of many cities. These traditional elements of urban form are not superficial emulations of the past but the outcome of known practices that have a track record of accommodating greatly different urban processes.

Expanding the Palette

The research suggests ways of expanding the theory and practice of New Urbanism. On one hand, it begins to spell out the enormous range of culturally based differences in urban forms, both historical and present. The research extends beyond the limited range of Anglo-Saxon responses and outlines many potential options that designers and planners might consider, especially in anticipation of the continued influx of Asians and Latin Americans into the United States.

On the other hand, the research provides detailed information about recurrent phenomena at the micro-levels of urban form. For example, the importance of the individual lot or parcel of ownership in shaping urban form certainly lends credence to New Urbanist focus on building type. The study of urban lots (one of urban morphologists' favorite subjects) not only documents the potential of many different building types, but also illustrates the range of mutations that occur within each type over time, reflecting attempts to balance the provision of sheltered space against the need for private open space for either cultivation or recreation.

Gianfranco Caniggia, for example, identified the

process of *tabernizzazione* (literally “the making of rooms”) or the gradual subdivision of buildings within individual lots to accommodate growing population and densities in Italian towns over many centuries. This example helps us consider New Urbanist proposals for accessory dwelling units in the context of the long-term history of optimizing the use of space under economic pressure and growing population needs. Another phenomenon, which M.R.G. Conzen calls “market colonization,” highlights the incremental transformation of open-air market places in British medieval towns into permanent mixed-use urban quarters; this provides a fascinating historical context to understand the current transformations of commercial malls.

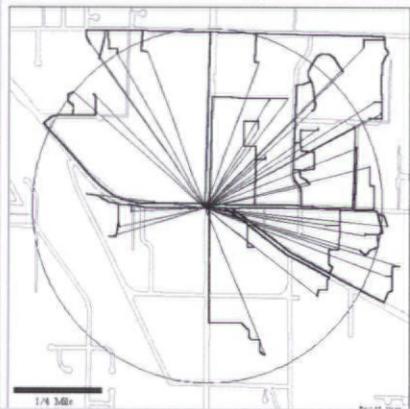
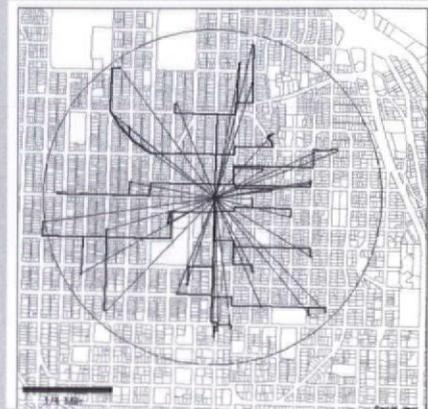
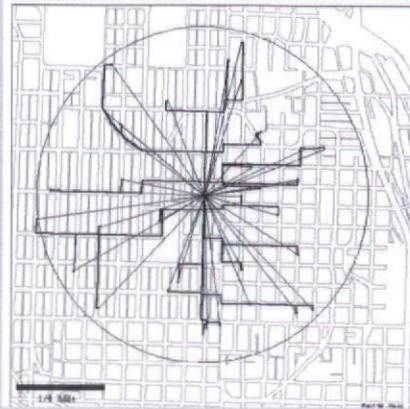
Generally, these studies show that New Urbanist proposals aim to recapture urban design processes that have long structured the formation of urban space and to adapt urban development strategies that have long enabled urban evolution and the inevitable transformation of urban space. The studies also suggest that New Urbanism rethink its reliance on static building types, expanding its definition to include how space may be used by different people and for different purposes, and to consider how types perform over time. Urban morphological studies make it clear that time is an essential dimension of urban form, and that the designer’s intervention only marks the beginning of a long process of transformation. Educating designers and planners to understand the processes of change will allow them to better anticipate its inevitability and to provide some of the necessary options.

Interpreting Substantive Research

The development of substantive theory is neither value- nor risk-free. The controversy that surrounds the interpretation of research on urban form and urbanization processes echoes some of New Urbanists’ struggles for identity.

One such struggle in urban morphology involves the issue of modernity in city building. Most scholars see long-term continuity in urban form and accept the gradual introduction of change; hence, they support the direction taken by New Urbanism. Some, however,

Pedestrian Accessibility



This study assesses the pedestrian accessibility characteristics of traditional neighborhood development and typical suburban development, comparing two communities in the Seattle area. Each pair shows the same area; the image on the left shows street patterns and the image on the right shows street and lot patterns.

Top row: The urban neighborhood of Queen Anne showing walking routes and straight-line distances between randomly selected housing units and the center of the retail district. Average walking route

length is 0.43 miles. On average, walking routes are 1.29 times the length of straight-line distances.

Bottom row: The suburban neighborhood of Kent East Hill showing walking routes and straight-line distances between randomly selected housing units and the center of the retail district. Average walking route length is 0.66 miles. On average, walking routes are 1.6 times the length of straight-line distances.

Graphics: Paul M. Hess

argue that the Modernist break with tradition (large, self-contained buildings, large blocks, etc.) is likely an accelerating and irreversible trend.

“Conservatives” (those who believe in the future continuity of forms), “progressists” (those who see the accommodation of gradual change) and “Modernists” (those who believe that Modern environments have only begun to be produced in cities) engage in debates that are similar to those surrounding the New Urbanism. The question is one of interpretation: whether and when New Urbanist advocacy (or, for that matter, any other instrument of change, such as significant increases in gas prices) will effectively co-opt contemporary forces

of suburbanization and eventually prevail in reversing the forms and patterns of suburban development.⁷

Another challenge relates to the regional scale of today's cities. While urban form continues to be produced at a relatively small scale, in increments of lots, blocks or districts, cities have taken a regional dimension that greatly affects how they function, in terms of location, transportation decisions and behavior in general. Most urban morphologists, as most New Urbanists, continue to work at the neighborhood or district scale and have yet to address the great challenges posed by the emergence of city–regions. The few studies of regional form and the few New Urbanist regional plans suggest the need to recognize the different scales at which urban form is shaped and the need to understand, as well as practice, the relationships that exist between elements at the different scales.

Next Steps

Claiming its roots in the history of theory, the New Urbanism first exercised its influence by building a supporting base in design practice. It later added a pedagogical dimension, with educational programs at the University of Miami and in the Congresses. A logical next enabling step would be to develop a research program that would establish a substantive foundation that would test and validate the movement's ideas, ground it into actual processes of city building, and contribute to its long-term viability.

Three areas of research emerge. One is the critical documentation of the New Urbanism's nemesis, contemporary suburban development practices, including their impacts on human behavior and resource consumption, especially environmental systems. For all the rhetoric surrounding the subject, only lip service has been paid to actually measuring the vast excesses related to this form of development. Few policy makers really know how big and spread out the elements of suburban development are, even as compared to previous generations. If the reaction to Newman and Kenworthy's attempt at comparison is an indication, even academics seem to pay a deaf ear to the issue.⁸

To provide a contrasting and positive alternative, a second area of research could turn to those parts of American cities where a more modest human imprint still enables healthy socio-economic conditions—documenting, for example, the many late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century suburbs where property values have risen over time, where residents may own and use multiple cars, yet where they drive at least half as fewer miles as in the newer suburbs, and where they may walk to shop. It is important to go beyond polling prospective buyers of new suburban homes and to learn more about people who selecting to stay in these older communities, how they use and behave in these environments, and why.

Finally, New Urbanism should study its own work, evaluate it critically and establish a baseline from which progress can be measured. People living in New Urbanist communities, as well as those building and managing them, can shed light on all sides of the debate: how good are the small lots, the town centers, the alley dwellings? Are residents shedding their cars, children walking to school? How strong are social ties in the community? Both positive and negative answers to these questions need explanation, in order to guide the designers into the next generation of projects.

Setting itself in this context, New Urbanism will be able to add substance to its claims, confirming with certainty their validity or calibrating them accordingly. Urban morphology offers a wealth of comparative data and analyses, as well as tools to carry out the research in a format that links the designer's concerns for the spatial and material elements of the city to the social and economic indicators typically used by the development industry. Adding this research dimension will afford New Urbanism the deeper level of self-awareness needed to insure the goodness of future cities.

Notes

1. New Urbanism has cultivated a large network of collaborators, not only in the architectural, engineering and urban design fields, but also in the areas of public policy, development, finance and community-based planning (through the charrette process).
2. For a historical overview of normative theory in urban design, see Geoffrey Broadbent, *Emerging Concepts in Urban Space Design* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1990). A discussion of the different types of design theories can be found in Jon Lang, *Creating Architectural Theory: The Role of the Behavioral Sciences in Environmental Design* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1987). For a broad discussion of the historical context contrasting belief versus proof, see Ian G. Barbour, *Religion and Science, Historical and Contemporary Issues* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1997).
3. I borrow the concept of "goodness" from Kevin Lynch to encompass the necessarily broad goals that urban design and city planning theories must consider. The concept also serves as an umbrella for the various claims that the growing number of New Urbanists have made covering environmental, transportation, cost-of-life and quality-of-life issues. This conceptual shortcut does not address the issue that New Urbanism has become many different things to many different people.
4. For a recent review of the research and literature in this field, see Randall Crane, "The Impact of Urban Form on Travel: A Critical Review," Lincoln Institute of Land Policy Working Paper (Cambridge, MA: Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 1999). Much of this research remains inconclusive because the transportation and land use data that are readily available relate to automobile travel speeds and distances rather than to the characteristics of non-motorized or transit travel. In addition, Crane's interpretation overlooks the limitations of available data in relating transportation, land use and urban form.
5. *ULI on the Future: Smart Growth* (Washington, D.C.: Urban Land Institute, 1998) and Adrienne Schmitz and Lloyd W. Bookout, *Trends and Innovations in Master-Planned Communities* (Washington, D.C.: Urban Land Institute, 1998).
6. Some of *isuf's* members refer to the field as typomorphology rather than morphology, in reference to the important role that building types (and hence architectural scale) play in the production of urban form.
7. *isuf* de facto adopted Geddes's conceptual division

Rural-Urban Transect



"The transect is a system of classification deploying the conceptual range, rural to urban, to arrange in useful order the elements of urbanism. The transect is a natural ordering system, as very urban element easily finds a place within its continuum. For example, a street is more urban than a road, a curb more urban than a swale, a brick wall more urban than a cluster." The concept of the transect can undergird systems of

regulation and implementation that correlate various elements (such as street types and parking strategies, land uses, parks and house types) in a logical, immersive manner.

Graphic: *The Lexicon of the New Urbanism*, © Duany Plater-Zyberk and Company

between the descriptive dimension of the study of urban form (politography) and the interpretive dimension (politology), a division that is quite common in the sciences. Thus work goes on documenting trends in urban development, while disagreement on the meaning of these trends persists.

8. Peter Newman and Kenworthy, *Cities and Automobile Dependence* (Brookfield, VT: Gower, 1989).

New Urbanism and the Environment

ANNE WHISTON SPIRN

The Charter of the New Urbanism begins with the following statement:

*The Congress for the New Urbanism views disinvestment in central cities, the spread of placeless sprawl, increasing separation by race and income, environmental deterioration, loss of agricultural lands and wilderness, and the erosion of society's built heritage as one interrelated community-building challenge.*¹

Calling attention to the direct link between exurban development and disinvestment in inner cities is the most important contribution of the Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU), from an environmental perspective. The insight itself is not new; others, such as Patrick Geddes, Brian Berry and myself have highlighted this connection.²

CNU members have persuaded developers that there is a profit to be made in infill development. They have demonstrated that if designers and planners aspire to be more than mere tools of prevailing market forces and public policies, they must redesign the processes that regulate the conception, construction and maintenance of the built environment.

But have they achieved the environmental goals spelled out in the charter? Sometimes, but often not. And do these goals go far enough? No.

Despite seemingly good intentions, the charter reveals a fundamental lack of understanding of how natural processes shape cities, towns and regions. This can lead to actions that contradict or undermine the stated goals, and result in missed opportunities.

While the language of the charter naturalizes the processes of growth and development as inevitable, it tends to render natural processes mainly as static artifacts. For example, almost all references to the natural environment are nouns ("climate," "ecology," "topog-

raphy," "coastlines"). This leads to nonsense like the following statement: "Metropolitan regions are finite places with geographic boundaries derived from topography, watersheds, coastlines, farmlands, regional parks and river basins."³

A watershed is a territory shaped by water flowing. A watershed may be as small as a single neighborhood, or it may encompass a chunk of a continent and multiple metropolitan regions, such as that of the Chesapeake Bay, Mississippi River or Columbia River. Geographic boundaries are shaped by processes—social, economic, cultural, political and natural.

Focusing on natural features rather than the processes that shape and structure them has consequences: the failure to accommodate dynamic change in the natural environment, the failure to make connections among seemingly unrelated elements and issues, the failure to recognize that not all traditional settlement patterns should be repeated and the failure to realize opportunities.

Take the example of water flowing and, in the process, shaping and structuring rivers, floodplains, watersheds and their topographies. Seen from this perspective, the drainage system of a neighborhood, city or region consists of not only the channels officially designated for storm water flow, but also all the other surfaces and water reservoirs within a watershed: roofs, roads and parking lots; gardens, parks and forests; soil, plants and valley bottoms.

Water flow is changing, not constant, and floodplains are zones of dynamic change, places where water rises and falls, pools and seeps. Burying a stream in a sewer and filling in the floodplain does not eliminate many of the floodplain's characteristic qualities. Understanding floodplain processes is as germane to

Nature in the CNU Charter

WILLIAM R. MORRISH

New Urbanists would agree with Anne Spirn's remark about the importance of enriching the natural processes that flow through our cities, towns and communities and incorporating them into our plans for revitalizing and extending metropolitan regions. We also recognize that natural processes and habitat are among the most difficult issues for us to define and integrate into supportive physical form.

The heart of Spirn's critique is a single article in the Charter of the New Urbanism that seems to set built form against natural process. That article, she states, precludes design solutions that embrace natural processes and seems to contradict the charter's preamble.

As primary author of the charter's preamble, I offer a closer reading of it and a brief narrative of its evolution, reflecting especially on how New Urbanists have sought to construe natural processes as an underpinning infrastructure for our mission and work agenda.

Reading the Charter

The charter consists of two related sections, the preamble and its articles. The preamble is a set of overarching principles that outline key relationships between urban systems, cultural patterns and natural processes. The articles are design building blocks, formal elements that give shape to and support specific local processes.

The central theme of the preamble is to recognize that working with natural process, as William Cronon describes, is an act of "cultural construction," or, as J.B. Jackson has written, "the making of a synthetic landscape, background or infrastructure to our everyday lives." These definitions set the stage for weaving cultural and natural processes.

Spirn's argument about the environmental failures of the charter and the products of New Urbanism is based on one article of the charter:

Metropolitan regions are finite places with geographic boundaries derived from topography, watersheds, coastlines, farmlands, regional parks and river basins.

In framing her argument, she has taken the article out of context. The third line of the preamble addresses her concern about the issue of static natural features versus fluid natural processes:

We recognize that physical solutions ["natural features"] by themselves will not solve environmental, social and economic problems, but neither can economic vitality, community stability and environmental health ["the process that shape them"] be sustained without a coherent and supportive physical framework.

Of course water is a natural process (a verb) that shapes conditions like climate, ecology, topography and coastlines. Nevertheless, when water flows through urban areas, it is manipulated by public agencies (nouns) like water and sewer agencies, parks departments, flood control districts and port authorities. It is in these arenas that the preamble — and New Urbanism — seeks to change perceptions and, ultimately, policy and management mechanisms.

Figuring the Ground

This approach has been implemented in a public housing project in Minneapolis's Northside community.¹ The pre-existing project, 350 units built in 1938, was demolished and families were relocated for one central reason, according to a brief the city included in its request for proposals: "...one of the chief constraints to the

New Urbanism and the
Environment

rebuilding an inner-city neighborhood as it is to developing a new town on former farmland.

In many inner-city neighborhoods, vacant land is concentrated in valley bottoms on buried floodplains.⁴ Water flowing underground, flooding basements and undermining foundations, contributed to abandonment (which was also fueled by political processes like redlining and socioeconomic processes like population migration). Those who developed public housing in the past sometimes built on buried floodplains; ignorant of the hydrological reasons for building deterioration and abandonment in these places, they sowed the seeds of future destruction. HOPE VI projects, which merely replace Modernist superblocks and towers in inner-city neighborhoods with traditional grids, houses and porches without understanding all the underlying causes of abandonment, may blindly repeat these past mistakes.

Rebuilding houses on vacant land over buried floodplains also neglects a potential opportunity. Such areas should be developed as landscape infrastructure that detains storm water, preventing floods and combined sewer overflows downstream, thereby addressing regional environmental issues. Landscape infrastructure need not appear "natural" in order to serve this hydrological function; it can consist of plazas, pools, gardens or even parking lots.

Natural processes of water, weather, erosion, plant growth and succession shape landscapes, from small gardens to entire regions. Overlapping, interacting, interwoven over time, these processes compose the rhythm of a place. Together with cultural processes, such as movement and trade, cultivating and building, wasting and worship, they mold material and produce forms, giving a place its distinctive character.

Traditional building forms and settlement patterns are the product of dialogues among natural and cultural processes in a given landscape over time. Landscape features are dynamic, related markers of change, not discrete, fixed objects. Composing a place as a formal arrangement by adapting the plan and elements of a historic garden or town, borrowing a phrase here and there from contemporary work, is like trying to compose a sentence or paragraph entirely of nouns and adjectives,

without verbs. Neglecting pertinent processes can lead to failure of function and expression.⁵

These failures of knowledge and practice apply to most architects and planners, not just CNU members. They reflect a failure to grasp the substance and scope of landscape architecture as a discipline, a disregard for the profession's contribution to site design and landscape planning beyond the selection and arrangement of plants.⁶

Reversing these failures of knowledge and practice requires rethinking how plans and designs are conceived and how they are implemented and maintained over time. CNU members are well acquainted with this type of enterprise. In adopting the design of the development process as part of the designer's brief, they have succeeded in creating denser and, arguably, more sociable environments. Designing and managing natural processes entails similar habits of mind.

Notes

1. Congress for the New Urbanism, *The Charter of the New Urbanism* (www.cnu.org/charter).
2. Anne Whiston Spirn, *The Granite Garden: Urban Nature and Human Design* (New York: Basic Books, 1984); Brian J. L. Berry, "The Urban Problem," in Archibald M. Woodruff, ed., *The Farm and the City: Rivals or Allies* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1980); Patrick Geddes, *Cities in Evolution* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1915).
3. Congress for the New Urbanism.
4. See the stories of Boston's Dudley Street and Philadelphia's Mill Creek in Anne Whiston Spirn, *The Language of Landscape* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998). I described the link between floodplains, vacant land, and community development many years earlier; see Spirn, "Urban Nature and Human Design: Renewing the Great Tradition," *Journal of Planning Education and Research* (Fall 1985).
5. These ideas are described more fully in Spirn, *Language of Landscape*.
6. For example, out of more than forty speakers at the conference "Exploring (New) Urbanism(s)," held at Harvard's Graduate School of Design last year, only three were landscape architects (George Hargreaves, Warren Byrd and myself). All three appeared on the same panel: "Region, Environment, Landscape."

new development is the soil condition in the area.”

In glacial times, this site was a primary channel of the Mississippi River. The river left behind a mosaic of sand and expansive clays. The area was first used as an excavation site for making bricks. Then it became a low-income neighborhood and, eventually, a site for the WPA housing project. Over the last sixty years the housing authority has waged an expensive, losing battle to hold together the block buildings, which were settling unevenly across this complex soil matrix.

Local residents, city officials and even HUD officials all saw that it was too costly to keep fighting the natural process of this site. They have embraced the idea that natural material of this place should be used for making a working landscape, managing storm water and building a 36-acre park.²

The Designer's Brief

Spirn's most important point concerns CNU's effort to tackle the challenges of her statement: "These failures of knowledge and practice apply to most architects and planners, not just CNU members." I would add to this list landscape architects, engineers and public officials.

The charter was written in spring 1996 by the CNU board. The creation of the preamble was a turning point for CNU. Prior to this, the primary focus had been on refining the physical building blocks — an aggregation of city planning components and architectural design codes derived from neo-traditionalist and transit-oriented design projects. Meanwhile, New Urbanism had evolved into a national congress that gathered a diverse membership working on a wide range of greenfield developments, inner-city projects and local, regional and national urban and suburban policies. We realized that the articles (or physical building blocks) alone were not adequate: we needed to articulate urban design and planning principles that would allow us to engage in political debates about issues like the sprawl, smart growth and social and environmental equity.

Thus the preamble seeks to elevate a set of performance criteria, which are implicit in the articles. It provides a more explicit account of the efforts of CNU's members — design professionals, civic leaders, entrepreneurs and government officials — to redesign the political processes that shape and manage economic, social, cultural and natural systems.

There is still debate within CNU about whether the preamble policy statements are needed. It is a well-founded concern that, as in the past, the attention to process will subsume the concern for formal quality (inherent in the articles) into shallow policy clichés or simplistic slogans.

What are those terms of policy and design that must be re-explored and realigned so that New Urbanist projects can increase their capacity to integrate natural process with built form? The debate has been carried into the work of CNU committees (including an environment committee), which have become research networks. CNU has also launched an annual award for New Urbanist landscape design, first given last year.³

The charter is an evolving document, just as New Urbanism is an evolving body of practice. Seeing nature as a cultural construction and an infrastructure for making New Urbanism landscape is a long and messy process. It requires demonstrations, access to and translation of the latest research, and an insightful eye into the mechanisms of institutional processes and standards. We are only at the beginning of this exciting and expanding work.

Notes

1. The design brief was developed collaboratively by the Minneapolis housing authority, the Northside neighborhood and the University of Minnesota's Design Center for American Urban Landscape (under the direction of former CNU board member and landscape architect Catherine Brown). The developer (McCormack Barron) and the design team (Urban Design Associates, William Wenk Associates, Close Associates, SRF Engineering) are now engaged in project design.
2. For more information, see <<http://www.cala.umn.edu/dcaul.html>>.
3. See "The 1999 Catherine Brown Award for the Landscape of the New Urbanism," *Places* (13.1), 74-77.

Creating Community

DOES THE KENTLANDS LIVE UP TO ITS GOALS?

Joongsub Kim

Over the last few years, New Urbanism has drawn considerable attention from the media, design professionals, academia and public officials. This is due, in part, to claims that neotraditional development fosters a greater sense of community than a conventional suburban development. Among the claims New Urbanists make are that:

- compact neighborhoods and mixed land uses will encourage residents to walk for their daily activities,
- neotraditional development that evokes the feeling of prewar communities will engender among residents a feeling of emotional bonding to the place
- the proximity of homes to each other; mixing of house types in blocks and neighborhoods; use of elements like front porches; and provision of amenities like sidewalks, pedestrian connections and local public spaces will foster social interaction, and
- the use of traditional architectural styles and urban elements like alleys, carriage houses, picket fences and common spaces surrounded by diverse housing types will create a distinctive physical character or a sense of place.

To date, these claims have been rarely substantiated. Recently published books on Celebration (*Celebration, U.S.A.*, by D. Frantz and C. Collins, and *The Celebration Chronicles*, by Andrew Ross) have shed some

light on New Urbanist qualities of this planned community at its early stage, but the authors tend to emphasize the role of the Disney Corporation (which developed the town) and public school controversies. Both books fall short of explaining the extent to which broader New Urbanist goals have been realized.¹

Likewise, while recent studies by Jack L. Nasar and Plas and Lewis are valuable to the examination of New Urbanist claims, both have limitations. Nasar's research is not based on actual neotraditional communities; Plas and Lewis's findings are based on the evaluation of Seaside, which is atypical because it is a resort community.²

This article addresses some of the claims of New Urbanism by drawing upon the preliminary findings of research conducted in Kentlands, a master-planned community built over the past decade in Gaithersburg, MD., a suburb of Washington, D.C. It reports on preliminary findings of a comparative case study that evaluates Kentlands and Orchard Village,³ a conventional suburban community also in Gaithersburg. The research involved a survey (approximately 750 participants), in-depth interviews (approximately 130 participants) and week-long activity logs (approximately 70), all conducted during spring and summer 1999.

This article presents information drawn primarily from residents' responses to two open-ended survey questions and incorporates several emblematic examples from the extended interviews. Although the analysis

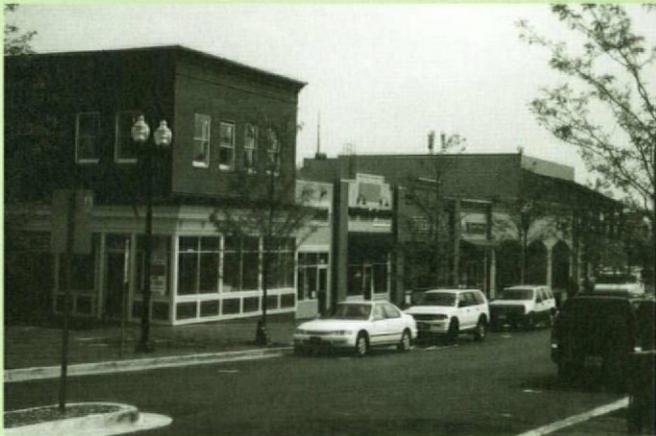
Contrasting Kentlands (left) and "Orchard Village" (right)

Photos: Joongsub Kim

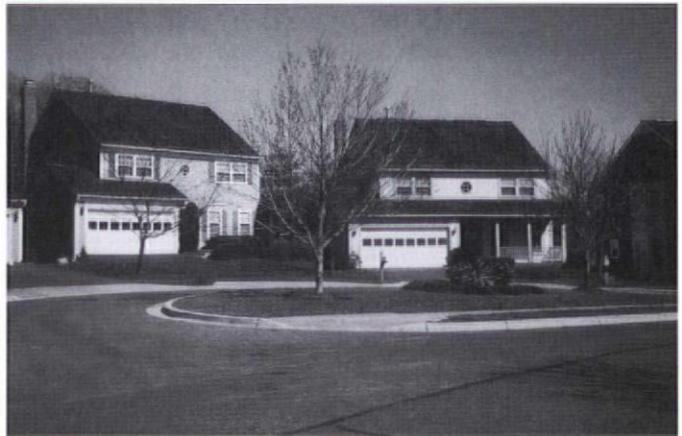
Kentlands



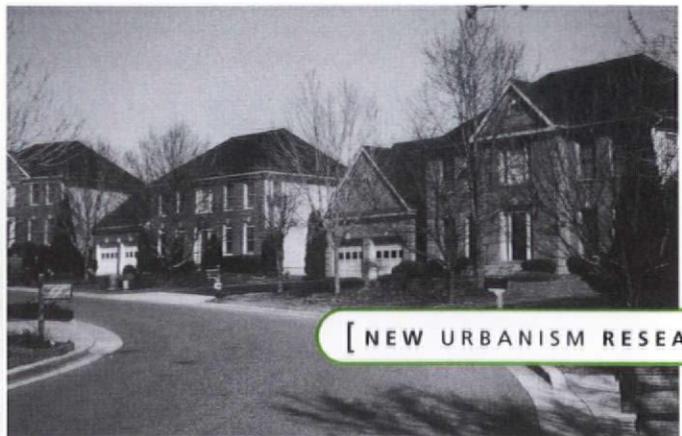
“It would be very difficult for me to move elsewhere. This place reminds me of the neighborhoods I grew up in.”



Orchard Village



“I like living here because it is a very convenient, safe and quiet place...(but) I don't feel this is my permanent home.”



[NEW URBANISM RESEARCH]

KENTLANDS

“It is so exciting and convenient ...to walk to the newly built cinemas in the Market Square Shopping Center, enjoy the movies, grab pizza or ice cream in the Kentlands Shopping Center, and walk right back home.”

and findings presented here are still preliminary, they are consistent with the overall outcome of the quantitative analyses of the survey questionnaire.

Research Sites

Kentlands. Kentlands and Laguna West in California are probably the two classic examples of neotraditional residential communities built to date. Whereas Laguna West is far from complete, Kentlands is nearly finished. Moreover, Kentlands is located near many conventional suburban communities in Gaithersburg, facilitating comparisons. Factors such as the climate, public facilities in the city of Gaithersburg, the quality of the school district, and the location of job market within and near Washington, D.C. are similar.

Kentlands is a 352-acre development located on the former Kent family farm in southwest Gaithersburg. It was designed by Andrés Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk in 1988 and planned for approximately 1,800 residential units and approximately 800,000 square feet of retail and office space. Construction began in 1989; completion is expected in 2002.

At the time this research was undertaken, two-thirds of the housing was occupied⁴; an elementary school, church, children's center and a clubhouse-recreation center had also been built. Kentlands includes two major shopping centers: Kentlands Shopping Center, which resembles a typical suburban big-box shopping mall, is completed; Market Square Shopping Center, which consists of small-scale shops, is expected to be completed in two years.

Kentlands is characterized by: a mix of homes, retail, office and civic uses within the community; diverse neighborhood types and neighborhoods with higher densities and a wider mix of housing types than in typical subdivisions; narrow streets arranged on warped grid patterns, with a network of alleys and few culs-de-sac; houses on small lots and with narrow setbacks

Kentlands Is The Place Everyone Is Talking About.

You've seen it on the national news. You've read about it in *Smithsonian*, *Washingtonian* and *Time*.

Old-fashioned urban planning is back in style. Cul-de-sacs are out. Grids of streets are in. Parking lots are out.



Sidewalks are in. Suburban sprawl is out. Small-town charm is in.



It's a welcome trend back to the past called Neo-Traditionalism. And its architects are the husband-and-wife team of Andrés Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk.

Time magazine calls them "visionary urban planners." Their town of Seaside, Florida has been described as "the most important new piece of archi-

ture in the country."

And, we're pleased to announce, they are also the planners of Kentlands. Come see what they've done. And what all the talk is about.



from the street; architectural elements like picket fences and front porches; garages that face alleys, not streets; and plenty of sidewalks and footpaths.

The layout features several clear, formal characteristics: an entry circle fronted by an elementary school and church; a semi-circular green where a clubhouse-recreation center is located; and a boulevard that connects the two spaces. Landmark buildings terminate vistas or adjoin public spaces.

Kentlands includes roughly 100 acres devoted to public open spaces which consist of tot lots, tree saves, common greens, lakes, and parks in diverse sizes and locations; each neighborhood has a central, common green. The grading and the siting of buildings are sensitive to the natural setting, as the landscape retains many mature trees and topographic features such as hills and lakes.

Home prices in 1999 ranged from \$200,000 to \$1,000,000 and averaged \$360,000.

Orchard Village. Orchard Village is a conventional suburban community a few miles away from Kentlands. It is the most comparable development to Kentlands within Gaithersburg, in terms of average single-family home prices, average household income, age of development, major housing types and total number of units.⁵ It covers about 250 acres.

Like many conventional suburban developments, Orchard Village is characterized by a plan with wide, curvilinear streets and numerous culs-de-sac. The houses are on large lots and most are similar in style and type. Orchard Village includes no local retail facilities, such as shops and restaurants; although Orchard



their community as well as feel a sense of belonging to the community by being able to walk around it.

Kentlands residents often mentioned that walkability or easy access to community services (such as the shopping centers, ele-

ORCHARD VILLAGE

“I don’t understand why they built a sidewalk only on one side.”

Village has clubhouse–recreation facilities and picturesque wetlands, it does not have a church, an elementary school or a children’s center.

In Orchard Village, there are no central, common greens, alleys, landmark structures, picket fences or carriage-house apartments; front porches are very rare and there are fewer sidewalks than in Kentlands. Garages face the main streets and houses are set back further from the street. The landscape in Orchard Village is characterized by extensive, grassy areas with trees between the streets and the houses, a few tot lots and a large, partly accessible wetland.

The overall housing density of Orchard Village is lower than that of Kentlands. The average home price in spring 1999 was approximately \$340,000.

Four Findings

The findings reported here focus on the two open-ended questions on the survey questionnaire: “What do you see as the greatest strengths of Kentlands (Orchard Village)?” and “What do you think are the most important weaknesses of Kentlands (Orchard Village)?”⁶ The discussion is organized into four themes—pedestrianism, community attachment, social interaction and community identity.⁷ The comments presented here are supported by the preliminary descriptive statistics derived from the survey analysis: Kentlands receives higher ratings than Orchard Village on all four elements.

Pedestrianism. Pedestrianism implies that a community is designed for walking and other street-oriented activities. Pedestrianism would promote sense of community, as the residents experience and get to know

mentary school, clubhouse and lakes) is a major strength of Kentlands. Many said they found it convenient, fun and pleasant to explore and know the community on foot due to many sidewalks and trails, well-connected path network, and visually interesting and attractive streetscapes. One night around 9:30 near the clubhouse, I encountered a resident who I had interviewed a few weeks earlier. He was pulling a cart heading toward the shopping center and yelled to me, “See this is a New Urbanism thing, you know!”

Another frequent response concerned the easy access to the shopping centers. “It is so exciting and convenient for me, my wife and kids to be able to walk to the newly built cinemas in the Market Square Shopping Center, enjoy the movies, grab pizza or ice-cream in the Kentlands Shopping Center, and walk right back home. I have [not done that] since I was a little. It was something that we couldn’t do in our previous suburban neighborhoods,” said one respondent.

On the other hand, this was a typical comment: “Walking to Market Square Shopping Center and other sections of the community has been difficult and even dangerous due to constant construction. It feels like [it is] taking forever! Kentlands Boulevard, which physically separates Kentlands Shopping Center from the rest of the community, is not very safe to cross.”

Orchard Village residents saw the lack of sidewalks as one weakness of their community. One respondent complained, “I don’t understand why they built a sidewalk only on one side.” A number of the residents wrote that they would walk more frequently if there were more sidewalks in their neighborhood. Only the

KENTLANDS

“It would be very difficult for me to move elsewhere. This place reminds me of the neighborhoods I grew up in.”

main street has sidewalks on both sides of the street. The others have either a sidewalk on one side or no sidewalks at all; many of the cul-de-sac neighborhoods have no sidewalks.

Community Attachment. Community attachment refers to residents' emotional bonding or ties to their community through a sense of ownership, community satisfaction, and feelings of connectedness to the past environment. Many respondents in Kentlands expressed a strong sense of this kind of attachment. Written comments such as, “This community is my home,” were frequent.

One resident wrote: “Kentlands is my home and I love this neighborhood. It would be very difficult for me to move elsewhere. This place reminds me of the neighborhoods I grew up in because architecture here looks very familiar to me. It brings back old charm and intimacy with nice modern amenity. I really like alleys and carriage house apartments (living units above garages). What an old-fashioned sensibility!”

Among the other strengths mentioned are traditional styles of architecture and traditional town planning (e.g., Colonial houses, alleys, mixed uses). A popular sentiment shared by many residents is an appreciation for visual qualities of Kentlands that remind them of their favorite childhood environments.

However, many respondents said they disliked the excessive sense of ownership demonstrated by some residents. Several comments echoed the following strong sentiment: “People who do not treat this neighborhood like their home cannot live here.” Respondents often made remarks like: “People here are too narcissistic,” or “There are zealots in this neighborhood who say, ‘This place only belongs to us.’”

Other comments sounded more positive and expressed a sense of mission: “Let’s share good things about this



community with people outside. We can educate other people who don’t know about this place. We should open our door to the neighboring communities.”

On the whole, Kentlands residents have a very high degree of satisfaction with their community and a genuine sense of ownership. Taken together, these sentiments illustrate a bonding to their community, a quality that seems lacking among the Orchard Village residents.

The responses of the Orchard Village residents offered neither complaints about their community nor a strong emotional bonding to it. Many Orchard Village respondents clearly made conscious decisions to move to the community, and many do like their neighborhood, as the following statements indicate: “better housing,” “cleanliness,” “nice landscape,” “good location” and easy access to highways.” But comments to the effect of, “this place is my home” or “I feel a strong sense of belonging to the community,” were rare.

Some interviewees used the word “transient” to describe Orchard Village. For example, one said: “This is a very transient neighborhood. But I like living here because it is a very convenient, safe and quiet place, in addition to lots of children and nice houses. Nevertheless, I don’t feel that this is my permanent home.” Many of their comments seemed to revolve around the theme of “quality neighborhood,” but a heartfelt sense of emotional attachment to the community seemed to be absent.

Social Interaction. Social interaction consists of activities like neighboring, casual encounters, community participation and social support. A sense of community can be fostered if the physical characteristics of a

A Place Like Kentlands Comes Along Only Once Every 200 Years.



If you're partial to old towns like Georgetown and Williamsburg, you'll be totally taken with Kentlands.

Because Kentlands is built along the same lines. Its narrow two-lane streets crisscross to form blocks and to slow down traffic. Its homes are built close to the

street—and close to each other—to encourage friendships. Its sidewalks take you to school, to the park and to the store.

And like the old towns, it has landmarks. On the public square, a turn-of-the-century mansion has been restored for the community. Across the street is a block-long village green. An 11-acre lake and great stands of trees frame the landscape. The Kentlands Recreation Center is just a hop,

skip and a jump from your home.



It's a close-knit community that's also part of something bigger: Gaithersburg, the social and cultural center of Montgomery County, Maryland. Which means



excellent secondary schools, shopping, and restaurants are nearby. The Shady Grove Metro Station is just four miles away.

And the future of planned developments is right here and right now. At Kentlands.

community facilitate residents' social interaction, their getting to know each other and their feeling that they are part of a community. At Kentlands, the the residents' written comments generally offered a positive endorsement of the interactive quality of the residential environment, although there were concerns about occasional incivility, the isolation of apartment and condominium residents and a lack of privacy.

One of the most frequently cited strengths of Kentlands was the interaction among residents. In their written comments, respondents said they like the "ample neighboring opportunities," "easy casual social encounter at the clubhouse," "community participation" and "social support."

Comments like "I moved here because I love friendliness, neighborliness and interaction among residents" suggest that Kentlands may attract people who are either extroverted or socially active. But other comments indicate that Kentlands also attracts many "quiet" or "shy" people who move there because of its physical beauty, pleasant landscape, convenience or amenities. Moreover, the interview findings indicate that shy or less socially active people do become more socially interactive or involved over time, at least in part due to the physical characteristics of Kentlands. One resident observed: "I know someone who is very shy and never interacted with her neighbors when she moved here a few years ago. ... Her husband really liked it here but she hated it initially. Now she is actively involved in alley parties, block parties and clubhouse activities. She seems changed."

Indeed, many survey respondents and interviewees indicated that they almost felt forced to interact with

"Homes here are so close together that you're going have to say 'hi' or whatever, while sitting on the porch, when someone's walking by. If not, people might wonder what's wrong with you." Yet other respondents echoed this comment: "I know some people who live here are painfully shy. We tried to invite them to our house for parties several times but they never showed up."

Some residents, even those who were socially active, commented on the impact that the closeness of homes had on privacy. One respondent shared the observation that "density could have been a little lower. A little more distance between houses could have been much more ideal. I bought a car one day and as soon as I got out of the car, suddenly two dozen people came out of nowhere. Actually they were my close, immediate neighbors. They gathered around the car and began to ask me questions about the car!"

There were a surprising number of comments about the lack of civility during occasions like board meetings. One respondent stated: "I have seen uncivilized behavior in the public discourse and paternalistic behaviors of earlier residents. There are some egotistical residents who are not willing to hear other residents. I once even walked out of a board meeting as a silent protest. We also have too many factions in different districts or cliques and excessive power struggles among a few residents."

Some condominium and apartment residents said they felt isolated from the rest of the community. Typical comments included: "If you don't have a child, it would be difficult to interact with single-family-home folks in the other side of the community. We are physically sep-

other residents as a consequence of the closeness of homes, ample porches and proximity of sidewalks to houses, features that were often included in respondents' lists of community strengths. A number of respondents made comments like:

ORCHARD VILLAGE

"I like living here because it is a very convenient, safe, and quiet place, in addition to lots of children and nice houses. Nevertheless, I don't feel that this is my permanent home."

KENTLANDS

“Kentlands is a predominantly white neighborhood [and], a family and children oriented-community. Singles seem to have a limited place here. ...”

“Some architectural features, such as white picket fences and townhomes in certain blocks, seem to look alike, monotonous and repetitive.”

parated from the rest. Condominium and apartment buildings broken into smaller groups ... should have been integrated into the community near the center of Kentlands.”

Although Orchard Village residents also seemed to express satisfaction with the sociability of their community, many of their responses conveyed regret that their community is not as conducive to the formation of social interaction as the Kentlands is. Indeed, this was one of the most frequently cited weaknesses of Orchard Village. Respondents often cited features that inhibit social interaction such as “the unfit and small clubhouse, lack of tot lots, lack of residents’ willingness to participate in the board activities or lack of community activities.”

On the other hand, residents of cul-de-sac neighborhoods indicated that the intimate circle area facilitates social interaction among a small group of households within the cul-de-sac, although they did not know many people beyond their own cul-de-sac.

Many Orchard Village residents said they knew about Kentlands and expressed dislike of what they perceived to be forced social interaction and lack of privacy there.

Community Identity. Kentlands residents clearly expressed the sense that their community has a powerful physical character or physical identity that makes it different from other communities. Moreover, the responses indicate that that sense of character or physical identity certainly engenders a substantial sense of pride among the Kentlands residents.

Probably the most frequently mentioned strength of Kentlands is its unique physical character or identity, which its residents perceive as distinct from other communities. Both the survey and interview data indicated that many people, both socially interactive and shy, moved to Kentlands often because of its unique architectural and community character and the sheer physical beauty of both buildings and landscape.

If Kentlands Looks Revolutionary That's Because It Is.

The homes at Kentlands come in a wide variety of sizes and styles. All designed to complement each other. Condominiums share the same street with colonials. Townhomes face estate homes. Cottages and mansions stand side-by-side.

A closer community results. At Kentlands, singles and marrieds, adults and children, newlyweds and retirees—



people from all walks of life—mix and mingle together. You can see them visiting on their front porches, talking over

white picket fences, fishing from the pier at Inspiration Lake, and celebrating at festivals on the village green.

Join them and you'll have your own recreation center with swimming, tennis, basketball, and horseshoes. Your

own shopping center with supermarket, hardware store, department store, and restaurants. And your own day care center right next to the elementary school.



Several model homes are open for your inspection. The Kentlands Information Center is open daily from 10 to 5. Take

I-270 to Rt. 28 West, go four miles, and turn right just past the National Geographic Society. Or call 301-948-8353.

One respondent commented that “Kentlands looks very different from others and yet looks familiar. This unique place gives me a feeling of being different. This is my kind of community. I felt a sense of pride when I gave visiting friends a tour of the community.” The physical characteristics they mentioned as strengths included traditional architectural styles, porches, alleys, central common greens, lakes, sidewalks and garages not facing the main streets.

Furthermore, a great many residents expressed a strong sense that Kentlands has an overall cohesiveness. One resident commented: “White picket fences give this place a sense of order, structure and coherent character. I like the fact that Kentlands consists of fairly similar styles of buildings, yet they don't look identical. They are all unique. Its architectural character is very consistent throughout the community.”

On the other hand, many respondents felt that Kentlands was too cohesive, lacking diversity in terms of race and lifestyles. For example, according to one comment, “Kentlands is a predominantly white neighborhood. This is also a family and children oriented community. Singles seem to have a limited place here. Physically, some architectural features such as white picket fences and townhomes in certain blocks seem too look alike, monotonous and repetitive.”

Quite a few respondents expressed concern that residents who are excessively passionate about maintaining Kentlands's physical character. One respondent complained that “some exceedingly nosy residents actually took the time to walk around the community only to pick on petty stuff such as flags that were not in right angles in someone's house.”



In contrast, although Orchard Village respondents generally noted that their community offered many positive features, relatively few made specific statements about its physical character, such as "attractive buildings," "distinctive architecture" or "physical beauty." Quite a few Orchard Village residents made comments like, "Orchard Village does not have a kind of unique physical identity that Kentlands has." This suggests that although Orchard Village residents who know Kentlands don't care for its density, its physical character clearly leaves a strong impression.

Does New Urbanism Fulfill Its Promise?

The preliminary findings of this research suggest that Kentlands appears to fulfill some aspects of the New Urbanist promise. Kentlands residents' responses to the open-ended survey questions reveal a higher level of attachment to their community, and a stronger sense of community identity, than the responses of the Orchard Village residents do. Kentlands residents appear to take advantage of the community's walkability and the sociability that high density housing and other design features were intended to foster. On the other hand, the apparent success of the design goals of Kentlands is not without complication, as some of the more negative comments from residents indicate.

Two important issues must be considered in evaluating these findings. First, this research was not concerned with the matter of self-selection. Although Kentlands seems to attract both socially interactive and shy people, the extent to which the success of Kentlands is attributable to self-selection requires a further evaluation.

Second, this research does not address broader claims of New Urbanism that involve people's interaction with

the region, such as public transit usage and the frequency and length of car trips.

The complex socio-physical dynamics of Kentlands and Orchard Village will be more fully revealed through the ongoing analysis of the larger

study upon which these preliminary comments are based. Still, the evidence to date from this study provides support for continued development and refinement of New Urbanism theory and practice.

Notes

1. D. Frantz and C. Collins, *Celebration, U.S.A.: Living in Disney's Brave New Town* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1999); Andrew Ross, *The Celebration Chronicles: Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Property Value in Disney's New Town* (New York: Ballantine Books 1999).
2. Jack L. Nasar, *Neo-Traditional Development, Auto-Dependency and Sense of Community*. EDRA 28/1997: Proceedings of the Environmental Design Research Association Annual Conference (Oklahoma City, OK: Environmental Design Research Association, 1997), 39-43. J. M. Plas and S. E. Lewis, "Environmental Factors and Sense of Community in a Planned Town," *American Journal of Community Psychology* 24:1 (1996), 109-143.
3. Kentlands Visitor Center, Kentlands Management Company, & Kentlands Information Brochure, 1999. At the time of my res occupied, including 450 single-family homes; 220 condominium units, 280 townhomes and 270 apartments.
4. The real name of the development has been changed.
5. Approximately 570 units are occupied, including 380 single-family units and 190 condominium units.
6. In Kentlands, 450 of 537 survey respondents (approximately eighty-four percent) and 420 of 537 (approximately seventy-nine percent) responded to the first and second questions, respectively. In Orchard Village, 151 of 211 (seventy-two percent) and 141 of 211 (sixty-seven percent), responded to the first and second questions, respectively.
7. It is my hypothesis, based on extensive literature review, that these elements engender a sense of community.

KENTLANDS

"White picket fences give this place a sense of order, structure, and coherent character. I like the fact that Kentlands consists of fairly similar styles of buildings, yet they don't look identical."

Style Matters

THE CASE OF SANTA BARBARA

Hilda Blanco

Santa Barbara County Courthouse, an exemplar of the Santa Barbara style (Mooser and Company, J. Wilmer Hersey, architects; Ralph Stevens, landscape architect; 1929)

Photo: Santa Barbara Conference and Visitors Bureau

Suppose you read this in your city's paper:

Civic association sets high goals for the city's image

The new Plans and Plantings Committee of the city's two-year old Civic Arts Association advocates a new Spanish Colonial style based on Mediterranean Spain as the perfect architectural image for the city.

The chair of the committee believes this image will be worth millions of dollars to the city in the future. "We're not going to attract major industry or business. Our image is our fortune..."

*"Our committee aims to preserve the city's early nineteenth-century Hispanic buildings, remodel or replace the non-Hispanic buildings with Spanish Colonial ones, use this imagery for all new buildings, encourage landscaping compatible with this image, and use planning tools to maintain the scale and size of the community."*¹

Is this a joke? How fake and dictatorial can this be? In fact, this is very much what happened in Santa Barbara in the early 1920s, and the civic association prevailed beyond its wildest dreams.

Today Santa Barbara is one of the most beautiful cities in this country. One reason, certainly, is that it is blessed with natural beauty—the city is nestled between California's coastal range and the Pacific Ocean, and its climate is better than that of the Mediterranean. But the architectural style that Santa Barbara's civic leaders dreamt up decades ago has been just as instrumental in making the city's image.

Santa Barbara offers a case study in the debate about architectural style and community building, which is currently raging in design circles in regard to New Urbanism. Does the imposition of a uniform architectural style result in repetitive and boring cityscapes? Do the benefits of design control outweigh the

costs—the loss of creative freedom and property rights? Aren't the historicist styles and vernacular elements so often found in New Urbanist developments simply trading on nostalgic sentiment? Which comes first, a community or a community image, and how do they contribute to each other?

New Urbanist developments do not offer many lessons about these issues. Too few have been developed, many design visions have been compromised by development decisions and insufficient time has elapsed to allow for their evolution. Since urbanists, unlike natural scientists, cannot manipulate people and towns in controlled experiments, the evaluation of natural experiments, or cases that differ in regard to the presence or absence of particular causal factors, can be illuminating. Santa Barbara presents a significant experiment in imposing and retaining a distinctive city image.

Crafting an Image

In some ways, this is a story about the Progressive Movement's effect on American cities—the formation of civic associations and local boosterism, the emergence of the City Beautiful and city planning movements.²

Santa Barbara's civic activism was strengthened by the city's wealth. By the 1920s, its mild climate and beautiful setting had attracted many wealthy families, who built winter homes there. Many were philanthropists. Max C. Fleischmann, heir to the Fleischmann Yeast Co., underwrote the renovation of the Mission and historic adobes. Frederick Forest Peabody, heir to the Arrow Shirt Co., financed the Peabody Stadium and Central Library. The Santa Barbara Civic Arts Association, founded in 1920, received \$25,000 a year from the Carnegie Foundation, whose past president was a resident.

Notes

1. This is a paraphrase of statements by civic leader Bernard Hoffman. E. Boba and C. Snook Weare, "Planning in Santa Barbara," in *Studies of a Growing Community: Santa Barbara 1930-1980* (Santa Barbara: Graduate Program in Public Historical Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara, 1982), 48; David Gebhard, *Santa Barbara: The Creation of a New Spain in America* (Santa Barbara: University of California, Santa Barbara, 1982), 19-20.





In 1923, the committee hired Charles Cheney of Olmsted and Olmsted to prepare building and zoning codes, create a waterfront plan, advise on a planning commission and develop architectural controls. As a result, Santa Barbara established its first planning commission, one of its four objectives being "to devise plans and recommen-

City, mountains and bay
Photo: Santa Barbara Convention and Visitors Bureau

Yet if not for the earthquake that destroyed most of downtown in 1925, the product of this civic activity probably would have amounted to little more than a collection of heirlooms. Santa Barbara would lack the strong design and planning processes that have been instrumental in implanting its image, sustaining it and supporting subsequent city design initiatives.

In 1922, the Civic Arts Association's Plans and Planting Committee began promoting a new Spanish Colonial image for the city. Santa Barbara was already recognized as the most Hispanic of California's cities, and its Mission and historic adobes provided a precedent for the style and suggested some common architectural elements, such as the pitch of roofs and the use of tiles.

The style the association promoted was more Spanish Mediterranean than Mission or Monterey. The committee made its reference points explicit: Mediterranean, in particular, Andalusian, with influences from Morocco and from Italian villas. This style, called Spanish Colonial Revival, had gained public attention during the 1915 Panama-California Exposition in San Diego, designed by Bertram Goodhue.

The more examples of the style that existed, the committee believed, the easier it would be to convince people to adopt it as a uniform image for the city. Bernard Hoffman, the committee chair, bought and restored several historic adobes, developed two major exemplars of the style (the Paseo project and the Lobero Theatre) and commissioned the design of the new city hall.³ Committee members educated, persuaded and strong-armed business owners to adopt the style.

dations for the general improvement of the architecture and of the general attractiveness of the city."⁴

By 1925, drawing on the talent of local architects and committee members, the Plans and Plantings Committee had established a Community Drafting Room, which provided design assistance to property owners, and persuaded the city to establish an Architectural Advisory Committee.

The earthquake helped persuade Santa Barbarans of the style's advantages; the new Spanish Colonial Revival structures downtown were among the few spared. The city immediately established a formal Architectural Board of Review, the first of its kind in the country. In less than a year (it was soon disbanded due to political opposition), the board reviewed more than 2,000 projects. Most of these involved Spanish Colonial Revival plans flowing from the Community Drafting Room, which stepped up its operations after the earthquake, providing free plans for all types of buildings, from gas stations to factories to shops. By 1926, in effect, Santa Barbara had been transformed into a Spanish city.

The crowning glory was the county courthouse, the product of a forced collaboration between architect Charles Mooser, and the Architectural Advisory Committee (especially J. Wilmer Hersey of the Community Drafting Room). The process yielded a beautiful U-shaped complex of buildings with a magnificent plaza and landscaping. (Mooser's original design had called for a massive structure in the middle of the block.) Mooser later noted, perhaps in exasperation, that the courthouse was "...more Spanish than any hotel-deville in Spain."⁵

2. New Urbanism emerged from a narrower context. It is a design movement that seeks to revive aspects of early twentieth-century city design approaches, particularly the City Beautiful and Garden Cities movements. But it lacks the broad-based activism that characterized city improvement efforts a century ago.
3. Other prominent architects were: George Washington Smith (Lobero Theatre, 1922-24; *News-Press* Building, 1922), Lulah Maria Riggs (Lobero Theatre, 1922-24), James Osborne Craig and Mary Craig (El Paseo, 1921-22), Carelton Monroe Winslow (Museum of Natural History, 1927-28, 32-33, 34), Joseph Plunkett and Edwards (Fox Arlington Theatre, 1930-31; National Guard Armory, 1938; Santa Barbara Airport Terminal Building, 1941).

Sustaining the Image

By the late 1920s and 1930s, Santa Barbara's transformation was being noted with admiration throughout the country and in leading architecture and planning journals. Yet Santa Barbara is a real city subject to political and architectural change. Its case further shows how a city, once having established an architectural image, can sustain it with public support and planning controls.

During the 1930s and through World War II, while Modernism was on the rise, construction was slow in Santa Barbara and the Spanish Colonial Revival style prevailed. Though the city had ceased formal design review, the Architectural Advisory Committee and the Plans and Plantings Committee were still influential.

In 1930, Santa Barbara passed a comprehensive zoning ordinance, a pyramid scheme that allowed residences to mix with other uses. Significantly, the city has not changed this zoning scheme, as many cities have, for the single-use zoning districts that are now typical. Residential neighborhoods still have corner grocery stores, and single-family houses and apartment buildings can still be found on the same block. By the late 1930s the city had also set height limits, which it still retains.⁶

After World War II Santa Barbara's Spanish Colonial character faced pressure from growth and from a generation of architects influenced by the Modern movement. Reacting to these challenges, Santa Barbara adopted a new Architectural Board of Review in 1947. But through the 1970s, the board's architect members were also influenced by Modernism; consequently, some older buildings downtown were demolished and replaced with Modern-style buildings, and the Modernism's influence was felt in many remodelings. Bill Mahan, a prominent local architect, explained why, fresh out of school and a committed Modernist, he settled in Santa Barbara: He saw many old buildings and expected they would be torn down, generating plenty of opportunities for "flat roofs."⁷



Santa Barbara rooftop
Photo: Santa Barbara Convention and Visitors Bureau

The city's Hispanic tradition, however, still had great popular support. In 1960, the city designated a historic district, "El Pueblo Viejo," comprising sixteen blocks of the historic downtown, and established a Landmarks Advisory Committee to review renovations and new buildings in the district. About this time, two new civic associations were founded, the Citizens Planning Association of Santa Barbara County and the Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation. These groups broadened civic involvement in countywide planning issues, influencing growth control efforts and helping to survey and restore historic structures.

The real challenge to downtown's viability came from La Cumbre Plaza, a shopping mall with plenty of free parking and pedestrian amenities that opened in the late 1960s near the city limits. Downtown merchants realized they had to counter with ample, free parking and pedestrian amenities along State Street, downtown's main street. They agreed to establish a parking assessment district, which financed the acquisition and construction of parking lots and helped make pedestrian improvements.

Six blocks of State Street were converted into a "Hispanic Drive-Through-Plaza" that extends to the waterfront. Sidewalks were widened, landscaped and provided with benches; streets were narrowed to one lane of traffic in each direction; mid-block pedestrian crossings were provided. The improvements saved Santa Barbara's main street from the onslaught of the malls.

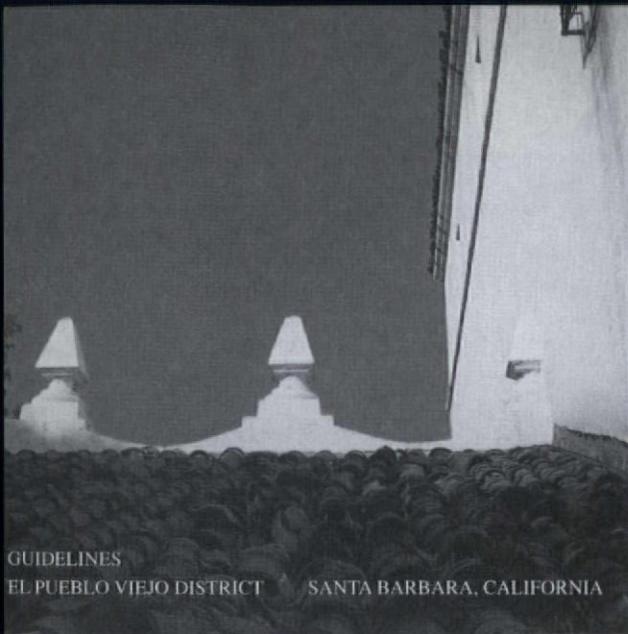
Modern architecture continued to make inroads downtown until city politics changed in the 1970s. In 1973, in reaction to growth and environmental prob-

Several landscape architects also embraced the style: Ralph Stevens (county courthouse, 1925-29; Biltmore Hotel, 1926-27); Peter Reidel (Gould House, 1920; Steedman House, 1922-25); Florence Koch and Lucile Council (Stewart House, 1923); Lockwood de Forest (Santa Barbara Museum of Art remodeling, 1940).

See Gebhard (1982) and H. Andree, Noell Young and Patricia Halloran, *Santa Barbara Architecture* (Santa Barbara: Capra Press: 1995).

4. Boba, 49.

5. Gebhard 1982, 28.



GUIDELINES
EL PUEBLO VIEJO DISTRICT SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA



Santa Barbara's historic districts, design review and design guidelines have been important tools for promoting the city's Spanish Colonial style.
Graphics: City of Santa Barbara

lems, a new anti-development city council took office and adopted an 85,000 population limit for the city. A 1989 ballot measure limited new non-residential development in the city to three million square feet until the year 2010. The historic district was extended and enshrined in the city charter, the Landmarks Advisory Committee became a chartered commission, a sign ordinance was passed and a Sign Review Committee was empowered.

The designation of much of

downtown as a landmark district, and downtown's continued viability as a business center ensured a demand for Spanish Colonial architecture in commercial buildings. This, coupled with growing public and professional disaffection with Modern architecture, brought about a change in local architectural practice. Designers adopted the Spanish Colonial Revival style, reluctantly and clumsily at first⁶, then with increased attention to the great exemplars, such as the Lobero and the courthouse. Beyond employing obvious elements, such as pitched tile roofs and white stucco, architects became sensitive to properties of massing, the relation of inside to outside and of structure to open space, and the restraint in decoration. The Spanish Colonial style is undergoing another revival in Santa Barbara, particularly in the hearts and minds of local architects, some of whom were once its greatest opponents.

Interestingly, Santa Barbara is now drawing on New Urbanism's design advocacy. New design guidelines, meant to guide design review and planning approvals throughout the city's gridded areas, in the historic districts and beyond, are now under review. The guidelines acknowledge their alignment with "traditional town planning" and spell out principles concerning compatibility with existing development, human-scale character, and so on. These principles are embedded

in Santa Barbara's historic areas, but the city is recognizing the value of extending them, explicitly, to outlying areas.

Sustaining the Style

The Spanish Colonial Revival style has been sustained in Santa Barbara for eighty years, despite growth pressures and changing architectural fashion, because of the popular support it has garnered. Key to this support have been active planning and design associations, their leaders and the many volunteers that have served on the city's planning and design review boards.

Continuity of civic leadership has been particularly important. Pearl Chase, sister of influential developer Harold Chase, promoted the new image in the 1920s and was imperiously influential through the early 1970s as chair of the Plans and Planting Committee. As Chase's powers waned, David Gebhard, a nationally respected architectural historian, became active; he served on the city's Historic Landmarks Commission for twenty-two years (1973–95) and wrote popular and scholarly accounts of the Santa Barbara style. These champions were influential with decision-makers, spearheading and shaping public support at times when the style was unpopular or poorly executed.

The style itself also carries its own power. It has a certain romantic quality, not prettified but handsome, with clean lines, interplay of volumes, reliance on asymmetrical elements, sharp demarcation between inside and out, and light colors that accentuate shadows and contrasting volumes that capitalize on the play of light and shadow, requiring less decoration while yielding rich, fluctuating patterns. The use of Andalusian references resulted in an intertwining of architecture with landscape, since artful interior gardens are a legacy of the Arab traditions in southern Spain.

The Santa Barbara style also performs well at the urban scale, perhaps because of its use of interior courtyards, paseos and arcades, which involve a concern for the relationship between structures and urban spaces. The early exemplars, such as the Lobero, the courthouse and the Arlington, were standing lessons for new generations of designers on how to accommodate modern requirements for large-scale development within the tradition.

6. No commercial building can exceed four stories or sixty feet, and no multi-family residential can be higher than forty-five feet or three stories. The height limit was prompted by the construction of the eight-story Granada Building, which showed that scale was an important element in retaining the Mediterranean image. (Gebhard 1982, 21)

7. Personal interview.

**Style: Nostalgia,
Weapon or
Instrument?**

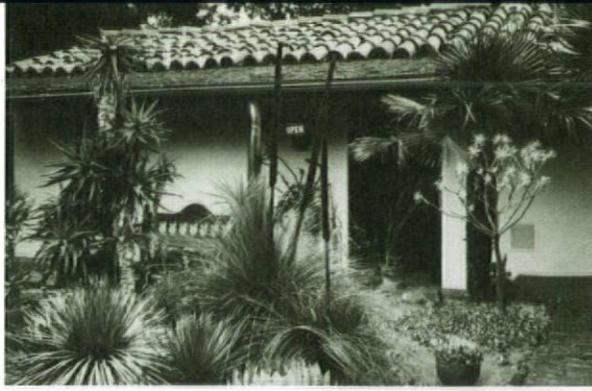
New Urbanist developments often display relatively uniform and historicist architectural styles, and this has become a flash point for debate. The Charter of the New Urbanism itself advocates a uniform architectural style in a vague and mild way through principles that urge compatibility with surroundings and regional character. It states, "Individual architectural projects should be seamlessly linked to their surroundings. This issue transcends style," and "Architecture and landscape design should grow from local climate, topography, history and building practice."⁹

At stake are two intertwined but distinct issues: the choice of a specific (often historicist) style, and the uniformity with which the style is applied. New suburban developments of any stripe typically display a consistent style; many New Urbanist developments impose historicist styles (uniformly or a narrow range of choices) and vernacular elements (picket fences, porches), often regionally inspired.

Andrés Duany, a strong proponent of traditional architectural styles, has said that "Style is not nostalgia; it's a weapon, or at least an instrument." Schneider suggests that uniform historicist expression is needed to help developers and the public accept denser urban patterns.

Some New Urbanists, however, are ambivalent, if not embarrassed, by this aspect of many New Urbanist projects. They think that the historicist elements are fake, and feel that codes that regulate urban form, rather than architectural style, are sufficient.¹⁰ Other critics are less kind, arguing that efforts to impose a uniform style are fake and dictatorial. Santa Barbara's case may clarify some aspects of the controversy.

Fakeness. Take the issue of fakeness. We may object



to the style being imposed as imitative, not creative or authentic. Or we may object to it as being made up all at once, rather than emerging over time.

Santa Barbara's style was clearly made up. It was not authentic to the place; it was an imitation of a style developed long ago and far away. It had historic precedent, but if one compares the Arlington Theatre or the courthouse to a historic adobe, one can quickly mark the distance.

What is wrong with imitation? Many architects imitate. Often, the real issue is which style is imitated. In our culture, and particularly in architectural culture, the new is often privileged over the old, even though the rationale for this is neither clear nor strong. (In contrast, in conventional housing design, traditional styles are typically preferred.)

Perhaps we object to poor quality imitations, cheap copies that seem authentic but on closer inspection are missing essential elements, or are inappropriate applications of a style to a building type. Santa Barbara shows that an imposed, uniform, style can, in fact, stimulate robust design. Although the Spanish Colonial Revival style was driven initially by romantic nostalgia, it has proven itself capable of solving a range of tough, current design problems.

Historically, cities and towns developed over time, acquiring a patina of age, character and variety. Is the charge of fakeness a reaction to the all-at-once feel-

Examples of the Santa Barbara style, clockwise from upper left:

Gonzalez-Ramirez Adobe
Photo: Hilda Blanco

Santa Barbara Fire Station #3
(Edwards, Plunkett and Howell, 1929)

Photo: City of Santa Barbara

Santa Barbara City Hall (Lockard and Sauter, 1922-23)

Apartment building
Photo: Hilda Blanco

8. This second Spanish Colonial Revival period, which occurred in the 1970s, is characterized as producing "below average" structures. (Andree 1995, 258)
9. Congress for the New Urbanism, *Charter of the New Urbanism*.
10. Robert Campbell, "A Colloquy in Cyberspace," *Preservation* 51 (September/October, 1999), 9-23. G. Schneider, "Substance or Style," *Harvard Design Magazine* (Winter/Spring 1997), 62.



Barcelona Building (Sharpe, Mahan, 1986)
Photo: Bill Mahan

ing that the uniform style of a new development conveys? Santa Barbara does not convey that sense; though the style was conceived in the 1920s, it has been applied steadily for more than eighty years and could now be considered authentic to the place. The style has not been static; architects have been able to learn from their experience.

Perhaps the concern is that a style will be applied so widely that the results will be uniform and boring. Santa Barbara's Spanish Colonial Revival style has supported a variety of building types, from offices to parking garages, villas to apartments, theatres to schools. Moreover, the style does not blanket the city. It covers downtown and the Mission district, but residential areas are characterized by a mix of styles. Neighborhoods might comprise Craftsman-style bungalows, Victorian homes, Queen Anne cottages and contemporary apartment buildings; on many blocks, there may be few or no Spanish Colonial houses.

Yet, Santa Barbara's image is distinctly Spanish Colonial Revival. I take from this that a city's image is a robust concept. For an architectural style to provide a vivid image for a city, perhaps it must cover only the central area (which is most prominent in people's perception) and be reinforced in a fraction of the rest of the city. This selective application of a single style could carry over into the overall image of a place, yet prevent it place from seeming boring.

Santa Barbara did not only construct a style; it also created the conditions (and has been blessed with a stable local economy) that have allowed a local school of architecture to evolve. As an architect in Santa Bar-

bara, you are likely to design a dozen or more projects within your home town—buildings that you see day in, day out—in a style in which your peers also design. The style becomes common ground for a group of architects who, in a town the size of Santa Barbara, intimately experience the buildings they design. This facilitates learning from mistakes and successes and sets the conditions for the development of a living, local-regional architectural tradition.

Today, there is a group of Santa Barbara designers who have absorbed the art in the exemplars from the inside out. For this group, the ingredients of the style are merely raw materials; they struggle with the massing, the relation of interior to exterior, the blend of landscape and building. The existence of this design community makes the issue of the authenticity of the Santa Barbara style moot, because its designs are the product of a living, creative tradition.

Dictatorial. New Urbanism's advocacy of design controls such as architectural codes and review has resulted in charges that it is too controlling, even dictatorial or fascist. One criticism is that design review and architectural codes constrain the freedom of designers and property owners. Freedom from constraint is a core element of American political philosophy; even more so, perhaps, architects consider creativity part and parcel of their ideology.

Yet building construction is constrained by any number of codes, and most of us are glad for that. Besides, being constrained to a style does not necessarily curtail creativity. Paraphrasing Henry Lenny, a Santa Barbara architect: Creativity without constraints is easy; it takes a higher level of creativity to design within the lines.¹¹

Is the imposition of an architectural style too blatant an exercise of municipal control? Hardly. It is an issue of public and economic choice. Communities continually grapple with the dilemma of adding value to the *res publica* at the cost of constraining economic vitality and design freedom. Santa Barbara's efforts have been reinforced through mechanisms now common in u.s. cities—general plans, zoning and historic district design review. Any economic cost seems to have been offset in part by the potential of design controls to sustain a market demand.

11. Personal interview, Dave Davis.
12. Gebhard 1982, 20; W. Tomkins, *Santa Barbara Past and Present* (1975)
13. Some New Urbanists may be accused of physical determinism. See D. Hall, "Community in the New Urbanism: Design Vision and Symbolic Crusade," *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review* (11), 22-36.
14. Christine Palmer and Babatunde Fodayemi, personal interviews.

We may also object to the power of the group imposing the style or its lack of inclusiveness. Santa Barbara's style was clearly imposed by an elite group of civic leaders who used a variety of sophisticated methods—educational campaigns, demonstration projects, technical assistance, public planning and controls, backdoor influence and strong-arming. By the time the earthquake hit, they had forged a consensus on a uniform style for Santa Barbara.

Though this group was elite, its concerns were inclusive. In the 1920s, the Plans and Plantings Committee "initiated a 'Small Homes Program,' both to educate and to encourage the building of well-designed small houses." In the 1930s it participated in the "Better Homes for America Campaign" and developed an affordable suburban housing subdivision—one-acre lots, each with a four-and-a-half-room bungalow, garage and thirty-five trees, and selling for \$3,000 to \$4,500.¹²

These efforts have, arguably, facilitated a strong sense of community in various ways. Of course, creating a sense of community takes more than improving a city's image, but improving people's perceptions of the public environment can facilitate a sense of community by strengthening place identity.¹³ Let me be clear, lest I be charged with physical determinism. The Santa Barbara style has made clear to many people the social construction of the public environment; it has made the *res publica* more psychologically available.

Moreover, design concerns have been pursued through various organizations, both public and private, whose care for design has arguably been a factor in strengthening the community. Public institutions, such as planning and design review processes, are open and responsive to public input.

My hypothesis is that these factors would increase the rates of citizen participation in public affairs, though I only have anecdotal accounts to support it. Planning commission meetings draw crowds of eighty people or more, which is high attendance for a city of this size. The city historian explained that there seems to be a culture of attending public meetings. Social critics indicate that Santa Barbarans are unusually engaged and responsive to civic issues.¹⁴



This highlights a significant contrast between Santa Barbara and New Urbanist developments. In Santa Barbara, style became a way to forge a distinctive image for an existing city. Creating and retaining the image clearly became community building projects. Civic associations were formed and sustained to that end; public regulatory processes were established; a professional community was fostered. New Urbanist developments, on the other hand, often use style to create the appearance of civic agreement in the absence of civic culture.

Is it fair to criticize New Urbanists for using style to create the appearance of community? In new suburban subdivisions, at the outset, at least, there is no community. The best designers can do is to create places that, hopefully, will facilitate people's interaction once they inhabit the place.

Can we criticize New Urbanists for not doing enough to build a civic culture that sustains places, like Santa Barbara, which can constantly be reinvested in, even reinvented at times? Perhaps. If New Urbanism remains a movement to redesign products for the real estate market, then it might contribute better design to the middle kingdom of suburban America, but it cannot pretend to deliver an invigorated public culture. If New Urbanism seeks to become a broader, social reform movement (as the Charter of the New Urbanism suggests), then the case of Santa Barbara suggests that New Urbanism must reach beyond design circles and development practices and consider the prospect of engaging a range of local institutions, public and private, in broad community-building processes.

Paseo Nuevo shopping area
(James Osborne Craig, Mary
Craig, 1921-22)
Photo: Santa Barbara Con-
vention and Visitors Bureau

Acknowledgements

This article came to life with the help of interviews with Bill Mahan, architect and city planning commissioner; Dave Davis, Director of Santa Barbara's Community Development Division; Christine Palmer, city historian; Louise Boucher, Landmarks Commissioner; Babatunde Folayemi, Director, Pro-Youth Coalition; Liz Limon, city planner. Mahan, especially, make clear to me that the Spanish Colonial Revival style was a living tradition.

Just Architectural Business as Usual

Dell Upton

Recently I published an interpretive book, *Architecture in the United States*, in which I mentioned New Urbanism.

The major passage came at the end of a long essay that discussed 4,000 years of efforts to represent and construct community in America, ranging from ancient Native American mounds and Iroquois longhouses to the U.S. and Nebraska capitols, the Ames family's North Easton, the Colonial Revival, ethnic revivalism, the Cincinnati Gateway and Laguna West. I showed that these built communities have been framed through the lenses of a variety of religious and secular theories, as well as high- and ethnic-cultural values. My comments on New Urbanism were framed in terms of my argument that the inclusive representation and creation of community in physical form is a long-sought but difficult enterprise that has never been successfully accomplished, and may not even be possible.¹

I also mentioned Laguna West in the context of an essay on expressions of nature in architecture, emphasizing the tendency to conceive of the natural in theological terms and to view the human relationship to nature in terms of sin and redemption.² I chose Laguna West rather than more famous New Urbanist projects like Seaside because I believe that New Urbanists in the West take their environmentalism more to heart and address ecological concerns more explicitly in their manifestoes, if not always in their realized projects.

I imagined that my remarks were mild and pretty familiar. To my surprise, they provoked squeals of outrage on the New Urbanist e-list. From the many posts, I learned that I am a purveyor of half-baked sociology, a trickle-down Marxist, a basher of the middle-class who also wishes to punish the proletariat, an apologist for Rem Koolhaas (who is never mentioned in the book) and a proponent of paving the landscape. Although my comments paraphrased (to the extent that such a short essay allowed) the major claims of New Urbanists in words and phrases close to their own, I am portrayed as a

parodist of New Urbanist truth and a poisoner of the minds of architectural students. Even allowing for the hyperbole that characterizes electronic discussion groups, I was credited with an impressive list of accomplishments.

New Urbanists are a significant force in contemporary American architectural theory; they deserve careful response rather than simple uncritical praise. On the face of it, their goals are well-meaning and unexceptionable. The Charter of the New Urbanism attacks urban disinvestment, suburban sprawl, class and race segregation and environmental degradation. Only a few people would defend any of these. In general, the means that New Urbanists propose, which favor greater density over so-called sprawl and social, economic and land-use diversity over formal and informal zoning, seem equally unobjectionable. However, when one moves beyond official theory to praxis, as evidenced in unofficial statements, public perception and built projects, New Urbanism becomes more problematic.

A naive materialism, derived from fundamental and long-held tenets of Euro-American culture, lies at the heart of New Urbanism. European culture incorporated a strong materialist strain long before European colonizers arrived in North America. By this I mean that people assumed that physical environments and intangible human values are somehow closely related. The organizers of the English settlement at Jamestown, for example, believed that a good environment shaped a good society, and so gave precise (but unimplemented) orders for the form of their new town. Similarly, English, French and Spanish colonizers believed that European-type houses would instill European values in Native Americans, and they read Indian acceptance of such houses as evidence that they had embraced the entire cultural package.

This materialist tautology — if a good society produces good architecture, then good architecture can produce a good society — has been a recurrent element of Euro-

American architectural faith throughout; New Urbanism carries on the tradition. Vernacular or traditional towns are good forms arising from more humane, more personal, more neighborly periods of American history, so close study of older towns can offer models for building new towns that would resurrect the desirable social qualities of traditional ones. This claim is carefully hedged in official documents like the charter, which argues that “physical solutions by themselves will not solve social and economic problems.” However, in less guarded statements, New Urbanists make it evident that they do grant considerable power to the material world.

We must all make some sort of materialist leap of faith, or there is no point in being interested in the physical environment as scholars or as designers. Our faith is supported by current work in cognitive science, psychology and philosophy, which has demonstrated that critical aspects of the self are shaped by engagement with the physical environment. To make such an argument, though, requires precise use of carefully analyzed evidence. The connection between forms and values is very elusive and is rarely carefully observed or described by New Urbanists. So far, their arguments for the benefits of their approach and the detrimental effects of current suburban models (for, despite the name, New Urbanism has clearly identified the suburbs, rather than the center city, as its target) have been entirely anecdotal.

New Urbanism is based on nostalgia for a small-town life that never existed. Witness the Southern small towns eulogized in the widely disseminated accounts of the origins of Seaside. Many of these towns — at least those that have not been decimated by urban renewal or economic collapse — are undeniably visually attractive. There is no more appealing urban landscape than that found in the white neighborhoods of Selma, Alabama, for ex-ample. But their apparent social and spatial intimacy was premised on invisible, rigidly (often violently) en-forced social practices and separations that permitted the illusion of commonality by suppressing differences. The same was true, to a less sensational degree, in the pre-war towns, North and South, that New Urbanists admire.

New Urbanists have the relationship between society and environment backward. So-called traditional land-

scapes are shaped to facilitate existing or evolving social practices, they are not the causes of those practices. The public, exterior spaces of vernacular environments are inextricably linked to the private, interior ones, and all are in turn the products of cultural, relatively stereotypical, ways of imagining human relationships that are at best approximations of the texture of actual daily life.

Thus, vernacular forms, once codified, may help to reproduce or reinforce certain social practices, but they often outlive the social practices they were meant to house, as traditional townscapes themselves demonstrate. The fit between architecture and society is both complex and loose, and not necessarily amenable to simple formal imitation. At the very least it requires more extensive, more careful and less purely visual study than New Urbanists have yet accorded it.

Until more rigorously presented evidence for New Urbanism’s claims is offered, one must continue to ask whether the right questions are being asked and whether the right answers are being proposed. Once again, we face the materialist issue. Is urban design the

The critical social and political problem is pluralism, not community. It is much harder to find ways to live with and act responsibly toward those who are not one’s neighbors, but are nevertheless one’s fellow citizens.

solution to the social and economic problems that New Urbanism claims to address? Or are these problems functions of political decisions, economic policies and social practices that seem too daunting (and tedious, unglamorous and, perhaps, intractable)?

New Urbanism’s modesty in disavowing claims to having all the answers might be read as an evasion of these difficult questions. Like much of the architectural profession, New Urbanists often hide behind a realist argument: architects and planners must work within the existing socioeconomic structure. Perhaps. But the existing socioeconomic structure is not a force of nature; it is the cumulative result of choices made by individuals who could have made other choices.

Like many of their predecessors in urban planning and other aspects of social reform, New Urbanists present

a social vision in the guise of a set of tools for implementing a universal good — the creation of a more humane landscape. This is a refreshing change from the rejection of social concerns that prevailed in architectural discourse in the 1980s. However, as the hysterical responses to my comments in *Architecture in the United States* revealed, New Urbanism has become an evangelical crusade that brooks no skepticism.

At the core of the movement is an age-old quest for something called “community.” The proposition is that many of our social ills would vanish if we would all begin to experience one another (once again) as members of a community, a goal that can be facilitated by small-scale settlement patterns that encourage face-to-face interactions among diverse neighbors. But what happens when one’s neighbors want to party until 2 a.m., or wash their cars and play loud rap music on the village green, or let their lawns grow wild? It is difficult to answer these questions precisely, because while New Urbanists have much to say about racial and economic diversity, they have little to say about diversity of values, goals or interests and the inevitable conflicts these generate when they overlap in one place.

Throughout American history, calls for community have commonly been raised in response to perceived centrifugal social forces. It is a concern as old as the debate over the Constitution, when anti-Federalists doubted whether a nation of diverse regions, classes and interests could hold together, and as new as the claims that the forces of consumerism and the mass media are undermining our society. By imposing or propagating vaguely defined common values, complexity and conflict can be reduced to manageable proportions. What should these values be? So far, the built products of New Urbanism suggest that the operant definitions of neighborliness and community will be genteel and upper-middle-class — those modes of urban interaction that the conservative communitarians call “civility.” As a neighbor, complaining about my parking in front of her house, once said to me through clenched teeth, “In this neighborhood we cooperate.”

So when New Urbanism calls for a more humane landscape, we must ask by whose standards it is more humane. It is well to remember that many small-town residents of an earlier era found such places intolerable. To them, what we now look back on as a sense of community too often resembled Foucauldian surveil-

lance, while common values bored and constrained. Wasn’t Sinclair Lewis’s *Main Street* (and *Madame Bovary* before it) set in a traditional town? Those who felt stifled on *Main Street* found the anonymity and lack of community of the large cities to which they fled comforting, even stimulating.

To write off those who demur from the aesthetics and the social values of New Urbanism as proponents of shopping malls and uniform subdivisions is condescending and evasive. Some people value the messiness of the real city and the cumulative results of many individual choices, and they understand the appeal of the anti-social. They want genuine variety rather than minor rule-determined cosmetic variation, and seek a range of opportunities and cultural stimuli that no small town or suburb can provide. Unfortunately, the cumulative results of individual choices are as unlikely to happen in most real cities now as they are in New Urbanist subdivisions: that is not where the economics of real estate point at the moment.

The critical social and political problem is pluralism, not community. It is relatively easy to get along with one’s neighbors, but as the mean-spirited tone of contemporary politics shows, it is much harder to find ways to live with and act responsibly toward those who are not, who never will be, and who do not want to be one’s neighbors, but who are nevertheless one’s fellow citizens.

This is also a planning problem. New Urbanism strikes me as another of the devolutionary movements so conspicuous in the politics and social policy of the 1980s and 1990s. These movements abandoned the effort to grapple with large-scale problems altogether, or left them to be solved by voluntarism and the magic of the market. New Urbanists’ modesty in their claims are appealing in theory; in practice, they avoid the critical problems of existing cities and populations in favor of creating suburban fantasy lands for the comfortable.

It seems to me that New Urbanists, like everyone else, can best address the issues that the movement says it wants to address as citizens rather than as intervening experts. Otherwise New Urbanists should admit that they work to appeal to the aesthetic and social sensibilities of a certain segment of the upper middle class. There is nothing wrong with this, but nothing particularly praiseworthy about it, either. It is just architectural business as usual.

Notes

1. Dell Upton, *Architecture in the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 101-5.
2. Upton, 147.

New Urbanism and the Apologists for Sprawl

There is an increasingly vocal group of sprawl apologists, land-use libertarians and property rights advocates who are questioning the viability of any form of development that deviates from standard sprawl.¹

Their basic argument is that the problems of sprawl are either overstated or easily repaired and that there is little need to change in our patterns of development. They claim that land is plentiful and congestion can be solved with more roads. They argue that the free market efficiently expresses people's housing preferences in the form of sprawling subdivisions, that growth management drives housing prices up, and that everyone should have the right to develop their land freely. Don't mess with the American dream, don't impose more regulations: People like the suburbs the way they are.

This Land is Your Land

Consider each assertion separately. Yes, land in America is plentiful. Even if we were to preserve environmentally sensitive areas, there would be more than enough space for us to sprawl as we like.

But this quantitative analysis begs the qualitative question that troubles most citizens: Even if there is plenty of land in Kansas, do we want to lose the open space and farmland in our region? The people have answered: More than 150 ballot initiatives to limit development and preserve open space were passed in 1998. All over the country there is a rebellion against leapfrog development and the loss of open space.²

Conserving land does not have to be draconian as it is made out to be. A recent regional plan for the Salt Lake City area showed that by responding to the exist-

ing market demand for rental housing, redeveloping underutilized areas and reducing the average single-family lot size by less than ten percent, the total land area needed to accommodate the next one million people would drop from 420 square miles to 167. Such a balanced approach does not mandate apartment towers for all or involve a new form of social engineering. It is simple land conservation mixed with a recognition of reasonable market forces in housing.

The apologists for sprawl contend that we could solve the traffic congestion problem by building more roads. But increasing numbers of people oppose this strategy, recognizing that it would only be a temporary fix. More roads lead inevitably to more auto-oriented development, which consumes more open space and leads to more congestion. A University of California, Berkeley, study showed that for every ten percent increase in new freeway miles, a nine percent increase in traffic would be generated within five years.

More importantly, we can no longer afford to keep building new freeways. It has been estimated that California needs to add approximately 720 new lane miles per year to keep up with its growing auto demands. The maximum ever built was 573 miles in 1967; current budgets only allow about 50 lane miles a year.

Roads are only one part of the cost. The Salt Lake study compared low-density development with more roads to a compact, transit-oriented regional future and found the former cost the new home buyer an average \$30,000 more for backbone infrastructure and services. The wealthy may be happy to pay these costs,

Peter Calthorpe

Apologists for sprawl resort to oversimplifications to make their case: "developed land only represents one percent of the country—there is plenty of room," "the alternative to sprawl is high-rise living," "cars are

flexible, transit is not," "sprawl is the people's choice development patterns that expand people's choices. providing a full range of housing options? What if w flexibility to walk, bike or use transit? What if we coul designing complex, multifaceted communities? What

or would likely pass them on to the next generation of home buyers. But many may be priced out of living in the Salt Lake area if such a sprawl future materializes.

Why not let the users pay? Build toll lanes on existing highways, say the land-use libertarians (and, ironically, the Environmental Defense Fund). But this approach creates a very exclusive future; the next ring of sprawl will be accessible to the wealthy, who can speed down economically segregated highways while the working poor and young families without disposable income poke along in the slow lanes. Congestion solved for some, fewer choices for others.

The apologists for sprawl criticize transit as a solution to congestion. They argue that even doubling transit ridership (for example, from 2.5 percent of trips to 5 percent) is slight compensation for increased density.

They're right: transit alone will not solve the congestion problem. What they overlook is there are a range of alternatives to auto use. In most of Europe, walking and biking are much more significant alternatives to auto use than transit. In Sweden, with a cold, wet climate, more than 50 percent of trips are made on foot or bike, with just 10 percent by transit and 37 percent by car.³

The key is building more walkable environments, which not only reduce the necessity of using cars for local trips but also support the use of transit for longer trips. Walkable neighborhoods coupled with good transit can have a large effect on Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT). In Portland, for example, there is a three-to-one variation in VMT per capita between its auto-oriented suburbs and walkable urban neighborhoods. In the Bay Area it ranges from 8,000 VMT per household in San Francisco to 32,000 in Contra Costa County.⁴

The real goal, of course, is improving people's mobility and access, not just reducing auto congestion. And this depends more on promoting different land-use patterns than building new roads. Pedestrian-oriented, mixed land-use patterns coupled with a range of transit alternatives (trains, buses, jitney, car pools, etc.) can provide much-needed choices in environments now completely monopolized by cars. Simply put, locating everyday destinations closer to home or closer together may be a better strategy than building bigger roads to connect increasingly distant places.

Don't Mess with the Market

Supporters of sprawl contend that everyone wants a detached home in the suburbs and that any form of growth management will frustrate this natural market. But the claim that people have voted with their dollars for sprawl is simplistic. In fact, one could argue that the reverse is true.

In our ubiquitous form of growth management called local planning, many communities practice exclusionary zoning by allowing only large-lot homes to be built. This effectively excludes housing that meets the needs of many household types (singles, single moms, some empty nesters and the elderly) or lower-income people. Property rights advocates rarely decry constraints on this segment of the market. Their perspective is biased toward one segment of the population, middle-class families with kids, which accounts for only 25 percent of new home buyers.

The compelling fact is that one size no longer fits all. The 1990 census showed that only 11 percent of U.S. households are families with children and one-wage earner. Some of the other 89 percent may want single-family homes, but many may want more housing choices than current zoning allows. The inertia of our zoning regulations and banking policies constrains the options we have and therefore the expression of our needs. The truth is that the range of choices offered by the market has yet to catch up with economic and demographic changes.

If more choices were available — bungalows in walkable villages, townhomes in real towns, lofts in vital urban neighborhoods or affordable housing just about anywhere — the housing market might embrace the diversity. If we allowed zoning for more compact communities that offer urban amenities and street life, we might find that the market actually supports more density not less, more housing diversity, not less.

People fundamentally like small towns more than sprawl, and they are moving back to older urban neighborhoods and even central cities. Wherever New Urbanist communities are built in the suburbs they sell faster and for a premium, compared to standard subdivisions. Recent studies by Market Perspectives and the Urban Land Institute, comparing New Urbanist developments

Comments like these sidestep the challenge of finding what if we could conserve accessible open space while could expand the flexibility of the car by adding the move beyond rhetorical extremes and set to work the post-industrial society we are becoming?

with standard subdivisions, showed a 15 percent premium for houses in New Urbanist communities. New Urbanist mixed-use projects were also selling faster than those in conventional subdivisions.⁵

What if real mixed-use towns were available? A study of new home shoppers by American Lives showed that the second highest preference (behind the universal desire for accessible open space) is now for a “walkable town center.” The market is changing but marketing experts, constantly looking into their rear-view mirrors, don’t recognize it.

The Cost of Containment

The land-use reactionaries claim that regional open space preservation and urban growth boundaries (UGB) drive up home prices by limiting the supply of developable land. They claim that Portland’s UGB has driven up home prices dramatically.

But the link between rising prices and the UGB is unclear. Portland’s median home price is now \$150,000, which is about average for major western cities. Some would argue that the home price escalation in Portland is tied more to the region’s phenomenal job growth than to a shortage of land.

Perhaps Portland’s high-quality jobs, open space, walkable neighborhoods, convenient transit and successful downtown are making the region more desirable and, therefore, more expensive. Should we have a policy to ensure that a region maintains a low quality of life so home values do not rise? Isn’t it a free market choice to pay a higher price for a single-family home in a region that provides a higher quality of life?

Finally, property rights advocates argue against regional planning, or any planning for that matter. They say that people should have the right to develop their property as they please.

But what if one person’s development decision adversely impacts another’s property, or the neighborhood? What if certain choices require more public tax dollars (to pay for the infrastructure and services, for example) than others?

At the regional scale, it is public dollars that enable development on private property. Without highways,

roads, sewers, water systems and public services, development is not viable. It is a conservative and defensible to seek out and implement the most cost-effective set of public investments to support growth. This is the basis of the Smart Growth legislation in Maryland, which will not pay for development in areas where investments for infrastructure and services is deemed inefficient.

Study after study finds that sprawl is more expensive to build and maintain than more compact walkable neighborhoods. Certainly, we all have property rights, but not the right to use public dollars to enhance our development potential or the right to degrade the environment for others.

Expanding the Horizon

The apologists for sprawl always seem to resort to oversimplifications to make their case: “developed land in America only represents five percent of the country — there’s plenty of room,” “the alternate to sprawl is high-rise living,” “cars are flexible and transit is not,” or “sprawl is the people’s choice or it wouldn’t exist.”

Comments like these sidestep the challenge of finding new patterns of development that expand people’s choices. What if we could conserve accessible open space and provide a full range of housing options? What if we could expand the flexibility of the car by adding the flexibility to walk, bike or use transit? What if we could define a new metropolitan form, one that was not black or white, car or train, high-density or low-, suburban or urban? What if we could move beyond rhetorical extremes and set to work designing complex, multifaceted communities that fit the post-industrial society we are becoming?

New Urbanism assumes that the future is not necessarily a linear extension of the past, that yesterday’s market is not necessarily tomorrow’s. The American Dream is changing. The issue is not density but design — the quality of place, its scale, mix and connections. The alternative to sprawl is not a forced march back to tenements but a range of unique places with various densities and in various locations — more choices for a diverse society.

HEY!

Now That We Have Their Attention

Earl Blumenauer

Several years ago I was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. Because I won a special election and because I am a Democrat, I was last on the seniority list in the minority party in a Congress in which Democrats and Republicans were absolutely polarized and at each other's throats. So I left the city I love and I left what must be the best local job in America — city council member in Portland, Oregon — to go to a place where I was absolute political pond scum.

I went to Washington, D.C., because I am convinced that the federal government needs to be an aggressive, thoughtful, cooperative partner in making our communities more livable. My colleagues often say the issues communities are dealing with are local, that the federal government doesn't have any role in them. But that is absolute poppycock. The federal government has been involved with land use since we first started taking away land from Native Americans and giving it to European settlers so they could farm it. Consider the transcontinental railroad, what we've done with water projects, how we manage (or not) public lands, our urban renewal (or urban removal) program and the interstate freeway system — a great idea in concept but carried to grotesque extremes, particularly when applied to urban areas with no sense of the context, no citizen involvement and, in some cases, perfunctory local interaction.

The federal government has been a partner, for better or worse, in shaping the design of our communities. Now it's time for the federal government to catch up with what is happening in the rest of America, happening in large part through the help of people like you. Although there has been leadership at the national level, from people in the Clinton administration, including the president and vice president, local communities are really driving this change.

In 1998 there were 200 community livability ballot initiatives at the state and local levels; most of them were successful. This is happening not just in places like Portland. Places like Athens, GA., and Salt Lake City have come up with plans that look like what we have done in Portland for the last twenty-five years.

People who have their finger on the public pulse — for example recently elected governors Roy Barnes of Georgia or Jesse Ventura of Minnesota — have been successful, in large measure, because they reflect some of the concerns their constituents have about growth and development.

My career tracks these issues. I'm an unapologetic junkie. My first government appointment, while I was in college, was to the Livable Oregon Committee, by then-governor Tom McCall. When Oregon passed state land-use laws, I was a legislator in the county that was the first major jurisdiction to implement a comprehensive plan. I learned from sophisticated citizen volunteers and dedicated professional planners. Being on the Portland city council for ten years was a magnificent experience.

An Agenda for Congress

First let me tell you what I've done in Congress, because that helps set the context. In the course of one's first three years, when nobody's going to listen to you anyway, when you have no significant committee assignments, you might as well do what you want. (That is advice I would give to anybody in the political arena. It's better for your mental health and you might be surprised at what happens.)

I have set out — in my campaign, when I was inaugurated and ever since — be the spokesperson for livability in Congress. Every week I'm on the floor of the House, either speaking on an amendment with a special order or making one of those goofy one-minute

This article is adapted from comments made at the Seventh Congress for the New Urbanism, June 12, 1999, in Milwaukee.

speeches that are just for the record, referencing an issue of the day and how it relates to livable communities.

My legislative program, whether it's taxation, transportation, water, federal building policy or bicycles, is an attempt to craft issues that will make a difference in terms of livability. I want to provide more tools for the federal government to be a good partner and for state and local governments to have the resources, the flexibility and the capacity to do the job.

I am working with the media, spending an increasing amount of time giving journalists information about issues, responding to terrible articles, trying to offer a sense of current events with a livability spin to it.

I am working with the Clinton administration, which is perhaps the most sensitive in the history of our country to the nature of the federal–community partnership. The president announced several initiatives in his State of the Union address. The vice-president has made a number of statements about these principles and continues to make livability an issue.

I am working with cabinet secretaries and other critical people in the agencies that are dealing with these policies. Congress can play a critical role in helping people, particularly at the second and third levels of the administrative structure, to take risks for livability.

I am attempting to work with people in local communities. I have been the Johnny Appleseed of livability, visiting more than forty communities, trying to work with other members of Congress, either bringing them to Portland, going to their communities, trying to get them to understand that picking their shade of green with livability is important to their constituents, and candidly, for their political career.

I am even organizing in Congress! In addition to the Bike-partisan Bicycle Caucus (a fun way to address some of these issues), we have a task force with more than fifty members from the Democratic Caucus, meeting every two weeks to deal with issues of livable communities. We have a bipartisan caucus for sustainable development, and there is a bipartisan smart

1 The first thing you must do is be aggressive about building a platform and a political coalition, both nationally and in your local community.

growth caucus in the U.S. Senate. These are platforms to get the word out, not only to members of Congress, but also — even more critically — to the twenty-something year olds that really run Capitol Hill, keeping them supplied with policy information and opportunities to interact.

I am working on policy development, experimenting at your expense. I am in your communities all the time, testing ideas, stealing shamelessly from you. I am trying to reciprocate by being an ally. Some of you have been pretty aggressive about using this service of my office, giving me articles that you think we should respond to, hooking us up with local talk shows, sometimes working with your local officials or business people. This is a two-way street.

I am trying to make this a political issue. I have organized a political action committee, the Committee for a Livable Future, which has made contributions to more than forty candidates for Congress who are not ethically challenged, who have a chance of winning and who understand this.

An Agenda for Designers

That's my agenda. But more important than that is your political agenda. What are professional designers doing to make this happen?

I have no patience for people who are exclusively involved in the ozone in a theoretical sense. Some of that is fine, because it helps provide intellectual movement and energy. But focusing solely on theory instead

2 Government performance is the single most powerful tool at your disposal.

of hard political spade work, instead of building citizen infrastructure, instead of fighting these issues out on the ground, is a waste of time.

The first thing you must do is be aggressive about building a platform and a political coalition, both nationally and in your local community. The other side is doing it. I am contacted every day by people I

do not know, about issues I do not care about, taking up my time. They push; they organize; they make political contributions; they have lobbyists, platforms and conferences. In short, they make things happen because they are politically aggressive.

3 Get involved in the 2000 presidential campaign; make community livability an issue.

You must care politically as much as the wingnuts and the whole host of organized groups — you know who they are. I can't believe that you do not care as much about your livelihood or your community, about building livability, as some of these people who are using up oxygen in Washington, D.C., state capitols, county commissions and city halls.

Another point. Government performance is the single most powerful tool at your disposal. Make the government — state, federal and local — play by the rules to promote livability. Robert Peck, of the General Service Administration's Public Building Service is fighting an uphill battle because the federal government, despite the best intentions of this administration, does not have its collective act together in terms of promoting livability.

I have submitted a bill that would require the U.S. Postal Service to obey local land-use laws, zoning codes and environmental regulations. I was afraid for a moment that it would pass last session; I live in fear that President Clinton and Vice President Gore will simply order the Postal Service to do this. Bad post office decisions are one of best tools we have for organizing, for getting the point across: We wouldn't need new laws, taxes, regulations or rules if we could only get the federal government to do what it is telling local communities to do to protect the environment.

Seize this issue as a blunt instrument and beat up every federal, state and local official whenever there is even a hint of hypocrisy. You will have righteous indignation on your side, and it will help you build your coalition and generate momentum.

People who would rather gargle formaldehyde than utter the words "land-use planning" understand this. It will help Bob Peck if you raise your voice and demand that the federal government, which has portfolios of a million or more square feet in sixty metropolitan areas, be a full partner for livability. It will help him and it will help you.

Get involved in the 2000 presidential campaign. I commend the vice president for making livability an issue. He is doing his part. If Al Gore is your cup of tea, tell him so, get involved, help him refine the message. Push back the people that are trying to make this an issue by perverting what he is saying and trying to do.

For those of you of a different political flavor, make this an issue for your candidate. You will be doing him or her a favor. These people are going to be running around for the next year trying to find air time, trying to look intelligent. You can help them with one of the least toxic, most persuasive and important issues of our time.

For those of you who want to wait, organize local forums, particularly if you happen to be from New Hampshire, Iowa or California. Invite the presidential candidates or their surrogates. Have a livability forum.

Organize a strategy for enlisting college students. Colleges of environmental design, architecture, landscape

4 Reach out to organized labor, the environmental movement and students.

architecture and planning are a source of amazing vitality and energy. You should be there, pumping them up, engaging them — you can make livability an issue on campus just as anti-war, civil rights and environmentalism became issues. Young people understand the livability issue, they relate to it, they can be involved.

Reach out to organized labor. Seize the opportunity for a green — blue alliance. Livable communities have more union jobs, they are more pleasant and they are safer — not only for construction or transit workers,

5 Do not assume that the rest of America's political action committees, in their aggregate, are going to represent you and your interests.

but also for letter carriers, fire fighters and others who provide neighborhood services. Those of you in the development arena should think about the potential of tapping into tens of billions of dollars of union pension funds for livable community projects.

There should be a stronger relationship with the environmental movement. Design professionals have some terrific ideas for saving salmon, reducing emissions, conserving energy and protecting the water cycle — seek out and involve environmentalists. This relates to an issue that seems academic but should nevertheless be on your radar screen: developing a new round of environmental protections that are results oriented and performance driven, not regulatory and bureaucratic.

Come up with your own examples of my post office bill, of micro-policies that are so simple, direct and powerful that they will get the point across to the most hidebound opponent, the most obtuse person on the other side of this equation.

Here's another example: When I went to Congress, I was mortified to learn that I could give my employees free parking, either in Portland or Washington, yet I could not spend a penny of my million-dollar budget to subsidize employees who wanted transit passes. I was not allowed, even though the federal government had been telling the rest of America to do this for years, even though many federal agencies were doing it, even though Washington has terrible air pollution and congestion, even though both Portland and Washington have effective regional rail-bus systems. It took two years and discussions with more than three hundred of my colleagues before the Republican leadership gave up and changed the rules.

Lastly, get real about the politics. Do not assume that the rest of America's political action committees, in their aggregate, are going to represent you and your interests. Do not assume that the rest of America's political action committees, in their aggregate, are going to represent you and your interests. There are

conservatively 250,000 design professionals. If each of you would con-

tribute \$10 a month, you could amass a political fund similar in size to that which Tom DeLay is raising from the business community for Republicans running for House in the next election. The fund would be larger than the National Rifle Association's, in league with what organized labor is spending. This would transform the arena in which you do business.

Hear what I said. You do business. Most of you make your living related to things that are at least tangentially involved with livable communities initiatives. You will make more money if we spend our infrastructure dollars wisely, if we make it easier to finance mixed-use development, if we stop doing stupid things with our transportation system. You will have more professional satisfaction and your communities will be better.

The American public does not agree with the NRA on provisions that deal with gun violence. The NRA's radical views are actually embraced by only about three or four percent of the population. Yet they have tied our Congress and state governments in knots because they are focused and they care.

Every week I get on a plane and go somewhere new to talk about this. I am convinced that this is the time to make a difference for livability. I am absolutely convinced that you in the design professions can make a difference in your community and nationally. And I appreciate what you are already doing.

Charter of the New Urbanism

The Congress for the New Urbanism views disinvestment in central cities, the spread of placeless sprawl, increasing separation by race and income, environmental deterioration, loss of agricultural lands and wilderness, and the erosion of society's built heritage as one interrelated community-building challenge.

We stand for the restoration of existing urban centers and towns within coherent metropolitan regions, the reconfiguration of sprawling suburbs into communities of real neighborhoods and diverse districts, the conservation of natural environments, and the preservation of our built legacy.

We recognize that physical solutions by themselves will not solve social and economic problems, but neither can economic vitality, community stability, and environmental health be sustained without a coherent and supportive physical framework.

We advocate the restructuring of public policy and development practices to support the following principles: neighborhoods should be diverse in use and population; communities should be designed for the pedestrian and transit as well as the car; cities and towns should be shaped by physically defined and universally accessible public spaces and community institutions; urban places should be framed by architecture and landscape design that celebrate local history, climate, ecology, and building practice.

We represent a broad-based citizenry, composed of public and private sector leaders, community activists, and multidisciplinary professionals. We are committed to re-establishing the relationship between the art of building and the making of community, through citizen-based participatory planning and design.

We dedicate ourselves to reclaiming our homes, blocks, streets, parks, neighborhoods, districts, towns, cities, regions, and environment.

We assert the following principles to guide public policy, development practice, urban planning, and design:

The Region: Metropolis, City and Town

1. Metropolitan regions are finite places with geographic boundaries derived from topography, watersheds, coastlines, farmlands, regional parks, and river

basins. The metropolis is made of multiple centers that are cities, towns, and villages, each with its own identifiable center and edges.

2. The metropolitan region is a fundamental economic unit of the contemporary world. Governmental cooperation, public policy, physical planning, and economic strategies must reflect this new reality.

3. The metropolis has a necessary and fragile relationship to its agrarian hinterland and natural landscapes. The relationship is environmental, economic, and cultural. Farmland and nature are as important to the metropolis as the garden is to the house.

4. Development patterns should not blur or eradicate the edges of the metropolis. Infill development within existing urban areas conserves environmental resources, economic investment, and social fabric, while reclaiming marginal and abandoned areas. Metropolitan regions should develop strategies to encourage such infill development over peripheral expansion.

5. Where appropriate, new development contiguous to urban boundaries should be organized as neighborhoods and districts, and be integrated with the existing urban pattern. Noncontiguous development should be organized as towns and villages with their own urban edges, and planned for a jobs/housing balance, not as bedroom suburbs.

6. The development and redevelopment of towns and cities should respect historical patterns, precedents, and boundaries.

7. Cities and towns should bring into proximity a broad spectrum of public and private uses to support a regional economy that benefits people of all incomes. Affordable housing should be distributed throughout the region to match job opportunities and to avoid concentrations of poverty.

8. The physical organization of the region should be supported by a framework of transportation alternatives. Transit, pedestrian, and bicycle systems should maximize access and mobility throughout the region while reducing dependence upon the automobile.

9. Revenues and resources can be shared more cooperatively among the municipalities and centers within

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regions to avoid destructive competition for tax base and to promote rational coordination of transportation, recreation, public services, housing, and community institutions.

The Neighborhood, the District and the Corridor

1. The neighborhood, the district, and the corridor are the essential elements of development and redevelopment in the metropolis. They form identifiable areas that encourage citizens to take responsibility for their maintenance and evolution.

2. Neighborhoods should be compact, pedestrian-friendly, and mixed-use. Districts generally emphasize a special single use, and should follow the principles of neighborhood design when possible. Corridors are regional connectors of neighborhoods and districts; they range from boulevards and rail lines to rivers and parkways.

3. Many activities of daily living should occur within walking distance, allowing independence to those who do not drive, especially the elderly and the young. Interconnected networks of streets should be designed to encourage walking, reduce the number and length of automobile trips, and conserve energy.

4. Within neighborhoods, a broad range of housing types and price levels can bring people of diverse ages, races, and incomes into daily interaction, strengthening the personal and civic bonds essential to an authentic community.

5. Transit corridors, when properly planned and coordinated, can help organize metropolitan structure and revitalize urban centers. In contrast, highway corridors should not displace investment from existing centers.

6. Appropriate building densities and land uses should be within walking distance of transit stops, permitting public transit to become a viable alternative to the automobile.

7. Concentrations of civic, institutional, and commercial activity should be embedded in neighborhoods and districts, not isolated in remote, single-use complexes. Schools should be sized and located to enable children to walk or bicycle to them.

8. The economic health and harmonious evolution of neighborhoods, districts, and corridors can be improved through graphic urban design codes that serve as predictable guides for change.

9. A range of parks, from tot-lots and village greens to ballfields and community gardens, should be distributed within neighborhoods. Conservation areas and open lands should be used to define and connect different neighborhoods and districts.

The Block, the Street and the Building

1. A primary task of all urban architecture and landscape design is the physical definition of streets and public spaces as places of shared use.

2. Individual architectural projects should be seamlessly linked to their surroundings. This issue transcends style.

3. The revitalization of urban places depends on safety and security. The design of streets and buildings should reinforce safe environments, but not at the expense of accessibility and openness.

4. In the contemporary metropolis, development must adequately accommodate automobiles. It should do so in ways that respect the pedestrian and the form of public space.

5. Streets and squares should be safe, comfortable, and interesting to the pedestrian. Properly configured, they encourage walking and enable neighbors to know each other and protect their communities.

6. Architecture and landscape design should grow from local climate, topography, history, and building practice.

7. Civic buildings and public gathering places require important sites to reinforce community identity and the culture of democracy. They deserve distinctive form, because their role is different from that of other buildings and places that constitute the fabric of the city.

8. All buildings should provide their inhabitants with a clear sense of location, weather and time. Natural methods of heating and cooling can be more resource-efficient than mechanical systems.

9. Preservation and renewal of historic buildings, districts, and landscapes affirm the continuity and evolution of urban society.

Hillary Levitt Altman

GSA Center for Urban Development

The U.S. General Services Administration is known best, perhaps, for managing buildings and providing services for federal agencies. Increasingly, however, communities are recognizing the significant impact GSA has on urban areas, particularly downtowns, and involving the agency as a partner in local revitalization strategies.

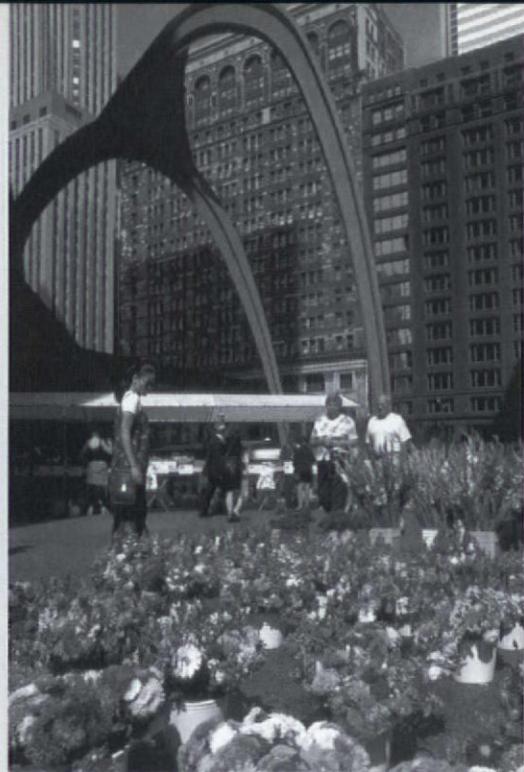
GSA is the largest urban-oriented real estate organization in the country. It owns or leases more than 300 million square feet of space in more than 1,600 communities, providing space for some one million federal workers. More than 90 percent of that inventory is located in urban areas and more than 400 federal buildings are historically significant. GSA spends more than \$5 billion annually on real estate, maintenance and security services, and each year the agency makes approximately 3,000 leasing and locational decisions.

With this tremendous investment at stake, and with so many people affected by its decisions, GSA is committed to helping the communities where federal facilities are located become more livable and vibrant.

GSA recently created the Center for Urban Development to help change the way the federal government does business. The center, established in May 1999, helps GSA direct its real estate activity in ways that support local efforts to bolster smart growth, economic vitality and cultural vibrancy.

The center's network of field officers works with local governments and community groups to integrate federal resources into the fabric and life of communities, and to ensure those investments support local development. The center is re-evaluating various federal development, design and leasing policies, and it serves as an information resource for other federal agencies, urban interest groups, local governments and communities.

When major projects, such as building a new federal courthouse or expanding a customs and immigration station, are being considered, the center engages



everyone involved in the decisionmaking process in a dialogue, sometimes for the first time ever. This results in a better understanding of how to enhance the government operations while supporting the development and livability of the community.

The center is always finding new ways for GSA to be a good neighbor—such as creating green space near federal buildings, supporting local business development in plazas and retail space, sharing resources or participating in local business improvement districts. The center is building on a tradition of creating places for people to engage one another, rather than spaces for people to enter and then leave.

The task is not easy, though. Sometimes, federal agencies find it more desirable to abandon downtowns for the convenience of suburbia, citing concerns like crime and security, transit access and parking. The center works to remind both agencies and communities alike that the federal government's overarching goal—affirmed by several Presidential executive orders—is to support the economic stability and revitalization of cities and regions.

We look forward to the work ahead. We know from experience that the federal government and local communities can form productive partnerships that strengthen our urban centers—partnerships that are truly the foundation of sustainable development and livable places.

Hillary Levitt Altman is Director of the Center for Urban Development, U.S. General Services Administration.

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A Renewed Federal Mandate

The federal government's impact on the landscape has been vast and pervasive. From the earliest days of the republic, federal investment has spurred the growth of communities and regions, and it has transmitted ideas about what the face of architecture, the form of communities and the character of places ought to be.

The location of facilities like customs houses, court-houses, military bases and highways can make or break a town—conferring political status and prosperity on the lucky recipients. But such investments can also be uneasy impositions—their design unresponsive to local traditions or conditions, their long-term prospects dependent on the patronage of far-away politicians and bureaucrats.

The General Services Administration, which manages the government's enormous real estate operation, is often the focal point for this tension. GSA's Public Buildings Service controls more than 300 million square feet of space in more than 1,600 cities; each year it spends more than \$5 billion for private real estate, maintenance and security services and makes some 3,000 lease and location decisions.

The impact of these activities may be local and, at times, undramatic, but they still can have an important effect on communities. The challenge for GSA has been to consider not only the concerns of the agencies it serves but also these local impacts. As long ago as 1949, Congress required GSA to coordinate federal projects with local plans, and a host of mandates concerning historic preservation, environmental protection and shared use have followed.

Last year GSA established a "Center for Urban Development," whose focus is helping GSA align its activities more closely with the interests of local communities. Last fall, the center gathered regional GSA administrators, project managers and urban

experts in a workshop that considered the dynamics, potential and process of this renewed federal commitment.

From Lightning Rod to Catalyst

The cause of "livable communities" has become a visible political issue, even meriting mention in President Clinton's State of the Union address. "A wave of civic revitalization is rolling across the country," Keith Laughlin, from the White House Task Force on Livable Communities, told the workshop. "The federal government can play a key role in this process, and is committed to being a dependable partner to communities wrestling with this issue."

Of course, the arena in which GSA operates is complex. There are client agencies and building management issues to consider, as well as federal policies concerning retail leasing, selling property, environmental review and historic preservation. At the workshop, GSA staff recounted what one person called "the hundred balls we have to juggle":

- Agency concerns (such as parking and security), may conflict with local concerns (such as urban design, traffic and stimulating development downtown). Agencies often seek extra funding for interior amenities, such as furnishings, rather than public amenities, such as plazas, landscaping or public art.
- Government procedures do not always consider the value of addressing broader community concerns.
- Government spending occurs in a political arena, with many layers of oversight, and is unpredictable.



Opposite page: Market and public art on the plaza at the federal building in Chicago—two approaches to making livable places

Above: The historic Stegmaier Brewery in Wilkes-Barre, Pa., was saved from demolition when GSA converted it into a federal office building.

Photos: Center for Urban Development

GSA project managers are thus in the position of creating opportunities, cultivating constituencies and crafting deals. Some of the workshop discussions, therefore, focused on good old-fashioned facilitation and negotiating techniques.

But the workshop also considered broader strategies that the center could initiate to help local GSA offices promote community livability. The strategies will necessarily be flexible and situational, responding to project demands and local context. Clearly, however, the center's fundamental role will be to think beyond GSA's basic mission—providing good working conditions for federal workers and good value for public expenditures—to consider how federal investment can most effectively strengthen local communities.

Be a resource. The center can help regional staff and localities simply be being a conduit for information, and by developing new information that supports their work. For example, the center has already teamed with the National Main Street Center to develop a model for assessing the economic impacts federal buildings and workers have in communities.

Be a good neighbor. GSA's "good neighbor" policy seeks to increase the public use of federal buildings and spaces. In San Francisco, that thinking is being applied to the interior organization of a new federal building, according to GSA Regional Administrator Kenn Kojima. "We are trying to combine the idea of livable communities with hassle-free government by using the first few floors as a place where citizens can connect with the government," he said. A post office, passport agency and tax information center will be located there.

Commit client agencies to community goals. "We have to have our client committed to the community" said George McGrady, a field officer for the center who is based in Atlanta. Otherwise, agencies may seek to move to the suburbs—leaving GSA with a vacant building and damaging efforts to keep downtowns viable.

Sometimes this simply means supporting established community initiatives. In Birmingham, Ala., GSA and the Social Security Administration (SSA) agreed with the local business improvement district to use an SSA parking lot to support after-hours events at the nearby Birmingham Civic Center.

Or it means directing GSA resources to address local problems. In Wilkes-Barre, Pa., an abandoned, historic brewery building was re-opened as federal offices in February, 1998. The brick Victorian Revival building, which is on the National Register of Historic Places, provides space for the SSA, the postal service, a local congressman, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and other federal organizations.

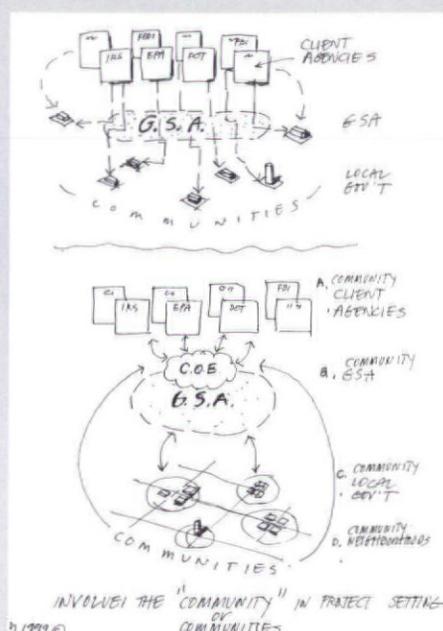
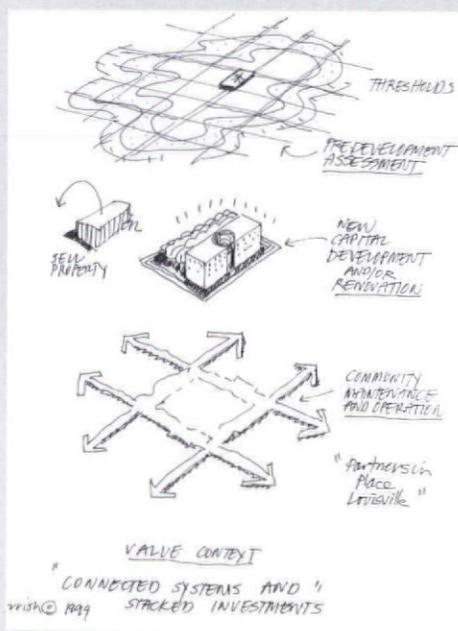
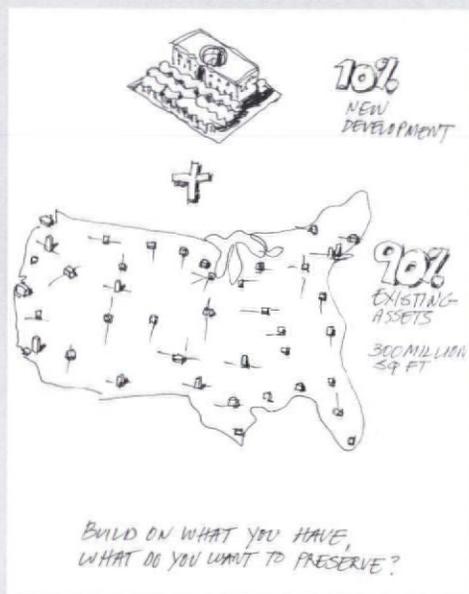
Point out linkages to other federal resources. While agencies like GSA, the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Department of Transportation spend billions in urban areas, lower-profile agencies like the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration also offer resources. "Federal agencies are all operating with their own missions and own constituencies. Nobody is pulling it all together in one place," said Fred Kent, president of Project for Public Spaces.

Be a partner. The center should be involved in local planning efforts continually, not just when a project comes along. "GSA should be a part of the planning process, not just internalize public opinion into its projects," suggested Elizabeth Jackson, president of the International Downtown Association.

Since new construction comprises only ten percent of GSA's activity, the agency should not overlook its existing properties. "Look at where you are, how people use facilities, why you want to stay," said William Morrish, director of the Design Center for the American Urban Landscape at the University of Minnesota.

That's the idea behind a major initiative in Fort Worth. There, center staff are meeting with GSA and city officials to devise strategies for a civic square that will connect a federal building to development along a transit corridor. One idea involves integrating renovations to the building with development along the main business street. Others include restoring a public fountain in the adjacent federal plaza and redesigning the streetscape and lighting around the building.

Be a convenor. The center should develop the capacity to do focused planning for areas affected by federal investment, urban designer Charles Zucker suggested. That could be especially important to communities that are concerned about livability but have few planning resources, Morrish added.



In Denver, where the center has launched another major initiative, GSA is expanding its federal center next to a transit line, and HUD is supporting a HOPE IV project nearby. GSA could be a convener of federal agencies, "but that's not good enough, city council member Susan Barnes-Gelt said. "Even at the local level, HOPE IV people aren't talking to the BID people, transit isn't talking to anybody."

The center hosted a community workshop designed to map out a strategy for a new downtown district that will link federal and local development efforts to a planned transit corridor. Also, GSA and the local transit agency have collaborated on a plan for locating transit stops in the special district.

Be a catalyst. The center should encourage both its clients and localities to pursue programs that will support livability. "Ask the city to support things you want, such as bringing in housing so workers can feel safe after hours. That is what a private developer would do," said Shelley Poticha, executive director of the Congress for the New Urbanism. In Newark, for example, GSA proposed leasing a city street on which it is establishing a pedestrian mall with a farmers' market.

That includes challenging government notions about buildings. "The way GSA thinks of buildings, as meeting needs of users, is unlike that of developers, who think of the value of their structure. Sometimes you need to tell the clients that the plaza is what will create long-

term value, not the oak in the judges' chambers," said Dena Belzer, principal of Strategic Economics.

She also urged GSA to take risks to leverage private development. "Developers are looking for ways to manage risk. GSA seems even more risk-averse, even though its money is at less risk than developers'."

From Within and Without

The center, still in its first year of operation, is busy with major projects in Denver and Fort Worth and dozens of smaller initiatives elsewhere. For now, its role is that of a convener, collaborator and facilitator, and there should be no underestimating the role it can play as a change agent in that capacity.

Over time, though, as the center gains experience, it will think more about challenging how the federal government does business. This will certainly involve reforming laws and administrative procedures that govern federal real estate operations, but it might also involve fundamental new approaches to federal involvement in local places.

What is not likely to change, however, is the fundamental tension between the federal and the local. One hopes that in adjusting to local conditions, federal projects do not abandon the broader sense of purpose that characterize so many of the federal government's most successful architectural, urban design and engineering endeavors.

Diagrams illustrating the role GSA plays in local communities

Left: The properties GSA already owns and leases play a major role in hundreds of cities

Center: Looking at GSA construction, renovation and property disposition activities within a range of larger contexts

Right: Top-down versus collaborative approaches to planning federal investments

Graphics: William Morrish

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