

New Development, Traditional Patterns

by Philip Langdon

Are people in your community tired of having to drive everywhere, and disenchanted with the sprawling development they see? Would they prefer close-grained neighborhoods where residents could actually walk to the store, the park, and other local gathering places? Then maybe they're ready for Traditional Neighborhood Development, an old planning idea that's been dramatically reborn in the past 15 years.

Traditional Neighborhood Development, or TND, aims to create sociable, pedestrian-scale neighborhoods, whether in small towns, rural areas, suburbs, or cities. TND is the key component of New Urbanism, a planning approach that's

trying to reshape American communities' fragmented growth patterns.

The term "New Urbanism" was coined several years ago by designers, planners, builders, developers, and public officials promoting an alternative to the single-purpose developments that have predominated for the past 50 years. As a label, "New Urbanism" has its problems. New Urbanism's ideas are, in truth, not terribly "new," nor do they apply only to "urban" areas.

But regardless of the name's deficiencies, this is a planning movement worth knowing about, one that tries to remedy serious defects in development patterns. The most basic of these defects has to do with the character of the subdivisions we've been building since the Second World War. Why do we lay out subdivisions that make it impossible for a ten-year-old to walk to the store for a Popsicle or a loaf of bread? Why are streets and land uses in postwar suburbs arranged so that everyone has to have a car to reach even the most routine daily destinations? Wouldn't it be better if everyday necessities were easy to reach and if the streets and sidewalks were designed as convivial places for meeting friends and neighbors?

The central argument of the New Urbanists is that the country made a

costly mistake in rigidly separating housing, retailing, employment, and other land uses and in conceiving the streets almost solely as passageways for motor vehicles. **REP-1** The New Urbanists want communities to have the walkable character that was widespread before the car became the all-conquering king. The assumption is that if public spaces — especially streets and sidewalks — can be made enticing, residents will become more involved in neighborhood and public life, and spur a reinvigoration of community activity.  *How Popular is New Urbanism?*

Traditional Neighborhood Development is the New Urbanists' chief means for accomplishing this. But New Urbanism is also concerned with development at a scale beyond that of the neighborhood. At its most ambitious, New Urbanism seeks to reshape the *region*, tying diverse neighborhoods into a metropolitan structure offering convenient mass transit, preserving important landscape features, and providing greater opportunities for people now stuck in poor, depressed neighborhoods.

A SOCIOLOGIST'S VIEW

Sociologist Ray Oldenburg, in *The Great Good Place* (Paragon House, 1989), says inconvenient layout is the hallmark

Editor's Note: I'm pleased that planning journalist Phil Langdon agreed to prepare an overview of "new urbanism" for Planning Commissioners Journal readers. New urbanism in many ways represents a return to a pattern of development and building that pre-dates World War II and the explosive growth of suburbia. More and more planners and designers see new urbanism as a way of mending what they feel is the torn fabric of our communities. Langdon's article will help familiarize you with this important movement in planning and architecture.

*Over the past eight years, the PCJ has run a number of articles touching on different aspects of new urbanism. We felt that these back articles would provide a good companion for those of you interested in taking a closer look at some of the issues Phil Langdon discusses. We've inserted the symbol **REP** to cross-reference related articles contained in this reprint set. Information on articles included in the reprint set is on page 19.*



of most American communities built since the Second World War. Postwar development usually consists of expensive houses here, less expensive houses there, apartment complexes somewhere else, retailing dispersed along the roadsides, and employment scattered around — all of this yoked together by a road system that pays little heed to pedestrians' needs.

The fragmented postwar land-use pattern makes it difficult for people to walk from their homes to stores, churches, schools, post offices, and other common destinations. Dead ends (cul-de-sacs) and a circuitous street pattern make travel within the neighborhood inconvenient, especially for those on foot. People are effectively discouraged from getting acquainted with the neighborhood beyond their cul-de-sac. Restaurants, coffee houses, taverns, and other gathering places cannot build up a neighborhood customer base when the street system is such a formidable obstacle. (Most zoning codes compound the offense by banning restaurants and other commercial activities in residential areas.) The elimination of nonresidential activities is wrongheaded, says Oldenburg, because without gathering places nearby, people are deprived of opportunities to get to know their neighbors and learn about community concerns. **REP-2**

Keep in mind that one-person households — the people most vulnerable to isolation and loneliness — now make up nearly a quarter of the nation's households. Their need for neighborhood connections is great, and they are not well served by conventional subdivisions. "Auto-based suburbs with single-family homes work only for families with young children," says Chris Bradshaw, principal of Bradshaw Communities in Ottawa, Ontario. "The young children are the only catalysts to bring the neighbors out into the street to engage each other. Auto-based suburbs don't work for that same family during other stages of life or for the parents after the kids have gone." **REP-3,4**

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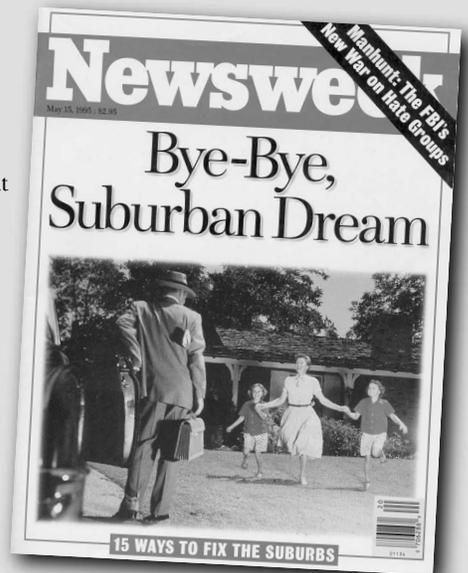
How Popular is New Urbanism?

Comments by residents, along with some limited opinion surveys, suggest that Traditional Neighborhood Development spurs people to get to know more people within their neighborhoods.

Andrew Ross of New York University studied the New Urbanist town of Celebration, Florida for his new book, *The Celebration Chronicles: Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Property Values in Disney's New Town*. (Ballantine, 1999). The first wave of residents in Celebration includes many who arrived specifically seeking neighborliness and civic participation, so they may not be an entirely representative sample of the American population. Nonetheless, Ross was impressed that "virtually everyone attested to the experience of making many new friends in a short space of time." He observes: "Many of these were relationships of proximity, due primarily to the physical layout."

Consistent with this, two parents in Celebration, Douglas Frantz and Catherine Collins, wrote in a *New York Times* essay in May that children there "have many adults watching over them." Frantz and Collins, authors of *Celebration U.S.A.: Living in Disney's Brave New Town* (Henry Holt, 1999), say housing density, sidewalks, and the fact that people know their neighbors "contribute to a sense of community that creates a cocoon of sorts around the children." This does not replace parents or eliminate problems, they note, but it translates into "a high degree of freedom for our children and a level of comfort as parents...."

Two national joint surveys by American LIVES Inc. and Inter-Communications — reported in the February 1997 issue of *Urban Land* — have found that Americans' desires are shifting "from suburban anonymity and individualism to a yearning for community." Twenty-one percent of the respondents in one survey favored New Urbanism, including the higher density. Another 48 percent "liked the image but wanted larger lots; they liked the town center idea but could not buy into the new urbanism idea because they found too many things wrong with it, all associated



with density and automobility."

"Homebuyers do not want uncontrolled suburban growth spreading across the landscape; they want urban growth to create nicely bounded small-town cells that have nuclei that are town centers," the report also noted. "Eighty-six percent of the survey sample wanted a 'town center that has a village green surrounded by shops, civic buildings, churches, etc.'"

These findings indicate that public sentiment is moving in the direction of Traditional Neighborhood Development.



One Planning Commissioner's Progress

When Joe Anderson was appointed four years ago to the planning commission of Whitewater Township, near Traverse City, Michigan, he knew what he wanted to do: introduce the principles of New Urbanism, or Neotraditional Development, to his 40-square-mile municipality and its 2,200 inhabitants. Those principles, he believed, would help conserve the township's 6,000 acres of prime agricultural land and at the same time help resurrect an old unincorporated village known as Williamsburg.

"I have been interested in New Urbanism for eight or nine years, since I read an article in *Time* magazine about Andres Duany," says Anderson, an insurance salesman and former history teacher. From Duany, a Miami architect who has

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One Commissioners Progress

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been a leading exponent of New Urbanism, and from other sources, Anderson had concluded that “most zoning ordinances are the genetic code for urban sprawl.”

“There are five recurring themes in most zoning ordinances,” Anderson says. He describes them in these terms:

- “Unobstructed flow of traffic. How do we keep the cars happy?”
- “Very strict separation of uses. A zone for this and a zone for that.”
- “Parking in huge quantities, usually located in front of the buildings.”
- “Low densities. Everything on a lot that’s bigger than it needs to be.”
- “Staggered or rotated buildings. No space can be defined.”

When Anderson and other planning commissioners felt they “knew what the disease was,” they came up with the prescription for an antidote. “We will make the roads a little narrower,” says Anderson. “We will mix our uses. We will have ‘build-to’ lines instead of setbacks. We will make the lots smaller.”

The Michigan Society of Planning Officials played a role in the township’s deliberations. Last year the Society enunciated a set of community planning principles based largely on the charter of the Congress for New Urbanism, the leading New Urbanist advocacy organization. The Whitewater Township Planning Commission then endorsed them.

The master plan was rewritten, and Anderson expects the township’s township’s zoning ordinance to be rewritten to conform to the master plan. Last year the township adopted a zoning amendment establishing a traditional village district in Williamsburg. The results of these activities will be the right kind of development in Williamsburg and a reduction in land consumption and automobile dependency, Anderson believes.

Throughout the process, Anderson says he has tried to keep the township’s elected officials informed. In doing that, he has started summing up his ideas as “building community.” For many people, that phrase has a better ring than New Urbanism.



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NEW URBANIST PLANNING RULES

New Urbanism sets out these key precepts:

- The street network should be extensively interconnected. This lets people walk (or bike) to local destinations by a variety of relatively direct routes. It also provides varied scenery which makes trips interesting and enjoyable in their own right. And it cuts auto congestion by giving people more routes to choose from.

- Within a five-minute walk of most people’s homes, sites should be designated for small parks, churches, stores, or other gathering places. If the neighborhood is too small to support stores, retailing should be encouraged in pedestrian-oriented locations serving more than one neighborhood — such as a town center or a downtown. An enclosed shopping mall is not an adequate substitute. **REP-5**

- Housing should vary in type, size, and price so that the neighborhood can be home to people in a broad spectrum of ages, incomes, and occupations. A mixed population, including people who work at home, boosts the demand for goods and services throughout the daytime, evening, and week, helping neighborhood businesses to thrive, Bradshaw says. Diverse communities, including one-person households, generate more mid-weekday visits to shops and offices; they make street and park life more lively.

- Public transit should be encouraged. Especially good locations for bus stops or transit connections are neighborhood or town centers which contain stores and public buildings. If these centers offer densely developed housing, convenience stores, cleaners, and eating and drinking places, people may not need a car.

Ultimately, car-sharing and neighborhood car-rental businesses (an idea promoted by Washington, D.C., planning consultant Patrick Hare) could come into being. New Urbanism does not call for eliminating the car, but it

does aim to alleviate people's dependence on it. **REP-6**

CONNECT THE STREETS

New Urbanist circulation systems often use a grid or a variation on the grid. Numerous through-streets and abundant connections among the streets allow traffic to disperse over many more routes than is possible in a subdivision full of cul-de-sacs. "You should be able to get the proverbial loaf of bread on local streets" without venturing onto a high-volume arterial, says Walter Kulash, a transportation engineer with Glatting Jackson community planners in Orlando, Florida. It's on narrow, tree-lined local streets that people get to know their community.

New Urbanism accepts the need for some broad, high-volume streets. The houses, apartments, and other buildings along the most heavily trafficked streets are usually set back from the pavement. Minor streets, by contrast, may have buildings close to the street and sidewalk. Streets closely lined by buildings can exude great charm — as Boston's Beacon Hill, San Francisco's hillside neighborhoods, and Charleston's historic district have demonstrated to millions of tourists. "If the street is to be successful as a community place, it needs to be defined as a space — as an 'outdoor room,'" observes Michael Haverland, co-director of the Yale Urban Design Workshop in New Haven. The facades must be close enough to the street to serve as the walls of this outdoor room.

Instead of *setback* requirements, which tend to destroy a sense of enclosure, New Urbanist zoning codes may have "*build-to*" requirements, stipulating that the facade be within a certain distance of the public right-of-way. Front yards are often just 10 feet deep at Harbor Town, a much-praised New Urbanist development in Memphis. Porches or balconies on the fronts of the houses put extra "eyes on the streets," in the memorable phrase of urban critic Jane Jacobs. Such informal oversight can help deter misbehavior. Hedges, low fences, and

rows of trees often define the front yards and further enhance the streets.

Traditional Neighborhood Development counteracts the dullness of garage doors by requiring that each attached garage be recessed behind the line of the house facade. Or a detached garage is built near the rear of the lot. Fort Collins, Colorado, requires garages to be at least four feet back from the facade or front porch.  *Fort Collins, p. 15* "That makes a big difference," says Clark Mapes, a planner with that city of 105,000. With garages relegated to the background, houses display windows, front doors, porches — elements that convey a lived-in feeling.

Some TNDs have alleys, but opinion on their desirability is sharply divided. Alleys make garbage collection, utility boxes, and other services less conspicuous.  *Alleys With All the Trimmings*. But alleys consume land and siphon some neighborhood activity away from the streets. Bradshaw, in Ottawa, suggests it would be better to build "side alleys" — short alleys running perpendicular to the streets. Each side alley could provide access to the garages of four or five houses. Small apartments above the garages (a favorite New Urbanist housing option) would provide some neighborly surveillance over these narrow lanes. Side alleys could also give pedestrians much-appreciated short-cuts through blocks, furthering the New Urbanist goal of walkable neighborhoods.

TAMING TRAFFIC

Most TND streets are narrow, which helps slow the traffic and improve safety for cyclists and pedestrians. When the 130-acre Harbor Town development was planned in Memphis in the late 1980s, "we wanted 28 feet of pavement from curb to curb," says Antonio R. Bologna, director of development for the Henry Turley Company. "It fit the residential scale." The city held to its municipal standard of 36 feet. As a result, the developer ended up building the 28-foot streets as private streets, placing a permanent cost burden on the residents.

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Alleys With All the Trimmings

The first alleys in New Urbanist developments tended to be barebones affairs — just a narrow expanse of gravel or pavement lined by rows of garages. In the past decade, however, alleys have become fancier, reflecting builders' insistence that houses sell more easily when the alleys are attractive.

At the 130-acre Harbor Town development on Mud Island near downtown Memphis, some alleys have a kink in them, so the full length of the alley is not visible from the adjoining street.



An alley in Harbor Town.

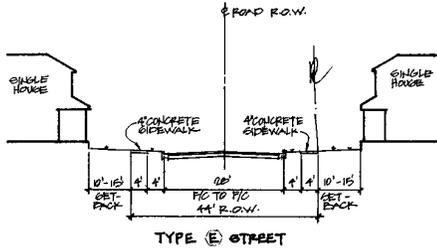
To soften the alleys' appearance, space is sometimes designated along parts of the alley for the planting of shrubbery and other vegetation. Concrete or asphalt paving may be edged with brick or stone. Irregularly shaped plots along some of Harbor Town's alleys contain mini-parks; they're maintained by the neighbors.

Architect J. Carson Looney, of the Memphis firm Looney Ricks Kiss, suggests planting trees at the rear of the back yards to shade and beautify the alley. He also recommends installing lights (controlled by motion detectors or photo sensors) on the garages, so the alleys will be less dark and fear-inducing at night.

All these enhancements have their appeal. But local government should think twice before *requiring* measures that enlarge the alleys and increase their cost. These may drive up the price of the housing and reduce the size of the lots, making alley developments uncompetitive with conventional subdivisions. Another fact to consider: alleys may pull some of the neighborhood's social life away from the streets in front of the houses — undermining one of the goals of Traditional Neighborhood Development.

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(Years later, the city decided 28-foot streets were safe after all). Planning commissioners who want to encourage pedestrian-scale development should review street standards, with an eye to allowing narrower passageways. **REP-7,8**



Narrower residential street widths are used in Harbor Town.

On-street parking in front of stores and houses slows traffic in TNDs and provides a buffer between pedestrians and moving vehicles. When parking lots must be built, they are often separated into smaller expanses to prevent deadening the surroundings.

Other traffic-calming techniques **REP-9** include:

- Roundabouts and raised intersections on major streets.
- Narrowing of the street at intersections, especially in commercial areas.
- Tight corners instead of easy curves on intersections.
- Kinks in the street alignment.
- T-intersections.
- Segments of pavement with a different texture.
- Plantings in the middle of intersections. Emergency vehicles can drive across the planted area if necessary.

LINKING SUBDIVISIONS

In 1997 Fort Collins became a leader in New Urbanism, adopting both a New Urbanist comprehensive plan prepared by Calthorpe Associates of Berkeley, California, and a land-use code based on that plan. One of the city’s crucial requirements is “street connectivity.” Subdivisions must be laid out so that when an adjacent subdivision is developed later, their streets will meet at least every 660 feet. Cul-de-sacs are discour-

aged. “We want to fairly and evenly disperse traffic, and we want *all* the streets to be safe and pleasant for *all* the residents,” says Mapes. *Fort Collins, p. 15*

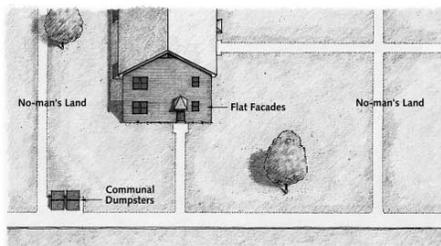
Kulash, in Orlando, says developers often resist street-connection requirements. “The best way to enforce that is for the county to map a collector road system [for all areas expecting development] rather than leave it up to the individual subdivisions,” says Kulash. Land-owners are thus put on notice that when their land undergoes development, it must include roads that form a continuous network with the adjacent areas. “The typical subdivision will have to build that collector for its own internal needs, anyway,” he notes. The only difference is that the collector road systems must be linked together.

WHERE TO BUILD A TND

The U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development embraced New Urbanism three years ago, and is using it to convert failed public housing projects into livable communities. One of the early successes is Diggs Town in Norfolk, Virginia, which was reconfigured by

Diggs Town before (below). No definition of private outdoor space for each unit.

Diggs Town after (right). The addition of porches, fences, landscaping, residential windows, and a new street help define the private space of each unit.

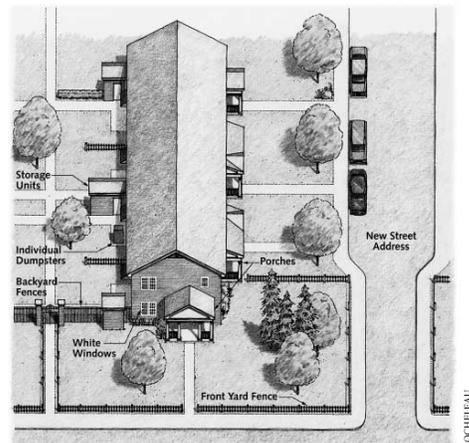


Common areas in Diggs Town(left) were transformed into neighborhood streets (right)

Urban Design Associates of Pittsburgh. Most of Diggs Town’s original common land, which was vulnerable to crime, has now been converted into front yards and back yards controlled by individual households. Picket fences help to demarcate each household’s private yard. Front porches, added to the apartment buildings, make it easier for residents to maintain surveillance of the streets and grounds. Since the project was redesigned, crime has dropped.

HUD is using TND principles not only to make physical improvements to old housing projects but also to build brand-new housing developments on the sites of high-rise projects that have decayed so far as to be uninhabitable. Row houses facing city streets have been built where some of Baltimore’s worst high-rises stood. Throughout the country, HUD’s HOPE VI program is combining TND with the Oscar Newman concept of “defensible space” to reclaim rundown projects.

TND standards can help to design new development that reinforces the character of old areas. The city of Belmont, North Carolina, population 8,500, is



URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES, PITTSBURGH, PA / PHOTOGRAPHER: PAUL ROCHELEAU



Fort Collins' Four Essentials

A New Urbanist stronghold,

Fort Collins, Colorado, has identified four standards as critically important for its goal of tying the community together and serving pedestrians well. Here are the four as described by Clark Mapes, a Fort Collins city planner:

- Each building must face the street and sidewalk or face a connecting walkway leading from the street and sidewalk. The connecting walkway cannot follow the outline of a parking lot. Consequently genuine streets and sidewalks run through apartment complexes. Commercial and multifamily buildings are not divorced from the street system.

- Subdivisions, in addition to having ample connections among their own streets, must connect their streets to those of the neighboring subdivisions every 660 feet.

- A small park must be built within 1/3-mile of 90 percent of the dwellings in a subdivision. A neighborhood center containing certain features, including outdoor space directly accessible via the local street network, must be built within 3/4-mile of 90 percent of the dwellings in new developments of 40 acres or more.

- Garage doors must be at least four feet behind the facade or front porch or must be side- or rear-loaded

For more information, contact Clark Mapes at 970-221-6225; e-mail <cmapes@ci.fort-collins.co.us>



Front porches at Diggs Town allow residents to keep watch over the streets.

using TND principles to upgrade dilapidated textile mill villages. In one 200-unit development known as Adams Bluff, new houses on 4,000- to 6,000-square-foot lots are being interspersed among old houses that are undergoing renovation. Planning Director Elson F. Baldwin says “a very pedestrian scale” is one of the attractions of Adams Bluff; the municipality has sought to reinforce the pedestrian-friendly atmosphere by building new houses close to the tree-lined streets. Most of the new residents are first-time homebuyers. The city’s regulating ordinance has been rewritten along New Urbanist lines with assistance from Duany Plater-Zyberk & Co. architects and town planners in Miami.

TND COSTS

Development costs for New Urbanist communities often exceed those of conventional subdivisions because the planning is more complicated and the amenities more substantial. “You’re building a really nice street lighting system, you’re planting street trees, you’re building a park system, so your costs are up,” says Harbor Town’s Bologna. However, some of the costs the developer incurs by providing these amenities can be offset by allowing the developer to build at a higher density than is

common in conventional subdivisions.¹ Moreover, a recent report by the Urban Land Institute has found that developers are obtaining significant price premiums due to homebuyer preference for New Urbanist communities.²

In the Cotton District in Starkville, Mississippi, a former shop teacher named Dan Camp has for 30 years been building a pedestrian-scale neighborhood containing houses and small apartments reminiscent of the beautiful old buildings in historic Charleston, South Carolina. Some of Camp’s buildings have been very inexpensive. That’s because he’s an economy-minded entrepreneur who chose to build in an apartment district where land costs were fairly low, and who designs units that are small (but well-crafted).

A local government can help make TND efforts financially viable by adjusting the street and parking standards, allowing higher density, and helping with other issues that affect costs, says Camp. These developments can instill new pride and optimism in a community. But don’t expect that everyone will choose to live in compact traditional developments. The people most drawn to TNDs, says Camp, are affluent

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¹ For more information on ways in which TND developments are cutting costs, see “Controlling the costs of TND infrastructure” in the July/August 1998 issue of *New Urban News*.

² See *Valuing the New Urbanism*, by Mark J. Eppli & Charles C. Tu (ULI, 1999). The report found a 25% price premium for the Harbor Town development.

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residents who “are more knowledgeable and who have traveled and become familiar with that type of look.”

A RANGE OF PRICES

Affluent residents of TNDs are willing to live close to people considerably less well-heeled than themselves, as long as there isn't a gulf in behavior. On one block in Harbor Town, says Bologna, “there's a half-million-dollar house next

to a \$220,000 house next to a \$170,000 house.” There are also plenty of apartments in Harbor Town and in other TNDs, such as Kentlands. Many of the apartments are not intermixed among the owner-occupied houses, despite New Urbanism's theoretical support for income-mixing. But TNDs also commonly offer small apartments above some of the garages, enabling young people with a modest financial status to live amid middle- to upper-income homeowners. The good news, then, is that in

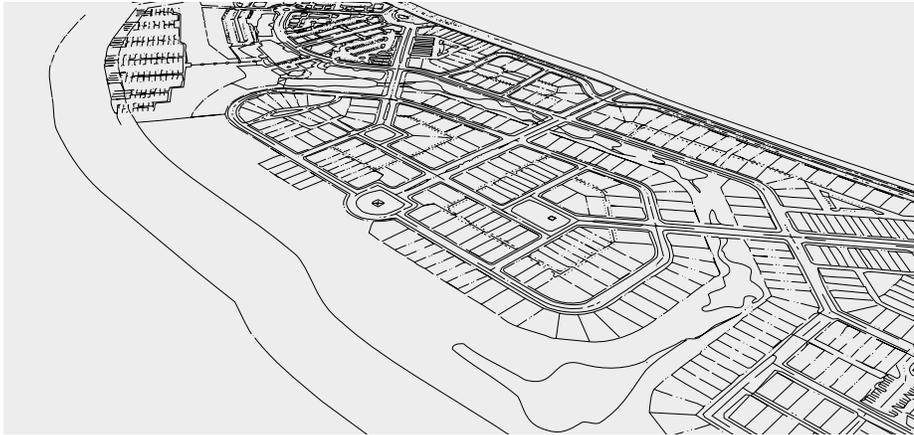
an attractive New Urbanist setting, people tolerate income disparities that would set off alarm bells in a conventional subdivision.

HOW TO MIX USES

Mixed uses — commerce, employment, housing — are a key element in New Urbanism. To make such mixing appealing, New Urbanists say the buildings that house those activities must look as if they go together. Joel Russell, a planning consultant and principal of Woodlea Associates in Northampton, Massachusetts, observes, “Most communities either have no guidelines or standards at all or have very vague standards that refer to things like ‘compatibility,’ ‘attractiveness,’ or ‘avoidance of excessive dissimilarity or similarity.’ These vague standards are unlikely to hold up in court if challenged. Or the regulations might say that all buildings have to be ‘colonial,’ whatever that means. At the other extreme, a handful of communities have excruciatingly detailed guidelines, usually implemented through a historic district commission.”

A better solution, Russell believes, is the kind of design standards his firm drew up in 1996 for the Village of Skaneateles, New York. Offices, stores, restaurants, and living quarters are allowed to be mixed together in the downtown of that old Finger Lakes community, but all are expected to conform to the height, proportions, and other characteristics of the century-old buildings in that downtown.

The standards do not prescribe a particular architectural style. Instead they identify elements that tie the downtown buildings into a cohesive ensemble and form a setting attractive to pedestrians. The standards specify, for instance, that a free-standing building's windows should cover no less than 12 percent and no more than 35 percent of the primary facade. The standards explain appropriate window proportions, identify window styles that are encouraged or discouraged, and go on to lay out design standards for awnings, sidewalks, curb cuts, building placement, and other elements.



Map and aerial view of Harbor Town in Memphis, Tennessee.



JIM HILLIARD ARIAL SURVEYS



JEFFREY JACOBS



LOONEY RICKS KIDS

Row houses, single family homes, and small parks are all part of the mix in Harbor Town.

Overall Character

Note: The illustrations below depict appropriate and inappropriate elevation designs based upon similar floor plans.

Appropriate Rear Loaded Facade Design YES	Inappropriate Rear Loaded Facade Design NO
<p>Pre-fabricated termination enclosed by a decorative chimney cap.</p> <p>Narrow width, appropriately detailed tall chimney of similar finish material as main house.</p> <p>Properly detailed copper or painted flashing does not draw attention to itself.</p> <p>Classically scaled, proportioned and detailed front entry porch.</p> <p>Tall ceilings and framing plan heights produce desired vertical scale and proportion.</p> <p>Finish floor, 18 in. absolute minimum above grade at front building line (24 in. preferred).</p> <p>7 ft tall entry door and 2 ft. tall continuous base detailing.</p> <p>Roof pitch complements building mass below.</p> <p>Appropriately scaled and detailed cornice.</p> <p>Window fenestration maintains a "classical" rhythm and proportion.</p> <p>Tall windows and transoms at high head heights with shutters sized to match window openings.</p>	<p>Overly steep roof with dormers house form below.</p> <p>Varying roof forms and pitches.</p> <p>Short, inappropriate scale and inadequately detailed chimney.</p> <p>Visually offensive and improperly detailed, waste applied aluminum or unpainted galvanized flashing.</p> <p>Front entry design (columns, cornice and roof) is out of scale and appears more like a side entry than a front entrance.</p> <p>Decorative brick work or iron done to draw attention to one particular area is inappropriate.</p> <p>Cornice and side details are inappropriate.</p> <p>Short, inappropriate scale and inadequately detailed chimney.</p> <p>Low ceilings and "typical" framing plan heights will not provide the required vertical scale and proportion.</p> <p>Short front door with "Victorian" styling.</p> <p>Finish floor is less than 18 in. above grade. Note: The house is lacking of any "base" detailing and</p> <p>Limited amount of windows.</p> <p>Scale: Basic style, scale.</p>

Architectural Elements

Appropriate Doors / Entryways YES	Inappropriate NO
<p>8 foot tall door, tall transoms, appropriate casing and head line.</p> <p>Decorative entry with 4 and 6 foot transoms and properly sized transoms with appropriate entry surround.</p> <p>8 foot tall door, with appropriate entry surround.</p>	<p>Substandard door with inappropriate surround.</p>
<p>Appropriately scaled window size.</p> <p>High sills create an on-beyond look should be avoided.</p> <p>Vertical window proportion with a side entry of 4 wide to 2 high.</p> <p>Consider casement windows to heights below 4 feet.</p> <p>Properly sized shutters.</p> <p>6 ft tall or taller window is desired for the first floor level.</p> <p>Transom height matches height of the below.</p>	<p>Inappropriate height.</p>

Above and left: Portions of the design guidelines prepared by Looney Ricks Kiss Architects for the Harbor Town community in Memphis

The design standards have been adopted as an integral part of the village's zoning. They are implemented through the village's existing permitting processes, including the historic landmarks commission, which Russell says is often the most appropriate body to administer design standards. Although Russell says this system avoids "the architectural straitjacket" found in some municipalities' more detailed regulations," Ottawa consultant Chris Bradshaw favors a still simpler approach — one identifying the proper scale of the buildings and their relationship to the street, but not dictating many details. Especially important are window proportions and build-to regulations, Bradshaw says. "After a little bit is built to those rules, the idea will perpetuate itself voluntarily," he maintains. To make design rules easily understandable by builders, developers, and ordinary citizens, often the rules are summarized in charts.

The assumption is that if different uses are housed in buildings that fit seamlessly into the built fabric of the

community, the mixing stands a much better chance of being accepted by the community's residents. **REP-10** Uses that generate excessive noise, odor, or traffic still must be excluded from areas where they would offend the neighbors. And maximum sizes for nonresidential uses may have to be specified; a small carpenter's workshop may fit into the community fabric, Russell notes, whereas a large furniture factory would not. On balance, then, New Urbanism represents an important shift in planning — a loosening of local regulation of uses, combined with tightening regulation of the buildings' massing, materials, and placement.

THE BIGGER THE BETTER?

New Urbanist projects in new suburban areas often need to cover 100 acres or more so that they can create a substantial pedestrian-oriented network — one with enough households to support a commercial center. TNDs have been built much smaller. Some governments authorize development of hamlets surrounded by preserved rural land — thus preserving some development rights for property owners even while avoiding a carpet of suburbanization. Some residential TNDs of a few acres have been developed in suburban areas, surrounded by conventional cul-de-sac subdivisions. Neither a hamlet nor a small suburban TND can achieve the broadest New Urbanist goals. A certain "critical mass" is required before a neighborhood

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Above left: Homes in DuPont's old village / Above right: Homes in Northwest Landing development
 Below left: Alley in DuPont's old village / Below right: Alley in Northwest Landing development.



ALL PHOTOS: W. SENVILLE

Editor's Note:

Earlier this year I was able to visit a "New Urbanist" development in the City of DuPont, located midway between Tacoma and Olympia, Washington. Northwest Landing, developed by the Weyerhaeuser Real Estate Company, stresses New Urbanism principles in its layout and design: a strong pedestrian orientation; stores and employment within walking distance of homes; a mix of housing types; interconnected streets with shade trees and sidewalks; reduced front yard setbacks; and side-entry garages or garages placed on alleys running behind the homes. Northwest Landing will eventually house 10,000 people and provide employment for 8,600

(largely through a new Intel facility).

The City of DuPont itself was originally built as a company town (not surprisingly, by the E.I du Pont Company) in 1906. While du Pont's manufacturing operations ended in 1976, the original houses remain occupied, and are part of a historic village district. Interestingly, the much larger Northwest Landing development is following many of the same principles that guided the 1906 layout — though with some notable improvements.

More information about the Northwest Landing development is available on the Web at: www.nwlanding.com

—Wayne M. Senville



Resources

The Congress for New Urbanism, an international organization founded in 1993, promotes traditional community planning through conferences, literature, and other means. Write CNU, 5 Third St., Suite 500A, San Francisco, CA 94103. Phone (415) 495-2255; fax (415) 495-1731; e-mail cnuinfo@cnu.org.

New Urban News, an independent newsletter "covering traditional town planning and development," is produced six times a year (subscriptions \$79) by publisher Robert Steuteville. P.O. Box 6515, Ithaca, N.Y. 14851; phone (607) 275-3087; fax (607) 272-2685; e-mail: NewUrban@aol.com. Planning commissioners may be especially interested in the Nov.-Dec. 1998 issue, which featured an analysis of 39 municipal and county ordinances that promote New Urbanism.

New Development, Traditional Patterns

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can support institutions such as a convenience store, a dry cleaner's shop, and a cafe or restaurant.

In a community where the surrounding streets are already well-connected — as is the case in many pre-World War II suburbs, cities, and small towns — a TND doesn't have to be big to make a worthwhile contribution. One example is the Arts Center District in New Haven, where 19th- and early 20th-century buildings containing stores, offices, art, and entertainment have been augmented by new buildings. A master plan by Herbert S. Newman and Partners laid out the new buildings with storefronts along the sidewalks and with apartments above. To supply apartment-dwellers with outdoor space sheltered from the streets, the housing wraps around courtyards — a proven technique for making urban housing more pleasant.



Audubon Street in New Haven.

Planning is needed at a large scale, usually regionally, if New Urbanism's emphasis on mass transit is to be realized. Transit-oriented developments are being built in metropolitan Portland, Oregon, and elsewhere. Along metro Portland's Westside light-rail line, new mixed-use centers with densities well above the suburban norm are coming into being. For example, the 190-acre Orenco Station project in Hillsboro, Oregon, includes houses on lots as small as 3,700 square feet, some within easy walking distance of the station. A quarter-mile from the station, a "town center" containing stores and offices has been planned — close to apartments, townhouses, and small single-family dwellings. "Big picture" planning like

this is needed if the prevailing patterns of suburban development are to be altered

Planning commissioners should be wary of thinking that New Urbanist ideas will be widely used if they are presented just as an option. Gaithersburg, Maryland, well-known for the Kentlands development whose planning began in 1988, offers a Traditional Neighborhood Development option which a developer can use in any zone. But only one developer has used it — for a 343-acre project known as Lakelands, adjacent to Kentlands. Otherwise, the option is ignored. If you really want compact, walkable, mixed-use development, you have to do more than just allow it. Fort Collins, Colorado, is one of a number of municipalities that actually mandates elements of Traditional Neighborhood Development throughout its boundaries.  *Fort Collins' Four Essentials*, p. 15

Governmental policies making TND a “by right” form of development — not subject to hearings or procedures that put obstacles in the way — would help more New Urbanist communities to come into existence. By-right development would reduce uncertainty and delays, making it easier for builders and developers to create TNDs.

A community needs an overall strategy on how to grow. The zoning and subdivision regulations must reflect that strategy. **REP-11** Local institutions such as the school system also need to be brought into the discussions. “A new school in an outlying location can invite a new wave of sprawl,” Russell observes. Currently, the site-selection criteria for schools require so much acreage that in some states, high schools are almost impossible to integrate into a neighborhood, according to John Torti, of Torti & Gallas & Partners architects and planners in Silver Spring, Maryland.

A word of caution: Some proposals merely masquerade as Traditional Neighborhood Development. If a developer proposes houses on big lots, far back from the street, and claims they’ll be “traditional” or “New Urbanist” because they will have porches or a particular style, don’t believe it. If a strip-shopping

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REP-1 American Zoning & the Physical Isolation of Uses, by *Laurence C. Gerckens*. A look at why zoning ordinances came to segregate residential, commercial, and industrial zones. (PCJ #15)

REP-2 Our Vanishing “Third Places”, by *Ray Oldenburg*. An exploration of why informal neighborhood gathering places are so important to the health of our communities. (PCJ #25)

REP-3 Creating Vital Communities: Planning for Our Aging Society, by *Deborah Howe*. With an aging population, there’s a growing need for a more adaptable built environment. (PCJ #7)

REP-4 What Every Planning Commissioner Should Know About Demographics, by *Judith Waldrop*. How the changing composition of households will reshape housing demand and land use needs. (PCJ #17)

REP-5 Center-ing Our Suburbs, by *Richard Untermann*. Existing underutilized shopping areas can be converted

into centers that provide a mix of commercial, office, and residential uses. (PCJ #22)

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REP-8 The Residential Street, by *Greg Dale & Jennifer Sharn*. A look at the influence of the land use development pattern on residential streets. (PCJ #22)

REP-9 Traffic Calming Basics, by *Richard Untermann*. An introduction to traffic calming, with examples of several techniques for reducing traffic speed and improving the pedestrian environment (PCJ #26)

REP-10 A Mix of Housing, by *David Brussat*. Some thoughts on how multi-family and single-family housing can co-exist in the same neighborhood. (PCJ #23)

REP-11 Rethinking Conventional Zoning, by *Joel S. Russell*. How more flexible zoning can allow for a mix of uses while preventing adverse impacts. (PCJ #15)

center with parking in front is proposed and is described as “a neighborhood center” because it will have a cupola on its roof or a tower at the corner, ask the zoning board to reject it. Tacking a picturesque element or two onto a disconnected, single-use, automobile-scale development does not transform a sprawl into a walkable, human-scale place.

The message, then: revise your master plan to encourage New Urbanism, and encourage local legislative bodies to adopt zoning ordinances that will implement the master plan. The task of creating genuinely convenient and sociable communities will demand continual

effort. But the results are beginning to become visible around the country.

It wasn’t long ago that New Urbanism was seen by many as almost a radical idea. Now it’s solidly in the mainstream. Which is where it belongs. ♦

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