# REGIONAL POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

## MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

WEDNESDAY, MAY 13, 1992
METRO COUNCIL CHAMBERS
5:00 PM - 6:30 PM

## AGENDA:

I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF MEETING OF 4/8/92 (ATTACHED)

II. REGION 2040 UPDATE:
-- CONFERENCE
-- SURVEY
-- STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS
-- PARTICIPATION "KITS"
-- PUBLIC WORKSHOPS

III. REGION 2040 LOCAL GOVERNMENT "KIT" (TERRY MOORE FROM ECO NORTHWEST WILL LEAD RPAC THROUGH A PLANNING EXERCISE TO PROVIDE INPUT TO PHASE I OF REGION 2040)

IV. OTHER:
-- DLCD URBAN GROWTH MANAGEMENT PROJECT
-- LCDC URBAN RESERVES RULE
-- METRO URBAN RESERVES PROJECT

PLEASE LET US KNOW IF YOU CANNOT MAKE IT. ALL PARKING SPACES ARE AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC AT 5 PM. THANKS!!!

## Regional Policy Advisory Committee

### Minutes
### Meeting of April 8, 1992

**Members and Alternates In Attendance:**

Larry Cole, Darlene Hooley, Dick Benner, Jerry Arnold, Gretchen Kafoury, Alice Schlenker, John Godsey, Sharon Cohen, Jim Zehren, Pauline Anderson, Susan McLain, Bob Liddell

**Others Present:**

Ethan Seltzer, Chris Foster, Larry Bauer, Peter Fry, John Reeves, Gail Ryder, Mark Turpel, Larry Shaw, Peggy Lynch, Brent Curtis

The meeting was called to order at 5:17 pm.

I. Susan McLain asked if there were any additions or corrections to the minutes of the previous meeting, and whether there was a motion for their approval. Larry Cole moved and Darlene Hooley seconded that the minutes be approved as written. The motion passed unanimously.

II. Susan McLain asked if there were any communications from the public. Peter Fry, member of the Multnomah County Planning Commission, asked for and was granted time to speak to the urban reserves issue. Mr. Fry lives in the country and opposes the proposed urban reserves rule. He stated that he believes in the UGB and thinks that it shouldn't be moved if it is going to work. He stated that moving the UGB would damage the real estate market and would put NE Portland at risk. He stated that the UGB provides a framework to equalize the market and the proposed urban reserves rule would tamper with that. He is also concerned about Metro's proposed urban reserves study and what he perceives to be a bias towards believing that living in the country costs the public. He believes that it is just the opposite. Finally, he is concerned that science is being submerged. He stated that an LCDC study has found that small farms are highly productive, and that those findings needed to be incorporated in policy discussions. He reminded RPAC that Multnomah County is not just urban.

III. Ethan Seltzer then provided an update on Region 2040 activities. The conference is attracting a lot of interest, with over 300 already signed up. The governor will be speaking at noon. Fifteen out of 60 stakeholder interviews have been completed. The telephone survey is done. The "kits" for securing input from elected bodies and other groups are almost done and RPAC will have its chance to provide its input to Phase I of 2040 through the "kit" exercise at its next meeting.

Alice Schlenker commented that in recent polling for the Lake Oswego planning levy, the City determined that the term "growth management" was a real negative.

IV. Ethan Seltzer then introduced the Metro proposed forecasting process. He explained that Metro was now starting the process that would lead to population and employment projections to 2015 and 2040. He noted that these projections were integral not only to Region 2040 but to Metro's conclusions about the adequacy of the urban land supply. Dick Bolen then explained the forecasting process, and he and Doug Anderson explained the way in which Metro's forecasting and modelling program was proposed to be changed. Two features of the forecasting process were of particular importance to RPAC:

1) Both RPAC and RTAC are proposed to have specific roles in the process, advising the Metro Council on the adequacy of the urban land supply. This is a major change, since the land use supply portion of the growth allocation process was previously not treated as a policy issue on this level.

2) The forecasts and growth allocation, when adopted by the Metro Council, will be important policy decisions that will affect all aspects of regional planning, including urban reserves, urban infill, Region 2040, and the RTP.

Doug Anderson stated that the process is currently open for discussion and urged RPAC members to let him know if they had comments. Ethan Seltzer then explained the urban reserves study methodology. He noted that the process would look at all land outside of and adjacent to the UGB. He stated that more information on the pilot for the methodology would be available at the next meeting.

V. Ethan Seltzer quickly described the state of LCDC's proposed urban reserves rule, and reminded RPAC members that LCDC would conclude its work on the rule at the April 17 meeting in Beaverton.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:30 pm. Respectfully submitted by Ethan Seltzer.

# REGION 2040 TRI-COUNTY SURVEY SUMMARY
# APRIL, 1992

During the week of April 6, 1992, Decision Sciences, Inc. administered a random sample telephone survey of 405 tri-county residents in order to assess values, beliefs, and opinions related to the future of the Portland metropolitan area. The questionnaire consisted of 28 questions and made extensive use of open-ended questions to provide for in-depth qualitative information. Quality control measures that were taken to assure a valid study included random digit dialing, questionnaire pretesting, callbacks, and formal content-analysis of responses to open-ended questions.

When asked what the respondent liked most about where they lived, important are convenience (mostly in terms of transportation to and from one's neighborhood), closeness to downtown, not being crowded, a small town feel, the people, quiet, good neighbors, natural beauty, and low or no crime stood above the other reasons.

When asked what they disliked about their neighborhood, traffic congestion, crime, the people, and that nothing was to dislike stand out.

Respondents were asked to identify communities or neighborhoods in which they would find it appealing to live, and responses are too diverse to easily classify. However, when asked what about their choice made it appealing, mentioned most often is a country or rural feel and nice, well maintained houses and yards.

Related to appealing places in which to work, again locations are difficult to classify, but most mentioned reasons why they would be appealing include accessibility and convenience, being close to home, and easy transportation.

Related to appealing places in which to shop, two-thirds mention malls or downtown locations. In terms of why they found their choice appealing, standouts include having a wide selection, variety, or diversity, everything being compact or close by, shopping being near home, and to some extent, easy transportation.

Six out of ten respondents see the quality of life in the next 20 years in the metropolitan area as getting worse, 20% see it as getting better, 17% see it as staying about the same, and 3% were unsure. Reasons for a deteriorating quality of life include a perception of things growing too fast, of an increase in crime and a decrease in public safety, and of an increase in traffic congestion. Reasons for it getting better include an increased emphasis on and awareness related to the environment, a growing economy, and a belief that things would get better only if land use planning were used.

While all sub-groups fell on the 'worse' side, respondents who live in an area changing from rural to suburban are more likely to rate their future quality of life as getting better, while rural residents are more likely to rate it as getting worse. Frequent users of mass transit are more likely to choose better, while non-users are more likely to choose worse.

A series of six questions were presented in a tradeoff format, using a 7-point rating scale where 1-3 indicated strength of favor for one tradeoff, 4 meaning both tradeoffs were equally attractive (or unattractive), and 5-7 indicating strength of favor for the other tradeoff. Following are the results for the questions that revealed clear preferences.

The question trading off growth primarily in developed areas versus growth in undeveloped areas was presented, and the indications are that growth in primarily developed areas was preferred.

The next question offered the tradeoff of investment in roads for cars versus investment in mass transit, and there is strong preference on the mass transit side. For all scenarios, this one had the most clear results. In addition, mass transit users are more likely to choose investment in mass transit, as are households with no children living in them and females.

For the question trading off living and working in the same area versus living separate from, then commuting to work, results are not clear, but it appears that there was a tendency of polarization, where either end of the scale (1 or 7) was chosen most and equally as often, but since 2 was chosen more often than 6, there is the tendency for living and working in the same area to be slightly favored.

The final question presented the tradeoff of a public policy being needed to encourage affordable housing through the use of smaller homes, smaller land parcels, multiple unit housing, and other cost reducing design options, versus the belief that the market will take care of itself under consumer demand, and that public policy is not needed. Results indicate some preference for such a policy, not strongly, but enough to support it.

In sum, for the six questions, we find strong support for mass transit, considerable support for growth in developed areas only, a little support for living and working in the same areas, some support for a public policy for affordable housing, and no clear preference for either mixed use (residential and commercial) centers versus residential and commercial separation or for suburban-like growth versus downtown-like growth.

A more detailed report, including demographic and geographic subgroup variations, will be available following the Metro Growth Conference.

# SUMMARY OF REGION 2040 STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

As part of the public involvement process for the Region 2040 project, 60 stakeholder interviews will be conducted. The following is a summary of the first 25 interviews conducted.

Regional stakeholders most like the area's liveability, particularly the convenient access to employment, shopping, and a wide variety of recreational activities. Open space/greenspaces, a good educational system, a healthy economy and the diversity of the region's population are also frequently identified as important regional attributes.

Increasing traffic congestion is the most disliked aspect of living in the region. There is a concern about the loss of farmland and the identity of established neighborhoods from increased growth. Other negative factors frequently cited include the tax structure (and associated unstable school funding), crime, the long-term effects of growth on the region's livability, and a lack of affordable housing.

There is almost universal agreement that the transportation system will improve,primarily due to a commitment to the expansion of mass transit. The region's open space and parks system is also expected to improve, due to changing attitudes about the value of the natural environment and an attendant public willingness to finance improvements. The economy will improve as it diversifies and the educational system will improve as better means of school financing are developed.

There is less agreement on what aspects of the region will remain the same over the next 20 years. People will continue to want to use their private autos, resulting in an ongoing need to expand the transportation system. An undiminished environmental ethic will exhibit itself in continuing efforts to protect the region's livability.

Ironically, there is also strong agreement that traffic congestion will increase with increasing population growth, especially in the short term. There is also general agreement that the public sector will be unable to provide adequate services to keep up with projected growth in the region, primarily because of the public's unwillingness to finance needed services. The educational system is also expected to be in worse shape, due both to a lack of investment in higher education and a lack of vision/leadership to address the system's problems. The area's environment, particularly its air quality and water quality/quantity, will deteriorate due primarily to population pressures.

The majority of stakeholders believe that growth should be focused in existing areas versus undeveloped areas, because there is adequate land available within urban growth boundaries to accommodate projected growth and undeveloped areas need to be preserved as open space and for long-term growth needs. Others believe that, while it is advantageous to try to concentrate growth, there will always be a market demand to expand into new, undeveloped areas.

The majority of stakeholders believe that future transportation system improvements must address both cars and mass transit, given that private auto use will not decrease significantly overnight. There is a need to make mass transit work for the middle class, to make driving more expensive through demand management pricing and other disincentives, to focus transit money on light rail, and to incorporate the needs of pedestrians and bicyclists in transit/road planning.

Stakeholders are split on the question of suburban-type growth versus a few downtown-type centers. Those favoring the former are concerned that concentrating densities creates "downtown problems" and that most people still prefer a suburban lifestyle. Those supporting more densely developed centers believe that "it is more efficient to grow up than out" and that such centers will reduce traffic congestion, promote mass transit, and better preserve the remaining open space in the region.

Stakeholders are evenly divided on the question of living and working in the same areas versus living separately from work. Living/working in the same area is felt to improve air quality, increase the efficiency of mass transit, decrease auto use, reduce the cost of public services, and respond to changes in workstyles (telecommuting). Conversely, living separately from work should be a matter of personal choice, as many people still desire to live in single-family dwellings.

There is a strong preference for mixed use centers versus residential-shopping separation because such centers "make better use of the land", reduce public service costs and decrease traffic congestion.

There is a clear split on whether public intervention versus a free marketplace is needed to ensure the affordability of future housing. Those favoring public policy believe that the market either responds too slowly or is unwilling to respond to affordable housing needs. Others believe that the market adequately responds to all types of housing needs.

Policy choices that should be considered as part of the Region 2040 effort include environmental factors (air quality, water quality and quantity, greenspaces, energy needs/sources), the capacity of the region to absorb growth, the future of agriculture and government structure.

**METRO**

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# *Memorandum*

DATE: April 29, 1992

TO: RPAC

FROM: Jim Gardner, RPAC Chair

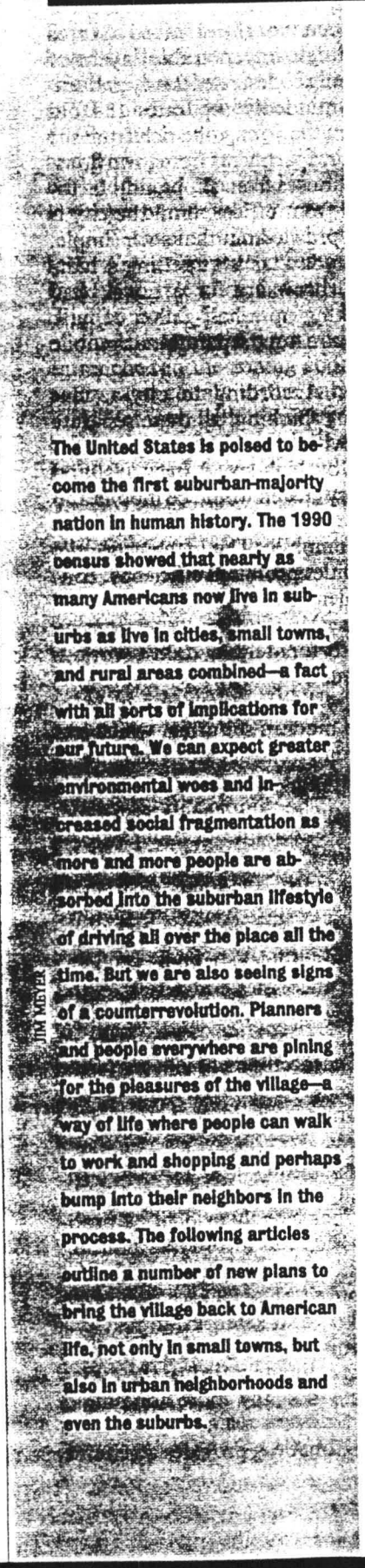
SUBJECT: Reading Materials

Attached are a couple of articles that I found interesting. I hope you enjoy them! See you on May 13.

ROBERT GERLOFF • SPECIAL TO UTNE READER

# Rediscovering the village

*Small-town comforts are now the cutting edge of urban planning*



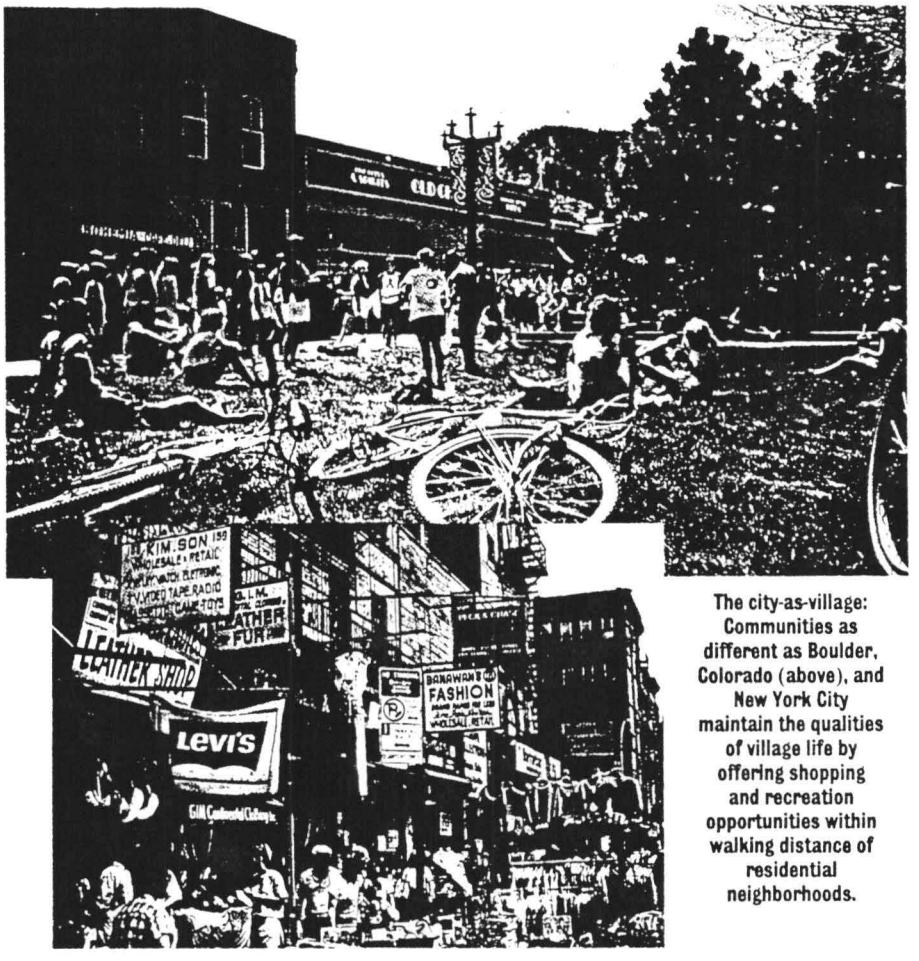



FALUDI, NADER, CHARREN PHOTOS: AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

JIM MEYER

Today on my walk home from work I dropped in at Dave's Dinkytown Hairstylists for a haircut. Dave's 8-year-old son, his 15-year-old daughter, and her boyfriend were hanging out in the shop after school. While Mona was snipping away at my hair, Fred, a Dinkytown institution, came in for his monthly trim. He told us all about his new great-grandson while Dave trimmed his hair ("short on the top, just trim the sides . . ."). Afterward I popped into Biermaier's Books to see if Bill had a used paperback of *Main Street* (he did) and stopped in at Ralph & Jerry's Grocery to pick up a half-gallon of 2% and to flirt with the new checkout woman (she has a boyfriend).


To me, this relaxing, 20-minute stroll home from work seems only natural—and far more convenient than battling traffic on the freeway. But to those who are thinking about the future of our cities, my 20-minute walk is along the cutting edge of contemporary urban planning, and the Dinkytown/Holmes neighborhood of Minneapolis, where I live, work, eat, shop, and play, is the very definition of an "urban village." It is the village, that most ancient of human settlements, that is stirring people's imaginations today,




The city-as-village: Communities as different as Boulder, Colorado (above), and New York City maintain the qualities of village life by offering shopping and recreation opportunities within walking distance of residential neighborhoods.

COURTESY BOULDER CONVENTION AND VISITOR BUREAU

©RICHARD B. LEVINE

reinforcing the Swiss architect Luigi Snozzi's belief that "nothing needs to be invented; everything needs to be rediscovered."

The qualities that are being rediscovered in the village are simple: A village is a compact gathering of houses, apartment buildings, corner groceries, Main Street shops and offices. A village is inhabited by people of diverse age groups and income levels. And a village is friendly to pedestrians, a place where you can easily walk to work or to the grocery rather than driving a money-hungry, resource-hogging, smog-pumping automobile.

**It is the village that is stirring the imagination of urban planners.**

The qualities of the village can be encapsulated in a simple model for urban planning: the city as a collection of villages. In recent decades, this idea has been discarded, and replaced with the modernist model of the city as machine. While the village blends houses with shops, the old with the young, and the rich with the poor, the notion of the city as machine, which is now rigidly enforced in the United States through impenetrable layers of zoning codes, relentlessly and single-mindedly separates the old from the young, the rich from the poor, apartments from town houses, houses from shops, and factories from offices, until the city is so sprawled out that such simple, everyday tasks as getting a haircut, browsing for a novel, and picking up a half-gallon of milk require three separate automobile trips.

According to city-as-machine thinking, all these separate activities would be easily accessible by high-speed freeways, and every citizen would be mobile and independent in his or her private automobile. The machine model of cities promised efficiency, convenience, and the tidy clarity of everything having its own place. Unfortunately, it didn't work—as our downtowns, which are generally lifeless after five o'clock, and modern suburbia, which has become a classic case of there being no there there, can attest.

The simple city-as-village idea may have the power to reshape our soulless cities and suburbs over the coming decades, for this model has gained adherents all across the ideological spectrum, from the '60s activist roots of California planner Peter Calthorpe to the Ivy League style of Miami architects Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk; from the Marxist urban theorist Leon Krier to the future king of England, Prince Charles (who hired Krier to design his new showcase village of Poundbury in Dorset); from the golf-cart retirement villages of the Sunbelt to the Birkenstock-style Village Homes development in Davis, California.

Clearly the city as village functions more smoothly as urban design than the city as machine—this is becoming increasingly evident as problems with pollution, traffic, and affordable housing mount. But the strongest appeal of the village model is its tug on human emotions: The village promises a life that is simpler, slower, and safer; a life where a neighborhood is transformed through social ties into a community; a life more intimately tied to the cycles of nature; a life that seems somehow more honest and genuine.

At its best this emotional tug provides a genuine

historical continuity that taps into the spirit of such beloved communities as Aspen, Carmel, Taos, and Bayfield, Wisconsin—tourist villages that are now being loved to death. At its worst this emotional tug is the mindless nostalgia that Christopher Lasch denounces as "the abdication of memory," a nostalgia that many developers are now exploiting with white picket fences and front porch railings lifted from traditional neighborhoods and deposited in otherwise ordinary sprawling suburban developments.

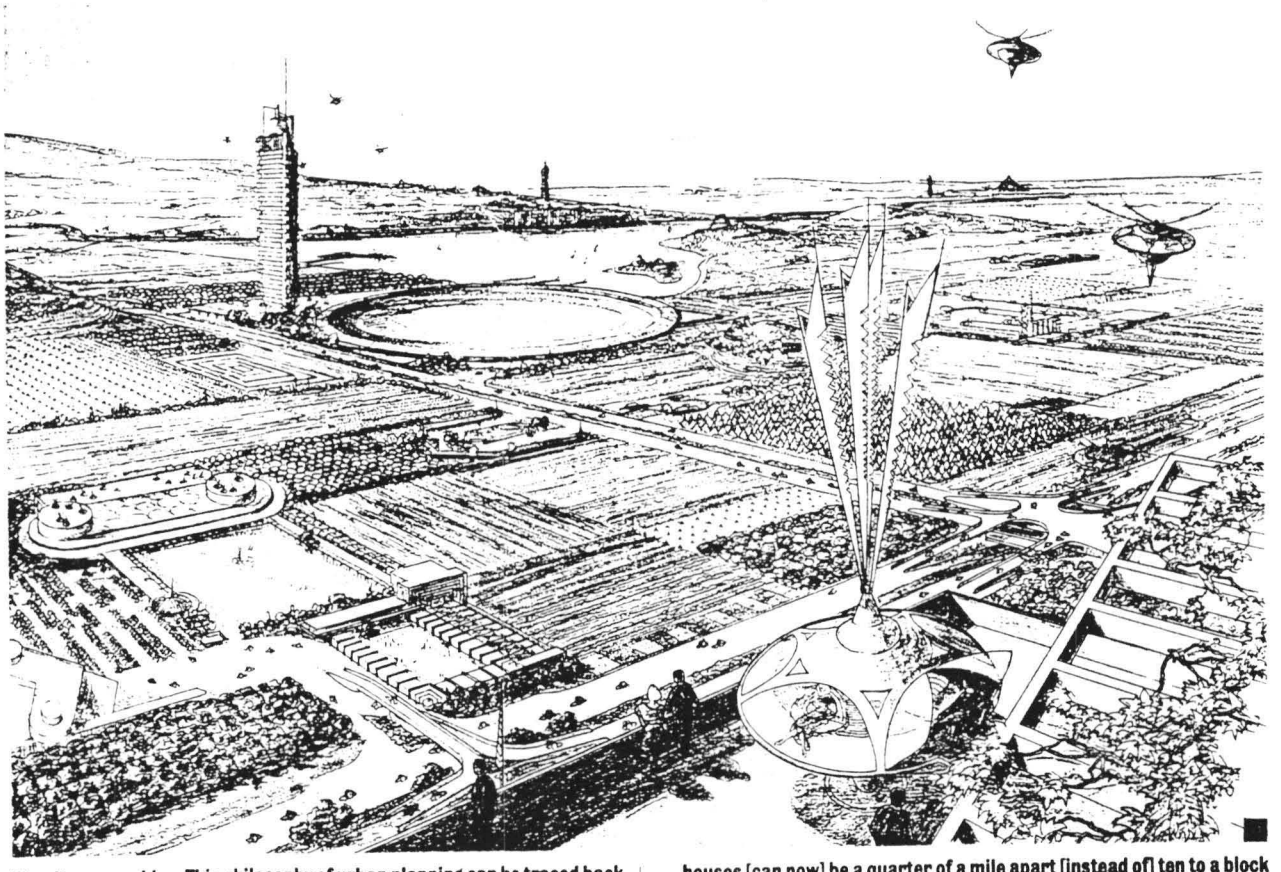
Reshaping the world, of course, is not a simple task. Any attempt to create a new village, or even to build a simple corner store in an existing residential neighborhood, faces a major battle, for the principles of the modernist city-as-machine model are deeply entrenched in the zoning codes of every city, municipality, and county in the nation.

Yet even within this legal superstructure of zoning codes the marketplace is rediscovering the village in unexpected ways: A new SuperAmerica outlet in Burnsville, a suburb that grew up around a freeway exit 15 miles south of my home in inner-city Minneapolis, functions as a grocery store (milk, nachos, sandwich meat), a bakery (bread, cookies, muffins), a service station (gasoline, wiper blades, oil), a bank (automatic teller machines), a hardware store (light bulbs, screwdrivers, snow shovels), a video store (Julia Rob-

**The village promises a life that is simpler, slower, safer.**

erts, Sylvester Stallone, and Woody Allen), a newsstand (newspapers, magazines, paperback novels), a café (sit-down dining on microwave foods), a post office (stamps, a fax machine, a Federal Express drop box) . . . all the commercial institutions of a village Main Street have been compressed into one small convenience store. It's not hard to imagine people bumping into each other here and trading stories about the weather, the traffic, the high school hockey team or maybe even the birth of a great-grandson.

The village was supposed to be dead and buried alongside the covered wagon in our nostalgic memory, but it turned out to be both too practical and too deeply embedded in our imaginations to die.



COURTESY BOULDER CONVENTION AND VISITOR BUREAU

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**The city-as-machine: This philosophy of urban planning can be traced back to Broadacres, Frank Lloyd Wright's suburban interpretation of the American Dream that emphasized individualism over community. "Because we have the automobile," wrote Wright, "we can go far and fast, . . . houses [can now] be a quarter of a mile apart [instead of] ten to a block . . . I have always referred to this as the architecture of democracy: the freedom of the individual becomes the motive." Presumably, Wright's vision did *not* include strip malls, ozone holes, or rush hour gridlock.**

A village, of course, is far more than a simple physical structure. It is a community of diverse individuals and families. Sinclair Lewis skewered the smug, parochial, small-town way of life in his 1920 masterpiece, *Main Street*. Can we revive the village forms without also reviving the social and moral codes that allowed small-town life to function smoothly? Can we re-create village forms and community without the social strictures Lewis satirized? Perhaps Lewis' own life provides us with an answer. When he fled the stifling provincialism of Sauk Centre, Minnesota, for the sophistication of New York in 1907, he found a home in the bohemian enclave of Greenwich Village, a community perhaps as provincial and literally villagelike as the society he left behind—just one with a different set of values.

Journalist James Fallows argues in his book *More Like Us* that it is America's rejection of Old World village life—where society is static, time is cyclical, and the rhythms of life flow from the natural cycles of birth, death, and rebirth—that has made America a world economic power. The American dream is built on values alien to the village, on our willingness to tolerate unpredictable disorder, to follow the job market like nomads, and to reinvent our lives with every generation. This economic prowess has come at a cost measured in escalating levels of traffic, environmental damage, rushing around, rootlessness, and alienation—a cost many people are no longer willing to pay.

On the larger scale, questions about what kind of society we really want are daunting. On the smaller scale, the scale of everyday life, they are simple. If I had driven to a trendy hair salon rather than stopping in at Dave's Dinkytown Hairstylists, I never would have shared Fred's joy at the birth of his great-grandson. And Fred's joy made my life just a little bit richer.

*Robert Gerloff is an associate with Mulfinger, Susanka & Mahady Architects in Minneapolis.*

# Communal living, '90s style

## *Cohousing offers an easy balance between community and privacy*

**NOT ALL THE THINKING ABOUT HOW TO RE**store a sense of community to modern cities focuses on the width of streets and location of grocery stores. The cohousing movement advocates a more communal way of life, which, while not as cozy as the communes of the '60s and '70s, offers a substantial alternative to the isolated single-family home.

Cohousing developments feature individual homes clustered around a large common house with shared facilities such as a dining room, children's playroom, workshop, and laundries. The houses typically have their own kitchens and are self-sufficient but are designed with an emphasis on communal activities in mind. Each cohousing plan is worked out with intense participation by future occupants. There is no single plan for these projects; they are designed for specific and changing needs.

The idea was first developed in Denmark in 1972, and there are now more than 100 cohousing communities there and in the Netherlands. The cohousing approach has been used for condominiums, cooperatives, and non-profit rental housing. There are more than 80 cohousing groups planning communities in the United States, with three completed or nearly completed: a 26-unit community in Davis, California; 12 units in Emeryville, California, and 30 units in Winslow, Washington.

**Home, sweet home: A cohousing community—like this group in Davis, California—participates in the planning of their future home.**

Adherents see a number of advantages to cohousing, among them an easy balance of privacy and community, a safe and supportive environment for children, environmentally sensitive design, and greater personal security. Kathryn McCannant and Charles Durrett, authors of the book *Cohousing* (Ten Speed Press, 1988), point out that "the scale of cohousing communities—15 to 35 dwellings—makes them ideal for urban infill sites or conversions of existing buildings."

*—Sam Smith*
**The Progressive Review**

*Excerpted with permission from* The Progressive Review *(Nov. 1990). Subscriptions: $14/yr. (9 issues) from The Progressive Review, 1737 Connecticut Av. NW, Washington, DC 20009. Back issues: $2 from same address.*

# The second coming of the small town

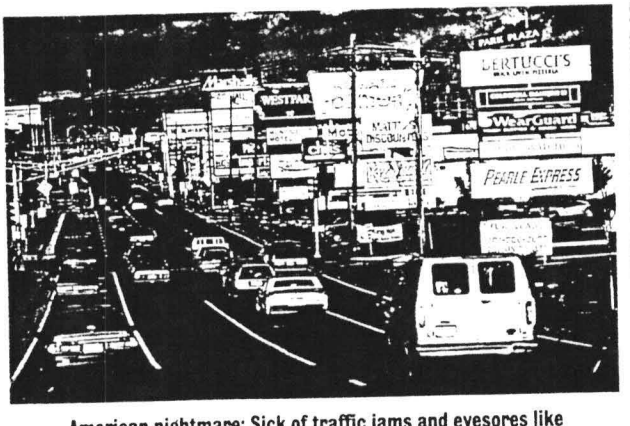
*Fed up with suburban sprawl, Americans want to walk again*

Three years ago, Dade County, Florida, sentenced itself to the absurd fate of perpetual urban adolescence. Responding to a state mandate, the county government adopted a package of "balanced growth" measures, conceding that traffic congestion and growing demands on the public purse for roads and other infrastructure had made it impossible for the city of Miami to grow any further in the old way. Most citizens were pleased.

PELHAM PHOTO

Talk of the town: Visionary planners Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk.

The reaction against growth has become a nationwide phenomenon. This is unprecedented. Never before in American history has growth been so unwelcome. What is responsible for this bizarre antipathy is not growth itself but the particular kind of growth we have in the United States. Suburban sprawl is cancerous growth rather than healthy growth, and it is destroying our civic life.

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American nightmare: Sick of traffic jams and eyesores like Route 9 in suburban Boston, people are saying no to further sprawling development.

Americans are only beginning to understand that this is so. The credit for this change belongs partly to the environmental movement, which has persuaded most Americans of the need to stop ravaging the landscape and polluting the atmosphere with ever more roads and cars.

Suburbanites sense what is wrong with the places they inhabit. The classic suburb is less a community than an agglomeration of houses, shops, and offices connected to one another by cars, not by the fabric of human life. The only public space is the shopping mall, which in reality is only quasi-public, given over almost entirely to commercial ends. The structure of the suburb tends to confine people to their houses and cars.

Is there an alternative? There is, and it is close at hand: the traditional American town. This is not a radical idea—far from it. When the Gallup organization asked Americans in 1989 what kind of place they would like to live in, 34 percent chose a small town. Only 24 percent chose a suburb, 22 percent a farm, and 19 percent a city. One hardly needs an opinion poll to discover the allure of towns. The market reveals it. Americans have shown over and over again that they will pay premium prices to live in the relatively few traditional towns that remain, places such as Marblehead, Massachusetts, Princeton, New Jersey, and Oak Park, Illinois.


All of the elements of the traditional town exist in the modern American suburb. For various historical reasons, though, they have been improperly assembled. There are housing "clusters," office "parks," and shopping "centers." These elements have the makings of a great cuisine, but they have never been properly combined. It is as if we were expected to eat, rather than a completed omelet, first the eggs, then the cheese,

and then the green peppers. The omelet has not been allowed to become the sum of its parts.

The tragedy is that we could have been building towns during the 1970s and '80s. But all of that wonderful growth has been wasted, and it is doubtful that we will ever see anything like it again in our lifetimes. Misguided planning, not rapacious real-estate developers, is chiefly to blame for this gross miscarriage of growth. Left to their own devices, developers would have every incentive to build towns. Traditional towns are less expensive. Because these towns are more compact than sprawl, the cost of land, streets, water and sewer lines, and other infrastructure is lower.

All of our recent suburban development occurred under the dominion of Euclidean zoning—zoning that requires the rigid segregation of housing, commerce, and industry. This approach to zoning is a residue of the industrial revolution, which made it seem desirable

# Tea and community

## *Toronto families revive village life*

**WHEN I FIRST MOVED TO THE BIG CITY OF TORONTO, I USED TO WONDER** how I could ever make connections in this place full of strangers. Not until my children were born did I really begin to feel a sense of kinship—with other women who were lugging their strollers down the subway steps or wiping their children's sticky faces at the supermarket, and with older women who looked at my babies and told me about their grandchildren. Sifting through the layers of big-city hustle and bustle, I slowly unearthed a hidden village.

Alison Stallibrass' book *The Self-Respecting Child* (Addison-Wesley, 1989) provides a kind of blueprint for finding the comforts of a village within modern society. She describes her work at the Pioneer Health Centre in England, which offered an open gym every day where children could come and play freely, and adults could have tea together and enjoy one another's company. The center became a social and spiritual focus for 700 member families: a small village inside a big city. Stallibrass' descriptions helped me imagine what could be done.

**A municipal recreation center comes alive every Thursday as families gather to play, gossip, and eat.**

COURTESY JUTTA MASON

A few friends and I approached the director of one of Toronto's municipal recreation centers, and we asked him if we could use the gym for four hours every Thursday, as an indoor park. And could we make tea if we brought our own teapot? He suggested a program of structured activities, which we firmly rejected. But he let us use the place nonetheless.

Laden like camels, my friends and I arrived at the recreation center every Thursday with toys and babies and bags of sandwiches. We borrowed a boom box and put on Vivaldi. We dragged out the balance beam and mats from the equipment room. We danced with the children. We played with them on the mats. And we sat at a long table near the kitchen, talking and watching the little ones run in their shorts and bare feet, kicking balls around.

Gradually, friends told other friends. More people came, and we added another table. We asked for—and got—longer hours, since no one used the gym in the daytime. By the second year, we had even more people. Someone volunteered to cook and sell good food. The staff let us use the center's dishes and pots; the cook wrote up a menu, with prices; and we played "restaurant," serving each other from behind the counter. When 70 people showed up, I stopped counting. But still we had to bring out more benches.

Some of the newcomers were older children who did not attend school. They played ball hockey on one side of the gym while the little ones, delighted and impressed, toddled in and out of the fast-moving game. The older children played as if they had eyes in their backs, for they mysteriously avoided falling over any of the babies while charging up and down the gym.

This indoor park has been going for six years now. We have had dance classes, gingerbread housemakings, cheap-clothing sales, plays, musical jam sessions, and fairs. We have gained the use of the woodworking shop, the swimming pool, and the skating rink. Some people stopped coming and then returned again, perhaps with a new baby, or just stopping by on a visit to see their friends.

Many Thursdays, the gym seems to be a magical place. The conversations at the tables are engrossing; good food smells surround us. The children move around the floor at their many different games. The adults, as they gather around the tables, work on major life decisions: Shall I leave my husband? Can I handle the job I've been offered? Should we move to the country? Will my kids be happy in a French program? Much of

to move people's homes away from the dark satanic mills. Such distancing is no longer necessary, of course, since most contemporary office parks and electronics plants make extraordinarily benign neighbors.

There are people alive today who have never even laid eyes on the alternative to suburbia—people, in other words, who have never seen a real town. Authentic urban experience has become such a rarity that many places have become tourist attractions simply by virtue of being real towns. Visitors drive hundreds of miles to spend a weekend in places like Sonoma, California, just for the sake of experiencing the pleasures of small-town living.

This also explains the success of Disneyland and Disney World. Visitors do not spend as much time on the rides as they do wandering along Main Street, USA, and through the international villages of Epcot, getting the civic kicks that they cannot get at home.

One of the great mysteries of the American suburb is this: How, with such low-density development, have we produced such extraordinarily high traffic? How have we achieved the traffic of a metropolis and the culture of a cow town? That, too, has been accomplished by the miraculous tool of postwar urban planning: the collector street, festooned with its variety of pods—shopping centers, office parks, schools, and residential areas—each with an independent connection to the collector. This arrangement guarantees that nobody can go to lunch, go shopping, or get to work or school without driving. In Orlando, Florida, it has been estimated that each single-family house generates an average of 13 car trips a day and thus vast amounts of pollution.

Building more highways to reduce traffic congestion is an exercise in futility. Whenever it is done, more people take to their cars, and before long the roads are as clogged as ever. We cannot continue to spend as extravagantly on roads as we did during the postwar decades of affluence. We must revert to planning approaches from the days when America was a poorer but smarter nation. The only permanent solution to the traffic problem is to bring housing, shopping, and workplaces within walking distance.

Reducing dependence on the auto would also help solve the problem of affordable housing. At the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, architects are going to great lengths to fnd ways to make housing cheaper, developing prefabricated components, spacing wall studs further apart, and using rubber hoses for plumbing. In the end, all of these efforts do not add up to very much—perhaps a $10,000 or $20,000 savings. Nothing can be done for housing costs that rivals making it possible for a family to get by with one less car. The second or third car, so necessary in today's suburb, costs about $5,000 *annually* to operate. That is a highly leveraged sum, large enough to supply the payments on a $54,000 mortgage at 10 percent.

**To reduce traffic, shopping, work, and housing must be within walking distance.**

The tyranny of the auto reaches into every corner of American life. The auto's worst victims, however,

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what goes on around the tables is fine, old-fashioned gossip—the powerful stories women and men have been telling one another since perhaps the beginning of time, all the while weaving the fabric of a shared community life.

Over the course of these six years of storytelling, eating together, and playing, the outlines of the village I was looking for emerged more clearly than I had anticipated. And I've learned a great deal about what it means personally to belong to a village:

*Village life means exposure.* It means being with others long enough to see them falter and fail and delude themselves, and it also means that I see my own foolishness reflected in the eyes of my neighbors. The luxury of urban anonymity is lost.

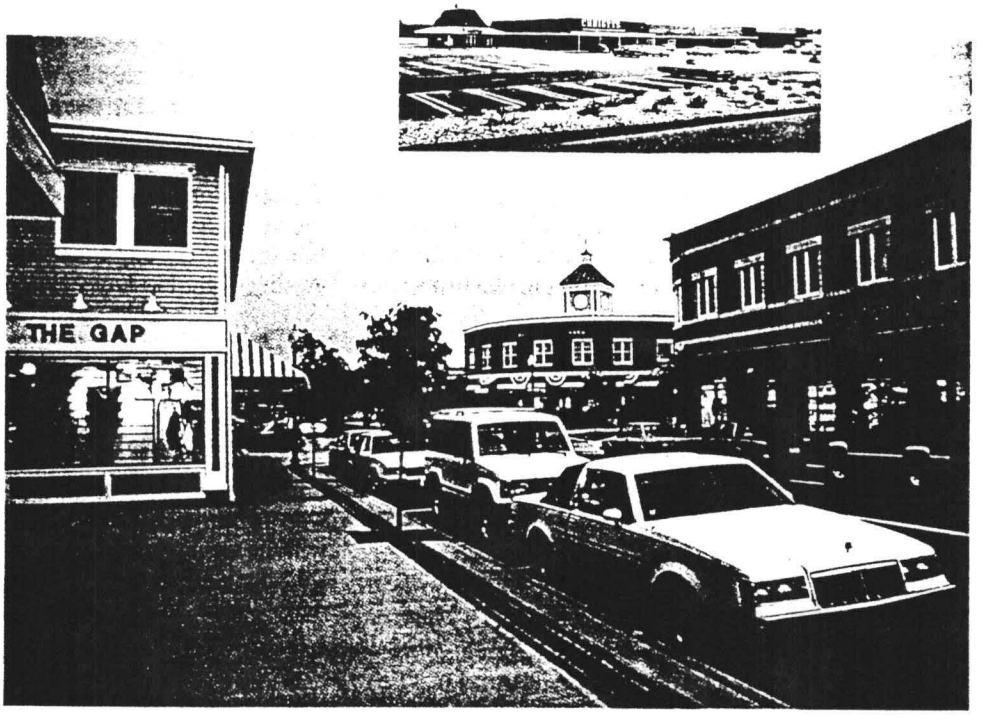
*Village life requires a lot of work.* As a good neighbor, I do not sit down longer than 10 minutes on some Thursdays, for I am faced with a constant round of messes to wipe up, children to rescue, shy people to introduce, dishes to wash, and problems to settle. At the same time, the responsibility invites camaraderie; I am often surrounded by people who want to talk, to share their troubles or their pleasures.

At various times during the past six years, I have gone back and forth between seeing this village as a garden of colorful, substantial families and seeing it as a collection of rather insecure people tenuously held together by overlapping complaints or fantasies. It has slowly dawned on me that both perceptions are true, that this village embodies a whole range of good and bad possibilities. What binds it all together are the stories—the gossip—and the neighborly relations that grow between people who stick around long enough to open their hearts to one another.

—*Jutta Mason*
**Mothering**



COURTESY JUTTA MASON




PHOTOS COURTESY DUANY AND PLATER-ZYBERK

**Mashpee Commons: Duany and Plater-Zyberk have transformed a Cape Cod shopping center into an old-fashioned Main Street.**

are the very young and the very old. The suburb is poorly suited to the elderly. A suburbanite who loses his or her driver's license—perhaps because of failing eyesight—ceases to be a viable citizen. That person cannot go shopping, visit friends, or get to the doctor's office. He cannot take care of himself. In a town, he can. He may be too old to drive, but he is not too old to walk.

Children are the other great victims of the suburbs. Families move to the suburbs precisely because suburbs are supposed to be "good for the kids." And the fresh air and open spaces *are* good for them. Suburban sprawl is not. Children in the postwar suburbs are kept in an unnaturally extended state of isolation and dependence because they live in places designed for cars rather than people.

The school is the social center of the child's life, but the routine of the typical suburban school is governed by the school bus. The children are bused in at eight o'clock in the morning and most of them are bused home at three o'clock, regardless of what they are doing, warehoused in front of television sets until their parents come home from work. If the parents do not want their children to lead that kind of life, one of them (usually the mother) has to stay home to take care of them. And that often amounts to little more than exchanging a career for a new job as an unpaid chauffeur. Imagine how the lives of children would change if the suburban house and yard were assembled in the form of a traditional neighborhood so that kids could visit friends, go out for a hamburger, or walk to a library on their own.

All of us suffer. The eight-hour workday was the great victory of the past century, but we have squandered our gains by expanding our commuting time. Instead of spending two more hours a day with our families and friends, or forging bonds of community over the backyard fence or at the town hall, we have chosen to spend them competing with our fellow citizens for that scarce commodity called asphalt. Now, do you know that if you commute an hour a day to work and an hour back, which is perfectly normal in the suburbs, you're spending 500 hours a year in the car? That's the equivalent of 62.5 workdays or 12.5 work weeks.

Americans are ready for the return of the town. The signs of a revival of interest in community on a smaller scale are everywhere. In major cities, police officers are deserting their patrol cars and walking the sidewalks, not just responding to crises but actually getting to know the people on their beats. Los Angeles yuppies by the thousands are leaving the city's sprawl for the more traditional neighborhoods of Portland and Seattle.

Building real towns will require changing master plans, codes, road-building standards, and, above all, attitudes. The mindless administration of rules enshrining the unwisdom of the past half century must cease; the reign of the traffic engineers must end. Americans need to be reacquainted with their small-town heritage and to be persuaded of the importance of protecting the human habitat every bit as rigorously as the natural habitat. Architects and planners and developers can be leaders and educators, but ordinary citizens will have to insist that the happiness of people finally takes precedence over the happiness of cars, that the health of communities takes precedence over the unimpeded flow of traffic.

*Excerpted with permission from* The Wilson Quarterly *(Winter 1992). Subscriptions: $24/yr. (4 issues) from The Wilson Quarterly, Box 56161, Boulder, CO 80301. Back issues: $6 from 370 L'Enfant Promenade SW, Suite 704, Washington, DC 20024. This essay is based on a lecture that Andres Duany delivered at the Harvard Graduate School of Design in November 1990.* 

JIM MEYER

COURTESY DUANY & PLATER-ZYBERK

TODD W. BRESSI • METROPOLIS

# The neo-traditional revolution

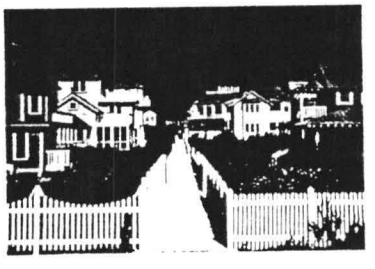
*A new generation of town planners attacks the suburban status quo*

For millions of Americans, the suburbs are what author Robert Fishman has called a "bourgeois utopia," a place where almost everyone can have a slice of land, a piece of nature, privacy, and peace of mind. It's a dream with a strong pull. In 1990, the Census Bureau reported that almost half of all Americans now live in the suburbs.

But the success of this ideal—single-family homes situated on quarter-acre lots and connected to the rest of the world only by automobiles—is becoming its own downfall. The problems of car-oriented sprawl—relentless traffic jams, the erosion of rural landscapes, social segregation, pollution of all kinds, and rising housing costs—are afflicting metropolitan areas from Miami to Seattle, and most cities in between.


JIM MEYER

San Francisco architect Peter Calthorpe has proposed another way of building suburbs that he believes could change all this. Calthorpe, along with Miami architects Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk—designers of Florida's celebrated Seaside community—represents the hottest new idea in urban planning since Levittown: neo-traditional communities. The neo-traditionalists want to channel new suburban growth into compact, tightly woven communities with housing, offices, and stores within walking distance of each other. Their goal is to wean people from cars by creating neighborhoods—in existing urban and suburban areas as well as in new developments—where walking is encouraged, public transportation is accessible, and streets, parks, and other public places are sources of civic pride and identity.



COURTESY DUANY & PLATER-ZYBERK

**Seaside, Florida: The town talked about around the world.**

What's surprising is that people are listening. Even in California, of all places, where automobiles and suburbs have shaped both a landscape and a lifestyle. In suburban Sacramento County, the Apple computer company is building a 250- to 300-employee facility in Laguna West, a Calthorpe-designed community now under construction, which will eventually be home for 10,000 people. With stores, jobs, restaurants, day care, and civic buildings all within a friendly walking distance of town homes and single-family residences, Laguna West represents a startling innovation in urban planning, an idea Calthorpe calls Transit-Oriented Developments. Laguna West even looks different from other suburban developments, with narrower streets, garages at the back of the lot, porches in front, and, in some cases, a good old-fashioned alleyway.

A slightly different version of Calthorpe's Transit-Oriented Develoment (TOD) is expected to start construction this summer in the East Bay area northeast of Oakland. South Brentwood Village will be built as an extension of the existing town of Brentwood, and will offer the same small-town amenities, including tree-lined avenues and a village green surrounded by shops, offices, and a day-care center. A similar idea is being planned for the town of DuPont, Washington, in the Northwest Landing project. An urban Transit-Oriented Development is also being planned along a light rail line near downtown San Jose, with apartments, offices, and shops revitalizing a mixed Japanese and Hispanic neighborhood.

Calthorpe's plans don't stop with just bringing a new sense of community to existing towns, cities, and suburban areas. He's got whole new cities, composed of clusters of Transit-Oriented Developments, on his drawing board. Placer Villages (a new town of 80,000

PHOTOS COURTESY DUANY AND PLATER-ZYBERK

made up of 10 adjoining villages that has been designed to be built along a proposed extension of Sacramento's light rail system) represents a radical revisioning of how North Americans might live in the future. He's also been commissioned by the city of San Diego to draft new planning guidelines that will push all development in the direction away from sprawl.

The best way to visualize Calthorpe's ideas is to imagine a village, town, or city neighborhood in the days before World War II. Then think about the center of town, perhaps a city hall, a town green, or a market. A TOD would be like a small town centered around a transit station. Since mass transit works best when pedestrian access is convenient, Calthorpe believes that the size of a community should be limited by easy walking distance to a transit station—about a quarter of a mile, he figures. The community would then be designed around the station. Retail, office, and manufacturing spaces would be closest. Just beyond that area would be a mix of town houses and semidetached houses. This layout would ensure that jobs and most day-to-day goods and services, including day care and recreation facilities, would be available to community residents; they also would be easily accessible to others who might arrive by transit, such as people working in the nearby offices.

But mixed-use buildings and high density are not enough to create community. What makes Transit-Oriented Developments different from car-dependent suburbs is the way residential and commercial areas are knit together. If the heart of a TOD is the transit station, then its soul is the streets, parks, and public spaces that are designed to enhance the friendly, common-ground spirit of a village.

Because most households today no longer fit the once-traditional pattern of working husband, housewife, and two children, Calthorpe contends that large single-family suburban housing as we've come to know

**New neighborhoods where people can *walk* represent the hottest idea in urban planning since Levittown.**

it is becoming less the norm. The shift to smaller households and the increasing numbers of elderly and dual-income families means that most households cannot maintain or even afford four-bedroom homes on expansive quarter-acre lots. He adds that the widespread physical scattering of people over far-flung suburban expanses prevents the mixing of classes, ages, and cultures that is important to a democratic society.

Transit-Oriented Developments could bring housing costs down by including more duplexes and town houses, which have private (albeit smaller) yards but are less expensive to build and maintain. Housing could be tailored specifically for the needs of singles, "empty-nesters," students, and the elderly. Denser development patterns also mean reduced costs on infrastructure, such as roads and sewers, a savings that can be passed on in lower home prices.

Affordable housing and a relative lack of transportation problems have made Sacramento County, where many of Calthorpe's projects are planned, one of California's boom regions. Planners see problems on the horizon, however, and Transit-Oriented Developments offer a way to help alleviate the anticipated growing pains, especially traffic jams and air pollution.

Rob Sherry, a county senior planner, thinks that as the cost of single-family homes continues to rise, more Californians will be willing to live in town houses. "In Sacramento, we think that as prices continue to escalate, there will be a growing market for multifamily apartments and town houses. Part of the key is quality community design. That's what we want Calthorpe to help with.

BOTH PHOTOS COURTESY CALTHORPE ASSOCIATES

COURTESY CALTHORPE ASSOCIATES

**Laguna West: A new pedestrian-oriented community under construction near Sacramento attracted an Apple computer facility.**

"Sacramento has traditionally been a small community but we just hit the million mark," says Sherry, who is coordinating a revision of the county's general plan with Calthorpe as a consultant. "We've just begun to feel the effects of big-city growth and we hear a lot of 'Let's not become Los Angeles.' "

But to get TODs, the county had to make exceptions to some of its own zoning codes. At Laguna West, plans for narrow streets and houses situated closer to the street were not allowed by the existing county rules.

The Laguna West project provides the first indication of how well the Transit-Oriented Development concept will hold up. Calthorpe was forced to make a number of compromises, but also demonstrated that the idea is flexible enough for the real world.

First, there was little chance that Sacramento's light rail system would cross the Laguna West site. Calthorpe settled for turning the transit station into a

stop on a bus line that would feed into a nearby light rail station.

Second, building a community with all row houses and apartments and no single-family detached homes is anathema to California developers, who would have a hard time raising money for such projects. At Laguna West, Calthorpe arranged a secondary quarter-mile ring, consisting mostly of single-family detached homes, around his quarter-mile-radius town center.

BOTH PHOTOS COURTESY CALTHORPE ASSOCIATES

**Redesigning the American Dream: Peter Calthorpe**

Third, the development firm, River West, would not settle for a community without culs-de-sac. Why? Californians expect them, explains the development's marketing director, Susan Baltake. So Calthorpe added culs-de-sac, which he connected with pedestrian paths that lead to other streets and the town center.

Finally, only part of the commercial development approved for the site is planned for the town center. Many of the stores and offices front a busy arterial street running on one side of the development. They are easily accessible by foot from Laguna West, however, a rare victory for pedestrians in the annals of suburban evolution.

Calthorpe draws inspiration from Luxembourg's visionary urban design theorist Leon Krier, who in his book *Urban Space* advocated that traditional streets and squares be the basis of community design. He pays particular attention to Krier's notion of the "urban quarter," which holds that all necessities of urban life ought to be accessible by foot within mixed-use communities.

Krier's thinking has had a strong influence on Prince Charles as well as on Miami architects Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk. A husband-and-wife team, Duany and Plater-Zyberk promote an idea they call Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND), a concept often associated with the Transit-Oriented Development as part of the neo-traditionalist movement. Their plans, like Calthorpe's, replicate traditional street patterns, emphasize public spaces, and call for housing, shops, and public structures to be built near one another.

TNDs also place great emphasis on devising zoning and design codes that reinforce architectural design quality and regional character. Duany and Plater-Zyberk contend that the disjointed tangle of ugly buildings and snarled traffic that characterizes today's suburbs is an inevitable result of codes that have been adopted since World War II. They claim it is codes, more than consumer demand or developers' tastes, that need to be revised in order to bring a spirit of community to the places where most North Americans live. Duany and Plater-Zyberk's Seaside development, for example, mandated white picket fences in front yards and encouraged buildings with towers.

Seaside, a resort community on Florida's panhandle, stands as the Lexington and Concord of neo-traditionalists' revolution against modern town planning. It is the housing development talked about around the world, having been written up hundreds of times in publications ranging from *Home Mechanix* to *Metropolitan Home*. Studying the shape and flow of Southern towns built before 1940, Duany and Plater-Zyberk devised a code that they believed would instill Seaside with the look, pace, and neighborly qualities of an old-fashioned small town, even with buildings designed by a number of different architects.

As a result of the media acclaim for Seaside, an increasing number of developers have hired Duany and Plater-Zyberk to design new projects in a diverse range of settings. At Kentlands, in suburban Maryland, a planned regional shopping mall is being reconfigured as a traditional town square within walking distance of several neighborhoods reminiscent of Washington's Georgetown, which are filled with handsome town homes. Mashpee Commons on Cape Cod involves the transformation of a strip shopping mall into a cozy Main Street featuring a church, library, meeting hall, storefronts, and over-the-shop apartments with more apartments, and homes nearby. Besides offering a pleasant setting, this new development brings some much-needed affordable housing to the area.

Like Calthorpe, Duany and Plater-Zyberk are working on even more ambitious projects. Avalon Park, a cluster of towns and villages designed along tradi-

**Kentlands: A new town in suburban Maryland that is reminiscent of Washington's Georgetown area, both in its architecture and in its neighborly atmosphere.**

tional neighborhood development principles but with diverse characters, is almost set for construction near Orlando, Florida. The Duany-Plater-Zyberk firm is also involved in planning for two of the largest undeveloped urban tracts in the United States—the 900-acre Playa Vista development in Los Angeles and the 4,500-acre Daniel Island development in Charleston, South Carolina.

With increasing recognition from the public and

more commissions from clients, the neo-traditionalists have also earned their share of criticism. Skeptics point out that changing deeply ingrained preferences for autos and single-family homes will require more than new types of community design. That is true, but Calthorpe appears justified when he says these ideas provide a valuable first step. And the idea appears to be catching on—"Andres and Lizz and I aren't going to do it all," Calthorpe notes, "but the biggest planning firms are starting to copy us."

Twenty-first-century suburbs may not look exactly like what Calthorpe, Duany, and Plater-Zyberk are planning, but they could be very similar.

*"Cities to walk in" adapted from* Metropolis *(March 1990), copyright ©1992 Bellerophon Publications, Inc. Written by Todd W. Bressi.*

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**MARCIA D. LOWE • WORLD WATCH**

# How to make cities more humane

## *Success stories from Portland, Pittsburgh, and Europe*

Modern cities can often seem like harsh places for people. To walk along many urban streets is to brave noise, smog, and the danger of being struck by a motor vehicle. Poorly planned city landscapes offer few glimpses of nature and little relief from relentless concrete and asphalt. Although nearly every city has its lively districts filled with character and color, large expanses of most cities are devoid of urban charm. Many neighborhoods have no inviting places for friends to meet or children to play.

Making urban areas more humane—in other words, bringing the village back into the city—involves major changes in the use of public space. In cities all over the world, automobile traffic needs to be restrained. Many European cities, especially in Germany and the Netherlands, have redesigned roads in order to "calm" traffic. This usually entails lowering speed limits and introducing strategically placed speed bumps, trees, bushes, flower beds, or play areas along or in the roadway—gentle inducements that make drivers proceed slowly and yield the right-of-way to pedestrians, cyclists, and children at play.

COURTESY CALTHORPE ASSOCIATES

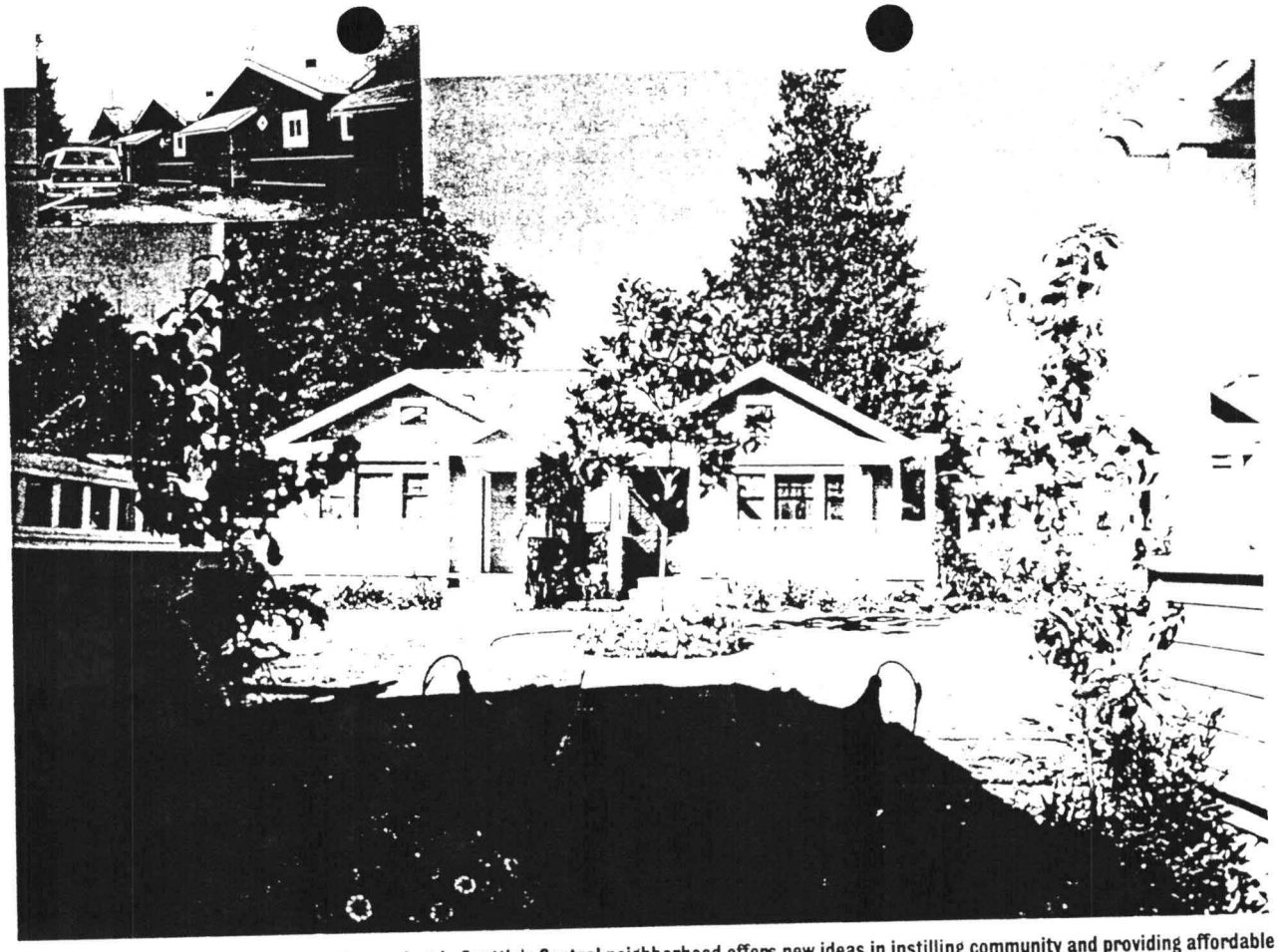
**South Brentwood Village: A new development in Brentwood, California, designed to offer small-town charm.**

Often, the heart of a downtown is inappropriate for motor vehicles. Most of Western Europe's major cities have now reserved their centers for people on foot. Prague also has a large auto-free section, and Moscow's Arbat Street, reborn in 1989 as a pedestrian zone, is now the most lively district in the city. The bazaars of Northern Africa are also pedestrian territory, as are the marketplaces of Asia and Latin America.


COURTESY JOHN KUCHER

Greenery further softens the city's rough edges. Devoting more urban space to trees and other plants can provide habitat for a surprising diversity of birds and other wildlife, giving city dwellers a needed bond with nature. Great Britain's Nature Conservancy Council, a central government agency, now supports nature reserve projects in more than 60 urban areas.

Many cities are linking stretches of open space along rivers, canals, or old rail lines into paths for cycling, horseback riding, jogging, and walking. For urbanites, these "greenways" bring fresh air and nature closer to home. In the United States, where greenways in Washington, D.C., Seattle,



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COURTESY JOHN KUCHER

COURTESY CALTHORPE ASSOCIATES

**Pine Street Cottages: A recent renovation project in Seattle's Central neighborhood offers new ideas in instilling community and providing affordable housing. With ten small homes on a single third of an acre lot, all facing a courtyard, the costs are low and interaction among neighbors is high.**

and other cities have become major routes for bicycle commuters, an estimated 500 new greenway projects (led largely by citizens' groups) are currently in process.

Better planning and more compact urban design can create city spaces that are friendly and safe enough for people to gather and enjoy themselves. Studies of street life in cities around the world show that certain common elements are needed to make streets and public spaces more humane. Among them are abundant trees and bushes, car-free spaces for people to walk or sit together with others, and streets lined with ground-level retail shops that serve the public.

In many cities, popular misconceptions about high-density development inhibit adoption of these practical land use patterns. Planners and citizens, particularly in North America, often assume that moderate and high-density land use are synonymous with crime and unhealthy conditions. Yet there is no scientific evidence of a link between these social problems and density per se. A recent report on the world's 100 largest cities, for example, found that Hong Kong—the most densely populated city, with 403 people per hectare—has fewer murders per capita than all but 11 of the other 99 cities. And low-density American cities like Los Angeles, Houston, and Miami are among those with the highest murder rates.

In her 1961 classic, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, author Jane Jacobs advanced the notion that by providing "eyes on the street," densely populated, people-filled areas become less vulnerable to crime. She reasoned, "The safety of the street works best, most casually, and with least frequent taint of hostility or suspicion precisely where people are using and enjoying the city streets voluntarily."

Similarly, high and moderate urban densities in themselves do not create a harsh physical environment. Copenhagen and Vienna—two cities widely associated with urban charm and livability—each have a relatively high density. By contrast, low-density cities such as Phoenix often are dominated by unwelcoming, car-oriented commercial strips and vast expanses of concrete and asphalt.

Compact development also fosters more livable cities by making walking, biking, and public transportation attractive alternatives to always using an auto to get around. It is not too late for well-established cities to improve their land use patterns by filling in underused space with new development. Even in cities where most areas are overcrowded, a surprising amount

of land in other parts is vacant or underused. For example, only about half of the urbanized land in Bogotá, Colombia, is actually developed, suggesting that it could be used much more effectively for homes, commercial developments, and parks.

Cities can help spark the regeneration of their underused and blighted land through property taxes, levying a higher charge on land than on buildings. This dual approach is now in effect in 15 U.S. cities—mostly in Pennsylvania, which has specific "enabling" legislation that allows localities to make such a change. When Pittsburgh introduced a sharply graded dual tax system in 1978, the number of vacant lot sales, new building permits, and new dwellings quickly increased. At the same time, demolitions declined.

Another priority for increasing density in residential areas is to allow homeowners to rent out small apartments within their homes. The size of the average household in industrial countries is shrinking steadily as couples have fewer children and more people choose living arrangements other than the nuclear family. As a result, many homes built for large households can accommodate an extra unit in a converted basement, garage, or attic—or even an added story. According to a 1985 estimate, 12 million to 18 million homes in the United States have surplus space that may be suitable for accessory apartments. Local governments in Canada and Europe encourage this as a way to provide needed housing and make better use of space. Most U.S. communities, by contrast, prohibit apartments in houses in single-family zones. In recent years, however, housing-short communities in California, New Jersey, and Massachusetts have changed their regulations to promote them.

**Portland has successfully fended off urban sprawl and reclaimed valuable land from the auto.**

Fortunately for the world's polluted, traffic-clogged cities, there are some outstanding models of urban planning that boost compact development, public transit ridership, pedestrians, and overall quality of life. Instead of giving in to ever greater automobile dependence and sprawl, Portland, Oregon, has encircled itself with an urban growth boundary beyond which new development is not allowed.

In roughly two decades, Portland has successfully fended off sprawl and reclaimed valuable city space from the automobile. The city has increased its housing density by encouraging a blend of multi- and single-family homes in pleasant, compact patterns. Portland's vibrant downtown boasts such green spaces as a waterfront park, which was once an expressway, and Pioneer Courthouse Square, formerly a parking lot. City officials welcome new office construction but restrict the amount of accompanying parking. Since the early '70s, the volume of cars entering the downtown has remained the same, even though the number of downtown jobs has increased by 50 percent.

Investments in public transport have also paid off in Portland. A highly popular transit mall reserves an 11-block stretch of two avenues in the commercial district for buses. Today, 43 percent of all Portland's downtown commuters ride buses and a light rail system, a higher ridership rate than those of most other U.S. cities its size. The shift to public transportation is believed to be partly responsible for dramatic air-quality improvements in Portland; the number of air-quality violations went down from one every three days in the early '70s to zero in 1989.

*Excerpted with permission from* World Watch *(Jan./Feb. 1992). Subscriptions: $15/yr. (6 issues) from Worldwatch Institute, 1776 Massachusetts Av. NW., Washington, DC 20036. Back issues: $5 from same address.*

*A longer treatment of this subject is available in Worldwatch Paper 105,* Shaping Cities: The Environmental and Human Dimensions *(Oct. 1991), $5 from same address.*

## Village resources

**Small Town.** ($30, 6 issues, Box 517, Ellensburg, WA 98926). A magazine from the Small Town Institute with nuts and bolts information on economic, environmental, and community concerns.

**The Urban Ecologist** ($25 membership, 4 issues, Urban Ecology, Box 10144, Berkeley, CA 94709; 510/549-1724). A spirited newsletter from Urban Ecology, an organization brimming with practical ideas for making North America's cities greener and more livable.

**Auto-Free Press** ($20 membership, 6 issues, Auto Free New York, 494 Broadway, New York, NY 10012; 212/475-3394). A lively newspaper dedicated to eliminating the automobile and its problems from New York City.

**Eco-Villages.** For a look at this new idea in modern living, turn to Zeitgeist, page 142.

**Worldwatch Institute.** Environmental think tank and publisher of these excellent pamphlets: *Shaping Cities* (Worldwatch Paper #105), *Alternatives to the Automobile* (#98), *Bicycle: Vehicle for a Small Planet* (#90), and *Rethinking the Automobile* (#84). $5 each from Worldwatch, 1776 Massachusetts Av. NW, Washington, DC 20036.

**Cohousing.** For more information, contact the Cohousing Company, 1250 Addison #113, Berkeley, CA 94702.

**Paving Moratorium Update.** ($30 membership or 30 petition signatures, 2-3 issues, Alliance for a Paving Moratorium, Box 8558, Fredericksburg, VA 22404; 703/371-0222). A new newspaper and national organization that say it's time to just say no to new roads and road widenings.