

REALTORS® & Smart Growth

# on common ground

WINTER 2010

## Green Communities

**Walkable Neighborhoods**

**Marketing Green Homes**

**Form-Based Codes**



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®



## "Greening" Our Way of Life

According to the National Building Museum's "Green Community" exhibit ([nbm.org](http://nbm.org)), a green community conserves its land, offers multiple options for transportation, provides open space for recreation and cultivation, and uses its natural and cultural resources wisely. This issue of *On Common Ground* focuses on this broad approach to "green," an approach that encompasses the building, its surroundings and how our communities function. It is this holistic approach that is being recognized as the best way to conserve our resources and our planet, and is currently finding favor in the market.

Green homes that are good for the environment while saving home owners money are in demand, and REALTORS® are responding by enhancing their multiple listing services to showcase green homes and green features. To prepare themselves to better serve this market, thousands of REALTORS® have already earned NAR's new Green Designation.

Beyond a green home, providing a walkable environment that does not require the use of a car for every trip is an important feature of a green community. Demographic shifts, economic concerns, and changing consumer desires are driving a greater demand for walkable neighborhoods. HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan recently testified to Congress, "auto dependent homes ... are more vulnerable to price devaluation," and homes that have access to more transportation options have held their value more in the slumping housing market of the past two years. New internet tools, such as Walk Score (described in the article on page 10), can help real estate professionals find homes that meet clients' desires to live in a place where many daily destinations are only a walk away.

As the demands of home buyers change, real estate practitioners will continue to learn more about green homes and communities, and will increasingly adopt new tools to help home buyers find green homes in walkable, green neighborhoods.

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### Distribution

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Cover photo of Del Mar Station, Pasadena, Calif., © Tom Bonner Photography, courtesy of Moule & Polyzoides Architects and Urbanist

# Walking into the Future

The market shows home owners are interested in smart growth living

By Brad Broberg

**T**he oldest mode of travel — walking — is suddenly one of the hottest as more and more home buyers want to live where they can park their cars and use their feet.

“In the last eight years, there’s been a profound shift in the home-buying habits of America,” said Dan Burden, founder of Walkable Communities, a nonprofit organization that promotes walkability. “The trend isn’t just significant — it’s mind-boggling.”

In 2000, when participants in a housing study were shown pictures of traditional neighborhoods, 25 percent said that was what they wanted, Burden said. “As of 2008, a new study showed the numbers have flipped with 75 percent wanting the traditional neighborhood — traditional meaning walkable,” he said.

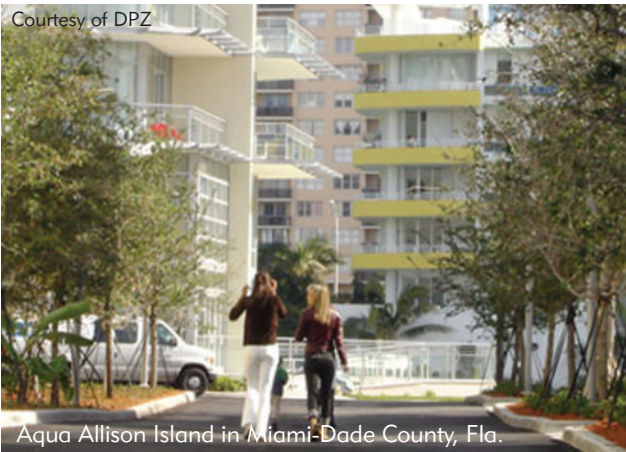
The prices commanded by homes in walkable neighborhoods reflect the demand. A study released in August by CEOs for Cities, a national network of public and private urban leaders, analyzed home sales in 15 markets nationwide. In 13 of those markets, there was a direct connection between home values and higher levels of walkability. The study used walkability scores from Walk Score, a Web site that calculates the walkability of any address in the country based on proximity to the closet amenities — stores, parks, restaurants, etc. (See “Know Your Neighborhood” on page 10 for more details.)

In some ways, Walk Score itself is a reflection of the demand for walkability. “I see a lot of consumers using Walk Score,” said Michael Kiefer, a REALTOR® and broker-owner of Green DC Realty in Washington, D.C. “They ask me all the time about it.”

Kiefer specializes in D.C.’s urban core. Rejected during the great exodus to the auto-oriented suburbs that began 50 years ago, city living is making a comeback

More and more home buyers want to live where they can park their cars and use their feet.

Courtesy of DPZ



Aqua Allison Island in Miami-Dade County, Fla.

across the country as people tire of long drives to jobs and entertainment. In D.C., a wave of condo and town home construction is being accompanied by new stores, restaurants and other businesses — all ingredients of walkable neighborhoods.

“I can’t tell you how many clients I’ve had who don’t have cars,” Kiefer said. “They want to be able to walk different places and not use a car. It’s like a whole new matrix for evaluating [residential value].”

The majority of his clients are either young professionals in their 20s or empty nesters in their 50s, Kiefer said. They are members of the two largest generations in the history of America — the 78 million millennials born between 1977 and 1996 and the 82 million baby boomers born between 1946 and 1964.

By 2015, the rising tide of both generations will peak at 44 million each — an unprecedented convergence, said Todd Zimmerman, managing director at Zimmerman/Volk Associates, a real estate consulting firm. But size is not the only similarity. The two generations also share an appetite for walkable living — and the amenities that go with it — that fits their childless lifestyles.

“That’s not to say all households without kids don’t want a single-family home on a large lot, but a lot of them don’t,” said Ellen Dunham-Jones, director of the

architecture program at Georgia Tech University and co-author of “Retrofitting Suburbia: Urban Design Solutions for Redesigning Suburbs.”

In some cases, the quest for a walkable way of life leads toward the urban core. In others, it leads to places like Orenco Station outside Portland, Ore.

Orenco Station is a walkable community built from scratch around a light-rail station and a town center. About two-thirds of the residents are empty nesters and most of the rest are young professionals, said Jim Rostel, a REALTOR® and broker-owner at Orenco Station Realty.

“It’s really a self-contained community,” Rostel said. “I’ve had clients who moved in and sold one of their cars because you can walk to the grocery store, walk to Starbucks and you have light rail to go downtown.”

Walkability was at the top of Mark and Anna Stickel’s list when they moved to Orenco Station two years ago. The semi-retired couple own just one car and put only about 3,000 miles a year on the odometer.

Two generations share an appetite for walkable living — and the amenities that go with it.



Orenco Station in Portland, Ore.



Photos courtesy of [www.flickr.com/photos/lisatown](http://www.flickr.com/photos/lisatown)



New Town in St. Charles, Mo.

## Walkable neighborhoods are retaining more of their value.

“We try to do most of our travel by walking,” Mark said. “It’s easier on the environment and good exercise, too. If we need to go to downtown Portland or shopping malls or the airport, we always take the train.”

While not immune to the housing slump, Orenco Station’s town homes, condos, row homes, lofts and cottages still fetch the area’s highest price per square foot, Rostel said. “The smart builders will recognize that the demographics have changed significantly and will build ... more places like Orenco Station,” he said.

After decades of developing auto-dependent suburbs, it’s past time to get started, said Christopher Leinberger, land-use strategist, developer and author of “The Option of Urbanism: Investing in the American Dream.”

In most metropolitan areas, just 5 to 10 percent of the housing stock is located in walkable neighborhoods, yet recent consumer research by Jonathan Levine at the University of Michigan suggests that roughly one in three home owners would prefer to live in such places, Leinberger said. Since the total housing stock in the United States is growing by only 2 or 3 percent or so per year, “it’s going to take us a generation to catch up with the pent-up demand,” he said.

A close look at the current housing crisis underscores the relative strength of the demand, said Leinberger. The steepest declines in value and the greatest number of foreclosures are occurring in auto-oriented suburbs. Meanwhile, walkable neighborhoods are retaining more of their value.



New Town in St. Charles, Mo.



Orenco Station

[www.flickr.com/photos/lisatown](http://www.flickr.com/photos/lisatown)

By emphasizing compact development with a mix of uses and a range of transportation options beyond the automobile, smart growth provides a basic framework for encouraging walkability.

Mashpee, Mass.



“The biggest problem we have in real estate is overbuilding,” Leinberger said. “The most important thing is to stop building [auto-oriented suburbs].”

That doesn’t mean the suburbs have no future. “The pent-up demand for [walkable] neighborhoods is going to be satisfied only partially in ... downtowns and places adjacent to downtowns,” Leinberger said. “Two-thirds of the demand is going to be satisfied in the suburbs.”

Smart growth can help make that happen. Creating walkable neighborhoods is both a principle of smart growth and an outcome. By emphasizing compact development with a mix of uses and a range of transportation options beyond the automobile, smart growth provides a basic framework for encouraging walkability.

The appetite for walkability isn’t just the result of millennials and baby boomers craving a different lifestyle. Rising energy costs provide everyone with a reason to take their cars out of the garage less often.

In a walkable neighborhood, a family spends 9 percent of its income on its cars, Leinberger said. In an auto-oriented suburb, it spends 25 percent.

Yet that may be worth it for families with children who want a big house and big yard no matter what. “There’s

Kentlands in Gaithersburg, Md.





still a lot of people willing to make that trade-off,” Leinberger said. “It’s not a matter of what’s right and what’s wrong. It’s a matter of choice.”

Sandra Keith is a REALTOR® and broker-owner of Lighthouse Realty in Sarasota, Fla. The predominant development pattern there is “classic suburban sprawl,” Keith said, but the county is encouraging the creation of walkable neighborhoods.

Keith said home buyers sometimes give mixed signals about walkability. “It’s a Catch-22,” Keith said. “Although people like [walkable neighborhoods], we are very attached to our cars, and we’ve become used to driving places.”

Nevertheless, Keith said, the pendulum is clearly swinging away from continued development of auto-oriented suburbs and toward walkable development. “It’s not just a trendy thing,” she said. “I believe it is, in fact, a new way of life.”

So does Dunham-Jones. And not just for the childless millennials and baby boomers. Members of the child-rearing generation in between — generation X — might be joining them. “The idea that a single-family home with a large lot is the best thing for families is coming under more and more scrutiny,” Dunham-Jones said.

The pendulum is clearly swinging away from continued development of auto-oriented suburbs and toward walkable development.



In an auto-oriented suburb, parents must drive children everywhere, but in a walkable neighborhood, kids can use their feet. Given the nation's alarming rates of childhood obesity and type 2 diabetes, that's food for thought, Dunham-Jones said. So is the fact that walkable neighborhoods give teens without driver's licenses the mobility they desperately desire.

Regardless of the generation involved, price premiums of 40 to 200 percent per square foot are proof that demand for walkable neighborhoods is exceeding supply, Leinberger said.

Example: Carillon Point, a mixed-use development near downtown Kirkland, Wash., a suburb of Seattle. "The housing there gets an 80 percent price premium over housing still in Kirkland but where you have to drive downtown," Leinberger said.

Although the housing slump has slowed progress, demand for walkability is fueling efforts to make suburbia more walkable. "Eighty percent of built America is now suburban, so if we can't use 80 percent of America, we're in trouble," Burden said.

Dunham-Jones pointed to MetroWest, a high-density, mixed-use community being built within walking distance of a rail station in the D.C. suburb of Fairfax County, Va. The developer, Pulte Homes, purchased 69 single-family homes at double their value to make way for the project, she said.

Projects like that show just how powerful the economic drive is for walkable living, Zimmerman said. "America will be much more walkable 20 years from now at every scale," he said. ●

Brad Broberg is a Seattle-based freelance writer specializing in business and development issues. His work appears regularly in the *Puget Sound Business Journal* and the *Seattle Daily Journal of Commerce*.

Demand for walkability is fueling efforts to make suburbia more walkable.



New Town in St. Charles, Mo.



Kirkland, Wash.



The pedestrian-friendly, walkable community of Amelia Park in Fernandina Beach, Fla.



# Know Your NEIGHBORHOOD

Identifying and buying homes in walkable communities

*By Steve Wright*

Since the dawn of time, buying or selling a home has been about “location, location, location,” as the old saying goes. Buyers want to know a home’s proximity to good schools and commercial districts. Sellers want to utilize every possible plus available to market their homes and attract interested buyers.

But in a time of economic downturn and a new era in environmental awareness, a home’s location takes on a whole new dimension. More and more buyers are asking for — even demanding — homes in walkable neighborhoods. Sellers are crafting sales pitches about the ease of a stroll to the local patisserie. And REALTORS® are looking for new tools with which to showcase a home’s walkable location.

How can a REALTOR® or home buyer know when a neighborhood is truly walkable? Is there an empirical way to prove walkability? Why would someone selling or buying a home even care?

“To me, walkability is a quality of life issue,” said Kirsten Kaufman, a REALTOR® with Prudential Northwest Properties in Portland, Ore.

“When people can walk or bike their kids to school, walk or bike to the store, etc., they get to know their neighbors and their neighborhoods. This instills a sense of community that has an intrinsic value and makes people want to live there,” said Kaufman, who calls herself “Portland’s Bicycle REALTOR®.”

When people can walk or bike their kids to school, walk or bike to the store, they get to know their neighbors and their neighborhoods.

There are so many benefits to walkable neighborhoods: they lower your environmental impact, improve your health and are better investments than less walkable neighborhoods.

“In my own experience in Portland, my clients are willing to pay more for a home — or accept less in terms of square footage and amenities — in exchange for proximity to shopping, entertainment, work and school.”

When asked how she determines and demonstrates a neighborhood’s walkability for a home, she is quick to mention WalkScore.com, a free Web site that utilizes Google maps to show the walkability of any address.

Visitors to the Walk Score site simply type in their address — or the address of a house they are considering buying — and the site lists the distance to the nearest restaurants, stores, post offices, libraries, movie theaters and other destinations. The address is then assigned a score of its walkability on a scale of 1 to 100.

“There are so many benefits to walkable neighborhoods: they lower your environmental impact, improve your health and are better investments than less walkable neighborhoods,” said Matt Lerner, chief technology officer for Front Seat, the software company that developed Walk Score.

“According to an NAR survey, 55 percent of Americans prefer mixed-use, walkable neighborhoods. We built Walk Score to help people find walkable neighborhoods, and having a Walk Score lets people easily compare the walkability of different properties,” said Lerner, who served as lead program manager for Windows Vista during a six-year stint at Microsoft.



Left: Bethesda, Md.  
Below: Walk Score Web site.





Courtesy of Dallas Area Rapid Transit



Kirsten Kaufman, Portland's "Bicycle REALTOR," shows the appeal of walkable neighborhoods to her clients.



Photo by Daniel Wakefield Pasley



Photo by Daniel Wakefield Pasley

Lerner encourages REALTORS® as well as buyers and sellers to get familiar with Walk Score and green concepts like walkability.

"A green real estate agent understands that the best investment in a home is also the most sustainable. For example, if you aren't dependent on your car you are less likely to be the victim of another gas price spike. If your home has a high Walk Score, is near transit and is near your work place, you are going to save a ton of money on transportation while protecting the environment," Lerner said.

Joe Cortright, president and principal economist for Impresa, a Portland consulting firm specializing in regional economic analysis and innovation, said that "a walkable neighborhood has lots of commonly frequented destinations nearby within walking distance."

"People are more concerned than ever about gas prices, about fitness issues and about the environment. Families are looking for neighborhoods where the kids can walk to places so mom and dad don't have to play chauffeur all the time. And people want more interesting walkable destinations," said Cortright, who is also a senior policy advisor for CEOs for Cities, a national organization of urban leaders.

People are more concerned than ever about gas prices, about fitness issues and about the environment.



U.S. EPA Smart Growth

Cortright believes Walk Score to be a useful tool in evaluating walkability and its relationship to home values, and he has data to prove it. He recently completed a report for CEOs for Cities, looking at the connection between walkability and housing values. He used Walk Score as the measure of walkability, and constructed a model of housing prices in 15 markets around the country, using data from 95,000 property sales. The study controlled both for the characteristics of individual houses (size, number of bedrooms and baths, age) as well as neighborhood characteristics (proximity to the central business district, income and accessibility to jobs).

“We found that walkability had a statistically significant, positive impact on housing values in 13 of the 15 markets we examined,” said Cortright.

“For the typical metropolitan area, each additional point of Walk Score was associated with a \$700- to \$3,000-

increase in home values, after controlling for other observable factors. To give you an idea of what kind of difference that makes in the marketplace, we looked at the difference in home values between a typical house that had the 50th percentile Walk Score, compared to an otherwise identical house that had the 75th percentile Walk Score. Going from the average level of walkability to the 75th percentile raised the value of the median house by between \$4,000 and about \$34,000, depending on the market.”

“The biggest gains in value associated with walkability were in the large cities with the highest densities — and best transit systems — like San Francisco and Chicago,” Cortright said.

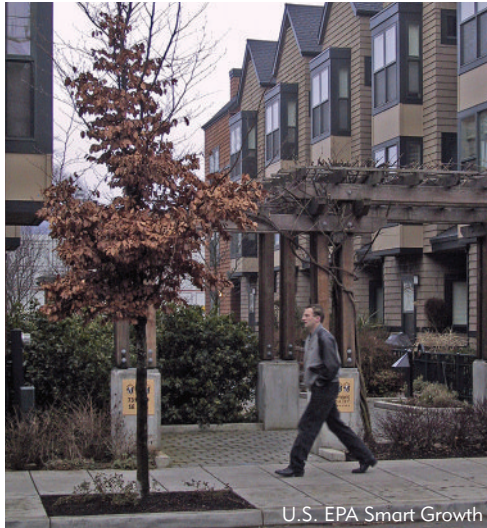
Jim Duncan, a REALTOR® and partner with Nest Real Estate Group in the greater Charlottesville, Va., area believes Walk Score is a good starting point when researching walkability.

“Certainly, a house with a score of 80 is in a more walkable area than a house with a score of 20. But to know for certain you need to actually walk it. Walk the neighborhood and talk to the neighbors. Ask them what

Walkability had a statistically significant, positive impact on housing values.



REALTORS® are catching on to marketing walkability and are spotlighting it in advertising materials.



Above: Crozet, Va.

they walk to. You also need to determine what walkability means to your buyer. For Europeans, walkability includes longer distances: a mile and a half to two miles. Americans don't want to walk as far," said Duncan.

Duncan said his clients are focusing more and more on walkability.

"Really and truly, many are looking for this when they go to buy. The way I define this with my clients is 'being close to stuff, close to the things of civilization:' coffee shops and a grocery store, as well as restaurants. Parks are huge for many of my clients. They want green spaces they can go to with kids."

"I have young clients without kids who came from about 25 minutes outside of Charlottesville. They don't want to drive as much anymore. They want to walk or ride their bikes to work. It's a huge lifestyle choice on their part. Some clients are motivated by gas prices or they desire to be environmentally conscious. Others want an urban environment," Duncan said.

"And often it's about quality of life. They don't want to be in the car so much. They also want to save money."

As REALTORS® are catching on to marketing walkability, they are blogging about it and spotlighting it in advertising materials. This is true for Diane Brooks, a REALTOR® with F.C. Tucker Company, in the greater Indianapolis area.

Regarding a sale for which Brooks represented the sellers, Brooks found out after the offer was accepted that walkability was very important to the buyers.

"It was one of their top criteria. They had lived in [the village] before and are now returning as empty nesters. They wanted to be in the village and have the ability to walk to the library, five blocks from this home. I had included a Walk Score in my marketing on that home," said Brooks.

"I will check the Walk Score Web site for any home that I have listed that is close to restaurants and shopping

The attractions of the home include the people nearby and the home's surroundings.

and post that score. We have taken photos of some of the retail establishments, shops and coffee spots nearby and have them on a Walkability Flyer for the home. We also plan to upload them to Realtor.com for this new listing. If a destination is within 1.5 miles, we consider that walkable and will include it in our list."

"Frequently, I will ask a seller to write a letter to a potential buyer that expresses 'Why We Love Our Home.' More often than not, the attractions of the home include the people nearby and the home's surroundings. Even though most sellers are not yet familiar with the term 'walkability,' they understand it inherently and recognize its importance to quality of life," Brooks said.

Kirsten Kaufman echoes similar sentiments.

"The goal of my business is to help people who want to drive less and enjoy life more, and I have to say that message has really struck a chord with my clients. My business has almost doubled since I identified this niche, and I find it personally rewarding on many levels. It's inspiring to work with people who would trade a big private yard or a gourmet kitchen in exchange for a farmer's market or community garden around the corner. These are people who would gladly pay extra to spend their evenings visiting with neighbors or sitting on their porches than stuck in a car fighting traffic for hours. Walkability just seems naturally desirable to me." ●

Steve Wright frequently writes about Smart Growth and sustainable communities. He and his wife live in a restored historic home in the heart of Miami's Little Havana. Contact him at: [stevewright64@yahoo.com](mailto:stevewright64@yahoo.com)

New Town in St. Charles, Mo.



[pedbikeimages.org/Dan Burden](http://pedbikeimages.org/Dan_Burden)



# SMART GROWTH AS AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

## *The Louisiana Land Use Toolkit*

By David Goldberg

Many people outside the state forget that in 2005 Louisiana was ravaged by not one, but two hurricanes: First Katrina lashed the eastern portion, and then, less than a month later, Rita wreaked havoc in the west. The storms were devastating to the coastal communities that were hit, and they created another kind of chaos in adjoining areas, as people migrated inland to previously rural areas.

As coastal areas struggled to redevelop, and inland communities were forced to grapple with unexpected — and often, unwanted — development, most were flying blind without a plan and lacking the zoning tools to shape development, says Camille Manning-Broome, director of planning for the Center for Planning Excellence (CPEX) in Baton Rouge. Only 21 of the state's 64 parishes (or counties) had zoning ordinances of any kind on the books, and many local communities were traditionally suspicious, if not hostile to the very idea of planning and zoning.



Damage from hurricane Katrina in Louisiana



Louisiana Land Use Toolkit Workshop

The regional plan for coastal Louisiana offered one of the most ambitious plans in the country.

In the aftermath of the storms, the Center for Planning Excellence — a nonprofit that works to help communities plan for sustainable growth and development — worked with the state of Louisiana to commission an unprecedented regional plan for coastal Louisiana. Dubbed Louisiana Speaks, it covered 35 parishes and 25,000 square miles, and involved 27,000 residents in workshops, surveys and other activities. The final report offered one of the most ambitious plans in the country, but the authors warned that little progress would be made unless local governments developed “a unified vi-

sion for economic development, effective planning and effective implementation of plans.” Particularly, at long last, they had to embrace “land use planning.”

“The hurricanes changed everything,” says Manning-Broome. Communities that had previously recoiled at planning and zoning began to clamor for some way to keep the pop-up subdivisions from encroaching on productive agricultural areas, or for traditional coastal towns from redeveloping as Anywhere, USA. Although many now had the will to take on growth and development planning and zoning, few had the wallet to pay for it.

“We came up with the idea to develop a land use toolkit that could be adapted in whole, or in part, by any community, that we would provide for free,” Manning-Broome recalls. But who would fund such an effort? “When we started thinking about funding for help for communities, we heard that the Louisiana Economic Development Department had done a survey and found that one of the largest impediments to recruiting industry was the lack of planning and consistent regulatory processes.”

Sure enough, the department was ready and willing to put up funds to allow CPEX to hire a firm that would create what would come to be called the Louisiana Land Use Toolkit. The economic development department’s participation was a major breakthrough, says Hugh Morris, with the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® smart growth program. “What is unique about this is that the economic development folks understand that if a community wants economic development, it needs to plan,” Morris says. “If a community doesn’t have land use rules, people won’t want to invest in that community.”

To prepare the model code CPEX hired Code Studio out of Austin, Texas, in 2008. Lee Einsweiler, a principal of the firm, went to work researching the existing state of affairs and the historic contexts that make Louisiana communities unique. “In our early stage of reconnaissance, we found there were very few places that even had zoning, and fewer with good zoning. Other traditions had much greater influence,” he says. For example, many areas had been — and still were being — shaped

We came up with the idea to develop a land use toolkit that could be adapted in whole, or in part, by any community, that we would provide for free.



by an archaic French system of landownership based on “arpents,” wedges of property fanning out from a river that often meandered this way and that. “Those arpents have been subdivided many times, and people have come to think that they should be able to build what they like on them.” Elsewhere, people were accustomed to building “fish camps that don’t mesh with standard subdivisions,” says Einsweiler.

Code Studio set about identifying the neighborhoods and districts that people in a given part of the state considered to be successful in their design, and created codes that would help communities recreate such places. To do so, the toolkit invites communities to label each given area according to its “context” — is it rural, urban, a village, a quiet residential neighborhood or a central business district? Then it identifies the dimensions and character of the streets — number of lanes; curb or no curb; sidewalks, and if so, how wide; etc. — and the building types and placement that go with that context. The resulting toolkit melds conventional zoning and form-based codes based on the urban-to-rural transect that new urbanists have begun to popularize. “The beauty is that it is optional, and it is quite flexible in its ability to handle multiple kinds of locations,” says Einsweiler.

Ultimately, says Manning-Broome, the toolkit had to be easy and affordable to administer and consist of clear, concise guidelines that could be represented in graphic form, rather than as pages and pages of legalistic termi-

The resulting toolkit melds conventional zoning and form-based codes based on the urban-to-rural transect that new urbanists have begun to popularize.



River Ranch in Lafayette, La., exemplifies one type of community that can be fostered by the Louisiana Land Use Toolkit.



Louisiana Land Use Toolkit Workshops

The interest and attendance — by local officials, REALTORS®, business owners and ordinary residents — surpassed expectations nearly every place the road show went.

nology. Once CPEX was satisfied the toolkit had hit the mark, the next step was to get it in front of local communities and stir interest in it. CPEX found a receptive ally in a number of local REALTOR® associations. In 2008, eight of the state's 13 associations applied to the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® for smart growth implementation grants that would allow them to host a "road show" and workshop for the toolkit, says Morris, who received the applications at his Washington, D.C. office.

"We decided that with that level of interest we would pull those out of the normal grant cycle and make a special grant for the toolkit road show," Morris says. Those funds made it possible to hold workshops in 10 communities across Louisiana in April and May, 2009. The workshop included not just a presentation on the toolkit, but also a discussion of local planning and development issues, and a hands-on mapping session in which participants worked together to place chips representing buildings, to visualize the kind of places they wanted to create.

The interest and attendance — by local officials, REALTORS®, business owners and ordinary residents — surpassed expectations nearly every place the road show went. Many participants responded to an appeal to chambers of commerce and community leaders from Stephen Moret, secretary of the Louisiana Department of Economic Development. Moret wrote: "In an effort to make Louisiana communities as competitive as possible, we encourage every municipality to create a plan for future growth allowing for new development while preserving the community's unique history and character."

"We had good involvement everywhere we went," recalls Einsweiler. "We presented in everything from a horse barn in one place to a new federal government building in Lafayette. We began by thinking this was for the smallest places, but it turns out this can be helpful to all kinds of places. We've talked to people in Alexandria, in areas around New Orleans. Monroe, in the northeast Louisiana, a place you might expect little interest, actually drew the biggest crowd."



River Ranch in Lafayette, La.



You had people in the development community, the regulatory community, real estate, planners, economic developers, local officials all together in a room where they worked together to “create” their community.

“It was really magnificent,” says Manning-Broome. “You had people in the development community, the regulatory community, real estate, planners, economic developers, local officials all together in a room where they worked together to ‘create’ their community. All the communities were incredibly different, but the take-away was that all could be created with our toolkit.”

In 2006, REALTOR® and NAR Director Sandra Guidroz moved to Alexandria in central Louisiana from Houma. “I moved north to get away from the hurricanes. I figured this was as far north as I could go without becoming a Yankee.” She found that Alexandria and the very rural area around it had little familiarity with the planning, development and redevelopment issues that she had known in Houma. The toolkit Road Show event in Alexandria was a big hit, she said.

“I thought it was fantastic. It drew from a lot of small communities within a 50 to 60 mile radius of Alexandria. They loved it because they had never gotten anything like that before.

“They got into [the mapping game] like playing Monopoly, moving hotels around. Where you got to lay your community out and say here’s where the subdivision should go, where the big lots and small lots go. We each put our different hats on — REALTORS®, local officials and what have you — and we had some contentious issues, but it was good for us all to work through them together. I hope they do it again.”

Meanwhile, Code Studio continues to work to refine the toolkit, with a new version that was due out at the end of 2009. CPEX has continued to raise money to try

REALTORS® would benefit in lots of ways by being more involved in planning their communities and in the quality of life and transportation issues.

to help communities implement planning and development codes. They are working directly with Tangipahoa Parish, between New Orleans and Baton Rouge, that was shocked by the wave of development it saw following the hurricanes, to create a plan and implement land use codes based on the toolkit.

In some cases, the arrival of the road show provided a catalyst for local efforts that had been simmering, says Mary Jane Bauer, CEO of the REALTOR® Association of Acadiana in Lafayette, the heart of Cajun country. “One of the best things that came about for our area was that we had had a comprehensive master plan developed by a large group of citizens that had sat on the shelf for years,” Bauer says. After the road show revived interest in the idea of planning, local officials in September 2009 finally approved funding to hire a consultant to create an official plan and begin to implement it.

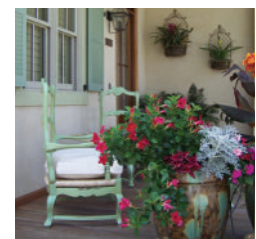
“This is so important to me as a citizen, but also as a REALTOR®,” adds Bauer. “REALTORS® would benefit in lots of ways by being more involved in planning their communities and in the quality of life and transportation issues. If it’s a place where people want to live and work the REALTORS® will be even more successful.”

Find the Louisiana Land Use Toolkit and associated materials online at: <http://www.landusetoolkit.com/>

Watch a YouTube video about the toolkit here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tm0OHX1N9PQ> ●

David A. Goldberg is the communications director for Smart Growth America, a nationwide coalition based in Washington, D.C. that advocates for land-use policy reform. In 2002, Mr. Goldberg was awarded a Loeb Fellowship at Harvard University, where he studied urban policy.





Designs for the new, LEED-certified Alabama Association of REALTORS® headquarters.

*By Christine Jordan Sexton*

While location is still the top driver when it comes to real estate transactions, green features that help to fight climate change as well as save money are swaying home owners when it comes to purchasing a house.

It's no surprise, then, that state and local REALTOR® associations have decided to build environmentally sensitive spaces as they outgrow old ones. With interest rates at an all-time low and readily available labor, REALTORS® are deciding now is the time to build green.

The Northern Virginia Association of REALTORS® (NVAR) broke ground on its new 24,000-square-foot building on May 4 and expects to occupy it by June 2010, said association chief executive Christine Todd.

The group decided to build LEED-rated space. Developed by the United States Green Building Council, LEED provides a framework for building green.

LEED, the acronym for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, is one of a handful of third-party standards. It is considered the definitive stamp of approval in the green architecture movement. NVAR's Todd said it "was a no brainer," to build a LEED-certified building. "We would have been criticized if we had not built to LEED standards," she said.

The association started discussing whether to build a new headquarters back in 2001 when the group had to decide whether to refurbish its existing building, tear the building down and rebuild or build a new facility. In 2004, the association decided to sell its land and build at a new location.

That's the same year that the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® unveiled its new corporate building in Washington, D.C., which is certified LEED Silver. The NAR building was the first privately owned LEED certified building in the city.

Todd said her group was wowed by what the NAR had accomplished. "We were very much inspired by the NAR building," she said.

The Northern Virginia building is a \$13-million capital investment, but the association will carry a \$2-million mortgage. It took advantage of historically low interest rates and tapped into a willing labor market to construct the building.

The association initially was shooting for LEED Silver certification but Todd noted that it is close to earning enough credit to take its building to the next level, LEED Gold.

"We are shooting for Gold but if we get the Silver, well, we'll take that as well," she said.

Like other LEED-certified buildings, the ventilation, heating and cooling systems are efficient and environmentally friendly.

There are special windows that reduce the penetration of heat while allowing in the light and the building is located near a Metro rail stop, making commuting by transit an attractive option.

State and local REALTOR® associations have decided to build environmentally sensitive spaces.



Construction site of the new NVAR building.



For those who don't use mass transit, there is shared parking with the adjacent project, reducing the impact caused by on-grade parking. There also is underground parking which has a landscaped plaza level. There are reserved parking spots for REALTORS®, agents and guests who drive hybrid vehicles or fuel efficient vehicles.

There are LEED guidelines for commercial buildings, new construction, schools and neighborhood designs. Points are awarded in five program areas: sustainable site development, water savings, energy savings, energy efficiency, and material selection and indoor environmental quality.

Cooper said each year every fifth grader in Alabama public schools comes to Montgomery. He wants to make his LEED Silver building part of the must-see landmarks on the fifth graders' field trip.

"They are all going to want to come in," said Cooper, who predicted the glass facade and modern look of the building will lure them and their parents into the space. "It will be a showplace."

Cooper is excited about the LEED process and highlights the benchmarks his association has met, such as recycling materials and using as many local products as possible. "Anything we can do to conserve natural



Tennessee Association  
of REALTORS®



The NAR building in Washington, D.C., also inspired the Alabama Association of REALTORS® to build a LEED Silver-rated workspace, said executive vice president J. Danny Cooper. A picture of the NAR office has hung on the walls in Montgomery and "was a drumbeat for us. It kept us heading in the right direction."

The association broke ground on the building September 17, and it will be the first LEED-certified building in Montgomery. It is located directly across the street from the Capitol and surrounding complex and just blocks from the Alabama Department of Archives of History and the National Civil Rights Memorial, designed by Maya Lin, who designed the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C.

resources and make the best use of all the things we use moves us forward," he said.

Similar to the NVAR, the Alabama association has been able to take advantage of available construction labor and lower interest rates. REALTORS® did agree to a \$36 additional membership fee to help fund the \$6 million building.

"Our members are very excited about this building," Cooper said.

While Alabama, Tennessee and Northern Virginia associations all decided they wanted to build LEED-certified spaces, the Tennessee Association of REALTORS® (TAR) had to change their building plans at the last minute. Building material costs ran higher than budgeted when TAR started building in 2006 said TAR Executive Vice President Steve Harding.



Alabama Association of REALTORS® design for its new building.

## The NAR building also inspired the Alabama Association of REALTORS® to build a LEED Silver-rated workspace.

Harding said the 13,000-square-foot building, which sits on a half-acre lot in Nashville, was designed to meet the LEED Gold standards for new construction. But the association scrapped plans for certification because Hurricane Katrina led to increased costs for lumber, plywood and other building materials in the Southeastern United States.

Regardless, the building was so well designed and planned that its utilities run about the same as the building it replaced which was less than half its size.

The association was also successful in lowering a city storm water tax. The tax is based on the amount of surface runoff commercial spaces contribute to the city's storm sewer system. The building has several features to mitigate runoff. It has front and rear bioswales, filled with native bog plants that filter and detain the water that falls on the building's roof and parking lot. The parking is made with permeable concrete so that rain water flows through its surface and is diverted into the

rear bioswale to help prevent polluted water from being fed into local streams, rivers and lakes. A tour of the property, which uses only rainwater for irrigation, led the city engineers to cut the storm water tax by nearly half.

Skeptical at first, the storm water engineers used a water hose to test the ability of the parking lot to drain water into the soil below its hard surface. "We passed the test," Harding says, jokingly noting that by the end of the tour the city officials had learned quite a bit.

The TAR headquarters also uses geothermal earth-coupling for heating and cooling. This system utilizes a 2 1/2-mile ground-loop that flows through a series of 21 wells drilled 300 feet down below the building's parking lot. The building has low-flow plumbing fixtures and dual flush toilets. High-performance glass allows a lot of natural light into the building and high ceilings, combined with ceiling fans, make for very comfortable spaces in which to work.



TAR's new building utilizes geothermal technology for heating and cooling.

Harding said TAR may try to achieve LEED certification after it adds a third floor, which was in the original design, but delayed. The additional floor would be surrounded by a visible green roof and also boast supplemental power with a solar photovoltaic panel system.

While he's proud of the accomplishments, Harding said what was considered state of the art a handful of years ago is almost commonplace today.

"It is no longer cutting edge," Harding said of automated energy and lighting features. "The technology is out there for anybody to do most of this, even as retrofit."

At times, he said, TAR battled with the city permitting department because some of the features it wanted to include in the building weren't specified in the local codes. "But now, some of the things we pioneered, we are seeing in construction throughout the city." ●

Christine Jordan Sexton is a Tallahassee-based freelance reporter who has done correspondent work for the Associated Press, the New York Times, Florida Medical Business and a variety of trade magazines, including Florida Lawyer and National Underwriter.

## NAR Smart Growth Grants Help Fund Green Efforts



The NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® is increasing the amount of money available to associations that promote sustainable green growth, and subsequently, a greener and cleaner economy.

A NAR grant program that was once targeted exclusively to promote smart growth initiatives has been expanded to include programs that help member REALTOR® associations encourage green building in their communities. Green building is becoming more attractive across the country especially as a way to encourage energy independence.

Until the change in policy there were no dedicated grants to green programs, said Hugh Morris, AICP, LEED AP and smart growth representative at NAR. The NAR has \$120,000 available annually in grants for green and smart growth initiatives.

Some REALTORS® associations across the country are already taking advantage of the green grant and are using it in ways to get the word out about green building in their communities.

In California, the San Luis Obispo Association of REALTORS® used the money to help fund an ECOEXPO. While it didn't offer the NAR green certification course it did provide agents the opportunity to earn continuing education credits, said Executive Director Lisa Smith. Although the course was tailored to REALTORS®,

Smith said the topic proved so interesting that some attorneys and bankers actually paid to sit in on the course.

It wasn't all academic, though, and the ECOEXPO highlighted 30-plus vendors from the area, including landscape architects, architects and contractors who specialize in the installation of solar energy panels — an attractive option in this sunny, central coast area of the state that is located midway between San Francisco and Los Angeles.

Wares featured at the expo ran the gamut, from hybrid cars and motorcycles to artificial turf that needs no watering. Children played with magical Shrinky Dinks that were melted through solar ovens while adults checked out the vendors.

There also were two bus tours highlighting some of the better green initiatives around town — including two remodeled homes and a multi-family unit.

“We had a little bit of everything for everybody,” said Smith, adding that some vendors already have contacted her to get details about next year.

Kevin Habuer taught the continuing education course but also was an organizer of the ECOEXPO as well as a vendor.

Habuer is a loan officer with the Mortgage House, a West Coast-based mortgage banker that offers energy-efficient loans. Habuer offers energy-efficient mortgages for home owners who are willing to either incorporate green features into a remodeled home or build a new home that meets Energy Star or LEED standards. LEED was developed by the United States Green Building Council and provides a concise framework for the design, construction and operations of a building.



San Luis Obispo Association of REALTORS® ECOEXPO

Energy Star means it meets the requirements laid out by the Environmental Protection Agency and Department of Energy. Habuer's firm offers a deal where homes that are built to LEED, or other regional green standards, can qualify for a 1 point discount on the mortgage.

While there has been a move afoot in commercial development to build green, Habuer said the interest is beginning to gain momentum in the residential market. Habuer said that people may want to build green homes but that they don't always have the vision it takes to see it all through.

“The biggest issue now is showing people how,” Habuer said, adding that events like the ECOEXPO where lenders, architects, contractors and others were brought together will help bring green options forward. Habuer said the goal is to “make the options and solutions available to people.”

Proceeds will be used to help pay for newspaper advertising promoting the San Luis Obispo Association of REALTORS® week-long campaign to collect used electronics. Smith said the group opens its doors the week after Christmas and residents are encouraged to drop off any old computer, cell phone or television they have. Last year three long-bed trucks hauled off what the association collected during its week-long drive. ●



# SELLING GREEN

*By Judy Newman*

When potential buyers are considering a home or condominium, more and more of them are no longer just looking to see how many bedrooms and bathrooms it has or if the kitchen is equipped with stainless steel appliances and granite countertops.

Some also want to know if the refrigerator has an Energy Star designation, if the toilets are low-flow or how energy efficient the windows are.

Features that make homes use less energy are becoming more important selling factors, REALTORS® say. And they are studying up on ways to help their clients go green by taking specialized classes and by highlighting environmentally friendly features via the Multiple Listing Service (MLS).

It's what the public wants, says Mary Janik, 2009 president of the five-county Traverse Area Association of REALTORS®, in Traverse City, Mich. Her organization is one of the first in the country that has "greened" its MLS. Homes with energy saving features have a green indicator on their MLS listings. Viewers perusing the listings on a computer can click on the symbol for green features and a written checklist pops up showing which features are marked as certified on the home.

Janik says a growing concern about protecting the region's environment is a big factor. "The sense that I'm getting is that, at least in our area, environmental quality is very, very important and our water quality

MLS listings are emphasizing the eco-friendliness of homes.



is of utmost importance to our people,” she says. “We are surrounded by 20 percent of the world’s fresh water supply (the Great Lakes). We need to be stewards of that water supply for future generations.”

Over the past couple of years, REALTORS® in the Traverse City area began noticing that people were interested not only in eco-friendly features in home building and remodeling but in having a way to find homes with those features on the Multiple Listing Service. “We really didn’t have anything set up to do that,” Janik says.

It worked out well, she says, that at about the same time, the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® stepped up its own effort to incorporate green procedures, launching a green training program. A 12-hour core course explains green building trends, sustainability issues and smart growth policies. Members can then choose one of three areas for further study — residential, commercial or property management — in a six-hour elective session. The three days of classes, which can also be taken online, conclude with tests that participants have to pass before they can earn an NAR Green Designation and become a member of its Green Resource Council.

Features that make homes use less energy are becoming more important selling factors.

Since the core course was introduced at NAR’s annual conference in Orlando in November 2008, nearly 5,000 REALTORS® have completed the class, says Al Medina, who manages the green training and is director of NAR’s Green Designation program. “That’s very good. It’s an indicator of the demand for green education,” says Medina, a LEED accredited professional from the U.S. Green Building Council.

Cost of the core program: \$295 in person or \$325 online; electives cost \$125.





At the Traverse Area Association of REALTORS® (TAAR), all six staff members will have their NAR Green Designation by the end of 2009, executive vice President Kimberly Pontius says. By September, 23 of the association's 605 REALTOR® members had gone through the program with another 25 slated for the November course. "I anticipate 10 percent of our members will have their Green Designation by year's end. That's how aggressively we're approaching it," Pontius says.

TAAR worked with the local home builders association to develop a disclosure form for sellers. The four-page form is "the most comprehensive greening of the MLS" that NAR's Green Resource Council says it has reviewed. Sellers and builders can specify if the home has any of a wide variety of features, based on four categories:

- Energy efficiency, such as Energy Star appliances or chemical-free insulation;
- Renewable heating and cooling, including solar panels, in-floor radiant heat or tankless water heaters;
- Indoor environmental quality, such as the use of finishes without volatile organic compounds, sustainable flooring in cork or bamboo, or low-flow bathroom fixtures; and
- Exterior water conservation, including rainwater collection or drought-resistant landscaping.

TAAR rolled out the green check-off concept in November 2008 in a combination trade show/outreach program called Green Solutions 4 — the "four" stood for: residential, commercial, property management and remodeling.

One of the things we are trying to do is to help the consumer understand what a green home is. It's not a random list of features, but a carefully thought-out grouping to address all of the environmental issues inherent in home building, operation and maintenance.

The goal was "to raise awareness about the value of green in home building and real estate" and to educate both REALTORS® and the public, Pontius says.

Since then, TAAR has shortened the name Green Solutions 4 to GS4 and has made it a brand under which the group has held more workshops and seminars about how to make properties eco-friendly.

Pontius has been asked for advice on how to incorporate green elements into the MLS. He spoke to the Council of Multiple Listing Services conference in Lake Tahoe in October, and he will be a speaker at NAR's annual conference in San Diego in November.

Janik says she was prompted to act when a speaker at NAR's 2008 conference recommended reading Thomas L. Friedman's book, *Hot, Flat, and Crowded*.

"It's going to open your eyes up. We're destroying all of our natural resources and then putting them in landfills when we're tired of them," Janik says. "We, as a board and association said, this isn't right. What can we do to get the word out to the public there's a lot of good in doing green construction and green home building?"

At the same time, home builders in the Traverse City area were ripe to go green, including Pathway Homes. Gary Jurkovich, chief executive officer, says he took a chance, building five homes, chock-full of energy-saving and eco-friendly features, on speculation at a time when the housing market was slowing down.

Next came Chrystal Ridge Condominiums, a 22-unit development under construction. The 1,600-square-foot condos, with full basement, are expected to have heating and cooling bills totaling only \$800 a year, Jurkovich says, even in cold and snowy northwest Michigan.

"We're not seeing homes built out of straw bales and recycled tires," Jurkovich says. "One of the biggest things is it has to be accessible to everybody."

Jurkovich says spending an extra \$2,500 can equip a home with spray foam insulation, low-flow bathroom fixtures, a high-efficiency furnace and hot water tank, and compact fluorescent light bulbs. "You'll get your payback in 36 months and have a significant impact on the carbon footprint," he says.

In the Tucson, Ariz., area, REALTORS® are about to introduce a checkoff list with categories of features consistent with national and local ratings systems for green homes. "We look at these critical categories: energy, water, resource efficiency, location, sustainable site and indoor environmental quality," says Jan Anderson of Long Realty Co. and a member of the Tucson Multiple Listing Service technology committee.

"One of the things we are trying to do is to help the consumer understand what a green home is. It's not a random list of features, but a carefully thought-out grouping to address all of the environmental issues inherent in home building, operation and maintenance," Anderson says.

There are definitely parts of the country that are seeing the need to (highlight green features.)

Each category will have a drop-down computer check list with features that are easily understood by consumers and real estate agents, such as Energy Star appliances, Anderson says. "Features will change over time as technology changes. But the issues we're addressing, such as energy conservation and water conservation — those are constant."

On the national level, NAR's Medina is working with the U.S. Green Building Council, the National Association of Home Builders and others to develop a tool kit to serve as a guide for other communities to add green features to their MLS listings. "There are definitely parts of the country that are seeing the need to do this and they don't have too much guidance right now," Medina says.



As more people build homes with green qualities or add environmentally friendly improvements to existing homes, those features seem to fall into four standard categories, Medina says: energy, water, indoor air quality and materials. Determining if homes with eco-friendly characteristics are “green” homes — if they are not certified by a third party or do not fit with national program standards — will be a question of degree. “It’s an issue that we’re trying to figure out,” he says. “If I want to say my home is energy efficient, how many features do I need to have?”

Medina says NAR’s tool kit will include a cover letter explaining why it makes sense to add green elements to the Multiple Listing Service; ideas on how to organize to get such changes made; case studies showing how some communities have greened their MLS; and a recommended data entry form. It will be a guide, not a mandate, Medina says.

Builders and home owners can also pursue third-party certification. LEED, or Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, certification is probably best known. Developed by the U.S. Green Building Council in Washington, D.C., the LEED designation requires meeting a long list of standards assessed in a “rigorous third-party commissioning process,” the Green Building Council says.

More cities are pressing builders to use LEED standards for new public buildings. For homes, though, it can be costly to meet the qualifications; plus there is the expense of hiring a consultant to test and quantify the features, Medina says.

The National Association of Home Builders offers its own sustainable standards, fairly similar to those for LEED buildings, and certification requires an analysis by an independent contractor. But costs are generally lower and much of the work can be prepared online, Medina says.

As for the potential hassle factor involved in MLSs adopting a green initiative, Medina says it is a question of “how responsive MLS decision makers want to be. The whole industry is changing. Consumers want it; the government is highly encouraging it through credits and incentives; and on the local level, it may be mandated. Some cities, like Boston, have adopted [sustainable requirements]. Building codes in cities like Boulder and Austin are heavily green,” he says.

“The challenge for MLSs is: do you want to be proactive or reactive? This is going to happen. If it hasn’t gotten to your community yet, it will, within a couple of years,” Medina says. ●

Judy Newman is a business reporter for the *Wisconsin State Journal* newspaper in Madison, Wis.



Photos courtesy of [www.flickr.com/photos/lisatown](http://www.flickr.com/photos/lisatown)

# Green Living Benefits Everyone



The Greens at Rolling Road in Baltimore, Md., is a newly built senior housing complex, developed by Enterprise Homes, Inc., the development arm of Enterprise Green Communities.

Chronically homeless people in Duluth, Minn., can live in the New San Marco apartments equipped with ceiling fans, energy-efficient lighting and high-efficiency steam heat.

Women and children with special needs occupy the Pomona Apartments, in Pomona, Calif., which have kitchen and bathroom fluorescent lights, exterior windows protected from the sun and carpets made of recycled materials.

Lower-income residents in Washington, D.C., can live at Wheeler Terrace, which has a geothermal heat pump and a green roof on one of its seven buildings.

Farm workers at the Colonia Amistad in Independence, Ore., have apartments with Energy Star refrigerators and washer-dryers and sidewalks that shed rainwater onto the lawn.

These are just a few of the housing projects that have been created with the help of Enterprise Community Partners' Green Communities program. The first national green building program focused on affordable housing, Enterprise Green Communities offers grants, loans, tax-credit equity, training and technical assistance to developers and builders around the country to help them finance projects that use environmentally sustainable materials, increase energy efficiency and reduce features with a negative environmental impact.

"The Green Communities program was set up to deliver health, economic and environmental benefits. You're providing a healthy living environment," said Dana Bourland, vice president of Green Initiatives for Enterprise Community Partners.

Many developers of affordable housing are eager to incorporate green aspects into their projects because they understand the benefits, Bourland said. "They are also mission driven. They know who they're serving. And they see what a difference it makes, delivering green, affordable housing," she said.

Established in 1982 in Washington, D.C., Enterprise Community Partners (then called the Enterprise Foundation), was created by real estate developer Jim Rouse and his wife, Patty, with the goal of making it possible for every American to live in decent, affordable housing. Since then, the organization has raised more than \$10 billion to help finance more than 250,000 housing units.

Its Enterprise Green Communities program, initiated in September 2004, was meant to be a five-year, \$555-million effort to build more than 8,500 homes for low-income people that would be energy efficient and employ sustainable building practices.

And it has surpassed its goals.

In five years, Enterprise Green Communities has pumped nearly \$700 million into projects that have created 16,000 affordable housing units nationwide.

Projects included in the Enterprise Green Communities program must meet certain guidelines. A lengthy checklist includes criteria such as:

- A green development plan that shows an integrated effort by the project team;
- A site along existing roads, water and sewer lines, near public transportation, but not within 100 feet of wetlands or land identified as habitat for endangered species;
- Property in a walkable neighborhood with at least four community and retail facilities within a half-mile;
- Energy Star appliances and water-conserving fixtures;
- Recycled materials or salvaged wood; and
- Renewable energy.

At Intervale Green in the Bronx, New York, at an intersection that looked like a bombed-out war zone when then-Pres. Jimmy Carter visited 30 years ago, about 400 people live in apartments with a private backyard and a garden studded with sculptures by a prominent local artist.

With the help of grants that included \$50,000 from Enterprise Green Communities, the Women's Housing and Economic Development Corp. (WHEDC) built the largest affordable, multi-family, high-rise building in the United States that is Energy Star-certified — a \$39 million, 128-unit building.

Lush, green roofs crown the complex and its landscaping — which includes 33 trees from the Mayor's Million Tree Initiative — is accessible to residents and to the community. Both are a source of great pride, said Nancy Biberman, WHEDC president.

"We are also proud to be able to locate non-toxic finishes and energy efficient fixtures that are both attractive and affordable," she said. "We are especially proud of the amenities in each apartment, which include access to broadband Internet. We are providing each family with a computer, as well as instruction on its use."

About one-third of the families who move into Intervale Green have come from homeless shelters. Residents are encouraged to get physically fit and reduce energy use at the same time, through initiatives like WHEDCo's "Burn Calories Not Energy — Take the Stairs" campaign, Biberman said.

"We are giving out bike helmets and pedometers to encourage fitness, and reusable water bottles to encourage recycling. We created a walkable interior courtyard with footprints so tenants can exercise outdoors with the children and count calories expended while walking," she said.

"Tenants are learning how to save money by creating their own green cleaning products. Most importantly, Intervale Green tenants are already seeing reduced energy costs," Biberman said.

Photo by Robert Schwarz



Parmenter Circle, Middleton, Wis.

Tenants in green housing units also benefit from the clean indoor air, said Enterprise's Bourland. A study of residents in 60 of the Enterprise Green Communities' homes in Seattle showed children with asthma had a 60 percent reduction in their symptoms within one year.

"We expected from the beginning that there would be an improvement, and our assumptions are right," Bourland said.

In Middleton, Wis., the Parmenter Circle project has seen a significant savings in electricity and water use, with green features that include low-flow toilets, faucets and showerheads; all fluorescent light fixtures; high-efficiency gas furnaces in each apartment; and two inches of rigid foam insulation under the basement floor, said Robert Schwarz, co-owner of the project development company, Nakoma Development.

He said installing energy-saving equipment added to the cost of the building. But a \$43,000 grant from Enterprise Green Communities helped cover some of the extra expense for the \$6.3-million project.

Forty of the 50 units have rent and income controls, and it helps that utility bills for heat and electricity combined average \$70 a month, or about \$45 in months in which little heat or air conditioning is needed, said Schwarz, who also lives in one of the apartments.

## We want to change people's perception about what affordable housing can be.

A recent energy audit by Enterprise Green Communities found that “Parmenter Circle really came out with flying colors. We surpassed their estimates” for reduced electricity and water use, Schwarz said.

Two projects being built in downtown Albuquerque by the private, nonprofit, Supportive Housing Coalition of New Mexico, have received grants from Enterprise Green Communities.

Silver Gardens will be adjacent to the Alvarado Transportation Center, a hub for commuter rail and buses, with 66 units for mixed-income residents. Downtown @ 700 Second is on a former brownfield site and will include 72 mixed-income apartments and some commercial space. It will have rooftop solar panels for hot water and heat, and domestic gray water recycling. That means water used in the units' sinks and showers will be captured, filtered and treated, then diverted for use in the commodes, said Mark Allison, executive director of the Supportive Housing Coalition, developing the projects.

“Water is just a huge thing out here for us,” he said. Innovative green design features such as those cost about \$500,000 extra. “But we're going to own and manage this property for the next 50 years. The more affordable we're able to make the project for the long run, the better it will be for tenants,” he said.

“We want to demonstrate that it makes good business sense and that it's the right thing to do. We want to change people's perception about what affordable housing can be,” Allison said.

Bourland said the projects built over the past five years have proven a point. “We're learning that you can do this in any housing, that it's cost effective. Now, let's do this in all affordable housing, so that green housing and affordable housing just become one and the same,” she said. ●



Intervale Green in the Bronx, New York



# Sustainable Partnership

## DOT, HUD and EPA form a new, unique relationship under the Livable Communities Initiative

*By Gary Fineout*

It may be just a fledgling partnership, but a unique arrangement among three federal agencies could set the stage for a concentrated focus on creating sustainable communities that aim to improve the environment, provide access to affordable housing and offer residents low-cost transportation.

“I would say that the goal of the partnership is to make the creation of communities that have sustainable characteristics the common-place style of development in this country, rather than the exception,” explains John Frece, head of the Smart Growth Office of the United States Environmental Protection Agency.

The Sustainable Communities partnership was forged among the EPA, the Department of Transportation and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development shortly after President Barack Obama took office in 2009. It started as an agreement between DOT and HUD to do joint initiatives on housing and transportation, but over the summer, EPA has also joined the partnership.

Frece, who had been the associate director of the University of Maryland’s Center for Smart Growth Research before going to work for EPA, views the partnership as a significant shift in the U.S. government’s attitude toward smart growth.



The goal of the partnership is to make the creation of communities that have sustainable characteristics the common-place style of development.

“The smart growth program has been working on these issues since 1996,” said Frece. “What has changed in the past four or five months is that I think the federal government has gone from a point where we were one of the few offices looking at this to one of many agencies looking at these issues.”

The partnership has some broad goals outlined in its agreement, which include: provide more transportation choices, promote equitable and affordable housing, support existing communities, increase access to economic opportunities and align policies and funding among the three agencies to support the effort.

Other key elements of the agreement call for redefining housing affordability measures so that they include transportation costs, redeveloping underutilized sites and performing research to develop a way to evaluate the livability of communities.

EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson — who testified about the partnership before Congress — said the idea is that these goals would wind up emphasizing developments that use less land and energy, provide affordable housing to people of all income and stages of life, make it easier for people to get to their destinations on foot, bike or public transit and direct growth to developed areas.

Jackson acknowledged that while there is a debate about the “appropriate federal role” in land use decisions, it’s also apparent that federal decisions can influence development patterns. She said the federal government

has an “obligation” to “ensure our actions do not favor development that adversely affects the environment and public health.”

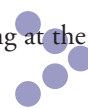
“If we are smarter about how we grow, we can make America’s big cities, small towns and rural communities more resilient to the economic and environmental challenges facing America,” she said.

The ramifications of the partnership aren’t entirely clear yet as all three agencies are working on an action plan intended to carry out the goals. Frece pointed out, however, that the goals will become imbedded in the legislative and regulatory actions of the three agencies who are now meeting weekly to discuss the initiative.

And Frece notes that one effort that has already begun is to identify conflicting federal policies that are “barriers” to carrying out the goals of the partnership. One of the barriers that has been removed is a prohibition that kept HUD from investing in multi-family housing projects built on brownfields.

“There are properties across the country with good access to affordable transportation and jobs that could be developed into affordable housing but aren’t developed because of the federal red tape involved,” said HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan when he announced the policy change.

But Frece cautioned that the first goal of looking at the barriers is “first do no harm.”





The partnership will also influence how the federal government hands out grants and other assistance to cities and counties across the country.

The partnership will also influence how the federal government hands out grants and other assistance to cities and counties across the country.

The top officials at all three agencies this fall toured Chicago, Denver and Dubuque, Iowa where they looked at developments that met the sustainable communities goals. During the visit to Denver, Donovan announced his agency was awarding \$300 million in money from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to fund 36 “green” public housing transformation projects across the country. One \$10 million grant was going to the Denver Housing Authority to continue development of South Lincoln Park Homes, which is located next to a light rail stop and built on a formerly contaminated brownfield site.

These grants are designated for the substantial rehabilitation or new construction of public housing developments that will increase energy efficiency and environmental performance. The idea is to reduce energy costs, generate savings for residents and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The 36 projects that received money were spread out across the country from Miami to Alexandria, La.; Rome, Ga.; El Paso, Texas and Seattle.

EPA announced in September that it would pay for technical assistance grants to the state of California, the



Projects that promote greater mobility, a cleaner environment and a more livable community would receive priority over other projects.

cities of Las Cruces, N.M., Louisville, Ky., and Montgomery County, Md. that would bring together agency staff and experts to help with sustainability efforts. EPA also unveiled a new tool to help local governments identify specific zoning code and land ordinance fixes that would improve access to affordable housing, provide additional low-cost transportation options, preserve community character and protect the environment.

EPA also plans to launch an urban waters initiative in connection with HUD and DOT to help urban communities revitalize their waterways and restore neighboring communities. The environmental agency also wants additional funding to boost its clean water program that offers financial assistance to improve aging wastewater and storm water systems.

Frece said that the billions spent on water improvements can influence where growth occurs.

DOT Secretary Ray LaHood said in June that his agency planned to award \$1.5 billion in Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grants by early 2010. LaHood said that projects that promote greater mobility, a cleaner environment and a more livable community would receive priority over other projects.

HUD Secretary Donovan — who appeared jointly before Congress with LaHood and EPA Administrator Jackson — said targeting affordable housing projects that feature reduced transportation costs is not only good for the environment, but it makes economic sense.

“The connection between transportation options and home values is clear,” Donovan told Congress. “As the recent housing downturn has shown, auto dependent houses — or homes that virtually require the resident to have access to a car — are more vulnerable to price devaluation. Homes in distant or remote neighborhoods showed a greater decline in value, while some centrally-located homes held or increased their value compared to regional averages.”

Frece says research done by EPA and private firms shows that there is a great deal of demand for sustainable communities that isn’t being met right now. He says that changing demographics — from aging baby boomers desirous of being close to entertainment and health care to young people without children — are creating a desire for places to live that are walkable and have amenities nearby.

“There’s a big gap between the demand and what’s out there,” said Frece. ●

Gary Fineout is an award-winning journalist who covered politics and government for nearly 20 years. He previously worked in the Tallahassee bureau of *The Miami Herald* and his work has also appeared in *The New York Times* and several other Florida newspapers. He is now an independent journalist.

# A New Kind of **ZONING**

Communities of all sizes  
are adopting form-based codes



By Brad Broberg

**H**urricane Katrina nearly blasted Pass Christian, Miss., off the map. The brutal storm leveled three out of every four buildings in the small Gulf Coast community. The historic downtown was hit especially hard. Just a handful of buildings survived.

“It was pretty horrific,” said Jeffrey Bounds, city planner.

Four years after the storm, the town is being rebuilt using form-based codes, an alternative approach to conventional zoning codes that fosters a more urban style of development.

Although most of Pass Christian’s 4,000 or so residents had never heard of form-based codes, they were familiar with the kind of community the codes are designed to produce.

“When we talked about mixed-use and walkability, people knew what we were talking about — especially the old-timers — because that’s how the town functioned as recently as the 1950s,” Bounds said.

Pass Christian is one of a growing number of places that are adopting form-based codes. “It looks to me like almost every town or city that is interested in redoing their zoning is at least looking at a form-based approach,” said Sandy Sorlien, director of technical research at the Center for Applied Transect Studies (CATS). “It’s really picking up steam.”

CATS is a nonprofit organization that promotes greater understanding of the transect. The transect, a graduated approach to controlling the intensity of development, is the organizing principle of the SmartCode, a customizable template created by Duany Plater-Zyberk & Co. (DPZ) to help communities put form-based codes to work.

Whether places use the SmartCode or some other model, the contrast between form-based codes and conventional codes is the same. Rather than regulating development by focusing primarily on land use, form-based codes focus primarily on physical form, describing in great detail what is desired in the built environment rather than what is prohibited.

Why does that matter? Because it’s a better way to create predictable outcomes. Not just any outcome, though. Form-based codes were conceived to regulate the details — everything from smaller blocks to buildings sitting closer to the street — that are most important to urbanism.

Urbanism represents a return to the way neighborhoods grew before development shifted from towns and cities to auto-oriented suburbs, where conventional codes typically separate various land uses and housing types — single-family, multi-family, retail, office — and maintain low density.

With sprawl, congestion and other ills making the typical suburban model less and less sustainable, more and more places are using form-based codes to recreate the compact, walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods of the past — a style that’s often referred to as new urbanism and which fits hand-in-glove with smart growth.

“Most zoning codes make smart growth illegal to build,” said Dan Parolek, a principal with Opticos Design. “Form-based codes have proven to be the most effective tool in breaking down those barriers and incentivizing the development of ... urban environments.”

DPZ pioneered form-based codes when it designed the town of Seaside, Fla., an early example of new urbanism that was founded in 1979. Today, Seaside is but one example of how form-based codes are being applied across the country.

In the beginning, cities and counties dipped their toes in the water by adopting form-based codes — sometimes at a developer’s behest and sometimes at their own initiative — to regulate specific projects or districts such as

Typical gulf coast architecture will be the foundation of redevelopment design in Pass Christian, Miss.



## More and more places are using form-based codes to recreate the compact, walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods of the past.

downtown. They often left conventional codes in place and offered form-based codes as options.

Now, more and more places are jumping in with both feet, replacing conventional codes with form-based codes and applying them universally. Examples range from small towns such as Pass Christian to big cities such as Denver to entire regions such as the Lake Tahoe Basin.

“Form-based coding’s time has come,” said Scott Polikov of Gateway Planning Group. Among the projects he’s worked on utilizing the SmartCode is a transit-oriented development initiated by the city of Leander, Texas.

The project covers 2,000 acres of undeveloped land plus downtown Leander. Although the start of construction awaits completion of a rail line from Austin, the form-based code will produce a “full-blown urban village” on the undeveloped property, Polikov said.

With seven different landowners owning pieces of the site, it would have been difficult for the city to achieve a unified vision for the property using a conventional code because it wouldn’t have spelled out the details needed to create a compact, walkable, mixed-use development.

Picture below: After completion of a rail line from Austin, Leander, Texas, will begin construction on a full-blown urban village using form-based codes to guide its design.



©Courtesy of Gateway Planning Group, Inc.

By utilizing a form-based code, the city was able to act as a “de facto master developer,” Polikov said.

Pass Christian was already rewriting its zoning code when Katrina hit, but didn’t decide to develop a form-based code until after officials attended the Mississippi Renewal Forum, where a team from the Congress for New Urbanism introduced the concept to 11 coastal cities facing major rebuilding challenges following the storm.

“The forum planted a seed,” Bounds recalled. “The planning commission said ‘let’s throw what we started away, start with a clean sheet of paper and do something a little bolder.’ There was no better time coming down the road.”

The existing conventional code had paved the way for “classic suburban sprawl gone wild,” Bounds said. The appeal of a form-based code was its potential to help Pass Christian recapture its original small-town character. “That idea had a lot of resonance with people,” he said.

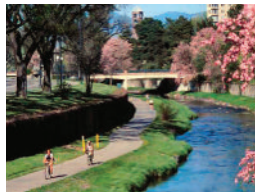
Pass Christian’s form-based code, which is based on the SmartCode, took effect last year. One of the advantages of a form-based code versus a conventional code is flexibility. In the historic downtown, for example, the code



Denver Metro Convention and Visitors Bureau



Photo by: Randy Brown



Cherry Creek bike path and Lodo grille and dining in Denver, Colo.

All photos: Courtesy of Denver Metro Convention and Visitors Bureau



Photo by: Steve Crecelius

requires buildings on two key streets to be built with retail facades. While the intent is that the buildings be used as retail, the code also allows them to be used as dwellings or offices if retail demand is slow to develop.

“By controlling the appearance, we believe the [intended] use ultimately will follow the appearance as long as we get the appearance right,” Bounds said.

Time will tell whether Pass Christian’s form-based code produces the desired results, but the proof already is coming out of the ground in New Town, a new urban community of 5,700 homes being built from scratch on 755 acres in St. Charles, Mo.

“Our intent is to replicate a small town in the Midwest,” said Tim Busse, town architect.

The developer, Whittaker Homes, wasn’t looking to utilize a form-based code when it conceived the project, Busse said, but the firm that planned the town, DPZ, knew the SmartCode was the right tool.

One of the first steps involved in creating a form-based code is to document the characteristics needed to produce the intended outcome. The New Town project team studied St. Charles and other communities in the region with vibrant urban fabrics, cataloging street widths, setback distances, building facades and other urban characteristics — the DNA of compact, walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods — at a block by block level.

The form-based code — embedded in the master plan and adopted by the city of St. Charles as the mandatory standard for all new urban development in the city — enabled Whittaker Homes to reproduce that DNA in a way conventional codes typically do not. “You could piecemeal it [with conventional codes], and end up with a form-based code, so why not begin with one,” Busse said.

The transect has become the most common organizing principle — or basis for differentiating between zones



Stan Obert for Denver Metro Convention and Visitors Bureau



Steve Crecelius for Denver Metro Convention and Visitors Bureau

Form-based codes contribute to a quality of life that many people desire such as walkable communities, schools located near homes, neighborhood grocery stores, restaurants, etc. It's an easy lifestyle to sell.

River Ranch is a new urban community in Lafayette, La. River Ranch was designed with a form-based model but entitled under a conventional code. As a result, 119 variances were required to provide the details necessary for compact, walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods.

"We needed 18 different street types alone — and half of them were not allowed [in the conventional code]," said architect Steve Oubre, who prepared the master plan for the 324-acre project. Other variances included decreasing the minimum setback to 0 to 15 feet (it was 20 feet), reducing minimum density to one unit per 3,500 square feet (it was one unit per 5,000 square feet) and placing parking at the rear instead of the front of buildings.

Since that time, the city of Lafayette has amended its zoning code to include a form-based option. The REALTOR® Association of Acadiana is now pushing for form-based codes to be included in more zoning codes throughout the six-parish region.

"REALTORS® recognize that having a community where people want to live and work is important to their business," said Mary Jane Bauer, the association's CEO. "Form-based codes contribute to a quality of life that many people desire such as walkable communities, schools located near homes, neighborhood grocery stores, restaurants, etc. It's an easy lifestyle to sell."

That message is trickling up.

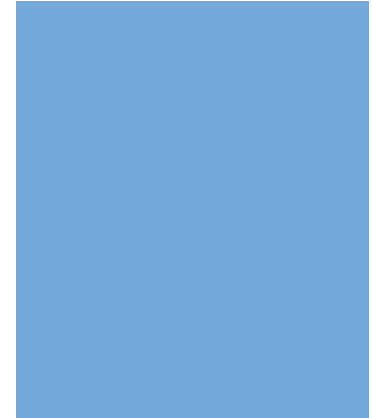
"As more high-quality projects regulated by form-based codes come out of the ground ... cities, towns and counties of all sizes across the country are becoming interested in using form-based codes," Parolek said. "Practitioners have shown that FBCs are not just for small sites, but can also be effective at citywide, county and regional scales."

— of form-based codes. "I've heard it called a feathering of the intensity of uses," Busse said.

The transect mirrors the natural world by creating a sequence of habitats — or in human terms built environments — that achieve urbanism through a series of gradual transitions from very rural at the edge to very urban at the center.

The SmartCode identifies six rural-to-urban transect zones. Within each zone, the SmartCode applies form-based regulations to ensure the built environment is appropriate to the location. Exactly how that looks varies from place to place depending on the vision of stakeholders — the developer, community, local government — and the geography involved. New Town, for example, contains no natural (T-1) or rural (T-2) zones, just sub-urban (T-3), general urban (T-4), urban center (T-5) and urban core (T-6).

One way to understand what a form-based code brings to the table is to consider what it takes to develop compact, walkable, mixed-use neighborhood without one.



By supporting compact, walkable, mixed-use development, a form-based code is expected to limit auto use, thereby reducing emissions and improving air quality.

The city of Denver and the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) are banking on that as they prepare to replace their existing zoning codes with form-based codes.

“We have a [conventional] code that’s really broken,” said Peter Park, manager of community planning and development in Denver. “It doesn’t support a lot of the policies in our adopted plans for sustainability, transportation and land use.”

Denver’s form-based code is expected to go to the city council early next year. In areas where the city wants to maintain stability, such as historic residential neighborhoods with bungalows on small lots, the code will ensure future development jibes with existing characteristics. In areas targeted for change, such as near new rail stations, the code will pave the way for transit-oriented development featuring a mix of uses and housing types within walking distance of the stations.

“The point is to have a vision of what kind of place we want and then have the regulations to support that,” Park said.

A desire to ensure the built environment complements the surrounding landscape is one of the reasons the TRPA, which spans four counties straddling the California/Nevada border, is starting a two-year process to develop a form-based code.

Vast stretches of the region are wilderness, but it includes the city of South Lake Tahoe and a number of small towns, where a legacy of “strip commercial” development is out of sync with the natural setting, said John Hitchcock, TRPA’s principal planner.

Environmental issues are also a driving force. By supporting compact, walkable, mixed-use development, a form-based code is expected to limit auto use, thereby reducing emissions and improving air quality.

In addition, compact development will leave more room for natural and/or man-made detention basins to filter sediments before they make their way into Lake Tahoe and degrade its prized clarity, Hitchcock said. ●

Brad Broberg is a Seattle-based freelance writer specializing in business and development issues. His work appears regularly in the *Puget Sound Business Journal* and the *Seattle Daily Journal of Commerce*.

# Malls Get Makeovers into Mixed-Use Hubs



Forward-thinking developers are transforming tired, old malls into revitalized mixed-use centers of community activity.

Bayshore Town Center in Milwaukee, Wis.

By G.M. Filisko

Like a phoenix rising from the ashes, a growing number of aging and obsolete shopping malls are being transformed into vibrant, walkable mixed-use communities, creating more-profitable retailers and developers, property-tax-flush governments, and more content and less harried residents and workers.

Though the trend has been slowed by today's recession, experts expect it to regain momentum when real estate markets begin to exhibit consistent signs of long-term recovery. "If any retail is going to be developed in the future, it will be more in this mixed-use format because it's responsive to needs and trends in our society," says

If retail is going to be developed in the future, it will be in this mixed-use format because it's responsive to needs and trends in our society.



Bayshore Shopping Center in Milwaukee, Wis., was once a sprawling retail mall complex.

developer Yaromir Steiner, CEO of Steiner + Associates in Columbus, Ohio. “It’s more environmentally responsible, and it responds to people’s desire for placemaking, or the need to have leisure environments where people can meet each other.”

### **Honey, We Forgot the Downtown**

“It’s interesting how the old becomes new again,” says Rodney Nanney, AICP, principal at Building Place Consultants, a community planning and economic development consulting firm in Ypsilanti, Mich. “We have historic downtowns in small towns and cities that grew up to support the population immediately around them. Those were the shopping malls of their day.”

It’s true that the mixed-use walkable community isn’t new. In the “olden days,” when transportation was difficult and expensive, city centers were by necessity more compact. But that development model fell out of favor as transportation became accessible. Developers increasingly turned to suburban single-use sites, which are easier to develop and finance than mixed-use projects.

“In America after World War II, we stopped creating urban gathering places like village centers or main streets, and what’s worse is that we destroyed some of the ones we had,” explains Steiner. “Fast forward to today, and the United States has many well-done single-use projects — residential subdivisions, office parks and shopping malls — but not many downtowns.”



Bayshore Town Center is an example of how an old retail center is transforming into a mixed-use, vibrant community.



Long-term value would be created by getting rid of the mall, reintroducing the street grid and reconnecting the back streets to neighborhoods.



Above: Architectural renderings showcase redevelopment plans for Columbus Commons.

However, as baby boomers age, they're increasingly seeking out walkable communities in which to live, work and shop. "The shopping mall is a sterile idea, and there's only one way to get there — to drive," says Nanney. "People want a downtown and a more vibrant experience when they do their shopping."

Out-of-date malls are perfect candidates for creating those communities. "Old malls have good locations," says Steiner. "But they've got too much retail and parking. We need to take that retail, shrink it a little, design streets, add civic buildings, residences, office space and hotels, and we'll have little downtowns."

Steiner knows whereof he speaks. In 2007, his company completed the first phase of the transformation of the aging Milwaukee-area Bayshore Shopping Center into today's mixed-use Bayshore Town Center. His company is currently converting the former Coliseum Mall in Hampton, Va., into the mixed-use Peninsula Town Center.

### Malls Making Mixed-Use Sense

The mall-to-mixed-use trend began with the 1991 conversion of the Boca Mall to the apartment, office and retail facility that is now Mizner Park in Boca Raton, Fla., says Arthur C. Nelson, presidential professor and director of the Metropolitan Research Center at Salt Lake City's University of Utah campus.

Few conversions followed Mizner Park until after the millennium, when the trend gained momentum. Among the first was Villa Italia in Lakewood, Colo., which was transformed in 2004 into Belmar. Today, Belmar includes a 1.1-acre plaza, a 2.1-acre park, more than 200,000 square feet of office space, 1,300 row homes, townhomes, condominiums and apartments, and more than 85 shops and restaurants.

"Villa Italia was 1.4-million square feet of enclosed shopping mall surrounded by a sea of parking on a single, 100-acre parcel," explains Roger S. Pecsok, development

director at Continuum Partners in Denver. "The mall had a combination of ownership, and there were multiple anchors that had veto rights over things that could get done. That paralyzed any potential for the mall to be repositioned or updated. The owners weren't refreshing the tenant mix and were getting a lot of vacancies, and sales were declining year after year. It was definitely on a downward spiral."

Continuum Partners proposed the transformation. "We really had a belief in creating a downtown for a community that had no downtown area or center of gravity," says Pecsok. "We knew we could get the retail needed because of the mall, and we believed in the long-term value that would be created by getting rid of the mall, reintroducing the street grid and reconnecting the back streets to neighborhoods to create that urban core. We believed that would drive more successful rents for all the uses."



Belmar in  
Lakewood, Colo.



That belief is now reality. “Our office space is essentially 100 percent occupied at above-market rents,” says Pecsok. “Apartments have commanded roughly a 20 percent premium over the rest of the submarket, and the for-sale residential product has established new highs in the market, even though the market is very soft.”

The retail has been “tricky,” Pecsok admits. “There’s always turnover in a center of this size. But we’ve completed a few significant and sizable deals, and we’ve broken ground on another 65,000-square-foot retail building on the site.”

Another project that’s underway is the redevelopment of Columbus City Center, a 20-year-old mall that’s being torn down to make way for Columbus Commons, a mixed-use project centered around a nine-acre park. The plan envisions 250 to 400 residential units — for either rental or sale, depending on market needs — 30,000 to 70,000 square feet of retail and 400,000 square feet of office space.

The demolition of the mall began in October, and the park is scheduled for completion in December 2010. “Our plan is to demolish the mall, create a clean, green slate and prepare the site for development,” says Amy Taylor, COO at Capitol South in Columbus, Ohio. “We’ll create the mixed-use element when the market is really ready.”



Blue Back Square in Hartford, Conn.



Blue Back Square in Hartford, Conn.

### Variation on a Theme

It’s not only malls that are being repositioned into mixed-use centers. Stagnant standalone retail with similarly stagnant surrounding parcels is also being converted.

“The site we assembled was an old car dealership, a couple of small residential buildings, an American Legion post and a couple of parking areas,” explains Robert Wiener, managing partner of Blue Back Square LLC in Hartford, Conn. “Some of it was obsolete and some was underutilized. There were very limited residential opportunities, and there were office buildings nearby, but they weren’t Class A and were always full. The retail was mostly small-format stores. We saw the opportunity to supply the missing elements in that market.”

The goal was to take that lackluster area and create a mixed-use center that complimented West Hartford Center, an adjacent shopping and dining district. Today Blue Back Square includes 62 condominiums and 48 apartments, 90,000 square feet of office space, 60,000 square feet of medical office space and about 250,000 square feet of retail.

“We’re not doing anything fundamentally different than what people in Europe were doing hundreds of years ago,” says Wiener. “We forgot how to do this after World War II, but the basic principles have been around. They don’t change.”



### Waiting for the Tide to Turn

Today's recession has slowed the mall-to-mixed-use engine. "For a time, these projects were considered the next trend in regional mall evolution," explains Nelson. "The economy has changed some of that. With the financial meltdown, lenders will be reluctant to pursue these mixed-use options even if they make all the sense in the world."

One example is Cottonwood Mall in Holladay, Utah. It's scheduled for redevelopment, but Chicago's General Growth Properties Inc. (GGP) has put the project on hold.

"The reason for delaying construction was the collapse of financial markets and the subsequent recession," said spokesperson Jim Graham in a statement, adding that the project has also been complicated by GGP's bankruptcy. "The delay is not a reflection on the quality of the mixed-use plan for the property."

In addition, Vornado Realty Trust plans to redevelop Springfield Mall in Springfield, Va., into the Springfield Town Center. It will add 2,000 residential units, about 1.1 million square feet of office space, a 225-room hotel and about 175,000 square feet of service-oriented retail. The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors approved Vornado's zoning request in June 2009.

However, the mall repositioning engine is simply idling until the economy recovers. "My sense is that we overbuilt retail space between 2003 and 2005, but not by much," says Nelson. "We still grow as a nation by about 1 percent per year. So if we were overbuilt by 5 percent in 2008, by 2012 we'll have absorbed that, and we'll be right back to



needing space. Will we be the hyper-consuming society we were? Maybe not. But we'll still need clothing and places to eat, and we'll want things like jewelry and cosmetics. Maybe some retail features will be cut back, but not a whole lot. In the meantime, the trend of mall conversions will be constrained and limited to a few real estate investment trusts that have positive experience in these kinds of redevelopments."

Wiener agrees. "I don't think today's market is a paradigm shift," he says. "I think it's a slow spot. The principles of mixed-use don't change, and the right way to do it isn't going to be different in 10 years. We just have to wait." ●

G.M. Filisko is an attorney and freelance writer who writes frequently on real estate, business and legal issues. Ms. Filisko served as an editor at NAR's REALTOR® Magazine for 10 years.

# A LEEDING Community



A LEED-ND community at Whistler Crossing in Riverdale, Illinois.

©Farr Associates  
Architecture/Planning/  
Presentation, Chicago, Ill.



New rating systems for green neighborhoods is inaugurated

By Steve Wright

In a short decade, Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) has become the standard for measuring the sustainability of a building.

With everyday people fighting soaring energy costs and striving to spend their dollars efficiently in a bad economy, LEED has gone from an obscure movement to a clear concept in the vocabulary of mom and pop consumers.

But a number of leading urbanists began to realize that if applying LEED standards to a building is good, developing a system of LEED standards for every aspect of neighborhood development would be great.

LEED for Neighborhood Development Rating System (LEED-ND) integrates the principles of smart growth, urbanism and green building.

And that is exactly what a herculean effort by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU) and the Natural Resources Defense Council has achieved.

Born of a balloting process among planning and sustainability experts, the LEED for Neighborhood Development Rating System (LEED-ND) integrates the principles of smart growth, urbanism and green building into the first national system for neighborhood design.

An exhaustive 100-plus page document creates a checklist for every conceivable element to promote sustainable neighborhood design. Points are given for: connectivity to existing development, water and land conservation, developing with a strong grid of streets, building near transit, creating affordable housing, using infill sites, facilitating a mix of uses, integrating universal design to accommodate people with disabilities, and dozens of other measures of compact, efficient neighborhood design that promotes healthy walkability while reducing automobile dependency.

## The LEED-ND system is calibrated to deal with smaller communities and smaller projects as well as larger cities.

“The LEED building program was limited in that a building could get a platinum (the highest standard of building sustainability), gold or silver certification, but be in a location where the employees or residents would be driving unnecessarily long drives to get to work, shopping or home,” said John Norquist, CNU president and CEO.

The Bank of America Tower on Sixth Avenue in Manhattan



Norquist said that very example happened in the Chicago area when a major bank headquarters moved to a new location in a highly-efficient building that earned a high LEED rating, but was isolated far from public transit.

“The old headquarters was on a transit line, but the new one was built so far away that everybody who worked there had to drive. People who used to take transit had to buy a car,” he said. “The energy spent on commuting to the new building blew out the energy savings in the LEED-certified building.”

“The Bank of America Tower on Sixth Avenue between 42nd and 43rd streets in Manhattan is a perfect example of a building that was built to meet LEED platinum building standards, but would also meet LEED neighborhood standards because it is an infill site with something like a half dozen major transit lines reached by elevators right underneath it,” Norquist said of the 54-story skyscraper on Bryant Park. “Not every place is like Manhattan, so the [LEED-ND] system is calibrated to deal with smaller communities and smaller projects.

While filled with complex calculations for everything from number of streets per block (small streets and lots of them earn high points) to ways of conserving topsoil and wetlands on-site, Norquist stresses that LEED-ND’s bottom line is market-friendly.





LEED-ND has created first-ever  
certification standards for  
entire communities and master  
planned developments.



“CNU is composed mostly of architects, planners and real estate investors and it played an important role in connecting the rating system to market realities,” he said of the mom and pop benefits of LEED-ND. “There is a whole cascade of benefits that come with compact development: transportation options, walkability, improved real estate value — it makes the economy more efficient.”

Chicago-based architect Doug Farr, one of the fathers of LEED building certification and author of *Sustainable Urbanism: Urban Design With Nature*, said LEED-ND has created first-ever certification standards for entire communities and master planned developments.

He explained that LEED-ND projects earn points by addressing principles of smart growth applied to the development of virgin lands, sensitive lands and infill developments. It also incorporates CNU’s charter that urges the creation of walkable communities and coherent urban places with: a mix of uses, choices in types of housing and options for how one gets around, with walking being the most reliable mode of transportation — plus biking and public transit.

“There is a strong argument that this is about choice and giving people rich communities and their ability to find their place in them, not dictating solutions,” he said.

Farr said LEED-ND’s sprawl-busting standards can make life much more economical in tough times.

“In exurbia, we find that there is often one car provided per adult, sometimes resulting in three or four cars per household. The benefit of living in a LEED-ND community is that the family can downsize their number of cars — AAA estimates an \$8,000 cost per year per auto, including insurance, gas, etc. — and avail themselves of some walking to meet needs, along with bike and transit options plus car share options,” he said. “Car share is cars placed in public locations, available for rental by mile or hour. So a family that needs a car once a week for a regular activity or outing can reserve a shared car for a couple hours, say, every Thursday evening. In an economic downturn, such options are looking increasingly attractive.”

Farr said a decade of working with LEED building standards has shown that a premium green building might cost 3 percent more than one built with conventional materials, but the structure may see up to a 16 percent increase in appraised value, plus it will be cheaper to operate.

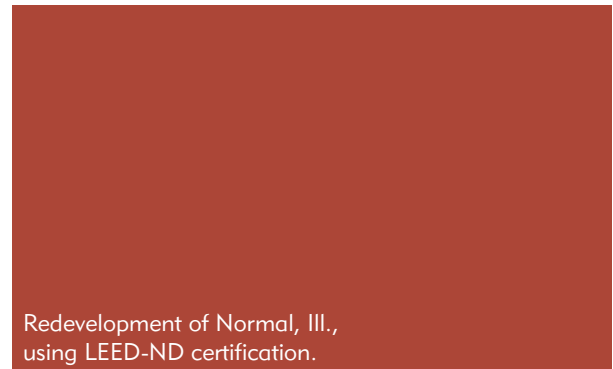
“We want to apply those same principles of cost/benefit to an entire neighborhood,” Farr said of LEED-ND. “The benefits to the home owner are profound; the benefits to society are huge. For generations, we have subsidized the wrong stuff. LEED-ND may help in a national debate to redirect scarce resources to long-term, lasting value.”

Justin Horner, transportation policy analyst for the Natural Resources Defense Council, said LEED-ND works for small villages as well as big cities.

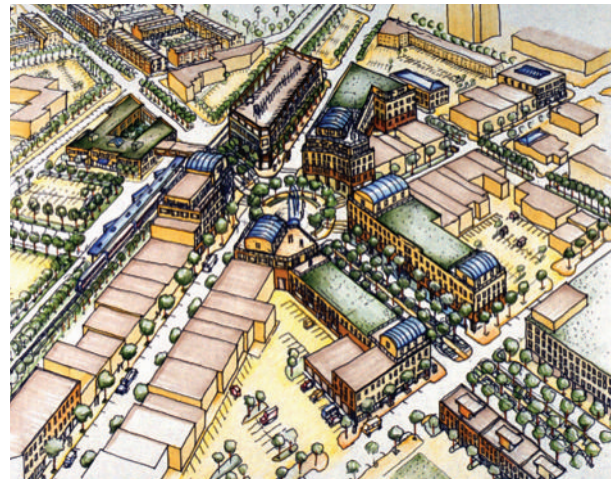
“A major misconception about smart growth is that it will transform our neighborhoods into Manhattan. Nothing could be further from the truth,” he said. “We need density to create markets for local businesses and to make transit feasible, but most people would be surprised at how modest that density threshold is. What LEED-ND does is give us a concrete image of what smart growth actually is — and we think people will like what they see.”

Horner points out that in a relatively short period of time, LEED accreditation became a respected national standard for sustainable building development. He said LEED-ND will take LEED’s market cache and apply it to entire neighborhoods, so consumers can “separate real sustainable development from the pretenders.”

“LEED-ND is the first systematic attempt to really define what smart growth is. The system’s measures and metrics not only provide guidance on how to minimize the environmental impacts of development, they also reflect the latest in cutting-edge urban design,” he explained. “These are the places where people will want to live.”



Redevelopment of Normal, Ill.,  
using LEED-ND certification.



©Farr Associates Architecture/Planning/Presentation, Chicago, Ill.



©Farr Associates Architecture/Planning/Presentation, Chicago, Ill.

LEED accreditation became a respected national standard for sustainable building development.

“Historically, environmentalists have been great at saying ‘no’ to development, but we can no longer ignore the environmental consequences of where we live and how we live,” Horner continued. “LEED-ND opens the door for environmentalists to say ‘yes.’”

Sophie Lambert, director of LEED for Neighborhood Development with the USGBC, agrees that LEED-ND can help address many of the concerns people have with new development.

“Community groups who sometimes oppose new development due to concerns about traffic and the like could see the environmental, health and social benefits of a LEED-ND project,” she said.

In addition, LEED-ND is the first national rating system for green neighborhood development in smart growth locations with compact, walkable form and energy- and water-efficient buildings and infrastructure.

Getting the community involved has proven successful for a pilot LEED-ND project in northern California.

“Working through the LEED-ND process helped to educate both the community and development team about the benefits of sustainable site design,” said Darin Dinsmore, professional planner and sustainability consultant about the Truckee Railway Master Plan.

The railyard redevelopment area is located at the eastern end of the city’s historic downtown and will serve as an

extension by strengthening the downtown core and local businesses. Plans include a mix of recreational facilities, commercial shops, restaurants, lodging and civic uses, plus a variety of residential unit types, including live/work and multifamily residential units incorporated in a mixed-use development. The redevelopment will incorporate affordable and work force housing for locals such as artisans, entrepreneurs and tradesmen.

The town of Truckee’s leadership and involvement has been key to the process, which also includes a collective of partners and the general public. Analysis of historic land use and block patterns, the creation of distinct character areas, a regulating plan and placemaking drawings for the extended downtown, form-based code and building types study have all been used in the redevelopment process. Together, they facilitate the logical and orderly expansion of the downtown on this former 75-acre lumber mill site and railyard.

With Americans dealing with soaring health care costs and illnesses directly related to obesity, LEED-ND also aims to create healthy communities through smart development patterns.

LEED-ND can help address many of the concerns people have with new development.

Truckee Railway Master Plan



Areas with convenience to shopping, jobs and activities are performing better in the market.



“Research has shown that living in a mixed-use environment within walking distance of shops and services results in increased walking and biking, which improve human cardiovascular and respiratory health and reduce the risk of hypertension and obesity,” according to the USGBC’s Web site detailing the benefits of the new LEED-ND rating system.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) convened a panel to study the benefits of LEED-ND and found the green neighborhood rating system can:

- Reduce the risk of obesity, heart disease and hypertension by making physical activities a part of people’s daily lives by designing walkable, bikeable communities with open spaces and parks close to work and home.
- Reduce the risk of asthma and other respiratory diseases, reduce air pollution and injuries from vehicle crashes by building compact communities where people can move about via walking, biking and public transit — rather than being dependent on the automobile.
- Improve mental health by reducing the amount of time spent commuting to work and increasing the amount of free time that can be spent with family and exercising in open spaces built into the development.
- Encourage healthier diets by making fresh fruits and vegetables more accessible because the rating system rewards points to developments that create space for community gardens and other means of local food production.



“People should not look at it as some kind of radical environmental movement. LEED-ND is very consistent with real estate trends,” CNU’s Norquist said. “Studies have shown greater price collapses in the housing market that is far remote from job sites. In many areas, the far-flung sprawl is doing worse than the old city center neighborhoods. Areas with convenience to shopping, jobs and activities are performing better in the market.”

Norquist noted that gasoline is no longer cheap and governments can no longer afford to pay for superhighways and the entire infrastructure needed to support sprawl.

“If grade-separated highways were the answer to economic vitality, Detroit would be the richest city in the world,” Norquist observed.

Just as hundreds of municipalities have required LEED standards for building and created incentives for LEED construction, Norquist expects regulatory agencies to eventually adopt LEED-ND standards for zoning and development permits.

“We cannot sustain the sprawl created by zoning requirements for huge setbacks, big streets, minimum lot sizes, minimum parking requirements, separation of uses,” Norquist said. “A lot of the current regulatory structure promotes sprawl. LEED-ND really tries to work with developers and real estate investors to create value. People like to live in a green environment. It is more and more important to people — both in a public relations sense and in the reality of the market.” ●

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# Growing Where We Live

## Urban Agriculture Takes Root across the Country



Farm plot at New Town in St. Charles, Mo.

*By John Van Gieson*

From new urbanist developments featuring farms and community gardens to urban farms and community gardens tucked away in vacant lots, parks, school yards and rooftops, the concept of growing food where you live is taking root all across America.

The growth of agricultural urbanism, one of several names for new communities featuring farms and food gardens, has prompted Ed McMahon, senior fellow at the Urban Land Institute, to declare that “agriculture is the new golf.”

Instead of building houses snug up against the fairways at golf course communities, he said, smart developers are going green by featuring farms and encouraging gardening at communities that embrace new urbanism principles.

“There are two things going on: people are finding out that green space sells real estate, and the second thing is the whole movement toward local foods,” McMahon said.

“There’s a huge interest in locally grown agriculture.”

One concept of agricultural urbanism has been developed by Duany Plater-Zyberk, the Miami architectural firm that launched the new urbanism movement in the early 1970s.

“We’ve divided agriculture and agricultural urbanism into three separate sectors: rural agriculture, which is traditional farms, bigger farms; peri-urban agriculture, which is yard gardens, community gardens and roof gardens; and intra-urban agriculture, which is very small scale, roof gardens, window gardens and vertical farming,” said Marina Khoury, an architect in Duany Plater-Zyberk’s Gaithersburg, Md. office.

Whether they are called agricultural urbanism or something else, the new residential/farming communities typically promote organic farming, preserve large areas of open green space and cluster residential development around town centers in view of the farm.

Khoury said Serenbe, a development in a largely rural area southwest of Atlanta, is one of the outstanding new communities linking farming and new urbanism. Serenbe is being developed by Steve Nygren, who retired to the area from Atlanta after selling his chain of 34 restaurants. His wife, Marie, coined the term Serenbe by combining the words “serene” and “be.”

Fearful that developers would overrun the area he loved, Nygren rallied neighbors who got the zoning changed on 40,000 acres to protect it from overdevelopment. “That’s when we decided to take our own land and do balanced growth on it to show people what could be done,” he said.

Three themed hamlets, as Nygren calls them, will occupy about 30 percent of Serenbe’s 1,000 acres with the remaining 700 acres dedicated to green space including forests, pastures, a stable and a 25-acre organic farm next door to the center of the agriculturally themed hamlet called Grange.

Nygren said eight acres is currently under cultivation, producing 40 varieties of vegetables and fruits in season.

New residential/farming communities typically promote organic farming, preserve large areas of open green space and cluster residential development around town centers in view of the farm.

The farm includes chickens for eggs, cows, sheep and goats. Produce from the farm is sold in the Serenbe Farmers Market, to three restaurants currently open — four more are planned — and distributed to 125 community supported agriculture (CSA) shareholders. One of the restaurants, the acclaimed Farmhouse at the Inn at Serenbe, is run by Nygren’s wife and daughter.

New Town at St. Charles, located about 25 miles northwest of St. Louis, is a community built around a network of canals and lakes, putting every resident within two blocks of the water. Buildings are styled after the 19th century brick buildings in St. Louis.



Prairie Crossing, Ill.



A 12.5 acre organic farm is located near the town center. New Town residents Nate Tilford and his wife, Angie, manage the farm, which features two greenhouses, ensuring that crops can be grown year round.

The Tilfords sell the vegetables and fruits they produce at a farmers market. In addition to managing the farm, they work with residents, who rent, raise 24 feet by 39 inch beds for gardening.

The whole community is going to be designed around how growing things and the community can work together ... the farm will be a very visible component.



Above: "Agriburbia" in Colorado.

Right: Prairie Crossing, Ill.



Courtesy of Maryanne Natarajan

"For a lot of the people, this is their first experience in gardening," Tilford said. "They relied heavily on us. We told them what to plant to keep bad bugs out and good bugs in."

About a dozen volunteers help the Tilfords work the farm and are rewarded with two dinners a year, their pick of flowers grown on the farm and discounts when they buy their food at the farmers market.

One of the largest and most ambitious farms is located in a Conservation Community called Prairie Crossing in Illinois, a one-hour commute to downtown Chicago on the adjacent Metra commuter rail line. The 90-acre Sandhill Organics farm produces a wide variety of fruits and vegetables, using unheated hoop houses, also known as high tunnels, to extend the growing season. The farm includes 40 gardening plots, a five-acre Learning Farm to teach Prairie Crossing school children about agriculture and a Farm Business Development Center that trains future organic farmers.

The future organic farmers lease tracts of up to five acres and are taught the ins and outs of organic farming by Mike Sands, the manager of agriculture operations at Prairie Crossing.

"They're young entrepreneurs who don't have much farm background," Sands said. "They typically go out and work their farm and take business management courses at the community college. We now have four farmers and three grads. The grads are all out there farming bigger farms."

Southlands, an agricultural urbanism community Khoury is designing south of Vancouver, is planned as a 538-acre community with 200 acres set aside for farming. Developer Sean Hodgins said growing spaces at Southlands will range from a large farm, peri-urban smaller farms, community gardens and window boxes.

"The whole community is going to be designed around how growing things and the community can work together, mostly food," Hodgins said. "The farm will be a very visible component. It will be the character and form maker of the community. It would not be hidden behind a row of trees."



City officials all over the country have become aware of the benefits of urban agriculture and are adapting to the needs of urban farmers.

Quint Redmond, a Golden, Colo., designer, is taking the development of farming communities in a somewhat different direction with his trademark concept Agriburbia.

“The real difference here is agriculture is not just an amenity,” Redmond said. “Ours is truly sustainable. It’s really, truly an integrated, sustainable way to live.”

Redmond has designed three Agriburbia communities in Colorado and one in North Carolina, but development has been delayed by the recession. His developments would feature two kinds of farms: civic and steward. The civic farms are likely to grow perennials such as grapes, fruit trees and nut trees. The steward farms are smaller, from a quarter acre to two acres, and would grow vegetables for consumption by the residents.

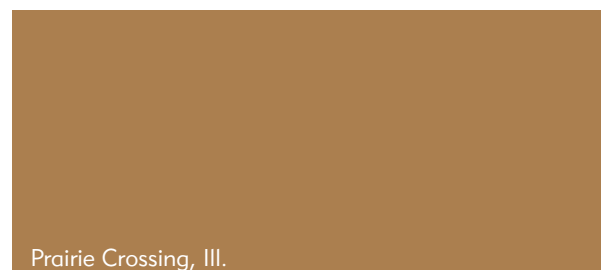
The civic farm at Platte River Village, a 640-acre project in Milliken, Colo., would feature a vineyard and ultimately produce wine. Profits from the sale of the wine would be returned to the home owners association.

Residents could work the steward farms if they wanted to, but most of the farming would be performed by a farming service, similar to a lawn service. The steward farms would be designed to meet a certain percentage of the daily caloric content of the food consumed by the residents, Redmond said.

“We figure out what the caloric content will be in those units, and we use that as a target,” he said. “You actually have a target of caloric need, and you design for that.”

City officials all over the country have become aware of the benefits of urban agriculture and are adapting to the needs of urban farmers, Khoury said.

“Many cities are rewriting their zoning codes to allow for live animals to be raised within their cities,” she said. “There’s nothing in codes currently that precludes farming or urban agriculture on a small scale.”



Prairie Crossing, Ill.



Courtesy of Maryanne Natarajan

Most beneficial are the urban farms and community gardens in inner city neighborhoods where a lack of stores selling fresh produce creates a “food desert.”



Courtesy of Maryanne Natarajan

Prairie Crossing, Ill.



Courtesy of Maryanne Natarajan



Urban agriculture comes in many shapes and forms, but the most beneficial are the urban farms and community gardens in inner city neighborhoods where a lack of stores selling fresh produce creates a “food desert.”

Growing Home, a Chicago nonprofit, runs several urban farms in the city’s poorest neighborhoods, including the Wood Street Urban Farm in the Englewood neighborhood on the city’s south side.

“People have been calling Englewood a food desert,” said Harry Rhodes, executive director of Growing Home. “People don’t have a choice about where they get their food, their produce.”

Growing Home is helping to meet the need for fresh produce by selling food from the Wood Street farm from pushcarts, a small stand at the farm and the Englewood Farmers Market, which the organization helped create.

“We see this as a model that can be replicated throughout the country,” Rhodes said. “We use agriculture as a means to provide people with transitional jobs and training, people who are hard to employ. Most of them have had some run-in with the law. A large number of them are dealing with substance abuse recovery.”

John Hantz, CEO of the Hantz Group, a financial services company based in Southfield, Mich., is underwriting the country’s most ambitious urban agriculture project — a plan to create urban farms on 5,000 acres of vacant or unused land in distressed neighborhoods in Detroit.

“Detroit could be the nation’s leading example of urban farming and become a destination for fresh, local and natural foods and become a major part of the green movement,” Hantz said in a press conference announcing the project earlier this year. “Hantz Farms will transform this area into a viable, beautiful and sustainable area that will serve the community, increase the tax base, create jobs and greatly improve the quality of life in an area that has experienced a severe decline in population.”



One of the nation's most blighted cities, Detroit has lost more than half of its peak population of nearly 2 million, largely as a result of the decline of the auto industry. Hantz Farms manager Matt Allen said Detroit contains 40,000 acres of land that is either vacant or occupied by abandoned eyesore buildings.

Allen said the farms will be distributed throughout the city in 200 to 300 acre clusters with the first ones slated for development next year. The farms will produce a wide variety of crops from vegetables to apples to specialty grains to Christmas trees, he said.

The Hantz farms will not compete with organic farmers who sell their produce at farmers markets, Allen said. Instead, the farms will sell their crops to wholesalers, food processors and distributors. Market forces will drive decisions on what to farm.

"Someday Del Monte may come to us and say, 'We'd like you to grow 50 acres of bell peppers.' Okay, we'll grow 50 acres of bell peppers for Del Monte," Allen said.

The farm is partnering with the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources at Michigan State University. "Not only is Hantz Farms going to be the largest urban farm in the world, we're also going to be the largest urban farm research center in the world," Allen said.

Will Allen of Milwaukee, a strapping, 6-foot-7-inch former professional basketball player, must be the best known urban farmer in the country. Earlier this year, he was awarded a \$500,000 "genius grant" by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. Former President Bill Clinton has tapped Allen to bring his urban farming expertise to Zimbabwe and South Africa as part of the Clinton Global Initiative.

## The farms will produce a wide variety of crops from vegetables to apples to specialty grains to Christmas trees.

The son of former sharecroppers, Allen is the founder of Growing Power, which has been farming in a rundown Milwaukee neighborhood since 1993 and has expanded to Chicago and other cities. His Milwaukee farm features seven greenhouses for year-round production, a fish farm, worms, bees, goats, chickens, turkeys and ducks.

Growing Power's Farm-City Market Basket Program provides a weekly basket of fresh produce to low-income urban residents at a reduced cost. It provides internships and workshops to engage teenagers and young adults in producing healthy foods for their communities and provides intensive, hands-on training to those interested in establishing similar farming initiatives in other urban settings.

"We're having to go back to when people shared things and started taking care of each other," Allen said in a New York Times interview. "That's the only way we will survive. What better way than to do it with food?" ●

John Van Gieson is a freelance writer based in Tallahassee, Fla. He owns and runs Van Gieson Media Relations, Inc.

# REALTORS® Take Action

## Making Smart Growth Happen

### Pursuing Affordable Housing Solutions in the Pasadena Area

REALTORS® in the Pasadena-Foothills area of California want to be part of the solution in bringing affordable and work force housing to their residents.

It's a smart move considering the continuing pressing demands for affordable and work force housing in Los Angeles County. The rapid escalation of housing prices even affected higher wage workers, according to a March 2007 housing report submitted to the city of Pasadena. The report shows that people who earn upward of \$100,000 annually in Los Angeles County, where Pasadena is located, struggle to find affordable housing in the city.

As the city of Pasadena prepared to review its affordable housing plan, the Pasadena-Foothills Association of REALTORS® reached out to the city planners offering to jointly host a Housing Summit. It was funded in part by a \$5,000 Smart Growth Action Grant from the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®.

Laura Olhasso, Pasadena-Foothills Association of REALTORS® director of government affairs, said that roughly 250 people attended the event, including elected officials, commissioners, developers, bankers, neighborhood associations, teachers, police and fire fighters union representatives and leadership from faith-based organizations.

The idea was twofold: to show how affordable housing impacts everyone in the community and to also stave off any changes to the city's affordable housing initiatives — including Pasadena's Inclusionary Housing Ordinance — that would drive up the costs of development and, subsequently, make housing even more expensive.

Olhasso said lack of affordable housing impacts everyone in the community, regardless of the amount of money they make.

"It increases traffic as commuters must travel farther and farther from home to work and impacts the local school district as enrollment figures continue to decline," she said. "The Housing Summit increased the awareness of the complexity of housing issues and resulted in lessening of the NIMBY cries."

Ultimately, the Housing Summit helped produce a plan, officially called the Housing Agenda for Action, that provided a blueprint the city should consider following as it pursues affordable housing for its residents, said Jim Wong, senior project manager for the city of Pasadena.

Wong said the Housing Agenda for Action was unanimously approved by the city in 2007.

"The Pasadena-Foothills Association of REALTORS® has been active in providing positive input in several city affordable housing initiatives," said Wong. "We would never imagine moving forward with an initiative without getting input from the REALTORS® association. It's an automatic, if you will."

REALTORS® haven't always seen eye-to-eye with the city. For example, when the city of Pasadena initially passed the Inclusionary Housing Program, REALTORS® were on board with the requirements in the policy, including a mandate that 15 percent of new residential developments be set aside for affordable housing.



Greg Asbury/Pasadena Convention and Visitors Bureau



Pasadena Convention and Visitors Bureau



Pasadena Convention and Visitors Bureau



Pasadena Convention and Visitors Bureau

But the Pasadena Foothills Association of REALTORS® opposed subsequent changes to the ordinance the city proposed along the way that, if passed, Olhasso said, would have made it more expensive and difficult to meet the criteria, which isn't good for anybody.

The Housing Summit gave REALTORS® the opportunity to show that they can help be part of the team that works on solutions to bring more affordable housing.

"At these types of events, we show that we are doing positive things and that we aren't just always saying "no" to something," said Olhasso, whose association also represents REALTORS® from San Marino, South Pasadena, La Canada-Flintridge, La Crescenta and Sunland-Tujunga. "The Housing Summit helped us be part of the solution because it showed that we were proactive within our community."

The city of Pasadena reviews the effectiveness of its affordable housing programs to ensure that the stated goal of encouraging home ownership regardless of

gender, race, sexual orientation or marital status or ancestry, among other things, is being met.

The city does not own or operate public housing but, instead, tries to provide an adequate amount of housing by encouraging development of new affordable housing, the preservation of existing housing and financial assistance to secure home ownership.

An evaluation of the 2005-2010 Housing Plan shows that in 2008-09, 93 newly constructed affordable housing units were completed for low-income or very low-income residents.

Wong said the Pasadena Foothills Association of REALTORS® has been supportive of several city affordable housing initiatives, including contributing funds that the city used to match with federal dollars to provide down payments to qualified home buyers.

"They have been active in providing positive input in several city affordable housing initiatives," Wong said. ●

# REALTORS® Take Action

Making Smart Growth Happen

## Public-Private Partnerships Help Meet Community Need

It isn't always easy to keep up with demand for schools in the 9th fastest growing county in the U.S.

Sometimes it takes some out-of-the-box thinking to make it work. So says the Raleigh Regional Association of REALTORS® (RRAR), the Wake County North Carolina School Board and some business groups that successfully supported a proposal that would allow developers to build schools for the county.

Raleigh along with Chapel Hill and Durham is known as the Research Triangle area thanks to the work done at the University of North Carolina, Duke University and North Carolina State University. The appeal of living in the area has had its impact on Wake County and there has been an increasing demand for new schools, said Tara Lightner, government affairs director of the RRAR. According to Wake County figures, since 2003, the County has enrolled on average 5,000 additional students each year.

RRAR used a \$3,000 NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® grant to help fund a "lunch and learn" session that focused on the use of public-private partnerships. Ronald D. Utt, known for the restructuring and devolutions of government programs and an analyst for the Heritage Foundation, was the featured speaker.

"He did a great job of examining the practical applications of public-private partnerships," said Lightner.

Before the bill became law, local governments had to provide for school facilities either through direct ap-

propriations for construction, by borrowing money in the form of bonds or leasing existing buildings.

Now the law allows the local school boards to identify where schools are needed, provide design and construction specifications to the builders and then lease the facility upon completion.

The RRAR and the Wake County School Board worked with state school boards in order to garner the support needed to pass the legislation.

"The REALTORS® were able to be seen as a 'solution' to a community problem rather than a group often opposed to all the 'usual remedies,'" Lightner said. "We now have the legal authority to enter into private-construction projects with various state and local entities."

Having legal authority is one thing, but getting developers and contractors to build the schools has proved a little more difficult.



Courtesy of GRCVB/VisitRaleigh.com



Courtesy of GRCVB/VisitRaleigh.com



Courtesy of GRCVB/VisitRaleigh.com



Courtesy of GRCVB/VisitRaleigh.com

Leann Winner, director of governmental affairs and chief lobbyist for the North Carolina School Boards Association, said after the law passed in 2006 public-private partnerships were tried in Charlotte and Wake Counties, but obstacles prevented the school boards from moving.

Winner said while the law increased flexibility, the ensuing downturn in the economy has prevented developers from getting more favorable interest rates than the counties. Additionally, while the Legislature gave the idea the green light, it didn't delete requirements that school projects be publicly bid by more than one developer or that the bids be open to public review.

The RRAR partnered with the Triangle Community Coalition in sponsoring the "lunch and learn" and

Utr's appearance. Despite the delays, the coalition still supports the idea of public-private partnerships for schools and thinks the law could be revisited to make it more attractive for developers to move forward.

Coalition spokesperson Chris Sinclair said before the law change, developers were prevented from trying to build the schools. Sinclair and RRAR's Lightner say the schools could be built quicker by private developers who don't have to jump through all the hoops the county does.

If time is money, they maintain, then public-private partnerships are a winner for everyone. ●



REALTORS® & Smart Growth

# on common ground



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®