

New Urbanism and the City: Potential Applications and Implications for Distressed Inner-City Neighborhoods

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Abstract

New Urbanism has been described as the most influential movement in architecture and planning in the United States since the Modernist movement. In recent years, New Urbanist design principles have been adopted for many housing and neighborhood planning efforts. This article considers the applications and implications of New Urbanism for distressed inner-city neighborhoods. Claims and criticisms of New Urbanism are examined and the long-standing debates over the extent to which physical planning and design can affect human behavior are revisited.

The article concludes that New Urbanism is not a panacea, but that its design principles are consistent with broader policies aimed at revitalizing and improving living conditions and opportunities for inner-city residents. New Urbanism needs to be viewed as one strategy to be integrated within the larger array of economic, social, and community development programs attempting to revitalize and improve the quality of life in inner-city neighborhoods.

Keywords: Development/Revitalization; Low-income housing; Urban planning

Introduction

Herbert Muschamp, architectural critic for the *New York Times*, has described New Urbanism as the “most important phenomenon to emerge in American architecture in the post–Cold War era” (Muschamp 1996, 27). Complete with its own charter, annual conferences, and growing membership in the official Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU) organization, the movement attracts comparisons to the International Congress of Modern Architecture (CIAM), the equivalent organization for Modernism, even as it defines itself in direct opposition to Modernist architecture and planning. Dubbed an architectural fad by many observers in the early 1980s, the movement has continued to grow and diversify its base for more than two decades and shows no signs of waning.

New Urbanist design principles have resonated and been incorporated within the goals and agendas of individuals and organizations from other fields, including environmental protection, sustainable development, historic preservation, growth management/smart growth, transit, pedestrian and bicycle planning, and main street programs. The housing field is no exception. New Urbanist design principles have been in-

corporated into the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD's) community design guidelines for Homeownership Zones and represent a key element of the HOPE (Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere) VI program's efforts to transform severely distressed public housing projects into more diverse, mixed-use neighborhoods. New Urbanism's role in billions of dollars worth of HUD programs alone would be enough to warrant serious consideration of its implications for housing policy, but its influence over urban policy making goes far beyond the HOPE VI and Homeownership Zones programs. New Urbanism is also influencing changes to city plans and regulatory codes and shaping dozens of new public and private sector projects in cities and suburbs across the country.¹

This article will focus specifically on New Urbanism's potential applications and implications for distressed inner-city neighborhoods where public and low-income housing are prevalent. In doing so, it will take up many of the criticisms of New Urbanism in particular and physical planning and urban design in general as part of an overall strategy for rehabilitating and revitalizing inner-city neighborhoods and reinventing public housing in the United States.

What is New Urbanism?

New Urbanism is a movement in architecture and planning that advocates design-based strategies based on "traditional" urban forms to help arrest suburban sprawl and inner-city decline and to build and rebuild neighborhoods, towns, and cities. New Urbanism is an umbrella term, encompassing the traditional neighborhood development, or "neo-traditional" town planning, of Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk (Krieger and Lennertz 1991), the pedestrian pocket and the transit-oriented design articulated by Peter Calthorpe (Calthorpe 1993), Douglas Kelbaugh (Kelbaugh 1989), and Bill Liebermann; and the "quartiers" approach of Leon Krier (Krier 1998).² New Urbanist design principles operate on a number of scales, from buildings, lots, and blocks to neighborhoods, districts, and corridors, and ultimately to entire cities and regions (Katz 1994). Shared principles call for organizing development into neighborhoods that are diverse, compact, mixed use, pedestrian oriented, and transit friendly.

The neighborhood is advanced as an essential building block similar to Clarence Perry's concept of the neighborhood unit in the First Regional Plan of New York (1929) but updated to reflect today's larger institu-

¹ See Katz (1994) and Steuteville (1998a, 1998b, 1999b) for summaries of New Urbanism's growing influence.

² See Christofordis (1994) for a good summary of these variations.

tions, heavier traffic volumes and parking needs, and changes in residential and commercial real estate products.³ The neighborhood is limited to an area approximating a 5- to 10-minute walk from center to edge, ensuring that all neighborhood activities are within convenient walking distance of residents. Within the neighborhood are a variety of housing types and land uses, a mix of shops, services, and civic uses capable of satisfying many of the residents' daily needs. Streets are designed for pedestrian use, with generous sidewalks, street trees, and on-street parking to provide a buffer from street traffic and make walking a safer and more appealing option. Buildings are generally low- to mid-rise, set close together, and built close to the street to promote pedestrian use and help define neighborhood public space in the form of streets, squares, and plazas. Small parks and civic institutions are given prominent sites and dispersed throughout the neighborhood (Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company 1999; Krieger and Lennertz 1991; Leccese and McCormick 2000).

The neighborhood center provides a focal point for shopping, dining, services, and transit. In dense urban settings, the center is most likely to focus on a commercial corridor at the edge of a neighborhood, with residential areas fanning out in a roughly semicircular pattern away from the corridor (Calthorpe 1993). Classic examples of this include the streetcar suburbs that sprouted from transit nodes and later developed into major commercial corridors (Warner 1962). Collectively, these are some of the principles constituting what New Urbanists call "traditional urbanism," built patterns and relationships that have been recurring in hamlets, villages, towns, and cities of all sizes for thousands of years but that became disrupted under 20th-century zoning and subdivision laws.⁴

New Urbanists identify traditional urban settings built before World War II, including historic sections of Annapolis, MD; Alexandria, VA; Savannah, GA; and Charleston, SC, as precedents they aim to emulate. Background research for New Urbanist plans and projects have involved studying urban design patterns and buildings found in local historic neighborhoods like Fox Point in Providence, RI; Squirrel Hill in Pittsburgh; Washington Park and Cherry Creek in Denver; the Highlands in Louisville, KY; Central West End in St. Louis; East Atlanta; Fells Point and Federal Hill in Baltimore; Hyde Park and Gold Coast in Chicago; and the West Side neighborhoods of Los Angeles. Precedents such as these are used in developing the types of building forms, lot configurations, streets, and public spaces to be included in new

³ For comparative diagrams and discussion, see section C2:1 in Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company (1999).

⁴ For a comprehensive treatment of New Urbanist design principles and philosophy, see Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company (1999) and Leccese and McCormick (2000).

neighborhoods and infill development. These are adapted to meet the needs of contemporary lifestyles, particularly in terms of accommodating the automobile and internally reconfiguring housing types for modern bedrooms, bathrooms, and living spaces.⁵

A core concept is the notion of a rural-to-urban “transect,” which provides a comprehensive framework for identifying the types of streets, buildings, and public spaces consistent with the rural, suburban, or urban character of different settings, and a traditional neighborhood structure consisting of central, general, and edge zones (Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company 1999). The transect is in part a reaction to the proliferation of generic codes and standards for streets, buildings, open spaces, and commercial real estate development that now prohibit the creation of traditional urbanism throughout much of the United States. Euclidean zoning and large-lot subdivision ordinances; building codes; the standardized formulas used in real estate development; and the standards used in traffic engineering, schools, and park and recreation facilities essentially mandate the production of the suburban “edge” zone of the transect at the expense of the rural and urban ends of the spectrum. New Urbanists maintain that the adoption of a planning and design approach based on the urban spectrum of the transect will lead to a more contextual form of urban development, one that is more interconnected with other parts of the city and that better reflects local and regional architectural traditions (Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company 1999).

New Urbanism and HUD

In 1996, HUD Secretary Henry Cisneros signed the CNU Charter in Charleston, SC, symbolizing the shared agendas between New Urbanism and HUD. Soon after, New Urbanist principles were adopted within the Homeownership Zones Program, to be followed by the HOPE VI Program.

The Homeownership Zone program will implement concepts of the New Urbanism, a type of urban planning that makes the neighborhood the focal point of planning and development. The New Urbanism principles that will be promoted by HUD and its partners in the Homeownership Zones include: defined neighborhoods of limited size; flexible zoning standards to allow a mix of compatible uses, along with a mix of housing styles and levels of income; public parks and gathering space; historic preservation; mass transit connections; and pedestrian-friendly streets and walkways connecting the neighborhood to the surrounding area. (HUD 1997b, 3)

⁵ On housing types, see, for example, Miller, Anderson, and Johnson (1997, 1998a, 1998b).

The commitment to New Urbanism has continued under current HUD secretary, Andrew Cuomo, who stated,

All of us at the department are committed...to the goal of livable, mixed-use neighborhoods built to a human scale. This is consistent with the principles of the New Urbanism—and yes, we strongly support this approach because we've seen that it works. (HUD 1997a)

New Urbanists' involvement in inner-city issues is not coincidental. The broadening membership of the CNU has spurred the creation of nine specialized task forces that now include both an Inner-City Task Force and a Community and Social Equity Task Force. The Inner-City Task Force, in particular, has been very active in HUD programs and has worked with HUD staff to develop and publish a subset of New Urbanist principles geared specifically for inner-city applications (CNU and HUD 2000).

By far the most high-profile New Urbanist involvement has been within the HOPE VI Program, which has grown from nine demonstration projects funded in 1993 to nearly 300 grants involving some 53,000 units of public housing and \$3.5 billion in appropriations by 1999 (HUD 1999b). HOPE VI represents much more than an urban design initiative and addresses management improvements, employment, crime, and social and community services in conjunction with physical improvements. New Urbanism is viewed as particularly supportive of two of the HOPE VI program's five key objectives:

Changing the physical shape of public housing by demolishing the worst developments—high-rises and barracks-style apartments—and replacing them with garden-style apartments or townhouses that become part of their surrounding communities.

Reducing concentrations of poverty by encouraging a greater income mix among public housing residents and by encouraging working families to move into public housing and new market-rate housing being built as part of the neighborhoods where public housing is located. (HUD 1999a)

The New Suburbanism?

New Urbanism aspires to provide an alternative to suburban sprawl while revitalizing existing towns and cities in a manner consistent with traditional urbanism (Leccese and McCormick 2000). In a regional context, New Urbanism advocates a full range of urban settings—rural hamlets and villages, small towns, and dense urban neighborhoods and districts—to provide compact development alternatives appropriate to each setting. But while HOPE VI projects have raised the profile of

New Urbanism in inner cities, there is still a widespread perception that New Urbanism is a suburban experiment. The movement is most closely associated with new suburban greenfield projects that have been featured in the mainstream media, such as Seaside, FL; Kentlands in Gaithersburg, MD; Laguna West near Sacramento, CA; and Celebration in Orlando, FL.

A 1999 annual survey by *New Urban News* identified some 155 New Urbanist infill and brownfield projects being planned, under construction, or completed within existing urban areas in 27 different states (Steuteville 1999b). Obscure compared with their greenfield cousins, these projects involve a mix of traditional single-family and multifamily housing laid out on pedestrian-oriented streets and interspersed with urban public spaces. Many of the projects also incorporate transit, a mix of commercial and civic uses, and mixed-income housing strategies, including subsidized housing units.

Despite the growing number of New Urbanist infill projects and HUD activities, until recently the volumes of material written on New Urbanism and the modicum of research on it have focused almost exclusively on suburban applications, not the city. The question remains as to what the potential applications and implications of New Urbanism are for the inner city, not just for HOPE VI projects, but for inner-city neighborhoods in general.

Applications

Applications of New Urbanism for inner-city revitalization have grown rapidly in recent years and involve a wide variety of situations, including the replacement or retrofit of public housing projects, brownfield redevelopment efforts, transit-oriented development, and garden-variety urban infill projects of all shapes and sizes.⁶ The sample of projects presented here highlights some applications of New Urbanism for several different situations and the challenges facing many of America's inner-city neighborhoods. The first two categories of projects involve New Urbanist transformation and rehabilitation of public housing projects, while the rest run the gamut of inner-city neighborhood situations in U.S. cities.

⁶ Outside of public housing projects, the literature on inner-city applications of New Urbanism is virtually nonexistent. *New Urban News*, a bimonthly newsletter, is one of the few sources of information, and background research for this article involved inquiries to New Urbanist Internet groups, web site searches, and interviews with New Urbanists to identify relevant projects.

Major transformation of severely distressed public housing projects

New Urbanism is undergoing an extensive inner-city “road test” in many of the 124 HOPE VI communities in cities throughout the nation. These include many of the more infamous projects such as Cabrini-Green, Robert Taylor Homes, and Henry Horner Homes in Chicago, as well as lesser known projects such as Holly Park (Seattle), Coliseum Gardens (Oakland, CA), Windsor Terrace (Columbus, OH), the Kennedy Brothers Memorial Apartments (El Paso, TX), Techwood/Clark Howell Homes (Atlanta), Mission Main (Boston), and the Ellen Wilson Dwellings (Washington, DC). A January 1999 conference at the University of Maryland titled “HOPE VI and New Urbanism” included profiles and case studies of more than two dozen ongoing projects that have incorporated at least some aspects of New Urbanism (CNU 1999).

Many of these cases involve the complete demolition of “barracks-style” projects built before World War II and “tower-in-the-park” high-rise projects built in the postwar years. Although these projects represent less than 8 percent of all public housing in the United States, their physical deterioration had come to symbolize the failure of housing and welfare policies for many Americans. While their failure has been attributed to a wide variety of factors, the physical planning and design of the projects has come under repeated criticism.⁷

Consistent with New Urbanism’s emphasis on rediscovering local architectural vernaculars, the neighborhoods created by the HOPE VI program replace high-rises and barracks-style apartment buildings with what one HUD publication (CNU and HUD 2000) describes as “dignified brick rowhouses in Baltimore, Victorian exuberance in Washington, DC’s historic Capitol Hill neighborhood, and bungalows with timbered accents in Seattle” (7). These traditional urban housing types are used to make subsidized and market-rate housing indistinguishable from one another in pursuing the mixed-income policies of HOPE VI.

Other New Urbanist adaptations seek to transform large, anonymous outdoor spaces by using building layouts, streets, fencing, and other elements to create smaller urban public spaces and semipublic/semi-private transitional areas. Superblocks are broken up into smaller blocks with the reintroduction of a street grid, and the streets themselves are pedestrian oriented with sidewalks, street trees, benches, and on-street parking. Inward-focused residential pods are replaced

⁷ For general discussions of the many problems experienced in public housing projects, see, for example, Bauman (1994), Fuerst and Petty (1991), Kamin (1997), Marciniak (1986), Nenno (1996), Plunz (1990), and Salama (1999). For discussions specifically focusing more on the physical planning and design flaws, see Newman and Franck (1982), O’Neill (1999), Rybczynski (1993), and von Hoffman (1998).

by mixed land uses with the potential to provide job opportunities and local goods and services, increase neighborhood street life, and help bring people into the neighborhood from other parts of the city. The combination of traditional urban housing with entrances, windows, and yards oriented toward streets and sidewalks, and a gradation of public, semipublic, and private space create conditions commonly associated with Oscar Newman's (1972, 1996) program for creating "defensible space" and Jane Jacobs' (1961) notion of "eyes on the street."

In Baltimore, Lafayette Courts and Lexington Terrace were two of four high-rise public housing projects built starting in the late 1950s. These tower-in-the-park designs replaced the existing urban pattern and ignored Baltimore's traditional housing types, introducing "almost the only high-rise apartment buildings in a city overwhelmingly composed of rowhouses" (O'Neill 1999, 6). The projects suffered a familiar pattern of decline over the years and were identified as severely distressed housing under the HOPE VI program. They were demolished by the Housing Authority of Baltimore City (HABC) beginning in 1994.

Lafayette Courts has been replaced by Pleasant View Gardens, a traditional neighborhood designed by Torti Gallas and Partners-CHK and based on New Urbanism. Row houses, emulating Baltimore's traditional urban housing forms, and one mid-rise apartment building for older residents have replaced high-rises. The reintroduction of through-streets breaks up the superblocks and reconnects the site with the surrounding city. The large, park-like "no man's land" is replaced with smaller, dispersed public spaces including a residential square that serves as a focal point for the community (Saum 1999).

The most dramatic change in Pleasant View Gardens is the replacement of high-rise apartments with "ground-related" units (in this case, town homes), in which each residence has its own street address and some outdoor space directly affiliated with it in the form of front and back entrances and yards. The redesign introduces some mixed uses in the form of a new day care center, recreation center, and community center, although the location of the site, within six blocks of City Hall, would seem to have presented greater opportunities for introducing employment and commercial uses. The project also makes a rather modest attempt to achieve broader social and economic integration within the neighborhood, with only a small percentage of units designated for homeownership and the remainder continuing under HABC management as a rental community (O'Neill 1999).

The Lexington Terrace project replaces high-rise apartments with ground-related units as well, but more aggressively embraces mixed-income strategies by incorporating 100 for-sale units within a 303-unit row house community. Lexington Terrace includes a broader mix of

uses, including a 20,000-square-foot extension to an existing school for a community center with day care and recreational facilities, plus a 30,000-square-foot business incubator with office and retail space.

New Urbanism has been applied to HOPE VI projects that range widely in size, composition, and site constraints. The Ellen Wilson Homes project involves the reclamation of an abandoned 5.3-acre public housing project in the historic Capitol Hill district of Washington, DC. The infill site presented several challenges, including the need to incorporate four existing town houses, the presence of an elevated highway and on-ramp, and the historic character of directly adjacent Capitol Hill neighborhoods. The new plan incorporates streets designed according to L'Enfant's original plan for Washington (prohibited under existing codes), while addressing contemporary needs by creating 93 off-street and 66 on-street parking spaces. The low-rise garden-courtyard buildings of the abandoned project were replaced with a diverse mix of nearly 30 different facades on five building types that mimic Capitol Hill's historic housing styles while adding modern amenities and creating Americans with Disabilities Act-accessible units. The 154 units include a mix of market-rate, submarket, Section 8, and fully subsidized units. Like many HOPE VI projects, Ellen Wilson Homes attempts to meld physical revitalization with broader community development efforts (CNU 1999).

According to a housing authority official, future funding for community and support services will come from an endowment that will be generated from the expected market-rate sales of 20 homes at Ellen Wilson built with a market-rate loan of HOPE VI funds. When these homes are sold, the construction loans will be repaid. The profit from the sales and the repayment of the construction loan will be invested to establish an endowment to fund ongoing community and support services.

When completed, it will have 134 limited-equity cooperative units and 20 units available for sale at prevailing market rates. All residents will be considered owners, including those in the 67 units that will be set aside for households earning 50 percent or less of the area's median income. The down payment for each household will be based on 5 percent of its annual income at the middle of its income band....A community development corporation official noted that a person earning \$6 per hour could qualify for a unit in the lowest income range. (England-Joseph 1998, 15)

Park DuValle represents a much larger project involving 130 acres and the demolition of 1,100 units of public housing in identical two-story buildings known as the Cotter and Lang projects in Louisville, KY. This multifaceted project involves a combination of HOPE VI, Homeownership Zone, and local public and private funding and is creating 1,200 new homes, including over 600 apartments, 450 homeownership units, and an independent-living residence for seniors, plus a new

school and a community health center. Homeownership units are priced to attract mixed-income households, and the new rental units are divided equally between public housing residents, Low Income Housing Tax Credit–eligible households, and market-rate rentals. A 25,000-square-foot town center is under construction, with plans for big box and smaller-scale retail and office uses and apartments on the second floor (Poulton 2000). This combination of land uses makes Park DuValle one of the most mixed-use HOPE VI projects to date and stands in stark contrast to the exclusively residential composition of the Cotter and Lang projects and conventional public housing projects in general.

Incremental rehabilitation and infill of public housing

A major criticism of past urban renewal strategies, and the HOPE VI program itself is that they have relied too heavily on slum clearance and demolition, destroying existing neighborhoods and buildings to create better living conditions. New Urbanism is now being applied to public housing projects involving the rehabilitation and retrofitting of existing buildings and infrastructure, the preservation of historic buildings, and the addition of new sections to existing neighborhoods. The Fourth Ward Revitalization Plan in Houston involves all three elements, including the preservation of historic houses and hand-laid brick streets built by freed slaves in the Freedman Town's Historic District. The Fourth Ward project is attempting to weave together 1,200 new and rehabilitated mixed-income units with the historic Freedman district and Houston's central business district (CBD), which is directly adjacent to the site (CNU 1999).

In these situations, which are common challenges for urban infill projects, New Urbanism is presented as a genuine alternative to the slum clearance and suburbanization practices of past urban renewal efforts. Other projects that have involved the rehabilitation of buildings and retrofit of infrastructure include projects like Orchard Park in Boston, Hillside Terrace in Milwaukee, and Diggs Town in Norfolk, VA.

Diggs Town (previously profiled in this journal) was the first public housing project funded under the Housing Act of 1949 and provides an example of a New Urbanist rehabilitation of an older, moderate-density, barracks-style project (Bothwell, Gindroz, and Lang 1998). In contrast to the well-publicized demolition of high-rise projects in HUD's HOPE VI program, the New Urbanist treatment of Diggs Town involved incremental changes aimed primarily at improving "territorial definition" within the neighborhood. Through relatively minor landscape improvements and exterior architectural work, Diggs Town's coarse grain of anonymous outdoor public space and interior private space

was transformed into a finer grain of private, semiprivate, semipublic, and public spaces. By creating front yards, back yards, and porches, the redesign served to increase residents' sense of ownership and control over adjacent outdoor spaces. The superbloc format was broken up with streets providing better access and public visibility for the project's interior spaces, where criminal activity had become problematic. The addition of through-streets also allowed each unit to have its own street address.⁸

Exterior improvements, such as the addition of front porches, residential windows, fences, patios, and storage sheds helped transform the designed-down, institutional look of buildings into forms that reflected local and vernacular architecture. Although reduced to a cliché by New Urbanism's critics, the porches and picket fences at Diggs Town were requested by the residents themselves for the express purpose of improving opportunities for social contact.⁹ The exterior improvements served to lessen the stigma of the units and afforded a greater sense of pride and human dignity in relation to the dwellings and the neighborhood.

For all its improvements to the physical condition of the community, however, the Diggs Town redevelopment project could not overcome the project's isolation on Norfolk, VA's, south side, across the bridge from the city and separated from it by the Elizabeth River. The introduction of through-streets also created a problem with a drive-through drug trade that was countered by stationing a community police officer within the neighborhood. As Ray Gindroz, the lead designer of the rehabilitation effort, laments, Diggs Town's redevelopment generally fails to address the issues of concentrated poverty and absence of job opportunities (Dean 1998). Although these were not goals of the redevelopment project, in lieu of social and economic programs to improve opportunities for Diggs Town's residents or make the neighborhood more attractive to new residential and commercial development, there is no guarantee that the symptoms of neighborhood decline will not begin to appear once again as the improvements begin to age.

⁸ Although seemingly mundane, the individual street addresses made possible by (1) the presence of streets and (2) the use of traditional urban housing types can help establish a stronger identity for housing units, distinguishing them from the names of stigmatized projects and providing a personalized address. A recent study by Newman and Schnare (1997) found only about 1.1 million street addresses for the more than 5.2 million units of public and assisted housing, in large part the result of past policies favoring mid- and high-rise buildings and superblocs with fewer streets.

⁹ Interview with Ray Gindroz, lead project designer for Urban Design Associates on January 3, 2000.

*Garden-variety applications of New Urbanism
in the inner city*

For every public housing project in need of repair, there are dozens of struggling and declining inner-city neighborhoods encompassing a wide range of conditions and challenges. Expensive inner-city neighborhoods in places like San Francisco and Manhattan face an affordable housing crisis, making any further gentrification unpalatable. By contrast, cities like Baltimore, St. Louis, Camden (NJ), and many others are crying out for a hint of gentrification amid a sea of vacant buildings and neighborhoods. Inner-city neighborhoods in Boston, Philadelphia, and Chicago are characteristically dense, urban settings, of multistory row houses, while neighborhoods in cities like Louisville (KY), Chattanooga (TN), and Houston are composed of detached single-family houses, flats, and duplexes.

Neighborhoods with high concentrations of poor and minority populations face challenges similar to those of public housing projects, while others have been characterized as “undercrowded” neighborhoods with dwindling numbers of buildings and residents.¹⁰ Projects involving the latter, with brownfields and abandoned areas of cities, provide opportunities to create *more* public and affordable housing, whereas projects involving populated neighborhoods and a demolition/rebuild scenario invariably result in fewer units.

Each case also involves its own unique challenges in terms of site constraints, financing, and policy objectives for housing, community and economic development, transit, brownfield reclamation, and broad urban revitalization goals. The general New Urbanist approach to these situations is similar to the one used for public housing projects. Drawing on local and regional precedents and market research, New Urbanists develop plans and design guidelines and projects incorporating a mix of traditional housing types and price ranges, mixed land uses, pedestrian-oriented streets, and urban public spaces.

In Pittsburgh, New Urbanism is being used to revitalize existing inner-city neighborhoods and “refill” urban renewal sites that have stood vacant for decades. A recent paper presented by Deitrick and Ellis (2000) identified three types of New Urbanist applications involving four inner-city neighborhoods in Pittsburgh: scattered site infill (Manchester), neighborhood infill (Holmes Place, Oakland and Fox Way Commons/New Birmingham, South Side), and community refill (Crawford Square, Hill District). These neighborhoods have involved both the

¹⁰ “Undercrowding” is a phrase coined by Douglas Rae, director of Yale University’s Changing Cities Research Group, and refers to neighborhoods characterized by dwindling populations scattered among abandoned buildings and vacant lots (West 1999).

rehabilitation of structures and the construction of scattered buildings, blocks, neighborhoods, and entire districts within the inner city.

Crawford Square, the community refill project, involves a large 20.5-acre section of the Hill District adjacent to Pittsburgh's CBD that had been cleared for urban renewal, resulting in the displacement of some 8,000 African-American residents in the late 1950s and early 1960s (Deitrick and Ellis 2000). In 1991, after decades of false starts, the City Urban Redevelopment Authority hired Urban Design Associates (UDA) of Pittsburgh to initiate a "bottom-up" planning process and come up with a resident-sanctioned plan for the district. The result, Crawford Square, incorporates a mix of 400 rental and owner-occupied units, three new parks with playgrounds and a swimming pool, and a fitness center.¹¹ The housing added to the city is 50 percent subsidized and 50 percent market rate, and 83 percent occupied by African-American households. As with most of the projects discussed in this article, it is too early to evaluate ultimate success or failure, although the project has met goals to create a walkable, mixed-income neighborhood, change the perception of the Hill District as a place to live and work, and act as a catalyst for additional residential and commercial development now under way (Fitzpatrick 1996).

Criticisms of the project include the absence of very low income housing and the departure of the design from the more urban row house blocks that were bulldozed in the 1950s. While Crawford Square's three-story town homes and rental units are less dense and urban than the old blocks, the designers point out that the scale and composition—bay windows, dormers, porches, and brick and clapboard siding—have a far more urban character than the small clusters of low-density ranch-style houses built on the Hill in the 1970s and 1980s.

In Louisville, KY, New Urbanism has been adopted as part of a multi-neighborhood "Sustainable Urban Neighborhoods" (SUN) initiative addressing five major areas of revitalization, including human development, economic development, housing, crime, and planning and communication (Evans-Andris 1999). While New Urbanism's primary role involves SUN's housing, crime, and planning activities, its implementation cuts across other areas as well. Neighborhood "charrettes" (intensive design workshops), for example, have been employed as part of community building and communication activities "to generate a shared community and neighborhood vision through bottom-up participation" (University of Louisville 2000).

Like Louisville, Chattanooga, TN, has several inner-city neighborhoods in various stages of decline adjacent to its CBD. The Chattanooga Neigh-

¹¹ UDA has also been involved in other projects profiled above, including Diggs Town, Park DuValle, and several other inner-city initiatives.

borhood Enterprise (CNE) hired DoverKohl and Associates to come up with a redevelopment plan and the Chattanooga Urban Design Studio to produce a streetscape plan for the Southside neighborhoods of Ft. Negley, Rustville, and Jefferson Heights, just south of the CBD. CNE is the primary developer and coordinator of the plan and is pursuing a largely residential mixed-use, mixed-income area, with a wide variety of both market-rate and subsidized housing.¹² CNE's goal is to assume the initial risk in creating successful demonstration projects to attract developers to fully implement the plan.

Similar efforts are being employed in many cities, such as Milwaukee, where the city has developed a New Urbanist revitalization plan for its Midtown Triangle District and is now underwriting the "City Homes" project to act as a catalyst in implementing the plan.¹³ In Winter Park, FL, Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company was commissioned by a local non-profit group to create a redevelopment plan for the city's West Side neighborhood, and DoverKohl was hired to rehabilitate the nearby Hannibal Square Civic Center. The city and the redevelopment agency are working to implement elements of the plan through a combination of design guidelines, demonstration projects, and careful oversight of private sector infill projects.¹⁴

The work of Daniel Solomon, a founding member of the CNU who heads a New Urbanist design firm based in San Francisco, also covers a broad spectrum of inner-city projects involving California's major cities. Amancio Ergina Village, a very early New Urbanist project completed in 1985 in San Francisco, is an infill development involving an empty 1.72-acre parcel left over from 1960s urban renewal. A proposal for the site described as "three slab-sided blocks set like barracks on the site" (CNU 1999) had been rejected by the redevelopment agency, which instead hired Solomon to create affordable rental housing more in keeping with San Francisco's urban neighborhoods. The project involved seven levels of subsidy and created 72 units of nonprofit, cooperative housing for sale, in the form of two- and three-bedroom town homes at a density of 42 dwelling units (DU) per acre (CNU 1999; Solomon E.T.C. 2000).

Most of Solomon's work focuses on using traditional urban forms to create dense, mixed-income housing on small sites in inner-city neighborhoods. Del Carlo Court (San Francisco) includes 25 low-income apart-

¹² Interview with Frank G. Greene, former CNE vice president and architect, June 21, 2000.

¹³ Interview with James B. Castle, architect, June 22, 2000.

¹⁴ Interview with Merrill Ladika, director, Winter Park Redevelopment Agency, July 10, 2000.

ment units in three 4-story buildings on a 0.39-acre lot (65 DU/acre). Britton Housing (San Francisco) consists of 92 units of affordable rental housing in town houses and flats for the former residents of the Geneva Towers public housing project (25 DU/acre). Vermont Village (Los Angeles) introduces 36 moderate-income town homes aimed at revitalizing a moribund commercial strip in South Central Los Angeles (29 DU/acre). Alacantara Court (San Francisco) tops the list with a density of 110 DU/acre in a 50-unit courtyard apartment project housing low-income seniors and funded under the HUD 202 program (Solomon 1992; Solomon E.T.C. 2000).

These California projects reveal the variety of challenges facing inner cities in creating affordable low-income housing and promoting infill development that fits the disparate contexts of historic urban neighborhoods in San Francisco as well as struggling sections of younger cities like Los Angeles. New Urbanism is also viewed as supporting “smart growth” strategies for lower-density inner-city neighborhoods in order to foster more compact development and support transit initiatives. One example is The Crossings, a project designed by Calthorpe Associates, which replaced an automobile-oriented strip mall adjacent to a new CalTrain commuter station with a mixed-use, mixed-income neighborhood of single-family homes, town homes, row houses, and apartments within a short walk of shopping and transit.¹⁵ Another example, 101 San Fernando (downtown San Jose), is a mixed-use project by Solomon that includes 322 units of affordable and market-rate rental units and 10,000 square feet of commercial space on a 2.99-acre lot (108 DU/acre) (Solomon E.T.C. 2000).

In Starkville, MS, the regeneration of the Cotton District provides one final example of New Urbanism’s practicality in the long-term, incremental transition of inner-city neighborhoods. Dan Camp, an instructor of blueprint reading, drafting, and shop at nearby Mississippi State University, has worked over a period of 30 years to rehabilitate the Cotton District, transforming shanties and row houses into attractive, viable rental and owner-occupied housing for a mix of incomes, races, and household compositions. In all, Camp has redeveloped more than 130 rental properties throughout the Cotton District, ranging in size and price “from just a few hundred square feet for a converted garage apartment that may rent for \$250 per month, to a two-bedroom, two-bath in a duplex that rents for \$750” (Sheffield 1997, 8). Owner-occupied properties range from 900 to 2,100 square feet and sell for between \$70,000 and \$130,000. Camp’s de facto New Urbanist approach has preserved and built on the Cotton District’s traditional urbanism and architecture. Although it is the work of a single “developer,” the Cotton

¹⁵ Calthorpe Associates is also involved in planning and designing the Chestnut Court HOPE VI project in Oakland, CA.

District shows the potential for carrying out gradual, incremental revitalizations of distressed inner-city neighborhoods using New Urbanist principles that can leverage the enduring value and flexibility of traditional urban neighborhoods and buildings.

Reasons for adopting New Urbanism

According to SUN Project Director John Gilderbloom, what makes New Urbanism compatible with the SUN program is the fact that the six neighborhoods involved in the West Louisville Enterprise Community are traditional neighborhoods reflecting Louisville, KY's, historic patterns of development. New Urbanism is viewed as a strategy consistent with the pedestrian qualities, mixed uses, interconnected streets, and urban housing types that have historically defined the neighborhoods and that support concepts of sustainable development based on compact, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly environments.¹⁶ The types of conventional apartment buildings, ranch-style houses, and enclave-type development advanced elsewhere as part of inner-city redevelopment efforts are viewed as antithetical to West Louisville. New Urbanist design guidelines are seen as a way to ensure that the historic character of this area is preserved and extended as individual houses, blocks, and sections are rehabilitated and redeveloped (University of Louisville 2000).

As in the case of Louisville, officials in Chattanooga, TN, and Winter Park, FL, cited New Urbanism's compatibility with the historic character of their inner-city neighborhoods. According to Merrill Ladika, director of the Winter Park Redevelopment Agency, New Urbanism makes sense "because the bones are there: We have an urban neighborhood, 50-foot wide lots, walkable blocks, short door yards, odd-shaped lots and sizes."¹⁷ In the past, the city allowed these lots to be combined and suburban products to be built. Ladika credits New Urbanists like Victor Dover with helping the community identify the traditional urban design qualities that give the West Side its character and that the city is now working to preserve and extend through new development.

In a similar vein, Bob McNutt, vice president of CNE in Tennessee, noted that the blocks in Chattanooga's Southside neighborhoods were already laid out in a flat, grid pattern that precluded large-lot suburban-style development. He also viewed New Urbanism as an approach that could produce the density needed to facilitate transit and attract retail to the area while maintaining the historically modest scale of the neighborhood's small-lot, two- and three-story houses and apartment build-

¹⁶ Interview with John Gilderbloom, director of SUN, June 30, 2000.

¹⁷ Interview with Merrill Ladika, director, Winter Park Redevelopment Agency, July 10, 2000.

ings. Overall, New Urbanism was viewed as a more sustainable approach than lower-density alternatives. McNutt felt that “a suburban layout is just not conducive to a pedestrian-friendly environment” where people can walk to work, shops, and recreation areas.¹⁸

Implications of New Urbanism for inner cities

Physical determinism and real estate fixes

Some of the harshest criticism of New Urbanism has come from evaluations of tenuous theories and concepts extracted from the movement’s normative literature, particularly those addressing the social and cultural implications of design and New Urbanism’s relevance as an overarching theory of planning (Audirac and Shermeyen 1994; Audirac, Shermeyen, and Smith 1990; Fainstein 2000; Harvey 1997; Talen 1999; Till 1993). To date, however, the New Urbanist literature has not involved social scientific theory building and empirical testing, but rather marketing and manifestos instead. But New Urbanist literature has clearly rekindled the long-standing debate over the relationship between environment and behavior and renewed charges of misguided policies based on the discredited concept of physical determinism.

In a series of essays beginning in the early 1960s, Herbert Gans voiced his concerns over what he perceived as misguided attempts at urban problem solving through physical planning and design (Gans 1968, 1991). Whereas CIAM-influenced urban renewal bore the brunt of criticism, Gans (1991) also rejected the opposing paradigm embodied in Jane Jacobs’ work in his 1961 essay on “Urban Vitality and the Fallacy of Physical Determinism”:

[T]he physical fallacy...leads her to ignore the social, cultural, and economic factors that contribute to vitality or dullness...[and] blinds her to the true causes of the city’s problems. (36)

The neighborhoods with which she is most concerned cannot serve as models for future planning. (41)

At the time, Gans and a growing number of social scientists were concluding that the effect of the built environment on human behavior was negligible compared with more powerful predictors like social, economic, and cultural factors (Berger 1960; Gans 1962, 1967; Keller 1968). From this time forward, the use of physical planning and design for addressing policy issues became labeled and widely discredited as physical, environmental, or architectural determinism.

¹⁸ Interview with Bob McNutt, CNE vice president and architect, July 5, 2000.

Many current critiques draw on this legacy in labeling New Urbanism as an attempt to employ quick real estate fixes to deal with complex social and economic problems (Pyatok 2000). While ardent New Urbanist proponents have overstated design's potential to bring about social and civic change, those searching for clear evidence of physical determinism will be disappointed with the official statement on the matter embodied in the CNU Charter:

We recognize that physical solutions by themselves will not solve social and economic problems, but neither can economic vitality, community stability, and environmental health be sustained without a coherent and supportive physical framework. (CNU 2000)

More important, as a result of over 30 years of theoretical and empirical inquiries on the complex nature of environment and behavioral relationships and the evolution of social science as the dominant base for planning in the postwar decades, the specter of physical determinism in planning has been greatly diminished.¹⁹ The concept of physical determinism has been replaced by more modest concepts such as Gibson's (1979) *environmental affordance*, which concerns the ability of environments to support or constrain different types of activities and meanings.²⁰

Physical determinism, in fact, has long since become a straw man that has been used to discredit and exclude physical planning and design from the realm of urban problem solving. It is a simplistic rendering of what design can and cannot accomplish as an isolated strategy, rather than one tool within a more comprehensive revitalization program. Inner-city residents will continue to need jobs and social services much more than they need yards and plazas. But unless urban policies call for the planned obsolescence and abandonment of neighborhoods or envision changeless neighborhoods of perpetual poverty and socioeconomic isolation, the physical environment must be addressed as part of any long-term inner-city program.

¹⁹ The Environmental Design Research Association was founded in 1968, seven years after Gans first wrote about physical determinism. Over the past three decades, this broad interdisciplinary field of environment and behavior research has made important theoretical and empirical contributions to the understanding of human-environment relationships. See, for example, Moore (1976), Canter (1977, 1997), Altman and Rogoff (1987), and other works addressed in the four-volume series, *Advances in Environment, Behavior, and Design*, inaugurated by Zube and Moore in 1987.

²⁰ See Gibson (1979), Heft (1997), and Lang (1993) for further discussions of environmental affordance.

Mixed-income neighborhood policies and gentrification

One reason for the growing application of New Urbanism in inner cities is to support policies aimed at reducing high concentrations of poverty by creating more diverse, mixed-income neighborhoods. New Urbanist design principles explicitly support the goal of creating mixed-income neighborhoods by calling for “a broad range of housing types and price levels to bring people of diverse ages, races, and incomes into daily interaction” (CNU and HUD 2000, 4). Programs and policies designed to attract middle-income households back to the inner city and create mixed-income neighborhoods have garnered considerable support (Quercia and Galster 1997).

These policies have also been criticized, however, for opening the door to the gradual gentrification of inner-city neighborhoods and the displacement of low-income and minority households (Palen 1988). Displacement has become a particular concern with many HOPE VI projects, which no longer require a one-to-one replacement of demolished units.²¹ Even in neighborhoods like Pittsburgh’s Hill District, a site where low-income housing had been demolished and stood vacant for decades, gentrification remains an issue, since new housing typically includes a large percentage of market-rate units priced for middle- and upper-income households.

In a recent commentary in this journal, Kasarda noted the “conundrum” of gentrification, where “for every positive point, there appears to be a negative point” (Kasarda 1999, 780). Gentrification and efforts to create mixed-income neighborhoods, however, are not synonymous. Mixed-income neighborhood policies often include provisions to maintain low-income and affordable housing options that are specifically aimed at preventing the wholesale gentrification of neighborhoods over time. Despite many creative financing, homeownership, and rental practices, however, the goal of nurturing more socially and economically diverse inner-city neighborhoods has remained elusive.

Some view New Urbanism as a complementary approach that introduces physical planning and urban design principles well adapted to the challenges of creating mixed-income neighborhoods in inner cities. This is based on New Urbanism’s ability to blend together “a broad range of housing types and price levels,” mixed land uses, and low-income housing units in the form of a traditional urban neighborhood. This approach contrasts sharply with the homogeneous residential composition and extreme concentration of disadvantaged populations

²¹ Residents of projects slated for HOPE VI projects have both supported and opposed the projects. Examples of opposition include formal protests held against HOPE VI projects in Minneapolis and Columbus, OH, and examples of support have included projects in St. Louis and Baltimore. See England-Joseph (1998).

in distressed inner-city neighborhoods and dovetails with the efforts of HUD and local public housing authorities to disperse low-income housing units.

Enthusiasm for employing New Urbanism to achieve more diverse, mixed-income neighborhoods needs to be tempered by what might be lost in a widespread dispersal of the residents of inner-city neighborhoods. While housing vouchers and suburban relocation programs have provided a potential means for lowering the concentration of low-income households, they may also have the undesirable consequence of exporting more successful families to suburban areas, creating a constant drain on the social capital of inner-city neighborhoods.²² While mixed-income neighborhood policies strive to avoid this situation, they also run the risk of diluting the local community to the extent that less advantaged groups become fragmented and isolated within larger pools of higher income groups (Briggs 1997b). Efforts to create more diverse neighborhoods using New Urbanism must be sensitive to local community bonds and the social capital of inner-city neighborhoods.

New Urbanist architectural styles and building types are also criticized for potentially contributing to gentrification pressures, because of the appeal of these housing options for middle- and upper-income groups and their inconsistency with the housing preferences of inner-city populations (Pyatok 2000). But these arguments conjure up the puritanical view that “social housing should not be fancy” and should only go to the “deserving poor” (Rybczynski 1993, 86, 83). These types of arguments can only lead back toward the designing-down of low-income housing initiated under the 1937 Wagner-Steagall Act, a policy that contributed greatly to the stigma of assisted housing (von Hoffman 1998). They also ignore the expressed preferences of inner-city residents themselves, who requested yards, picket fences, and porches in Diggs Town (Bothwell, Gindroz, and Lang 1998) and “houses just like everybody else has” (Gunts 1995, 1A) in Pleasant View Gardens.

*Density and the downsizing of inner-city neighborhoods:
What is “urban”?*

Ironically, the application of New Urbanism has raised concerns over the suburbanization of the city. This has been a particular criticism of the HOPE VI program, which emphasizes single-family housing types and requires significant density reductions. As O’Neill asks,

Is this emphasis on the single family home only part of an inexorable national trend towards single family living—and will this

²² In 1998, *Housing Policy Debate* devoted an entire issue (number 1) to the topic of social capital.

force a rethinking in the nature of our cities? Or does it conversely pose yet another threat to the ever diminishing qualities of urbanity in our world? (1999, 12)

Viewed historically, the conditions and trends that produced industrial urbanism have now been completely reversed in many American cities. There has been an extraordinary decline in the population of many older cities like Baltimore, Newark (NJ), St. Louis, and Philadelphia, and Americans' expressed preferences for single-family housing and lower-density lifestyles have grown ever stronger.²³ It would appear reasonable that inner-city neighborhoods built to accommodate much larger populations and densities in the past will need to be redesigned on a scale more consistent with present populations and with a housing mix that better reflects the contemporary housing market. In other words, it is very unlikely that the type of urbanism required to attract a diverse group of renters and home buyers today will be the dense, industrial variety of urbanism largely abandoned in older cities.

This does not require the suburbanization of the city, merely a rediscovery of the different scales and qualities of traditional urban neighborhoods. In practice, different shades of urbanism will make sense in different situations, depending on policy objectives, site characteristics, the historic character of neighborhoods, and the wide assortment of social, economic, and lifestyle variables that contribute to the market conditions of each place. A high-density, Leon Krier-like, quartier approach to inner-city redevelopment might make sense for cities like New York, Chicago, or San Francisco but face resistance and rejection in cities like Houston, St. Louis, or Chattanooga, TN.

New Urbanism provides for extraordinary flexibility in adjusting the density, building types, and urban character of neighborhoods in response to a particular context. Thus, Daniel Solomon's work and New Urbanist projects like Liberty Harbor North (Jersey City, NJ) incorporate "Manhattan-like densities" as high as 100 to 160 gross DU/acre in buildings ranging from 8 to 32 stories high, while projects incorporating duplexes, row houses, and single-family homes can easily go as low as 10 to 20 DU/acre (Steuteville 1999a). What distinguishes lower-density New Urbanist projects from suburbanization approaches to inner cities is the urban character maintained by the combination of narrow streets, continuous sidewalks, street trees, shallow setbacks, urban public spaces, and mixed housing types and land uses, none of which are representative of suburban planning and design.

²³ On residential preferences, see National Association of Home Builders (1999) for a recent example and Ewing (1997) and Gordon and Richardson (1997) for short summaries of prior research.

Is it affordable?

New Urbanism is regularly criticized as unaffordable for middle- and lower-income families. The favorite example is Seaside, FL, which represented the first large-scale implementation of New Urbanist concepts. While the town has developed into a high-priced resort for the rich, this has been a function of the real estate market, not the cost of the underlying urban design. For example, consider the costs one couple encountered in Seaside when it was first started:

Ms. Lovell, for instance, bought her lot for \$17,000 in 1982. She and her husband, a carpenter, spent three years commuting on weekends from Atlanta to build a 400-square-foot cottage using \$20,000 of materials. (Binkley 1995, F1)

By virtually any U.S. standard, the cost of the Lovells' home in Seaside would be considered affordable. So what went "wrong"? The problem with Seaside is that it became so popular it was effectively gentrified even as it was being built. The rich came and priced everyone else out of the market, running up the price of lots 25 percent annually since 1982 (Lincoln Institute of Land Policy 1995). An empirical study that analyzed thousands of single-family home transactions employing hedonic pricing models and controlling for site, interior, exterior, quality, location, and market characteristics also confirmed that consumers were willing to pay a premium to locate in New Urbanist suburban developments versus conventional suburban (Eppli and Tu 1999).

In addition, New Urbanism is perceived to cost more to build than other types of development, because of increased infrastructure costs, the architectural quality of the buildings, or provisions for public gathering places. While the interconnected street layouts and curb and sidewalk requirements are criticized as potentially costly in suburban New Urbanist projects, such infrastructure is considered ordinary for inner-city neighborhoods. Where infrastructure costs are comparable, the density of development becomes the major factor in determining the overall cost efficiency of development in terms of the infrastructure per unit of housing. This leaves the cost of the buildings and public spaces.

New Urbanist developments can include an urban code, an architectural code, or both. Critics point to the more prescriptive pattern books of upscale communities like Celebration, FL, as evidence that New Urbanism imposes additional costs on construction by requiring more expensive materials and architectural detailing. But the use of pattern books and urban design guidelines can also be used to *control* costs while reintroducing the urban variety and architectural traditions found in historic urban neighborhoods. In Lafayette Courts, for example, concrete steps are used in place of the marble ones found in prototyp-

ical Baltimore row houses, and lower-level arched doorways (another historic reference) are “provided in the form of a trash closet located on the street wall” (O’Neill 1999, 10). One of the goals of the Ellen Wilson project, in Washington, DC, was “to create affordable details for affordable housing”:

Through the use of computer-driven cutting (laser, plasma-jet, etc.), ornamental architectural elements such as wood cornice brackets and metal stair risers have been achieved within the project budget. The use of special shaped bricks has afforded an economical means to introduce patterning into facades and articulation of window openings. Careful study of proportions brings each façade affordably into the Capitol Hill spirit. (CNU 1999)

It is important to remember that prior policies emphasizing quantity over quality and bare bones design over contextual housing types that could blend with market-rate housing produced some of the greatest failures in the history of public housing. Similarly, many of the decaying, undercrowded neighborhoods “lack sufficient architectural treasures, locational advantages, or other amenities needed to spur re-investment” (West 1999, 7). Those other amenities often include well-designed urban public spaces traditionally built and maintained by cities—squares, parks, and plazas—that can add lasting value to a neighborhood and provide a spatially defined public realm for neighborhood activities.

While many types of affordable housing have been produced cheaply, not all of it has been considered livable. The result, as witnessed in the maintenance issues, abandonment, and implosion of distressed housing projects, has been millions of dollars of lost investment. To avoid repeating this scenario, more emphasis must be placed on the quality, diversity, and adaptability of design for inner-city neighborhoods and housing units as opposed to “warehousing” strategies. Too often, critics equate any hint of style, ornamentation, or public space as unnecessary frills rather than short-term investments that can reduce the stigma of assisted housing and contribute to the identity and long-term attractiveness of buildings and neighborhoods.

New Urbanism is a set of design principles capable of working at different scales of development at all levels of the housing market. But as Gans (1991) has noted, “[P]rivate enterprise...has been unable and unwilling to build for the poor since the start of the twentieth century” (43). Regardless of which physical planning and design approach is adopted, the creation of affordable housing on a par with rental costs in distressed inner-city neighborhoods will depend on the willingness and ability of the public and private sectors to work together to make it happen. Producing units on a par with public- and assisted-housing units will obviously require public intervention, either through inclusionary zoning, fair-share housing policies, density bonuses, or subsidies

to cover the construction of units and rental and mortgage costs for low-income populations.

Inner-city enterprise and ye olde corner store

Michael Pyatok, an architect who has worked extensively on public housing projects, once complained that these projects were designed as if all people were supposed to do there was “eat, sleep and watch the boob tube” (P.W. 1999, 30). The situation has not been much better for inner-city neighborhoods in general, where high unemployment is reinforced by a lack of job opportunities in the local community.²⁴ A recent HUD report also demonstrated that despite their significant buying power, many inner-city neighborhoods were significantly “under-retailed,” resulting in “out-shopping” in which residents had no choice but to shop outside their neighborhoods (1999c).

While New Urbanism advocates mixed land uses to make a wider variety of social and economic activities more accessible to inner-city residents, it has been criticized for a variety of reasons with respect to inner-city retailing and employment opportunities. Critics point to New Urbanism’s revival of the mom-and-pop “corner store” as out of touch with modern retailing and the desire of inner-city residents for a wider variety of goods at cheaper prices than small, local stores can provide. Paradoxically, others criticize the introduction of multinational chains like Starbucks, Gap, and TGI Friday’s as “commercial homogenization [that] may be wiping out the very character that made many inner-city neighborhoods so appealing” (Kasarda 1999, 780).

In reality, New Urbanism rejects the concept of strict zoning for particular types of businesses, whether mom-and-pop grocery stores or 50,000-square-foot big box retailers such as Wal-Mart (Krohe 1996). Instead, it focuses on creating building types that can accommodate a wide range of ever-changing residential, retail, and office uses and on adapting conventional real estate products designed for suburban areas—such as big boxes—to fit in a traditional urban setting.

For inner-city neighborhoods that want a large grocery store, New Urbanism design guidelines have been used to bring the building up to the sidewalk, put the parking in back, break up the blank walls with windows and entrances, and even introduce upper floors to accommodate offices and housing.²⁵ In other cases, liner buildings have been

²⁴ See Kain (1992) for a reconsideration of the “spatial mismatch hypothesis” he first posed in 1968.

²⁵ Examples include the Ralph’s grocery store chain store in the Uptown District of San Diego and the QFC supermarket chain store in Seattle’s Capitol Hill. See also Rue (1998) and section 4 in Steuterville (2000).

introduced to wrap around the big box along the sidewalk and house a wide variety of smaller local, regional, or national shops and businesses (Steuteville 2000). Unlike the historic buildings they mimic, New Urbanist commercial buildings are designed to allow space to be broken up or combined much more easily to accommodate the size of the operation leasing the space. The neighborhood gets the type of retailing it desires without destroying its urban fabric.

Another criticism by Michael Pyatok (2000) is that New Urbanist codes are too restrictive for “messy, income-producing activities” such as “repairing autos or appliances, making clothing or furniture, or providing hair and nail cosmetic services” out of the homes and backyards of low-income households (41). Although falling short of Pyatok’s more heterogeneous blending of home and work spaces, New Urbanism does strive to introduce a mix of land uses and small-lot “live-work” units in place of conventional single-use zones. While New Urbanist projects do not explicitly envision these types of microenterprises, they do manage to re-create the types of neighborhood spaces—private yards, detached garages, and alleyways—that Pyatok deems necessary for them to blossom. What continues to stand in the way are “modern zoning, building codes, lending practices, and insurance and property management policies” (Pyatok 2000, 42).

Planning for neighborhoods instead of projects

New Urbanism emphasizes the urban neighborhood as the basic building block of new and infill development. In contrast to the isolated projects created by CIAM- and Garden City–inspired urban design, New Urbanism takes the form of traditional neighborhoods characterized by smaller increments of buildings, blocks, and open spaces and an interconnected network of streets, sidewalks, and transit lines that can be woven into the existing fabric of cities.

Contextualism and traditional housing types

Briggs (1997a) noted the highly contentious location of 200 low-rise public housing units on only seven sites in Yonkers, NY, and argued that the Yonkers case still did not go far enough to disperse housing units. As witnessed in the projects profiled above, the traditional housing types employed by New Urbanism appear to offer good opportunities for pursuing such dispersed, low-income housing strategies. In opposition to the historical tendency to distinguish low-income housing from market-rate housing, New Urbanism emphasizes the use of local architectural traditions in all housing and mixed-use buildings. This practice has enormous potential to reduce or eliminate the stigma of

low-income housing that was facilitated by the designing-down of exterior appearances.

In contrast to high-rise apartments, traditional housing types also appear to offer the most realistic path to homeownership conversions in terms of their adaptability and desirability. Vale (1998), for example, found that, while the residents of public housing aspired to homeownership, they were not interested in purchasing the public housing units they currently occupied. He concluded that “unless the overall condition, reputation, and quality of life in public housing is vastly improved, very few current residents will be enticed to become owners of public housing units” (Vale 1998, 1).

At least part of the explanation for why public housing units are so undesirable for homeownership stems from the disconnection between the physical characteristics of the units themselves and the strong preference of most Americans for single-family housing. Drawing on Clare Cooper Marcus’s (1995) research on “dwelling as a mirror of self,” New Urbanism conceptualizes “housing units” in more humanistic terms as “the key to self-esteem and community pride” (CNU 2000). Features that have been identified as desirable by inner-city residents include separate entrances for units and transitional areas such as stoops, porches, and front and back yards, elements that have also been associated with providing a greater sense of control and ownership (Bothwell, Gindroz, and Lang 1998; Marcus 1995). Urban single-family housing types—walk-ups, duplexes, triplexes, town homes, and row houses—are common elements intermixed in New Urbanist neighborhood design.

By providing a variety of housing types, rather than a one-size-fits-all warehousing approach, New Urbanism creates better opportunities for matching households with their preferred housing arrangement. Traditional urban housing types have also proven to be more flexible in adapting to the needs of different types of households over time.

A typical 19th-century row house in Boston’s South End...has had a diverse history: built as a single-family home for the wealthy, later divided into a boarding house for low-income workers, and more recently reconfigured into condominiums for the upper-middle-classes. (von Hoffman 1998, 37)

Traditional housing types are not a “silver bullet,” however, and projects relying exclusively on one particular housing type run the risk of creating homogeneous zones as readily identifiable as high-rise projects and as potentially undesirable as the endless rows of abandoned row houses in Philadelphia and Baltimore. HOPE VI projects, in particular, have already drawn criticism for overusing the row house as a substitute for the high-rise (O’Neill 1999).

Territorial definition, safety, and social interaction

The work of Jacobs (1961), Newman (1972, 1996), Gehl (1987), Whyte (1988), and others has established the concept of territorial definition, consisting of the private space of a person's home; the public space of streets, parks, and playgrounds; and the transitional areas in between the public and private spheres. In Modernist planning and housing design, the transitional areas created by porches, balconies, arcades, stoops, and yards were eliminated in favor of uniform open public space that belonged to everyone and no one. This removed the eyes on the street advocated by Jacobs (1961) and many of the qualities of defensible space advocated by Oscar Newman (1996) as a means of discouraging crime.

New Urbanists place great emphasis on the creation of small urban public spaces and semipublic and semiprivate transitional areas and tout their potential for controlling crime, encouraging neighboring, and increasing the personal connection between residents and their homes. While inner-city New Urbanist projects typically report lower crime rates than existed before revitalization, it is too early to judge whether design was a significant factor or whether this simply reflects the newness of housing and infrastructure and other changes to the composition of the neighborhood. As the introduction of through-streets in Diggs Town illustrated, design changes can have mixed effects on criminal activity.

New Urbanism's potential for reducing crime relies, in part, on Newman's work on defensible space. While the two share an interest in creating transitional spaces, Newman has ideas that actually contradict New Urbanist principles, such as his use of fences and gates to "cut through-traffic and to create mini-neighborhoods" ("Good Fences" 1995, 30). The need to adapt New Urbanist design to reflect the conditions of inner cities was also apparent at a public design session for the redevelopment of a distressed inner-city neighborhood in Chicago. Residents at the meeting objected to the inclusion of alleyways, a common element of New Urbanist design aimed at removing cars and utilities from the streetscape, but one that residents associated with criminal activity.²⁶

Critics fault New Urbanists for erroneously expecting design elements to bring about more social and civic interaction and focus on the porch as an outdated cliché. New Urbanist design of transitional areas, however, encompasses the total neighborhood environment. Houses with front entrances and windows facing the street afford eyes on the street; shallow setbacks and transitional housing features (stoops, balconies, porches) create the opportunity for greater eye contact, visual identi-

²⁶ Interview with Robert Steuteville, publisher of *New Urban News*, June 25, 2000.

fication, and verbal communication between residents and passersby; narrow streets and on-street parking lower vehicular speed and discourage through-traffic; short blocks, street trees, small public spaces, ample sidewalks, visual variety, and local shops and activities make walking a more inviting option.

While these design elements are likely to fall short of New Urbanists' goals, the work of Appleyard (1981), Gehl (1987), and Whyte (1988) provide compelling evidence that design can significantly influence the extent to which people make use of the public realm for a wide variety of activities, including social interaction. But while preliminary research on the Diggs Town project suggests a subsequent increase in the level of interaction and engagement between the residents of that public housing project, this must be regarded cautiously (Bothwell, Gindroz, and Lang 1998). Research has also shown that the residents of public housing units located in more diverse neighborhoods continue to interact more with other public housing residents than they do with the residents of nearby market-rate housing (Briggs 1997b). While a mix of housing types, transitional spaces, and urban activities can create greater opportunities for interaction, they cannot ensure that it will occur.

Accessibility

Arguments against traditional urbanism often emphasize how "communities of interest" have become more important in the social lives of people than "communities of place" (Weber 1963; Wellman 1988).²⁷ However, this is true only to the extent that people have access to automobiles, computers, telecommunications, and the wider regional contacts established through one's school, family, and work life. Suburban lifestyles tend to substitute technology for local accessibility, but this is typically not an option for inner-city populations struggling just to pay for housing and everyday living expenses. As many researchers and observers have noted, the local community remains vitally important for significant populations of people who lack one or more of these connections, including the poor, the elderly, single-parent households, children, and teenagers.²⁸ New Urbanism has the potential to greatly enhance the local accessibility of these populations by placing them in closer proximity to the "functions of daily life: living, retail, employment, recreation, and civic and educational institutions" (CNU and HUD 2000, 16). New Urbanist streets, sidewalks, and pub-

²⁷ See Walmsley (1988) for additional insights.

²⁸ See Walmsley (1988) and Briggs (1997a) for short discussions.

lic spaces also ensure that the neighborhood is an integral part of the larger city by emphasizing an interconnected network of streets, sidewalks, and transit lines.

Arguments in favor of improving local accessibility to jobs, shops, and services are often countered by those favoring the relocation of inner-city families to the suburbs or subsidizing their transportation to other parts of the metropolitan region in order to find work. As job mobility and turnover rates continue to rise and job growth continues to increase more rapidly in suburban areas, providing inner-city residents better access to job opportunities is crucial. The question too seldom asked is which option inner-city residents themselves prefer: relocation, better transportation between urban neighborhoods and suburban jobs, or more job opportunities closer to urban neighborhoods. Some reactions of inner-city Pittsburgh residents reported by Fusco (1999) reveal their sentiments.

These new houses are giving the young people an opportunity to better themselves rather than staying in the projects. There's a mixture of young and older people.

This is where our roots are but there had been nothing here for us before. I really don't want to go anywhere else.

For convenience, the Hill District is the place to be. (2)

The disadvantages of suburban relocation and transportation options were summarized by a participant in a recent Internet discussion of "Poverty and Access to Work":

Finding work close to where you live, particularly if it is low paid work, is essential. Income is not clear profit and has to be offset against travel costs, but also child-minding and other expenditure arising out of the fact that you are no longer at home. If you can find work close to where you and your family live, perhaps someone else in the community will look after your kids, pick them up from school, cook them a meal, enabling a larger proportion of earnings to actually reach the family budget.

Though our self-employed jobs are less well paid than equivalent positions in multinational corporations, we gain in presence and proximity—no need for a second car, no need to pay minders to look after the children, no need for school meals or private tutors. We are thus directly involved in their education and available when problems arise. None of this makes us economically better off, but to my mind it is another far more valuable form of riches, for us and for them. Dispensing us to opposite sides of the urban area might boost our income but it would also make us a lot poorer in other senses and, to judge from other kids at school, could result in a lot more problems for our children.

Moving from where we live would mean abandoning a network of relations and friends, a part in the community, that make low income just about bearable. (Forster 1999)

The relationship between residential location and cost of living is an important issue facing those advocating suburban relocation as a strategy for assisting inner-city residents. While inner-city residents are typically relocated to areas with better schools and job opportunities, accessing these opportunities often requires them to purchase, insure, and maintain one or more automobiles, a significant cost not typically borne by inner-city residents, who rely more on public transit. Because the cost of transportation—the second biggest expense for a homeowner—has a direct effect on a household's ability to afford housing, there are now experiments under way in Chicago, San Francisco, and Los Angeles with location efficient mortgages (LEMs) that adjust the maximum amount that can be borrowed for a mortgage based on the transportation costs associated with residential locations. LEMs generally favor low- and moderate-income home buyers in urban locations ("Prime Location" 1998).

Finally, suburban relocation strategies also bring up the larger concern that "housing subsidies ought to encourage reinvestment in urban areas" instead of "underwriting the tide of suburban withdrawal" (Briggs 1997a, 746). New Urbanism is one means of expanding housing options and improving accessibility for inner-city residents *within* the city.

Public participation

While current public participation processes involving America's inner cities are far from perfect, they are light-years ahead of the top-down planning of highway building, urban renewal, and public housing initiatives in the 1950s and 1960s. Public participation is now a regular and often required element of renewal efforts and takes place in advance of decision making. But in contrast to the way most land use planning continues to operate in the United States, where development proposals are presented as completed designs for public review and comment, New Urbanists attempt to involve the public throughout the design process.

New Urbanism adds its own public participation activities, including community visioning, urban design charrettes, and visual preference surveys.²⁹ As employed in efforts like the Louisville, KY, SUN initiative, these techniques serve to both educate and engage the public in a dia-

²⁹ See section 10 in Steuteville (2000) on New Urbanist charrettes and Nelessen (1994) for more on community visioning, visual preference surveys, and other public participation techniques.

logue on community design issues. Urban design is advanced as a common visual language for communicating the content of two-dimensional land use plans and three-dimensional buildings and streets. Anton Nelessen (1994) also emphasizes a fourth dimension that communicates the implications for design alternatives in terms of daily living and working. The extensive use of drawings, diagrams, and photos helps overcome the planning jargon and legalistic regulatory codes that more often intimidate residents and discourage meaningful participation. While strongly advocating the principles of traditional urban form, New Urbanism has leveraged the power of urban design to help citizens and decision makers visualize and judge community design alternatives and to record their chosen alternatives in regulatory codes and documents they are far more likely to comprehend.³⁰

As the rejection of alleyways for an inner-city Chicago neighborhood shows, not all New Urbanist elements will work in all contexts. But greater participation *in advance of planning and design* creates the opportunity for residents to effect changes so proposals better reflect the wants and needs of the community. On the negative side, while New Urbanists maintain that most people will choose traditional urbanism over other alternatives, their advocacy of traditional forms introduces the risk that designers will manipulate the participation process by using the very tools they provide for judging the alternatives.

Conclusions

The limits of New Urbanism in bringing about inner-city revitalization

Many would agree with Briggs (1997a), who concluded that

even the most concerted—and measurably successful—community development efforts in declining areas cannot completely turn around that which much larger forces have devastated....Barring wider housing choices for low-income families, such neighborhoods will continue to “import” poverty as some families move up and out. (746)

New Urbanism should not be viewed as the magic wand for reversing the larger forces that Briggs alludes to. Severely distressed neighborhoods exist because of myriad wider societal conditions, and simply redesigning neighborhoods that will ultimately retain heavy concentrations of low-income residents is destined to be a disappointment in the long term. For policy makers to put New Urbanism in context, it is

³⁰ See Nelessen (1994) and Yaro and Hiss (1996) for some striking examples.

important to remember the limitations of physical planning and design for inner-city revitalization efforts.

New Urbanism is not a housing program: It cannot defy the dynamics of real estate markets nor ensure that affordable public housing units will be provided without public sector involvement. New Urbanism will also not provide housing-related services or help with utility costs and missed mortgage payments. It is simply an approach to planning and design that draws on historical precedents for ways to blend different combinations of housing types together in the form of neighborhoods, rather than superblocks, suburbs, or projects. New Urbanism cannot make inner-city revitalization occur in weaker markets, where it is already difficult to attract private investment, but it may be able to take advantage of untapped market niches to provide urban housing alternatives that have not been created for decades in many cities.

New Urbanism is not an economic development program. It will not provide job training or start-up capital. Misinterpreted, it could be applied in attempts to create totally self-sufficient neighborhoods or “olde” storefronts to house the mom-and-pop businesses of yesteryear. This would be a mistake. Micro-scale start-ups are important, but so are the types of growth businesses that Michael Porter (1995) argues are crucial for revitalizing inner cities. Redevelopment efforts (whether New Urbanist or some other variety) can provide opportunities to establish linkages between job training and employment opportunities created by a revitalization project, including employers intending to locate within mixed-use projects. The Cabrini-Green HOPE VI project, for example, is providing training oriented to take advantage of construction jobs generated by the project and fill positions committed by United Parcel Service, the U.S. Postal Service, and the Marriott and Hyatt hotel chains (Salama 1999).

Also, New Urbanism is not a social service program. A walkable neighborhood will not provide day care and affordable health care for impoverished families, or counseling for substance abusers, or community policing to help control crime. Work First, welfare-to-work, and family self-sufficiency strategies are far beyond its scope.

New Urbanism is subject to the limitations of place-based initiatives, which do a poor job of addressing problems that originate outside the local community, such as racism; inequality; spatial mismatches; and local, state, and federal policies affecting low-income populations. While the geographic neighborhood *sometimes* mirrors a place-based community, communities of interest, such as the African-American or the Latino communities, can be equally important and commonly encompass irregular geographic areas. Given this reality, efforts aimed at building social capital cannot be limited to neighborhood units defined by New Urbanists. While dispersal strategies may work to reduce con-

centrations of poverty and social problems, they may also enervate the social organizations and networks that help struggling families cope with adversity.

New Urbanism is not immune to the adversity and distrust experienced in participatory forums, particularly those involving disadvantaged populations that have traditionally been excluded from decision-making processes. As with most redevelopment efforts involving inner-city neighborhoods, the threat of displacement weighs heavily on the minds of current residents, and New Urbanist projects, particularly those that introduce commercial and market-rate real estate, are often viewed as land grabs. If New Urbanists hope to avoid the criticism of insensitivity heaped on the urban renewal era, they will need to work carefully to meet the needs and address the concerns of inner-city populations.

What happens to the portion of the inner-city neighborhood that is displaced in order to create a more diverse, mixed-income neighborhood? What happens to the residents of public housing projects where high-rises are destroyed and fewer units are replaced by low-rise development? New Urbanism does not provide solutions for these and other problems spawned by inner-city revitalization strategies. While the different types of housing espoused by New Urbanism might present better options for inner-city households, many will be excluded from these options without housing assistance and some type of fair share or inclusionary measures, density bonuses, and other incentives.

Finally, proponents often get caught up in rhetoric and make claims implying that New Urbanist design can lead to “strengthening personal and civic bonds essential to an authentic community” or that “we designed the public spaces to maximize social interaction and civic engagement” (CNU 1999). The potential for design to encourage and support social and civic interaction should not be confused with *causing* neighboring and civic engagement. As this article has emphasized, the potential for the built environment to support broader policy objectives and to *afford* diverse human needs should no longer be casually dismissed.

Early projects, such as the HOPE VI projects, hold promise for revitalizing public housing projects and distressed urban neighborhoods, either through redevelopment or infill projects on urban brownfields and vacant sites. However, critics are right to point out the danger of relying too heavily on design-based solutions to intransigent urban problems, since history provides many examples of design-based failures that go far beyond the easy targets of Modernist urban renewal. New Urbanism needs to be viewed as simply one strategy to be integrated within the larger array of economic and community development programs and social services necessary to improve inner-city neighborhoods.

Future research

The New Urbanist movement can be likened to an advocacy coalition whose design principles and propositions have yet to be systematically investigated and tested. Recent journal articles have begun to address this need, linking New Urbanism with literature on social ecology, social capital, urban morphology, environmental and community psychology, and subfields within the broad area of environment and behavior studies (Bothwell, Gindroz, and Lang 1998; Kim 2000; Moudon 2000; Plas and Lewis 1996). Future research should build on the large body of theory, methods, and research within these established fields. Although it sounds obvious, research on New Urbanism and the inner city should also focus on the growing number of projects actually located in inner-city areas, rather than on the high-profile suburban projects featured in the mainstream media.

To reengage design practice in broader efforts aimed at urban problem solving and to better conceptualize and appreciate what it has to offer, researchers must first replace the deterministic straw man with the more modest concept of environmental affordance. The physical determinism critique presents an easy but unproductive path to dismantling the statements of practitioners unversed in social scientific theory and methods, and absolves observers from facing the much more difficult questions concerning the subtle but very real relationships between the built environment and human psychology and behavior. It also continues to avoid the shortcomings of treating the inner city as a virtual realm, rather than facing the harsh realities and implications of the places Vergara (1995) illustrates in his photodocumentary work, *The New American Ghetto*.

The question for researchers is not whether New Urbanism has a deterministic influence over people's behavior, but the extent to which New Urbanist design is any better or worse at satisfying ("affording") the needs of people living in inner-city neighborhoods. The question for policy makers concerns the extent to which New Urbanism supports broader social, economic, and community development policies aimed at revitalizing inner-city neighborhoods. In some cases, the characteristics of the built environment—the mix and proximity of land uses and activities, the variety and pricing of housing units, the delineation of public, private, and defensible space, and the accessibility of neighborhoods to the larger city—will matter little. In other cases, however, the built environment will matter a great deal.

Unless New Urbanism is part of an overall strategy for revitalizing distressed inner-city neighborhoods, it remains simply a shell, a vessel to be filled randomly by whatever the marketplace wills. As an isolated approach, New Urbanism is open to the criticism that it represents a quick real estate fix that relies on the discredited notion of physical

determinism. As part of a coordinated strategy, however, it provides a flexible, incremental approach for revitalization that blends with the city and complements it, rather than fragmenting and dissolving it.

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