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CNU COLORADO

(COLORADO CHAPTER OF THE CONGRESS FOR THE NEW URBANISM)

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## MISSION STATEMENT AND SUBMISSION GUIDELINES:

The Colorado Urbanist is aimed at:

- Advocating New Urbanist principles in Colorado
- Stimulating a deeper level of thinking about urbanism
- Highlighting exemplary local practices
- Providing a local forum for urbanist ideas and explorations.

The Colorado Urbanist focuses on lectures, panel presentations and other events organized by the CNU Colorado Chapter Organizing Committee. As such, it welcomes submissions on following items:

- Responses to the lectures, panel presentations and other events organized by the CNU Colorado Chapter Organizing Committee
- Responses to the content of the previous issues of The Colorado Urbanist
- Opinion letters and short essays on any subjects pertaining to the issues outlined in the Charter of the New Urbanism.

Please email your submission as a Microsoft Word attachment to the editors and write "The Colorado Urbanist" in the subject line.

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## FROM THE CHAPTER

The year 2011 was challenging for all of us. A stagnant building market coupled with high levels of unemployment, especially in construction related sectors, has forced us to ask some serious questions about the future of planning and design. Some of the large design firms closed their doors and some smaller firms started to look for new ways to define the future. The stagnant building market urged us to ask questions about the future of urban development as well. In the face of an obscure financial future, creating sustainable lifestyles becomes ever more crucial, and I believe good urbanism is one of the most effective and direct ways to achieve sustainability. How can urbanism provide sustainability? What is good urbanism? These are the questions that we, as CNU Colorado, are asking and hoping to find answers to through a forum of innovative thinkers. This means your support is as important as it has ever been.

Last year, CNU Colorado was not immune to the turmoil we observed in the urban development scene. Even though we organized two panel presentations (included in this issue of *The Colorado Urbanist*) and conducted a full-day conference and workshop titled *Smart Growth in Small Town and Rural Communities*, last year was not a good year for CNU Colorado. We observed a significant decrease in membership. We were not active in publishing *The Colorado Urbanist*. Furthermore, some valuable members of our Board of Directors left the board at the end of the year. In the name of CNU Colorado, I express my gratitude to all of the former board members for their valuable contributions. They are: Sean O'Hara, Melissa Nelson Rummel, David Gross, Cynthia Patton, Gary Taipalus, Kevin Handley, Jeff Winston, and Peter Park.

However, after the low-energy ending of 2011, we have started the year 2012 with refreshed motivation and stronger dedication. We have recruited four new members to our board (the list of current members is on bottom left of this page) and created a strong schedule of events for the year (upcoming events can be found on the back cover). We are particularly excited to welcome Steve Mouzon on April 9, 2012 for a presentation in Denver. We have also decided to publish *The Colorado Urbanist* annually and to depend on our web page for more frequently updated media outreach. As always, we appreciate your support.

## Korkut Onaran

*President, CNU Colorado*

*Principal, Pel-Ona Architects and Urbanists*



Presenters at the Colorado's Next Urbanism panel, March 31, 2011. The event was hosted by the College of Architecture and Planning, University of Colorado at Denver.

## DENVER'S NEW FORM-BASED ZONING CODE, DECEMBER 10, 2010

The City of Denver is the second large U.S. city to go through the experience of a major rewriting of its zoning code and successfully adopting a citywide code which can be characterized as form-based. What made it possible? What vision, leadership and public process was necessary to get it done? We organized this panel to have a constructive discussion on these questions. We invited Peter Park, the manager of the Community Planning and Development at the time, Jeanne Robb, former City Council member, and Steve Kaplan, former City Attorney and Co-Chair of the Denver Zoning Task Force. The following is an edited and shortened version of the presentation and the discussion that followed.

### DENVER ZONING CODE

#### PETER PARK,

Community Planning and Development  
Manager

City of Denver

*(Peter left the office in August 2012)*



I am here tonight with two of the folks who really made this new zoning code happen. Jeanne Robb who was the City Council President at the time was instrumental in making this new code happen. Steve Kaplan, former City Attorney under Peña was a task force co-chair - there was a task force that the mayor and city council created to oversee this 18-month assignment that turned into 5 ½ years. Never did Steve complain about this task as co-chair. For the most part he enjoyed the experience, but doesn't want to do it again. I don't think many of us could do it again.

What I'd like to do is give you an overview. I'm going to talk a little bit about why we have a new zoning code. It really is to implement Blueprint Denver, which is our land use and transportation plan in Denver. What Blueprint Denver does is recognize that, in Denver, we're growing; in the 90s, we grew by about 90,000 people. We're projected to grow in the city to well over 760,000 people, and the region goes from 2.7 million in 2005 to 4.2 million in 30 years. The city is going to be significantly affected by that growth. Blueprint Denver identifies areas of change and areas of stability. The idea is to channel that new development along areas of downtown, for example the areas of Stapleton that have never been developed, along corridors like Colfax Avenue and Federal Boulevard, so the new development of Denver goes to places where it can have the greatest benefit; where there's land capacity and where it can enhance transit.

Also, the hope was that the areas with stability, which are primarily the established residential neighborhoods, would be protected. Many of you may be aware that there is a constant shifting in growing cities; there are desirable

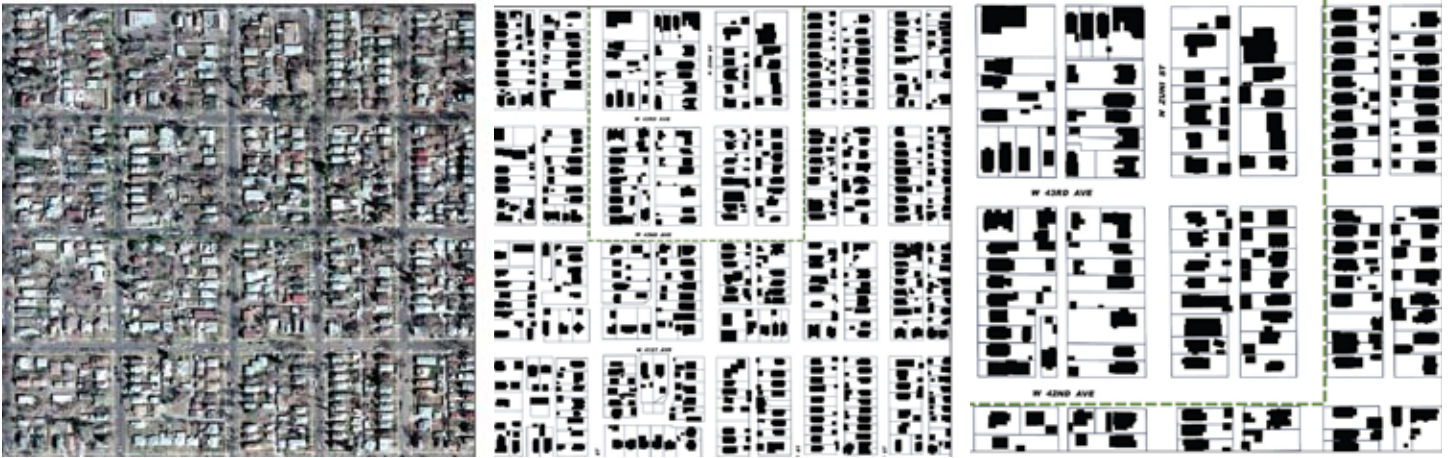
neighborhoods where people want to move in. The whole lexicon of "McMansion" and "scrape-off" and all the other flattering terms that people come up with for infill and redevelopment are a real concern here in Denver. It is important to remind people that "areas of stability" aren't immune to development. "Stability" doesn't mean there won't be any replacement, additions or teardowns; it just means that the basic established character of that neighborhood needs to be maintained. In the old zoning code, there was no guarantee. There were parts of the city that were zoned significantly higher than how they actually developed over time, and parts of the city that were under-zoned.

This brings up a vital point: remembering the importance of having a plan and a vision before tinkering with the zoning code. There are plenty of large cities, communities, and municipalities who think they need a new zoning code. That may be absolutely true, but before they try to plunge in to fix the code, they need to have a fundamental vision of what they're trying to accomplish. They could write a form-based code, but it doesn't matter if they have no vision. Blueprint is a significant foundation. We continue in the city to work on a whole number of plans - TOD stations, and various neighborhood plans - and it's from the guidance



*A map from Blueprint Denver illustrating areas of change and stability*





*Identifying Denver's neighborhood diversity through a typology of neighborhoods was one of the initial steps in the rewriting of the zoning code. This study resulted in identifying the different contexts which then shaped the structure of the code. (The above drawings are produced by the consultant Winter and Company.)*

of both Blueprint Denver and the various neighborhood plans and corridor plans that our recommendations for the new zoning code and the creation of the language and the mapping was directed.

Why is Blueprint Denver important? There is extensive public outreach involved in creating Blueprint Denver as a vision. At the core, Blueprint Denver promotes the creation and preservation of urban patterns, land use, multi-modal streets and the making of unique urban places. This notion of an urban place is a significant thing. I think a lot of people take it for granted - maybe because it's obvious to us - but if you look at growing communities, urbanism is still hard to do in a lot of places. The fundamental ideas are transportation, land use diversity, building on the existing patterns, etc. If you think of the urban renewal days and the repair of Downtown Denver, of removing blocks and blocks and millions of dollars in real estate of urban renewal, this is not what Blueprint Denver is about. It's about building on the urban strengths of the place and focusing on streets, blocks, and squares, the public aspects of private buildings, making places for people, making pedestrian-friendly and pedestrian-supportive places, and capitalizing on transit. So what Blueprint Denver involves is a whole bunch of activities from promoting a green print, to our climate action

plan, from fixing the zoning code to looking at the overall strategic transportation policy. The zoning code is a pretty big one.

The discussions about fixing Denver's zoning code predate Blueprint Denver. In fact, I was told that there were some initiatives to rewrite the code back in 1964, when the current zoning code of the time was only ten years old. The process of creating a new code in Denver was an extensive public process. There were four primary phases – analysis phase; problem definition phase; creation, evaluation and decision phase; and drafting and adoption phase. I was relatively new to Denver when we first started the problem definition phase. I would like to emphasize the importance of going through a problem definition phase. Many of us were anxious to get the zoning code done for But we took our time for diagnosis and that was a good thing. We did a number of listening sessions around the city. It was a very informative tour. We realized and recognized that perceptions of what was wrong with the Denver's previous zoning code were all over the place. There were thousands of people involved in this process over 5 1/2 years. We had a website that we tried to keep informative. It became a useful communication tool as a way to get comments and chase after those comments.



*Blueprint Denver focuses on using streets, blocks, squares and public aspects of private buildings to create pedestrian-friendly places with strong transit corridors.*





*Denver Plan as of 1960's: Ideas of urban renewal replaced the signature character of Downtown Denver and surrounding neighborhoods.*

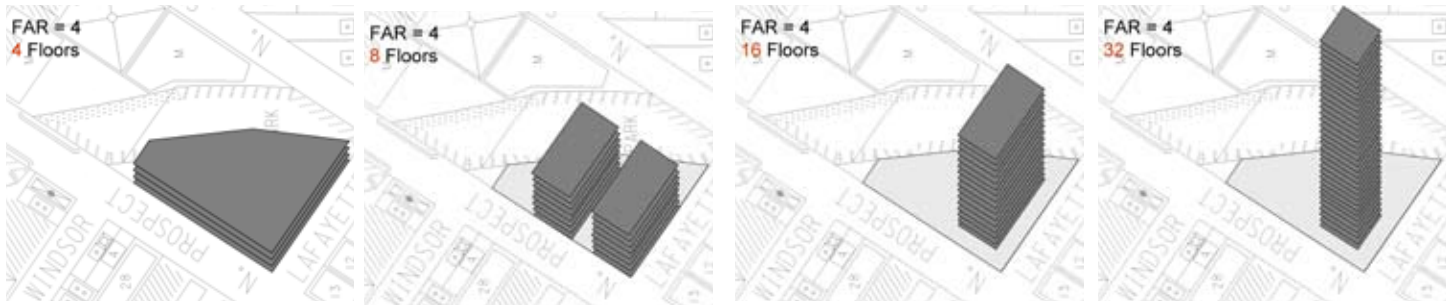
Why fix the code? There are two primary reasons. First, there was a fundamental vision mismatch between the city's adopted plans and the code that was adopted in the mid-fifties. Here was a system of laws that was out of sync with where the city said it actually wanted to be. Having this mismatch created difficulties. When you were trying to do a development, we were saying in the city that, here, this is what we want to see, a mixed-use development. But then, oh, sorry, your zoning does not allow that, you have to rezone it. This image (the image above) was the urban renewal vision of, well, totally wiping away the whole downtown. This was the vision in the sixties: LoDo goes completely away, to be replaced by high rises. The historic

character of the downtown would have been totally lost if this vision had been realized. You would infer from the zoning that this was really the future of our city.

The second reason is the way the old code worked. It had a one-size-fits-all notion in many districts. It had this notion that whatever exists today is expendable. Like many conventional zoning codes do, the old code treated residential neighborhoods as if they all are the same single-family district. But, an early 1910s' neighborhood of bungalows does not have the same character and feel as a 1960s' ranch neighborhood. A main street built around streetcars is not the same as a 70s' strip mall on Colorado Boulevard. But the old code treated them the same.



*Blueprint Denver promotes the preservation of Denver's existing neighborhoods, which are diverse in use, density and character.*



Floor Area Ratio (FAR) does not address how building volume is distributed on a site. Above is an illustration of four different building arrangements on the same lot with the same FAR. Obviously, there is a big difference between a 3-story building and a 32-story tower in terms of their visual impact.

There was also a concern about how complex the old code was. The new code is not the same size as the code that it replaced. We intended to simplify it. The old zoning code was organized by zoning districts. The interdependencies between chapters and the references and the sub-references kept you wondering if you had the whole story. In other words, you always felt like you were missing some of the crucial information.

In the new code we tried to recognize that the city was developed over 150 years. Early on, it was based on streetcar and trolley. Later the developments were influenced by the automobile. So, we studied these various patterns. We realized that we needed different codes for the different parts of the city that evolved into different patterns. When you look at the way the new code works, it is really a group of codes written for various contexts; they come together and form the citywide code, which is 1,062 pages.

Our old code was cumbersome because it was a result of a lot of amendments and changes, even though they were done with good intentions. If you do that for a long

time you defeat the purpose of having a consistent and predictable code. Consistent, easy to understand, and with a clear vision! How do you achieve these?

We left behind tools like floor area ratio (FAR). FAR is the common density measurement and the common reference for entitlement and value. It was a little bit scary to throw out this old measurement, but if you think about it, FAR is completely formless. In Denver's case you don't have height limit. With an FAR of 4 to 1, you could do a four story building, or arrange it in a tower with 32 stories. From a designer's point of view, it provides maximum flexibility in how to shape the building. But it doesn't give any clear vision of what the building is going to be. It is not a reliable measurement system if you care about the form of the city. If you care about creating building presence on the sidewalk, or definition of the street corner or square, you have no idea how someone might distribute that volume in a building. And each solution would be legal. Most people can tell the difference between 4-story buildings and 32-story buildings, but the zoning would not distinguish between those.



Suburban Neighborhood



Urban Edge Neighborhood



Urban Neighborhood



General Urban Neighborhood



Urban Center Neighborhood



Downtown Neighborhood

Denver's New Zoning Code defines six major contexts, each with its own chapter in the code.





*This building for the McDonald's fast food restaurant, on Colfax at Pennsylvania, is one of the earliest projects reviewed and approved under the new zoning code.*

The old code had rules of one-size-fits-all, with focus on more of what you can't do instead of what you can do. It had a lot of regulations in a format that was hard to track. The new code is context-based, having standards that are tailored to particular characteristics of any area. It has also a form-based approach that is better at describing what you can do, with higher reliance on graphics and tables. We took the opportunity to reorganize the entire code into thirteen articles in a framework that would be sustainable over time. If new uses come up in the near future, there is a place for those in the code. If there are different ways of arranging parking on a site, there is a place for that in terms of how and where you would address those things.

We have urban neighborhoods that have blocks with alleys in a street grid. We have neighborhoods that have cul-de-sacs and no alleys. These different contexts set the basis for multiple articles of the code. There are six contexts that organize the new code: suburban, urban edge, urban, general urban, urban center and downtown. The first three are primarily residential and primarily single family residential. General urban is still primarily residential. The urban center is more of a mix. Downtown is obvious. With suburban neighborhoods, you typically have curvilinear streets, cul-de-sacs, not interconnected street work. Typically no alleys. The urban neighborhood, on the other hand, is built on a grid, with blocks with alleys, and a consistent orientation of buildings to the street and sidewalk. Commercial main streets are walkable. In Denver a new context has been evolved: we call it urban edge, which is the mixing of these two. You might see ranch houses or smaller developed on a street grid or an alley. Sometimes there are main streets and sometimes strip malls. In terms of the general urban and urban center downtown, these were all built on the street grid.

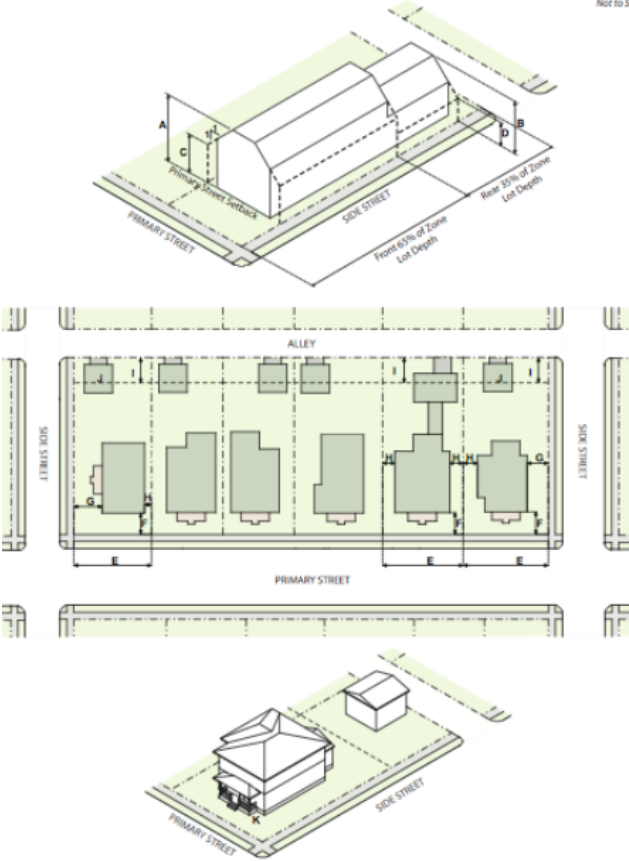
In the old code, so much was dependent on how words described what you could do. In the new code utilizes more graphics to explain these things and develops a vocabulary of building forms (such as, urban house, duplex, row house, courtyard building, general building forms). It is not about designing the building, but keeping the basic urban design elements of the relationship from building to building to street. If you were building an urban house, for example,



*Figure-ground images and neighborhood photos illustrate differences in density and character between two neighborhood contexts: Urban (left) and Suburban (right). The new code is context-based, with standards that are tailored to the particular characteristics of a specific context.*

5.3.3.2 District Specific Standards

A. Urban House



URBAN HOUSE

	U-SU-A U-SU-A1 U-SU-A2	U-SU-B U-SU-B1 U-SU-B2	U-SU-C U-SU-C1 U-SU-C2	U-SU-E U-SU-E1	U-SU-H U-SU-H1	U-TU-B U-TU-B2	U-TU-C U-TU-C	U-RH-2.5 U-RH-3A
<b>HEIGHT</b>								
Stories (max)								
A	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	3	2.5	2.5	2.5
Feet, front 65% of lot depth (max)								
	30'	30'	30'	30'	30'	30'	30'	30'
Feet, rear 65% of lot depth, allowable height increase								
	1' for every 5' increase in lot width over 50' up to a maximum height of 35'							
B	17'	17'	17'	17'	17'	17'	17'	17'
Feet, rear 35% of lot depth, allowable height increase								
	1' for every 3' increase in side setback up to a maximum height of 19'							
C	17'	17'	17'	17'	17'	17'	17'	17'
Bulk Plane Vertical Height at Side Interior and Side street zone lot line in front 65% of lot								
D	10'	10'	10'	10'	10'	10'	10'	10'
Bulk Plane Vertical Height at Side Interior and Side street zone lot line in rear 35% of lot								
	45°	45°	45°	45°	45°	45°	45°	45°
Bulk Plane Slope from Side interior and side street zone lot line								
<b>SITING</b>								
ZONE LOT								
Zone Lot Size (min)								
	3,000 ft <sup>2</sup>	4,500 ft <sup>2</sup>	5,500 ft <sup>2</sup>	7,000 ft <sup>2</sup>	10,000 ft <sup>2</sup>	4,500 ft <sup>2</sup>	5,500 ft <sup>2</sup>	3,000 ft <sup>2</sup>
Zone Lot Width (min)								
E	25'	35'	50'	50'	75'	35'	50'	25'
Dwelling Units per Primary Structure (min/max)								
	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/2	1/2	1/2
<b>SETBACKS AND BUILDING COVERAGE BY ZONE LOT WIDTH</b>								
All U-SU, TU, RH Districts								
30' or Less								
31' to 40'								
41' to 74'								
75' or Greater								
F	Primary Street, block sensitive setback required (see Sec. 13.1.2.3)	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
F	Primary Street, where block sensitive setback does not apply (min)	20'	20'	20'	20'	20'	20'	20'
G	Side Street (min)	3'	5'	5'	5'	7.5'	7.5'	7.5'
H	Side Interior (min)	3'	3' min one side/10' min combined	5'	5'	10'	10'	10'
I	Rear, alley/no alley (min)	12'/20'	12'/20'	12'/20'	12'/20'	12'/20'	12'/20'	12'/20'
Building Coverage, including all accessory structures (max)								
	50%	37.5%	37.5%	37.5%	37.5%	37.5%	37.5%	37.5%
<b>PARKING BY ZONE LOT WIDTH</b>								
Parking and Drive Lot Coverage in Primary Street Setback (max)								
	2 Spaces and 320 ft <sup>2</sup>	2 Spaces and 320 ft <sup>2</sup>	33%	33%	33%	33%	33%	33%
Vehicle Access								
	From alley; or Street access allowed when no alley present. See Sec. 5.3.7.6							
<b>ACCESSORY STRUCTURES</b>								
J	Detached Accessory Structures Allowed							
	see Sec. 5.3.4							
<b>DESIGN ELEMENTS</b>								
<b>BUILDING CONFIGURATION</b>								
Attached Garage Allowed								
	(1) Shall not project closer to the front line of the zone lot than does any other part of the front facade of the dwelling (2) If located entirely within the rear 35% of the zone lot depth, the attached garage shall comply with the Detached Garage Building form standards							
Primary Street Facing Attached Garage Door Width in first 50% of lot depth (max)								
	35% of the entire width of the facade of the dwelling or 16; whichever is greater							
<b>GROUND STORY ACTIVATION</b>								
K	Pedestrian Access, Primary Street							
	Entry Feature							

Sample pages from Denver's New Zoning Code. The standards are presented with a plan and three-dimensional diagrams. This page is for Urban House.

in an urban context, what is on these two pages (above) is most of what you need to know. This is where you find your height related standards, site related standards. There is a ton of information in these two pages. If we tried to describe this much information in all written text, it would probably be 10,000 pages.

The form-based code focuses more on the building form and the relationship to other buildings on the site, and the definition of the public realm. Our code relies more on simple diagrams, with the intention of having more clarity and flexibility. The freedom is in the translation of these buildings forms and how you want to explore them architecturally and stylistically. But there are some basic things that are addressed. It is about design diversity not style. It is about the fundamentals of urbanism. We think that the new code allows a variety of styles and forms within these defined parameters.

Here is last point. When your permitting processes are messed up or people are frustrated with them, everybody says that we need a new zoning code. That might be true, but if you don't have a vision, you're not going to fix your permitting process with a new zoning code. The code is a

means to an end. It's not an end in itself. Our point of view is that the regulations for land development should be clear. We think about these standards and processes as facilitating customers. Most of our customers want a permit more than they want a review. For us, our planned visions, which we create through public participation, form the regulations.

There are plenty of things that people wanted us to control, protect, allow, but we resisted. We wanted to focus on regulating things we knew we could enforce consistently and clearly; regulate the basics. This is one of the strengths of CNU: it focuses on design. Everything starts with the quality of design of places, architecture and the landscape. Any chance that we get, we promote the culture of design. How do we create an environment where the rules do no harm? How do we make it easy for the better design to prevail? This process of creating a zoning code was all about engagement with developers, neighborhood groups, and elected officials, with the intention of focusing on the form of the place, creating a code that would serve the city for a long time; that would meet our goals and align with the goals of CNU to create a sustainable future from an environment, economic and social equity perspective.

**JEANNE ROBB,**

Former City Council Member



**STEVE KAPLAN,**

Former City Attorney and Co-Chair of the Denver Zoning Task Force



**Time Van Meter:** I've been a user of the new code a couple of times. It's easy to validate the nature of what urbanists try to do. I no longer have to break rules here in Denver and that's great.

In the project I'm currently working on, there's no confidence that the project can get funding because of the current financial environment, and no confidence that the properties around it will redevelop as intended. As we spend time around the site, we see the value of the old building. It's a dilapidated warehouse set back from the street, but it has phenomenal volumes. I think we're going to break all the rules again but in the opposite direction because the building is in a place that is not supported by the code. How does the code address adaptive reuse?

**Jeanne Robb:** In a nutshell, the old code had conforming and non-conforming buildings and different rules for each. Obviously everybody likes conforming buildings, non-conforming buildings under the old code were supposed to go away. Our planners developed a middle ground called "compliant".

**Peter Park:** In real estate terms if you are trying to finance something or get insurance, being labeled as 'non-conforming' doesn't help. How does the new code handle this? We don't have the old way of thinking that non-conforming structures and buildings should go away as soon as they can. If you were calling about financing or insurance, the standard question at the bank would be is the building conforming or not? Now you can say that it is 'compliant.'

How do we encourage the reuse of existing buildings? Just like the way we don't enforce some of the building code rules on historic buildings. If you have a building that was built in 1882, it doesn't meet all of the fire exiting requirements in 2010. Is anyone shocked by that? No. What are the kinds of things we can look at in the regulation to at least do no harm and make it easier to reuse those buildings?

**Time Van Meter:** It's not historic. It just has a wonderful structure to it. There are some other development opportunities that could be form-based and responsive. Could it be developed under the new form-based code?

**Peter Park:** I am sure that it could be developed under the new code.

**Tim Van Meter:** It's appealing to people but it's rather anti-urban if you think about it. It's a very interesting space. We want to bring the baseline up, but we don't want to preclude really innovative thinking on the top end.

**Roy Jones:** Did you find the developers in Denver to be reluctant at all to new urbanism with the new form-based code process you went through?

**Jeanne Robb:** I wouldn't stereotype. There were some developers who got it. But the majority did not provide input early on. They did not attend the listening sessions five years ahead of time. They are just not the kind to come out for a neighborhood meeting and spend hours and hours. They are working all over the city and can't go to geographically located meetings all over the city. The fact is they don't believe that you're really going to change the code until you tell them that you are really going to do it. Even though early on there were specific interest groups we tried to reach out to (board of realtors, architects, etc.), many showed up in the last minute. ULI was really helpful when people started getting alarmed.

**Steve Kaplan:** The really difficult issues were from developers who wanted to do large retail developments. There was a constant struggle of wanting to push new development to be better than the old development. We believed, if we, as the City of Denver said 'this is what we want to see in our city,' big box retailers would follow it. Of course some would, some would not. The notion of not letting the big box retailers build the way they want to build (as they would in Aurora or somewhere else), didn't play as well as some of us thought it would. If you look around Denver, there are places to put large, big box retail that wouldn't require a huge community outreach and major rezoning so in the end there was a healthy candid discussion.

**Jeanne Robb:** We learned a lot because the category 'compliant' evolved during that discussion. One of the things was that we needed to be educated too. We dealt with a lot of issues before they came in front of us. The education went both ways.

**Steve Kaplan:** Peter provided the leadership and really had the vision. And the staff was fabulous. Way beyond the dozens of

community meetings or work sessions, they created this concept of office hours where any individual property owner or company could meet with one of the key staff people and sort out their set of issues. It was very time intensive and labor intensive, but it was phenomenally successful in making changes that really needed to happen. The public process and the commitment of the staff is something that everyone should understand.

**Peter Park:** A lot of times a developer has a project going. At the last minute all these people in the neighborhood come out and oppose it. We had a little bit of that. Our staff has been superb. The expertise that the neighborhood people had was also incredibly important, especially at the stage when the business community was criticizing the code and the process. Folks from neighborhoods who don't make their living in the real estate development profession knew how the code worked better than the professionals who made their living off of it. The neighbors were very proficient at it. Those kinds of exchanges were very useful in leading some of changes in the code.

As we look back, there may be places where we wish we hadn't given up as much ground, but the way things really work, there has to be compromise.

**Steve Kaplan:** It's interesting to think about the big chains. They have their set way of doing their store or drive through. The broker will tell you can't change it. You really start to have a discussion. 'What is it you are really trying to accomplish? Do you really have to have a drive through set up in the same way as all the other stores?' If you can start having that discussion where you are trying to accomplish what they think they need to make a go for it but in a different way, you've really moved the ball forward a lot. That's what started to happen in the business retail-working group. 7-Eleven was a good example. They were willing to do stores in an urban context differently from all other contexts.

**Peter Park:** 7-Eleven was great. They got it. When you do a store in downtown Boston, you don't have a parking lot in front. But when you do a store in a green field suburban location, you do.

**Jeanne Robb:** I don't know if you guys took the first call from 7-Eleven when their lobbyist called me. They said that they were going to the Mayor. They were planning seven new stores in Denver and that if we passed the new code, none of them would happen. This was a political problem. We have one going in on Josephine. It's a one-story, but it's a taller main street. It looks so much better.

**Peter:** It's on the northwest corner of Colfax and Josephine. If you compare the shape to the 7-Eleven that is across the street in terms of urban form, right next to East High



School, the cornerstone of that block is put in place. In the new code, there is more flexibility on a site like that which is oddly shaped, you can use some of the adjustments that are allowed in the new main street zoning to get the design.

**Audience member:** We reviewed a project, a carriage house. The height is an element that one can adjust to the context itself and to the existing architectural form of houses nearby. Can you speak to that?

**Peter Park:** In terms of fitting in with the context, we created the code to be more open. In a situation where you had to get a variance with the old code, where you had to prove a hardship - not solely economical reasons, etc., now there are provisions in the new code that allow you to demonstrate that what you are proposing is more contextually aligned, for example, in a historic neighborhood. I don't know many zoning codes that do that.

**Jeanne Robb:** In the past year are there any other cities doing form-based code?

**Audience members:** Miami, Florida. Montgomery Co., Maryland. Austin, Texas.

**Jeanne Robb:** I don't know much about the Miami code, but I think this 'compliance' idea along with the administrative adjustment will be what they may learn from us. Everyone was nervous when we started. The fact that it hasn't been done before, or done in limited scope, made it risky.

**Peter Park:** Why are we doing a form-based code since no one has done that? And our answer: "why would we keep following what we already have even though we know it's not working?"

**Audience member:** Here is an interesting statistic: over 90% of the re-zonings done in the previous ten years have been done with waivers and conditions. This suggests that something wasn't working well. Almost every re-zoning was a negotiated re-zoning. While people knew how to go through the process, it didn't make a lot of sense. We will see if that changes in the next ten years.

**Jeanne Robb:** There have been so many re-zonings in the time since I've been involved in neighborhood organizations. It was a habit we couldn't let go easily. We fought the City very hard. Are we going to need waivers and conditions in the future? Maybe just to correct the new code.

**Audience member:** You use the word 'correct.' I wonder if the word 'calibrate' be better. About that McDonald's building you show. The whole thing is making me wretch a little bit. It is in the right place, it is enclosing the street, and it has glass, entry, awnings and signage. Those are all good. But there are no trees, no street furniture and it is a brutal confrontation along the street. I mean, we got a response from McDonald's which is a home run. But how would we re-calibrate to create a more elegant building in the future? Are there any lessons learned from this particular building?

**Peter Park:** I think there are. What doesn't show in the slide is that the Pennsylvania side of the building has many windows. It's very transparent. As it returns on the Colfax side, there is continuous glass and the entrance. Filter out the architecture, if you look at the basics of how much of the building is forming the street wall on the corner, and the level of transparency at eye level, they are there. I can imagine designing this building in a different way and it could be fantastic. There could be some interesting graphics, a more interesting handling of the façade plane. Would it be better if there were more windows? Maybe if there was something to see.

**Jeanne Robb:** Wasn't this part of when we worked with the business retail working group and when we allowed alternatives to the transparency? That's where, like Peter said, we ask "do we give up a little bit?" It had our planners quite concerned at one point.

**Audience member:** If we write design guidelines (a precursor to form-based code), we would write certain form and massing rules, just to break the scale of the building down.

**Peter Park:** When you are writing design guidelines for a specific project, you have the ability to control it when you own the whole development. That's an important distinction. Most of the form-based codes that have been evolved in CNU were associated with TNDs. They were often greenfield or gray-field development, with one developer controlling everything, wanting to do the right thing, which is developing a form-based code. It is not the same when you are government trying to manage the regulatory system for a high level of variation in terms of neighborhood character and type, and tens of thousands of property owners. This issue of having more design standards or guidelines, I believe, is the next phase of the design review. We got the basic structure. Further codes and standards may be added for particular areas if there is a higher level of design expected. But we don't assume we can ratchet up government's control on every corridor in the city in the same way.

**Steve Kaplan:** Let me give a little perspective. With the exception of downtown and some other areas, every single property in Denver was re-zoned. The resulting building use might not have changed, but every single property was changed all at once. The new zoning code was recommended by the planning board unanimously, the task force unanimously, and passed by the city council unanimously, on June 27th. So we are six months into it. I know the economic times have not resulted in a lot of new construction and development, but all of that effort resulted in a citywide re-zoning with a lot of folks either happy about it, or saying "it's okay, I can make it work." That is a remarkable accomplishment for any city to have reached. We should not forget that.

We were on the verge, two years ago, of residential moratoria because neighborhoods all over the city were up in arms over scrape-offs

and "McMansions." We had many moratoria in Washington Park and to the west. There was a lot of dissension and turmoil. I am not saying it's over. That didn't necessarily drive the new zoning code. The zoning code kept on going. Everybody had enough confidence in individual city council members who were willing to bide time. But they weren't interested in doing the whole process.

**Audience member:** Is there any forecast on map amendments, legislative or by block or by citizen action?

**Jeanne Robb:** Yes, we had one in Judy Montero's district. I think the planning board supported the recommendation. It gets into the fine details - it was a difference between main street zoning and mixed-use zoning. The other corners were Mixed-Use 5, and this was a Main Street 3. Council turned it down. The owner's basis was "I want mine." That is: "Someone has a higher building across the street, and I want the same." I'm not sure if his application was wrong, but council turned it down. We didn't see the compelling reason for the change. Recently in my district, we found an area that had previously had residential and office use. It's maybe three blocks. In the update, we re-zoned it residential because there weren't a lot of offices there. An owner came to us because the new zoning didn't fit what he had. I don't think there will be many of those situations, but there are bound to be a few when you re-zone the whole city at once.

I can't think of other map amendments. We are doing an update of the Cherry Creek plan in my district. There is a zone called Cherry Creek North zoning, we moved it forward as an urban center. The neighbors are very nervous that we were going to change that zoning. The height is 55' and we don't have a form that fits that. I think it's worth looking to see how we can make that conform.

**Peter Park:** One thing I failed to mention is that the way the new zoning works, the height in stories of the building is part of the designation of the zoning district. An urban MS-2, for example, has 2 stories.

In the new code, we think we have a pretty good menu of zoning districts. We have a whole bunch of zoning districts within these different contexts. Mapping was a challenge because we were conscious about the diversity of neighborhoods we were dealing with. The old code had the 'one-size-fits-all' attitude. In what used to be R1 district in the old code, for example, there may be thirty different zoning districts now. There wasn't any question about use. There is often a mistake that form-based code doesn't control uses, but that's impractical. People do really care about use. The new code does a better job in dealing with use. It's quite a web looking at the uses - all of the things that are allowed. Even in addressing the uses a form-based code has advantages. You can scrub away many use-related issues controlling those things more directly in the form standards.

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## COLORADO'S NEXT URBANISM - PANEL DISCUSSION, MARCH 31, 2011

A few months ago, the Board of Directors of CNU Colorado decided to create an advisory board and ask advice about CNU Colorado's future. As a way to introduce the advisory board, we decided to organize a panel where each member provided a brief presentation. Our question was simple: 'What is the next urbanism?' First, Korkut Onaran, CNU Colorado's president introduces the subject (below). This is followed by an edited and slightly shortened version of presentations given by the panel at the College of Architecture and Planning, University of Colorado at Denver.

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### INTRODUCTION: WHY 'NEXT URBANISM?'

**KORKUT ONARAN,**  
*President, CNU Colorado*  
*Principal,*  
*Pel-Ona Architects and Urbanists*



A month ago I ran into a realtor friend of mine I haven't seen in a while who knew I was involved in CNU. He asked me: "Now that we're in an economic crisis, do you still think that the new urbanism works?" My answer was that in this region, the front range of Colorado, we are particularly lucky to see that urbanism works. In the last 15-20 years, we've witnessed some interesting investments in creating compact, walkable, livable urban centers, in other words, investments in urbanity and urbanism. In Denver, for instance, we have seen the 16th Street Mall development, all the infill around the Riverfront, the improvements around the Platte River Valley. We've seen some large neighborhoods like Stapleton, unique in its size and ambition, developed and occupied. We've seen some outdated shopping malls converted into livable neighborhoods. FasTracks is another very ambitious transit project, which is unique in its size. Not only in Denver, Boulder has seen a lot of infill mixed-use projects in downtown, new neighborhoods like the Holiday Neighborhood and Uptown Broadway. Up north we've seen interesting developments in downtown Loveland, Fort Collins. Golden has a very vibrant downtown now. And down south, in Colorado Springs, Pueblo. There are a lot of interesting developments in the centers of these cities.

These examples all show us that investing in urbanism pays. My proof is the real estate market. Some of the highest prices are still in the urban centers. The lowest foreclosure rates are again in the urban centers. 20-25 years ago, if you went to a realtor and mentioned \$900/sf for residential units in downtown, they would laugh at you. It happened. We still see those prices today. The volume is really low, but the prices are still high in downtowns. So, investing in urbanism pays, not only in terms of the money but in terms of creating life. We know this very well in downtown

Denver. We walk out from this building and there is life on the street. It's not just marginal life. It has a rich social texture. We take this for granted. You realize how important this is when you visit a downtown where there is no life on the streets. In many of so-called the 'snow-belt' cities of the East and Mid-west, white-collar residents moved out along with the rich social life. In many of those cities you see social deserts in the middle of urban areas. In short, we've been really lucky in this region. And investing in urbanism pays. It pays not only in terms of finances but also in terms of quality of life.

However, we are in a financial crisis. We have a lot of challenges, a lot of backlashes. Banks are really timid in disposing money and supporting mixed-use developments especially in urban centers. Investors and developers who were really active 5 years ago, are dormant, waiting to see what's going to happen next. We look around and look for a movement. We look at the horizon. What's the next wave? We are like surfers on the beach looking at the horizon, asking if we are going to be able to surf again? And then we saw these budget cuts at the federal level, tax credit cuts. The workers' unions are in a tough situation. You start to wonder if we are losing the lower to middle income class.

Where do we go from here? What is the next urbanism? When you are constrained, you feel helpless, sometimes that pushes you to have a big leap, be really creative. You think the unthinkable. This is our subject tonight, that is, where do we go from here and what's the future of urbanism? With this we should start the panel.



*Chuck Perry, Peter Park, and Tim Van Meter, during the panel.*



**TIM VAN METER,**  
*Principal,*  
Van Meter, Williams, Polack, LLP



I'm Tim Van Meter. I'm an architect and urban designer. We have offices here in Denver and in San Francisco. I've been in Denver for the last eleven years doing what we do, which is urban design and architecture. I co-chaired the CNU Local Host Committee with Peter Park when they came back out here in 2009.

Thank God new urbanism is not new anymore. It has been twenty-plus years. Many successes in new urbanism have been about realizing change, back to an environment of urban human scale. There have been a lot of successes, but each one has been a major battle. We still go through those with just about every project. What I see and walk around new developments and redevelopments are pretty good attempts, maybe a B+, but so much is missing because of those pitched battles that we constantly have to do to break the rules. Peter just wrote a beautiful code. There are still rules to break in there. There are still nuances, but what he has done is lifted the burden for people like me and my colleagues to do an even better job. That's a great thing because 10 years ago it was almost impossible for us to do a great job.

One of the things that I'm interested in and what I'm critical of in new urbanism and in all building is the lack of integration. This (*project image to the right and on page 12*) is in Hawaii. It's something I'm working on in our office. It is a small affordable housing community on Oahu, on a destroyed site: a former air base where they stored ammunition and fuel. Once you scratch the surface and deal with the soil problem, there is a lot you can do with the site. What we're attempting to do here is really bring the integration piece back in.

It's not just providing affordable housing for those in need, but can we truly create a community that generates more energy than it uses? Can we take care of all of the water on site? We think we can do that here due to the soil and to not having political problems in Hawaii about reuse of water. We can collect the water and bring it to the sinks. Those sinks go into a tank and get filtered, and the tank sends it to a toilet. We do all this and we're finding along with the landscape that we don't really need storm pipes. We need collection systems. We can take care of water on

site, but can we take care of the waste on site? Obviously recycled waste needs to go to centers, but can we take care of sewage on site? Can we produce enough food on site? Not necessarily for the whole population... but can there be an edible landscape?

The types of things we're trying to integrate have an outcome not just in urbanism, but an architectural response that is meaningful. This is just one of the buildings of Ohana housing which has multiple family members – could be two or three generations – living together. There is an architectural response here about reducing the energy load of these buildings, about gathering the trade winds. We don't have a heating issue in Hawaii, but a cooling issue. If you design it in a manner responsive to the environment, you don't need air conditioning, loads go way down and we are energy exporters. Tying it all back to urbanism: a landscape that drains itself, a landscape that you can feed yourself from, an infrastructure system that you can potentially grow your food from... To me that's the next urbanism, the integration.

I show this because we're very free on this site, because we have a very enlightened client: the state. They write the rules. We're helping them design and write the rules for the base. This is a pilot project for that. It's a refreshing course in what is possible in the next urbanism, but it also means that we need about 20,000 Peter Parks to help us get there.



*Site Plan - Ohana Housing Project, Oahu, Hawaii.*

**PETER PARK,**

Community Planning and Development

Manager

City of Denver

*(Peter left the office in August 2012)*



I am the manager of community planning and development in Denver – the planning director for the city. I’ve been in Denver about 7 or 8 years. I also teach as an adjunct here at the school- Urban Design Studios. Before I came to Denver, I was the planning director in Milwaukee where I did similar things in a colder climate.

One of the things about the new urbanism that I always like to emphasize is that it really focuses on design as a common ground for multiple professions - planners, engineers, developers, architects, landscape architects . . . I want to emphasize this because in this room we probably have planners, architects, landscape architects, developers. We have a whole range of people in these gatherings. That’s kind of what it’s about – building broader coalitions and strengthening how we build in our cities.

The first thing I want to emphasize is what I think is next – a continuation of what we’ve been doing in new urbanism for a long time – the importance of the economies of our cities and regions being linked to a national agenda. That’s big. How is that related to design? I think it’s a big opportunity for us. This is a place where the professions of design and building the environment can become relevant again in our country. I’ll just lay this out through a couple of thoughts.

We as a country bailed out our automobile industry and

our mortgage finance industry. I think we had a significant opportunity to do something with that, and I’m not sure that we did. We didn’t really expect any significant change out of that bailing out. Consider Einstein’s definition of *insanity*, to do the same thing over and over and expect a different result. I’m not sure what we thought we’d come out with.

One thought is, take a look at the auto industry today; it’s pretty advanced. I was watching on the Science Channel one time and saw the new Camaro factory; it was fantastic - the ability to change the assembly line to create a red Camaro, a black Camaro, all in sequence. It’s not like the paint line had to be all black and then switch anything over. The same machine, same room, re-configure, push a button, stamp out hoods. There’s unbelievable technology available.

In WWII, our federal government had private companies reconstitute what they were building for domestic product for military product with a short-term turn around time. What we could have done as part of our bailout was take steps to broaden the scale and scope of the products that we as an American industry create, for example transit vehicles. But we didn’t do that.

Portland, when it started its streetcar system, had to buy the first six cars from the former Czech Republic. Now they build them as part of the economic development strategy in Portland. Advanced manufacturing is one of four sectors they emphasize in the economy of building in the region; they build street cars for their system and for export. That’s a sustainable way of thinking about your economy, how you build a city, and the components that build your city. I think we could learn something from that.

On the financial side in the bailout as Korkut mentioned, we read a number of things about the mortgage failure rate often being higher the further away you are from the urban



*A perspective drawing of Ohana Housing Project, Oahu, Hawaii (designed and drawn by VMWP). Discussion on page 11.*



center. That is to say, the more dependent homeowners are on an automobile, the higher the rate of mortgage failure, as a pattern. It's interesting that we have this major failure on the financial side, and as a country and a matter of public policy, we bailed it out; but I'm not sure we changed things. There could have been other solutions. For example, we might have prioritized Location Efficient Mortgages as part of the conditions of this financial bailout. Add to that our capacity to build even a small portion of the best transit vehicles in the world - if we don't like them here, let's make them for the rest of the world because they like them - that might be an aspiration. I think there's an opportunity there; but we need to think about the right role for the government.

I would say one aspect of the next urbanism is thinking about how to demand from government its capacity to create opportunity. We think of government as a regulatory thing. Everyone says it should be more like business, until it actually runs like business; then they don't like it. In a business, if parks and libraries cost too much money, we give them up. We don't accept that. At a minimum, we need to think about the role of government as doing no harm. That's where we talk about fixing codes. We need to think about how government can support prosperity. It's not a bad thing for government to participate in the creation of wealth; we need to actually do it. I think fundamentally we need to change the use of our taxpayer money from spending to investing long term.

The second thing I'd like to talk about is public infrastructure in our country. In the CNU there are a number of initiatives: there's the freeway to boulevards initiative, about tearing down freeways; there are a whole number of urban arterial retrofits - the 6-lane arterial retrofit in the suburbs; and of course, water and greenway systems; and how we think about the overall infrastructure of the city. Planning of cities a hundred years ago started first with the design of the infrastructure - not zoning, not land use, but the physical framework, the bones of the city that the private sector invests around. You make it fantastic, you make it good, people want to be there. That's how you create value.

We got the legacy of urban renewal and post-WWII that actually destroyed our cities. Much of that infrastructure created laid waste to a lot of land. Elevated freeways throughout our country exist because there was a lot of private land that was devalued because of public dollars. It's failing, it doesn't last forever. We're at this position where we've got to do something about this. What should we do? Should we build it like before? Did we learn something? Or should we rethink it? I think this is a big opportunity from an urbanist point of view, from a design

point of view, and a development point of view. We took down a freeway in Milwaukee and found 28 acres of land along the Milwaukee River in downtown Milwaukee. It was amazing. We took away this freeway and there was all of this land. There is an opportunity in our country to do this. I often quote Churchill - "Gentlemen, we are all out of money, now we have to think." This is the opportunity to think about how local solutions to land use, development and infrastructure could actually affect and support some of the national challenges. Let cities thrive. Get some of our national scale government out of the way. If you know the initiative of the DOT and the EPA right now, they're doing just that. Denver is fortunate to be a recipient of one of those major grants.

My last comment is that I don't think code is done, but I think it's better than what we've had in the past, for a couple of reasons. First, I think form-based codes provide much clearer linkage to plans and planning. If you read a conventional zoning code with FAR, there is no vision there, no physical outcome of place contemplated. With a form-based code, the emphasis is on form and design and it makes design more relevant in the conversation of building cities. Also, form-based code is easier to administer. We are now 9 months under the new zoning code in Denver and I can tell you that it is faster for our customers, they can figure it out, and our staff can figure it out.

We have a zoning department. I don't want a zoning department in the city. I want a design and development department in the city because we're talking about building buildings. Who wants to be zoned? Our cities all have the same vintage of zoning codes. Post-WWII had a significant effect, which was sort of coincidental with the Xerox machine; it just spread. We have really good technique in form-based codes, so how do we grow it? How do we make it the common way in which we regulate the form and development in our cities? Therein lies opportunity.

My last point of the form-based code is this: it does take skill and understanding to make a form based code. If you don't have vision and clarity of how form-based codes work, I actually think they are quite dangerous. Many people talk about form-based code as smart development. Don't ever confuse form-based codes with an urban vision. The code is a tool to implement a vision. Anyone who suggests that we need a form-based code because we want urbanism, you have to ask them: do you have a plan and a vision for urbanism? Because they are not the same thing. You have to make sure people know the difference. Be suspicious if people don't know the difference. Educate them to know that this is a really powerful tool and we have the opportunity to grow it but it has to be used well.

## CHUCK PERRY

Partner,  
Perry Rose, Jonathan Rose  
Companies

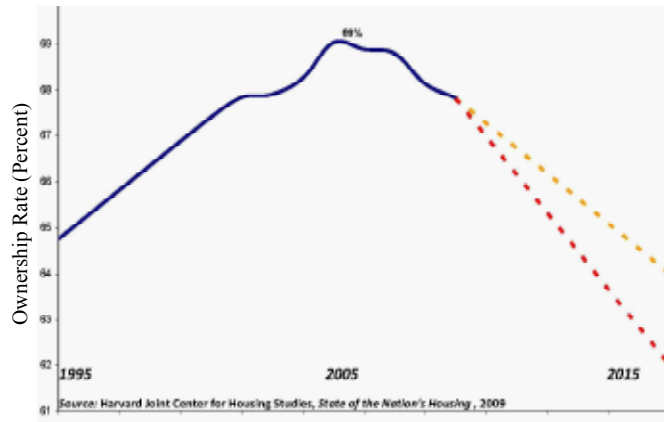


I am the managing partner of Perry Rose which is the Denver office of Jonathan Rose Companies. Jonathan Rose Companies does four things: urban planning; development on our own behalf and fee development for others primarily non-profits; we have an owners rep practice group, which supports cultural institutions and housing non-profits in building facilities for those groups; and we have an investment practice where we buy and sell real estate. We have two funds – one focuses on affordable housing preservation, the other on retrofit of Class B office buildings in city and town centers. Jonathan Rose, my partner, was one of the founding members of CNU. I guess our greatest contribution to new urbanism in Colorado is Highlands Garden Village, which was the redevelopment of the old Elitch Amusement Park at 38th and Tennyson.

I think vision is the key. CNU started with a set of principles. I think the next urbanism will embody those same principles. My favorite principle is: do not be afraid of density. Creating a sense of place, pedestrian connectivity, open space networks, diverse housing types, connecting people with nature . . . These are the same principles that we started with before, but the next new urbanism is going to face different challenges in different communities. We are going to have to respond to a fundamental set of demographic trends that are occurring:

The first is that this country is going to grow between now and 2015 by about 30 million people. It's not a question of *if*, but *where* and *when*. Those locational decisions have huge impacts. The typical suburban household uses six times as much energy as an urban green multi-family household. The next urbanism has to recognize the reality of that trend.

Between now and 2025 our population is going to age. How seniors live is going to dramatically change - I can say this because I'm over 60. We're going to be selling our houses, and more people will be buying houses than selling. We're going to see fairly dramatic household changes: 90% of the households are not going to have children; 36% are going to be single person households; the households are going to shrink, but household size has increased because of multi-generational living patterns, where parents live with



### Home Ownership

Source: Arthur C. Nelson, Presidential Professor & Director of Metropolitan Research, University of Utah

us or kids move back to live with their parents. This trend meant that we overbuilt the housing market by 1.5 million units. We have to get better at predicting what's going to happen.

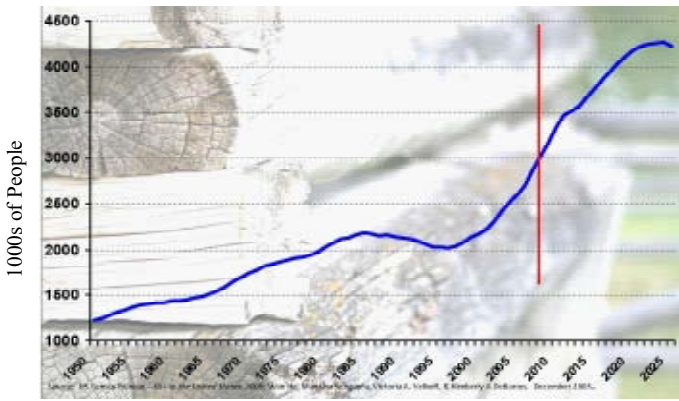
We're seeing household types changing; we're also seeing a dramatic drop in home ownership. The sub-prime crazy lending that Peter mentioned has gone away. We're going to see a lot less expensive, smaller loans, smaller homes, smaller lots and more renters. We were overbuilding the market up until 2007. Since 2007, we really haven't built at a rate that will keep pace with the housing that we need, which is a part of what that next urbanism is.

The other dramatic trend is that the multi-family share of housing is going to increase from 30% in 2010 to 50% of all households in 2020. We are going to see the large lots - suburban houses - decline, but there will still be demand for attached dwellings and small lot urban houses. These are the trends that the next urbanism has to live with.



Highlands Garden Village: the site before the development.  
(Source: Perry Rose LLC)



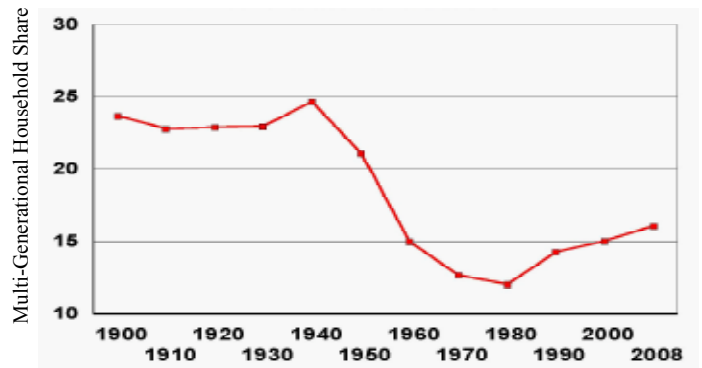


**People Turning 65 Each Year**

Source: Arthur C. Nelson, Presidential Professor & Director of Metropolitan Research, University of Utah

This is how we responded in the past: this is the old Elitch Amusement Park (*the site plan and the aerial photo below*). One of the biggest issues here was the vision and creativity - convincing a neighborhood how to go from the reality in 2000, to a two-dimensional site plan, which embodies many of the principles of new urbanism, to what exists there today. If you had this picture and showed people in the public hearings what it would look like – this network of open space, with a grocery store, single-family homes, townhouses, apartments, and some historic buildings - people would say you are never going to get there. Whatever that next urbanism is, it is going to require that vision that Peter talked about.

Another part of that next urbanism is what we are doing at South Lincoln with Denver Housing Authority: a mixed-use, mixed-income development, but it has to go beyond that. It has to start looking not just at stationary plans, but at corridor plans and how we link the corridors to achieve some of things that Tim was talking about on his site. How do we create corridor-wide storm water detention? How do we



**Multi-Generational Households**

Source: Arthur C. Nelson, Presidential Professor & Director of Metropolitan Research, University of Utah

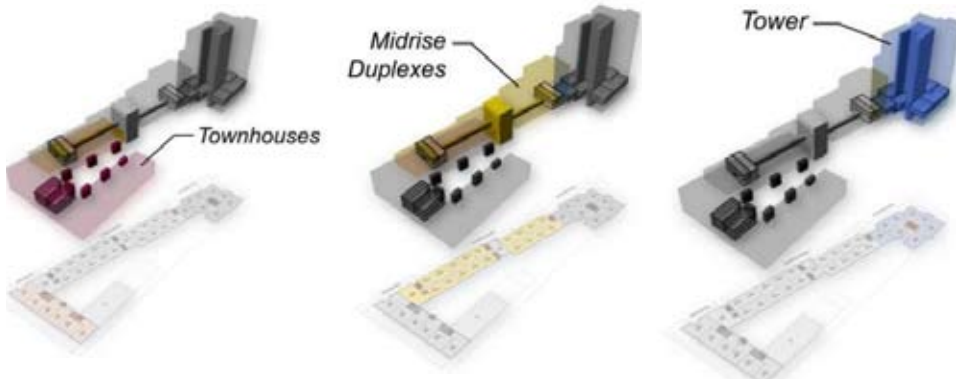
create situations in the corridor where we can grow more of our own food and connect with more people? South Lincoln is a plan that embodies the principles of new urbanism. It has a good storm water system - not self-sustaining, but more sustaining than we've seen in the past.

In New York, we have other examples of projects that Jonathan Rose has done. We have the Tapestry Project, which has high access to transit. It's a tiered building. It's a 20-30-50 (20% of the units are affordable to under 30% median income, 30% are affordable to people under 60%, and 50% at market). On each tier, on the roofs, there are rooftop gardens with different types of patios.

Another project which represents the next generation of urbanism is this (*images on the next page*), on a very narrow, ill configured site. The proposal is a mixed-use, mixed-income building that includes a variety of unit types. It has a number of green features that don't get to net zero, but are a step up from the level of sustainability we've seen in the past. This project attempts to create a sense of place using rooftop gardens as its central architectural feature.



Highlands Garden Village : Site Plan and aerial photo of the development. (Development by Perry Rose LLC)



Building typologies of the Via Verde project: a variety of housing options are offered on a narrow site in the South Bronx, New York. (Source: Perry Rose LLC.)

**JEFF WINSTON**

Principal,  
Winston Associates  
Boulder, CO



I am the owner of Winston Associates. We have been in practice for about 30 years. I've been the urban design consultant for 25 years now for the Town of Vail. I wrote the original design guidelines. I've had the extraordinary opportunity to have to deal with some of the language that I wrote 25 years ago. I originally studied at the University of Pennsylvania. I have a master's in architecture and landscape architecture. My first employer is in the audience here – Arlo Braun.

I come at new urbanism from a different perspective: comprehensive planning. Winston Associates do large regional plans, countywide plans and citywide plans. Our involvement in urbanism has to do with that larger scale where centers occur. Our practice extends from Nevada to Louisiana and to the east coast. Comprehensive planning sets the stage in an even bigger way for urbanism. Where is the center going to be? Where is the infrastructure? How does it tie together? How does it come about to create a place? My favorite example is Rome. The Pope put markers down and those became the seven fountains in Rome; all of Rome grew up around the location of those seven fountains. Those are the major intersections. That's an infrastructure that creates the form. We just finished a comprehensive plan for Garfield County and the City of Glenwood Springs. We're doing one for Livingston Parish in Louisiana,

Ascension Parish in Louisiana, and Washington County in Southern Utah. Change is scary for an awful lot of people. We are seeing a lot of push-back against smart growth, new urbanism, and visioning. There is huge skepticism out there.

How many of you have heard of the United Nations Agenda 21? Agenda 21 was passed in 1992, I believe. It has to do with sustainability for developing countries. It has been translated into a conspiracy. Let me read a quote from a website that's had a million hits:

*Most Americans are unaware that the greatest threat to their freedom may be United Nations program known as Agenda 21. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Division of Sustainable Development describes Agenda 21 as a sustainability agenda, which is an amalgamation of socialism and extreme environmentalism brushed with anti-American, anti-capitalist overtones. ... Undoubtedly residents of any town, county or city in the United States that treasure their freedom, liberty or property rights couldn't care less whether it's called 'Agenda 21' or 'smart growth'.*

*A recent example can be found in Carroll County, Maryland. A smart growth plan was drafted by the Planning Department, which, if enacted, proposed a breathtaking re-shuffling of land rights: rezoning of thousands of acres of beautiful low-density agricultural farm land into office parks; down-zoning of agricultural land to prevent future subdivision by farmers; up-zoning of low-density residential land around small towns into higher density zoning to permit hundreds or possibly thousands of inclusive housing units including apartments and condominiums; inclusive housing with the placement of multi-family construction; infill lots along with residential single family communities; endorsement of government sponsored housing initiatives to ensure healthier balanced neighborhoods; affordable housing.*





Exterior perspective of Via Verde. (Source: Perry Rose LLC.)

In one of the public hearings we have been involved there was a group that came out of the woodwork, a thousand people in one instance. One of the ringleaders said they were “villages”: *“the concept of villages: a European idea fostered by people in Washington, D.C. to brainwash us so that we’ll live in collective communities.”* And they were opposed to sidewalks. They said: *“connecting the streets allows criminals more access in and out of the neighborhood; sidewalks encourage people to walk in the neighborhood - you never know whom that’s going to bring.”* In Louisiana, this is code for racism. In Louisiana, and now many other places, you can’t use the words “smart growth” because of the negative overtones assigned to it. It’s a conspiracy theory and we’re all part of the new world order. In this room, we’re preaching to the choir, but it’s important to understand what the rest of the world is thinking.

Tim van Meter talked about us having a pitched battle every time we propose new urbanism, and Peter is doing a lot to allay some of those fears and create new mechanisms, but part of the resistance to change is something we call data. We have a saying that “data wins.” Another way of saying it is: when people don’t have the facts, they tend to make them up in the worst possible scenario.

My plea today is to document new urbanism’s successes. We need much more data, much more information about what the impacts are. For example, does the public really prefer new urbanism? We heard that it’s a little more recession proof, but can’t we do a survey and figure out if the public likes it? Is new urbanism really less expensive? What are the costs of roads versus alleys? What’s the true cost of density? We understand the relationship between wide properties and more linear feet of road: more paving per lot if you have large lots. But as you get smaller and smaller, you get more utility lines in the road and it costs more to repair them. In the end, you begin to wonder. I’ve asked several economists that we work with to help me justify smart growth or compact development, but they

can’t and they won’t. There are so many variables in an economic analysis that it’s tough to boil it down to smart growth.

Peter Swift, in the early days of new urbanism, did a landmark analysis of the correlation between the width of streets and accidents in Longmont, CO. To my knowledge, it’s never been repeated or expanded to a broader topic. He showed a direct correlation between wider streets and more accidents. The wider streets accommodate fire trucks, but increase speed. The accidents are injuring many more people on the streets than fires ever did. Data wins.

We need more data. Does mixed-use really work in the market place? It’s a new way of thinking for many commercial developers. They have to think about housing. There are very few people like Chuck who think about how to put those together. A recent study in ULI Magazine documented that in TOD developments, the actual usage of cars goes up, contrary to the whole justification we give for them. Is that true? We argue that the patterns and regulations that we have today foster a suburban result. If we remove the barriers, such as Peter is doing, will the developers actually respond?

Another aspect is how we communicate with each other, particularly with those who don’t think like we do. We have to find a better way of reaching out to the public, of getting the people’s voice. A comprehensive plan today is very expensive. They generally don’t start much less than \$250,000 and range up to \$2 million. New Orleans has had five comprehensive plans after Hurricane Katrina at over \$1 million each. The current plan, the one that they finally adopted, said to put it back the way it was. They had all kinds of folks down there doing comprehensive planning, but they were all rejected because they represented change and change is threatening. When you’re talking about public involvement, we have a relatively small percentage of people who will participate. We did a project in southern Utah where we had 1,300 come to public meetings. We thought that was a huge success. The population of that county is 130,000 – that was 1%. We’re making decisions based on 1%, sometimes less than that.

We have to find ways we can reach out. It’s got to be convenient, easy. People have got to be able to understand and to visualize what’s going on. It’s got to be accessible, not just at a convenient time for the decision makers to come to the meeting, but also convenient for me when I get home from work. Can I dial up at 11pm and provide my input? We’re exploring a lot of those tools in our firm, trying to make public input more accessible. For those of you who are in school, I encourage you to think about the research aspect and the data needs of our profession.



In Switzerland, public transportation combined with high-quality pedestrian environments reduces vehicular use (left and center images). Trinitat Cloverleaf Park, designed by Enric Battle and Joan Roig (right image, discussion on page 19).

**MICHAEL TAVEL**

Principal,  
Michael Tavel Architects  
Denver, CO



I moved here twenty years ago from the San Francisco Bay Area to teach. Probably the main contribution I've made to Colorado urbanism was a study abroad program that I created and ran in the 1990s in Prague. The program was a critique of new urbanism, looking at how natural processes and historic landscape beneath the city drive new development. We were looking at the edge of the city and the urban core. We were very heavy on city analysis. We had some great students in that program. Many of whom are top professionals doing great work in Colorado today. That's my main pride. I wanted to do that kind of work here in Colorado professionally. My family has been in Colorado for a 100 years or more, so I apprenticed myself to some really good new urbanists, architects and planners here. I started my own practice about 7 or 8 years ago. I've been fortunate to really focus on climate response of mixed-use



Solar Village project in Prospect New Town (design: Michael Tavel Architects)

urban buildings in neighborhoods and wrap myself around all of the competing paradigms in sustainable urbanism in the last few years. My main client is in the audience tonight, Norbert.

I'm like Jeff with the democratic process. I like to live in the world of ideas and to incorporate humanities, social sciences, and new paradigms into the work of the built environment. But it all has to trickle down to the democratic process.

I was thinking about Colorado's next urbanism; but it's not enough to just have ideas about it. Some of our pain and suffering has to do with I-70, and it has to do with people's experience. They start to realize that they need something else. My hope for Colorado from a land use standpoint takes example from the Austrian Alps and the Swiss Alps where you can get everywhere by public transit. When you get off public transit, you're in a high quality pedestrian environment.

With regard to the vision of better transit in Colorado, I think we missed a big opportunity with stimulus funds in the Obama administration: investing in FasTracks and public transit. That would have helped us point towards a more sustainable future in terms of lowering our environmental impact per person. Hopefully the Americans will support more rail, and here in Colorado a rail transit, in my lifetime. We can advocate for that. It will help the sustainability of Colorado. But we need something beyond FasTracks. In the city centers like downtown Denver and Boulder, I would advocate that more density is the sustainable direction. We've been taking baby steps in that direction. One good example is Vancouver, BC, which has a lot of high rises, interspersed with pedestrian-scale podium buildings at the sidewalk level. There are so many forms that density can take, and I think in our long-range future we will be exploring these forms in our city, although it might not be for a few decades. There are good ways to do density. There are some messy places of density and some more coherent ones, but I think we need to be open minded about that.



I think that most of the urbanizing growth should go towards infilling our suburbs. Most of our work is going to be in the suburbs. A big part of that might be reworking and revamping our bus service. One exciting opportunity coming up in Colorado is called FastConnects – a bus network connecting FasTracks. A lot of the buses we have in Denver follow the old trolley line. They go in a stair step across the region, which is incomprehensible to the newcomer. If we could have clear corridors of transit that link up the roots of FasTracks, then the suburban municipalities and the comprehensive planning could call for mixed-use at their crossroads and throughout the corridors. I think we need to revamp that bus service like the Hop, Skip, Jump in Boulder. With everyone who can afford it having a smartphone, people can know when the bus will be coming, or at least know the schedule. I see a future with biking, the smartphone, re-branding and reworking the bus system, that could really help reduce vehicle miles travelled in our suburbs and make local centers and suburbs more livable. *The Sprawl Repair Manual*, a book that came out recently, illustrates many different forms of infill at crossroads in the suburbs, which is one of the best places for that infill. Beyond densifying Denver suburbs, another paradigm to lay over it is that of new urbanism.

In the planning studio that I coordinate at the undergraduate school at Boulder, we were studying the Arapahoe corridor in Boulder and working with the city planning department. We were mainly looking at: what is sustainable urban form? To a great extent we were looking at new urbanism, increasing density and creating mixed-use. One student looked at the 500-year flood plain of Boulder Creek and proposed that the area be returned to an ecological habitat and a wetland in the city over the next 60



Site Plan of the Geos Neighborhood's "Checkerboard Blocks", where building placement is a large part of passive solar design.

years and not just filled in and squeezed by growth. The landscape urbanism movement tries to acknowledge the natural processes, the drainage that underlies the city and the ecology that underlies the city.

Another aspect that landscape urbanism promotes is re-purposing infrastructure. This is a great project in Barcelona (*Trinitat Cloverleaf Park*, image on previous page). It's taking a cloverleaf of a freeway and programming it and turning it into public space. There's a walkway under the freeway opening up to a public park with an amphitheater and a pond. There are fresh ways to think about the strange urban spaces we are left with today in addition to in-filling them with traditional building types.

Another thing that I think is important to fold into Colorado urbanism is climate responsive urbanism. This is



Perspective of the Geos Neighborhood in Arvada, CO, where window placement on buildings is designed to allow passive solar heating, and the public greenspace responds to stormwater management needs while providing public gathering and playing spaces.



Suburban development pattern for hot arid climate. (Source: *Design with Climate* by Victor Olygay)

a great work, *Design with Climate* by Victor Olygay, from 1963. He worked out suburban development patterns for four different climates – hot arid, hot humid, temperate and cold. All through history, cities have been passively designed to work with their climate. We’ve lost it from our vocabulary. Colorado, with its temperature swings, is an easy place to incorporate this. It’s much easier than New Jersey. This example (*image on page 19, bottom right*) is from hot arid. Stretch your buildings out from east to west, maybe tweak it a little towards the morning sun. You have courtyards that are cool. You have evaporative cooling to keep the surrounding buildings cool.

When I worked for Hoover Berg Desmond Architects in the early 90s, we designed an office complex on the University of Arizona campus in Tucson around cool courtyards with evaporative cool towers. It’s been built out, the first phase at least. It was a dense urban environment dealing with passive design. The first project in my practice, seven years ago, was a mixed-use building in Prospect New Town called Solar Village (*image on page 18, bottom left*). It was organized to open out to the south sun with outdoor space optimizing passive design and urban density at about 24 units per net acre. Solar was incorporated into the roofscape; optimum overhangs over south facing windows help to get people outdoors, out of their homes.

The main project I’ve worked on for the last seven years, with David Kahn, is a denser new urban neighborhood in Arvada that has not broken ground yet (*Geos Neighborhood, images on page 19*). It’s on a bus transit corridor, so the city identified it as a mixed-use area in the comprehensive plan. It was previously under-utilized industrial land. We looked at building types from around the world that incorporated ideas about passive design that we could bring back to Colorado. In the end we were really manipulating patterns we found in Colorado.

By transforming these elements like interspersing alley houses in between houses at the front of the lot, we were able to create perfectly passively designed buildings at 23 units per net acre. We also get the winter gain over one building to the next. Also, we intervened storm water into the entire town layout from the beginning with street tree rain gardens and private rain gardens. Those common greens for big flood events are shallow enough, and we’ve engineered them to be dry enough, that they’re usable year round. They’re great environments for small children. We’ve given the homes windows to the south, minimal windows to the north, good shade to the east and the west, and worked out the privacy issues. It really reduces the energy by a third. That sets the stage for doing net-zero energy building. I want to finish by thanking CNU Colorado for the opportunity.

## MARK HELLER

*Executive Director, Golden Urban  
Renewal Authority  
Golden, CO*



Thanks to Korkut and Colorado CNU Board for organizing and the school for hosting. I am the executive director of the Golden Urban Renewal Authority. Golden, some of you may know, is just a few miles to the west of here. It is a classic original new urbanist town. I’ve been the director there since 2004. I suppose my major contribution to new urbanism is that I haven’t screwed it up!

I am a recovering lawyer, so I’m going to take a slightly antagonist, a little entertaining angle. Like climate change, new urbanism is true, but it’s still debated for some reason. The premise of tonight is: what does new urbanism do for the future? Trying to justify the last 20 years and set the stage for the next generation. Old urbanism, pre-WWII, was supplanted by “New Suburbanism” after WWII. Scarcity was supplanted by abundance; cars represented technology; the phrase “chicken in every pot” - FDR said that. Before, chickens were a rarity, a delicacy. The idea of creating chickens in every pot was making the statement that we are going to gear up the American and make the country plenty for everyone. Gas used to be cheap. Land used to be plenty. The age of abundance is over.

Climate change, energy costs, water supply, jobs, infrastructure costs, budgets . . . everything you can think of is on the wrong kind of trendline in terms of how we have grown as a country in the past 40-50 years and how we continue those trends. The effect of these trendlines is going to do our advocacy job for us. There won’t be a debate because the world that we live in will make the arguments for us. Chuck talked about how boomers are going to want to sell their houses in the next 10-20 years, but there won’t be people to buy them, because they won’t be able to afford them - the banks won’t loan them the money. Those boomers are eventually going to die and transfer all that wealth to the next generation. But we can’t keep sprawling because of all these constraints. What will happen? Where will the money go? Money will get spent. It’s not going to stay bottled up somewhere. How will that happen with the constraints of our future?

I coined a new term “New Howardism”. We are on the right track. We have many cities the world over who are doing things that make sense; that reflect the good



ideals of new urbanism. The real battle is going to be in the suburbs. We have houses all over the place, but it's awful to get there; it's awful to move around in there. So what do we do with that housing stock? We can't just ignore it. We can't keep building on green fields forever. What can we do to these suburbs? Free the suburbs! No more cul-de-sacs! Just like breaking down the Berlin Wall to unite the two sides of Berlin, we need to enlighten the suburban development we've had for the last 60 years. We need to encourage connections, allow more commercial uses, allow more multi-family near single family, density and even things we don't yet know, and be creative.

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## MARILEE UTTER

*President,*  
Citiventure Associates  
Denver, CO

*(Marilee left Citiventure as of August 2012. Currently she is the Executive Vice President, District Councils, Urban Land Institute.)*



I'm the president of Citiventure Associates. I do consulting around the country on mixed-use development, large-scale master plans, and TOD (Transit-Oriented Development) with the real focus on implementation and the development side. My contributions include work on the Platte Valley - the Rail Yards was my project in the 90s, to envision that whole Riverfront area and transform it; also to create a financial structure that can fund this transformation. I worked on the city center in Englewood and did the first TOD in the region. I moved down to LoDo in the 80s and did a building down there and inadvertently started a lot of the art galleries coming down there. We've already been through a cycle and they've left again, but it's been fun to be down there and help that neighborhood along.

As I think about the future of urbanism, I have four key points. The first is infrastructure. You've heard it before; it's the backbone of all investment. It's the backbone of the communities we build. First we have to get the right infrastructure. Tear down some of the bad infrastructure that Peter talked about. When we do it, do it right. Do it thoughtfully. Get the complete streets. Certainly transit is important. I would like to have more trains. I think the FastConnects is a great call and a great opportunity for our region in particular. What about bus rapid transit? That's a hot topic because they think it's cheaper, but if you're not careful it looks just like a bus on a freeway. You have to do it right.

What about the funding for all that? It's a huge issue leading to a lot of private-public partnerships. You're going to see that theme everywhere. It does come down to the economics. No one has money any more so we have to work together. There are a lot of innovative structures used all around the world, but America has been slow to adopt. Hopefully that will be coming quickly, and certainly Colorado will be right in there.

Urbanize the suburbs. Sprawl is not stopping despite all of the trends. The percentage of people saying they would still rather live in a neighborhood in a single family home is greater than the percentage of people moving into the cities. We are going to continue to grow in Colorado. We have the last 50 years with all the mistakes to deal with: there isn't the infrastructure; we can't put in a street grid. We're really going to have work on those suburbs and create nodes - walkable places. More important than transit is walkability. If you really want to cut VMT, it's more important to have a walkable place with a mix of uses, with access through a variety of modes, than to have a train that will service 10 or 15 or 20% of your riders. Until you've lived in Paris, Boston, Washington, or New York, the metro system doesn't provide enough amenity value to make as big a difference as a great place with a lot of uses that you can walk to. That's the first thing: tie the infrastructure to the places.

If you look at the guys who designed the infrastructure and the transit systems in the Minnesota and the Twin Cities area, and you look at where the cities are, where the job clusters are, and where the wealth is going, they don't match. A lot of cities in America have the same problem. The trick is to build walkable places around those job clusters. If you want sustainability, it isn't good enough to do houses with retail on the first floor. You've got to have jobs, economic sustainability as well. We've got to get the infrastructure right and match it to those nodes in creating these regions. It's a big fundamental move.

The other thing we have to do - my last point - is to find a way that developers can make money doing this stuff. So far, they don't. The stuff we like to show - the ULI developers say, "I didn't do so well on that one, but my kid loves it." We've got to find a way to fix that. Part of it is the design of the buildings, part of it is site design, part of it is private-public partnerships, but the public sector isn't building this stuff. By and large, it's got to be the private sector. We've got a capitalist society. Developers have to find a way to make money. The government has to be comfortable supporting them. That's a huge challenge. It's something I'm working on a lot, making great places and making them profitable in the short term and the long term.

**Korkut Onaran:** I would like to open up to question and answers. But before we do that, if you want to respond to something you heard from the other presenters let's have that first.

**Marilee Utter:** Jeff, despite my fondness and involvement with ULI, I don't believe your quote. There is traffic generated from transit-oriented developments, but it's not the people who live there. We have a lot of data to support that.

**Peter Park:** Someone talked about this communication. I would like to reinforce our opportunity of what the new urbanism has given us is the importance of why multiple expertise, professions need to focus on the same thing. We should all be continuing to look at how to expand. We had a great turn out tonight. Next time we should have twice as many. Does everyone have at least one friend? So, there is that opportunity to link the academy with practice. Jeff was mentioning about the data. That's true. We can talk about what we think would make suburbs better, but we have to remember that it is consumer choice. What I've found is that when people see it, they get it, they just can't explain what they really want all the time. But given a choice, they will choose better quite often. What I find remarkable is human capability to accept something so low. That is the big part of education. It isn't just the responsibility of the university, but collectively raise up our own expectations in our community.

**Fernando Pages:** Listening to Mr. Perry viewing his demographic slides, I noticed that all of them referred to age but none to ethnic changes. I wonder how the panel sees this.

**John Olson:** Just to add to that, I get frustrated when a mono-culture community opposes you when you're trying to implement urbanism and increase diversity. Jeff mentioned the racism he was experiencing in Louisiana, that people did not want to connect. I find in our multi-cultural projects there is a heightened sense of connection. They may not speak the same language but they like to rub shoulders. I think that's powerful. I think new urbanism for the most part has been mono-culture. It looks it. We got the two-dimensional part of it right but we didn't really get the mix right. A great example will be here in Denver at South Lincoln.

**Chuck Perry:** I agree and I think that the demographic trends regarding ethnicity are another important measure that we need to look at in defining what that next urbanism is. I think also that a lot of new urbanist developments have been mono-cultural, but they have tried to embody the principle of diversity by having different housing types, mixed uses, a commitment to inclusionary development. We need to do more of that. Someone mentioned the DOT-EPA cooperation. We need to see more of

a situation where federal funding is contingent on some degree if there's residential at TOD station then there needs to be an affordability criteria. If I had the choice, there wouldn't be one station in Greenwood Village because there is not one stick of affordable housing in Greenwood Village. That may defeat some of the other environmental principles, but if we're going to address those issues, we have to do it with head-on policy choices.

**Audience member:** What do you think about whether new urbanism needs to be rebranded? And if so, do you have any suggestions?

**Marilee Utter:** Yes, but it's not an easy assignment – rebranding. I think the word “urbanism” is a problem. It puts off so many people; it has a hundred different connotations. I try not to use that word.

**Peter Park:** It's tough. What does urbanism mean? Part of it is – if you look at comprehensive plans in the early part of the last century really talk about this expansion – you will sometimes see the word sprawling used in a positive way. You see the word sprawl in Time magazine today. Suburban sprawl has a negative meaning. I think it's okay to use “urbanism.” I know it makes people uncomfortable. Maybe in certain parts of the world, you use the words “smart growth,” then you're in danger. Okay, we should have “dumb growth.” I think whatever we call it, we all tend to use a lot of images of places. If you were going to do an image preference survey for a neighborhood, you use different scales, you don't say – 10 units per acre, 20 units per acre, 60 units per acre – how do you feel about that? Who wants 60 units per acre? No one. You show the images of these places, the form and the character of the places, and you have a conversation. You don't need to be an expert in real estate terminology – what's the FAR, etc? There's a picture. I like that. I think with new urbanism that is what the contribution to the profession of planning is huge in that regard because we found ways to talk about places and depict them in beautiful drawings and that's how you engage the public because they get that, and then the words don't matter that much.

**Chuck Perry:** It's about choice. One thing that new urbanism is about increasing choices. We had 50 years of women in choices. It's just increasing the choices. It's not good to be anti-car anymore or anti-suburban, that doesn't get you anywhere. It's just constantly reinforcing a positive message, not the negative. We've all learned that in our personal relationships. It all works the same way. It's latching on to what you believe in and reinforcing that. Urbanism, rubbing shoulders. We walk outside here, it doesn't matter if we walk left or right, we're going to walk into a great neighborhood. That's what makes it powerful.

**Korkut Onaran:** There is a Winston Churchill quote that I like. He said: “*the worst governmental system is democracy, except for the others.*” Sometimes I feel the same about the term urbanism.

**Arlo Braun:** What's going on in the school these days that might support what you all are talking about and might take it further?

**Mark Gelernter:** There is a long list of positive changes the college is going through. Many of these are related with how we shall be organized in Boulder and Denver Campuses. As a College we have been involved in producing guidance in shaping our neighborhoods, our region. We have a lot of talent here; both instructors and students. I think the big focus will be on urbanism and urban design, because we are still seen as the laboratory for urban growth in the country. We just had our accreditation team for our planning program. They had great things to say about the planning program. But they also said that nationally Denver is supplanting Portland, Oregon, as the place to be seen, where is it happening. It's about urbanism and about the growth, that is, of how we deal with it. We are very excited about the college focusing on this challenge.


**Peter Park:** One of the aspects that interested me in coming to Denver when I was asked, was meeting Mark and his commitment to engaging the academy and practice. Korkut teaches here. I teach here. Just about every one of you I know has done something here. To me that is a really significant thing - for a city to be able to leverage the intellectual horsepower of the university and for the university to be able to provide a venue for students to engage with real things.

**Audience member:** I think a big trend in American cities has been informal urbanism

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Peter Park, Tim Van Meter, Marilee Utter, and Mark Heller during the panel discussion



where you have a lot of readapted spaces that are incremental and small. They are building another unit on the weekend, they're changing the facades. I'm very much a part of decentralization of the development process and the regulatory process. How do I feel about new urbanism? Is it willing to share the stage? Is it willing to acknowledge informal urbanism?

**Marilee Utter:** There's no question that we are going to see more developments in a much smaller scale, much more incremental, open to more people which I think is a very good thing. The big master developers, if they have any capital left, are saying that they don't want to spend and take risk all in one place. So they want partners to come in. I think the informal development is great, even if it's illegal, I guess. But that smaller scale, thinking about your neighborhood starting locally, thinking of what you can afford and what you need builds and shows that real strong demand so it's going to be sustainable. That's how great cities are built. If we look at these big projects, they're plots in the middle of something else. They don't have the connections, the fabric. That's part of the reason they don't succeed as much as they would like. I'm all for it. It's a strong trend you're going to see more and more. It's a reflection of economics as well as values.

**Peter Park:** I think new urbanism has been about smaller is better. Milwaukee has a

number of properties that the city owned as a public right of way, all of these remnant pieces of land. John Norquist, the former Mayor of Milwaukee (the current president and CEO of CNU), and I worked on a lot of these left over properties that weren't generating taxes They were city owned. We did little RFPs that didn't need the big developers, just a couple of people to build a couple of row houses. It was a lot of small things that generated a lot of interesting infill in Milwaukee that continues today. We focused on design. We really focused on the quality of the design of the development. It gave small architecture firms and developers a chance to get their foot in the door. It changed the dynamic of who built in the city and who did things fast. It wasn't the previous big machine, the big firm, the big developer; it was a whole bunch of small things going on. When we did the downtown area plan in Denver, the big things happen downtown. If you read the downtown area plan, it speaks to a thousand small things that are going to enrich the downtown. The stadium is a big move. If government had to supply the big moves all the time, how does the private sector get in and foster a functional sustainable market? Real market demand, not the subsidized kind. It's actually one of the hallmarks of new urbanism is to start with the small stuff. Form based code and the coding – our priority is at least doing no harm. Denver's

previous zoning code was a minimum lot area of 6,000 SF for a single-family house. Thousands of houses in the 1950s became non-conforming out of the great vision of that code. In the new code, you can now do small lots, accessory dwelling units, there's a whole range of things that are accounted for because we value the small stuff that already existed instead of clearing the whole city and starting over.

**Audience member:** In these new times, these lean times, I was wondering what you all feel about the role of the top-down versus bottom-up? What I think differentiates the United States from the models of Europe and Asia is their top-down planning and infrastructure and implementation. I think we are such a bottom-up, keep government out of the way, and that seems to be accelerating, that kind of philosophy. Yes, it would be nice to have rail and infrastructure. It seems like the reality is quite the opposite, not trusting the bigger government initiatives. In that context, how do we re-purpose and re-imagine the profession and its role? I think you mentioned, Peter, some ways of doing that. I was wondering if someone is willing to take that on?

**Jeff Winston:** I think you have to assign the right role to each level of planning. There's a tendency at the comprehensive level to try to micromanage when in fact what happens on the regional scale is getting the infrastructure right. What ought to be happening from the bottom-up is the neighborhood fabric. There's a differentiation about what each scale of planning does and what its major objective is.

**Korkut Onaran:** This has been a rich discussion and really more of brainstorming. We have more questions in our hand than the answers. Now I would really advise you to sit down and write an essay, something to respond to what you have heard here. We need your contributions in *the Colorado Urbanist*. Thank you for coming.

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## UPCOMING EVENTS:

### CREATING VALUE BY DESIGN

Lunch lecture by Steve Mouzon

Monday, April 9, 2012, 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

11:30-Noon Meet and Greet

Noon-1:00 Lecture and Luncheon

1:00 – 1:30 Q&A with audience

Tattered Cover LoDo, 1628 16th Street,

\$25 for friends of CNU (non-members)

\$20 for CNU members

Price includes admission, lunch and a copy of *Colorado Urbanizing*, a book highlighting over 100 new urbanist projects throughout Colorado. We encourage you to pay in advance so that we can pre-order lunches. Please mail a check or drop by in person to:

Cheney Bostic

1626 Wazee Street, Suite 2A

Denver, CO 80202

Email questions: [cheney@vmwp.com](mailto:cheney@vmwp.com)

### CNU COLORADO URBAN MEET-UP

Come join us for a local brew and find out what's happening in 2012!

Wednesday, March 28, 2012 5:00 – 7:00 pm

Great Divide Brewery. 2201 Arapahoe St, Denver

Join CNU Colorado for an after work Happy Hour.

In memory of former member  
of the CNU Board of Directors  
and dear friend

**GARY TAIPALUS**

We, CNU Colorado, will always remember you  
and your contributions to urbanism.

As always we need your support. You may be an event sponsor or an annual sponsor on several levels. You may also prefer to provide an ad similar to what you see on these pages. If you are interested in these options and would like more information please visit:

[WWW.CNUCOLORADO.ORG](http://WWW.CNUCOLORADO.ORG)

or contact:

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