

THE SEASIDE EFFECT

Involving the public, addressing affordability, and embracing product diversity are some of the lessons learned from successful New Urbanism. A look at the past, present, and future sheds more light on how the most successful communities get it right

The homes at NorthSky at RidgeGate, in Lone Tree, Colo., have a mid-century modern vibe that attracts boomers as well as Millennials. Godden|Sudik Architects took full advantage of the prairie and mountain views with 15-foot ceilings and strategically placed interior glass walls in nearly every room.



By Susan Bady, Senior Contributing Editor

New Urbanism has been called the most influential planning movement of the last three decades. Since the first New Urbanist community, Seaside, opened in Fort Walton Beach, Fla., in 1980, hundreds of new towns, villages, and neighborhoods that embrace New Urbanist principles have been completed or are under construction in the United States.

There are also hundreds of smaller-scale projects in the works to restore downtowns and first-tier suburbs, says Chris Grady, senior land planner for Denver-based Kephart. And in new suburban development, “a hybrid approach combining conventional design and tenets of New Urbanism has increased in the last 20 years,” Grady says.

Form-based codes are being written to ease the implementation of new projects and to ensure a greater diversity of building and street types that are also contextually appropriate. And New Urbanism itself has evolved, giving rise to new platforms such as Lean Urbanism that cut red tape and provide ways for new and undercapitalized developers to do smaller infill projects.

“Builders are pulling forward things they perceive as adding a tremendous amount of value,” says architect Barry Long of Urban Design Associates, in Pittsburgh. “That, combined with specific market conditions, such as the need for better public transportation or a jobs/housing balance, is influencing community design. I think more conventional approaches are at a competitive disadvantage.”

The proof is in the profits. As Berkeley, Calif., developer Keith McCoy says, “We have learned that people will pay a premium—20 to 40 percent—to live in a well-planned and executed traditional neighborhood development (TND.)”

TND TAKEAWAYS

- Involve the public in the planning process
- Strive for a diversity of architecture
- Formulate an environmental response that costs less, not more. For example, use passive heating and cooling techniques and preserve native plants and trees that require less water
- Make sure the community includes an affordable-housing component
- Provide opportunities for residents to interact, such as community gardens
- Build smaller-scale, infill projects that address an underserved niche in the market

[TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT]

The homes at Grow have a modern architectural style, with forms that are reminiscent of farm buildings and barns. The low-maintenance exterior materials include corrugated steel siding and fiber-cement panels painted in different colors. "An accent red is used on certain components, and all the front porches are a very dark purple," architect Jonathan Davis says.



Phase one of Grow clustered single-family homes around winding sidewalks and community gardens. Subsequent phases will feature more open space and a shared community center.

ISLAND COMMUNITY BUILDS CONNECTIONS

Just 35 minutes by ferry from Seattle, Bainbridge Island, Wash., is a beautiful place to live. But with its high land costs (not to mention the cost of living), it's a challenging location for new development.

Thanks to a pilot green-building program by the city of Bainbridge; an investor group (Asani) committed to sustainable development; and the Bainbridge Island design team of Jonathan Davis, Davis Studio Architecture & Design, and Bruce Anderson of Cutler Anderson, Grow is coming out of the ground. The 8-acre, 141-unit community is a five-minute walk to the small urban village of Winslow and a 10-minute walk to the ferry. Since it's so close to Winslow, Davis says, "we didn't need to provide anything other than a residential fabric."

Grow is the largest solar community in Washington state: Every home in phase one is powered by photovoltaics. All the homes are net-zero energy. There are community gardens, pea patches for children, and a community-led, car-sharing program.

But there are no garages, rear-loaded or otherwise. Instead, resident parking is separated from the homes, which encourages social interaction. Eliminating garages also opened up space for the community gardens which, says Asani's Greg Lotakis, are "the biggest binder within the community. They draw the most activity."

Grow includes detached homes; rental apartments; condominiums; and townhomes. Phase one, with 23 single-family homes and 20 apartments, is sold out. More than half of the buyers are from Bainbridge Island, including downsizers and first-time buyers.

Phase-one prices ranged from the low \$300,000s up to \$500,000, Lotakis says. Phase-two prices are higher; however, the rental apartments are affordable to those who want to live as well as work on the island.

Grow has a cohesive architectural style that Davis calls modern Northwest vernacular. "The island doesn't have a particular style per se, so we decided to do something a little different to make the community stand out."

PHOTO: DAVID COHEN; ILLUSTRATION: ASANI SUSTAINABLE INVESTMENT AND DEVELOPMENT CO.



The single-family homes at Town Creek are built on 40-foot-wide lots—small for New Braunfels, Texas, but builder/developer Trace Jurica has sold all 30 homes in phase one. "We have sidewalks everywhere," Jurica says. "You don't see that in a lot of places around here."

This site map of Town Creek shows the location of a planned light-rail line. The community includes single-family homes, townhouses, lofts, live/work spaces, office and retail space, and parks, and is within a 10-minute walk of downtown New Braunfels.



DOWNTOWN IS THE BIGGEST AMENITY

As a college student in New Orleans, Trace Jurica's imagination was sparked by the city's colorful, walkable neighborhoods. Later on, he was inspired by Mueller in Austin, South Main in Colorado, and Andres Duany's book *Suburban Nation*.

In 2006, Jurica purchased a 66-acre parcel in the middle of New Braunfels, Texas, a town of 60,000 people located between San Antonio and Austin. Dallas-based Gateway Planning Group helped him achieve his vision for a New Urbanist community, Town Creek. Jurica is co-founder, and his company, Jurica Builders, is building the first homes.

"We did a full-blown charrette that involved all the neighbors and stakeholders," he says. Construction started in 2009. Sales were initially slow, but the project gained momentum and Jurica sold out the first phase of 30 single-family homes. These "cottages" range from approximately 2,000 to 2,700 square feet and are priced from the high \$200,000s to the mid-\$300,000s.

"We've got the whole spectrum of homebuyers—everything from retirees at the one end down to young singles," he says.

Town Creek will also offer townhouses and condominiums (a rarity in that area); a restaurant; a gym; and retail and office space. But Jurica views historic downtown New Braunfels, which is within walking distance, as the community's biggest amenity.

PHOTO: JASON RISNER; ILLUSTRATION: TBG

EARLY DEVELOPMENTS OFFER VALUABLE LESSONS

The environmental practices implemented at Seaside were considered cutting edge back in the day: passive ventilation, permeable pavement, and native landscape preservation, to name a few. Kentlands, in Maryland, which celebrated its 25th anniversary last year, inspired the creation of HUD's HOPE VI affordable-housing program.

Miami-based Duany Plater-Zyberk & Co. (DPZ), the designers of Seaside, Kentlands, and a host of other New Urbanist communities, has launched initiatives such as Lean Urbanism (see page 35), and SmartCode. Whereas conventional codes are based on use, SmartCode is a form-based code that specifies the massing and orientation of buildings rather than the use. It was written using freeware that towns could download, says DPZ partner Andres Duany.

Eliza Juliano, director of urbanism for Canin Associates, in Orlando, Fla., sees a move away from "more boutique New Urbanist projects that are very high-end, with the focus on custom architecture." Newer TNDs offer affordable-housing options that aren't limited to apartments and townhouses. For example, Canin is designing high-density, single-family detached homes that can achieve a density of between eight and 13 units per acre.

The treatment of retail has also matured, says Peter Calthorpe, the Berkeley, Calif.-based architect, urban designer, and land planner behind Daybreak, Stapleton, and other well-known TNDs. Whereas early communities had retail "at every neighborhood center, every quarter mile, that's not the way people shop and stores succeed," Calthorpe says. "What used to be the corner shop has a hard time surviving, except in existing downtowns. In a newly built community, the healthiest retail clusters around a grocery store."

OLD AND NEW TND CONCEPTS

NorthSky at RidgeGate, in Lone Tree, Colo., opened in June 2014. It's a transition between the heart of RidgeGate and the adjacent open space and older nearby developments, says Scott Sudik of Godden|Sudik Architects, in Centennial, Colo. The builders are Berkeley Homes of Aurora, Colo., and Denver-based Harvard Communities.

[TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT]



Trees and native plantings along East Garrison's sidewalks were chosen to stand up to the region's sun, heat, and drought. Landscaping and community parks are irrigated with recycled water.

When completed, East Garrison will include a mix of house types, including affordable housing; a town center with light commercial; and an arts district with restored historical buildings and live/work units.



The 2,411-square-foot Steinbeck at East Garrison has a detached, rear-loaded garage that minimizes its footprint and allows for a covered loggia between the house and garage.

CORRECTING A JOBS/HOUSING IMBALANCE

Built on a former military base in Monterey, Calif., East Garrison aims to create jobs for the area as well as new homes. It was originally intended to be a master planned community but evolved into a New Urbanist project that won the support of neighbors, community leaders, city planners, and even the Sierra Club.

"The most important aspect in the development of East Garrison was the community planning process," says Keith McCoy, principal of Urban Community Partners (UCP), in Berkeley, Calif. UCP hired Urban Design Associates, of Pittsburgh, to help it create a compact, walkable, mixed-use/mixed-income community.

One challenge faced early on was public transportation. East Garrison is on the east side, a few miles from the core of the base, and is set on a bluff. There is a bus route that now runs through the community to adjacent

towns and connects to the regional transit system.

East Garrison has a small footprint (1,470 homes on 244 acres) and small lots (the largest is around 5,000 square feet). To achieve the desired densities, most of the homes have rear-loaded garages.

"It's an extremely dense project with a tremendous amount of open space around it," says Urban Design's Barry Long. "There's an incredible network of walking and bike trails."

The affordable housing includes live/work units and traditional mixed-income housing. "We broke up three 65-unit pieces into individual developments and integrated them into different neighborhoods," Long says.

Models opened in March 2014. At press time, the builder, Benchmark Communities, of San Jose, Calif., had closed on 100 homes.



Hutchinson Green Apartments was built on the last two parcels in Doe Mill, a TND in Chico, Calif. Builder/developer John Anderson says that modest multifamily projects work well in locations suited for Lean Urbanism, particularly if there is food and drink within walking distance.



The Hutchinson Green building elevations were designed to fit seamlessly alongside existing rowhouses in the neighborhood.

LEAN URBANISM: THE NEXT ITERATION

John Anderson used to develop large properties in Southern California, but after the recession killed a 200-acre project, he decided to change his business model. Anderson formed a partnership with designer David Kim and started pursuing Lean Urbanism, an initiative of New Urbanism that encourages smaller-scale, infill development.

"Out of raw necessity, we started looking at the smallest piece we could build on and make a profit," says the principal of Anderson|Kim Architecture & Urban Design, in Chico, Calif. "What if we built units for rent, and not 150 units [at once] but a small portfolio that over time we would be able to manage efficiently?"

One recent success is Hutchinson Green Apartments, built on the last two parcels of a 20-acre TND called Doe Mill. There are 22 apartments in two- and three-story buildings, with 11 apartments on each parcel. "Our pro forma said each unit would rent for \$950 a month," Anderson says. "They actually rented for \$1,100 a month—\$1,300 for the third-floor units, which have a view."

Hutchinson Green targeted the renter-by-choice market in Chico, a college town, and it leased up very quickly. Residents include hospital employees who work the night shift and don't want to live in a building full of noisy college students. The apartments have one bedroom plus a study, which is ideal for singles as well as single parents who have shared custody of their children.

"I think we're going to be seeing an entire new cohort of small developers and builders producing either apartments or small mixed-use or commercial buildings in more of an urban neighborhood context," Anderson says. "They'll be filling in a missing piece or looking to change the corridor of crap—the old strip malls and office parks."

"NorthSky is on the outer fringe and not necessarily a prototypical TND-specific development," Sudik says. Yet, like Seaside, the architecture is inspired by the region: a contemporary Colorado style with plans that embrace outdoor living and feature dramatic rooflines, stone elements, and earth-tone colors.

At 2,453 to 3,811 square feet, the NorthSky homes are larger than typical TND homes and have front-loaded garages. However, they also have generous front porches and a variety of garage configurations that minimize the impact of garage doors. The project's scale is smaller and more typical of a TND, with just 33 lots measuring 60 by 105 feet.

Within six months of the grand opening, 28 homes had been sold at prices from \$800,000 to the \$1.1 million range. "I believe the success of NorthSky is somewhat related to the ideas in Lean Urbanism," Sudik says. "Specifically, NorthSky is a small project that was able to be unique and special. There were no overbearing design guidelines that forced it to fit with a finite, predetermined template or style."

THE MOST APPEALING COMMUNITIES EVOLVE OVER TIME

New Urbanist communities are most likely to flourish when developers and designers get the public involved in the planning process. That takes more time, but consider that the best communities have shaped their character and authenticated their value over many years.

"TNDs such as Kentlands and Seaside didn't happen overnight," says UCP's Keith McCoy. "[Their creators] figured out early on—almost out of necessity—that building incrementally and at a slower pace resulted in the ability to adapt and change along the way."

Bainbridge Island, Wash., architect Jonathan Davis cautions against trying to develop a new town too quickly. "It can become a bit of a stage set," he says. "Be careful of trying to create or replicate something of the past all at one time."

Duany emphasizes the importance of architectural diversity. "If you downstream the architecture to others, it has that incredible variety, and you can learn and improve over time, which makes a real town," he says. "Urbanism is more about time than scale. That's the ingredient that makes it great." **PB**

PHOTOS: TOP, DAVID J. GUBERNICK; BOTTOM, KEITH SUTTER PHOTOGRAPHY; ILLUSTRATION: URBAN COMMUNITY PARTNERS

ILLUSTRATIONS: ANDERSON|KIM ARCHITECTURE & URBAN DESIGN