

Book Review

August 2014

Developing Sustainable Planned Communities

Edited by Jo Allen Gause, Primary Authors: Richard Franco, Jo Allen Gause, Jim Heid, Jr., Steven Kellenberg, Edward T. McMahon, Judi G. Schweitzer, Daniel Stone, Urban Land Institute, Washington, 2007.

Summary
Implications

Summary

The Urban Land Institute continues to produce useful and interesting work that presents ideas supported by case studies. The book's table of contents includes: sustainable from the start, integrating planning and design, the costs and benefits of sustainable development, green building design and maintaining sustainability followed by ten case studies. The ideas of particular interest are:

- **“Converging Ideologies”** [p7] concludes with **“Sustainable development** is a convergence of all the ideologies. Regardless of the planning strategy, successful projects take a comprehensive approach, which means integrating green principles and practices into every aspect of a community's planning, design, construction, marketing and maintenance.” The ideologies cited are:
 - Traditional neighborhood development,
 - Conservation development,
 - Transit-oriented development,
 - Smart growth, and
 - Green building design.
- **Visioning** is always an important early step. It is also a place along the way to spent too much time and energy that produces little value. The authors discuss “Creating a Vision” [p18] and offer “Rules of thumb for a vision statement...
 - Keep it short,
 - Use precise and meaningful language,
 - Make it actionable,
 - Avoid marketing lingo, and
 - Vet it.”
- **Site Selection** [p41]: The authors suggest that the site selection process for sustainable development is different than traditional approaches. A truly sustainable development needs to be on a sustainable site, therefore, sustainability factors need to be on the site selection list.

Senebe's Defining Principles

- A healthy lifestyle
- Expression of regional character,
- Diversity of age and economics,
- Environmental conservation,
- Environmentally responsible development,
- Community design integrated with natural environment,
- Education and self-development,
- Interaction with education and arts organizations, and
- High tech connectivity.

Source: *Developing Sustainable Planned Communities* [p28], ULI.

Note: “Senebe is a 900 acre community being [in 2007] developed in the heart of rural Chattanooga Hill Country in Fulton County, Georgia.” The Senebe website reflects a lively and successful community.

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- List of Attributes: The authors say “The following list of attributes expresses characteristics for brownfield, infill and greenfield locations:
 - Previously developed or impacted lands,
 - Lands contiguous to existing regional infrastructure,
 - Internal natural lands of high ecological value,
 - Adjacent natural lands of high ecological or connective value,
 - Existing county or city conservation initiatives, incentives and programs,
 - Local government-promoted healthy city concepts,
 - Market demand and demographics favorable to green building,
 - Existing or planned transit networks,
 - Opportunity to provide on-site or adjacent job/housing balance, and
 - Local utility companies that support alternative power generation.”
- **Resource Reduction [p55-64]** is a discussion dispersed among several topics that take the edge off the argument for reducing, reusing and recycling. The discussion of water is minimal, as it is everywhere that water is plentiful and cheap. The discussion of energy conservation and alternative energy sources is more meaty.
- **Infrastructure as Amenity [p61].** The authors recognize that stormwater systems can become community art.
- **Accommodating Diversity [p49].** The authors recognize “a strong correlation between sustainability and diversity.” They identify several venues for diversity:
 - Diversity of land use and jobs/housing balance,
 - Design of pedestrian/cycling environment,
 - Destination accessibility,
 - Distance from premium transit.”

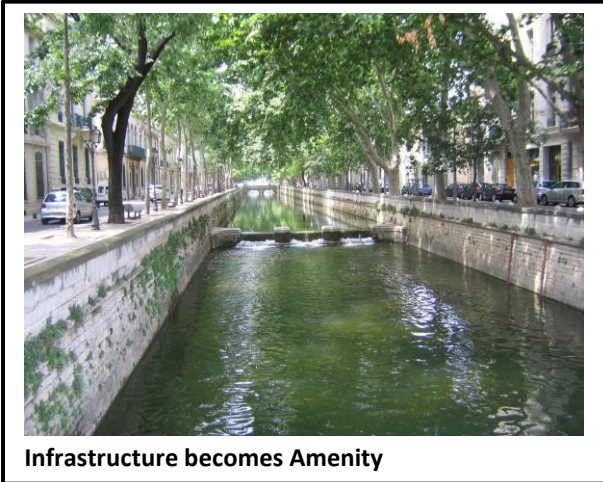
Noisette Vision and Cornerstones based on “Sanborn Principles”

Noisette’s principles include:

- Healthy indoor environments,
- Ecological health,
- Social justice,
- Cultural creativity,
- Beauty, and
- Physical and economic accessibility.

Source: *Developing Sustainable Planned Communities* [p22], ULI.

Note: “Noisette is a 3,000 acre restoration project encompassing the downtown core of North Charleston, South Carolina.”



Infrastructure becomes Amenity

New Adage:

- Reduce,
- Reuse,
- Recycle.

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- **Other venues for diversity** could be:
 - Multi-modality which they mention
 - in a separate section,
 - Diversity of plant materials
 - Diversity of housing prices, styles
 - and types,
 - Diversity of age, race and ethnicity in the community,
 - Diversity of the population's economic circumstances as mentioned by Senebe,
 - Diversity of power and water sources,

Guidelines for Wise Water Use

- Reduce Use of Potable Water
- Reclaim Used Water
- Capture Rainwater

Source: *Developing Sustainable Planned Communities* [p92], ULI.

Olde Midwestern Adage:

- Use it up,
- Wear it out,
- Do without.

Diversity should be inherent in every aspect of a sustainable community.

Diversity provides for long-term survival.

Excerpt from the Noisette website, October 8, 2013.

"The Noisette Company has always believed that the most durable communities are those that have developed a common vision, and that a truly sustainable culture starts with the health of our ecological, life support, and social systems as a highest priority. We are proud to share the following update on Noisette and are thankful for all of the friends that have joined us on this journey in building a sustainable city – one that is socially just, respects our ecological systems, restores our intuitive understanding of our natural world and benefits our human health, while creating a sustainable economy that allows access and opportunity to all in the community."

Implications for the American City

The book was published in 2007 and therefore written before The Great Recession. The housing market was still strong and the objectives of the community development industry, as reflected by the selected developers, were almost idealistic. However, the principles are still valid and many of the communities cited in the case studies are working well; perhaps a tribute to their sustainability ideas baked in from the beginning.

The principles of sustainability, the maximization of breadth of the diversity pallet and attention to fundamental market factors are all still good ideas. This work of the ULI Team is instructive and timely despite the changed economic setting.

REVIEWER:

Bill Kercher, AICP, LEED®AP, wck | planning, inc., Orlando, bill.kercher@wckplanning.com