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CNU STRATEGIC PLAN

2016 - 2018

I. Introduction

This is a crucial moment for New Urbanism. Since our founding in 1993, CNU has changed the conversation and created thousands of New Urbanist streets, developments, and neighborhoods. Walkable, mixed-use communities are returning to popularity—and we have the knowledge and tools to build them on a wide scale.

Our challenge now is to build upon our success. Over the next three years we will accomplish this by engaging, equipping, and empowering a broad range of cities, towns, organizations, and community leaders involved in placemaking—across the wide spectrum of disciplines advocating, designing, and building great urbanism.

People are demanding better choices for where they live, work, shop, and get around. Demographic shifts within the boomer and millennial generations are driving many of these changes. Meanwhile, budgets are constrained at every level of government, and underserved urban communities are at risk of falling further behind.

As a nation, we can no longer afford to make shortsighted investments in housing, transportation, schools, and infrastructure that meet only one community goal. We must target public investments that strengthen budgets and support healthy, sustainable communities. We must design, build, and revitalize streets as tools for economic development. We must invest in housing that allows for greater mobility to jobs, schools, and everyday needs. New Urbanist developments and strategies can meet multiple community objectives—and build equitable places where people of all backgrounds, races, incomes, and abilities can live happy, healthy, prosperous lives.

Now is the time to leverage our past successes and to accelerate the pace of change. Local governments and the public are demanding it. How will we respond?

Since 2008, the landscape of our movement has changed. Our members, funders, and like-minded organizations seek holistic, lean, implementation-focused solutions. Our allies, public and private sector leaders, and community advocates face new and diverse barriers to building and revitalizing the great places they want. Drawing on CNU's knowledge base, we must develop collaborative and adaptive approaches that put the best resources and tools in the hands of the people designing and building places people love.

Our three-year strategic plan seeks to build on CNU's strengths by:

- » Empowering cities and towns
- » Changing policies and standards
- » Building strategic partnerships

II. Strategic Plan Areas for 2016–2018

The Charter for the New Urbanism unites our members and partners. It provides the vision that empowers New Urbanists to work in diverse ways at different scales while maintaining common goals and values around community, equity, sustainability, health, prosperity, and quality of life.

The Charter powers member engagement and work. Their constant search for better practices and their on-the-ground experiences make up a constant stream of new ideas, proven strategies, and success stories—all of which keeps us at the forefront of innovation.

This three-year strategic plan seeks to build CNU’s assets and strengthen the movement. A stronger, more engaged CNU means a stronger movement—and a stronger movement can imagine, design, build, and preserve great urbanism in more places.

1. EMPOWERING CITIES AND TOWNS

Demand for walkable urban areas is increasing. Cities and towns are looking to capitalize on these trends to help drive growth and revitalization. Instead of asking, “Why do this?” local decision makers are asking, “How do we do this?”

CNU can help. Since 1993, CNU members have developed a comprehensive knowledge base for building and retrofitting better places, producing public-education seminars, visioning workshops, charrettes, code audits, model codes, scenario building, and pro-forma analyses. Our cities, towns, and regions may face serious challenges, but many of these challenges are well understood—and we have the solutions.

Drawing on our network of international experts and leaders, we will engage municipal governments and officials to elevate conversations about better development. We will deploy bold solutions for overcoming the barriers that prohibit the building of great places. We will provide a full range of services to educate and empower community leaders to imagine, design, build, and revitalize strong, prosperous neighborhoods—from start to finish—combining our interlocking traditions of great design, innovative policy, public education, private sector engagement, and implementation strategies.

Central to empowering cities and towns is helping citizens and residents engage in transparent planning and development processes. It’s no longer enough to create vibrant, prosperous neighborhoods if that prosperity unintentionally displaces or disadvantages existing residents. CNU will work with local leaders and advocates to develop city-specific strategies that transform neighborhoods and more equitably distribute the benefits and opportunities of transformation.

2. CHANGING POLICIES AND STANDARDS

CNU will identify and address state and national policy barriers that hinder the building of great urbanism. Our national advocacy position will allow us to proactively address

emerging trends with major impact on building great places at the national, state, and local levels. These issues include, but are not limited to:

- » Launching the Project for Code Reform to address code barriers at the state and local level
- » Engaging HUD in finance reform
- » Updating fire codes for safer street design
- » Accelerating suburban retrofit
- » Expanding transportation reform

Addressing these barriers and identifying emerging trends will allow CNU to accelerate the building of great places, particularly within disadvantaged or underserved neighborhoods and minority communities.

CNU will also continue to work with our private sector partners to leverage and accelerate market influences, which can sometimes be more effective in addressing barriers to building better places.

3. BUILDING STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

CNU has a long history of working collaboratively with partnersⁱ to address opportunities, barriers, and strategies to create better urbanism. Changing how American regions, cities, and towns can equitably grow and develop is a complex challenge—one that requires a coalition of diverse organizations to face.

CNU will work to expand the scope and impact of our work by building and participating in a network of like-minded organizations and individuals. By leveraging the resources and thought leadership of this network, CNU will focus on what it does best: developing, testing, and implementing new design approaches throughout the community development and design fields.

By fostering an active network of partners and frequent collaborators, CNU can participate in more joint work and learn from its allies' efforts—all of which will expand the impact of our work and help unite the movement's efforts to limit sprawl and create more vibrant, prosperous places.

III. Cross-Cutting Areas

In addition to these strategic areas, there are a number of CNU priorities that influence all of our strategic areas. CNU will continue to strengthen and integrate these priorities into all aspects of the strategic plan. These areas include:

CONFRONTING EQUITY AND INCLUSIVITY

CNU's work will reaffirm the Charter's commitment to building great places for all users, regardless of background, race, income, or ability. Drawing on our movement's tradition of design excellence, we will explore strategies and solutions for providing attainable

housing, designing and financing diverse neighborhoods, and ultimately building a just city.

CNU will strive to engage diverse perspectives, non-traditional stakeholders, and disadvantaged populations. Across all of our work, we will challenge ourselves, our members, and our allies to build a more inclusive, engaged movement.

ACCELERATING AND CONNECTING MEMBER LED EFFORTS

Our members are the heart of CNU. They are our thought leaders, designers, planners, advocates, and builders. Our biggest successes and innovations—around neighborhood design, housing, equity, transportation, health, sustainability, finance, and countless other issues—have all sprung from the passion and hard work of our members.

Connecting and accelerating member-led efforts are critical to advancing and succeeding in all of our three strategic areas. In particular, members will: (1) help CNU identify and address specific barriers to building great places; (2) accelerate change by expanding our knowledge base; and (3) allow CNU members and like-minded organizations to continue testing and adapting multi-disciplinary strategies for building great urbanism in more places.

CONGRESSES

The annual Congress for the New Urbanism is our flagship event. Our Congress will be an important platform for advancing all three strategic areas because of the networking, convening, and education it offers our members and the broader placemaking movement.

CNU will continue to provide an outstanding Congress experience to attendees by convening strategic groups to advance our joint work, creating opportunities for learning and collaboration, connecting with like-minded innovators, and exploring current issues in new contexts. CNU will continue challenging our attendees to learn from host communities and to rethink their own perspectives and approaches—furthering the core goal of designing and building great urbanism for all.

ⁱ Through its history, CNU has worked with a range of partners, from federal agencies such as the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, national associations such as the Institute of Transportation Engineers and the National Association of Realtors, non – profit organizations such as the Center for Neighborhood Technology and the Atlanta Regional Commission, and private sector groups such as the U.S. Green Building Council and the National Town Builders Association.

Acknowledgments

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