

New Urbanism needs more attention

by Randy W. Bright <http://www.tulsabeacon.com/?p=706#more-706>

If you read my column last week and have been reading my column over the past six weeks or so, you know that I have been in an ongoing dialog with the managing editor of the SmartCode, Sandy Sorlien. She has asked that I clarify something I had written about in an article on New Urbanism in the October 19, 2006 issue of the Tulsa Beacon.

In that article, I cited Ten Solutions that had been listed on the www.newurbanism.org website. Sorlien pointed out that this is not the official website of the Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU), the group that she belongs to, and that the owner of the [newurbanism.org](http://www.newurbanism.org) website had previously drawn their ire for not identifying its authorship.

Since that time, these Ten Solutions have been revised by the owner of the website; earlier, the word “immediate” was deleted, and sometime since then they have been revised a great deal more. Nevertheless, both earlier versions may misled readers, so Sorlien has furnished me with comments regarding the Ten Solutions from Steve Filmanowicz, the CNU Communications Director.

I covered the first five in last week’s article, and this article will cover the last five.

Here are the last of the Ten Solutions as they appeared in 2006, with Mr. Filmonowicz’s (SF) comments following each one.

“6. The immediate construction of massive new solar and wind power generating capacity all across America, including neighborhood scale and small wind turbines that can be incorporated inconspicuously into the roofs of buildings. Also, the immediate installation of new hydropower generating capacity in the form of coastal wave and tidal energy capture.”

SF - “The practice in recent decades of designing communities to be completely dependent on cars and trucks for their daily needs is short-sighted, leaving people in the United States acutely vulnerable to high gas prices and driving up their emissions of greenhouse gas. New Urbanists advocate a shift to more sustainable community design, which results in enduring and valuable cities and towns with important quality of life benefits. They also generally support compatible measures such as the development of renewable energy resources. When and whether an immediate and massive shift to renewables occurs is something that individual New Urbanists discuss and debate.”

“7. The immediate installation of full roof solar panels on every building in America.”

SF - “The response here is essentially the same as the last one, which also referred to solar power. [Newurbanism.org](http://www.newurbanism.org) often sounds like it’s out to order everybody around, while a strength of New Urbanism is its ability to win favor in the marketplace and build support for its policies through public processes.”

“8. An immediate moratorium on the building of any additional sprawl (which deepens auto/oil dependence).”

SF - “We don’t need moratoriums. We ask that policies help level the playing field. When that happens, the advantages of New Urbanism become obvious. Sprawl is slowing to a crawl as its disadvantages become too obvious to ignore.”

“9. A major focus of federal, state, and local governments on the revitalization and densification of all existing cities and towns across America into walkable, mixed-use communities, with pedestrians and bicycles given top priority over automobiles, and a serious focus on bicycles as a major form of transportation. Included would be millions of affordable housing units and high quality neighborhood schools located so all children can walk or bike to them.”

SF - “This is a laudable vision its good because it doesn’t insist on doing it through mandates and moratoriums.”

“10. The immediate installation of major organic farms at the edge of every city and town across America. In addition to this, the immediate planting of millions of trees across America.”

SF did not reply to this item, but summarized: “New Urbanism provides principles for building well-planned communities in which traditional walkable neighborhoods and beautiful parks, squares and other public spaces help establish a beneficial relationship between the built and natural environments. The movement envisions sustainable, diverse and thriving communities. It supports codes and policies that foster the development of these communities. While newurbanism.org primarily reflects the view of one person, the CNU has 3,200 members who interact to share expertise, create tools and resources and advance professional practices. Although they have a range of political orientations, they share a commitment to the principles of the Charter of the New Urbanism, which is found at cnu.org.charter.”

Sorlien has shared a great deal of the SmartCode material with me, including a copy of the new Smartcode Version 9 and Manual, which is more than I suspect she usually does with others. I am still studying the SmartCode, and will be writing more on it and New Urbanism in future articles.

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