Reinventing the Urban Village
THIS IS NOT YOUR FATHER’S NEIGHBORHOOD

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Learning to Love Urban Neighborhoods Again
Not All Neighborhood Visions Represent Progress.
Nor is the past necessarily the vision for the future.
New demographics and values are setting the stage for a new generation of denser, more diverse, more livable urban neighborhoods.
AGENDA

- Why talk about 21st century neighborhoods?
- Changing demographics, market forces, and values are changing urban neighborhoods
- New opportunities for denser, livelier, more livable 21st century neighborhoods

Revitalization strategy for Park Heights, Baltimore
Why talk about 21st century neighborhoods?

- America’s last round of urban neighborhoods—late-19th to mid-20th century—was built for largely homogenous communities.
- 21st-century neighborhoods need to accommodate and celebrate previously unimagined diversity.
- Neighborhood planning and design principles.
- The roles of density in accommodating diversity in planning and designing 21st-century neighborhoods.
Traditional neighborhoods were built for largely homogeneous communities

- Traditional neighborhoods were often developed for communities that shared similar...
  - incomes
  - race
  - Ages
  - Ethnic background
  - religion
  - household type, etc.
- People worked, shopped, worshiped, etc., in or close to neighborhoods
A changing America is changing urban neighborhoods

Changing demographics are producing dramatic changes in America’s housing market...

1950s-90s: 40% of total housing dollars

New Demand 2000+

Dollars Spent on housing

2000

1950s-90s

Age
Changing demographics are creating a strong new urban market

- 23.5 million new households, 2000-2020: younger, older, immigrants
- <25% of 2005 households include kids under 18
- >25% of 2005 households are single individuals
- 78 million baby boomers will be empty nesters by 2030—-with trillions of housing dollars

“One third of Americans want to live in small towns, one third want to live in the suburbs, and one third want to live in more urban, walk-to environments... [T]his last sector is growing, could be approaching 40% now... but this sector is greatly underserved with product.”

CHRIS LEINBERGER, ARCADIA LAND CORP.
“Among the newest players now moving into urban housing are such tract homebuilders as Toll Brothers, Inc., and Los Angeles’ KB Homes…. Both have spent decades trying to lure folks out of the city. Now... those same companies are suddenly making a reverse commute of their own by gobbling up urban properties at a fevered pace.”

“...the U.S. Census Bureau estimates that sales of newly built town homes—which tend to be located in urban areas—now represent 13% of all new homes sold, vs. 10% in 1999...”
...and creating demand for urban housing not seen since WWII

“For many...an urban condo is more luxurious... than a...yard”

“Last year, for the first time...the price of a condo was higher than that of a single-family home”

WALL STREET JOURNAL

The value of condo's is rising much faster than the price of single family houses
Mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly districts now create value

- Before 1987, “24-hour” cities were worst investment and “edge cities” the best
- Since 1987, “24-hour” cities have outpaced other investments
...congestion is undermining quality of life

Average commuter today spends more than an entire workweek per year stuck in traffic. — TEXAS TRANSPORTATION INSTITUTE

BOSTON REGION CHANGES, 1990-2000

- Population: +4.9%
- Employment: +10.5%
- Vehicle Miles Traveled: +13.8%
- Registered Vehicles: +25.6%
- Congestion Hours: +51.6%

The Boston Globe reported that more than 75% polled now report that a shorter commute would be a primary factor in choosing a next house.
...regions with healthy urban neighborhoods are healthier

- CDC: Denser communities have less obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure
- According to a recent national health survey, sprawl and low density correlate more highly with reduced health than...
  - race
  - reducing income by 50%
Urban neighborhoods build regional economic competitiveness

- Peter Kwass: “Jobs now follow people who can do the jobs…”
- “Creative class”—urban neighborhood amenities attract employees in high-tech and similar industries
- Almost no state or city can support the costs of sprawl today

New downtown mixed-use district being planned for Boston
...and sprawl is becoming a costly burden

- Lincoln Institute: public sector in Northeast could save $40 billion over 25 years with more compact development
- “Fix It First” and other smart-growth initiatives based on saving scarce public-sector money
A changing America is creating dramatic new opportunities for urban development and urban neighborhoods

- A diverse community seeks more than “one size fits all” housing
- 21st-century neighborhoods need to celebrate previously unimagined diversity

For the first time “…we are much more diverse…. There is no mass market. We are truly becoming ‘a nation of niches.’”

Urban Land Institute

Like many cities, Cleveland’s neighborhoods were known initially developed largely for individual ethnic groups.
...and America has used obsolete models to respond to increasing diversity

- 1950-60s—low density suburban models were in vogue
- 1960-70s—urban renewal rediscovered density...and made a mess out of it
- 1980-90s—Hope VI declared density the villain incarnate and offered an “urban village” model
New social patterns: mini case study in diversity and density.... The Uplands, West Baltimore

- Neighbors imagined 100 houses on 50+ acres.
- Market study supported 700 units:
  - Large single-family houses
  - Smaller “Village” single-family houses
  - Row houses
  - Flats
  - Apartments
  - A mix of for-sale and rental
- Far larger, more diverse, market than seen in previous decades
Redevelopment of Cabrini-Green in Chicago into a mixed-income, mixed-use, neighborhood
New economic equations: density and height can pay for amenity, livability

- In many cities height creates value—particularly for housing
- Cities use height bonuses to create parks, libraries, affordable housing, and other public benefits

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Parks, libraries, affordable housing, sustainability, other public benefits
Density is critical to providing economic sustainability

- In most neighborhoods residents now spend less than a fifth of their retail dollars in local commercial districts — 1,000 to 2,000 new housing units within a 10- to 15-minute walk needed to support a block of new Main Street — more in low-income neighborhoods
- Private development pays for public realm: parks and other neighborhood amenities
- More eyes and people on the street promotes safety
Density supports mixed-income housing

- Creating mixed-income neighborhoods is a growing challenge for an increasingly economically fragmented society...with steadily diminishing public funding for housing
- Higher-cost housing markets can take significant advantage of internal subsidies within projects

Mixed-income housing replacing Cabrini-Green public housing, Chicago Near North
New development patterns: cinemas, retail, and lofts replacing surface parking lots

- Supported by demand for urban live...and economics that enable developers to shift from surface to structured parking
- Accommodating growth in ways that preserve and enhance quality of life
- Building new futures for older downtowns
- Housing an increasingly diverse population
- Supporting economic opportunity

Downtown mixed-use development, Albuquerque
...more lofts in Albuquerque

- “Urban” became a positive concept—and word—in the late 1980s/early 1990s
- “Lofts” in the mid 1990s
- “Urban lofts” = a positive concept of density

Old Main lofts, Albuquerque
...and on reclaimed rail yards in Denver

- Fear and loathing of the density that supports redevelopment is...
  - Ironic
  - Dangerous
  - Counterproductive

Waterside Lofts, TOD in Denver
Mid rise mixed-use development in neighborhood centers and housing over supermarkets

- Mixed-use neighborhood retail buildings began to appear in the late 1990s.
- Lofts in urban neighborhoods
- Housing over supermarkets

New neighborhood housing in Portland (top) and Seattle
Transformation of brown fields into lively mixed-use districts—Assembly Square, Massachusetts
Communities willing to engage in discussions about the big “d’s”: density and diversity
Cabrini-Green, Chicago, at 30 units/acre
... 40 units/acre

Cabrini-Green, Chicago
... 50 units/acre

Cabrini-Green, Chicago
Chinatown community in Boston calling for high density, mixed-income, development at a charrette
Planning and designing neighborhoods of choice

- Accommodate a highly diverse population with an equally diverse range of housing types.
- Attract people with compelling place making: a public realm of streets, squares, and parks.
- Use densities that support neighborhood commercial districts, services,
- “Make no little plans”—create critical mass needed to convey sense of rebirth and attract private investment and public political capital.
- Overcome isolation: forge social, physical, retail, and other connections.