

# NEW URBANISM IN PRACTICE



American Planning Association  
New Urbanism Division

Making Great Communities Happen

A Publication of the New Urbanism Division  
of the American Planning Association

Volume 9, Issue 2  
Fall 2011

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"New Urbanism in Practice", published quarterly, is the official newsletter of the New Urbanism Division of APA. We welcome your articles, letters, suggestions, and information. Please forward submissions to the editor, Jennifer Chamberlin, AICP, at chamberlinj@fishers.in.us.

The Next deadline for the submission of articles is February 10th, 2012.

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## Purpose

*The New Urbanism Division of the American Planning Association provides planners, public officials, and other decision makers with the information, support, and tools needed to eliminate restrictive conventional development regulations and allow New Urbanism patterns to be incorporated in all communities.*

## Editor's Opinion: Would Durkheim support New Urbanism?

Jennifer Chamberlin, AICP

In 1893, the theory of the development of societies was introduced in Emile Durkheim's *The Division of Labour*. Durkheim's theory focused on defining two types of social solidarity, mechanical and organic. Mechanical solidarity is the cohesion that exists among familial networks typical of "traditional" small scale societies, sometimes compared to rural agricultural communities. Durkheim observed that interdependence of society came forth from specialization of work in modern (industrial) societies, resulting in organic solidarity. Durkheim's central goal was to define what holds a society together, what creates community cohesion. So much of what supports community solidarity in our modern society depends upon the places we live, work, or recreate, our neighborhoods, cities, and towns, and how we travel throughout these landscapes. If it were possible, I would like to ask Emile Durkheim if the defining elements of new urbanism have a positive or negative influence on community cohesion. Mr. Durkheim, do these new urbanist places we construct today actually support what you defined over 100 years ago as organic solidarity?

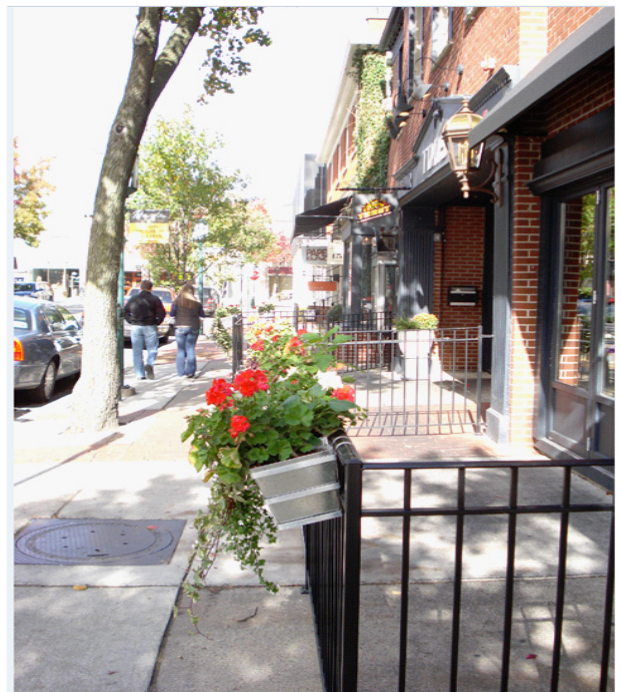
In an attempt to answer these questions, I would like to review the defining elements of new urbanism as brought forth by the founding members of the movement and provided by the Congress for New Urbanism (CNU).

- The ideal new urban neighborhood today must have a discernible center (square, green, memorable street corner, transit stop, etc.). A discernible center creates a gathering place for the community members, a place where identity is created that is common to all individuals, and also where social networks are initiated and maintained.
- Most of the dwellings are within a five-minute walk of the center, average of roughly .25 miles. Walking creates opportunities for interaction of community members strengthening social relationships that result in collective and economic results.
- There are a variety of dwelling types — usually houses, rowhouses, and apartments — so that younger and older people, singles and families, the poor and the wealthy may find places to live. Mixed-income developments support the bridging of social capital, and thus provide for a higher shared quality of life across socioeconomic statuses.

• At the edge of the neighborhood, there are shops and offices of sufficiently

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*New Urbanism in Place (photo Courtesy of Jennifer Chamberlin)*



(Continued from 1)

varied types to supply the weekly needs of household, and small playgrounds are accessible to every dwelling. Common areas to shop and work create bonds among customers and business owners and present additional opportunities for community connections to foster. Public places are key to creating member interaction and supporting community networks, while at the same time providing a safe environment for children.

- An elementary school is close enough so that most children can walk from their home. Educational opportunities and associated events and programs for the youth of the community provide additional networking opportunities and coordination of households from common experiences.
- The streets are relatively narrow and shaded by rows of trees. This slows traffic, creating an environment suitable for pedestrians and bicycles. Alternate modes of safe transportation, such as biking and walking, support community interaction and the use of public spaces. Parking lots and garage doors rarely front the street.

*New Urbanism in Place (Photo Courtesy of Jennifer Chamberlin)*



- Parking is relegated to the rear of buildings, usually accessed by alleys. This provides a pedestrian friendly street, recapturing it as a safe place for people to travel on foot or bike and also a focal point for community members. Active street fronts encourage community individuals to communicate with each other and interact with the streetscape, just as a member interacts with a discernible center.

- Certain prominent sites at the termination of street vistas or in the neighborhood center are reserved for civic buildings. These provide sites for community meetings, education, and religious or cultural activities. The provision of sites for community meetings, education, and religious or cultural activities strengthens community gatherings, interactions, social capital, and networks.

The basic elements of new urbanism, as defined by those of the Congress of New Urbanism and the movement's founders, all seem to have a positive influence on community cohesion, whether it is through the creation of a sense of place that all members use for self-identification purposes or by bringing people of differing backgrounds together to support networking among members. Therefore, my conclusion and the answer to the question of Durkheim's stance on new urbanism is that he would indeed be one of those facing the many challenges, political and otherwise, in an effort to support implementation of new urbanist principles into the landscape of our 20th century built environment. In fact, I would even venture to say that new urban neighborhoods would probably be examples used in comparison to suburban, automobile-centric subdivisions to support his case of organic solidarity and the importance of place in facilitating community cohesion and leveraging social capital to its fullest potential.

Even though this is only my interpretation of these theories and movements, it should be abundantly clear to all that urban planning is a multi-disciplinary field and that new urbanism is more than a movement or a set of regulating standards. New urbanism is a lifestyle, a complex component of our social fabric, a vital element of community cohesion, and an opportunity for successful community development. Please keep in mind as you work towards implementing new urbanism into your planning policies and initiatives that you are not only implementing sustainable principles in design and urban planning practice, but you are also creating opportunities to strengthen community cohesion—the very essence of our society today.

### **Gina Tirinnanzi Memorial Scholarship Announcement**

About a year ago, the Division lost one of its founding members, Gina Tirinnanzi. Shortly after, Division leadership decided to commemorate Gina's role in the New Urbanism Division by establishing the Gina Tirinnanzi Memorial Scholarship. Originally announced to the membership in late 2010, this scholarship did not garner the attention that we had hoped, so we've decided to make another attempt. This scholarship is open to student members of the division who have a strong interest in New Urbanism. Students are invited to submit to the Division an original paper or project that is focused on the tenets of New Urbanism and the practical application of those views within contemporary development scenarios. The recipient of the scholarship will be chosen by the Division's leadership committee and will receive a one-time scholarship of \$500. Students who are interested must submit their entry by December 16th, 2011. If you have any questions, please contact the Division's Vice Chair, Martin Scribner at [mscribner@nkapc.org](mailto:mscribner@nkapc.org).

## New Urbanism Division Member Survey Results

*Martin Scribner, AICP*

Periodically, APA asks the divisions to survey their membership to provide some feedback and help us improve our services. This year division leadership put together our first online survey for all of our members to participate in.

The survey was 12 questions long and 91 members took the opportunity to complete the survey and provide valuable input to division leadership.

Detailed results are available on our website at <http://www.planning.org/divisions/newurbanism/business/pdf/surveyresults.pdf>, but here is a quick summary of the results:

- Approximately 65% of those who responded have 11 years or more of professional experience.
- The largest portion of respondents is 55 years old and up.
- Over half of respondents have been with us for 3 years or more. Not bad, considering that the Division has only been in existence for around 10 years.
- Around 60% said that they are also a member of at least one other division. This was encouraging, considering that overall APA division membership has been decreasing over the past few years.
- The amount of experience with New Urbanist activities ranged from a mere interest in the subject to bonafide experts in the subject matter and everywhere in between.
- A large majority of respondents joined the New Urbanism Division to learn more about New Urbanism or to network with other New Urbanists. Clearly, these are the areas that Division leadership needs to focus on.
- Nearly 94% stated that they have read the Division Newsletter in the past year, but only 7 people attended the 2011 Division Business Meeting in Boston.
- About half of the respondents indicated that they are at least "somewhat satisfied" with the Division, while around 40% said that they were neutral and 10% stating that they were dissatisfied. Division leadership is discussing ways to bring that 10% back into the fold, while turning the neutral folks into true believers.
- When asked to rate "New Urbanism in Practice", the Division newsletter, around 65% responded with "good" or "excellent", while 31% responded with "average" and 4% responded with "fair". Thankfully, no one responded with poor (expletives deleted).
- When asked to rate activities in importance, "Social Functions at the Annual APA Conference" stood out as the most important, followed closely by "Group Blog for Networking Purposes", "Student Grant Programs and Internships" and "Division Blog or Discussion Board". These results were particularly surprising, considering the low level of participation those activities have historically experienced.
- When asked if they would be interested in volunteering to help the Division out in the future, over 60% indicated that they would --- that's HUGE, especially considering that the core of this Division is only 5 people, all volunteering their time where they can. 19 people indicated that they would be interested in writing an article for the newsletter – that's our toughest area, so consider this a formal invitation! Murphy's, Chris' and my email addresses are always at the top of the newsletter, so please send your article ideas to us for inclusion in the next one!
- For those who left their contact info for us, THANK YOU! We haven't forgotten about you and will be contacting you in the near future for your help! New blood always infuses some energy into the process as those of us who have been around for awhile start to tire.
- When asked how we could improve the Division, there was a wide array of answers with some great ideas that we will definitely be considering. Check the link above to see those comments.



*APA Website Photography*

Overall, we felt that we got some great feedback which we will be reviewing and considering as we put together our work program for the next year.

Thanks to all those who took the time to complete the survey, telling us how we're doing and how we can better provide value to you and your organizations through membership in the New Urbanism Division!

## APA President Recipient of the first Robert C. Weaver Distinguished Service Award from Hunter College

CHICAGO—APA President Mitchell Silver, AICP, was selected as the first recipient of Hunter College's Robert C. Weaver Distinguished Service Award through the department of urban affairs and planning. The faculty-created award recognizes individuals who, like the late Dr. Weaver, have made exceptional use of their talents and expertise to shape policies, implement plans, and serve as leaders in the urban professions.

Silver was selected to receive the award due to his many accomplishments over his 25-year planning career. He will be presented with the award at the Urban Dialogue & Award Ceremony, Friday, September 16. The event includes "Planning and Community: A Conversation with Mitch Silver," a dialogue between Silver and his former professor and mentor Dr. Eugenie Birch, FAICP, the Lawrence C. Nussdorf Professor of Urban Research and Education, Chair of the Graduate Group in City Planning, and Co-Director of the Institute for Urban Research at the University of Pennsylvania. The event will take place at the Roosevelt House Institute for Public Policy.

The Robert C. Weaver Distinguished Service Award is named in honor of Weaver, a former Hunter College professor in the department of City Planning & Urban Design Center. Weaver was named the first Secretary of Housing and Urban



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## EVENTS AND HAPPENINGS

January 20th-22nd, 2012  
*6th International Conference on Design  
Principles and Practices*  
Los Angeles, CA  
[www.cnu.org/events](http://www.cnu.org/events)

February 1st-2nd, 2012  
*Smart Cities 2012 Conference*  
Amsterdam  
[www.cnu.org/events](http://www.cnu.org/events)

February 2nd-4th, 2012  
*11th Annual New Partners for Smart Growth  
Conference*  
San Diego, CA  
[www.NewPartners.org](http://www.NewPartners.org)

April 14th-17th, 2012  
**Early Registration Ends February 16th, 2012**  
*APA National Conference*  
Los Angeles, CA  
[www.planning.org/conference](http://www.planning.org/conference)

April 29th-May 1st, 2012  
*National Green Building Conference & Expo*  
Nashville, TN



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*To add your upcoming New  
Urbanism or smart growth-related  
event to this calendar, contact the  
newsletter editor.*