



**THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF THE FAIRFAX AREA**

BULLETIN

Founded in 1925

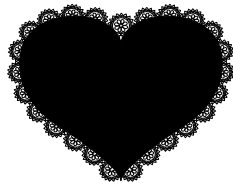
Meeting Continuously Since 1946

February 2007

4026 Hummer Road #214 Annandale, Virginia 22003

Volume 59 Issue 6

Happy Valentine's Day



Happy League Birthday

February 14, 1920

The topic for February Unit Meetings is Land Use. All you need to know is in this *Bulletin*, read it and participate in a unit meeting—make your voice heard.

Calendar

February 2007 BLACK HISTORY MONTH

- 02 NCA Board Meeting/ *Ground Hog Day*
- 03 Briefing - Land Use - Upper Conference Room
- 07 League Day in Richmond

8, 12, 13, 14 Units - Land Use

- 14 *St. Valentines Day/League Founded 1920*
- 15 *Susan B. Anthony Day*
- 16 Board Agenda Deadline
- 19 **Annual Meet Kit Due/Presidents Day/FCPS Closed**
- 21 **Board Meeting/March UC Letter Deadline**
- 27 **April Bulletin Deadline**

March (Important Dates) WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

- 02 NCA Board Meeting
- 03 Briefing/ NCA Airports/Upper Conference Room
- 08 *International Women's Day*

8,12,13,14,Unit Meetings - Airport Update (NCA)

- 16 Board Agenda Deadline
- 17 *St. Patrick's Day*
- 21 **Board Meeting - FX Cnty Budget Presentation/ April U.C. Letter Deadline**
- 23 Board Agenda Deadline
- 28 **Board Meeting (Regular)**
- 30 Spring Break/FCPS Closed

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Wednesday, February 7, 2007 is League Day in Richmond. Starts at 9 AM with the Women's Roundtable (WRT) followed by a briefing with LWVVA Lobbyist Anne Sterling on issues of concern in the General Assembly. Carpools call 703-658-9150 or email lwvfa@ecoisp.com or lwvfa@aol.com if you wish to attend.

President's Letter

It was so good to see everyone at the General Meeting in January! And Representative Davis gave his usual interesting and enlightening talk on Congress and what to expect for our area. Arrangements Chair **Viveka Fuenzalida** does a magnificent job in planning these affairs! By the way, I apologize for my bad grammar in the meeting reservation form – the word should have been “effects” not *affects*. And I made the *Bulletin* Editor change it to the incorrect form – 20 hits with Webster’s for me!

I want to call your attention to a change in the current program year that the board made in December (see also Board Notes). Program Co-Director **Rona Ackerman** received some long-awaited information on later start times for high school students in Fairfax County and wanted to present the information to the membership during this program year – as a follow up to the June 2006 topic [aka “SLEEP”] – with a possible concurrence on the subject. Therefore, the board agreed to have unit meetings in April, to discuss the issue. The units will need a Discussion Leader to attend the briefing – briefing date will be March 31 or April 7– we will let you know.

We welcomed **Mary Grace Lintz** to the board in January as an additional Program Co-Director to **Rona Ackerman** and **Lois Page**. Some of you may remember Mary Grace served as LWVFA president some years ago. Her expertise will help us all.

Some of you may want to attend **League Day** in Richmond on **Wednesday, February 7**. The event will start at 9 AM with the Women’s Roundtable (WRT) and be followed by a briefing with LWVFA President Lulu Meese and Lobbyist Anne Sterling on issues of concern to the League in the General Assembly (G.A.). Carpools can be arranged, please call or email the office, 703-658-9150, lwfva@ecoisp.com or lwfva@aol.com for more information.

LWVFA gave testimony and wrote letters regarding G.A. actions and procedures in January, and, at the end of the month, we spoke at the public schools hearing on the FY08 FCPS budget. Check out our website (www.lwv-fairfax.org) - “Fairfax League In Action” page – to see what we said.

Sherry



Unit News

The holidays meant family visits for many. **Edith Appel** (HHE) was in Australia. **Judy Schiller** (VID) was in France. **Sherry Zachry** (FXS) was in Jamaica. **Lorraine & John Hart** (VIE) had her sister Pat from UK. **Olga Hernandez** (CHD) had daughter Cassy home from Dallas. **Leslie Vandivere** (CHD) had various family contingents from Canada, Amsterdam, Florida, and Switzerland. **Sally Ormsby** (VID) had daughter Alison home from Florida. **Mary Elizabeth Gordon** (VID) underwent knee surgery in January. **Bobbie Stewart** (VID) will be in Australia from Jan thru March.

Membership Update

Leslie Vandivere - 703-222-4173

LVandivere@cox.net

Welcome **Ruth Becker**, a nationally recruited member. We're glad you've joined us.



% Only English spoken at home by Grade Level

1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th		
91.5	89.5	94.8	94.4	95.5		
6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	
95.5	92.4	66.6	97.3	76.7	69.8	

Source: Richmond Times Dispatch, 12/3/06.

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703-658-9150 Information/fax/answering machine

www.lwv-fairfax.org E-mail: lwfva@ecoisp.com

President Sherry Zachry 703-730-8118 szachry@aol.com

Editor Lavinia Voss 703-257-1831 Fax-call first

Proofing Bernice Colvard 703-978-3227

Address corrections, please email the office or call 703-658-9150

Board Notes

Lavinia Voss

At the December 20, 2006, board meeting the following appointments were made, **Inta Sraders** to the Bylaws Committee; **Lavinia Voss, Una White** and **Diane Hardcastle** to the Budget Committee. **Carol Hawn** gave an update on the Voters Service publication activities. **Lorraine Hart** reported on our Voters Service outreach plans.

Program Directors **Rona Ackerman & Lois Page** reported on the results from December unit meetings. The program recommendations sent to LWVVA were: 1. The effect of an aging society on the delivery of medical and social services. 2. The impact of climate change (global warming) on Virginia's natural resources and economy. 3. An update of electronic voting, to include but not limited to paper trails. One recommendation was sent on to LWNCA: Emergency preparedness coordination. The unit reports for November's topic "Redistricting II" showed a consensus. The Redistricting Concurrence from the LWVFA December units was tallied and sent to LWVVA for the concurrence on the floor of the convention. The board also agreed that unit meetings will be held in the month of April to accommodate a proposed change in program. (See President's Letter on page 2.)

Action Director **Jane Hilder** gave a written update on the BOS December meeting and the LWVVA priorities for this year's General Assembly session. She also said she would work on some talking points for President Zachry for the General Assembly delegation legislative public hearing in January.

Justice Committee Chair **Judy Leader** submitted a written report on events to date for her committee and asked for \$400 to videotape a moot court competition for George Mason University law students. The funding for this project came from the overage from the People Speak United Nations Grant LWVFA got earlier in 2006.

All the other written reports from Membership, PR, and the Nominating committee were reviewed and accepted by the board.

Seen and Heard Around Fairfax and Beyond-

Our website now has a "**Fairfax In Action**" section. Testimonies, letters to the editor, etc. are all posted there for your convenience.

VIRGINIA HAPPENINGS

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

THEY WENT WEST

Bernice Colvard, League Historian

A 250 foot long mural was displayed for nine months as part of a larger year 2000 public program in Denver's LoDo (Lower Downtown). The display focused on some of the many women who contributed to the state's history. Among them:

Clara Brown (1800-1885) was born a slave near Fredericksburg, Virginia. She obtained her freedom in 1856 and set out to search for scattered family members as well as expanded opportunities in the West. She earned westward passage as a wagon train cook. In seeing to Gregory Gulch gold miners' needs for laundry and cooking services, Brown's entrepreneurial skills enabled her to amass more than \$10,000 in property. She was largely responsible for building Colorado's first Methodist Church. At age 82, Brown was finally united with her daughter Eliza.

Elizabeth Piper Ensley (c. 1850-1919) was born in the East and studied abroad. She and her husband, Horwell, taught at Howard University in the 1880s, moving to Colorado around 1890.

Comprising only two percent of the population, Denver's blacks were completely segregated. This fostered the banding together of female community members to form a vibrant network of clubs for cultivating social change. Their causes included suffrage, temperance, poverty, and the plight of unwed mothers.

As a civic leader, Ensley helped found the Women's League in 1894 and served as treasurer of the Equal Suffrage Association. In 1904, she founded the Colorado Association of Colored Women's Clubs to include the majority of Denver's blacks, who performed menial labor.

Colorado's women won enfranchisement by referendum in 1893 (Carrie Chapman Catt was there, promoting the referendum). They first voted in an election a year later.

Source <<http://www.museumoftheamericanwest.org>>

To be continued next month.....

Love is the child of illusion and the parent of disillusion.

Miguel De Unamuno

Justice System Report

Therese Martin

(The LWVFA has had a long-standing concern about the number of and treatment for persons with mental illness in the Fairfax adult detention center and has been supportive of jail diversion programs such as those described below.)

Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board staff recently presented an overview of its Mental Health Services' Jail Diversion Program to the Criminal Justice Advisory Board. This diversion program, in operation since October 2005, offers an alternative to arrest and incarceration for people with mental illness, who have committed minor non-violent offenses. Police may divert a person to Woodburn Emergency Services for assessment, treatment, and intensive care management services. A police officer is posted there from 2:00 pm to 8 am, seven days per week, to accept custody of individuals diverted from arrest. This enables the transporting officer to quickly return to his or her assignment.

At the Woodburn Center, the individual is assessed for further treatment, as well as referred for intensive case management services. Specific services are tailored to an individual's needs with the goal of engaging persons in mental health/alcohol and drug treatment, as well as linking them with the necessary resources and benefits, such as housing entitlements and health care. Since the program began, 60 clients have entered it and 25 graduates have enjoyed successful transitions to outpatient and residential services. Six individuals are currently being served for Assertive Community Treatment while four are receiving ongoing case management through Intensive Case Management Services. In addition, five individuals entered mental health services in other states. Although housing has proven to be the most needed resource for those individuals in the jail diversion program, the program has had success in supporting clients into housing. The program has expanded its scope of eligibility to include persons who have already been booked as well as those diverted from arrest.

It is with true love as it is with ghosts; everyone talks of it, but few have seen it

La Rochefoucauld

Immigration Quiz

1. Out of these nations, which one has the highest number "non national residents" making up 15% of its population? a) USA b) Great Britain c) Germany d) France
2. In the USA immigrants from Latin America mainly come from? a) Central America excluding Mexico b) Caribbean c) South America d) Mexico
3. The foreign born group with the highest household income median comes from? a) Middle East b) Asia c) Europe d) Africa
4. The area of the world that sends to the USA the highest percentage of immigrants who are at least high school graduates is? a) Africa b) Europe c) Latin America d) Asia
5. In 1910 the USA population was 15% foreign born. In 2000 the foreign born percentage of the population was? a) 8% b) 10% c) 11% d) 13%
6. According to the Center of Immigration Studies, the immigrant population is growing how much faster than the native population? a) It is not, the native population is growing faster b) It is growing 2 times as fast c) It is growing 6.5 times as fast d) It is growing 8.3 times as fast
7. Annually immigrants receive \$42.9 billion in benefits such as education & public assistance. Approximately how much do they pay in taxes? a) \$70.3 billion b) \$50.8 billion c) \$42.9 billion d) \$30.5 billion
8. Increased immigration tends to a) produce higher wages for all immigrants b) produce higher wages for U.S. citizens c) produce lower wages for immigrants d) produce lower wages for U.S. citizens
9. The population of foreign born immigrants that has the highest citizen rate comes from which region? a) Latin America b) Africa c) Europe d) Asia

Answers below:

	8. c.. 9. c. foreign born Mexico, Latin America
	1. c. 2. d. Alt

Source: LWV Montgomery County, MD Newsletter Dec. 2006. Updated by Karla Franco, intern LWV Seattle Voter.

Can Suburbs Become Cities? Would We Want Them to?

Anne Kanter

Introduction: Have you ever enjoyed a concert on a summer night at the Reston Town Center? Have you ever said, "I love walking in New York's Greenwich Village, or Venice's Piazza San Marco, or Philadelphia's Rittenhouse Square"? Do you have a "dooryard" or a "third place?" These are the creation of urban inhabitation and the ancestors of urban planners, and this "built" environment affects lives as much as the climate, the vegetation and the geography affected pioneers.

LWVFA members are familiar with the Government Center, the Pennino Building and the Herrity Building in Fairfax. Imagine you had some business there but went to the wrong building on a scorching summer day. Do you stroll over to the other building? Stop for a drink under a shady archway? Pick up a baguette and a seasonal lettuce for dinner on your way back to the apartment? Drop into a chapel and say a prayer for a sick niece? Run into a friend and her dog? Of course not: it's 95°, there's no shade, no iced coffee, no St. Bridget's, no Jane! But, for centuries cities evolved so that's what humans could do. The center of government, commerce, and religion were all on the town center, a space where the social public life of the community went on. It was the "there" of a locality: the square, the plaza, the agora..

Can you artificially create the community center that usually took generations to develop? Urban planners in the last century and a half have been trying to do so. But there is a heartfelt bias in planners: They like how things look from the air. They want to believe that an architecturally-balanced environment will actually change people's character. From the mid-nineteenth century on, with Ebenezer Howard's utopian Garden Cities of Tomorrow to the Robert Simon's Lake Anne Plaza in Reston, there is a "nudge" gene in planners. They say: "This is a place designed with better aesthetic standards, so you will be better people." Planners have had a hard time taking people for what they are, and adapting the built environment to work for them, rather than hoping that people will change to fit a design that is architecturally pleasing.

Planners went most wrong in the 1950s and 1960s when they cleared slums and tenements, under the

admirable intention of eliminating blight, and created the 6-lane roadways, towering high-rises and open spaces of the idealists' Cities of the Future. But the resulting projects, such as Priutt-Igoe in St. Louis and the Robert Taylor Homes in Chicago, had no mix of uses, with barren plazas between slab walls. They proved to be so fundamentally flawed that the only solution was implosion.

In the suburbs, zoning ordinances and dependence on cars resulted in less socially-engineered but also imperfect communities. Houses were built with garages in front, isolating the residence from the street. Front porches were deemed unnecessary because there was air conditioning and no neighbors to greet because no one walked by. There were no sidewalks and no nearby destinations. Cul-de-sacs made sure you couldn't get anywhere on foot. Shops were in strips separated from the street by rows of parking. Workplaces and government buildings were architectural wonders, set on plinths, in a sea of asphalt. Planners knew that most people will walk only if a destination is a quarter mile or less away, yet persisted in designing mass transit stations where a quarter mile barely gets riders out of the parking lot.

Consumers began falling out of love with malls, too. The International Council of Shopping Centers reports that only one major mall opened in the US in 2006.¹

So what has come to be developed in the place of conventional suburbia? Not the shining towers of the Modernists, but Pentagon City, Reston Town Center, and Clarendon. There are more than 60 so-called lifestyle centers planned to open nation-wide in '06 and '07.² They are characterized by outdoor shopping streets that are friendly to pedestrians, plazas, fountains, and closely packed living units, restaurants, and public transportation stations.

But changes have come to residential streets, too. In Kentlands in Montgomery County, MD, and to some extent, Blueberry Hill in Vienna, VA, a new form of suburban streetscape has been created. Houses with large porches and no garages face each other across short front yards. Blocks are short. There are commercial areas within walking distance of most houses.

How did these changes come about?

Appalled by the urban renewal debacles of the 1950's, a reporter and teacher named Jane Jacobs wrote a vastly influential book in 1961 called *THE DEATH AND LIFE OF GREAT AMERICAN CITIES*. She wrote in her introduction: "In short, I shall be writing about how cities work in real life, because this is the only way to learn what principles of planning and what practices in rebuilding can promote social and economic vitality in cities."³ She favored a vibrant street life on wide sidewalks, with "living over the stores," and parks that can be observed from the outside. Her most famous security principle was "eyes on the street." She believed that pedestrians felt most comfortable when they felt that they could be seen by others when using the community's public areas. She also is credited with creating the term "mixed-use development" Both terms are now used world-wide.

Another influential book on the change in planning is *SUBURBAN NATION: THE RISE OF SPRAWL AND THE DECLINE OF THE AMERICAN DREAM* written in 2000 by Duany, Plater-Zyberk, and Speck. Andres Duany and his wife Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, who is dean of the School of Architecture at the University of Florida, founded the architectural firm of Arquitectonica, and the Congress for New Urbanism. Both have been driving forces in the changes in planning and land use that are variously known as Smart Growth, New Urbanism and Transit-Oriented Development.

THE NEW WATCHWORDS

Smart Growth's basic philosophy is that suburban sprawl should stop. Existing green space (called greenfields) at the edges of urban areas should not be further developed. Another tenet is that dependence on the automobile should be reduced. If a population is growing, as it is in the Washington metropolitan area, housing units and employment opportunities should be created in central cores and existing suburbs, especially those with access to or potential for mass transit. Another way to increase housing and other development without creating more sprawl is to develop underutilized or vacant industrial and commercial space. This is called respectively, brownfields and grayfields redevelopment. Smart Growth also engenders the use of environmentally friendly and energy efficient construction materials, and the adaptive reuse of existing buildings.

Low-Impact development is an offshoot of the environmental segment of Smart Growth, and is a developing field where new techniques and technologies are being introduced to lessen the effects of development on water and air quality, soil erosion and native plantings. Rain gardens, green roofs, and permeable paving are examples. Fairfax County is offering developers workshops and guidelines for LID.

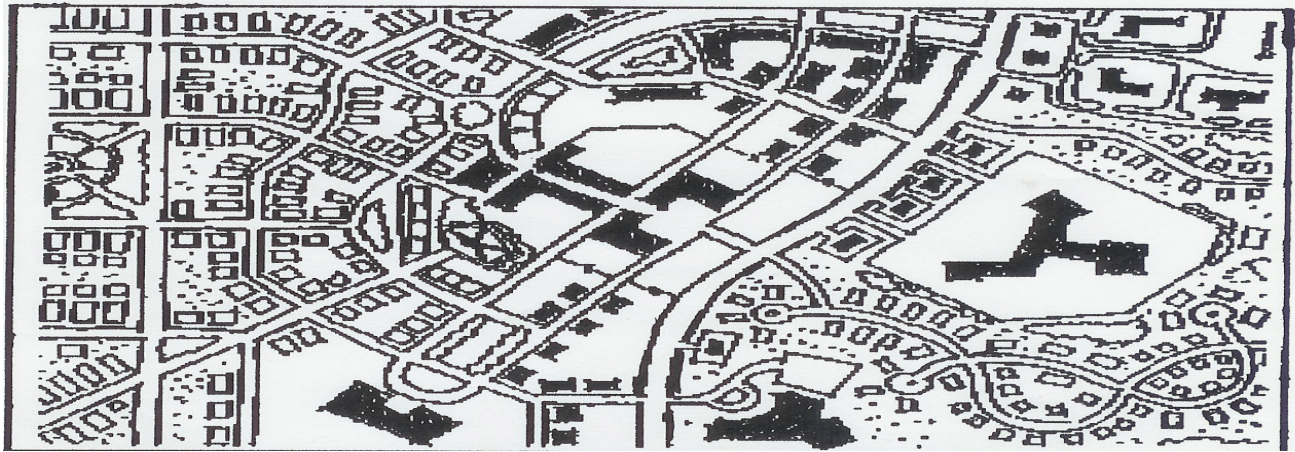
Transit-oriented Development is at the heart of Smart Growth. For Fairfax County it means approving high-density development close to our existing and proposed Metro stations. Both the Dunn Loring-Merrifield and Vienna-Fairfax-GMU stations have recently had County approvals for dense mixed-use development. Now the County is considering the Dulles line stops in Tysons Corner. In all cases, residents living in nearby subdivisions have been deeply concerned. It is not the land-use scenario they bought into.

Developers who are seeking and gaining these high-density projects have proffered to use TDM—Transportation Demand Management—to limit increased demand on roads. However, the League and many stakeholders have found that the County has shown a poor ability to track whether or not proffers, especially those not needed to get occupancy permits, are made good. The County has now provided funding for a study of the effectiveness of TDM strategies as well as some funding for enforcement of the TDM proffers at major developments, with non-compliance fines of up to half a million dollars.

New Urbanism is also part of the Smart Growth philosophy. New Urbanism holds that in order to promote community, the built environment must be diverse in use and population, scaled for the pedestrian, and capable of supporting mass transit as well as the automobile. It must have a well-defined public realm supported by buildings reflecting the architecture and ecology of the region.

The drawing on page R-3 shows a number of New Urbanism concepts that create a "place." The right side of the drawing shows a layout of the standard suburban plat. There is a separation of uses. The subdivision in the lower right contains only residences on cul de sacs and a single point of access to the main road.

Integrated v. Segregated Community Design (New Urbanism) ⁴



Houses are widely separated, each would with its own driveway. Shopping and offices are surrounded by parking lots with few access points.

The left side shows houses closer together and closer to the street. Ideally, there would be alleys behind the houses. There is a grid pattern to the street with more ways to access the other neighborhood uses.

Commercial areas have parking behind them. The large buildings create a “street wall” which is welcoming to pedestrians. The U-shaped buildings in the center create a center that could contain open space that might be surrounded by cafés and benches. New Urbanism goes on to promote porches on houses and pocket parks. It suggests that there be buildings of architectural interest or public art at the end of streets to create viewpoints. It promotes public-use buildings (libraries, post offices, shops, etc.) that have direct sidewalk access.

Perhaps your neighborhood now has a proposal put forward to develop a “Towne Centre.” What makes a great space? Urban quality consultants Jan Gehl and Lars Gemzoe have studied urban spaces world-wide and have created a checklist:

12 Steps to a Great Place

Protection

1. Protecting against traffic
 - traffic calming
 - pedestrian spaces
2. Protection against crime and violence
 - people on the streets
 - people living nearby

- activity in the evening
 - lighting
3. Protection from the weather and elements
 - protection from unpleasant elements of climate
 - protection from pollution

Possibilities

4. Possibilities for walking
 - sufficient space for free movement
 - good surfaces
 - interesting architecture
 - direct routes
 - attractive destinations
5. Possibilities for stopping and standing
 - inviting edges that welcome you to the space
 - objects to relate to so it’s not a vast, empty space
 - features to draw you in like a water fountain or public art
6. Possibilities for sitting
 - benches ledges walls, public art to rest upon
 - seating areas configured so people can view sites
7. Possibilities to see
 - unhindered, interesting views
 - other people
8. Possibilities for hearing and talking
 - low noise level
 - seating areas configured so people can sit close and face one another
 - certain spots offer a sense of privacy
9. Possibilities for play & activity
 - Running around
 - Playground
 - Exercise, games and sports
 - Performances
 - Carnivals and festivals
 - Food vendors

Enjoyment

10. Scale

- human scaled, not too small but especially not too big
 - 11. Possibilities for enjoying weather and the elements
 - opportunities to enjoy both sun and shade
 - opportunities to soak up sun or enjoy a cool breeze
 - winter activities like skating
 - 12. Aesthetic quality
 - good design and good details
 - art
 - good views
- trees, plant, fountains and water features ⁵

Smart Growth advocates and New Urbanists use several other fairly new planning concepts. All try to develop a sense of community and social contact:

The Third Place concept, now co-opted by Starbucks and chain bookstores, was defined in 1989 by Ray Oldenburg. “‘Third places’ or ‘great good places’ are the many public spaces where people can gather, put aside the concerns of home and work (their first and second places) and hang out simply for the pleasure of good company and lively conversation. They are the heart of the community’s social vitality and the grass-roots of a democracy.”⁶ This is, of course, not a new social phenomenon. The town well, the hair salon, the bar, the coffee shop, and the square where they were all situated fulfilled this function. But before the 1990’s, urban renewal promoters and suburban developers never seemed to provide for them. If they did exist, they were denigrated as “strip malls” and set off from residential areas by high fences.

Dooryards is a concept forwarded by Reston’s own Ed Risse, in his book *SHAPE OF THE FUTURE*. He uses a hierarchy of building blocks for a community, and they form a useful way to evaluate where improvements can be made. A novel concept is the second-smallest level, the “dooryard.” Units, the smallest level, shelter an individual, family or small group. The dooryard is a functional group of units that provides for the effective communication among similarly located, adjacent units. Of all the levels of urban organization, they are most dependent on civility to operate. Your dooryard is usually those units you can see and communicate with when you are outside your own unit: your block, if it’s short enough; your end of the apartment corridor; your cul-de-sac; or your townhouse square.

They are usually too small to have any sort of formal organization, but are best level to create your own sense of community. These are the people who will pick up your mail and notice if a stranger is loading your TV and computer onto the back of a truck. They are the neighbors who are most likely to greet you as

you come and go, and are the best chance of support in a time of disaster. Casual socializing, task sharing, and trading of favors is a good way to create a thriving dooryard, which in turn improves the community sense in clusters and neighborhoods.

How can you strengthen your dooryard, cluster, or neighborhood? What follows is a list from *Ode* magazine with some suggestions.

Easy ways to improve your (public) life

- Sow flowers seeds in vacant lots, median strips, and anywhere that could use a little more life. Plant flowers in your front yard or a window box.
- Throw a party and invite everyone on the block or in your building. Spend a little time discussing what you’d like to see improved in the neighborhood.
- Adopt a public space near your home—pick up the litter, take care of it and let the proper authorities know when something needs their attention.
- Always buy lemonade from kids at a sidewalk stand.
- Always tip street musicians
- Patronize locally owned businesses.
- Adopt the German custom of a *Stamcafé*—a local place that is your regular hang-out.
- Put a bench in front of your home or business so that people can sit and talk.
- When no one’s looking, try out the local playground.
- Drive slowly enough to see the passing landscape.
- Stop you car or bike to let pedestrians pass, even if you have the right of way.
- Lobby local officials to install traffic calming and other measures to tame autos in your community.
- Do your web-surfing or email correspondence in cafés.
- Take a bus or train somewhere you would usually drive, and pay attention to what you usually miss.
- Bike somewhere you would usually take the bus or train, and pay attention to what you usually miss.
- Walk somewhere you would usually bike, and pay attention to what you usually miss.
- Hang out on your street at a time you would usually walk, and pay attention to what you usually miss.⁷

Street walls are part of New Urbanism and come in two forms. The first is a planning concept where the edges of buildings are directly adjacent, or very close, to the sidewalk. It gives a “downtown” feeling in commercial areas. In commercial areas, parking is moved to the rear of the wall of buildings, or put into

underground structures. Reston Town Center, Clarendon, and Pentagon Row are built this way.

In residential areas, especially if combined with front porches, residences close to the street give tacit permission for neighbors to address each other, and form connections. Visually, it creates a controlled point of view.

The second kind of street wall is a placement of trees and gardened spaces between the sidewalk and the street, especially a heavily traveled street. This creates a small physical and larger psychological barrier between the fast-moving cars and pedestrians.

Both types of street walls run into regulatory problems. Look through ***What's Wrong with This Picture?*** on pages 6 and 7 to see how street walls and other community-building changes would require changes in zoning and street construction ordinances. House setbacks of 35 ft., as is common in Fairfax County, puts front porches out of conversation distance from the sidewalk. County planners and VDOT engineers both frown on any plantings between the sidewalk and the street. They believe there should be an obstruction-free buffer zone for high-speed traffic. Trees also uproot sidewalk slabs, and limit access to utility easements. These are all considered a higher priority than shaded, seasonally changing walkways for pedestrians.

However, a recent study by Eric Dumbaugh on the safety of urban roads found "that tree-lined streets experience fewer accidents than do 'forgiving roadsides'—those that have been kept free of large inflexible objects" (trees).⁸ Motorists slow down and are more alert when they don't have wide open spaces to travel through.

Critics of New Urbanism

The major criticism of New Urbanism and lifestyle centers is that they are too clean, and eliminate the gritty side of true urban life. Reston Town Center is an example where the public realm is privately owned and privately managed. Panhandlers and those carrying placards are not welcome on its sidewalks, streets and plaza. There is no urban blight, and no older buildings with lower rents and affordable housing. The following editorial shows another way to consider the issue.

COMMENTARY: AFFORDABLE LIVING, NOT JUST AFFORDABLE HOUSING---Robert Steuteville

Viewed in isolation, housing affordability is a tough challenge for new urbanists. That's because new urbanists are in the business of planning and developing amenities close to housing. Land values within walking distance of transit stations, shops, parks, and other facilities—all other things being equal—will always

be higher than where people have to drive everywhere, notes Jennifer Hurley, a Philadelphia planner.

Given that dynamic, how can the goal of healthy, diverse, mixed-income, and mixed-use neighborhoods be achieved? Hurley and other new urbanists are recognizing that housing affordability should not be an end in itself—a better goal is affordable living. The truth is that anyone can achieve housing affordability in any metro area—if you live far enough away from where the action is. But then your transportation costs probably will rise or your income fall, neither of which is a bargain.

Transportation—second only to housing in household expenditures—is closely linked with housing choice, and costs vary tremendously according to where you live. The Surface Transportation Policy Project did a study that showed that households in the New York metro area spent 15.1 percent of their income on transportation—close to 10 percentage points less than Tampa, where households spent 24.6 percent of their income on transportation. Despite New York City's higher housing costs, residents of Tampa spent substantially more on these expenditures. Sprawling metros have the highest mobility costs, the study showed.

The impact is even more pronounced within a particular metro area, according to a study of the Minneapolis/St. Paul region by the Center for Neighborhood Technology and Reconnecting America. A family living close to downtown spends half as much on transportation as a family living in an outlying suburb—a difference of nearly \$6,000 a year. The concept is called location efficiency. Another vital point: neighborhoods with lower transportation costs also have good access to higher-paying jobs.

THE SCARCITY OF URBANISM

So urban places can and do make sense in terms of affordability. One problem, however, is that good urban places have become relatively scarce in recent decades—because they have been made illegal by land use laws. In his book, *Zoned Out*, Jonathan Levine demonstrates that most zoning puts limits on density and setbacks and separate uses. Zoning therefore forces citizens to buy lower density, more disconnected housing than they would in a free market. Over 50 or 60 years, those policies have also used up more scarce land around key metro areas—further driving up prices.

New urbanists are battling those forces by designing and building more urbanism and creating codes that allow more diversity in the built environment. This effort is still in its infancy, but one day, maybe, most land use codes will allow urbanism to thrive and new walkable communities will become commonplace. That will reduce transportation costs and the premium that is placed on well-designed urban neighborhoods.

What's Wrong With This Picture? ¹⁰

The town below seems like a pleasant place to live. What follows are regulatory obstacles that the building of such a town today might encounter—a composite from communities across the country.

The Violations:

1. Stores too convenient for local residents. Newly erected commercial buildings must often be in a zone separate from residential areas and accessible to most people only by car.
2. Arboreal interference. Traffic departments in many cases deem curbside trees hazardous to motorists.
3. No parallel parking allowed. The preference has shifted to off-street lots and driveways.
4. Not enough parking. Typically, 3 to 5 spaces are required per 1,000 sq.ft. of commercial space. Many

commercial buildings today may not be more than one story high because they don't have enough parking spaces to be taller.

5. Houses are too close together. These structures violate minimum side-setback requirements. In Fairfax County there must be at least 24 feet between dwellings.

6. Houses too small. Many newer communities have minimum-square-footage requirements, which effectively dictate that only people of a certain income level may live there.

7. Park too small. New parks must frequently meet a minimum-size test: maintaining one big park is cheaper than maintaining several smaller ones.

8. Sidewalk cafés not allowed. Restaurateurs and other vendors may be subject to a variety of sidewalk restrictions.

