

TAKING CONTROL: NEW URBANISM AND THE POLITICAL PROCESS

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THEME: How Fort Collins is using the concepts of New Urbanism in its development of City Plan, our Comprehensive Plan, and in developing the Civic Center Master Plan. What are the political issues in our experience?

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CITY PLAN

The City adopted a new Comprehensive Plan in 1997. The plan reflects the values of the community based on 2 years of outreach.

It includes many of the principles of New Urbanism that you have been discussing this week. Some of the key elements include:

Density: It's our goal to build a CITY, so that means encouraging urban densities in some areas.

Activity Centers with mixed uses - This is a key feature of the land use code. The concentration of mixed use, higher density uses in different parts of the City use those concepts of New Urbanism that you are here to study. For Fort Collins, that means creating centers throughout town that include the things we need every day: Residential, grocery, cleaners, small retail, day care, etc. Then, those things have to be tied together by appropriate transportation options.

Transportation linkages - Walkable neighborhoods, transit connections between the places we live and the places we shop so that we don't have to drive everywhere.

Open Lands - As we grow and become a bigger city, it's a high value for our community to protect our natural environment and create open areas for recreation and the quiet enjoyment that comes from seeing the mountains and streams.

We're proud of the plan and the future that it envisions. We're already seeing some development that embodies the New Urbanism values called for in the new Comprehensive Plan. Examples in Fort Collins include: Indian Hill Village, Home State Bank, and especially the Civic Center. Construction of three major components of the plan is underway.

CONGRESS
FOR THE
NEW
URBANISM

Bio: Ann Azari is mayor of Fort Collins, Colorado. She can be reached at (970) 221-6505.

POLITICAL ISSUES

Perceptions are running through the development and business community that City Plan is bad for business and bad for our community. Some of those objections have included:

The market won't support City Plan Projects: People are saying that buyers don't want the higher densities that City Plan requires.

Reality: Demand for building permits continues to be strong. 4500 new residential units have been submitted for review under the new plan. This is as much as under the previous code. Building is still occurring.

Increased building costs because of new design standards.

Reality: We've had no evidence of that happening. Stock plans are being revised in some cases to meet the code, but given the size of most proposed subdivisions, the per unit cost becomes very small.

Less flexibility hurts creativity

Reality: Builders still have as much or more flexibility as compared to the previous plan.