

## NEW URBANISM AND THE CULTURE OF TECHNOLOGY: REBUILDING COMMUNITY

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**Consumption, Community, Celebration**

The character of contemporary culture is best captured, I believe, by the term technology. It reminds us of the artifacts and procedures that distinguish our time. But to be helpful it needs to cover as well the pattern of how these objects and methods have insinuated themselves into the fabric of daily life. One crucial part and in fact the end of the pattern of technology is consumption.

**Consumption is the adversary of community. In a philosophical sense, consumption is the unencumbered enjoyment of glamorous commodities. The demands and impositions of neighbors and even family members get in the way of our desire to do whenever whatever we like. But just as indulgence in sweets and fats leads to malnutrition, indulgence in consumption leads to a morally debilitating condition. This malady has become chronic through our common and implicit decision to shape our material culture in such a way that for anyone inhabiting it thoughtlessly the daily default decisions favor consumption.**

**The New Urbanism is a principled attempt at restructuring the material environment so as to conduce to social and physical engagement. Neighborhoods invite talking to neighbors and walking to stores, taverns, and concert halls. In such ways, a common reality is regained from the isolation and distraction of consumption.**

**While the daily fabric of walkable neighborhoods is a significant advance over residential areas that serve consumption, it is penultimate and subvertible as long as the crucial counterforce to consumption remains indistinct and implicit. That force is celebration. Genuine celebration in turn is the communal devotion to something that unites and surpasses us and is sacred in a broad cultural sense. In the small community of the family it is something like the culture of the table. At the large scale of a neighborhood or town it may be music or athletics.**

**Thus in addition to making towns walkable we must make them hospitable to focal practices and communal celebrations.**

CONGRESS  
FOR THE  
NEW  
URBANISM

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