

ContextSensitiveSolutions.org Webinar Question + Answer

Webinar Title: Using CSS to Help Transportation Investments Foster Livability
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Ellen L. Partridge: Do you have a quantification of any increase in market value resulting from these improvements?

Hannah Twaddell: On the subject of quantifying increased market value from higher density/mix developments: Off the top of my head, I recall that Reid Ewing has done some useful analyses of real estate values around transit stations; Urban Land Institute has a host of useful publications and resources on the pros and cons of smart growth on real estate development; and I've noticed that there is a growing interest among technical folks of connecting "Return on Investment" models and fiscal impact analysis tools with GIS-based scenario planning tools - our firm is developing some tools along these lines for various projects, and I've seen some interesting stuff from private firms like HDR and from public agencies like the Minnesota LISC and the Center for Neighborhood Technology in Chicago.

Jim Schultz (Michigan DOT): Big Box/Power Centers seem to go against this flow...how do you see retail changing and aligning with CSS / New Urbanism?

Hannah Twaddell: On the subject of big box power centers, again I'd recommend Urban Land Institute (ULI.org) as one of the best resources to examine market trends toward higher mix and pedestrian-oriented network design. We did an interesting mini-workshop with a major developer in Edison on a "lifestyle" center they were developing on the site of a former Ford plant, right on Route 1. Working with the DOT and transit agencies, the group came up with some very creative ideas on how to create access for transit within the center, and to better handle accessibility from heavily traveled Route 1. Generally, I think we are in the infancy of transition from big box to some new form of development that gets a higher return on investment. At the New Partners for Smart Growth conference this past February, I noticed a lot of sessions in which various types of experts were predicting a new interest in redevelopment of older suburbs on the fringes of urban areas - saying that these are the locations that will begin popping as th

Bud Laumer: I need as many examples of five lane conversions under road diets as you can share. Here in our part of the south they are a preferred cross-section. They make bike ped movements pretty dangerous due to crossing conflicts. Success stories?

Hannah Twaddell: On the subject of road diets, I'd suggest starting with www.ite.org - take a look at all the good work these respected engineers are doing to quantify and demonstrate the way to do road diets. Among other things, a handbook is out that was published last July. I think www.completestreets.org Other useful website are, of course, Dan Burden's walkablecommunities.org site, which includes a huge number of free images on all types of subjects; and

www.completestreets.org. Finally, for someone with an interest in the South, I'll let you know that we included a nifty example from Hampton, Virginia in a recent study for AARP on designing complete streets for older drivers and pedestrians. Check out AARP.org livability policy center; see if you can download the webinar slides.

Jim Schultz (Michigan DOT): Has anyone ever looked at posted speed limits from a regional or county level with the idea of nurturing walkable centers or streets?

Hannah Twaddell: On the subject of looking at posted speed limits from a regional level to nurture walkable centers or streets - I'm not exactly sure what you're proposing here, but it sounds interesting. We do know that the design speed is the number one factor in determining the overall dimensions of the street - it was a big issue of contention for the ITE/CNU walkable urban thoroughfares book. I did a review of that book for planning commissioner's journal, too - www.plannersweb.org. Many engineers are still reluctant to give up the rule of thumb that you should design the street for a speed that is 5-10 mph faster than the posted speed - which makes sense on interstates and high-speed highways, but doesn't make sense at all in pedestrian-oriented places. As you probably know, the injury & fatality rate for pedestrians' increases exponentially with the vehicle speed of the driver who hits them. Once you get above 35 mph, you're pushing the envelope for pedestrian friendliness.

Nicki Jensen: Do you have any suggestions, tips, examples of ways to impress upon communities/community members the importance and benefits of complete streets? For many- it's all about available parking spaces and number of lanes.

Hannah Twaddell: On the subject of explaining the benefits of complete streets, you may want to note that we often don't need to take away any parking spaces in order to create a more pedestrian-friendly street - sometimes we just need to move them around to the back, which solves a lot of roadway operational problems in addition to opening up room for bikes & pedestrians. Talk with Barbara McCann at www.completestreets.org, I bet she can point you to some useful information on how to really assess the parking issue. Bob Dunphy, emeritus with ULI, is also a great expert on the issue of making the parking work for the commercial world. And Donald Shoup's book "The High Cost of Free Parking" is a great read, all 750 pages. I wrote a review of it for planning commissioner's journal a couple of years ago - www.plannersweb.org.

GUEST 8: How does increasing the home values negatively impact low income residents? Or are you taking mixed income development into consideration?

S. Gilchrist: Also, see ICMA sustainable communities <http://icma.org/>

Stephanie Gibson: How do you get land/business owners to buy into this? In many cases are you appear to be getting rid of the existing business and bringing in a completely different type of business - in many ways displacing the existing business community.

Hannah Twaddell: On the subject of potential changes to businesses - most of the projects I've done have been in places where that change is occurring already, and people

want to be part of making it happen to their best advantage. Changing the Tire Mart to a restaurant, for example, is an economic trend that is happening no matter what. But in other places, the trick is improving the built form of what's already there, like adding some better connectivity between shopping centers and nearby villages. Again, nothing substitutes for talking directly with the most affected people and really responding to their needs.

Hannah Twaddell: On the Route 57 scenario evaluation measures, the things that people want to see most were measures around criteria such as the amount of land consumed, the proximity of jobs to households and the proximity of households to schools; and particularly the amount of development in existing communities, which is an important economic development goal there. We also used travel demand modeling measures to look at strategies for improving efficiency of the highway.

Aaron Bustow: **So theoretically, shouldn't NYC and San Francisco have no or little congestion, great AQ, and wonderful natural environments?**

PPS viewer: No, but NYC and SF are two of the most desirable places to live in the world and handle their traffic problems as well as or better than most other major cities.

Marsha Guffey: One of the important components of the Sustainable Communities Partnership is affordable housing. You mentioned how improving the streets actually increases property values. Can you speak about how affordable housing fits in with these changes?

Jamie Rayman: **See the new CDC Recommendations for Improving Health through Transportation Policy at: www.cdc.gov/transportation**

Hannah Twaddell: On the subject of engaging the health community, there is some exciting stuff going on at the federal level with CDC and US DOT collaborating in research and promotion of walkability; most of the studies I've seen about obesity issues tied to transportation accessibility are from CDC. The Robert Wood Johnson foundation has been a wonderful convener of things.

Bud Laumer: **Dan moved to a great example community and that has to help folks who come to visit to SEE and feel the difference. Is there any movement to help us in CSS deserts by creating a model city program so that I can send someone to a place that is not so far away as WA or???**

Hannah Twaddell: On the "model city" question - an alternative to going somewhere else to see good design is to have your elected officials and planners look fresh at their own community - teach them about the basics of place with tools like the PPS Place Audit, and then send them out to find the places that already have the right ingredients, but nobody's noticed them before. Have them take pictures of treasured places - you'd be surprised how many people come up with. Websites like Dan's are great for giving you tons of examples of places from all over to use as virtual models.