We hear a lot about Smart Growth Districts and other “place designations”..
...but what do these places actually do?
II. What

EcoDistricts are neighborhoods or districts where neighbors, community institutions and businesses join with city leaders and utility providers to meet ambitious sustainability goals and co-develop innovative district-scale projects. EcoDistricts commit to self-organizing, setting ambitious sustainability performance goals, implementing projects and tracking the results over time.

Technologies and strategies for enhancing neighborhood sustainability, such as district energy, green streets, smart grid, demand management and resource sharing, are well known. However, the widespread deployment of these strategies has been slow to develop due to lack of comprehensive policies or implementation frameworks at the municipal level. We have created an implementation strategy to accelerate neighborhood-scale sustainability with the understanding that it provides a platform for innovation and integration of sustainability strategies.
DISCOVER BEST PRACTICES

The STAR Community Rating System provides best practices intended to move the needle on community-level conditions or outcomes. Learn more about how STAR Certified Communities are affecting positive change in their cities and counties through our publications and webinars.

STAR Communities also holds regular education and training programs both online and at events across the country. See our Events page for upcoming events and webinars, or view past public webinars below.

CASE STUDIES

Review and download case studies here

Examples of our case studies include:
The Rating System

Certification

Who's Involved

Get Started

Looking for a specific community? Search Communities Now
2050: 75% of the world’s population will live in cities.

The cost of urban disasters in 2011 alone was estimated at over $380 billion.

It's time for cities to act.

The Resilience Dividend

Today, humanity faces unprecedented risk

Urban populations have never faced so many shocks and stresses. Without strategic investment, cities struggle to adapt, respond and recover from disaster.
Green Star – Communities: The Rating Tool

Green Star / Rating Tools / Green Star - Communities / The Rating Tool

Categories and Credits

Submission Guidelines

Summary of Changes

Green Star – Communities assesses the design and construction of any building across five impact categories:
Blue Zones
Where people live the longest.

History
What began as a National Geographic expedition to find the longest living cultures evolved into a recipe for living longer that we’re taking across the country.

Blue Zones Projects
A community well-being improvement initiative designed to make healthy choices easier through permanent changes to environment, policy, and social networks.

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE BLUE ZONES STORY

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE BLUE ZONES PROJECT
Blue Zones Project

Blue Zones principles at work in American communities

Looking to sign up your community?

Albert Lea, Minnesota

In 2009, a statistically average American city underwent an extraordinary experiment: how the first Blue Zones community shed 12,000 pounds, slash 33% of cigarettes, and raise their average life expectancy.

Learn More

Beach Cities, California

Hermosa, Redondo and Manhattan Beach citizens suffered from grandmother diseases, done in by automobiles. Today they are happier, healthier and more engaged than ever before.

Learn More

State of Iowa

Iowa is aiming to become the healthiest state by 2016, and we’ve already seen results. Iowa has received Blue Zones certification and are already seeing changes.

Learn More
'Smart growth' district eyed in Newburyport

Initiative will expand city's affordable housing options

NEWBURYPORT — City officials yesterday launched an initiative to create a “smart growth” district here in an effort to expand the stock of affordable housing.

By doing so, the city is positioning itself to receive state incentives of perhaps $500,000 for its general fund, according to commonwealth officials.

Mayor Donna Holaday and city councilors Barry Connell and Jared Eigerman were among those who met at City Hall with William Reyelt, principal planner for Smart Growth Programs for the state.

The city leaders say they will attempt to facilitate
'Smart growth' district eyed in Newburyport

Initiative will expand city's affordable housing options

By doing so, the city is positioning itself to receive state incentives of perhaps $500,000 for its general fund, according to commonwealth officials.
'Smart growth' district eyed in Newburyport

Initiative will expand city's affordable housing options

By doing so, the city is positioning itself to receive state incentives of perhaps $500,000 for its general fund, according to commonwealth officials.

It's a big subsidy!
As the United States slowly emerges from the Great Recession, a remarkable shift is occurring in the spatial geography of innovation.

For the past 50 years, the landscape of innovation has been dominated by places like Silicon Valley—suburban corridors of spatially isolated corporate campuses, accessible only by car, with little emphasis on the quality of life or on integrating work, housing and recreation.

A new complementary urban model is now emerging, giving rise to what we and others are calling “innovation districts.” These districts, by our definition, are geographic areas where leading-edge anchor institutions and companies cluster...
RISE OF INNOVATION DISTRICTS

Innovation in America

SEATTLE: SOUTH LAKE UNION
Re-Imagined Urban Area

One of Stockholm’s newest innovation districts, innovation Life, is implementing a bold plan, which includes extending the district near a major highway.

Innovators in leading edge innovation districts offer five pieces of advice:

1. Build a collaborative leadership network, a collection of firms and sectors who regularly and formally cooperate on the design, delivery, marketing and governance of the district. In advanced innovation districts in Barcelona, Stockholm, St Louis and Stockholm, leaders found the triple helix model of governance to be fundamental to their success. The triple helix consists of structured interactions between industry, research universities, and government.

2. Set a vision for growth by providing actionable guidance for how an innovation district should grow and develop in the short-, medium- and long-term along economic, physical and social dimensions. Most practitioners cite the importance of developing a vision to leverage strengths-distinct eco-system leading local and regional companies, physical design advantages and attributes.
Transportation
Transportation + Housing
What’s the Problem?
Housing problems and transportation problems are often closely related...and are also closely aligned with economic development issues. Smart strategies recognize and act on these relationships.
Mobility districts
The goal:

Reduce the cost of urban housing and transportation without subsidy
New Mobility
With New Mobility do you get a TOD?
Maybe, but you can also get “TOD lite”
TOD lite vs. a real TOD
Pike & Rose: The former Mid-Pike Plaza
Preconstruction: $880,000 in taxes
Phase I completed: $3.4 million in taxes
Full build out: $15 million in taxes
The problem with TOD:

You need the transit!
That can be a heavy lift in some places.

Even BRT has a hefty price tag...
A new form of urban alchemy...
A new form of urban alchemy...
Asheville, NC
Like the chart above, the height of the parcel on the map represents the amount of revenue earned per acre, not the actual height of the building (green=private buildings; red=public).
$24M, 5.2 acres, 12 stories
$34M, 0.7 acres, 9 stories, 70 units

$24M, 5.2 acres, 12 stories
What if all the buildings performed like this one?
Downtown “Mobility District”

$34M, 0.7 acres, 9 stories, 70 units

$24M, 5.2 acres, 12 stories
This would add millions to the tax base!
What if you created these districts all across the US?
And used common metrics to define them?
Location Efficient Mortgages
Location Efficient Mortgage® (LEM)

A Location Efficient Mortgage® (LEM) is a type of mortgage that recognizes the savings available to people who live in location efficient communities.

The LEM resulted from a three-year long research program in 1995 led by three non-profit organizations: CNT, the Natural Resources Defense Council, and the SURFACE Transportation Policy Project. Together they have formed a new non-profit organization called the Institute for Location Efficiency (ILE).
Location Efficient Mortgage® (LEM)

A Location Efficient Mortgage® (LEM) is a type of mortgage that recognizes the savings available to people who live in location-efficient communities.

The LEM resulted from a three-year long research program in 1995 led by three non-profit organizations: CNT, the Natural Resources Defense Council, and the Surface Transportation Policy Project. Together they have formed a new non-profit organization called the Institute for Location Efficiency (ILE).
Location Efficient Mortgage® (LEM)

A Location Efficient Mortgage® (LEM) is a type of mortgage that recognizes the savings available to people who live in location-efficient communities.

The LEM resulted from a three-year long research program in 1995 led by three non-profit organizations: CNT, the Natural Resources Defense Council, and the Surface Transportation Policy Project. Together they have formed a new non-profit organization called the Institute for Location Efficiency (ILE).
Location Efficient Mortgage® (LEM)

A Location Efficient Mortgage® (LEM) is a type of mortgage that recognizes the savings available to people who live in location-efficient communities.

The LEM resulted from a three-year long research program in 1995 led by three non-profit organizations: CNT, the Natural Resources Defense Council, and the Surfside Transportation Policy Project. Together they have formed a new non-profit organization called the Institute for Location Efficiency (ILE).
18 years ago!

REMARKS BY VICE PRESIDENT AL GORE
THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION
Wednesday, September 2, 1998

...18 years ago!...
It’s the best antidote to “drive till you qualify”
This advertisement and the logos shown here should not in any way be regarded as an endorsement of the concepts showcased in this presentation by any party.

Location-Efficient Mortgage concept formulated by the Center for Neighborhood Technology, Chicago, Illinois

Big Savings on Your Mortgage; One More Reason to Live in the Zone

Exercise Your Freedom of Mobility

Mortgage servicing provided by:
But it needs national underwriting standards

This advertisement and the logos shown here should not in any way be regarded as an endorsement of the concepts showcased in this presentation by any party.

This is dummy copy for a fake ad for location-efficient mortgages, a concept that has been in existence for more than 15 years. The purpose of the ad is to showcase the potential of the concept.

Big Savings on Your Mortgage;
One More Reason to Live in the Zone

Exercise Your Freedom of Mobility

Location-Efficient Mortgage concept formulated by the Center for Neighborhood Technology, Chicago, Illinois

Mortgage servicing provided by:

BIG BANK HOME MORTGAGE
But it needs national underwriting standards

This is dummy copy for a fake ad for location-efficient mortgages, a concept that has been in existence for more than 15 years. The purpose of the ad is to showcase the potential of the concept.

This advertisement and the logos shown here should not in any way be regarded as an endorsement of the concepts showcased in this presentation by any party.

Big Savings on Your Mortgage;
One More Reason to Live in the Zone

Exercise Your Freedom of Mobility

Mortgage servicing provided by:

Location-Efficient Mortgage concept formulated by the Center for Neighborhood Technology, Chicago, Illinois

But it needs national underwriting standards
This is a huge because it involves millions of units across the nation
A Tale of 2000 Cities

How the sharp contrast between successful and struggling communities is reshaping America

Louise Keely and Kathy Bostjancic

February 2014

FOUNDERS
The Demand Institute is jointly sponsored by The Conference Board and Nielsen
A Tale of 2000 Cities

How the sharp contrast between successful and struggling communities is reshaping America

Louise Keely and Kathy Bosljancic
February 2014

FOUNDERS
The Demand Institute is jointly sponsored by The Conference Board and Nielsen

Exhibit 3
U.S. Aggregate Housing Market Value in 2012
Across 2,200 American Cities (Billions)

Note: Distribution based on analyzing the largest U.S. incorporated municipalities.
1 unit in the mobility district = 15 in the burbs
America's lost trillions

By Chris Isidore @CNMoney June 9, 2011: 1:03 PM ET

HOUSEHOLD NET WORTH

- Peak: $65.80 trillion
- Trough: $49.40 trillion

Source: Federal Reserve

26 Trillion lost!
26 Trillion lost!
America's lost trillions

Household Net Worth

$70 trillion (Peak $65.80 trillion)

Trough $49.40 trillion

Percentage Change in Median Net Worth of Households, 2005 to 2009

-16% Whites

-66% Hispanics

-53% Blacks

Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of Survey of Income and Program Participation data.
What about Gentrification?
What about Gentrification?
What about Displacement?
San Francisco housing: Time for a correction?
Diana Olick | @diana_olk
Thursday, 9 Oct 2014 | 8:57 AM ET

3184 MISSION ST #204
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94110
LIST: $785,000
SALE: $940,000

As Housing Costs Soar, San Francisco Seeks Ballot Solution
By IAN LOVETT OCT 2, 2014

Photos: Priced-Out in San Francisco
BY SAMANTHA KAPLAN AND SHAMINDER DULAI 10/29/14 AT 2:32 PM

San Francisco Home Prices & Values
Zillow HOME VALUE INDEX
$993,300
12.1% 1 year change 4.3% year forecast

MARKET TEMPERATURE
Very Hot

For nearly three decades Diego Deleo has begun most simple breakfast—mixed nuts, apples, bananas and beef coffee and perhaps a glance at the newspaper.

Richard Silver, who fans eviction from his rent-controlled San Francisco apartment, adds, "What am I going to do, just throw my stuff out the window onto the sidewalk?" Jan Wilson/The New York Times
Average annual expenditures of urban and rural households, 2011

- Other expenditures
- Personal insurance and pensions
- Education
- Entertainment
- Health care
- Transportation
- Apparel and services
- Housing
- Food away from home
- Food at home

Average annual expenditures of urban and rural households, 2011

- Other expenditures
- Personal insurance and pensions
- Education
- Entertainment
- Health care
- Transportation
- Apparel and services
- Housing
- Food away from home
- Food at home

Average annual expenditures of urban and rural households, 2011

This takes a lot of subsidy!
Average annual expenditures of urban and rural households, 2011

- Other expenditures
- Personal insurance and pensions
- Education
- Entertainment
- Health care
- Transportation
- Apparel and services
- Housing
- Food away from home
- Food at home

Average annual expenditures of urban and rural households, 2011

- Other expenditures
- Personal insurance and pensions
- Education
- Entertainment
- Health care
- Transportation
- Apparel and services
- Housing
- Food away from home
- Food at home

The Cincinnati and Chicago metro areas illustrate the trade-offs that moderate-income households often make between housing and transportation costs. In Cincinnati, moderate-income households experience lower-than-average housing costs, but higher-than-average transportation costs. As a result, their combined burden of 58 percent of income is roughly the same as that of Chicago where housing and transportation cost breakdowns are more in line with the overall averages.

When we compare cost burden—the share of a household budget spent on housing plus transportation expenses—we see a much different picture of affordability than when just comparing expenses. As shown here, housing and transportation consumes 72 percent of the income of moderate-income households in the Miami metro area (a staggering amount)—in spite of roughly average housing and transportation expenses—because these expenses are so out of sync with the local median income, which is one of the lowest in the nation. A similar dynamic exists in areas such as San Diego, Riverside, and Los Angeles, where combined housing and transportation costs are high despite relatively low incomes.

On the other end of the spectrum, the Washington, DC, area has the lightest overall cost burden (51 percent)—despite being the most expensive—because relatively high costs are matched by relatively high incomes for moderate-income households.

Source: Housing + Transportation (H+T)® Affordability Index applied to 2006-2010 American Community Survey data (Center for Neighborhood Technology and Center for Housing Policy).
Housing Costs in US Metro Regions (MSA)

Average annual expenditures on housing-related items, per household, selected metropolitan areas, 2011-2012.

Source: Housing + Transportation (H+T) Affordability Index applied to 2006-2010 American Community Survey data (Center for Neighborhood Technology and Center for Housing Policy).

NOTE: Numbers may not add up due to rounding.
The metro areas where moderate-income households spend the greatest share of their income for housing and transportation costs are not where we might expect. This is because higher incomes help offset the high costs of housing and transportation expenses in some (but not all) high-cost areas.

If we examine housing costs — without considering income — the five most expensive metro areas for moderate-income households in our analysis are Washington, DC, San Francisco, Boston, San Diego, and Los Angeles. When transportation costs are added to form an overall picture of the complete costs of place — housing plus transportation plus utility costs (included in housing costs) — the relative expense of the largest 25 metro areas begins to shift. Some metro areas become less costly than other metro areas because lower transportation costs help offset higher housing costs (for example New York and Chicago). Other areas become relatively expensive because of higher than average transportation costs (for example Riverside, Minneapolis, and Atlanta).

Variations in income among metro areas have a profound effect on the affordability of housing and transportation costs. Incomes often track costs, but not always, as shown by the orange line. In regions such as Washington, DC, Boston, and San Francisco, high costs do not always correlate with high incomes. This suggests that other factors, such as the availability of public transportation and the affordability of housing, play a significant role in determining the overall cost of living in these regions.
The metro areas where moderate-income households spend the greatest share of their income for housing and transportation costs are not where we might expect. This is because higher incomes help offset the high costs of housing and transportation expenses in some (but not all) high-cost areas. If we examine housing costs — without considering income — the five most expensive metro areas for moderate-income households in our analysis are Washington, DC, San Francisco, Boston, San Diego, and Los Angeles. When transportation costs are added to form an overall picture of the complete costs of place — housing plus transportation plus utility costs (included in housing costs) — the relative expense of the largest 25 metro areas begins to shift. Some metro areas become less costly than other metro areas because lower transportation costs help offset higher housing costs (for example New York and Chicago). Other areas become relatively expensive because of higher than average transportation costs (for example Riverside, Minneapolis, and Atlanta). Variations in income among metro areas have a profound effect on the affordability of housing and transportation costs. Incomes often track costs, but not always, as shown by the orange line. In regions such as Washington, DC, Boston, and San Francisco, high costs

Housing + Transportation Costs Do Not Always Track Incomes

Average Housing and Transportation Costs vs. Incomes for Moderate-Income Households in the Largest 25 Metro Areas

- Monthly Income
- Monthly Transportation Costs
- Monthly Housing Costs

Source: Housing + Transportation Affordability Index applied to 2000-2010 American Community Survey data (Center for Neighborhood Technology and Center for Housing Policy).

NOTE: Numbers may not add up due to rounding.
Housing Costs in US Metro Regions (MSA)

The metro areas where moderate-income households spend the greatest share of their income for housing and transportation costs are not where we might expect. This is because higher incomes help offset the high costs of housing and transportation expenses in some (but not all) high-cost areas.

If we examine housing costs — without considering income — the five most expensive metro areas for moderate-income households in our analysis are Washington, DC, San Francisco, Boston, San Diego, and Los Angeles.

When transportation costs are added to form an overall picture of the complete costs of place — housing plus transportation plus utility costs (included in housing costs) — the relative expense of the largest 25 metro areas begins to shift. Some metro areas become less costly than other metro areas because lower transportation costs help offset higher housing costs (for example New York and Chicago). Other areas become relatively expensive because of higher than average transportation costs (for example Riverside, Minneapolis, and Atlanta).

Variations in income among metro areas have a profound effect on the affordability of housing and transportation costs. Incomes often track costs, but not always, as shown by the orange line. In regions such as Washington, DC, Boston, and San Francisco, high costs of housing and transportation dominate the cost picture. Other regions like Miami, Phoenix, and Denver have moderate housing costs but high transportation costs. The transportation costs are not included in the housing costs. Therefore, the transport costs are added to the housing costs to get a complete picture of the costs of place.
How can we lower urban living costs without subsidy?
How can we lower urban living costs without subsidy?
How can we lower urban living costs without subsidy?
How can we lower urban living costs without subsidy?