

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT TO THE BOARD OF
THE CONGRESS FOR THE NEW URBANISM
13 September 2009

In spite of difficult economic times, the staff and committees of CNU have produced some remarkable accomplishments in the past 3 months.

- I John, Abby, and the Finance Committee have put in place mechanisms, a conservative budgeting approach, and cost savings. Congratulations to all. John said in his letter that it was not time to breathe easily, but at least CNU is still breathing, which is more than most can say.
- II The member and board balloting on the 2009 LEED-ND rating system is now complete.
- III Staff are meeting grant application targets.
- IV Advocacy with the various federal agencies is underway, and the new integrated approach holds much promise for CNU's involvement.
- V The Atlanta CNU is being beautifully planned and promises to be an extraordinary one.
- VI The Accreditation Program has been launched, the exam has generated interest and participants, and it has provided much needed revenue.
- VII Launched the initiative process where members submit initiative proposals to the board to be endorsed as an official CNU initiative and an initiative committee reviews proposals and outlines the organization's relationship with the chosen projects.

All of this has been done in the face of a restricted budget and a 20% reduction in staff time.

Congratulations to all for a remarkable effort.

I. Challenges ahead:

1. Financial Management: An on-going effort by the staff John and the Finance Committee
2. Fund Raising: Continues to be a focus going into the fall. John, several board members, and the staff have taken steps forward to better our situation. Scott Polikov as chair of the Fund-raising committee has brought new vitality to the effort.
3. Calls for Improvements to the Annual Congress: The annual Congress has many different aspects and roles. It has some similarities to the fable about the Elephant and the Blind: many visualize the whole as only the part they touch. The Congresses are our best recruiting device, they educate new participants, provide a forum for debating issues, and an aspiration to advance the State of the Art. Many are calling for change, and some have already initiated some ideas. At the last Board Meeting, we agreed to establish a "Congress Committee" to examine the long-term strategy and goals of the Congress. This group will remain separate from the board advisors assigned to each individual Congress who provide ideas, overall guidance, and monitoring of Congress Planning.

4. Need for Central Information Resource: In the various discussions since the last Congress, there have been calls for setting up a central repository of information about New Urbanism. Those working to put together information for a presentation to the Federal Agencies had to dig deeply to find appropriate material. The floor is open for discussion on how best to address this need.
5. The Message: There has been work on producing an effective and consistent “Message”, including the involvement of Robin Rather and great work by Steve. These have been in response to specific situation, but it would be important to make the “message” itself a project.
6. Increasing Advocacy Role: Many individuals, especially Stephanie, Lizz, John, Scott, Kevin Klinkenberg, Steve and staff have been working hard to respond to the ever-changing list of opportunities that coming out of the new administration. We have formally created Transportation Initiatives, but the HUD/DOT/EPA Initiative is still an informal group. As we move forward with this Initiative, we may want to consider formalizing the committee and including more non-board members. We could start with the twenty plus persons signed up at the Congress.
7. Further Development of the Accreditation Program. The board committee on Accreditation will be reviewing the next steps in the development of this program, including continuing education objectives, advancement of the exam content, and relationships with other partners.
8. Access for the Membership: Mechanisms for enabling more members to participate has long been a complaint of some and a goal for the organization. In Andres Duany’s words “people are having difficulty in finding a way to “plug-in” to the system”.
9. Future of the Organization: In Denver, Victor and I interviewed the 6 founders and others to ask for their views on the future. These included suggestions for changing the format of the annual Congresses, questions about the size of the organization, and many thoughts on how the CNU would be part of a “constellation” of organizations. A specific idea suggested by three of the founders was to pursue is a relationship with the APA around the accreditation program.

AND, all of these need to accomplished with an even smaller staff and budget than last year.

One way to accomplish this is to continue the process of defining committees and initiatives so more people can contribute in a structured way. The successful efforts seem to be when two or three people form the core of the effort. Most of the accomplishments above were achieved that way.

The obstacle has been finding enough time to engage enough people in this process. All of us are caught up in our own crises, and the organization has been responding to both opportunities and crises. So there seems no time for the “luxury” of discussing ways of modifying and expanding the way we are organized.

II. Transitions and the Future of the Organization:

We have been in transition for the past several years, as the Founders moved to Emeritus Status, new leadership emerged, and now a third generation is rapidly taking leadership roles, including membership on this Board.

Two ideas are in place to engage more people:

- a. The Initiatives Process
- b. Board Committees

- III. The Initiatives Process:** The Board approved the Initiatives Process in the Fall of 2008. It describes steps for moving member reform ideas into full projects and making decisions about the initiative priorities of the organization.

Jennifer Hurley has agreed to take the lead on behalf of the Board and would welcome other Board members to join her on the Initiative Committee. The committee will be asked to review initiative submissions and make decisions on whether to support new proposals based on the integrity of the proposals, their ability to affect change and lead to results, and existing staff and financial commitments.

- IV. Standing Committees:** The Finance Committee was established at the March 2009 meeting and has been very effective. Scott is now leading the Fund-raising Committee. A few additional committees to consider:

- a. The Annual Congress and its Future
- b. Communication
- c. Message
- d. Resources
- e. Future of the Organization

- V. The October Board Meeting:** This meeting offers the opportunity to jump start this process by reviewing both the Committee and Initiative structure and then, if possible have working sessions around specific topics.

I ask that each of you consider which committees or initiatives you would like to serve on. I hope the meeting is productive and look forward to seeing you all at the winter board meeting in Chicago.

Ray Gindroz
Chair

To: CNU Board of Directors
From: John Norquist
Date: September 21, 2009
Re: President's Report

Dear CNU Board members,

As we gather in Atlanta we see the first hopeful signs that the recession may be subsiding. I say "may" because California's unemployment rate just reached 12% where it hasn't been since 1941. Nor has CNU been spared the impact of the recession. After membership and meeting revenues dropped sharply starting in February, this pattern continued into the spring. In the time since the Denver Congress, however, finances have improved somewhat. The projections in July forecast a negative balance for CNU in November. The projected balance has improved significantly since then. Whereas in July we faced a \$60,000 negative balance by year's end, as you can see from the treasurer's report CNU is now projected to have a positive balance — so positive that if we raise an additional \$60,000 we could actually reach the 2008 ending balance of \$211,000 which the board set at its winter meeting in Chicago as the target for 2009's ending balance.

There are various reasons for this improved position. CNU membership and renewals, which suffered an 18% drop in February 2008 to Feb. 2009 recovered in July and August to about a 4% drop. The numbers from CNU 17 continued to improve as revenues and costs have been finalized. Revenues from the CNU/University of Miami certification project added about \$25,000 to CNU's revenues. The summer fundraising effort has helped and we made cuts early enough in the year to reduce expenditures significantly.

Should we breathe a sigh of relief and declare mission accomplished? No. The economy remains shaky and the full effects of state and local budget cuts have not fully hit our public sector members. Some of CNU's cutbacks have helped or at least not hurt operations. Abby Bouzan-Kaloustian searched for economies in the office and from vendors. Sandrine and Abby worked with Stephanie to identify savings in the CNU Denver budget. Lee Crandell has helped better organize our fundraising efforts. Yet the four-day week for staff, while necessary, has had a negative effect on meeting the expectations of CNU members. New initiatives can't get the attention they deserve. Our effort to influence legislation in Washington has been hampered. CNU's lobbyist, Andrew Garfinkel has not been used since May when our language on networks was included in CLEAN TEA. Other volunteer contacts can advance our cause, but if we want to actually achieve law changes, it is important to use well-connected professional representation, especially with the T4 authorization coming up.

The environment and the economy urgently need CNU and its ideas. The fact is CNU needs to grow in size and influence for that to happen. Also attached is the 2010 proposed CNU budget, which is based on conservative estimates; for example no grant money is counted that has not been secured. The 2010 budget restores the five-day workweek for CNU staff.

Highlights and news from CNU's initiatives include:

The new CNU certification system resulted from hard work by CNU staffer Nora Beck and U. of Miami professor Chuck Bohl. We've worked on a contract to go forward and will present it to the board in Atlanta.

The Charter Awards for 2010 will be chaired by South Carolina developer Vince Graham. The Charter Awards have been a great success in all ways but one. They cost more than they bring in. At the board meeting we plan to discuss ways to improve the business model for the awards.

CNU has neared completion on two major projects, LEED-ND and the new ITE/CNU urban thoroughfares guide. The LEED-ND rating system is set for launch in Washington DC on Tuesday October 6. The Green Building Council, NRDC and CNU will meet at the site of a new urbanist development designed by UDA, Ray Gindroz' firm. The streets guide is finished and heavily influenced by new urbanists such as Norm Garrick and Lucy Gibson. It will be printed and distributed at year's end. To accelerate its adoption CNU is partnering with the City of Elgin, Illinois to pilot the streets guide. CNU and the city have requested a \$125,000 grant to support training sessions with Elgin's planning and engineering staff. Elgin has 19th century gridded neighborhoods, conventional sprawl and undeveloped land. So the opportunity is there to refurbish, retrofit and properly plan these three conditions.

Later in October I travel to Baltimore where CNU and our firefighter allies may win a new International Fire Code rule that relaxes the 20' clear rule that has obstructed new urbanist efforts to build walkable neighborhoods. Much thanks should go to Carl Wren, Chief Engineer of the Austin Fire Department. Carl is the author of the new rule. Particularly gratifying is Carl's enthusiasm for connectivity. He realizes that well-connected street networks increase safety and add value to communities.

The new HUD/USDOT/EPA Sustainability initiative holds great promise. We have strong friends in all three agencies, most prominently our own Shelley Poticha, the Sustainability director for HUD. Board members Ray Gindroz, Stephanie Bothwell and Scott Polikov have met with officials, setting up future possibilities for collaboration with CNU. We also are developing strong contacts with HHS and the Center for Disease Control based on the increasing evidence that sprawl is an unhealthy living pattern. CDC is supporting the CNU Atlanta Congress, which will emphasize how urban living patterns can help create better health outcomes. Richard Jackson, who spoke eloquently at CNU 11 in DC, will be back to advocate for urbanism as a way to improve public health.

CNU 18 is blessed with a strong local host committee chaired by Ellen Dunham-Jones. Laura Heery, who is leading the fundraising for the LHC has already made great progress. You'll meet her and several other Atlanta new urbanists on October 2nd.

People are looking for new ideas to guide the economic recovery. I think that's why our new certification system is so popular. They also want the US to become more

efficient and perform better environmentally. CNU could be the answer for many people— for designers, developers and officials. To help us speak in a concerted way about these new urbanist solutions — and their direct benefits for everyone from mayors and metro leaders to CNU is committing a small amount in operating dollars to developing specific outreach messages and materials with Robin Rather, and we're urgently seeking funds to launch a larger outreach campaign. (See the Communications Report for more details of this work, which will advance this fall.)

We need to build CNU strong enough to connect with the people who need us and to support our members' efforts to achieve the goals of our charter. CNU needs to get stronger and better financed. Some of you have already helped a lot, but now let's all pull together to build the new urbanism movement.

Thanks for all of your efforts in this challenging year.

John Norquist