



CONGRESS FOR THE NEW URBANISM

Charter Awards

2026

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Each year since 2001, CNU has sponsored the Charter Awards to celebrate the best current work in New Urbanism from around the world. Winning projects highlight exemplary efforts put forth by local governments, developers, lenders, architects, urban designers, community activists, and others engaged in revitalizing cities, towns, neighborhoods, districts and corridors, and metropolitan regions. The award winners this year not only embody and advance the principles of the Charter of the New Urbanism, but also make a positive difference in people's lives.

Letter from the Jury Chair

ERIC KRONBERG

The Jury

ERIC KRONBERG, JURY CHAIR

Founder, Kronberg Urbanists + Architects

MAJORA CARTER

Real Estate Developer, Majora Carter Group

MARQUES KING

Managing Principal, Fabric[K] Design.

JEREMY LAKE

Principal at Union Studio Architecture and Community Design

JOANNA LOMBARD, AIA, LEED AP

ACSA Distinguished Professor at the University of Miami School of Architecture

RICO QUIRINDONGO

Director of Seattle's Office of Planning and Community Development

ASHLEY TERRY

Vice President of Development at Pivot Real Estate Development



From top left to right: Ashley Terry, Rico Quirindongo, Majora Carter, Jeremy Lake, Marques King, Eric Kronberg. Not pictured: Joanna Lombard

The charter awards provide a dual opportunity – first to spotlight amazing work by practitioners in the field. Second, they highlight the foundational and evolving priorities of New Urbanism as a movement. The theme of this year’s awards is the transect – a deeply fundamental component of New Urbanism. Conceptually, the transect provided a lens through which we compared the range of truly remarkable award submissions. The submissions themselves also provided a rich framework for understanding the evolving concerns embodied in the recent Charter Amendments. We’ve been using the phrase “places that love people” as a simple way to communicate the broad and ranging goals of New Urbanism. This idea was top of mind for all of us as jurors as we debated which projects best supported the uplifting of communities across scales, across the transect.

This year’s award winners exemplify the best of the New Urbanism – new towns, suburban retrofits, attainable housing, regional trail and mobility infrastructure, and thoughtful investments in main streets. From Joanna Lombard, ACSA Distinguished Professor at the University of Miami School of Architecture and one of this year’s jurors: “I think it is important for people to know that the field itself is very strong. Most of the projects could easily be contenders for the awards- the value of the multitude of projects in contributing to the goals of a more accessible, humane, and resilient environment is clearly present and all that work represents significant progress and commitment. That is a sign of meaningful progress and is inspiring!”

The Grand Prize winner, Seabrook, Washington, stood out on so many levels. The development team has executed, incrementally over 20 years, a bold yet carefully considered approach to making a place that truly loves people. Equally as impressive as its success to date are Seabrook’s ambitious plans for additional phases. This upcoming development is squarely considering the importance of offering a range of housing choices, from workforce and attainable housing

to luxury hotel accommodations. This inclusion of this wide scope of housing types across an inclusive scale of price points highlights the amazing evolution of New Urbanism. Providing mixed income housing has long been a long goal of many New Urbanists. We applaud Seabrook for squarely taking on that challenge in upcoming efforts.

The work done for Jackson, Wyoming and Sacramento, California, also centers inclusivity through attainability as a core goal, examining how land use policy directly impacts housing affordability. We applaud the direct and transparent connection provided in these thoughtful redevelopment studies. It is absolutely a model for other municipalities struggling with these tradeoffs. At a smaller scale, the partnerships forged to help make the Belle Gardens infill project possible shows the direct roles municipalities can and need to play to facilitate more attainability in more places.

So much of this year’s Congress will be looking at ways to turn the tide on sprawl in one of the fastest- growing regions of the country – Northwest Arkansas. The Razorback Greenway, spanning forty miles through the region, provides a deep commitment to Trail Oriented Development. This provides another route to promote denser, more connected, and mobility-rich development patterns as an alternative to sprawl. The South Street Cottages, in Fayetteville, provide a great model of attractive, compact housing. We need so many more projects like these built all along the Greenway. Plan Bentonville provides a robust framework for smart development that is focused on arresting urban sprawl. The 1907 Building redevelopment in the heart of Rogers speaks to overcoming the challenges and pitfalls of adaptive reuse to create a beating heart of a downtown, and how to also insert housing to support local businesses in the same project. Per Ashley Terry, Vice President of Development at Pivot Real Estate Development and one of this year’s jurists: “The rehabilitation preserves the building’s history while layering in a mix of uses that reconnect it to downtown Rogers. The project is a testament to what patient

capital and a developer’s dedication can achieve.” All of these projects are a must see for folks joining us for the Congress!

The jury also saw projects that highlighted how hard, so very hard, it often is to get these projects to a completed state. An accomplishment like those you’ll find in this 2026 Charter Awards booklet is never the result of one person. Many, many hands bring them to completion. The story of how the town of Basalt, Colorado, overcame community division to execute a revitalized downtown main street and public realm was particularly poignant.

Our friends from Europe submitted a number of wonderful projects. The Cité-Jardins transformed an area blighted by suburban disinvestment into a prosperous town center, one firmly grounded in New Urbanist approaches implemented with an added dose of French flair and integrating gorgeous greenspaces with urbanist density. The other projects in Cornwall and Heulebrug both showed thoughtful execution of a long-held vision. We applaud them for nearing the finish line with the projects.

We always appreciate the array of wonderful student projects submitted every year. This year was no exception. Winners include a team project, from University of Maryland, looking at a great redevelopment proposal for Baltimore urban infill as well as a thoughtful look at blending urbanism, infrastructure, and resilience with the proposed plan for the Addis Ababa Upper Kebena River project from a student at the Tulane School of Architecture and Built Environment.

We commend all applicants, and especially the winners of this year’s awards. Every one of these submissions is absolutely a proposal for places that love people.

GRAND PRIZE

Seabrook, WA

THE NEIGHBORHOOD, THE DISTRICT, AND THE CORRIDOR
SEABROOK, WASHINGTON — SEABROOK LAND COMPANY AND QAMAR & ASSOCIATES



Street & Seabrook Avenue Telescoping Views to Pacific Ocean



Seabrook, Washington, a much-admired new beach town with a traffic-calmed coastal road running through it, has now received the highest prize for a New Urbanist project. The 588-acre town perches on three promontories overlooking the Pacific Ocean, safe from tsunamis or the potential impacts of climate change. Now that its original neighborhood is mostly complete, including an organic-looking town center with positive regional economic impacts, Seabrook was awarded a Grand Prize in the 2026 Charter Awards.

Seabrook broke ground in 2004 on 82 acres, completing 640 homes and nearly 40,000 square feet of commercial space to date. Land acquisitions have added 500 acres to the original plan, so Seabrook Land Company is entitled to build a total of 2,100 houses with commercial and civic uses on 588 acres. Nearly 50 percent of the land is preserved in forest, wetland, and stream corridors.

Each promontory along the Scenic Coast Hidden Byway is planned with its own small mixed-use center and walkable scale. In all, Seabrook will add three town centers to the nearby historic towns and villages of Pacific Beach, Moclips, and Aloha.

The town introduces a new model of development to the Washington Coast and Grays Harbor County, where the late 20th Century pattern is exemplified by the sprawling Ocean Shores, located a dozen miles to the south. With its compact, walkable

form, Seabrook has been called a West Coast version of Seaside (Florida), albeit in an area that was, until recently, severely disinvested—so much so that much of the county, including the coast around Seabrook, was designated an Opportunity Zone in 2017. Town founders Casey and Laura Roloff launched their business from custom home construction, and prior to that, Casey was a house painter. Seaside inspired the plans for Seabrook.

The town has a wide range of housing types, including small and large single-family homes, duplexes, triplexes, rowhouses, townhomes, 4-story condominium-apartment flats, 3-story walk-ups, and accessory dwellings, which are accommodated on 90 percent of the lots.

Civic buildings include a town meeting hall, a natatorium/fitness facility, a walk-in medical clinic (in nearby Pacific Beach, a satellite of the regional hospital, serving the entire community, including the Quinault Indian Reservation, 3 miles to the north), and a future school (also in nearby Pacific Beach, with land secured). The mixed-use town center includes a 13,000-square-foot market/grocer where residents and visitors can purchase daily necessities.

The public spaces in Seabrook are generous, beginning with beach access and a public esplanade overlooking the Pacific. Also, the town has 18.6 miles of developed hiking and biking trails and a range of parks. These include:

- Crescent Park is a central green space that often hosts festivals and includes an indoor pool, fire pits, and shuffleboard.
- Meadowview Park, the town's largest park, embedded in a neighborhood, features an oval meditation lawn, an observation mound with a fire pit, and a children's slide.
- Kucera Park includes a playground, a pickleball court, and space for seasonal outdoor yoga.
- Barn Hill Park is a newer, seasonal event space featuring a tented venue for community gatherings.
- Numerous "pocket parks" are scattered throughout neighborhoods.
- Meriweather Square is an outdoor meeting space with views into green space.
- An off-leash dog park is a dedicated area for pets located at the town's edge near the Farm District.

Transect-based design

Seabrook is designed for immersive environments, from the main street commercial district to the town edge that includes a Farm District with an equestrian barn and pastures, and walkable neighborhoods in between. In one location, a historic cabin is preserved with community gardens.

"From its inception, the town rigorously applied the 'Transect' model to shape growth of new neighborhoods as well as existing settlements, all within a polycentric 'web' defined by natural features, including managed forests, ocean bluffs, stream corridors, and adjacent farmlands," according to the design team.

The building frontages, especially the porches on the houses and the many parks lined with residences, promote social connections between neighbors. The design team carefully crafted the physical definition of streets and public spaces as places of shared use, a key principle of the Charter of the New Urbanism. Urban design patterns include street views that radiate to the ocean and back into the town toward civic buildings. Even the mid-block

areas, including semi-private cottage courts, are carefully designed.

The streets were planned for safety, comfort, interest, and usefulness for pedestrians and bicyclists. Crucially, Seabrook convinced the Washington Department of Transportation to reduce the speed limit from 50 mph to 25 mph along the scenic highway segment through the town and to permit on-street parking along its shoulders. "By adding signaled crosswalks and buildings near the roadway edge, we proved speed reductions were warranted to achieve greater pedestrian safety," the team reports.

The town is fully open and accessible to all, including via the county public bus system.

Impact on the region

Seabrook has had a significant economic impact on the county, which was declared the most underprivileged in Washington State not long ago. A new bike-pedestrian path along the highway (State Route 109) will soon link the Quinault Indian Nation and Seabrook to Pacific Beach's new schools, medical clinic, and Boys & Girls Club—all located safely above tsunami inundation zones. The area's economy was previously based on logging and fishing, until these industries collapsed in the late 20th Century, the team explains.

Seabrook financially donates to the region with its Seabrook Community Fund (1 percent of real estate sales in perpetuity, set up by the town founders). To date, the Seabrook Community Foundation (SCF) has contributed \$8M to local schools, residents, and long-term climate resilience planning. "The town's expanded tax base has created a surge in opportunities for building, supply, and resort service trades, and has allowed for the creation of several locally-owned small businesses," the team explains.

"The Pacific Beach clinic represents a

meaningful investment in health equity and community-centered care," the team notes, especially because the hospital is 45 minutes away. "By bringing primary care services closer to where people live, work, and gather, we are reducing barriers to access and supporting healthier outcomes for residents across the North Beach area, including members of the Quinault Indian Nation."

Seabrook represents leadership in urban design, town planning, and development—with a vision not just for a town but for the region as a whole. For that reason, the 2026 Charter Awards jury selected Seabrook as the clear choice for Grand Prize.

Seabrook, WA — A Rural-to-Urban Regional Town Planning Model

Seabrook Land Company, LLC, Principal firm

Casey & Laura Roloff, Seabrook Town Founders

Casey Roloff, Seabrook CEO

Laurence Qamar, Seabrook Land Company | Qamar & Associates, Principal Town Planner

Stephen G. Poulakos, VP of Town Planning & Design | Landscape designer

Sam Nielson, P.E., VP of Engineering & Entitlements

Michael Benjamin, MBA Architects, Principal Architect

Matthew Craig, P.E. | Parametrix, Civil & environmental engineering

Ryan Carr, VP of Construction

Jeff Gunderson, COO Seabrook Land Company

Robert Gibbs, Gibbs Planning Group, Retail Consulting

CHARTER AWARD

Belle Gardens

THE BLOCK, THE STREET, AND THE BUILDING
BROOKLYN, NEW YORK — DAVID CUNNINGHAM ARCHITECTURE PLANNING PLLC

Along a transit-oriented corridor in Brooklyn, a design and development team is showing how to construct scattered-site, Missing Middle housing with context-sensitive architecture, and some buildings use single-stair construction. David Cunningham Architecture Planning won a 2026 Charter Award for Belle Gardens, which consists of seven four and five-story buildings along a 15-block corridor centered on Herkimer Street.

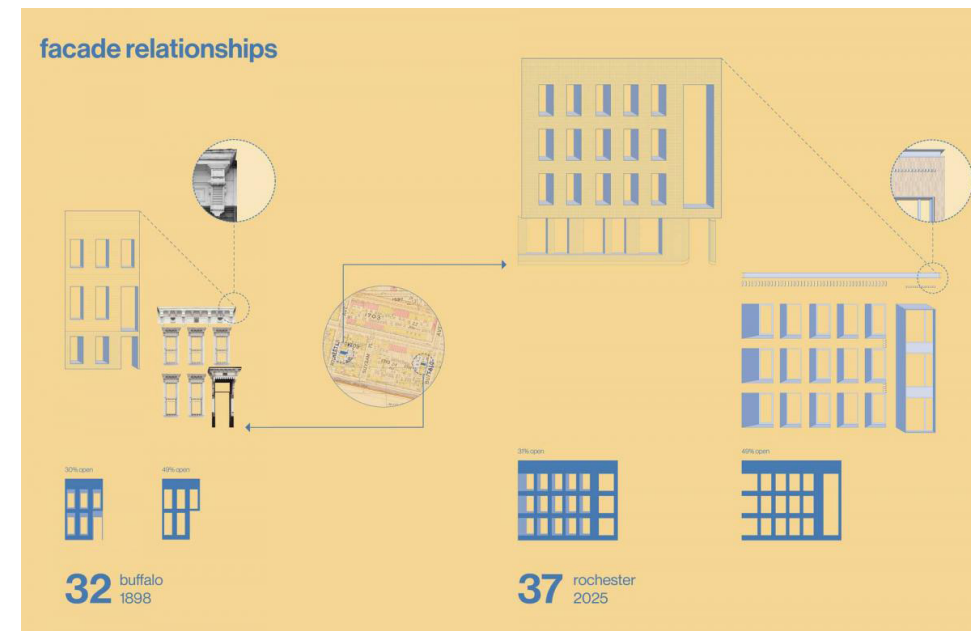
The 78 one- and two-bedroom apartments are located on sites totaling 0.73 acres in the Bedford Stuyvesant neighborhood. Subway and elevated regional rail both serve the neighborhood, enabling car-free or car-light lifestyles. Buildings occupy formerly vacant lots owned by the NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development. Belle Gardens addresses a gap in the borough's affordable housing programs: Most affordable housing in Brooklyn is rental. These units are all being sold—purchased by first-time home buyers.

"I've lived in my home for nearly a decade and work in education within the same vibrant section of central Brooklyn," reports one neighbor. "For much of that time, the lots next to and behind my house and were owned by the City and effectively abandoned—overgrown with weeds and home to stray cats and even raccoons. Meanwhile, our neighborhood has become increasingly expensive, forcing many neighbors and families, including those from my school, to move away. The transformation of those

empty lots to thoughtfully designed residential development is a welcome and meaningful improvement ... a step toward keeping our community inclusive and diverse."

The buildings range from 8 to 15 units. The small-scale multifamily buildings achieve a net density of about 100 units per acre, even with shared back gardens. Design emphasis was placed on the gardens and shared lobbies. Because of the rail service, the buildings were constructed without parking. "In a neighborhood that suffered decades of deliberate underinvestment from redlining in the 1950s and 1960s to subprime mortgages in the 2000s, this is a significant transformation," according to the design team.

The architecture was designed to be compatible with surrounding housing, even though the new buildings are somewhat larger. "The scale and size of the buildings were a key design challenge," the architects note. "In an area characterized by single-family homes on narrow lots, how do multifamily buildings join the block in a respectful manner? In studying the existing wooden housing stock, we observed that finish trim added to the windows and doors create the appearance of a lighter, more open façade. The proposed brick facades use metal trim to alter the proportions of walls and openings in a similar fashion. New windows are larger than windows in neighboring buildings, but share their rhythmic spacing and vertical proportions." Materials connect to the brownstone building tradition in Bed-Stuy. The



facades line up with neighboring facades—eschewing an approach taken by some Brooklyn affordable housing that opt for larger, more suburban setbacks.

"Raising the first floor above street level is another important feature of Belle Gardens," the designers explain. "The approach was specifically requested by City officials to provide a measure of privacy for first floor apartments. The design follows precedent in Brooklyn, where row houses have raised first floors approached by an entry stoop." The steps were paired with ramps to make the buildings accessible, and each building has an elevator—whether required by code or not.

Two of the buildings have single-stair construction, which is rare in the US but allowed in a few jurisdictions, including New York City. A nationwide movement to reform codes to allow this construction, common in Europe, is underway. "The building code outlines two different exceptions—one for four story and one for five story buildings," explain the designers. "Both exceptions were applied to this project and provided significant construction savings."

The designers sought creative ways to cut costs—foundations were important. By limiting foundation work near existing buildings, the project avoids the legal and financial difficulties of underpinning neighboring structures. Careful foundation design simplifies procedures and saves money, according to the architects.

Environmental concerns were important, with attention to energy and the urban heat island effect—light materials were used for roofs to reduce the latter. Casement windows were chosen for superior energy performance.

Electric appliances and heat pumps for heating and cooling help reduce the carbon footprint.

The City has been trying to redevelop these sites for a long time. Most have been abandoned lots for decades, going back to the 1980s. An effort in 2007 fell through because of the housing crash. That may have turned out for the best, because the current project provides three times as much affordable housing as the 2007 proposal. Belle Gardens is providing lasting, affordable homeownership to Brooklyn households of modest means, and doing so with innovative, context-appropriate design.



Belle Gardens

David Cunningham Architecture Planning, Principal firm

Fulcrum Architecture DPC (Jack Heaney), Architect (buildings #1,#2,#7)

BJF Development LLC, Client

DCI Engineers (Erik Madsen), Structural engineer

Altera Engineering (Dmitriy Morozov), MEP/SP engineers

CHARTER AWARD

South Street Cottages

THE BLOCK, THE STREET, AND THE BUILDING
FAYETTEVILLE, ARKANSAS — RANGE CO.

The South Street Cottages in Fayetteville, Arkansas, deliver small-scale, high-quality urban infill. By holistically developing and designing every detail of the neighborhood ensemble—from architecture and interiors to gardens and site planning—they blend quality and efficiency on a site just over an acre. The project uniquely integrates design, sustainability, affordability, and community engagement, six blocks from downtown, earning a 2026 Charter Award from CNU.

The master plan includes nine cottages of varied size and design, two ADUs (rentable accessory dwelling units), apartments above a retail building, and twelve townhomes. In total, approximately 23 residential units are planned. The first eleven units have been completed in a series of small phases, including a mix of owner-occupied and rental units.

The units range from 576 to 1,950 square feet and house residents of diverse ages and household arrangements. Two of the homes sold for prices that met federal affordability standards for 80 percent Area Median Income, without subsidy, due to their small footprints and focus on constructability. “The project demonstrates forward-thinking affordability, with homes meeting AMI standards without subsidies through thoughtful sizing and cost-effective design,” explains the project team.

The neighborhood’s custom street section promotes walkability, social connections between pedestrians on sidewalks and residents on front porches, and slower traffic speeds. Street tree plantings were informed by data from the Bartlett Tree Laboratory Field Testing for urban tree soil options, resulting in a buildable, low-tech solution that integrates tree-well root paths into adjacent residential landscapes. The meticulous approach provides adequate topsoil space for Overcup Oaks, native to the southeast, yielding nearly double the foliage volume of street-tree plantings elsewhere in the neighborhood, the design team explains. “This low-tech, cost-conscious solution illustrates the Charter of the New Urbanism’s call for stewardship of public space and ecological systems, while also advancing the Canons of Sustainable Architecture and Urbanism, which advocate for urban landscapes that are both resilient and beneficial to human experience,” the team explains.

The urban-to-rural Transect is evident in the small site plan, which includes single-family detached housing, accessory dwelling units, townhouses, and a future mixed-use building on the corner. The parking is handled creatively—much of it is grouped along two alleys that pass through and border the site. The neighborhood already has mixed-use, including a brewery and pub a block away.



“At 20 units per acre, this development is a great reminder that ‘higher density’ can look very gentle and neighborhood-scale,” comments Carla Norris, Transportation Project Manager at AECOM, a multinational infrastructure consulting firm.

At the building scale, the cottages and townhomes reflect careful attention to proportion, materiality, and adaptability, consistent with the Charter’s emphasis on quality, durable, and context-sensitive design. Building small houses means being thoughtful and efficient about using space. What the interiors lack in square footage, they make up for in design of the main living areas, upstairs, and bathrooms, where woodwork, fixtures, and build-ins make a big difference.

South Street Cottages

Range Co., Principal firm

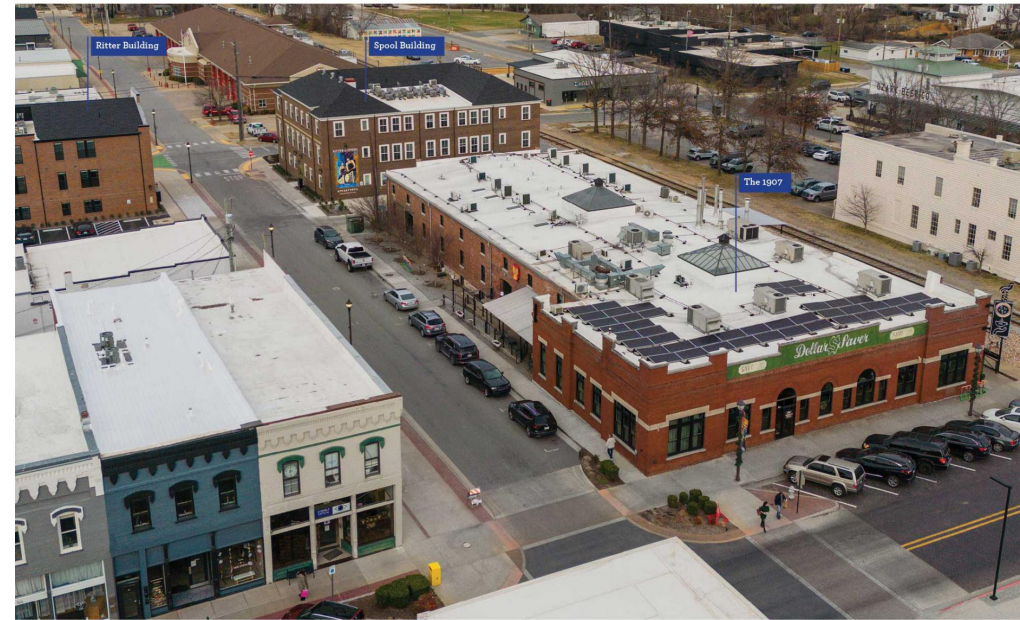
Flintlock Development, Developer



CHARTER AWARD

The 1907 Block

THE BLOCK, THE STREET, AND THE BUILDING
ROGERS, ARKANSAS — HIGH STREET REAL ESTATE AND DEVELOPMENT



The 1907 Block is embedded in a vibrant downtown, the revitalization of which it helped to launch. The developers saved a historically important but dilapidated building in Rogers, Arkansas, and constructed two new, context-appropriate residential buildings. With three James Beard Foundation finalists as tenants, the 1907 Block has put Rogers on the culinary map. This remarkable ensemble won a 2026 CNU Charter Award.

The four exterior walls of The 1907 Block are largely unchanged from 118 years ago, with the addition of outdoor elements that connect to the community. These include outdoor seating, landscaping, lighting, and curb extensions that make it easier for pedestrians to cross at the downtown’s primary intersection. The new, three-story brick Ritter and Spool buildings fit the neighborhood’s architectural context while providing a place for people to live downtown.

“The restoration of the 1907 building marked a turning point for Downtown Rogers,” says Rogers long-time Mayor Greg Hines. “By bringing together locally loved destinations like Onyx Coffee, Yeyo’s, and Pinky Swear, the project transformed a historic space into a true community gathering place. It showed how thoughtful reinvestment can activate downtown, and create momentum for surrounding development. This is exactly how cities grow stronger while staying true to their character.”

The 1907 Block’s impact on Rogers is hard to overstate, according to the project team. Since its opening, 180 downtown businesses have launched, including 19 additional restaurants and bars, after decades of economic stagnation. Tenants have achieved national and international recognition, while nearby property owners have been inspired towards quality adaptive reuse and infill efforts, says Ward Davis of High Street Real Estate & Development. “The success of the 1907 Building also allowed us to move forward with Ritter and Spool, a two-building apartment complex directly adjacent to the restored property,” he says. “This new construction infill development brought new housing to downtown Rogers, further enhancing the block.”

Importantly, the ripple of success shifted the municipal focus back towards the downtown core and ultimately moved the city to adopt Arkansas’s first city-wide form-based unified development code, setting the stage for additional walkable, human-scaled urban growth.

The 1907 Block includes 9,320 square feet of retail food-and-beverage space, 6,466 square feet of office space, and 56 residential units on an acre of land. The two new residential buildings were completed in December 2025, while the 1907 Block adaptive reuse was finished in 2019. Davis’s original partner was Morgan Hooker, the High Street co-founder

who originally considered redeveloping the building and passed away in 2022. Jason Keathley has been the project partner since that point.

The two James Beard 2026 finalists are the Heirloom at 1907 and Onyx Coffee Lab, while chef Rafael Rios (Yeyo’s) was a 2025 finalist. Onyx is recognized as the top-rated coffee shop in the world. This culinary concentration in a single building may be unprecedented.

Cost and efficiency

One lesson is that “exceptional design does not require extraordinary cost,” Davis points out. With 1907 Block development costs of just over \$180 per square foot, “Onyx achieved international recognition, the owner of Yeyo’s earned accolades as a James Beard finalist, Heirloom became the most sought-after dining experience in Arkansas with a remarkable \$127,000 finish-out budget, and the Ritter and Spool apartments folded comfortably into downtown for \$47,000 less per unit than a nearby more conventional apartment project.” The efficiency came from thoughtful planning, material selection, and collaboration, he explains.

Another lesson is that “context matters.” The 1907 Block blends into its historic surroundings while adding new energy, “creating a sense of place sometimes lost when projects are designed to be incongruous,” Davis notes. The Ritter and Spool infill buildings fit seamlessly into the historic downtown architecture from the main street commercial district to the town edge that includes a Farm District with an equestrian barn and pastures, and walkable neighborhoods in between. In one location, a historic cabin is preserved with community gardens.

Daily life pulses through the 1907 Block at all hours, anchored by beloved destinations. The new and restored buildings help define the streets, contributing to walkability, while the “third places” foster social bonds.

“The redevelopment and success of Downtown Rogers’ historic 1907 building was an important catalyst in the wave of new restaurants, shops, and apartments we’ve seen open up over the last decade,” says Raymond Burns, CEO of the Rogers-Lowell Chamber of Commerce. “Through its accomplishment of maintaining the building’s historic architecture, the 1907 building’s design has helped position Downtown Rogers as an authentic and welcoming community.”



The 1907 Block

High Street Real Estate & Development, Principal firm

Jon & Andrea Allen (Onyx Coffee Lab), Tenant/Owner/Designer

Bradley Edwards (Ozark Modern), Architect, The 1907

Robert Sharp, Architect, Ritter & Spool

Michael Ames, Contractor

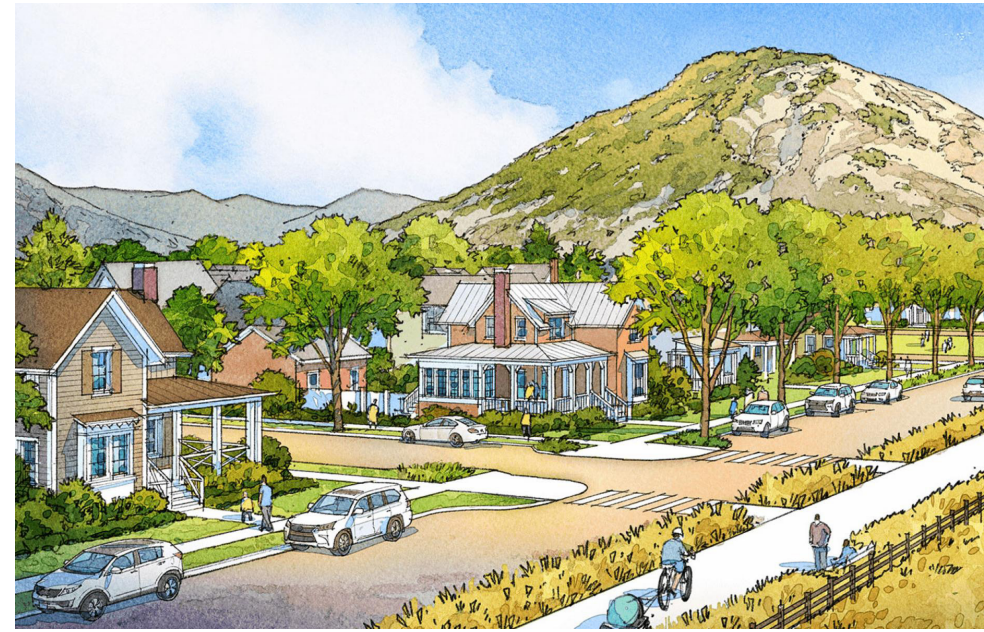
Rafael Rios (Yeyo’s), Tenant

Jason Paul & Daniel Rubio (Heirloom at The 1907), Tenant

CHARTER AWARD

Jackson WY Teton County Northern South Park Neighborhood Plan and Code

THE NEIGHBORHOOD, THE DISTRICT, AND THE CORRIDOR
JACKSON, WYOMING – OPTICOS DESIGN



Housing costs in Jackson, Wyoming, are among the highest in the US, with average home values of nearly \$2 million, according to Zillow, and one-bedroom units rent for nearly \$3,000. The affordability crisis in this mountain and ski resort town has worsened drastically over the last decade: in 2013, one in three homes was affordable to median-income households; by 2020, only one in ten.

Workers in the town of 10,000 people, home to three ski resorts, have been forced to commute long distances. Opticos Design led a multidisciplinary team to develop alternatives for a 225-acre site owned by two ranching families. Adjacent to schools, transit, and amenities, the site was previously zoned for 118 sprawling estate homes. Instead, plans are approved and moving ahead with amended zoning to build 1,319 additional Missing Middle, workforce, and affordable homes in walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods. Opticos won a 2026 CNU Charter Award in the Neighborhood, District, Corridor category.

The Northern South Park Neighborhood Plan establishes a vision for the site at the southern edge of Jackson, under Teton County jurisdiction. "Identified in the Comprehensive Plan as a critical

opportunity for workforce housing, the challenge was proving that a mix of housing types and affordability levels could compete financially with large estate homes allowed under previous zoning. This effort combined design with financial modeling to create a plan that met city and county goals while remaining viable for property owners," Opticos explains.

At least 70 percent of homes will be deed-restricted, with 40 percent affordable and up to 30 percent workforce housing—balancing diversity and private development incentives. The site, owned by the Gill and Lockhart families, has been the subject of decades of debate and legal challenges. The plan creates an urban framework of walkable streets and blocks on the site, which greatly increases the potential for compact housing of various types that are compatible with the historic character of Jackson Hole.

"Implementation is opt-in, offering landowners additional entitlements in exchange for meeting new standards," notes the design team, reporting that the Gill family has committed 45 acres to Habitat for Humanity and the Housing Trust. The first proposal—up to 685 homes on 101 acres—has been submitted, marking the start of what

could be Teton County's largest housing initiative, Opticos reports.

"In terms of accomplishing the goals of this community — to take all the housing that could spread out throughout the county and put it all in one place — we are removing the pressure to build elsewhere in the county," said Teton County Chair Mark Newcomb. "We have to keep that in mind. This is finally a place where we are reaching a balance with all of our goals, primarily to provide a neighborhood for the future of this town."

The public process was key to achieving the consensus to move forward. The planning team compared alternative scenarios to development under the pre-existing zoning, which would have done nothing to ease the affordability problems. Missing Middle Housing alternatives A, B, and C examined more compact, deed-restricted housing. Planning, market, and financial analyses looked at property tax revenues, transportation impacts, job generation, and energy and water use for the alternatives relative to the existing zoning. The more compact, the better the alternatives performed. The community ended up choosing the middle-density option.

All of the alternatives included pedestrian-oriented street design, a complete network of pathways, public open spaces, green infrastructure, a center for each of the three neighborhoods in the plan, a diversity of housing choices and price points, and wildlife permeability. The site offers an unprecedented opportunity due to its legacy property owners, proximity to services and transportation, and inclusion in the county's comprehensive plan.

Neighborhood engagement was central to the plan's approval. Over four years, the process included multiple rounds of public input, stakeholder meetings, and refinement guided by a Steering Committee. The opt-in zoning strategy, where landowners voluntarily adopt new regulations in exchange for entitlements, reflects a collaborative, incentive-based approach to implementation. This policy innovation aligns with the Charter's principle that meaningful change requires cooperation among residents, public officials, and developers. Other towns with conditions like Jackson's, with land available for new development, could follow a similar process to achieve similar results.

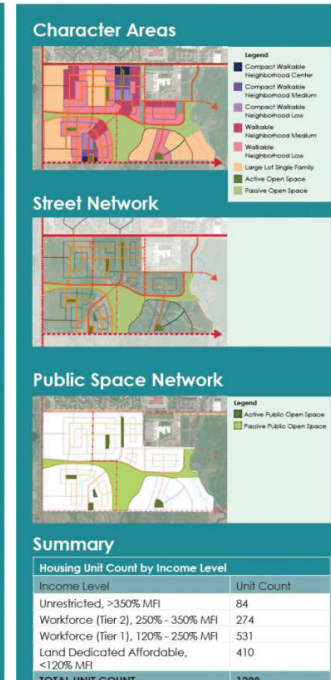
At its core, the plan advances the Charter's call for neighborhoods that are diverse, compact, and connected. "It proposes a complete neighborhood form with a mix of housing types, civic spaces, and neighborhood-serving amenities within walking distance," Opticos says. "The plan's structure supports a range of incomes and lifestyles, with at least 70 percent of new units permanently deed-restricted for Affordable and Workforce housing. This commitment to social equity and economic diversity directly reflects the Charter's emphasis on inclusive neighborhoods."

"Please approve this plan," local resident Rose Caiazza told commissioners prior to the vote, "for every working person in Jackson determined to build their dream future in a community that they have loved for so very long."

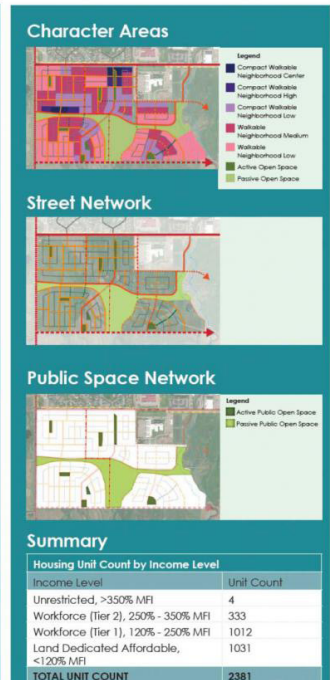
Alternative A Estates and Apartments



Alternative B Neighborhood with Estates



Alternative C Mixed-Type Neighborhood



Jackson WY Teton County Northern South Park Neighborhood Plan and Code

Opticos Design, Principal firm

Cascadia Partners, Outcomes scenario modeling, market analysis + financial feasibility

Crabtree Group, Infrastructure + civil engineering

Charlier Associates, Transportation + mobility

Cambridge Systematics, Transportation modeling



CHARTER AWARD

The New “Cité-Jardins” – Le Plessis-Robinson

THE NEIGHBORHOOD, THE DISTRICT, AND THE CORRIDOR
PARIS, FRANCE – ATELIER XAVIER BOHL

The New “Cité-Jardins”—the New Garden City—in Le Plessis-Robinson outside of Paris, France, is surely one of the most dramatic redevelopments in the history of New Urbanism.

“This town did the impossible. It was able to transform itself from a gloomy, dispirited town dominated by concrete flats, into a thriving, friendly, and beautiful community,” explains The Aesthetic City, a European website that promotes urbanism.

The 2026 CNU jury awarded the New “Cité-Jardins” a Charter Award in The Neighborhood, District, and Corridor category to be presented at CNU 34 in Northwest Arkansas.

The project was led by visionary Mayor Philippe Pemezec, who has been in office 37 years. Pemezec has pursued a policy to beautify and humanize the built environment to improve lives in the city of 28,000 people. The unique and creative 50-acre master plan was designed by Atelier Xavier Bohl.

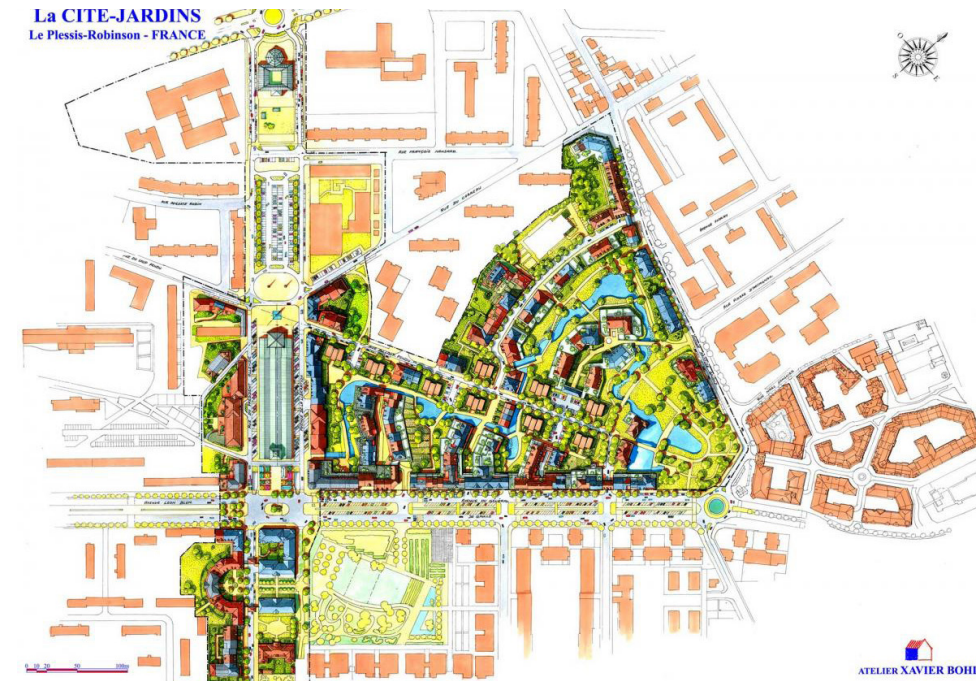
The Le Plessis-Robinson project—completed in 2008—is recognizably New Urbanist in its walkability, mix of uses, network of human-scaled blocks, and use of architecture to shape the public realm. And, it is unusual and

innovative in its integration of nature into a dense neighborhood.

“The project radically rethinks the role of nature in the city,” notes the design team. “While the CNU Charter encourages the integration of green spaces, Plessis-Robinson makes them the beating heart of the neighborhood. The central park, shared gardens at the base of buildings, and the kilometer-long (0.6 of a mile) riverside promenade, with its bridges and populated by fish and dragonflies, are not just decorative; they form an ecological framework that structures the entire site.” The stretch of waterway is biodiverse—true nature within a city.

Underground parking frees up public space for pedestrians and cyclists, and most automobile traffic is kept at the periphery, creating a tranquil and safe village-like atmosphere. Motorists can drive into the 50-acre site, but only on very narrow streets that access parking under the units. Otherwise, very little land is devoted to cars.

“At a time when climate and social challenges demand bold solutions, the Cité-Jardins of Plessis-Robinson offers a replicable and inspiring model, where urban planning



becomes a lever for social and ecological transformation,” the design team says. The model:

- Can serve as a laboratory for future garden cities, demonstrating how to blend tradition and innovation to address the urban challenges of the 21st century.
- Prevents urban sprawl on natural or agricultural areas by renewing the city within itself.
- Re-establishes water features and green spaces into the city.

The project achieves a relatively high density of 24 units to the acre (gross), with substantial commercial and green space. “The project confirmed that urban density and quality of life are not incompatible, provided spaces are thoughtfully hierarchized and connections to nature are multiplied,” explains the design team.

The architecture features sloped roofs, windows with depth, shutters, and balconies. It would not be out of place in the center of Paris, 10 miles away. “One of the most significant lessons was the art of reinventing tradition without resorting to pastiche. Drawing inspiration from local architectural heritage while integrating contemporary solutions demanded uncompromising creativity.” The plan incorporates, and new buildings are placed comfortably around, some of the former towers.

The commune of Le Plessis-Robinson was largely built in the form of modernist flats in the decades after World War II, with a significant amount of social housing. By the 1980s, two-thirds of the buildings were in a bad state: Energy inefficient, vandalized, and poorly maintained. The municipality experienced problems with crime.

The solutions that Pemezec arrived at, and Atelier Xavier Bohl designed, are not that different from the HOPE VI public housing program in the US: Create a high-quality public realm, promote homeownership, and make the “social housing” indistinguishable from market-rate housing on the outside. The implementation at Le Plessis-Robinson is unusually high quality.

The town has aged very well. The new community is diverse, including families with children. Employment is up, and the central marketplace is alive with business and shoppers. Residents can walk to their daily needs. The center includes an active cultural center.

“This project demonstrated that urbanism is an art of the long term: a neighborhood is not built merely for its inauguration day, but for the generations who will call it home,” explains the design team.

The New “Cité-Jardins” - Le Plessis-Robinson

Atelier Xavier Bohl, Principal firm

Philippe Pemezec, Mayor of Le Plessis-Robinson



CHARTER AWARD

Razorback Greenway Corridor Plan

THE REGION: METROPOLIS, CITY, AND TOWN
NORTHWEST ARKANSAS – FIELD OPERATIONS AND BLOCKWRIGHT

The Razorback Greenway Corridor Plan transforms a 40-mile multi-city trail into the organizing regional framework for development in fast-growing Northwest Arkansas. The Greenway, built over the last 10 years, links seven cities and is one of the most important regional bike-ped trails in the US.

The plan combines broad ecological and policy analysis with specific plans for seven local places, providing a shared playbook for city-by-city implementation. Field Operations and Blockwright won a 2026 Charter Award for the plan. “By treating the Greenway as a continuous public realm rather than a mere amenity, the plan creates civic rooms for social gathering, utilizes ‘sponge parks’ for public stormwater management, and establishes a commuter bike network to reduce auto-dependence,” the design team explains. “Its innovative regional governance framework and policy toolkit, featuring the Greenway Transect and incremental infill, ensure that this shared spine drives sustainable growth, protects watersheds, and provides diverse, walkable housing for over 230,000 residents.”

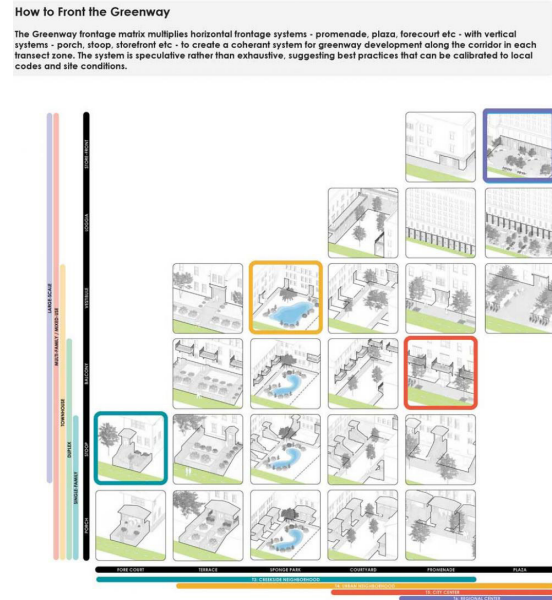
The team explains three key concepts for mixed-use development along the corridor:

- The Greenway Transect (T1-T6) treats the corridor as the region’s spine and calibrates the rural-to-urban character of

places, from creek reserves to trail-facing centers. Using the Transect at a regional scale gives seven cities a shared language for block sizes, street types, and frontages, so conservation, mobility, and housing add up to coherent walkable neighborhoods rather than scattered projects.

- Incremental infill is one of the biggest opportunities hiding in plain sight, as most corridor parcels are already appropriately sized for infill. The project illustrates how hundreds of small developments, parcel by parcel, can accommodate significant growth without erasing existing places: a future that’s both resilient and familiar.
- A frontage and access matrix multiplies horizontal systems (promenade, plaza, forecourt, sponge park) with vertical systems (porch, stoop, storefront) to guide development edge conditions by zone.

The plan allows for an orderly transition from the current built form, often with underutilized parcels or the backs of lots facing the Greenway, to development that fronts the trail and connects to it over time. Transition tools include: eliminate minimum lot area per unit and street-frontage requirements; reduce setbacks (<10 feet); manage parking ratios (≈1:1 in T3-T4; 0.3-1.0 in centers); enable small commercial in higher zones; and



provide flexible open-space requirements and affordable-housing bonuses near the spine. Parking/loading diagrams show how both existing and new sites can flip service to alleys or side streets and put front doors on the trail.

To develop the policy- and site-specific recommendations, the planners conducted a hands-on housing workshop that used hundreds of Transect tiles. Teams from each city placed tiles along the trail in the other cities—not their own—to indicate recommended intensity and character of development. The teams then critiqued the tile placement by other teams in their own city. “This exercise surfaced blind spots, built empathy, and produced a practical, shared regional framework for where conservation, retrofit, and walkable centers belong along the 40-mile corridor,” the planners explain.

Phase one of the Greenway Corridor Plan defines the regional framework and key places. Phase two advances policies and design visioning for the key places along the trail. “Together, these elements position the Greenway to do double duty: a beloved recreation asset and the backbone for region-shaping conservation, mobility, and housing,” notes the design team.

The key projects are inspiring because they show how a compact development areas with access to the trail, from villages to walkable neighborhoods to urban centers, could accommodate much of the region’s growth. For example:

- **Key Place #3:** Uptown Rogers would make the most of one of the most economically dynamic places in Northwest Arkansas,

but is currently being built with too many single-story buildings and parking lots. “The plan for this area visions a new direction, with a fuller mix of uses including housing, commercial, and health care leveraging what will likely be the most commuter-focused portion of the Greenway.”

- **Key Place #5:** Lake Springdale offers a chance to explore alternative modes of suburban development, such as a walkable village, at a destination spot along the Greenway.
- **Key Place #8:** Midtown Fayetteville “is a vibrant first-ring neighborhood made up of aging homes, an industrial district, a creek corridor, and a rail corridor. The plan for this area negotiates between the need for new growth and the imperative to preserve naturally occurring affordable housing.”

Northwest Arkansas is one of the fastest-growing regions in the US, with an opportunity to change development patterns to build more livable, healthful, and economically and ecologically sustainable cities. With this plan, the Razorback Greenway becomes the organizing framework for that transformation.

“More people move into Northwest Arkansas every day,” said The Arkansas Democrat-Gazette. “An extensive system of trails can influence, for example, where they’ll live. Easy access to a trail system that makes A-to-B movement—as opposed to just recreational movement—a possibility can change the way the region develops.”

Razorback Greenway Corridor Plan

Field Operations, Blockwright, Principal firms

Field Operations, Lead consultant

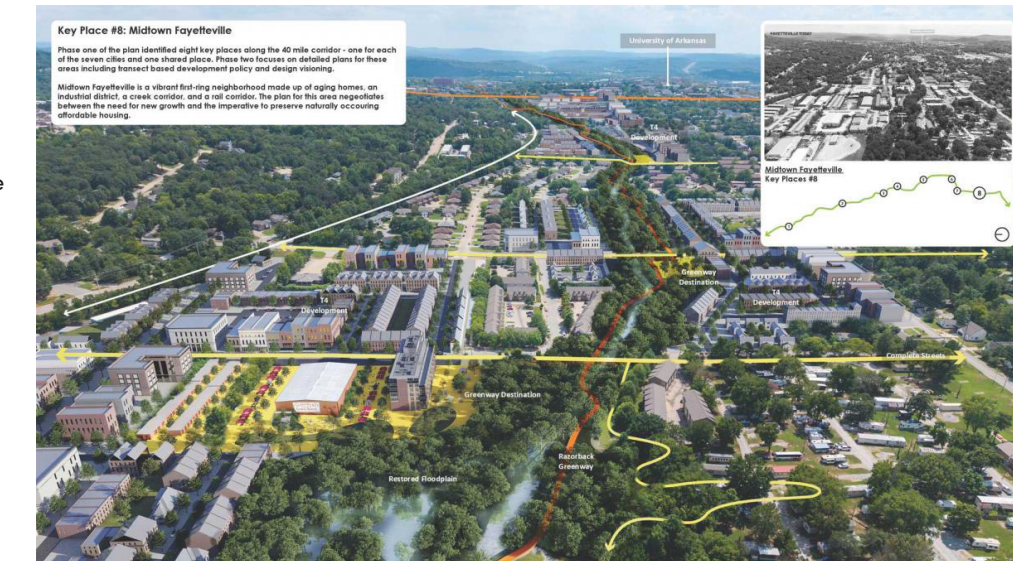
Blockwright, Housing consultant

Northwest Arkansas Regional Planning Commission, Client

Matthew Petty, Project planner

Mary Madden, Policy analyst

Neil Heller, Development analyst



Sacramento CA Citywide Missing Middle Strategy

CHARTER AWARD

THE REGION: METROPOLIS, CITY, AND TOWN
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA – OPTICOS DESIGN

Sacramento, California, is implementing a nationally significant strategy to promote Missing Middle housing to meet a target of 45,580 new housing units citywide this decade. As the author of this strategy, which aims to provide more than 25,000 low- to moderate-income living spaces, Opticos Design was recognized by the 2026 CNU Charter Award jury.

The Missing Middle Strategy addresses rising housing costs in the City of 525,000 people. Affordability plummeted by 44 percent from 2011 to 2020, followed by a 19 percent increase in rents from 2021 to 2022, according to Opticos, which teamed with Cascadia Partners, the financial and displacement-risk analyst for the project.

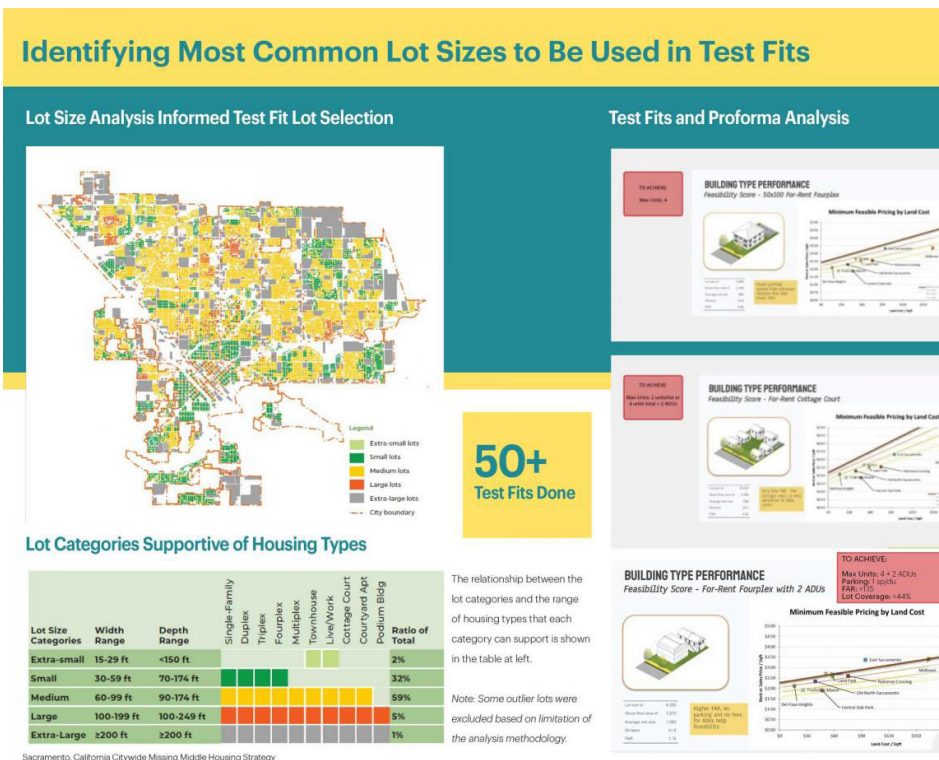
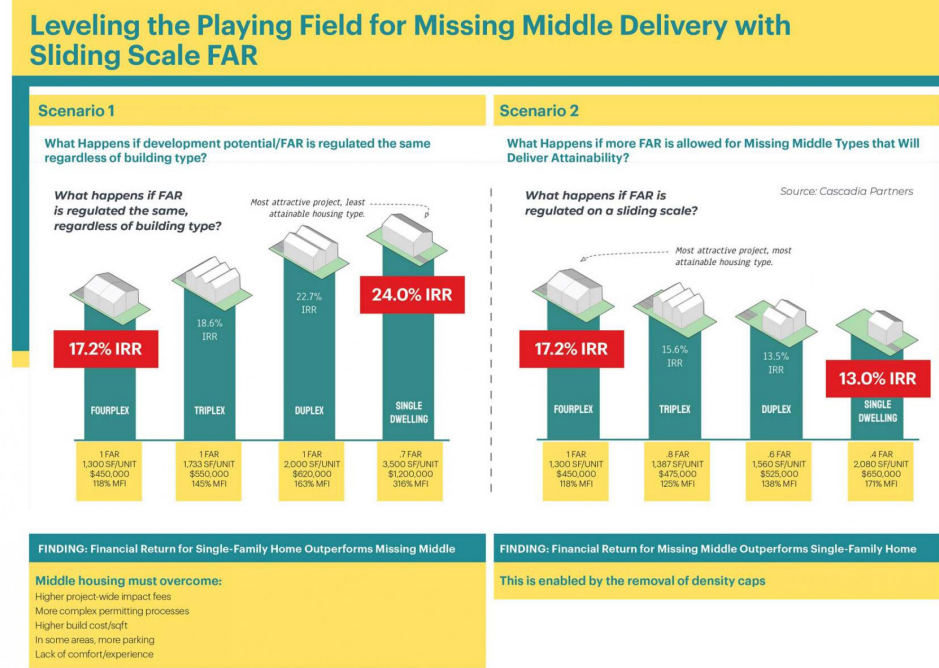
A key feature of the Missing Middle Strategy is the use of a sliding-scale floor-area ratio (FAR) system to promote more affordable Missing Middle types. A citywide pro forma analysis revealed that under former, outdated density caps, the most profitable housing type on a given lot was a \$1.2 million luxury single-family house. McMansions easily outdistanced more affordable residential types, but the new regulations flip that outcome (see image at top).

“The FAR system allows, for example, a fourplex to achieve a 1.0 FAR, while a single-family home is limited to 0.4—making multi-unit housing more

viable and affordable,” the team explains. The four-plex tops affordability metrics. “We call this the Missing Middle sweet spot of feasibility, attainability, and livability,” says Opticos founder Dan Parolek. Adding to that, a local bonus program was introduced for projects with fewer than five units, offering additional FAR and lot coverage in exchange for deed-restricted affordable housing, the team reports.

Sacramento’s physical context includes historic neighborhoods, suburban subdivisions, and transit-rich corridors. The strategy covered Sacramento’s 100 square miles, and focused on four residential zones (R-1, R-1A, R-1B, R-2), where 65 percent of housing is single-family. The team categorized every residential parcel by lot width and depth to determine which Missing Middle housing types would work. The scale of that analysis was ambitious and unusual. Visualizations and test fits demonstrated how Missing Middle types, like a fourplex plus accessory dwelling unit, can integrate into existing neighborhoods.

The team also produced a technical report on displacement risk, ensuring that policies would not push historically marginalized residents out of their communities. Displacement risk was assessed based on many factors, like education, race, income, housing market, and access to jobs. The study showed that



88 percent of new housing avoids high-vulnerability communities.

The displacement risk analysis was part of an inclusive public engagement program. The City partnered with local organizations such as Unseen Heroes to lead outreach efforts, ensuring residents were informed and involved throughout the process. This approach reflects the Charter of the New Urbanism’s emphasis on participatory planning and the importance of local knowledge in shaping policy, Opticos explains.

The projected outcomes for housing include:

- 10,463 very low-income units
- 6,306 low-income units
- 8,545 moderate-income units
- 20,266 above-moderate-income units

Initiated in 2022 and adopted in 2024, the policy eliminates single-family zoning citywide and legalizes small-scale multi-unit housing—such as duplexes, fourplexes, cottage courts, and townhouses—in every neighborhood.

“This overall policy is profoundly positive for our city,” says Mayor Darrell Steinberg. “It distinguishes Sacramento from many other cities around the nation by supporting several and creative home styles in traditionally single-family areas.”

The strategy’s core goals include:

- Expanding housing choice and affordability
- Promoting racial and economic equity
- Supporting intergenerational living and passive income

- Empowering local builders and homeowners

“It offers a replicable framework for other cities seeking to address affordability, displacement, and climate resilience through neighborhood-scale urbanism,” the design team explains.

Sacramento CA Citywide Missing Middle Strategy

Opticos Design, Principal firm

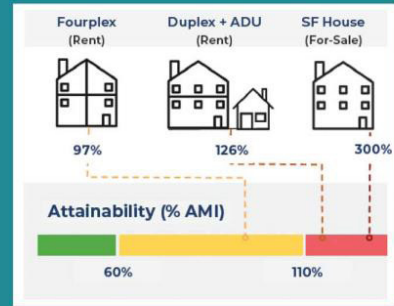
Cascadia Partners, Project partner, displacement risk analysis, financial feasibility analysis

Unseen Heroes, Public engagement

Collaborative Design + Innovation, Public engagement strategy

Iterative Process to Test Feasibility + Level of Attainability By Sub Market

Iterations between design outcomes and financial feasibility



Lot Test Fit Scenarios: Financial Performance:

Which Types Performed best on Existing Lot Sizes in each neighborhood.

We studied both for sale and for rent outcomes.



Best Performing Model



Sacramento, California Citywide Missing Middle Housing Strategy

MERIT AWARD

Basalt Downtown Streetscape & River Park

THE BLOCK, THE STREET, AND THE BUILDING
BASALT, COLORADO – CONNECT ONE DESIGN

A streetscape and park project revitalized the economically struggling downtown of a historic Colorado mining community while engaging the town's history and culture. The Basalt Downtown Streetscape & River Park overcame controversy and a mid-project special referendum to create accessible gathering spaces for the entire community. Connect One Design won a Merit Award in the 2026 CNU Charter Awards.

The project represents a large public investment in the public realm of Basalt, a coal-mining town that thrived through the railroad era. "But by the 2010s, the town lay in a social and economic quagmire," according to the design team. "Straddled between the youthful, artistic towns down-valley; and the elite prosperity of Aspen up-valley, Basalt had a reputation for stagnation and lacking its own identity."

A \$2 million riverfront park generated a seven-fold increase in visitors. "Along the banks of the Roaring Fork River, the 3-acre Basalt River Park was a nearly decade-long transformation from historic man-camp threatened by yearly floods into the Town's beloved primary gathering space."

Designed as a circular river "eddy," the park includes spaces for art, play, and respite. The iconic bandshell features a bouldering wall. In the plaza, basaltic uplift formations, which give the town its name, host a water-misting

feature. The design includes a triple-wide slide, slack lines, willow forts, café tables, and a railroad track that provides seating during concerts. In short, it's a cool space on the water, walkable to the downtown core.

The larger part of this project involved a nearly \$10 million revitalization of the historic main street, Midland Avenue, which needed upgrades to the failing utility and above-ground infrastructure. The new design is based on the Dutch "woonerf" concept. The two-block core of the street was switched from angled to parallel parking to provide more room for pedestrians and outdoor retail space. In other areas of the downtown, angled parking was added to maintain the total number of on-street spaces. Protected crosswalks were built, and curb extensions reduce crossing distances at intersections. Rain gardens next to crosswalks create a safe space for pedestrians at the center of the street. The wooden beams sticking up from the rain gardens speak to the historic railroad design aesthetic and fit the town's informality.

"An immense amount of research was done by the design team to understand the context in which the sites developed over the century, but also to get intricate details of the design historically accurate," notes Connect One Design. "For instance, each historic property line along Midland is demarcated with an



engraved paver stone, illustrating who owned that property circa 1900."

Principles of the New Urbanism informed the project throughout. Public realm strategies of Jane Jacobs, William H. Whyte, Jan Gehl, Michael Southworth, and Eran Ben-Joseph were employed. The team approached streetscape projects as a means of creating "complete streets" that serve all users, particularly those outside of automobiles.

The town overcame harsh criticism from a faction of the community to complete the work. The opposition centered around loss of parking spaces in the two-block core, and the impact of construction on main street businesses. The critics tried to stop the Midland Avenue changes, even when the project was well under construction, by spearheading a special election. Yet citizens voted 71-29 to complete the renovation, mirroring the results of a previous referendum to fund the project in the first place. "The public engagement was comprehensive and inclusive, even in the face of loud opposition from a minority of residents," the team reports.

Downtown merchants had barely survived the Covid recession, and the negative impact of construction was widely feared. The construction plan went to great lengths to reduce the economic hardship. "Hardscape along the businesses was carefully demo-ed, formed, and poured all in one day (one 20-foot building face at a time) so that businesses maintained operating hours," the team explains. "Additionally, a 36-hour all-nighter to install and connect the water main so that businesses didn't lose water for more than one day was miraculous."

All of this work is setting up Basalt for economic revitalization and social cohesion for years to come. "Basalt's downtown revitalization truly

strengthened the coherence of the town by linking the new riverfront Basalt River Park with the historic commercial core through accessible streets and more unified public spaces," explains Catherine Christoff, Town Engineer and Project Manager.

The two interconnected projects are not alone in contributing to the transformation of Basalt over the last 15 years, the team notes: Other developments, backed by private investment, include affordable housing in the downtown core, restaurant space on the park, indoor community activity space, a non-profit Roaring Fork River conservation foundation, and a non-profit climate institution. However, the park and streetscape projects showcase the deliberate public investment in the public realm.

Kris Mattera, President of the Chamber of Commerce, sums up what the streetscape and park project have meant to the city: "The Midland Avenue Streetscape project has honored the historical, railroad roots of downtown Basalt, while allowing for modern utilities and amenities. Not only are the wider sidewalks a great improvement for walkability regardless of mobility needs, but it also provides local businesses additional physical space to interact with people walking by. The additional space has also created opportunities for new public art installations, dotting downtown. The greatest aspect is the use of Midland Avenue as an event space—Basalt's Merry on Midland celebration is the highlight of the year, made possible by this project, creating a wonderful, accessible gathering space for locals and visitors alike."

Basalt Downtown Streetscape & River Park

Connect One Design, Principal firm

Town of Basalt, Client

Sopris Engineering, Civil engineer

Rocky Mountain Custom Landscapes, Landscape contractor

Stutsman Gerbaz, Streetscape General Contractor & Earthmoving

Wember Inc., Streetscape Owner's Representative

ID Sculpture, Basalt Geologic Misting Features & Climbing Wall Design and Fabrication

Full Light Communications, Streetscape Public Communications & Engagement

Ashley Concrete Structures, Streetscape Concrete Sub-Contractor

Azure Engineering, Streetscape Irrigation Design

Cushing Terrell, Streetscape Electrical Engineer & Phase 1 Civil Engineer

Bryan May Architecture, **Eide Industries**, **Burlingame Construction**, Bus Shelter/Bathroom Architect

Z Group Architecture, Bus Shelter/Bathroom Architect

Basalt Chamber of Commerce, Communications & Business Liaison

The Lighting Agency, Lighting Representative

Snooks Concrete, Park Concrete Sub-Contractor

Colorado Outdoor Environments, Park Irrigation Design

Walters Company, Park Phase 1 Infrastructure & Concrete General Contractor

MERIT AWARD

MidCity District

THE NEIGHBORHOOD, THE DISTRICT, AND THE CORRIDOR
HUNTSVILLE, ALABAMA – URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

The MidCity District replaces a 140-acre failing mall site with a block-and-street network that offers tremendous opportunities to develop valuable real estate supporting a high-quality public realm. The Huntsville, Alabama, project was designed in 2015 and adapted to changes wrought by the pandemic, and is now a nationwide model for dead mall transformation. The principal firm, Urban Design Associates, was recognized by the 2026 Charter Award jury.

The former Madison Square Mall, built in 1984, was surrounded by giant parking lots. By contrast, the MidCity plan creates fine-grained blocks with plentiful building frontages on urban streets. These blocks were designed for flexible uses, accommodating shifts in the market. "Over time, the plan has shifted toward more residential and hospitality uses and smaller, more adaptable office spaces, without sacrificing walkability or urban coherence," notes the design team. Much of the artistry of the MidCity District lies in skillfully building on the urban frontages and in creatively designing the public realm.

MidCity's urban structure establishes a legible, walkable public realm. The district functions as a complete neighborhood, in part due to a concerted effort to bring in key tenants. "A successful public campaign brought Trader Joe's to its second Alabama location within MidCity, signaling community

demand and reinforcing the district's role as a neighborhood center. Additional uses, from local and national coffee shops to restaurants, entertainment venues, and small retail, contribute to an inclusive commercial mix that supports diverse daily activity," the design team explains.

The result is the antithesis of the inward-facing suburban mall it replaced. Where the mall was isolated behind asphalt and blank walls, MidCity is outward-facing in design, implementation, and ethos.

"MidCity is one of Huntsville's great success stories," says Tommy Battle, Mayor of Huntsville. "Through a public-private partnership, we took a 'dead mall' and transformed it into a vibrant, walkable district built around people and place. We infused residential, commercial, cultural, and recreational amenities into one of the most sought-after destinations for residents and visitors."

At 1.6 million square feet, MidCity District is nearly 50 percent complete. Already, its 1.7 million square feet of development includes 1,260 living spaces, 310,000 square feet of retail, 35,000 square feet of office, 300-plus hotel rooms, and two music venues. The latter includes the magnificent 8,500-seat Orion Amphitheater, designed by David



M. Schwarz Architects. The total buildout, expected in 2032, will include 4 million square feet of development. The project has notable elements:

Streets as public spaces. They build upon the new urban structure, employing design excellence in public spaces and architecture. "Pedestrian-focused streets, paseos, and layered open spaces create a flexible, human-scaled environment capable of hosting large civic events. Vertical and horizontal integration of residential, retail, and civic functions ensures neighborhood completeness and vibrant street life. Active frontages, including balconies and porches, provide 'eyes on the street,' promoting safety and social interaction," the team explains. Curbless "shared streets" and car-free mews streets are included in the plan.

Creative activation. "The Camp" was established early—before full construction—as a temporary pop-up venue to signal transformation and invite the community onto the site, the team explains. It allowed for market-responsive investments that informed future phases. The Camp has evolved into a permanent feature, a central gathering place and music venue, and includes hosting The Market at MidCity, which draws 40,000-plus annual visitors, and a small-business incubator. It will move from its early activation location to the heart of the master plan in the coming years.

Supportive public policy. "Implementing a district-wide form-based code enabled predictable building forms, cohesive streetscapes, and flexible tenanting while reducing bureaucratic uncertainty. Adaptive zoning strategies allowed temporary

uses, pop-up programming, and phased construction, illustrating regulatory approaches that support incremental and responsive urbanism."

Culture. Situated within a predominantly rural region, MidCity provides Huntsville with a concentrated destination for dining, events, and arts, the team explains. Festivals, public art, and murals integrated into building facades are central to the district's identity and community life. "What sets MidCity apart is its grounding in culture as an economic catalyst. Gener8tor MidCity supports more than 100 companies, has created over 700 jobs, and raised \$20M+ in capital. Culinary partnerships with Auburn University and Hatch extend opportunity, workforce training, and identity—making MidCity a model of New Urbanism rooted in place and people," the team explains.

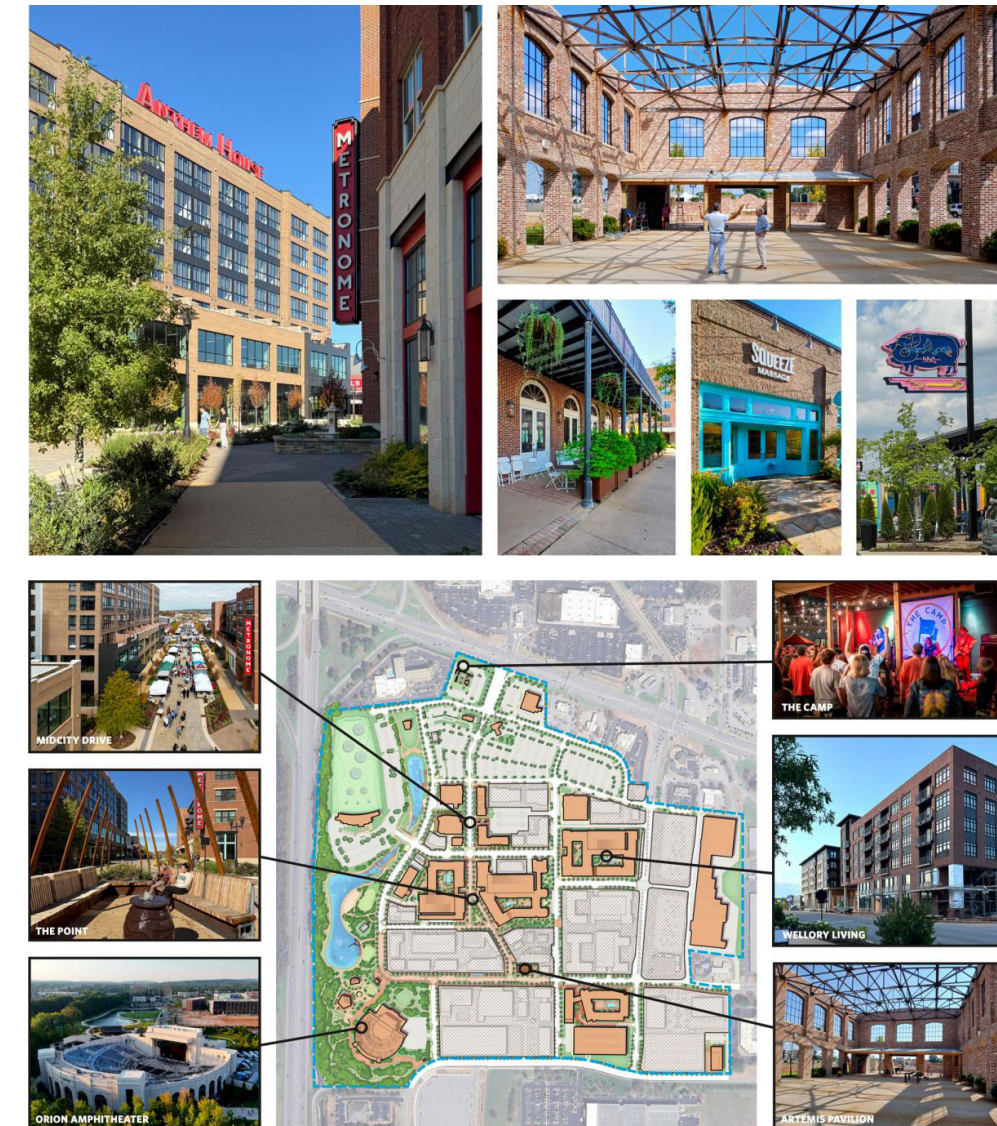
Dennis Madsen, Manager of Urban and Long Range Planning for the City, sums up MidCity's impact: "Not only has it breathed new life into a struggling site, it has grown into a key quality-of-life asset for one of our most important employment centers (Cummings Research Park, the second largest research park in the United States), become a recruiting tool for Huntsville's colleges and universities, and spurred reinvestment along a crucial commercial corridor (US-72W, aka University Drive). ... As a planner, I'm generally an optimistic person, but the maturation of MidCity has surpassed my wildest expectations."

MidCity District

Urban Design Associates, Principal firm

RCP Companies, Nadia Niakossary, Senior Director of Development

RCP Companies, Max Grelier, Co-Founder/Executive



MERIT AWARD

New mixed-use development at Nansledan, Newquay in Cornwall UK

THE NEIGHBORHOOD, THE DISTRICT, AND THE CORRIDOR
CORNWALL, UNITED KINGDOM – ADAM ARCHITECTURE

Nansledan is an extension of the town of Newquay in Cornwall, UK, restoring a sustainable, efficient pattern of growth, in keeping with the original settlement. Newquay refers to a “new quay” that was built on the north Cornwall coast in 1439—so the town of 24,000 people has sustained itself for nearly six centuries.

Nansledan is a 620-acre, compact, mixed-use, mixed-income development on land owned by the Duchy of Cornwall, which is also building the renowned Poundbury in Dorset, 140 miles to the east. The pattern of small blocks and walkable streets is distinct from the recent developments around Newquay, which feature cul-de-sacs and larger blocks. Nansledan is a worthy successor to the older, historic parts of town, where the streets form the foundation of a strong public realm, and building frontages shape it, making walking a pleasure.

Nansledan's principal design firm, ADAM Architecture, was recognized by the 2026 Charter Award jury. Launched in 2013, the project has seen 900 homes built to date, in addition to 40 businesses, including shops, cafés, bars, offices, a fitness center, and a church. By 2045, the town is planned for:

- 3,700 homes, of which 30 percent are affordable;
- 936,260 square feet of employment space delivering up to 3,700 jobs (one per household);

- 328 acres of open space;
- A new main street and district center;
- Eight walkable neighborhoods designed around local centers.

“Nansledan serves as a potent demonstration of the relevance of traditional placemaking to creating new mixed-income communities that are walkable, sustainable, and beautiful,” notes Eric Osth, a board member of the Institute of Classical Architecture & Art in New York City. “This innovative development seamlessly integrates much-needed affordable housing alongside market-rate residences in the familiar form of a remarkable traditional town. The Nansledan model is at the forefront of the drive to address the contemporary housing crisis, and we hope it will inspire additional communities in the UK, the United States, and worldwide.”

The development is strong in its civic buildings and infrastructure, the public realm, and public open space. The design team's list of civic provisions is impressive:

Local centers. Nansledan is divided into eight neighborhoods, each with a five-minute walk to a local center. These micro-civic hubs are arranged around a square or green and combine a mix of uses, helping residents to meet daily needs on foot. One of these centers,



New mixed-use development at Nansledan, Newquay in Cornwall UK

ADAM Architecture, Principal firm

Sam Kirkness, Duchy of Cornwall, Executive director of development

Peter James, Duchy of Cornwall, Project manager

Nick Pollock, Duchy of Cornwall, Head of planning

Hugh Petter, ADAM Architecture, Director

Peter Matravers, AWP Awcock Ward Partnership, Technical director

Andrew Smith, Fabrik, Managing director

Philip Fry, CG Fry, Managing director

Steve Goldsworthy, Wain Homes, Acting Managing Director – South West

Eugene Rapson, Morrish Homes, Joint Managing Director

Peter Hume, Purl Design, Director

Tricia Langdon, ALA Architects, Architect

Ross Sharpe, Yiangou Architects, Director

Cory Babb, ADAM Architecture, Senior Associate Urban Designer

Andrew Rowland, ADAM Architecture, Architect

Kresennik Pennfenten, is marked by an 18-foot granite obelisk as a civic focal point.

Market Street. This district center is within a 15-minute walk of all residents. The first phase, opening in 2026, includes an 8,000 square foot public event square and a 7,700 square foot traditional market hall, alongside other mixed-use focused on local craft. Market Street is located on a primary traffic route through the development.

Newquay Community Orchard. Established in 2015 on seven acres of Nansledan land, this not-for-profit initiative is focused on holistic wellbeing, and provides orchards, and community gardens alongside a community building that hosts education programs, wellbeing support, and a café.

Skol Nansledan. Opened in 2019 as Newquay's first new school in 30 years, this elementary school accommodates 420 pupils in two classrooms per grade on an 11.5-acre site.

Nansledan Community Centre. Operated by the community association, this 860-square-foot bookable venue provides flexible space for meetings, events, and activities within one of the local centers.

Stone-clad bridges. Two graceful stone-clad bridges opened in May 2025 cross the Nansledan valley. Designed for 20,000 vehicle trips per day, they facilitate both a bypass for Newquay and a new main street for Nansledan. More than infrastructure, they serve as architectural landmarks—symbols of identity and civic pride in the landscape.

Railway Station. A replacement railway station and park-and-ride facility provide residents with convenient walkable access to the railway network, alleviating congestion at the adjacent terminus in Newquay.

Remembrance Woodland. Opened in 2021, this one-acre woodland of 100 trees offers a tranquil outdoor space for remembrance and

reflection of those who have served in the armed forces.

Future civic spaces. With the development partially complete, additional civic spaces remain to be realized. The master plan allocates sites for a doctor's office, pharmacy, church, and five more local centers.

The development includes 328 acres of public space (more than half of the total land area and eight times the amount required for a project of this size), and 65 percent of it is complete or under construction. These public spaces can be broadly categorized in three ways:

Play and recreation spaces. There are three play areas currently, two for younger children and one for older children and teens, with a skate park and pump track. Two full-sized playing fields are adjacent to the elementary school. Nansledan has taken over the lease of a fitness center, with an adjacent 18 acres of fields for a range of sports. “Over one mile of the development's original hedgerow tracks has been retained and integrated into Nansledan's connected walking and cycling network,” the design team explains. Finally, the 1.1-acre urban park at the center of the development is the key space for public activities.

Natural and semi-natural landscapes. A 75-acre natural green space provides 2.3 miles of trails through rolling wildflower meadows. A 33-acre wetlands integrates sustainable drainage, trails, and habitat enhancement. Sixty-two acres of open space on the east side defines the development edge and protects “residents' connection to nature in perpetuity,” the design team explains.

Local food production. “A network of community gardens, orchards, and espaliered fruit trees are planted throughout the open spaces and public realm as part of an ‘edible streets' strategy,” the team explains. A total

of 5.6 acres of community gardens and orchards are frequently combined with play spaces, allowing parents to tend their plots while children play nearby.

Through this carefully planned public realm, Nansledan offers a wide range of housing types and affordability. Affordable units are indistinguishable from the market-rate housing. Nansledan celebrates Cornish culture through a pattern book and design code that ensures all architecture draws from regional vernacular—using locally sourced slate, granite, and lime render.

Two housing projects underway address homelessness. One will provide 24 homes for local adults experiencing homelessness. A second project will provide apartments for young people aged 18–25 who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Both projects are built to the same high standards as all other housing in Nansledan.

For the town of 24,000 people, Nansledan offers substantial growth that is socially conscious, environmentally sustainable, and that reinforces local culture. And it's economically sound. The market endorsement of this approach is evident in the 12 percent value premium over comparable developments. The development could handle most of the town's growth for the next two decades.



MERIT AWARD

Village of Heulebrug, Knokke-Heist, Belgium

THE NEIGHBORHOOD, THE DISTRICT, AND THE CORRIDOR
HEULEBRUG, BELGIUM – DPZ CODESIGN

The Village of Heulebrug is a 66-acre urban village, an extension of the City of Knokke-Heist, Belgium, that delivers social and affordable housing along with exceptionally competent vernacular architecture. DPZ CoDesign was recognized by the 2026 CNU Charter Awards jury.

This village takes the form of an urban neighborhood—a modified grid at the scale of a five-minute walk from the center to the edge—comprising a near-complete example of traditional neighborhood design. DPZ collaborated with the late Leon Krier in the 1998 charrette. The vision has been implemented and stewarded over nearly three decades by the municipal client, WVI (West-Vlaamse Intercommunale).

The blocks are organically shaped, with narrow streets that emulate the best neighborhoods of the historic seaside resort city. Even the one busier street through the village was reduced to a size that keeps traffic moving slowly, balancing power among pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers. A tower next to a square punctuates the center of the new neighborhood.

The civic tower terminates views and is visible over the roofs of buildings throughout much of the village, orienting pedestrians to the center. Northern and western edges of Heulebrug seamlessly connect to the existing urban fabric,

while the southern and eastern edges face the City's greenbelt. A trail and right-of-way preserve views of the open space, which the planners describe as a "second coastline."

Heulebrug offers a mix of market-rate and affordable housing through public-private partnerships, including a wide range of housing types for the City, which has experienced rising prices due to international demand for real estate. Heulebrug's first phase, launched in 2002, included 185 building plots, 26 social (publicly owned) housing units, and 124 private apartments, reports the design team. Of the 124 apartments, 90 were available for sale, while 34 (25 percent cheaper) were offered exclusively to buyers meeting income conditions.

Sales for the second and final phases began in 2017, including 159 council plots for single-family homes and at least 54 social housing units, they report. The plots were allocated objectively, prioritizing young resident families, and conditions were tightened to prevent financial speculation, such as a 20-year ban on reselling the building plot.

This phase nearly completes Heulebrug, with affordable, high-quality, and sustainable rental homes on 24 of the 159 plots, which will be offered to the Affordable Rental Agency in Knokke-Heist. The village is about 80 percent



built out with 851 living spaces, civic uses, and a small amount of commercial space.

At the time, traditional architecture was difficult to build in Belgium, and the plan and design came under attack from the architecture profession. But it had the support of then-Mayor Leopold Lippens, who decried the ugliness of late 20th Century city building and sought a better example for Knokke-Heist. He insisted on hiring DPZ after learning about Seaside. Lippens died five years ago, but lived to champion the project for decades—along with people he hired like engineer-architect Mathias Delrue, who has worked on Heulebrug for more than 25 years.

Recognizing the difficulty of building Flemish vernacular styles in a Modernist design environment, the team created a simple yet precise one-page code of urban and architectural standards. The code governs design aspects like roofs, windows and doors, exterior walls, and other elements. The team also created an elevation matrix and renderings to make the text code visually clear to architects, builders, public officials, and residents. The public championing of the design code paid off in today's remarkable results.

This village demonstrates that a municipally-sponsored development designed to address the housing needs of lower-income residents can transcend the conventional perception of a "housing project." Social housing typically consists of uniform, repetitive buildings set amidst minimal, ill-defined landscapes that disregard both natural and cultural contexts.

The approach for affordable housing has inspired policy changes throughout the City. "Thanks to the continued commitment of the mayor and the entire town council, the Heulebrug project has led to the establishment of a broader

and more ambitious affordable housing policy for the entire municipality," explains Delrue. "One important outcome has been the introduction of diverse housing typologies within the neighborhood, including terraced houses, small-scale apartment buildings, and ground-floor spaces for commerce and services. In addition, the renewed appreciation for terraced housing—supported by the platting system (including service alleys and the potential for accessory dwelling units in rear garage structures)—has made these typologies increasingly common in densification, urban infill, and repurposing projects throughout Heist."

The plan emphasizes civic space for play, activities, and general physical exercise, and civic buildings. The municipal tower and community building at the Central Square (named 'Kraaiennestplein' or 'Crow's Nest Square' in English) includes the offices of the public social welfare center, the social housing company, the municipal affordable renting organization, a local police station, and community gathering spaces. The top two levels of the tower include several large public meeting rooms that are used by local associations, and the official city council meeting also takes place there twice a month.

There's also an eastern gate over the main road that goes through the village, which is a civic monument, and a bridge at the central canal. Both feature views of the tower.

"The master plan for the Heulebrug residential area in Heist was ahead of its time," explained the late Leopold Lippens. "This large-scale residential project was developed in the late 1990s by a visionary team of designers according to the principles of New Urbanism. Creating a true village on a human scale was the key principle. I was committed to defending it."

Village of Heulebrug, Knokke-Heist, Belgium

DPZ CoDesign, Principal firm

Leon Krier, Master planner

WVI (West-Vlaamse Intercommunale), Municipal client



MERIT AWARD

Plan Bentonville

THE REGION: METROPOLIS, CITY, AND TOWN
BENTONVILLE, ARKANSAS – DPZ CODESIGN

The Bentonville Community Code, a unified, Transect-based land-use code, was adopted by the City Council in mid-April. The action codifies the City's recent New Urbanist community plan, approved in 2025. Led by DPZ CoDesign, Plan Bentonville, including both plan and code, was recognized by the 2026 CNU Charter Award jury.

Bentonville, Arkansas, the headquarters of Walmart, is experiencing rapid, intense growth that has transformed what was a small town in 1980 into a city of more than 60,000 residents—and it is expected to more than double in population to 140,000 by 2050. The development has been ad-hoc, largely low-density, and automobile-dependent. Fiscal analysis shows the recent growth cannot pay for itself, the planners report.

"Left unaddressed, these conditions would have continued to erode public trust, strain municipal finances, and force growth decisions into contentious, project-by-project negotiations," says DPZ CoDesign. Plan Bentonville, which sets an example for the Northwest Arkansas region, can now be implemented with the Council's action.

Plan Bentonville directs growth to new and existing walkable centers with access to jobs, services, and transportation. This compact growth yields stronger long-term returns for tax expenditures, while preserving existing

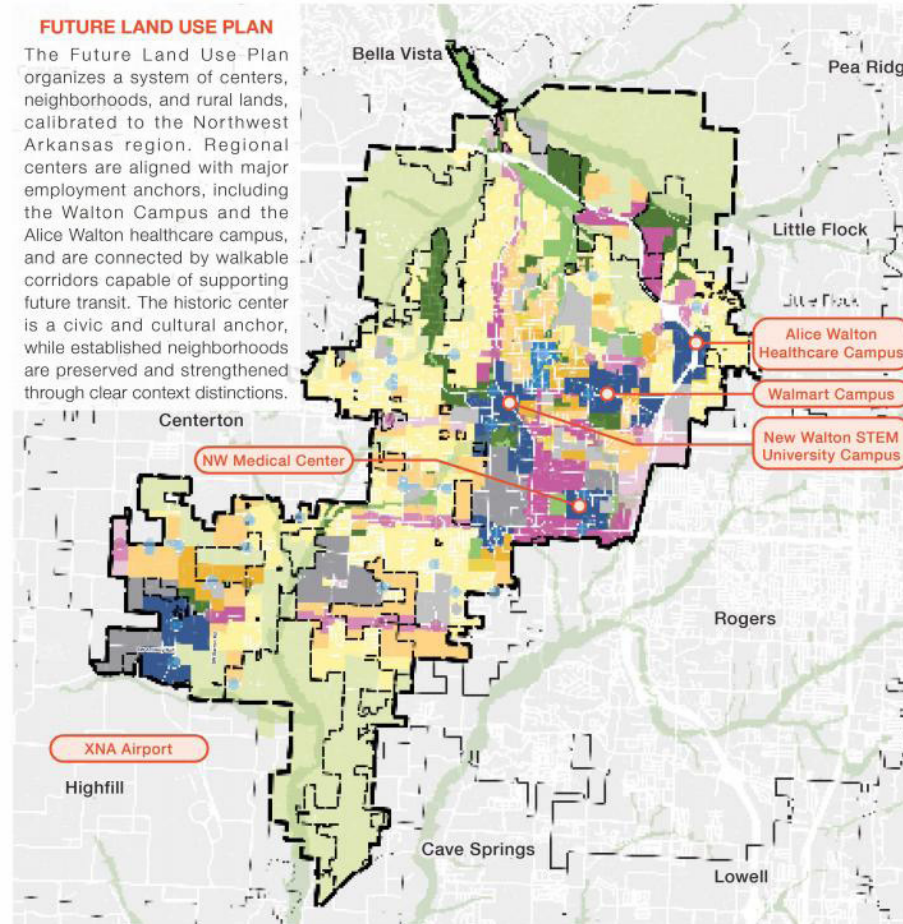
neighborhoods and natural areas. The new code replaces the uncertainty of discretionary approvals with clear, by-right outcomes that align zoning, development standards, and procedures with the new policy, the planning team explains.

"Plan Bentonville is the City's foundational planning document to guide the next 25 years of growth and beyond," says Tyler Overstreet, the City's Planning and Community Development Director.

Infill housing in walkable areas

By legalizing missing-middle and small-scale multifamily housing in walkable areas, the code expands access to housing near employment, education, and daily services. Incremental infill development is permitted by right when it meets the standards, significantly reducing reliance on rezoning and discretionary approvals, the planners told CNU.

That makes development more predictable. Context-sensitive, form-based standards govern building placement, scale, and frontage in both higher- and lower-intensity areas. These standards apply consistently across projects, supporting small and large projects without project-specific negotiation.



Street and block standards in the code require connected networks that support walking, cycling, and future transit expansion, while maintaining access for vehicles and services. Streets are conceived as public spaces that foster interaction and safety, reinforcing the Charter of the New Urbanism's emphasis on human-scaled environments and universally accessible civic realms.

A defining feature of Plan Bentonville is the integration of fiscal performance into urban policy. Place-based fiscal analysis confirmed that compact, mixed-use places generate stronger long-term public returns than dispersed growth. By aligning fiscal outcomes with urban form, Plan Bentonville suggests that economic resilience, environmental responsibility, and social equity are not competing goals, but mutually reinforcing obligations of good governance, the planners say.

Plan Bentonville coordinates fiscal analysis, policy, regulation, and capital investment. Transportation, power, water, and wastewater departments are aligning their long-range capital improvement plans within the same planning framework, closing the gap between aspirations, regulations, and infrastructure investment that underlie policy plans.

For a city with a nascent public transit system, Plan Bentonville lays the foundation for transit-supported growth. Rather than planning transit routes in isolation, the plan places neighborhood and urban centers along corridors that are likely to be major transit routes as the region grows.

Bentonville elevates New Urbanism as a financially responsible development practice, the team reports. Compact, mixed-use places are not only encouraged but also incentivized because they perform better for residents and the public balance sheet.

"The strength of Plan Bentonville lies in its intentionality—pairing visionary leadership with data-driven decision-making rooted in place," notes Kalene Griffith, CEO/President of Visit Bentonville. "It reflects a community that understands it is making significant, long-term business decisions about urban form, mobility, and quality of place, rather than reacting emotionally as a small community. This approach positions Bentonville for thoughtful, sustainable growth."

Plan Bentonville
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 City of Bentonville, Client
 PlaceMakers, Primary collaborator
 LandUseUSA | Urban Strategies, Market analyst
 The Geoaccounting Institute, Fiscal analyst
 Bill Lennertz, CDI LLC, Stakeholder engagement
 Andrew von Maur, Designer & illustrator

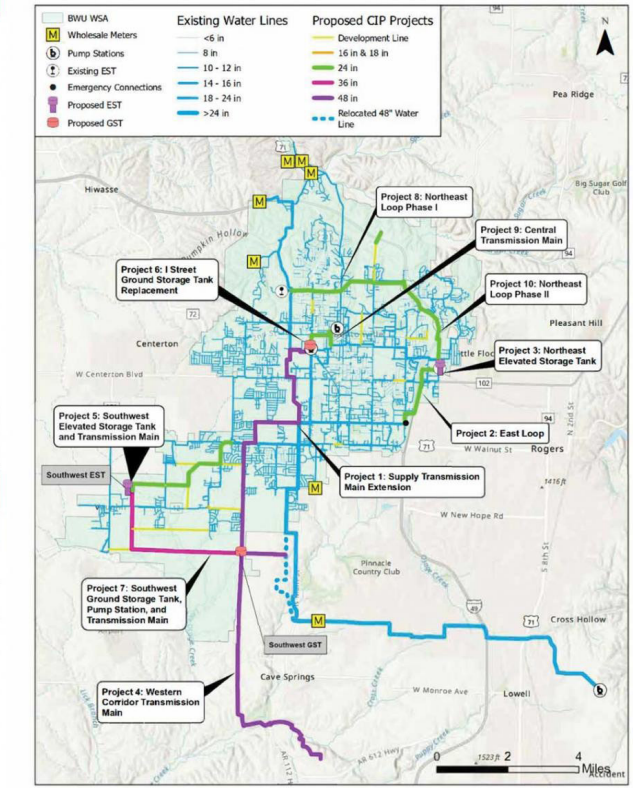
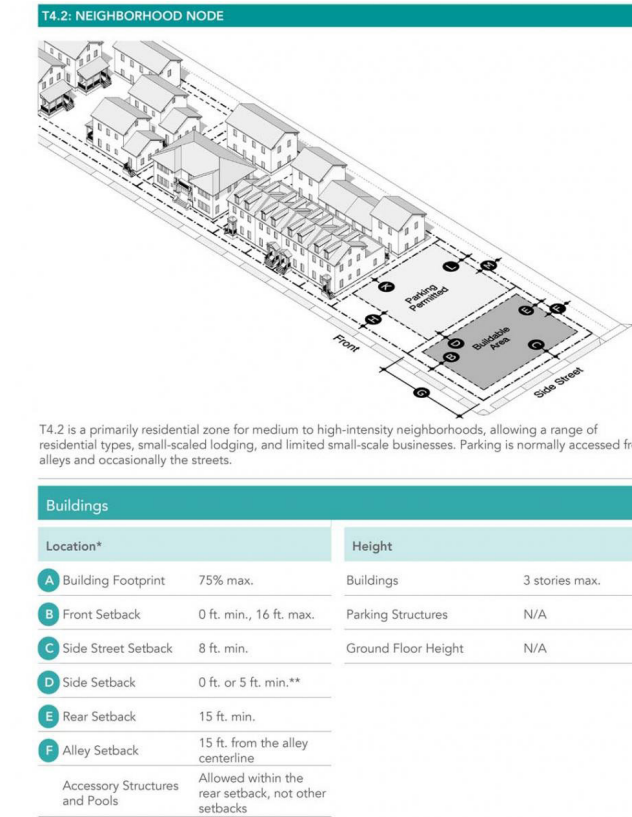


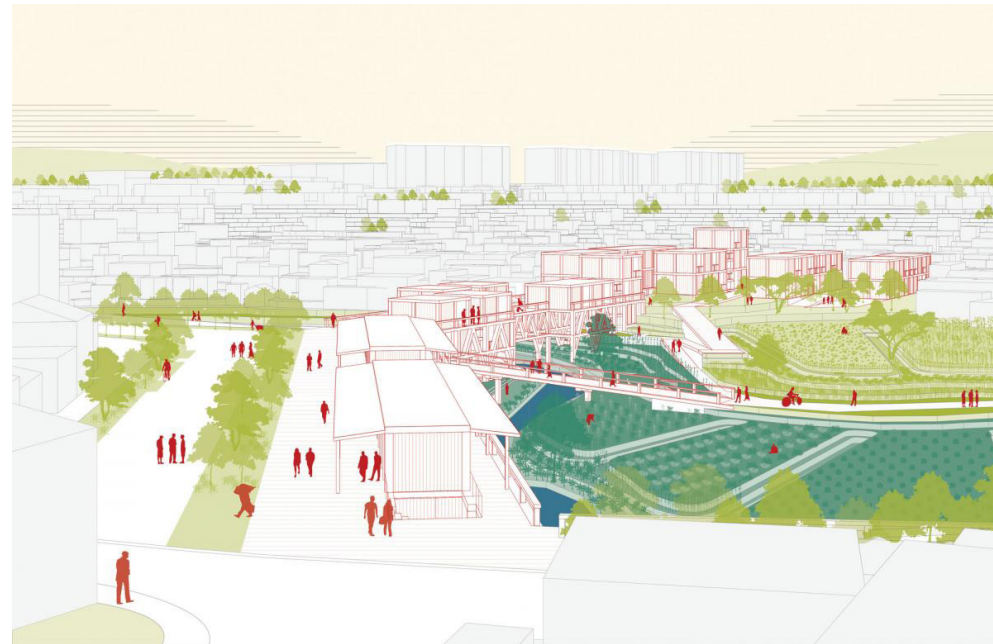
Figure 1-1: CIP Overview Map

STUDENT MERIT AWARD

Hybrid Bridge: A Multi-Level Civic Infrastructure for the Upper Kebena River

THE BLOCK, THE STREET, AND THE BUILDING
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

UNDERGRADUATE INDIVIDUAL – TULANE SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE AND BUILT ENVIRONMENT: ADDIS ABABA RIVER CITY RESEARCH PROJECT & ALEC PAULSON



Hybrid Bridge turns utilitarian infrastructure into a compelling, multifunctional civic space. The Addis Ababa River City Research Project of Tulane’s architectural school won a Student Merit Award from the 2026 Charter Award jury.

Hybrid Bridge proposes a multilevel, mixed-use bridge across the Upper Kebena River in the Kazanchis neighborhood of Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia. The seven-acre academic project includes a public market, residential uses, and connections to the riverfront from the surrounding neighborhoods. The 2026 Charter Awards jury recognized Hybrid Bridge with a Student Merit Award in the Block, Street, and Building category.

The proposal reframes a bridge as multi-level civic infrastructure: an inhabited, programmatic structure that combines pedestrian mobility, flood adaptation, re-housing, and public amenities within one architectural armature, according to the Alec Paulson, of the Tulane School of Architecture and Built Environment. “Rather than a thin span designed only for

movement, Hybrid Bridge acts as both connector and destination—linking streets on both banks while providing continuous access down to river level through ramps and branching circulation.”

Hybrid Bridge advances the Charter of the New Urbanism by demonstrating how a single piece of essential infrastructure can shape walkable, mixed-use, and resilient urban place at the scale of the block, street, and building, Paulson explains.

Hybrid Bridge: A Multi-Level Civic Infrastructure for the Upper Kebena River

Addis Ababa River City Research Project, Tulane School of Architecture and Built Environment

Alec Paulson, Student author

Ruben Garcia Rubio, Faculty advisor

STUDENT MERIT AWARD

Madison Crescent

THE NEIGHBORHOOD, THE DISTRICT, AND THE CORRIDOR
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND
GRADUATE STUDIO/TEAM – UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND: LAUREN MCNAMARA, MAKENNA BENSON & SHANNON SINNICKI



Madison Crescent shows how infill development can offer housing solutions in historic cities. A University of Maryland, College Park design team won a Student Merit Award in the Neighborhood, District, and Corridor category of the 2026 CNU Charter Awards.

Madison Crescent proposes a new use for a six-acre infill parcel in Baltimore that currently includes a former elementary school and community building slated for demolition. It shows how infill development in historic cities can create high-quality public space and unite diverse neighborhoods while solving long-standing housing problems.

Madison Crescent sits between the relatively affluent Bolton Hill neighborhood and the working-class Madison Park neighborhood. The University of Maryland team won a Student Merit Award in the 2026 CNU Charter Awards for the project.

The plan addresses a mismatch between the existing housing stock in Baltimore neighborhoods—a monoculture of similarly sized rowhouses—and today’s market needs. Madison Crescent proposes a total of 141 housing units, including townhouses, two-over-two units, apartments over daycare, and market-rate apartments. “The units are designed to seamlessly integrate with the surroundings but also are market-driven in the sense that they

are sized for the market that exists today in the area, much smaller than the large townhouses that originally comprised the pre-war neighborhoods,” the design team explains.

The proposal creates a new neighborhood ensemble with a clear center and reconnects the plan of the city that had been disrupted in the area, the team explains. It offers residential choice and variety in the form of multiple-sized townhouses and apartments. Finally, it includes amenities such as day-care and a library to bring much-needed services (a retail center heavily patronized by the community is located two blocks away).

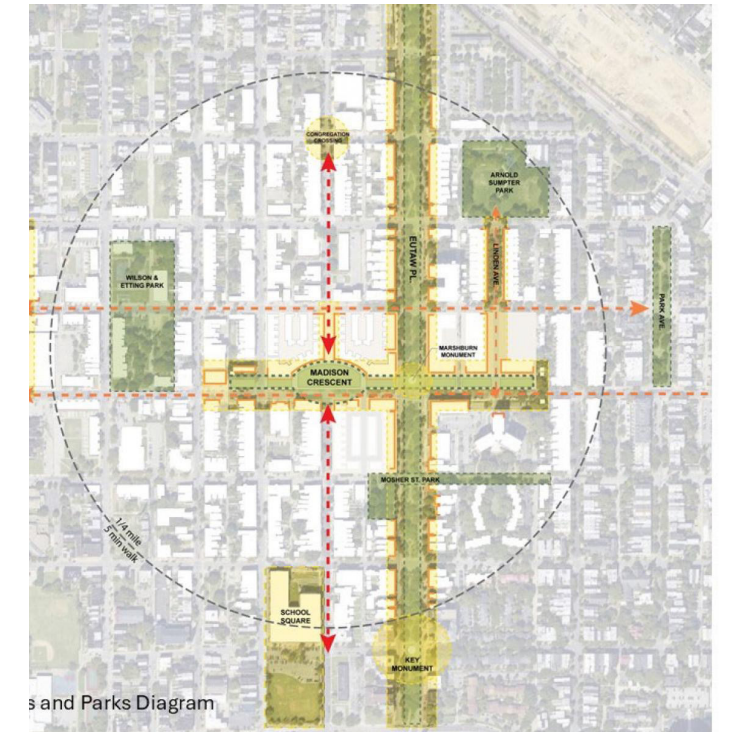
Madison Crescent

University of Maryland, College Park

Lauren McNamara, Architectural designer

Makenna Benson, Architectural designer

Shannon Sinnicki, Architectural designer



Streets and Parks Diagram

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