

Legalize Neighborhoods Again!

**SLUSH
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VOTED
MANIFESTO

AUTHOR

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NO

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Have you ever found yourself driving down a wide suburban street looking at the pole signs and parking lots and thinking, “Surely we can do better than this?” Have you ever wanted to walk out into the middle of a six-lane, medianized, signalized, double left-turn arterial street, wave your arms in the air and say, “Hey! We’re doing this all wrong! This is not how you make a city!” Well, of course you haven’t, because you’d get run over. Six-lane roadways are for cars, not for people, everybody knows that. Which is exactly what the problem is.

Since about the end of World War II, the United States has remade itself from a nation of people into a nation of automobiles. Don’t believe me? Look around you. Unless you live in central Boston, New York, San Francisco or Chicago, chances are you spend most of your waking hours driving—not walking—around a city that didn’t exist fifty years ago—a city made for cars. Interstate highways and incredibly wide arterial streets lead you to office “parks” that are not parks, “garden apartments” where there are no gardens, shopping malls, schools located on vast acreage, and residential “neighborhoods” consisting of nothing but single-family homes on curving dead-end streets. These are not neighborhoods—they are not even a good imitation of a neighborhood, the way some suburban office buildings are a good imitation of commercial architecture. They are highly segregated communities where the only tie that binds one neighbor to another is the confidence that all our houses are approximately



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the same price. Is this where you live, or where you aspire to live? Some call it the American Dream. I call it a nightmare. This sprawling, suburban, car-comfort lifestyle is not how we were meant to live. This manifesto will sketch a brief picture of life before car culture took over, how things got the way they are, why this is not a good thing, and how to get back to a more civilized pattern of living.

LIFE BEFORE CAR CULTURE

I was not born before World War II, but often find myself wishing I was, particularly when I look at old black and white photos of downtown Kansas City in the era before the shopping malls emptied it of retailers.

I actually have memories of pre-car life, when our family owned just one automobile, so my mother would sometimes take my brother and me on the bus to shop downtown. What a wonder the city was, so full of interesting (and odd) people, the proverbial hustle and bustle of workers, shoppers and beggars creating a rich stew of humanity that is still visible today in a handful of urban centers. For most people, however, this city exists only in memory, preserved as a black and white film, like downtown Bedford Falls in “It’s a Wonderful Life.”

What made the city work, then, was its *density*. Prior to the dominance of the private automobile, cities were dense because they *had* to be—people either walked where they were going, or, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, took public transit. This resulted in business districts and neighborhoods with narrow lots, tall, slender buildings, and many different uses in close proximity. The corner grocery store made perfect sense because most people carried groceries home from it on foot. No one stopped to consider whether density was good or bad—it just was. It was how you made cities, because the alternative, non-density, was



inconceivable. Then as now, no one wanted to walk six or ten miles to work. Since no one had cars, people made the obvious choice: to live closer together to reduce distances.

The result of these obvious and natural decisions was the obvious and natural city: still in evidence many places in Europe, relatively rare nowadays in the United States. Such a city had a very dense urban core, filled with high rise buildings (the definition of high-rise varying a good bit depending on whether you were in Chicago or Peoria), surrounded by close-packed neighborhoods of apartments, shops and single-family homes jammed onto narrow lots in a grid of streets radiating out from the commercial core. Oh, and yes, the very rich often owned a “country home” that was several miles outside of town (more about this later).

If you’re holding this picture in your mind’s eye—a dense urban scene with shops and apartments and skinny houses crowded together on narrow streets filled with streetcars and yes, automobiles, plus wide sidewalks where mothers and workers jostle with vendors and layabouts, consider that this scene, for better or worse, is now *illegal* in almost every municipality in the United States. This is true despite the fact that people pay large sums of money to visit such places, e.g., Newport, Rhode Island; Seaside, Florida; San Francisco and Boston (not to mention any number of cities in Europe).

If you stop and think about it, nearly everything about that prototypical city scene has changed dramatically in the past 50 years: The urban core is decayed with surface parking lots, its immediately surrounding neighborhoods are degraded and largely abandoned, the street grid has been decimated by limited-access roadways, and narrow lots have given way to the wide expanses necessary to fit “ranch houses” (sans ranch, of course), strip malls and McDonald’s restaurants. What precipitated this fundamental change in the way we make cities?

AUTOMOTIVE ADVENT



The short answer: the widespread use of private automobiles. Henry Ford's development of the Model T as a car for everyman had the eventual effect of convincing families that they weren't even in the middle class if they weren't in possession of an automobile. With the widespread adoption of private cars as a primary means of transportation, beginning before World War II but skyrocketing after it, our cities had to be remade to fit the new paradigm. And they were. Were they ever. Although suburbs were spawned, ironically enough, by street-cars that could move large quantities of people out of the city rapidly, they didn't see explosive growth until automobile ownership reached the tipping point, in the boom that started shortly after World War II.

The advent of widespread car ownership made the rural retreats of the very rich, an idea that can be traced at least as far back as the Italian Renaissance, into the model for all development. But since not all automobile owners were (or are) super-rich, the patrician villa was downsized and plopped into a suburban lot that is bigger than it needs to be to keep you from smelling the neighbors' cooking, but far too small to be a real "estate," though that is what they are often called. (Note that the language of real estate development evokes the imagery, if not the reality, of the rural retreat: "Bradford Downs." "Patrician Woods." "Carriage Crossing." "Exclusive estates.") The romantic notion of suburban tract home as a rural retreat for the masses still captures the imagination of young families looking to build a nest for their offspring.

Unfortunately, this neither-urban-nor-rural prototype, the suburban home on a larger-than-necessary lot, has become the preferred housing type of recent generations. Though they give an occasional nod to "loft living" or "cluster homes," week after week the housing supplement to your weekend newspaper features the latest so-called "community" of single family detached houses whose features invariably include large attached garages, curving cul-de-

sacs, lush landscaping (well, at least for the model!), and perhaps a pool for the exclusive use of the subdivision's residents. All designed to be approached, seen and experienced from the seat of a private automobile.

It is the automobile that has, pardon the expression, driven the development of cities for the past fifty years. First as an escape from the supposed degradation of the center city, and later as an exploder of distances, the car has remade America's human habitat from the ground up. What happened?

ROADWAY REDO

Skyrocketing automobile ownership necessitated massive road-building. America's roadways had to be rebuilt, starting with the relatively quaint ideas like Route 66 in the 1930s, but rapidly expanding to the more insidious idea of interstate freeways in the 1950s. Now an interstate highway is not a pernicious thing in itself—it's actually a good way to get from Kansas City to Denver without using an airplane—but interstate highways were superimposed onto existing cities without the slightest regard for how the city itself would react. Interstate highways cut off neighborhoods from the central business district and from each other, created shadowy realms of overly broad rights-of-way that became, in the city, literally no-man's-land, and flung traffic (and people) away from the central city like a centrifuge.

Traffic planning became a profession in its own right after the war, one populated by well-intentioned engineers who believed the problem they were trying to solve was how to get the most cars to the most places at the highest velocity safely possible. When you define the problem in those terms, the state of our city streets today seems inevitable: more and wider traffic lanes, broader curves, more turn lanes and, whenever possible, ramps and overpasses instead of intersections. Unfortunately, defining the problem this way did not take into con-

sideration what such traffic planning would do to neighborhoods, to the center city, and most particularly to pedestrians, who seem to have been entirely forgotten in the rush to speed traffic out of the city. Anyone who has ever attempted to cross a modern suburban intersection with multiple turn lanes and absurdly large curves knows that it is a daunting challenge to the able-bodied and a near impossibility for the young, the old and the disabled. And overpasses destroy the ground plane, an amazingly simple concept that in public, people, buildings and cars generally should exist at grade level. Simple as that concept is, it gets violated again and again in efforts to get more cars more places faster than ever.

RETAIL MIGRATION

Soon came the realization that if everyone had a car, downtown might not be the most convenient place to go shopping, since the streets were already crowded and parking was scarce. Kansas City's own J.C. Nichols pioneered the suburban shopping center when he created the Country Club Plaza in what was then a swampy wasteland in the 1920s, but like the road building boom, shopping centers didn't really take off until after the war. Once shoppers (and developers) realized that an alternative to downtown shopping existed, the race was on to evacuate retailers from the center city. In many cities, like my hometown, downtown retail is today either an oxymoron or a sad reminder of what once was.

Not long after the retail exodus began, business owners began to realize that they didn't have to be downtown either, since most of their employees now had their own cars. This realization, coupled with the fact that the upper-middle class of managers and owners had already decamped to the suburbs, began the exodus of office workers from the center city, following on the heels of the shoppers and the merchants. Today, many central "business" districts are a sad mix of government workers, lawyers and creative professionals who still feel the need

to mix it up with each other on the city streets—not that there are many people to mix it up with any more.

BETTER LIVING THROUGH RESTRICTIVE ZONING

As traffic engineers were making our cities more car-friendly, the city planning department was busy cooking up something much worse: single-use zoning. Born out of the perfectly reasonable desire to legislate against slum developments that crowded dozens of families into tiny flats in overscaled walk-up tenements, zoning laws morphed over the decades from a public health necessity into a land development control mechanism. The change in zoning from outlawing slums to planning suburbs took city planning out of the marketplace and into to realm of professionals. While this may have sounded like a good idea, the result was not good. Planners became enamored with the idea of regulating “land use,” a term that would have been meaningless to a 19th century citizen. Regulating land use meant planners and politicians should decide what could go where, based not on historical patterns of development, but rather on the latest trends in planning (or, more cynically, on political patronage). As a practical matter, it meant reserving some tracts for specific types of housing and others for commercial or industrial uses, distinctions that had never before existed in America.

The result of land use planning was the single-use zoning codes in place in virtually every city in America that make neighborhoods illegal today. Under single-use zoning, it is illegal for a bar to be next to an apartment building next to a post office. It is illegal, in some single-family residential zones,



to build schools or churches. It is illegal for retail shops not to have four parking spaces per thousand square feet of store, a formula that automatically guarantees a parking lot larger than the shop itself. And it is illegal, under single-use zoning, to build a grocery store on the corner with a few apartments above it—this relatively simple building type is labeled a “mixed use” that confounds the simplistic formulae of the zoning ordinance.

To make matters worse, single-use zoning became particular in the extreme. Ordinances in some cities not only designate specific zones where “retail” is legal, they then proceed to spell out which retail uses are permitted (e.g., candy stores) and which are not (e.g., dry cleaning establishments). This kind of inductive zoning law proscribes any use that is not specifically permitted, a bizarre inversion of the Constitution’s own limitations on the power of the State.

Zoning has also brought us the ubiquitous setback, the invention of which has proven to be a setback indeed for urban life. Though intended to improve the health and beauty of our cities by creating “green space” and openness, in reality building setbacks contribute to sprawl, destroy the public realm—the notion of a street as a public outdoor room—and create greater distances between buildings, encouraging (or forcing) people to drive instead of walk. Setbacks are yet another illustration of zoning as a good idea that has gone horribly wrong in its current dispensation.

LEARNING TO LOVE SUBURBIA



Whatever else you might say about this development, it is clear that no one walks here!

The objection might be raised that people tend not to complain much about the generally suburban shape of the modern city. I would respond that first, they tend not to think about the city much at all. Pole signs and parking lots seem as inevitable as air and water if they're all you know. And the better suburbs require massive amounts of decorative landscaping, a pleasant enough idea that tends to obscure the fact that you're in an environment that is utterly inhospitable to people, especially people on foot or on bicycles.

Proponents of suburbia point out that the single family home on a large lot (dubbed "McMansions" by some wags) still defines the American dream. If private homes in private yards with two- (or three-, or four-) car garages are what immigrants aspire to, what could be wrong with this picture?

Plenty, as it turns out. Suburban sprawl development may typify the American dream, but it is a dream as illusory as winning the lottery. Suburbia as a utopia is highly overrated. A brief listing of ways in which suburbia, brought to you by single-use zoning, fails as a pattern of human settlement would need to take into account the following observations:

- » It discriminates against any level of income that is not the equal of every other income level in a subdivision.
- » It alienates the home from the workplace, resulting in long commutes, pollution, and traffic accidents.
- » By moving community functions far away from each other, it makes children and seniors entirely dependent on rubber-tired transportation.

- » Its wormy pattern of dead-end streets that characterizes the modern subdivision makes it impossible for children to walk or bike anywhere (except a neighbor's house) safely.
- » Its characteristic lack of sidewalks typifies suburban contempt for the pedestrian.
- » Its low scale of development (mostly one story, sometimes two, rarely three) creates a boring, sprawling landscape without interest or human scale.
- » Its abandonment of the urban grid concentrates traffic on arterial and collector streets, worsening traffic congestion instead of relieving it.
- » It lacks any concept of public space (except perhaps parks), and relegates the functions of the town square to a privatized shopping mall where basic rights of free speech and free assembly are sharply curtailed.

...And so on. Clearly, if you were trying to design a neighborhood that worked for all citizens instead of just for owners of automobiles, the modern American suburb is not the first thing that would come to mind. Or perhaps even the last.

ANATOMY OF A NEIGHBORHOOD

Supposing that you could once again legalize neighborhoods, what would they look like? Would they be starkly urban or as comforting as a Thomas Kincaide painting? Would cars be prohibited altogether? Would you be allowed to have a yard?

Yes, yes, no, and yes. There is no one right way to design a neighborhood, but at the onset of the 21st century, cities have all but settled on the single most completely wrong way. Though

it can vary in a myriad of ways, a good neighborhood is almost always a complete negation of the contemporary suburban development pattern. The one way in which the two are alike is that both should have good public schools.

To be a healthier, more effective human environment, neighborhoods need to have the following qualities:

DENSITY: Expressly prohibited by most zoning ordinances, neighborhoods need at least ten dwelling units per acre, even more in the case of urban neighborhoods. This is not high density (at least not by San Francisco standards), but this ratio precludes a development consisting solely of single family homes on large lots with large setbacks. What it by necessity *includes* is a mix of housing types from apartments to duplexes to flats to townhouses to even a few stand-alone houses—on smaller lots, without giant garage saddlebags.

ACTIVITY: Good neighborhoods are active neighborhoods. People are present on the streets and sidewalks at almost any hour of the day or night. Cars and bicycles share the road in a dance of reasonable accommodation. Mothers push strollers, kids play on the front porch, and strange vehicles or persons are taken note of.

DIVERSITY: Diversity includes not just the obvious mix of ethnicities and cultures, but also diverse levels of age and income. People should not have to move out of their own neighborhood as they reach different stages of life. The name for this idea is “aging in place.” It presumes enough diversity of housing types that as singles transition to couples, families, empty nesters and retirees, there is a housing type available in the neighborhood to fit. In the same way, diversity assumes the existence of many income levels: hourly workers living in dignified dwellings proximate to the managerial class. This does not mean that everyone’s house is the same size. On the contrary, it means a mix of home sizes and types that accommodates a mix of incomes. The holy grail of political correctness, diversity is easier to achieve in the workplace than in a neighborhood, but urban neighborhoods are where diversity has its best shot.

AMBIGUITY: One of the pernicious qualities of single-use zoning is how boring it makes a city. You zone for car dealers, you get—guess what? Car dealers. Retail zones get filled with one-story strip malls—and nothing else. Ditto for R-1 Residential. Rich and rewarding urban neighborhoods have the opposite quality—you never know what might be around the next corner. A small grocery or a small bar? A hair salon or a funeral home? Maybe even a car dealer—hey, it’s been done. One car dealer won’t kill a neighborhood. A mile-long strip of *nothing but* car dealers will.

VITALITY: Everybody wants to live in a vital neighborhood, but what makes a neighborhood vital? My definition revolves around the presence of retail stores. Especially small retailers as opposed to megastores like Best Buy and Home Depot. A vital neighborhood would include enough retail shops to provide for neighbors’ basic needs (food, clothes, hardware, soft goods), with enough variety to animate the principal streets during both the day and the evening hours. Life on the street is not just for the homeless—it’s for everybody—including the homeless. And yes, vitality includes cars. Vitality is not the *absence of cars*, it is the *presence of pedestrians* to tame the wild automotive beast. Parallel parking can provide a wonderful metallic safety zone between pedestrians and traffic.

FLEXIBILITY: Real neighborhoods change over time. Real neighborhoods have the flexibility to allow for change to happen in an orderly way. But change is not wipe-the-slate-clean urban renewal. Change is incremental, gradual, and accretive. But just as historic districts try (in vain) to freeze a neighborhood in a particular time period, zoning laws try to freeze areas with respect to the “highest and best” use of land and buildings. This is unnatural and unfair, and it warps the natural evolution of real neighborhoods. Without zoning, neighborhoods could evolve naturally through cycles of development and redevelopment, growth, decline and renewal.

PUBLIC SPACE: One of the most important qualities of real neighborhoods is the presence of public space. Public space can be as simple as a street that respects the quality of civic life, or as elaborate as Central Park. But it must be public, that is, open to anyone. And it must be a real space, intentional and designed, not a leftover “open space” pushed to the margins of some gigantic parking lot.

WHERE TO, MAC?

It bears repeating that the neighborhood just described is illegal in most municipalities. Too dense, unacceptably diverse in housing types and building uses, built too close to streets which do not meet current (i.e. ridiculously high-velocity) traffic safety standards, this neighborhood cannot be built under planning and zoning ordinances in place in most U.S. cities. (To be fair, many cities have a Central Business District zone that allows dense development and doesn't require setbacks, but this zone usually only covers the current downtown, and often prohibits residential or mixed uses).

What to do? Legalize neighborhoods again! Let's change the laws—zoning laws in particular.

My first inclination is to take all the zoning ordinances and burn them. Like the tax code (manifesto, anyone?), zoning codes have become carbunched with amendments and interpretations that render most of them unintelligible, with the result that they mean, like the Queen of Hearts would say, “whatever I want them to mean,” the Queen in this case usually being the local planning commission. Moreover, we have seen that zoning ordinances are based on a flawed concept: that land uses should be categorized and mapped and regulated like groups of books in a library. What's good for a library is not necessarily good for a city.

Do zoning laws have any legitimate uses? Maybe a couple. Communities might find it useful to relegate certain activities, say, airports, adult entertainment or rendering plants, to the edge of town. Having said that, most zoning ordinances go way overboard, regulating everything from the height of letters on your sign to the color of your awnings to the number of shrubs you must plant per parking space in your (grossly oversized) parking lot. It would be difficult, in my opinion, to sift through all that chaff to find the few grains of wheat in most current zoning laws that have any value. Far better, in my view, to pass an ordinance restricting the locations of demonstrably noxious activities to certain remote locations and be done with it.

Some will protest that zoning ordinances also limit the *scale* of development, preventing unsightly high-rise condos from appearing in upscale neighborhoods. While this view may be reasonably put forward, I disagree with it, giving as evidence the case of Houston, Texas, a city without zoning, where upscale high-rises *do* in fact pop up in upscale neighborhoods, which seem none the worse for their having popped up. Some wealthy people actually *like* the idea that they can move to a high rise when their mansion and grounds becomes too much to handle. The real object of scale limitations in most zoning ordinances is to prevent apartment (which some view as a code word for public housing) projects from occurring anywhere in a suburban community, an insidious goal that is not worthy of public policy.

NEW TRAFFIC PLAN

Once we have held the great bonfire of zoning ordinances, we should turn our attention to the traffic engineers. Now I have nothing against traffic engineers personally. As I said before, as good engineers, they developed workable solutions to the problem as they understood it. My suggestion is that we defined the problem for them the wrong way. The problem of traffic, in my view, is not how to get the most cars to the most places as fast as humanly possible.

The problem of traffic is to design cities and neighborhoods where:

- » People have the option of walking instead of driving.
- » Bicycles are acknowledged as a healthier choice for wheeled transportation.
- » A grid of streets provides multiple alternative routes to get to a destination.
- » Curb radii favor the pedestrian rather than the turning vehicle.
- » Street parking protects pedestrians from the nearest moving vehicle.
- » One-way streets are reserved for historic neighborhoods where the cartway (curb-to-curb) dimension is less than 20 feet wide.
- » Left-turn lanes exist only where they fit, not wherever they are desired.
- » And public transit (including rail transit) is respected as a viable alternative to private cars.

This sort of problem statement is one that I am sure traffic planners are up to taking on, if only the public and our elected representatives will choose to define it in those terms. I hope that traffic planners themselves will begin to see the problem of traffic in different terms and work to change its parameters from within their own profession.

WHAT NEXT?

Once we have burned the zoning books and freed traffic planners from the straitjacket of an equation with too few variables, we will be free to build (or rebuild) neighborhoods as they should be. I believe that a market exists for such neighborhoods. The smattering of urban lofts, coffee shops and townhomes that dot my mostly suburban city gives me hope. Visiting truly urban cities like Chicago and Boston gives me even more hope, tempered by the realization that both Boston and Chicago are encircled by vast suburbs where neighborhoods are still mostly illegal.

I suggest we start this trend not on the periphery of the city, where new development always seems to move, or in new towns on greenfield sites, but atop the grid of streets that exists in that nether region between downtown and the suburbs in almost every American city. The massive investment in infrastructure (utilities, and streets) has already been made. The grid exists. Often the only obstacle (besides zoning and traffic planning) is the perception of this realm as being undesirable, a perception underscored by the obvious disinvestment that has occurred in these areas over the past 50 years. It is much easier, in my view, to overlay urban neighborhoods on areas that are already urban than to attempt to create them out of whole cloth on the periphery of a metroplex.

But let's let suburbs get in on the act, too. Let's encourage suburban towns, after they have burned their zoning books, to develop real neighborhoods with dense commercial cores surrounded by tall apartment buildings and townhouses, corner bars and coffee shops and people walking and riding bikes on something other than bike trails. There's no reason why big cities should have all the fun. Almost every suburb has a dead mall or two that could be razed or remodeled for such a purpose. Imagine: you could build practically an entire town in a mall parking lot, have it be very dense and urban, and still probably *reduce* the storm water runoff from the mall's former parking lot!

SPECIFIC STEPS

Let's get real. Most of you reading this aren't real estate developers (but if you are, call me!). What can you do to legalize neighborhoods again? Here are a few down-to-earth suggestions.

- » Oppose street widening plans in your community unless they are solving a problem other than moving more cars faster through your neighborhood.
- » Demand that any street improvements anywhere acknowledge the importance of both bicycles and pedestrians.
- » Support initiatives for transit, biking and pedestrian routes.
- » Fight to protect the ground plane. Oppose sunken or elevated roadways, and most especially oppose sunken or elevated routes for bikes or pedestrians.
- » Make sure your community's zoning ordinance:
 - A) permits or encourages mixed use development
 - B) does not require setbacks in commercial districts
 - C) does not require excessive (or even adequate) parking for development projects
 - D) does not require "open space" for development that ends up being sickly islands of broomstick trees in a giant parking lot

- » If your community seems committed to sprawl development standards, work to elect new leaders who are willing to change the rules, who recognize the value of walking and biking and density.
- » Engage your neighbors in a conversation about density. Point out that while rural retreats are nice in theory, the reality of low density development is discrimination against our weakest citizens, namely the very young and the very old.
- » Find a dense, rich, mixed-use urban neighborhood in your city and support it. Move there, even. Sure, you'll help drive the costs up, but they'll go up more for the people who come after you.
- » Engage the local media. Write letters to the editor. And don't forget your snoozy sub-urban shopper, weekly or neighborhood insert. All politics is local, especially when it comes to planning and zoning issues.
- » If you hear about a "New Urbanist" development in your area, do two things: First, check out the plan to make sure it's real. Many developers are labeling their projects "New Urbanist" because their tract houses have front porches or sidewalks, without really changing the basic formula of sprawl development. Second, if it seems legit, support it. Go to the zoning hearings and just stand up and say, "I'm in favor of this." You don't need to be eloquent, just be heard.
- » Think about where and when you can patronize local retail businesses instead of the Sprawl-Marts. There may be a cost involved, but there is also a cost involved in living life the way Sprawl-Mart has laid it out for us.

Well, you get the idea. I hope that you now feel a bit more inclined to stand in the middle of your six-lane arterial street waving your arms and saying, “Hey! We’re doing this all wrong!” But please don’t do it. You’d probably just get run over by an SUV on its way to the strip mall.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ It is important to distinguish between **zoning ordinances**, which are mostly evil and unnecessary and **building codes**, which, while not without problems, are generally a good idea. Building codes mandate the safety of buildings of various types for human habitation, especially with respect to structural integrity (think earthquakes) and egress (like fire stairs). Building codes have their own problem with being unable to deal with mixed uses (generally, mixed uses are treated like gasoline and matches by the codes), but nevertheless, they serve an important role in protecting the public. I do not advocate the wholesale burning of building codes, only zoning ordinances.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Architect and urbanist David Greusel is committed to the restoration of American cities. With over 25 years experience in architecture, David has had the opportunity to help design many of the buildings that make up a city, from schools and supermarkets to ballparks and office buildings. Some of those projects have contributed to suburban sprawl, while others have helped to heal the wounds of central cities. A project David worked on of which he is particularly fond was helping to design PNC Park, the home of the Pittsburgh Pirates, which has been rated the best ballpark in America by several publications and websites.

Over the years, David has come to value the “messy vitality” of cities, and has focused his work on projects that help restore the urban fabric. When he is not practicing architecture, David performs in a syndicated radio comedy program “Right Between The Ears,” which is produced by Kansas Public Radio. He is the author of the book *Architect’s Essentials of Presentation Skills*, published by Wiley. David and his family live in the Kansas City area.

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
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