

Communities By Design, a
nonprofit 501c(3) training and education
organization, in cooperation with the
City of Redwood City,
is pleased to present:

The Forum *at Redwood City*

A CONTINUING CONVERSATION ON CITY DESIGN



SMART GROWTH AND THE WORKPLACE

2007-08 SEASON: FORUM #2
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2007
BIG FOX THEATER
2209 BROADWAY
REDWOOD CITY
6:00 P.M. - 7:45 P.M.

On November 7, 2007, the City of Redwood City and the nonprofit "Communities by Design" held the second presentation of the 2007-2008 Forum season. The presentation featured **Dena Belzer** (President, Strategic Economics, Berkeley, CA) and **Ellen Greenberg** (AICP, Piedmont, CA) who spoke on the subject, "Smart Growth and the Workplace."

Ms. Greenberg began the presentation by asserting that smart growth and new urbanist principles fall short of describing how to address the workplace. While the Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU) Charter includes 27 principles that comprehensively cover neighborhood design, none of these principles explicitly focuses on the workplace. Likewise, the smart growth principles developed by the US EPA promote mixed land uses and development directed towards existing communities, but do not directly consider how the workplace is part of smart growth. Since the workplace influences our daily quality of life by providing a source of income, satisfaction, convenience, social interaction, and security, Ms. Greenberg stressed the need for the workplace to be explicitly considered in smart growth planning.

Ms. Belzer went on to discuss how smart growth planning for the workplace must consider the spatial complexity of workplaces. Workplaces require different settings and building types, and have a particular location in a region for a reason. The location of industry is influenced by factors such as accessibility, visibility, price, synergy, firm function, proximity to amenities, and land use compatibility. Planning for the workplace in a smart growth context must consider what industries are clustered or grouped in a community or region

and relate those industries' needs to the spatial distribution of cities to create higher densities that support transit.

While public transit is most successful in traditional, strong-centered metropolitan areas with workplaces and high density development that can be serviced by high frequency transit, the predominant spatial trend in the past decade has been suburb-to-suburb transit. Without high density developments and public transit systems, our suburbs rely on the existing road networks to bear the burden of commuters and peak travel demand.

“The commute trip has a powerful influence on our quality of life and the quality of our communities.”

-Ellen Greenberg

Both Ms. Greenberg and Ms. Belzer believe that increasing transit service to the workplace is critical. Ms. Greenberg cited a report on commuting patterns and trends in America that showed that 20% of trips made on roads are made by commuters. Ms. Greenberg stressed the need for planning transit corridors that link high density areas with transit-oriented industries to reduce commuter trips. If we could use public transit to replace some of these commuter trips, which typically occur during the same time of day and contribute to congestion, high vehicle hours of delay, stress and poor air quality, we could improve our quality of life.

Ms. Belzer and Ms. Greenberg also identified strategies for planning along transit corridors to create a good fit between corridor locations and industries, encourage transit supportive densities, and provide a diverse network of services. They advocate for designing and managing corridors for transit and pedestrian comfort, mixing uses, connecting many origins and destinations, collaborating with corridor property owners, and managing on and off-street parking.

“Smart growth is about smart collaboration.”

-Dena Belzer

While these principles encourage the high concentrations of employment that are needed to make the transit model work, Ms. Belzer and Ms. Greenberg concede that we need to be responsive to the market and realize that not all industries will be transit-oriented and not every community is going to be a major job center. The size of retail nodes will also depend on what the market is willing to bear. However, Ms. Belzer and Ms. Greenberg believe that by concentrating jobs and connecting them with housing and transit, we can create more sustainable and livable places.