

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



THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF INFILL:

Does Urban Evolution Require Divine
Intervention?

2008-09 SEASON: FORUM #8
THURSDAY, MAY 7, 2009
LITTLE FOX THEATER
2209 BROADWAY
REDWOOD CITY
6:00 P.M. - 7:45 P.M.

On May 7, 2009, the City of Redwood City and the nonprofit "Communities by Design" held the eighth and final presentation of the 2008-2009 Forum season, featuring Patrick Kennedy, developer and owner of Panoramic Interests, Berkeley, CA. Mr. Kennedy, who has built his career in infill development and overcome tremendous obstacles to create successful projects in Berkeley (where city ordinances make infill nearly impossible), discussed strategies to promote infill development in his presentation, "The Ten Commandments of Infill: Does Urban Evolution Require Divine Intervention?"

Drawing from his professional experience and current economic trends, Mr. Kennedy identified the major obstacles to creating infill development. First and foremost, he discussed the fact that infill development is significantly more expensive as compared to other types of development. Also, he showed how construction costs have increased over the past five years due to competing demands for materials, skilled labor, trade policies and state building codes. As an example, the cost to build Mr. Kennedy's Touriel Building on University Avenue in Berkeley, CA escalated from \$140/square foot (sf) in 2004 to \$265/sf in 2009, and costs for one of his high-rise buildings increased from \$170/sf to \$350-\$400/sf during this same period. Coupled with the rise in construction costs, the troubled housing market has made it a tough time for developers, making infill development almost impossible to do in California.

Despite the opposition that often accompanies infill development, Mr. Kennedy believes that it is within the interest of cities to invest in them, since it returns great economic rewards. For

example, the City of Berkeley earns substantial revenue from Mr. Kennedy's Gaia Building, which increased the property taxes by nearly 3000% over the building that previously occupied the lot. Additionally, infill development can help cities achieve long-term sustainability goals by promoting the use of alternative modes of transportation, discouraging auto use, promoting local business, and enhancing the pedestrian experience.

Mr. Kennedy believes that until significant regulatory reform allows infill to be more competitive with other types of development, developers simply won't do it. Thus he proposed his ten commandments to make infill viable:

Patrick Kennedy's 10 Commandments of Infill:

1. Increase allowable density.
2. Reduce parking requirements.
3. Reduce open space requirements.
4. Reduce setback requirements.
5. Encourage mixed-use projects, and allow them in areas zoned for commercial-use only.
6. Get enabling legislation from the state legislature to allow modification of local zoning ordinances.
7. Begin by designating only one or two areas for high-density housing and locate it close to mass transit, in whatever form that may be.
8. Identify the existing successes in the designated area, and build around that.
9. Encourage a multitude of smaller projects, different and finely grained, rather than one mega-project.
10. Do whatever it takes to get one project built; make sure it is a good one.

Of his 10 commandments, Mr. Kennedy placed the greatest emphasis on the second and third, since the two greatest factors that cause infill developments to fail are open space and parking requirements. Mr. Kennedy believes that open spaces are overly valued and unrealistically called for in developments, and they need to be reformed to create shared, more meaningful and successful open spaces.

Additionally, according to Mr. Kennedy, parking requirements should be reduced to promote alternative types of transit. While we should ultimately work to create entire neighborhoods that allow for car-free living, we can currently reduce car dependence (and the amount of space devoted to parking) with strategies such as car lifts, City Car Share spaces, and parking spots that are sold independently of units.

“In orthodox city planning, neighborhood open spaces are venerated in an amazingly uncritical fashion, much as savages venerate magical fetishes.”

- Jane Jacobs

In closing, Mr. Kennedy contended that we need to strike a better balance between developers and planners, and suggested using form-based codes and design review to do just that.