

# CHARTER

## OF THE NEW URBANISM

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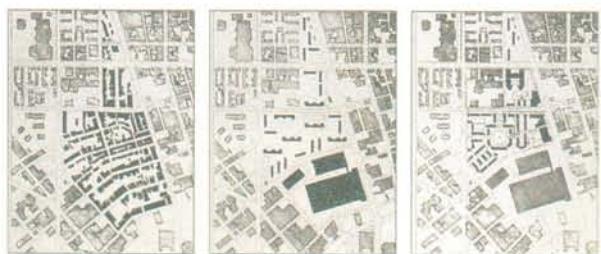
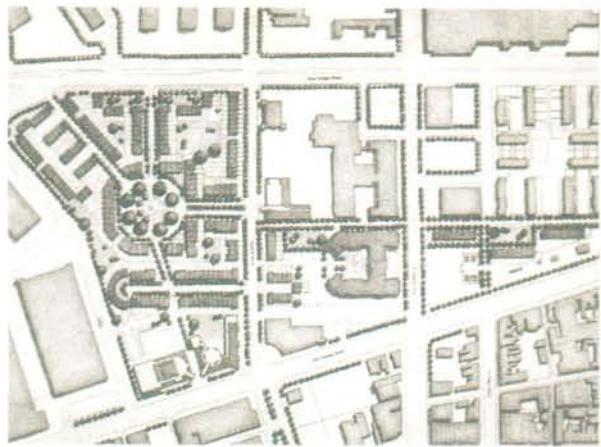
*Edited by*

MICHAEL LECCESSE AND KATHLEEN McCORMICK

CONGRESS FOR THE NEW URBANISM

McGRAW-HILL

NEW YORK SAN FRANCISCO WASHINGTON, D.C. AUCKLAND BOGOTÁ CARACAS  
LISBON LONDON MADRID MEXICO CITY MILAN MONTREAL NEW DELHI SAN JUAN  
SINGAPORE SYDNEY TOKYO TORONTO



1920s

1950s

1998

**FIVE BLOCKS EAST OF BALTIMORE CITY HALL,** Pleasant View Gardens is the first project completed under the federal program called HOPE VI—otherwise known as Homeownership Opportunities for People Everywhere. Pleasant View Gardens replaced grim 1950s-style high-rise public housing with rowhouses, senior housing, and mixed uses. Narrow streets and small blocks typical of Baltimore's historic neighborhoods were reinstated in place of "superblocks."

*Thirteen*

Within neighborhoods, a broad range of housing types and price levels can bring people of diverse ages, races, and incomes into daily interaction, strengthening the personal and civic bonds essential to an authentic community.

MARC A. WEISS

One of the greatest challenges facing the future of metropolitan America is to break up the concentration of poverty in inner-city and inner-suburban neighborhoods. Especially among minorities, particularly African-Americans and Latinos, families are increasingly isolated in communities where too few people have good-paying jobs or own thriving businesses. In these low-income neighborhoods, far too many people are unemployed, living on welfare, working part-time, or even working full-time but for such low wages that they cannot adequately support their children.

Initiatives such as Chicago's Gautreaux program, where low-income families living in inner-city, high-poverty neighborhoods are given the opportunity to move to mixed-income communities, have proven to be highly successful in expanding the availability of jobs, increasing incomes, and improving educational performance. Connecting low-income people to suburban jobs and homes is one much-needed approach; the other is rebuilding cities by bringing back working families through attractive amenities, healthy economies, and affordable homeownership.

The Clinton Administration, led by Secretary Henry Cisneros of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), took up the challenge of generating greater metropolitan diversity and investing in urban revitalization. To accomplish this, HUD drew on the expertise and vision of the Congress for the New Urbanism. I served as HUD's New Urbanism liaison, reaching out to CNU members and involving them in creating and implementing successful new national





1899



1940



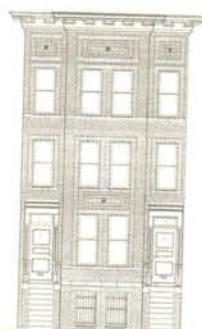
1970



1999



**THE TOWNHOMES ON CAPITOL HILL**, a HOPE VI project, replaces 5.3 acres of abandoned public housing in Washington, D.C., with 154 new homes, a community building, and new public streets. Affordable and market-rate homes are designed to the same standard. Variety is assured through 35 different facade designs, 30 window configurations, and 22 types of bricks, all based upon historical precedent on Capitol Hill. Figure-ground diagrams show how streets deteriorated from 1899 to 1970 as vacant lots and wide roads proliferated, and how this has been repaired.





RANDOLPH NEIGHBORHOOD, a HUD-funded neighborhood redevelopment in Richmond, Virginia (before and after).

programs and local development strategies. The basic philosophy behind our work with CNU is explained in a HUD publication, *New American Neighborhoods: Building Homeownership Zones to Revitalize Our Nation's Communities*:

"Rebuilding neighborhoods with hundreds of new homes presents an exciting opportunity to create better and more livable communities. In recent years, architects, planners, landscape designers, and developers have experimented with the principles of a New Urbanism, combining features of traditional community planning with new ways of organizing daily life in a rapidly changing world.

"The fundamental idea is to view the neighborhood as a coherent unit, where adults and children can walk to nearby shopping, services, schools, parks, recreation centers, and, in some cases, to their own jobs and businesses; where civic centers can serve as focal points for community activity; where streets and blocks are connected with pedestrian walkways and bicycle paths; where public transit is readily available to connect with other neighborhoods and communities throughout the metropolitan region; where automobiles are convenient to use but do not dominate the most visible aspects of the urban landscape with traffic congestion and massive parking lots; and where houses are built closer together, with front and back porches and yards, grouped around tree-shaded squares, small parks, and narrow streets with planting strips.

"Such pedestrian-friendly environments help facilitate positive community spirit and emphasize neighborhood safety and security. The goal of

New Urbanism is to promote diverse and livable communities with a greater variety of housing types, land uses, and building densities—in other words, to develop and maintain a melting pot of neighborhood homes serving a wide range of household and family sizes, ages, cultures, and incomes."

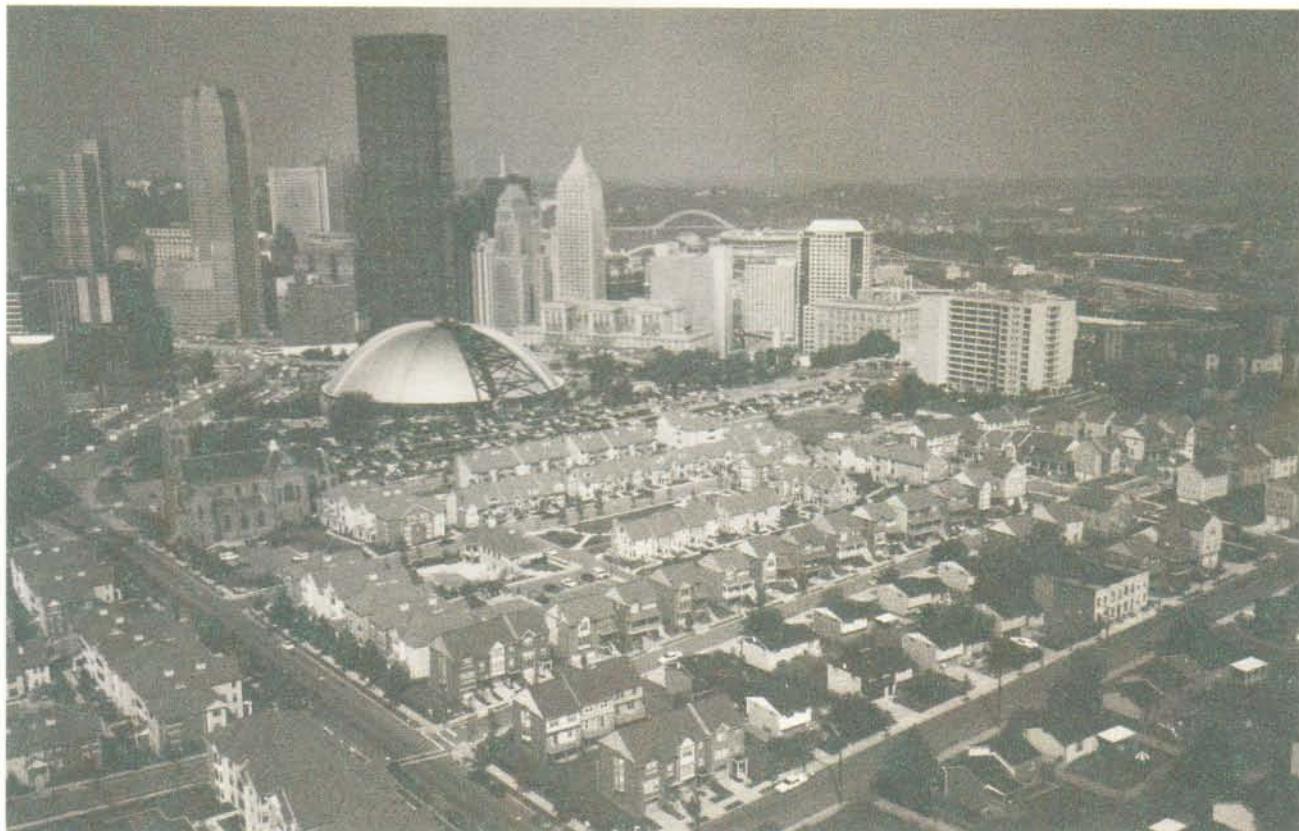
Our goal at HUD was to support the rebuilding of both urban and suburban neighborhoods, respectively, by promoting a mixed-income environment with greater economic and social diversity, along with a mixed-use environment that included better design, planning, and development of land and buildings. Nowhere was this change more urgently needed than in public housing. In many cities the most isolated, deteriorating, and poorest neighborhoods were "the projects." We wanted public housing to become like *Where's Waldo?*—invisible in the urban landscape, interwoven into the wider metropolitan fabric, indistinguishable from all other types of private and publicly assisted homes and apartments.

To pursue this vitally important objective, we established the HOPE VI program to radically transform public housing developments by demolishing vacant high-rise buildings and reconnecting low-income residents to their surrounding neighborhoods; attracting mixed-income populations through a combination of public and private housing, both rental and homeownership; and building genuine community through economic development, human services, and good planning and design. CNU members used considerable

"One of the unsuitable ideas behind projects is the very notion that they are projects, abstracted out of the ordinary city and set apart. To think of salvaging or improving projects, as projects, is to repeat this root mistake. The aim should be to get that project, that patch upon the city, reweaved back into the fabric—and in the process of doing so, strengthen the surrounding fabric too."

JANE JACOBS

*The Death and Life of Great American Cities*



IN PITTSBURGH, CRAWFORD SQUARE in the Lower Hill neighborhood was vacant for 25 years. The redevelopment included 331 residences—rental and owner-occupied—built around parks and reconstituted streets. The revived neighborhood is racially mixed and equally divided between market-rate and affordable homes.

expertise in redesigning public housing developments including Diggs Town in Norfolk. They are assisting HUD and local public housing authorities in spending billions of dollars wisely on redeveloping public housing communities in Baltimore, Charlotte, Chicago, Detroit, Washington, D.C., Boston, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Atlanta, Louisville, and dozens of additional cities.

Similarly, when the Clinton Administration embarked on its ambitious Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities initiative and its new Homeownership Zones program, we turned to the New Urbanists for help in developing innovative concepts and methods of community planning and urban design. Secretary Cisneros asked the CNU to form an Inner City Task Force to work with HUD and local communities in applying the principles of New Urbanism to rebuild inner-city and inner-suburban neighborhoods. The CNU leadership then asked Secretary Cisneros to sign the Charter, and he did so when he gave the keynote address at the Charleston congress in 1996. Since that time, CNU's Inner City Task Force has played a major role in both the HOPE VI and Homeownership Zones efforts, serving as faculty in HUD-sponsored

courses to educate and train local officials in the use of New Urbanist ideas to improve development practices and build better communities.

Leaders of the Congress for the New Urbanism produced for HUD a landmark document, Principles for Planning and Designing Homeownership Zones, based on the key ideas in CNU's Charter. This document was used by all of the 110 local government applicants for the \$100 million nationwide Homeownership Zones grants competition in 1996. HUD awarded extra points to applicants for development proposals that incorporated "innovative and creative community planning and design" strategies using New Urbanism principles.

The bottom line is this: To achieve a prosperous and just society with a high quality of life for all our citizens and families, economic, social, and physical diversity are essential elements for the long-term success of every neighborhood and community. One of the best ways to promote such a healthy diversity of homes and people is by utilizing the principles of the Charter of the New Urbanism.

#### MARC A. WEISS

Marc A. Weiss, Ph.D., a former professor of urban development and planning at Columbia University, served as special assistant to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) from 1993 to 1997 and was a senior policy adviser to the Clinton-Gore campaign and transition in 1991 and 1992. Weiss is a senior fellow at the Center for National Policy in Washington, D.C., and is the author of many books and articles, including *The Rise of the Community Builders* and *Real Estate Development Principles and Process*. He is currently co-authoring a book with Henry Cisneros on the future of American cities and regions.

"Nobody not under the control of some bureaucrat or commissar would ever wish to live in a 'housing project'... nobody not under some such control ever has."

PETER BLAKE

*Form Follows Fiasco*

## Diggs Town, Norfolk, Virginia



The Diggs Town housing project was once a dangerous, decaying, 30-acre island of impenetrable superblocks where gunshots rang out in the night. Today, thanks to a unique collaboration between architects and tenants, it has become a genuine neighborhood, with lovingly tended yards and flower gardens, safe, well-traveled streets, and a burgeoning sense of community.



Architects began the redesign by opening up the project to the surrounding neighborhoods and transforming it into a series of small villages. New streets and paths have given it the texture of a normal neighborhood in which each unit faces a street and has its own address and front yard. Picket fences help define private and public areas, and traditional porches allow tenants to talk with neighbors while keeping an eye on the street. Drug dealers, finding little privacy in the narrow streets, have gone elsewhere, and crime and violence have decreased. And now that they are in charge of the space in front of their homes, residents have begun to care for their properties and take pride in them.

While no one believes that the physical changes in Diggs Town have solved all of its problems (65 percent of the 4,000 tenants live below the poverty line), the newly energized community has been liberated from the stigma attached to public housing.

— GIANNI LONGO

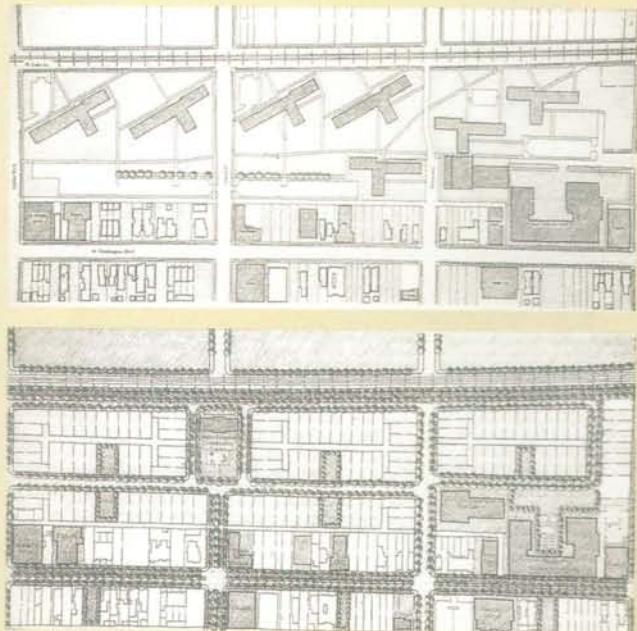
*A Guide to Great American Public Places*

### DIGGS TOWN

#### TRANSFORMED:

Common areas that had become urban DMZs were revived by re-creating neighborhood street patterns lined by front porches. Each house now provides an individual address for residents.

## Key Elements of HOPE VI



**IN CHICAGO, THE HORNER NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN** eliminates dysfunctional 13-story towers of public housing and replaces them with

townhouses, duplexes, and small apartment buildings. Intimate, tree-lined streets supplant the inhumane, unsafe "superblocks."

- New developments are designed to human scale. Superblocks are divided into smaller blocks. High-rise buildings are demolished and replaced with townhomes, single-family homes, and smaller apartment buildings.
- Civic uses such as recreation and medical facilities, village centers, and shops and small businesses are included in the neighborhoods.
- Market-rate and affordable housing are indistinguishable from each other.
- Resident incomes are mixed; units are rented or owned by middle-class, working-class, and publicly subsidized households.
- Homes are close to the street, with front windows and porches.
- Residents have street addresses rather than project addresses.
- Back and front yards belong to individual units, creating "defensible space."
- Parks are small and placed where they can be observed closely by residents.
- New streets that break up "superblocks" are designed to be relatively narrow and have on-street parking and traffic-calming devices like crosswalks.
- Tenants are carefully screened, and rules are strictly enforced.

