



Hollidaysburg, PA
A National Main Street Center
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Build a Better Burb

SPRAWL RETROFIT TOOL

MAIN STREET CENTER AS A MODEL FOR SPRAWL RETROFIT

Main Street Center as a Model For Sprawl Retrofit

This document is one of a series of created for Build a Better Burb, CNU's Online Journal of Suburban Design. The series emerged from the Build a Better Burb Sprawl Retrofit Council in Miami, Florida, in March, 2016—an event aimed at expanding transportation choice, sense of place, and sustainability of the Suburbs.

The Problem

Suburban areas in need of transformation often lack an oversight organization to join, providing a network of support.

Discussion

The National Main Street Center (NMSC), a program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation works with a network of coordinating programs and local communities to encourage preservation-based revitalization of downtowns.

The NMSC is found in 40 states and a number of large metropolitan areas and provides numerous incentive programs geared towards low interest loans and tax relief (TIFs, Enterprise Zones, Redevelopment Funds, etc.). The program is part of a network of state organizations that influence elected officials and promotes community improvement.

Using the Main Street model, failing downtowns are led from concept to

implementation and communities are transformed. Prior to the NMSC, the nation's main streets were dying with no one to turn to.

Similarly, indoor malls, strip centers, big box stores, and fast food outlets are sometimes left vacant; surrounded by overgrown parking lots that front streets designed solely for vehicles. Land values are depreciating and budgets strained.

Studies indicate that people (especially millennials and boomers) crave mixed use, walkable environments. The real estate market and developers are responding to this shift in demand. CNU and similar organizations have identified tools to transform failing suburban areas into vibrant, pedestrian-friendly places: www.cnu.org/our-projects/sprawl-retrofit

A Solution

Consider creating a “gatekeeper” organization similar to the NMSC to connect suburban communities to a newly established “Sprawl Retrofit” Organization (SRO). The SRO would provide jurisdictions with policy proposals, regulatory frameworks, databases, and design tools to repair sprawl with sustainable compact, connected, and complete communities.

More Information

National Main Street Center
www.mainstreet.org

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