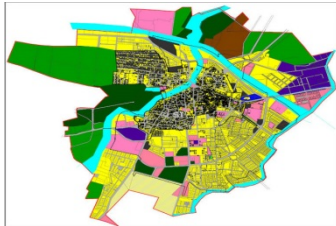


Most New Development Can Take Place on Existing Sites

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<http://sourceable.net/new-development-can-take-place-existing-sites/>



Through 2030, the space needed in the US for new non-residential development will total about 130 billion square feet.

That compares to the 84 billion square feet already built, according to Professor Arthur C. Nelson, executive director of the Metropolitan Research Center at the University of Utah. In addition, the US population is projected to increase from 300 million people in 2006 to 400 million in 2034 and 500 million in 2050, requiring substantial investment in new housing. Australia is already more urbanized and faces strong population growth, as well.

But rather than consuming farmland or woodland, there is another option. The majority of the land used for development, Nelson said at the Conference for the New Urbanism 21 in Salt Lake City, will be currently used land that's "recycled" with new development.

Because retail and commercial space are redeveloped more quickly than housing, within only 20 to 30 years many of those buildings will be ripe for redevelopment.

"One of the things going for us is that these commercial properties are not built to last," Nelson said. "They're built for the investment horizon of the investor."

Compared to new builds on raw land, those properties offer:

- Locations on existing highways
- Transportation corridors that are transit ready
- Infrastructure for electric, sewer, and water that is already in place

- Single, profit-motivated ownership that is willing to redevelop
- Sites that are flat and well-drained
- Residential neighbors, vexed by the current declining, outdated properties, can become allies if properly engaged
- Zoning committed to commercial or mixed use
- Sites closer to other existing and future amenities

Transit oriented development (TOD) will be a major driver of new development, both residential and non-residential. Nelson noted that surveys indicate there will be strong demand for mixed housing options such as smaller single-family and attached homes, in walkable and New Urbanist neighborhoods, with higher walk scores, near transit stations. Therefore, we should redevelop commercial corridors and connect them to bus rapid transit (BRT), streetcars, and other forms of transit.

“Redevelopment of commercial corridors can meet a large share of the emerging market demand,” Nelson said.

In fact, he said, about 70 per cent of new development will take place on already developed suburban land. But with a commitment to greater density, all of the land needed can be land that’s currently used as parking lots.

Specifically, Nelson described typical suburban zoning as about 1050 people per square kilometre in the US, and about 2400 to 4600 people per square kilometre in suburban Europe. By approximately doubling the compactness, developers and municipalities could meet all the needs for land for new development in most of the nation while remaining far less compact than European suburbs.

The next issue, though, is what to do with the cars after redeveloping many of the parking lots. Though new development will trend toward higher density and walkable urban projects, cars will still be present in suburbia.

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