



A NEW ULI PUBLICATION, *SHIFTING SUBURBS*, EXAMINES CREATIVE USE AND ADAPTATION OF INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT COMPACT DEVELOPMENT IN AMERICA'S SUBURBS

For more information, contact Trish Riggs at priggs@uli.org; 202-624-7086

WASHINGTON (December 18, 2012) – Successful strategies for creatively using and adapting infrastructure to support more dense development in America's suburbs are highlighted in *Shifting Suburbs: Reinventing Infrastructure for Compact Development*, a new report from the Urban Land Institute (ULI).

The report focuses on the growing trend for suburbs to be redesigned and redeveloped to be more people-oriented than car-dependent, offering more options for walking, cycling or using public transit to get from one place to another. With the U.S. population anticipated to grow by 95 million people over the next 30 years, and with the vast majority of this growth expected to occur in the suburbs of metropolitan areas, the challenge of providing the appropriate infrastructure to encourage compact growth has never been more important, notes *Shifting Suburbs*. Specifically, suburban arterials and first ring suburbs would benefit from the development of new approaches to solving infrastructure and land use challenges, it says.

The steady movement toward more compact suburban growth is being driven in part by Generation Y, a key demographic group (numbering 80 million) entering the housing and jobs market. These young professionals tend to favor the convenience and choices provided by urban-style environments, but often live outside of city centers for employment or financial reasons. Fitting their lifestyle preferences into a suburban setting has, in many markets, triggered a movement to rethink traditional infrastructure design, the report says.

"America's suburbs are experiencing a dramatic shift away from the development patterns of previous decades, which were almost entirely car centric," said ULI Chief Executive Officer Patrick L. Phillips. "There is an increasing demand, especially among Gen Y, for high-density living environments that provide access to more transportation choices. Through *Shifting Suburbs*, ULI is drawing from some of America's most innovative suburban redevelopments to share lessons learned about adapting and reusing infrastructure to fit the changing needs of residents. We're striving to help both private- and public-sector organizations determine how to plan, fund and finance the often complicated infrastructure required for successful compact development."

Shifting Suburbs examines in extensive detail eight suburban infrastructure projects: Bridge Street Corridor in Dublin, Ohio; Aurora Corridor in Shoreline, Wash.; Belmar in Lakewood, Colo.; State Route 7 in Broward and Miami-Dade Counties, Fla.; White Flint/Rockville Pike in Montgomery County, Md.; Richardson, Texas; CityCentre in Houston, Tex.; and West End in St. Louis Park, Minn. The report evaluates the significant challenges faced by these places in trying to establish themselves as more compact suburban locations, including overcoming community resistance, obtaining the necessary funding, negotiating cross-jurisdictional planning issues, and establishing the required skill sets among the public and private organizations delivering redevelopment projects.

The following strategies, concludes the report, are key to building more compact and pedestrian-friendly places:

- **Build partnerships** - Effective partnerships, especially between public and private sector organizations, are essential. The report highlights West End as being a particularly strong example of the long-term value of such collaborations. In addition, it notes that collaboration between private sector companies is also emerging as a powerful organizing force. The report cites the White Flint Partnership's aggregation of the resources of real estate companies as a key factor in addressing infrastructure challenges.

- **Take a comprehensive approach** – Suburbs must creatively and comprehensively consider the infrastructure and transportation approach that will best withstand the changing needs of their local communities. For instance, in Belmar, an urban street grid was the transportation pattern of choice, while designers of the West End project carefully orchestrated the reworking of utility infrastructure. In the case of the Aurora Corridor, project leaders sought to maximize bus system improvements with comprehensive upgrades to the corridor and public realm.
- **Use place management** - Fostering sustained engagement with customers and residents is essential in creating thriving destinations. The report highlights the festivals, concerts, farmers markets, and other special events that draw visitors to the CityCentre project in Houston. “Soft” infrastructure strategies such as business improvement districts and community improvement districts apply coordination and promotion methods to suburban places.
- **Emphasize public space** – The public realm is an essential part of a suburban place’s infrastructure, with sidewalks and trails providing connectivity, while open space and plazas provide a community gathering place. The report showcases several successes, including CityCentre’s central plaza, which hosts hundreds of events each year. The upgraded, wide sidewalks and landscaped medians that provide pedestrian access along Aurora Corridor are also cited.
- **Implement proactive planning** – Effective planning, through the establishment of market studies, infrastructure strategies and zoning changes, can help facilitate compact development by minimizing uncertainty and encouraging redevelopment that fits with a larger vision for the community. In particular, Dublin is commended by the report for laying the groundwork for more compact future development.
- **Foster stakeholder engagement** – Proactive engagement with the local community helps reduce opposition and build support for projects. Richardson is cited for fostering extensive public engagement in its transit-oriented development strategy, as is the White Flint Partnership, which harnessed the power of social media to build public support for the corridor’s transformation.
- **Obtain multiple funding sources** - In order to build the transformative infrastructure required by suburban development projects, multiple sources of funding and a variety of financing tools are often necessary. For example, a \$2 million federal grant, along with assistance from a number of foundations, has helped State Route 7 stakeholders in Florida create a plan for the road. In Belmar, the developer paid the transportation construction costs upfront and is slowly being repaid by the city.
- **Ride the demographic wave** - Members of Generation Y are the key demographic driving the demand for compact, walkable places. The report points to Dublin’s successful efforts to transform itself into an appealing living environment for young, talented workers, and to attract companies seeking to employ these workers.

Shifting Suburbs: Reinventing Infrastructure for Compact Development and the activities related to the preparation of the report were generously supported by the Rockefeller Foundation. It is available to download at: www.uli.org/shiftingsuburbs.

About the Urban Land Institute

The Urban Land Institute (www.uli.org) is a global non-profit education and research institute supported by its members. Its mission is to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide. Established in 1936, the Institute has nearly 30,000 members worldwide representing all aspects of land use and development disciplines.