



New Urbanism

Description

Why Current Master Plan Will NOT Work!

New Urbanism Place Making

There has been a lot of talk, argument, discussion or whatever you want to call it, about the so-called “**New Urbanism movement**”. A recent proponent of the “New Urbanism” philosophy is a company called [DPZ](#). DPZ was founded in 1980 by Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk to replace suburban sprawl with neighborhood-based planning. At first glance this sounds like a good idea. But look a bit deeper. If you go to their web site you will find some very interesting things. For instance, the front page of their web site claims **35 Years of Making Great Places**. Does this phrase remind you of anything? Does our new POA Director’s title, **Director of Place Making**, sound familiar?

Under the “**Urban Planning**” tab of their web site they state the following:

DPZ – New Urban Planning

“**Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company** has been a leader in the practice of planning and urban design for over 30 years. Our philosophy is the platform of New Urbanism, a movement promoting mixed-use, traditional neighborhood planning over the segregated-use suburban sprawl seen worldwide. Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk are the co-founders of the Congress for New Urbanism (CNU). DPZ’s principals have been longtime advocates of urban growth through compact, pedestrian-oriented, transit-friendly communities that continue to shape policy and have recently influenced new sustainability codes.”

DPZ in the Village to Develop New Urbanism

Let us take a look at the **Congress for New Urbanism** for a moment. **DPZ came to the village** last year to “study our environment and culture.” They made a lot of observations, then took them back to their offices and built a “customized charrette” to present their findings to the Board of Directors and

any interested residents. They recommended many things such as, “Develop Pocket Neighborhoods” that are designed to be rather small living units by the Village standards that are crammed onto a small footprint. Also, they recommended that we open up our roads and make it easier for non-residents to gain access to their planned urban areas for shopping.

Protective Covenants Changed for New Urbanism Plan

In addition, they said we needed to clean up our Protective Covenants and Restrictions because the appearance of the Village and it’s architecture did not meet the expectations of the new crowds of people that would be attracted to the Village. They also recommended that we install “automatic gates that would read a data strip in each vehicle that passed through the gates. This would allow them to determine how many non-resident vehicles came into the Village and where they came from. This is much-needed information if they were going to test the effectiveness of the marketing efforts of turning us into a major suburban city or town that will attract new people in great numbers. They even helped develop a new roadmap on how to get us there and called it a “Comprehensive Master Plan”.

DPZ Missed These Critical Points

I could go on and on about this subject but I will not because I think **the current Board of Directors already has enough egg on their collective faces**. I will, however, point out a few critical facts about our Village that were missed when DPZ was making our charrette, such as:

- 1 – The Village is located in the mountains.
- 2 – The walkways are not on level, even ground.
- 3 – The streets are typical mountain roads, except they have mostly been paved and have many curves per mile with steep grades and treacherous drop offs.



Many Steep and Winding Roads In Hot Springs Village, AR

- 4 – The largest majority of Villagers are of retirement age or older and a large number of them suffer from various “old-age” maladies, hearing loss, visual impairment, etc.
- 5 – The Village is not located close to a major metropolitan area. Little Rock is not very large compared to most metropolitan areas.
- 6 – DPZ wants to create a much denser population coverage here than we currently have.
- 7 – DPZ is a proponent of getting rid of vehicles wherever possible except for the non-resident traffic they need for our economic health.

Midtown, Bryant, AR

The same web site goes on to say, “Our individualized approach to each project, usually **designed in the company of community stakeholders and tailored to the environmental constraints of each site**, has produced over 500 master plans that have been featured in numerous publications as well as in both mainstream and industry periodicals.” But let’s take a closer look at a nearby project they tried to build nearby in Midtown, Bryant, AR.

Problems in Midtown, Bryant

In 2007 the city of Midtown, Bryant and the residents there went through the same charrette that we did here in the Village. There were a few skeptics about how successful it would be but they felt that it would be a good thing so they bought into the idea. A Developer was selected and the project began. There was a huge issue that came up with the Developer (a local man, Aaron Jones) who was accused of arson in burning down his own multi-million dollar home in 2008.

He was never convicted and a federal investigation is still ongoing but he is still in business and is still

a successful Developer. The only problem is that the development to “urbanize” part of Midtown, Bryant fell flat on its face. There have been many discussions and debates about why the plan did not work with many pointing their fingers at the developer and others pointing at DPZ. Keep in mind that the “Developer” is still in business. Also, keep in mind that DPZ has been paid for their part because they are a “Planner” and they have turned their plan over to the citizens of Midtown, Bryant.

New Urbanism Community, Midtown, Bryant, Arkansas photo provided by Tom and Monica Impellizzeri 1

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New Urbanism Community, Midtown, Bryant, Arkansas photo provided by Tom and Monica Impellizzeri 2

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DPZ Missed Target for Village

DPZ does a good job of designing older urban areas where it is needed. However, **they missed the target for the Village.** The age demographics here in the Village were evidently not taken into account. **Their analysis said to take down the gates and open up DeSoto Blvd to the public . That started a huge rock fight** in the Village. The residents have risen up and said, emphatically “NO. Leave our gates up because we don’t want the high traffic they say will come once we take down the Village gates.” Questions to our Board of Directors and our CEO have been answered, repeatedly, with, “No. We will NOT take down the gates.”

Rest of the Story

But here is “The rest of the story,” as Paul Harvey used to say. The BoD and CEO are telling the truth,

the literal truth. The BoD wants the gates to stay up so that the new “Card Reader System” project can monitor those coming and going to determine the traffic volumes coming and going from the village just like it is specified in the New Urbanism goals. In fact, our POA put a fast stop to that project that most of the Villagers were looking forward to.

Rest of the Reasons

Villagers didn't know about the “rest of the reasons” for the RFID card gates. They just liked the idea of the automatic reading of their entry passes that would speed up the entry coming into and going out of the Village. The thing about these card reader RFID devices is that they can also tell where anyone stopped while in the Village and how long they were there by installing hidden card readers at various strategic locations throughout the village. This may be the answer about why the new “RFID” East and West gate project was begun in the first place. With these card readers connected to the security software they will have the ability to pass visitors through as long as they have an RFID sticker and there does not have to be an expiration date unless one is programmed into the system.

New Urbanism – Discourages Driving

Mr. Duany has publically announced that he and DPZ are against older people driving automobiles and they should walk wherever possible. Can you imagine our population of aging and aged people trying to walk to the store when many cannot walk much further than to their mailbox and back, or walking down a steep path to the bus stop, or trying to carry a week's worth of groceries from a store back to the bus stop and climbing on public transportation with all those bags and packages? Mr. Duany may have his opinion on this subject and it may work for crowded and cramped areas that are located near a major metropolitan area. It appears there is also an element of age discrimination involved. Do you want to follow a plan which discriminates against the majority of the population living in the Village?

Has Our Point Fallen on Deaf Ears?

We have made our point to the Board of Directors but it may have fallen on deaf ears, or even worse, unacceptable attitudes toward the POA Members. As our elected officials, they do not seem to think the “property owners” are their customers. They seem to think their fiduciary responsibility should be directed to the Property Owners' Association. This attitude is just very wrong on so many different levels. What we need are honorable, strong leaders on our Board of Directors. There are probably Board members who fit this requirement. But they have been squelched or outvoted on these issues with the Village Comprehensive Master Plan. We need a way to determine who or what the problem is on our BoD.

Roll-Call Should be Standard

One very good recommendation is to establish the requirement for a ROLL-CALL on every open meeting held by the BoD to be included in the meeting minutes and to eliminate all the unnecessary “Closed Door” meetings they have. There is very little call for closed-door meetings unless there are personnel matters to discuss, or legal issues to be discussed from pending lawsuits. The number of

closed-door meetings our current Board has makes one wonder if there is a hidden agenda they do not want us to know about?

We Love this Village

We love this Village dearly and think you do too. We set a 5-year plan to retire and move here in 2008. It took us until 2016 to complete our objective but we did it. We worked very hard to achieve that goal. Yes, it took us three years longer than we originally thought to complete it, but we did. We will continue to watch our BoD and CEO very carefully now until either we can put our trust in our BoD again and get our GM back or we will assuredly be eaten by the wolves of Duany. **URGING** you to do the same!

Not Calling for Resignations

No, I am not calling for anybody to resign from the BoD positions or the CEO position. I believe that our current CEO has done a very good job of doing exactly what our Board of Directors told her to do! After all, she works for them, not the other way around. Our Board of Directors has done the best job they know how and they did not start this crazy idea, but keep in mind what a challenging and difficult job they have to do. It is not easy.

Remain Diligent My Friends

Think about it, my friends. Keep a close eye on what is going on here and keep your ears and thoughts open. It is critical that we put a stop to this mess they call the CMP and get back to growing the Village the way it was intended to grow. Don't be afraid to ask questions and insist they be answered. Don't accept responses that do not answer your questions but keep asking until you get your answer. The BoD owes it to you. YOU are their customers, after all, **THEIR ONLY CUSTOMERS.**

Your Protection Against New Urbanism

Please keep all this in mind when you cast your votes. The best and only way to fix these issues and get the New Urbanism out of our Village is to vote for the three candidates who have primary goals to do this. All three of the **Three for HSV** candidates fit this requirement and are armed with the experience, knowledge and leadership to make it happen.

Please vote for Sherman, Podawiltz, and Campagna.

Take care and stay safe my friends,

Frank Shears
aka Bubba McGilicutty

Category

1. Bubba's Ruminations
2. HSV Villager's Opinion

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Author

lynn

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