



An urban design collaborative dedicated to research, education and advocacy that assist communities in designing more livable cities.

The Urban Charrette

This Urban Design Glossary explains the concepts used to shape and define communities and the built environment.

Green Building - Is the practice of increasing the efficiency with which buildings use resources (energy, water, and materials) while reducing building impacts on human health and the environment. This is accomplished through better siting, design, construction, operation, maintenance, and removal — the complete building life cycle.

Third Party Certification – Provides independent analysis and testing of environmental performance claims based upon established standards. There are many government and non-profit programs (including those mentioned below) which provide criteria and testing of homes and buildings.

LEED® for Homes – (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) *LEED for Homes* is a rating system that promotes the design and construction of high-performance green homes. A green home uses less energy, water and natural resources; creates less waste; and is healthier and more comfortable for the occupants. Benefits of a LEED home include lower energy and water bills; reduced greenhouse gas emissions; and less exposure to mold, mildew and other indoor toxins.

Florida Green Building Coalition (FGBC) – Another third party certification system, the FGBC Green Home Standards indicate the criteria by which a Florida home, new or existing, can be designated green. Certifying agents guide designers, builders or homebuyers through the process of qualifying and documenting green homes using FGBC's pre-determined criteria.

ENERGY STAR® - Is a United States government program created in 1992 by the US Environmental Protection Agency in an attempt to reduce energy consumption of everything from power plants to appliances. Homes can now be Energy Star rated. To earn the ENERGY STAR, a home must meet strict guidelines for energy efficiency and be tested by a third party.

Find out more at www.urbancharrette.org

The Urban Charrette – Urban Design Glossary

Urban Design is the aspect of architecture and city planning that guides the design of the built environment including towns, cities, and public spaces.

City Planning - also referred to as town planning or urban planning, is the activity or profession of deterring the future physical arrangement and condition of a community. It involves an appraisal of the current conditions, a forecast of future requirements, a plan for the fulfillment of these requirements, and proposals for legal, financial, and construction programs to implement the plan.

Smart Growth - invests time, attention, and resources in restoring community and vitality to center cities and older suburbs. New smart growth is more town-centered, is transit and pedestrian oriented, and has a greater mix of housing, commercial and retail uses. It also preserves open space and many other environmental amenities. *Principles of Smart Growth include:*

- Create Range of Housing Opportunities and Choices
- Create Walkable Neighborhoods
- Encourage Community and Stakeholder Collaboration
- Foster Distinctive, Attractive Communities with a Strong Sense of Place
- Make Development Decisions Predictable, Fair and Cost Effective
- Mix Land Uses
- Preserve Open Space, Farmland, Natural Beauty and Critical Environmental Areas
- Provide a Variety of Transportation Choices
- Strengthen and Direct Development Towards Existing Communities
- Take Advantage of Compact Building Design

Greenfield Development - refers to development built on vacant, previously undeveloped land.

Brown-field Development - refers to development built on land previously used for industrial purposes or certain commercial uses that may be contaminated by low concentrations of hazardous waste or pollution and has the potential to be reused once it is cleaned up.

Transit Oriented Development, or TOD - is the creation of compact, walkable communities centered around high quality fixed transit systems. TOD makes it possible to live a higher quality life without complete dependence on a car for mobility.

Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) – is a walkable and sustainable community. Borrowing principles from the neighborhoods built in the pre-1950s, TND's include high-density residential choices within walking distance to neighborhood stores, services, schools, recreational activities and open green spaces.

Mixed-Use Development - sometimes referred to as live/work/play communities, refers to development that includes a mixture of complementary land uses. The most common mix of land uses include housing, retail, office, commercial services, and civic uses.

Mixed-Generational Housing - allows for a mix of all ages within the same community.

Mixed-Income Housing - includes both market rate and affordable homes within the same development. This delivers affordable housing choices in areas close to jobs that generate more modest incomes. Mixed-income housing is often financed through public-private partnerships. The subsidy is determined by a formula requiring a certain percentage of the housing mix to be allocated for affordable housing. Municipal government policies related to mixed-income housing are known as inclusionary zoning.

Compact Development - refers to development that uses less land than conventional development.

Affordable Housing - According to the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, the generally accepted definition of affordability is for a household to pay no more than 30 percent of its annual income on housing. Families who pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing are considered cost burdened and may have difficulty affording necessities such as food, clothing, transportation and medical care.

Density - is a standard measure of units per area (typically reported in dwelling units per acre or du/ac). High-density areas have more homes per unit of land than low-density areas. A typical suburban development (lower density) may have a housing density of 2 units per acre, while a typical townhouse development (higher density) may have a housing density of 22 units per acre.

Walkability – the measure of walking conditions within a given area. Walkable areas are friendly to pedestrians. There are four ingredients to walkability are a reason to walk, a safe walk, a comfortable walk, and an interesting walk.

Public Realm/Space - The “public realm” is the shared environment within cities and towns such as sidewalks, streets, squares, open spaces, parks plazas, and waterfronts. Well-designed public realm spaces encourage and enable human interaction. Public spaces should be comfortable, climate sensitive, and walkable.

Storm-water Management - Is the process of controlling and managing runoff from rain so it does not harm the environment or human health.

Pervious surfaces - allow water to filter into the ground, which helps to filter pollutants, and reduces erosion and flooding. The use of pervious asphalt and concrete for parking lots, roads, driveways, and sidewalks is an important part storm-water management.

Transportation

Heavy Rail Transit – Regional system that travels on a separate rail right of way with a 1-5 mile distance between stations and 10 minute frequency. Travels 50-80 MPPH

Commuter Rail – Operates between a central city and adjacent suburbs and generally built on existing tracks at grade street crossings. Stations are 2-5 miles apart with 20-30 minute frequency. Travels 30-60 MPH.

LRT, or Light Rail Transit – a regional, urban system that can operate in mixed traffic with a separate right of way aligned center or at the side of a street. The distance between stations is 1-mile and the frequency is 5-30 minutes. Travels 20-30 MPH.

Modern Streetcar and Heritage Streetcar – run on streets providing local urban circulation. The distance between stations is .25-miles and the frequency is 8-15 minutes. Travels 8-12 MPH.

BRT, or Bus Rapid Transit – mass transportation that uses buses on existing roadways with **dedicated rights of way** or high occupancy vehicle lanes. The distance between stations is .25-2 miles and the frequency is 8-20 minutes. MPH varies.

Express Bus – Runs between central cities and suburbs. Travels in streets with traffic. Limited stops with 10-20 minute frequency. MPH varies.

Overlay Zoning - allows for special development controls to be applied to existing zoning district. This planning tool enables local governments to install more specific site-based design guidelines.

New Urbanism - is an American urban design movement that arose in the early 1980's. Its goal is to reform many aspects of [real](#) estate development and urban planning, from urban retrofits to [suburban infill](#). New Urbanist neighborhoods are designed to contain a diverse range of [housing](#), jobs and to be walkable. New Urbanism can include traditional neighborhood design and transit-oriented developments.

Urban-to-Rural Transect - is an urban planning model created by Andres Duany. The transect defines a series of zones that transition from sparse, rural farmhouses to the dense urban core. A major feature of transect planning is that it incorporates a variety of residential and commercial spaces into a single neighborhood. Moving outwards from the centre, residential density would gradually decrease starting with townhouses to single family homes. The central area would be a focus of transit and ideally be within walking distance from any point in the neighborhood.

Form-Based Codes - a method of regulating development to achieve a specific urban form. They create a predictable public realm primarily by controlling physical form, with a lesser focus on land use, through city or county regulations. Form-based codes are a new response to the modern challenges of urban sprawl, deterioration of historic neighborhoods, and neglect of pedestrian safety in new development.

Master Plan - a comprehensive plan to guide the long-term physical development of a particular city, town or region.