

Smart Growth Canada Network's E- Courses

Walkable Neighbourhoods That Keep Us Healthy:
How They Happen(ed) & How They Can Be Reinvented



Gloria Venczel, BES, BArch, MRAIC,
Executive Director,
& Don Alexander, Ph.D., MCIP.
Co-chair
Smart Growth Canada Network/ New City Institute

INTRODUCTION

introduction



Overview

.Walkable neighbourhoods were the norm until the private automobile became affordable for most people in North America, after World War 2.

.The very old town centres in the age of horse drawn carriages, like Old Montreal, Old Quebec and even Gastown, were compact and very walkable, as a green grocer could only do good business if people lived close by, as was the case with all other shops and services.

INTRODUCTION

introduction



Overview (cont'd)

.Then came the streetcars and streetcar suburbs with their commercial 'high streets,' like Lonsdale Ave., Dunbar, 4th Ave., Commercial Drive, and 41st, along with other neighbourhoods that are still today some of the trendiest places to live.

.Even though there is no streetcar running along these routes anymore (they have been replaced by buses), the land uses and size of lots that resulted from a streetcar-oriented development have a wonderful pedestrian character.

.Generally, the storefronts were about 12'-25' in frontage, with houses on 33' lots, so that enough people could live within walking distance to support the shops – i.e. hop off the streetcar on the way home from work, buy a few things and walk home.

3

INTRODUCTION

introduction



Overview (cont'd)

.It's no secret what the next transportation technology was that drove development patterns.

.The private automobile, and car-based neighbourhoods seemed like a good idea at the time, when there wasn't as much sprawl and the just-built freeways were rather empty.

.*But who was doing the math?* People tend to have babies and the economic forecasts indicated that there would be growth into the foreseeable future. People would buy cars and more and more people would do so because they could. In many cases now, it is impossible **not** to have a car in today's car-based suburbs.

4

INTRODUCTION

introduction



Overview (cont'd)

.So, in the past we knew how to build and live in walkable neighbourhoods. But then there was a break in continuity.

.As far as our generation is concerned, we grew up in mostly car-oriented suburbs. Many of us probably live in car-oriented suburbs now, because there are lots of them and they offer many good things to families. But there are also significant downsides.

.Fortunately, car dependent suburbs can be updated and gently transformed into walkable communities. It's called renewing the existing urban fabric or (sub)urban repair.

5

INTRODUCTION

introduction



Overview (cont'd)

.One challenge to be overcome is the ongoing desire on the part of many to realize the '(North) American Dream' of a house in the suburbs and access to the shopping mall.

. We are losing the collective memory of what pleasant, walkable neighbourhoods are like and how to ask for them in terms of voting with our feet when buying or renting housing.

.North America is leading in childhood obesity and diabetes, as well as adult heart disease and stroke. Car-oriented suburbs do have a health impact on us, in addition to their contribution to greenhouse gas emissions.

6

Smart Growth Canada Network

sgcn



.Smart Growth Canada Network (www.smartgrowth.ca) seeks to respond to these challenges. Its work is based on 10 principles that encourage an integrated approach to achieving vibrant, walkable communities through 'sustainable urban design.'

.Organizations that share these principles include:

- . Smart Growth BC (www.smartgrowth.bc.ca)
- . Smart Growth US Network (www.smartgrowth.org)
- . Smart Growth America (www.smartgrowthamerica.org).

7

Smart Growth Canada Network

sgcn



Our Mission Statement:

To encourage and facilitate the implementation of complete and sustainable communities in Canada.



8

Smart Growth Canada Network

sgcn



Our Vision:

- To create capacity for the implementation of smart growth solutions in towns & cities through education/awareness programs and research.
- To assist in connecting peers.
- To develop on-line learning and e-conference tools.



Smart Growth Canada Network

sgcn



Our target audience is the full range of decision makers:

- Municipal/provincial/federal politicians & administrators
- Consulting & municipal professionals
- Development community
- Current & future (i.e. kids) community leaders.



SGCN E-Courses

sgcn e-courses



Ten principles of SGCN are:

- **Housing Choice**
Principle: Create a range of affordable, quality housing choices.
- **Vibrant, Walkable Complete Communities**
Principle: Foster development that creates vibrant, unique, walkable complete communities where uses like residential and commercial are mixed to create attractive places to live, work and play. (i.e. urban design excellence).
- **Smart Building Design**
Principle: Encourage building designs that contribute to the context of a pedestrian-oriented neighbourhood and use green building technologies.

11

SGCN E-Courses

sgcn e-courses



Ten principles of SGCN are (cont'd):

- **Renew Existing Communities**
Principle: Direct development away from unsettled areas and encourage growth and renewal in existing communities.
- **Green Infrastructure**
Principle: Utilize green infrastructure to save money and protect the environment.
- **Green Space, Farmland and Ecologically Sensitive Areas**
Principle: Preserve and enhance green spaces, farmland and environmentally sensitive areas.

12

SGCN E-Courses

Ten principles of SGCN are (cont'd):

sgcn e-courses



.Broad-Scale, Integrated Planning

Principle: Undertake broad-scale planning for cities and towns in adjacent regions and towns in adjacent regions and towns in a way that integrates land use and transportation planning for the entire region.

.Transportation Options

Principle: Provide varied transportation options and infrastructure for walking, bicycling, car pooling, car sharing, scooters, public transit and others.



13

SGCN E-Courses

Ten principles of SGCN are (cont'd):

sgcn e-courses



. Community Involvement

Principle: Encourage effective community involvement early in the process to find unique solutions that fit with the community's vision of itself.

. Focus on Implementation

Principle: Utilize planning processes, tools and incentives to facilitate private sector investment and ease of navigation in achieving smart growth solutions.

14

SGCN E-Courses

introduction

The SG 10 principles need to be used together

sgcn e-courses



15

SGCN E-Courses

introduction

SGCN E-Courses on the SG Principles

sgcn e-courses

Approach:

- Municipal/ developer best practices, making it happen, benefits, policy options and resources
- Reduce the perception of the risk of “going first”, departing from “business as usual”
- Self-paced with questions, crossword puzzle - **visual & fun!**



THE REAL ESTATE
FOUNDATION
OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

 Natural Resources
Canada Ressources naturelles
Canada

Canada

16

SGCN E-Courses

introduction

sgcn e-courses



THE REAL ESTATE
FOUNDATION
OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

SGCN E-Courses on the SG 10 Principles

- Free access on the web thanks to Natural Resources Canada & the Real Estate Foundation of BC.
- Creating awareness of the principles of sustainable communities in the public realm.
- Establishing an accurate definition of the smart growth principles in the public realm, i.e., “smart SUVs” have nothing to do with Smart Growth.



17

SGCN E-Courses

introduction

sgcn e-courses



THE REAL ESTATE
FOUNDATION
OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



18

SGCN E-Courses

introduction

sgcn e-courses



THE REAL ESTATE
FOUNDATION
OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

SGCN E-Courses

introduction

sgcn e-courses



THE REAL ESTATE
FOUNDATION
OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

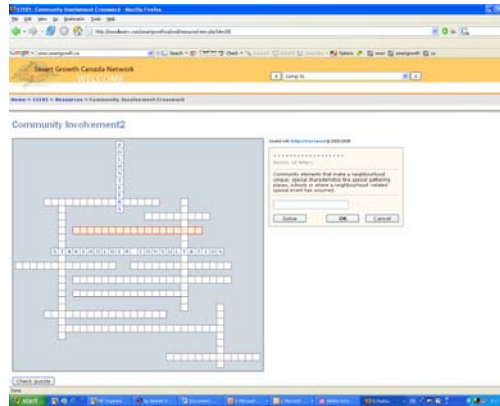
SGCN E-Courses

introduction

sgcn e-courses



THE REAL ESTATE
FOUNDATION
OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



21

Conclusion

introduction

conclusion



■As a society, we have historically known how to build and live in walkable neighbourhoods, but that collective memory of what to ask for from the 'market' and from our leaders is fading dramatically.

■By supporting, as citizens and consumers, vibrant walkable neighbourhoods – and their re-invention – we will make it easier for leaders and developers to support them as well.

■Visit <http://www.moodleserv.com/smartgrowthca/> for the SGCN E-Courses.



22