

# Don't sacrifice the suburbs for the sake of New Urbanism

June 28, 2018

by [Randy Bright](#)



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Sir Winston Churchill said, “Socialism is a philosophy of failure, the creed of ignorance and the gospel of envy – its inherent virtue is the equal sharing of misery.”

Last week, the Huffington Post ran an article entitled *Urbanism at a Crossroads*. Its author was lamenting how urban areas – Detroit for example – had depopulated, but New Urbanism, that enlightened philosophy was the answer:

“New Urbanism, with its focus on building walkable neighborhoods and reestablishing population density in the urban core and its ability to inspire generations of citizen planners, is among the most successful thought movements of our time. For decades, New Urbanist prophets like Andres Duany and James Howard Kunstler, building on the teachings of Jane Jacobs – who first reminded us that cities should be planned for people, not ideologues or machines – have articulated a compelling critique of auto-centric lifestyles, the plasticity of suburban existence and unsustainable cost-burden of post-war American infrastructure.”

“...Part of New Urbanism’s appeal is that it offers the prospect of spiritual redemption, a hope of putting the existential gloom and isolation of suburban existence behind us as we move toward more connected lives on walkable streets that foster cultural and commercial exchange. With a revival of the street, we can sooth the strife of what Kunstler calls, ‘a planet rife with suffering and tragedy, the spectacle of a clown civilization.’

“The apotheosis of the New Urbanist gospel – which draws heavily on the geometries and densities of town planners from antiquity to early modern era – is upon us in the form of the Great Inversion, a futurist phenomenon first noted by author Alan Ehrenhalt in which core urban neighborhoods with vital streets and mixed-use developments are in such great demand by back-to-the-city millennials that working class and poor folks who held down the fort in these places for a half-century are displaced to decaying suburbs.”

Tell that to the millions of Americans who choose to live in those “decaying” suburbs. In fact, demographer Wendell Cox has produced statistics that show that there is no real flight back to

the city cores and any number of other studies have shown that the suburbs are still the preferred way of life for the majority of Americans.

But socialism – which the Founders did their best to create a system to help us avoid – and those who espouse it want diversity and freedom to live in their preferred lifestyle – the dense urban core – but are willing to demonize any other lifestyle other than their own in considering it a way to “spiritual redemption” through the New Urbanist “gospel.”

The author also dreams about social equality through the use of government programs like land banks filled with vacant lots abandoned by their owners – who found no such spiritual redemption or any other kind for that matter, by losing their property. Who knows what percentage of those properties will be taken through the abuse of eminent domain, necessary to engineer the kind of streetscapes this author apparently sees as a salvation of the individual and mankind?

Not everyone agrees with the socialists besides me or millions of other Americans. Jacquielynn Floyd of the *Dallas News* wrote an article entitled Bring on ‘new urbanism.’ but don’t demonize suburbs. She writes, the suburbs “have been the devil for decades, but there seems to be a fresh urgency to the hostility...as a spirit of “new urbanism” is making serious inroads in Dallas, its satellite communities are fielding the blame for a host of woes: not just freeways and sprawl but such elemental human failings as greed, bigotry and mindless consumerism...could we please dispense of the haughty stereotype of suburban cities as unenlightened wastelands? If we really want to make our lives more “walkable” and “sustainable”, we need to quit pretending there’s one narrow model for virtuous existence, and no others need apply.”

Tomorrow we will celebrate our freedom on the Fourth of July, but the truth is that there is a select minority of people in places of influence who are able to convince the uninformed that the lifestyle they are living – that is, in the suburbs – is morally wrong, outrageous and ridiculous; to them our freedom is what they say it is, not what our Founders and others fought and died for, and certainly not any of us.

Is there anything inherently wrong with walkable sustainable streetscapes? No, but no one has ever been spiritually saved by a walkable sustainable streetscape. Only God can save you.

Randy W. Bright, AIA, NCARB, is an architect who specializes in church and church-related projects. You may contact him at 918-582-3972, [rwbrightchurcharch@sbcglobal.net](mailto:rwbrightchurcharch@sbcglobal.net) or [www.churcharchitect.net](http://www.churcharchitect.net).

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