

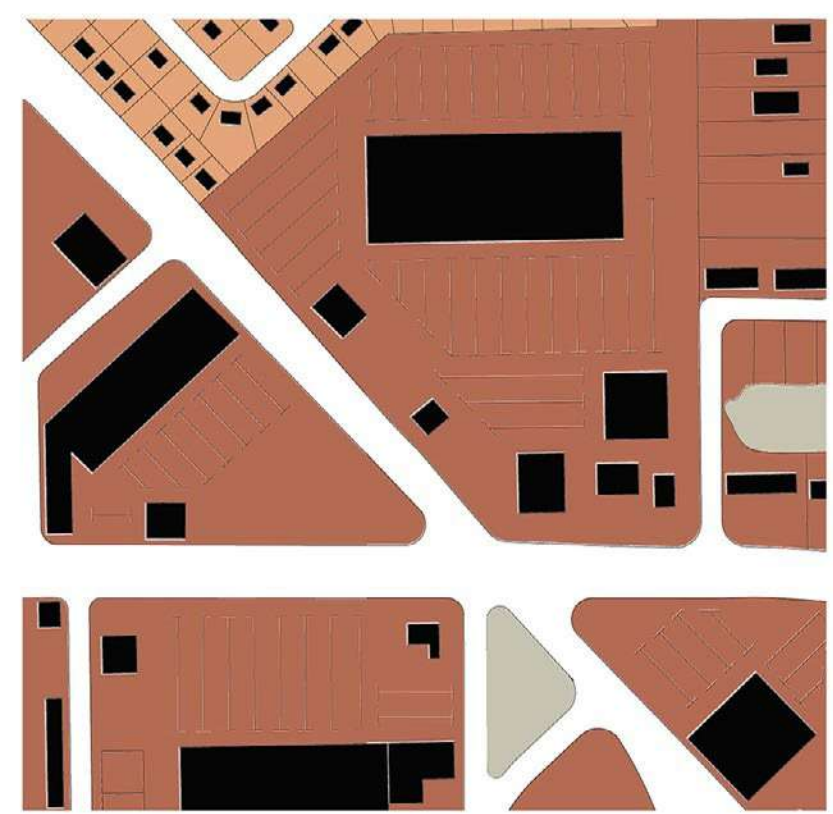
Sprawl Repair

By Galina Tachieva

The next frontier
in residential
innovation

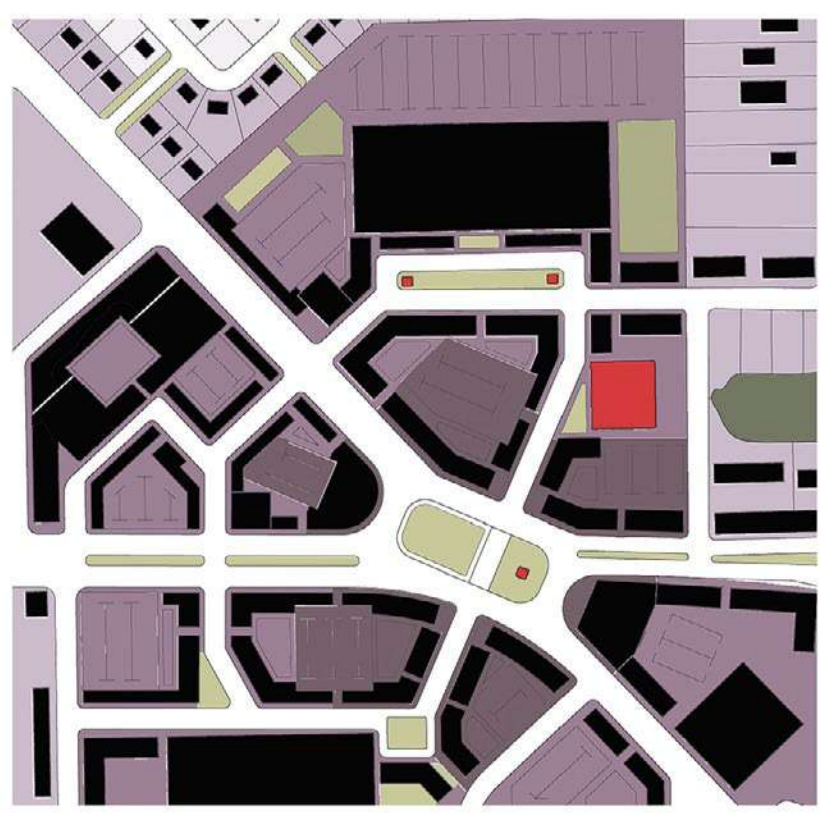
The home building industry can participate in one of the most important projects of the 21st century: building a better suburb through retrofit and repair that transforms underutilized, disconnected suburban assets into livable, walkable communities.

The United States population is projected to increase by [almost 100 million people](#) in the next 40 years. And yet, the [demand for single-family housing](#) is expected to decline as people age and fewer households have children. Cities and inner suburbs will not be able to accommodate everyone, even though many will want the convenience and amenities of an urban lifestyle that serves contemporary social, economic, and environmental needs.



4-69. Conventional single-use zoning

- Open Space
- R1 - Single-family Residential
- C1 - Commercial
- Existing buildings

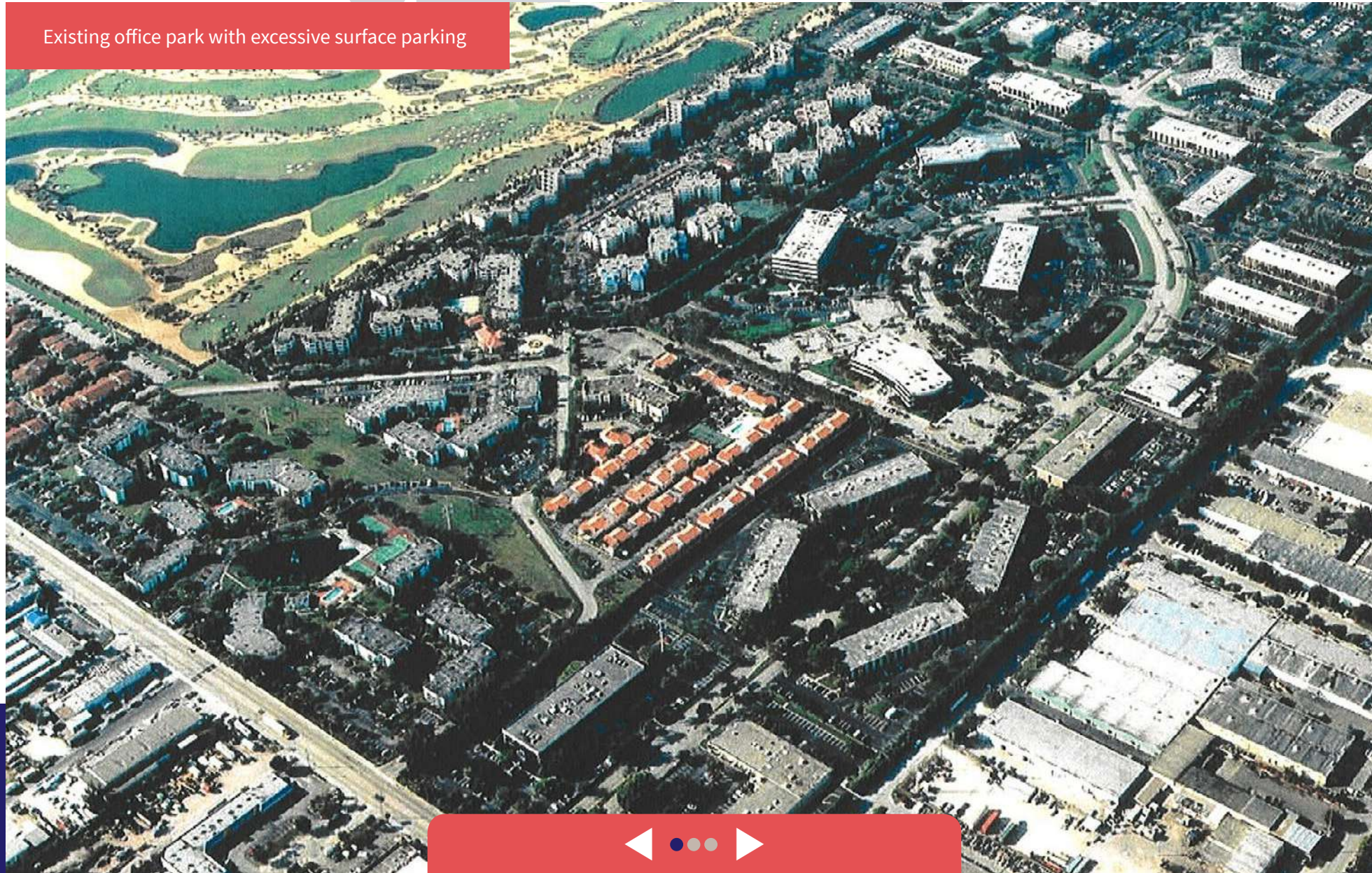


4-70. Transect-based zoning

- T1 - Natural zone
- T3 - Sub-Urban zone
- T4 - General Urban zone
- T5 - Urban Center zone
- T6 - Urban Core zone
- CB - Civic Building
- CS - Civic Space
- Existing and proposed buildings

Left: Conventional single-use shopping center development.
Right: The proposed sprawl repair includes high-density residential, commercial, and civic uses supported by structured parking.

Existing office park with excessive surface parking



Office Park Repair: Downtown Doral, Miami, Florida

An out-of-date, single-use office park was transformed into a high-density, mixed-use development. At full build-out, it will contain 5,000 residential units in multifamily buildings and townhouses, with 1 million SF of office, 250,000 SF of retail, and civic features, such as a park, an elementary school, a library, and new city hall.

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The following demographic trends confirm this new frontier:

- **Millennials** have surpassed baby boomers as the nation's largest living generation.
- Suburbs that evolve to meet the urban convenience and amenity preferences of millennials are becoming magnets for **companies looking to attract workforce talent**.
- The nation's **elderly population** will grow to 81 million in 2050.
- More than 70 percent of those over 50 plan to **age in place** in their homes or communities, where they may have lived for decades.

Where will these 100 million people live? The next frontier in residential innovation will be in the suburbs and will capitalize on shifting market trends driven by millennials seeking affordable, dynamic neighborhoods and seniors wishing to live actively and gracefully in their own communities. An urgent rethinking of current growth patterns is necessary to accommodate these needs, while containing and reversing decades of sprawl that promotes car dependency, poor health, and waste of financial and environmental resources.

The aim of sprawl repair is to build communities based on the neighborhood unit, similar to the traditional fabric that was established in towns and cities prior to World War II. By incorporating residential options—including houses, townhouses, apartments, and live-work units—within single-use, auto-centric suburban developments, sprawl repair can rebalance these properties into more complete, robust communities. This can help convert stranded suburban assets into valuable products.

SHIFTING TRENDS CREATE OPPORTUNITIES

The **current retail climate** is causing former giants, such as Macy's, Sears, and J.C. Penney, to abandon their mall anchor positions and jettison assets. This is due to changes in shopping habits, from increasing e-commerce, an oversupply of retail, and

Proposed master plan with residential, commercial, and civic infill

Map labels include: NW 87th Avenue, NW 84th Avenue, NW 85th Avenue, NW 54th Street, NW 53rd Terrace, NW 52nd Street, Main Street, Paseo Blvd., Park, City Hall, Grocery, Park Place, 8333, Cordoba II, Cordoba I, 7950, Davenport, Dawson, Spire, D.D. Charter Elementary School, Townhomes, White Course (Future Development).

Legend:

- RETAIL (Purple)
- OFFICE (Yellow)
- RESIDENTIAL (Blue)

DISCLAIMER: THIS GRAPHIC ILLUSTRATES THE DESIGN INTENT OF THE MASTER PLAN. THE DEVELOPER MAKES NO REPRESENTATION OR WARRANTIES VIA THIS DOCUMENT FOR FINAL LAYOUT OR DESIGNATIONS AND RESERVES THE RIGHT TO MAKE ADJUSTMENTS AS THE DEVELOPER DEEMS NECESSARY.

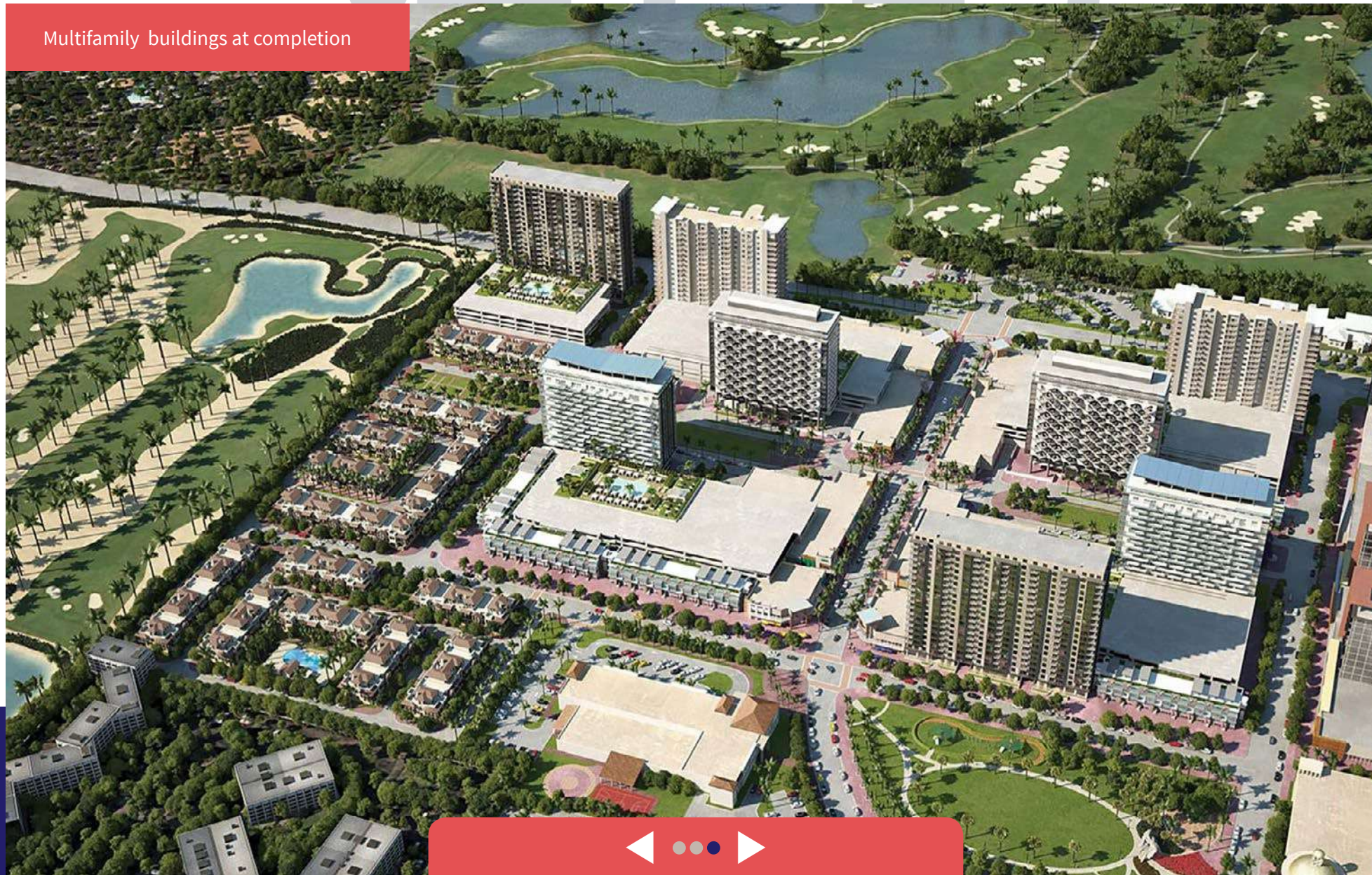
The master plan creates a flexible framework for a true “downtown” that is mixed-use, connected, and accommodates peak-hour traffic. It preserves existing infrastructure and introduces pedestrian-scale urban fabric and public spaces. High-density condominium towers rise above retail podiums, which conceal structured parking.

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Office Park Repair: Downtown Doral, Miami, Florida

In place of previously disparate enclaves of office, warehouse, and residential uses, the young city of Doral, Florida (incorporated in 2003) enjoys a new walkable city center with a balanced mix of uses, adjacent to a world-class golf course. It is viewed as a game changer for the region.

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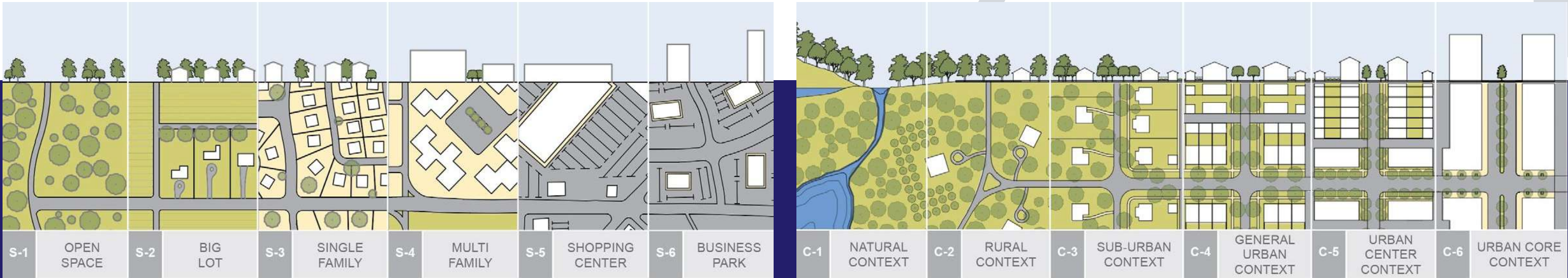
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Transect Development Patterns



Conventional Suburban Development (CSD) along a gradient of single-uses, with increasing pavement and context simplification from Open Space to Shopping Center and Business Park.

Complete Community Urbanism along a gradient of mixed-uses, with increasing complexity and function from T1 Natural to T6 Urban conditions.

a restaurant renaissance driven by social and experiential needs. A domino effect causes smaller retail tenants to fail, resulting in fewer employment opportunities, decreased property values, and vanishing municipal tax revenue. This downward cascade from restrictive, single-use zoning can be slowed, and even reversed, with focused urban design based on a neighborhood model that puts a premium on experiences and services. Effective sprawl repair transforms dead malls, shopping centers, office parks, and underutilized parking lots into town centers, with a variety of housing in walkable, reconnected street networks. Compact, mixed-use development reduces full car dependence, offers live-work-entertainment options, increases tax revenues, improves municipal service efficiency, and creates significant value for the long term. Infill residential development within this context can be tailored to the needs of millennials and seniors, accommodating their demographic growth.

POLICY AND REGULATORY CHALLENGES MUST BE ADDRESSED However, such neighborhoods cannot be built within the existing regulatory environment. Sprawl repair requires policy and regulation revisions in the form of zoning adjustment, targeted funding, and incentives equivalent to instruments that have fostered sprawling land use patterns in the United States since the end of World War II. Instead of an instant, total overhaul of communities, incremental and opportunistic improvement is key. Organizations such as [Build A Better Burb](#) offer resources for communities and practitioners. A gradual process of adopting form-based codes has been started by some municipalities and cities. [Form-based codes](#) regulate the form of the built environment, allowing and encouraging good place-making. A model form-based code is the SmartCode, a comprehensive ordinance that enables smart growth community patterns and the transformation of sprawl into walkable urbanism. The code includes a special

sprawl repair sector that is assigned to areas that are currently single use and have disconnected conventional development patterns, but have the potential to be redeveloped into neighborhoods and urban centers. The [Sprawl Repair Module](#) has been created as a special “plug-in” to the SmartCode to activate the technology for repair as a part of the code. The module presents a sequence of techniques for retrofitting the sprawl elements into complete communities. It operates at the scale of the region, community, block, building, and thoroughfare. The SmartCode and the Sprawl Repair Module function according to the rural-to-urban [transect](#), an organizational framework and planning methodology that enables the redevelopment of our sprawling communities into more sustainable patterns. Far from a mandatory tool to be imposed on planners and local governments, a transect is a concept originally used by ecologists to describe distinct natural habitats. As it relates

to the built environment, the transect is a tool used to understand and organize structural elements according to increasing density and complexity, from the countryside to the urban core.

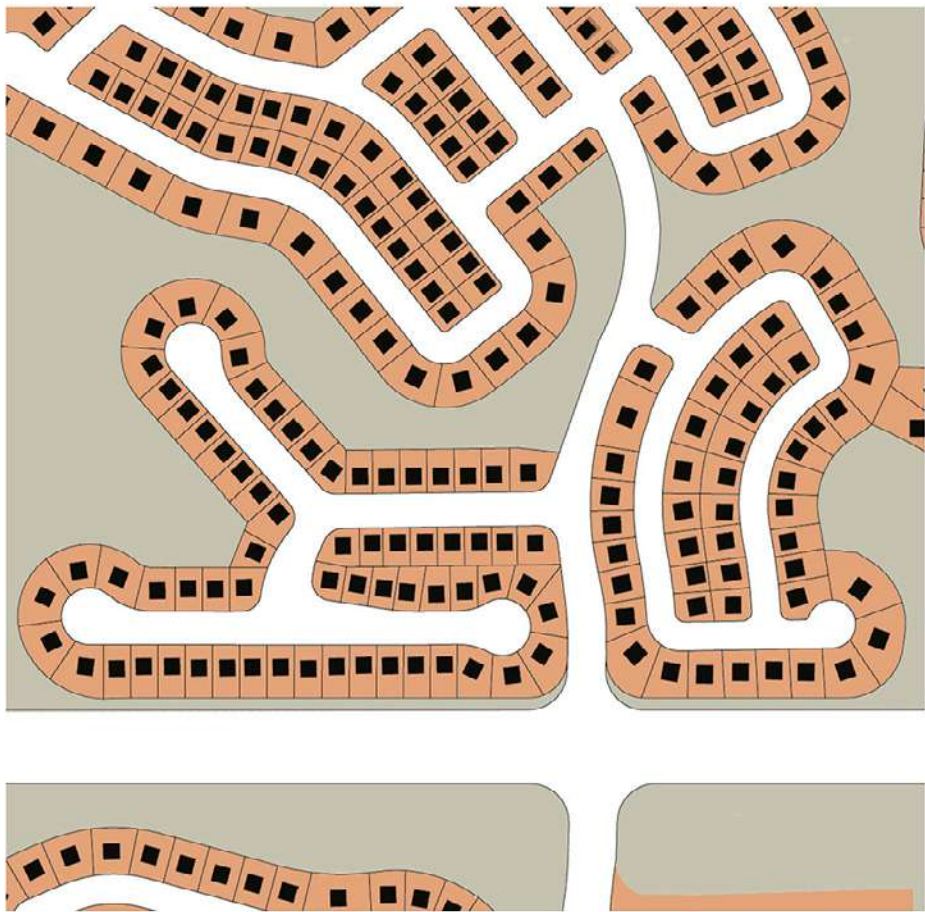
While a total overhaul of current zoning practices is needed for effective intervention at a national scale, immediate action can be taken in smaller, faster steps. The latest generation of form-based zoning involves the so-called [Pink Codes](#). Such codes are being adopted as overlays or modules to minimize red tape. They facilitate creative, smaller-scale development through the following basic steps:

- Collaboration with owners, developers, and local/state governments to create Pink Zone protocols for specific properties.
- The revised code facilitates adaptive reuse of shops or malls, or conversion to residential, workshop, civic, office and dining/entertainment uses that complete the community.
- Building codes may be revised to quickly and cost-effectively accommodate infill uses, including residential.

BUILDERS ARE CENTRAL TO SPRAWL REPAIR

Home builders can play an important part in transforming our suburbs, with actions targeted toward establishing urban centers. These include:

- Partnering with mall operators and commercial developers on inserting single- and multi-family housing options on underutilized parking lots to revitalize struggling retail spaces and create additional foot traffic.
- Expanding the affordable housing stock with strategies such as [accessory dwelling units](#); McMansion conversions into multifamily, senior, or student housing; and repurposing of suburban setbacks to make aging in place and workforce housing more viable.



4-27. Conventional single-use zoning

- Open Space
- R1 - Single-family Residential
- Existing buildings

Left: Conventional single-use residential development.
Right: The proposed sprawl repair provides maximum flexibility, a mix of uses, and a full range of human environments from rural to urban.

- Amenitizing suburban residential developments with compact, mixed-use modules that can be inserted into one or more lots to offer employment, service, and recreation opportunities and an improved quality of life.



4-28. Transect-based zoning

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THE TAKE-AWAY

Home builders play a key role in delivering desirable, livable products and can remain competitive by leveraging existing infrastructure, location, and market needs to create value out

Policy Watch

of stranded real estate assets. By including housing within auto-centric commercial development, sprawl repair promotes economic diversity and vitality.

Form-based zoning is a necessary tool that the home building industry should know well and take advantage of. It enables options and flexibility to transform single-use parcels into more diverse and resilient urban nodes that accommodate different people, incomes, and ages, and serves the suburban population at large. 🏡

Shopping Mall Repair:
Downtown Kendall, Miami, Florida

The master plan created a recognizable city center in a suburban, automobile-dominated community, including multifamily and rental units, main street retail, and amenities.



Top: Multifamily mixed-use infill development.

GOOGLE EARTH

Bottom: View along new main street.

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