

# Getting Smart About Growing Smart

It's not your  
imagination...

sprawl

is getting

worse.

What can

we do

about it?

(And why

hasn't anybody

fixed it?)

## PARTICIPANTS

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**Jack Clarke** is the director of advocacy for the Massachusetts Audubon Society and is chair of the Gloucester Planning Board.

**Charles Euchner** is the executive director of the Rappaport Institute for Greater Boston at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. He was previously the associate director of the Center for Urban and Regional Policy at Northeastern University.

**Phil Herr** is a planning consultant in Newton, Massachusetts, and a professor retired from the department of urban studies and planning at MIT, where he taught for more than 30 years.

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**Elizabeth Padjen FAIA** is editor of *ArchitectureBoston*.

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**Elizabeth Padjen:** The discussion of sprawl seems to have reached a fever pitch nationally in the last few years, with abundant coverage in the media and greater political attention to the issue. But sprawl isn't new, and discussions of it certainly aren't new. This has been a conversation going on for a very long time — 30 or 40 years at least. What's different about the discussion today? What keeps the general population from tuning out because they've heard it all before?

**Phil Herr:** My involvement in this issue goes back to the early 1960s, maybe even '50s. One difference is that many more people are personally hurt by the effects of sprawl today. Before, sprawl was an abstraction — something that was hurting some people, but most people weren't themselves affected. A second difference is that there is now a set of remedies that didn't exist before. People have the expectation that we can actually do something about it. Not many people believed that in the past. Sprawl had a sense of inevitability about it. It was inevitable, but it didn't really hurt. Now it hurts, but it's not inevitable.

**Charles Euchner:** I think that one of the most important changes is that people don't think that cities are beyond hope. Twenty years ago or even 10 years ago, there was a sense that the problems of New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, even Boston, were so severe that nobody could ever do anything about them and we would simply have to accept them. It seemed that the price of living in an urban environment was putting up with all sorts of inhumane surroundings and inadequate services. But in the last decade or two, we have discovered not only that cities are capable of revitalization, but also that in many ways they are the key to our success as a society: They are the incubators of artistic creativity, centers of technological advances, they're the hope of our environment, and they are the kind of places where we can actually bring people together.

**Jack Clarke:** Sprawl has become personal — it's not just a public-policy issue that you read about in the paper. The average American spends two weeks a year in a car. That's a serious issue and it's a personal issue. As an urban society up to the end of World War II, people had mass transit, they could walk to the store, neighborhoods were built around churches, houses were closer together and closer to the streets, people sat on their stoops talking in the summer evenings. But federal subsidies encouraged people to move out of the cities. The GI Bill provided education for men and women coming home from World War II, giving them upward mobility. Veterans loans helped people build houses. The federal highway system allowed people to spread out rapidly. So there was the financial incentive from the federal level for people to get out of the cities, to have their large lot and their large house. And then they discovered they had a whole new set of issues to deal with: "I can no longer walk to the store. I've got

a one-acre yard — it's too big to mow, but too small to farm — and I've got to keep it maintained." Now we are all invested in our suburban road systems. Daily life for a lot of people means driving the kids to the soccer game, driving for bread and milk, driving to church or the town hall — and it all involves getting in the car. That's what makes it personal.

**Elizabeth Padjen:** I sometimes worry that the current discussion is in danger of being perceived as an elitist conversation and, perhaps more counterproductive, as a politically partisan conversation. There are still lots of people who say, "The city is fine for other people, but I want to be someplace nice."

**Randolph Jones:** You're touching on the issue of choice, which drives a lot of the debate. These are personal matters — where we chose to live, where we work, where we send our children to school. But in making those big locational decisions, we need an alternative to Toll Brothers subdivisions, for example. The answer is to redirect investment into our inner-suburban school systems, focus more dollars on transit, and provide more affordable housing. We're already starting to do that. Our traditional New England building patterns offer a framework for an alternative to suburbia.

**Armando Carbonell:** I agree that the discussion is about increasing the amount of choice and the number of options available. I don't think many people believe today that it is possible to completely reject the standard model of suburbia. The forces of decentralization have been going on for so long and are so strong that they've created significant investments, a whole set of behavior patterns, and also substantial infrastructure. But there are many different models for urban development. We have the opportunity to think about the central city in different ways, creating not an elitist model that's available only to a few, but an opportunity to offer options for people who may fit very different profiles in terms of their needs for housing and work.

Elitist or not, we are not going to create a successful agenda if it rejects the idea that we have already gone very far down the road of decentralization. We need to accept what we have to work with today, and not over-promise what we can do in the short run. I agree with Bob Burchell from Rutgers, who says that if we can only deal with one third of the new growth in a very centralized fashion, keep one third within some reasonable proximity to community centers, and let one third go, we will still have significantly changed the overall pattern of growth in this country. And that hardly sounds as though we are saying that everybody has to work in a certain kind of place, and walk to work, and live in a prescribed pattern of behavior. It suggests that there will be choices in all categories.

## WHY SHOULD WE CARE?

### We've grown less urban...

Boston metropolitan area:  
2,700 people per square mile

Los Angeles metropolitan area:  
5,400 people per square mile

### Massachusetts landscape is vanishing...

Land in farms, 1950–2000:  
down 50%

Land in subdivisions,  
office parks and malls, 1950–2000:  
up 200%

### We're spreading out, not really growing:

Population density, 1950–2000:  
down 55%

**Charles Euchner:** The biggest challenge is to honor the different kinds of choices that people have made. The very worst thing that the smart-growth movement can do is to start wagging its finger at upscale suburbs like Wellesley and Weston. My favorite author and thinker on these issues is Christopher Alexander. And in his book *The Timeless Way of Building*, he says that every structure, every piece of work in a neighborhood or in a community, should aim at healing the larger whole. If we go at it from that stand-point, we aren't going to be setting ourselves at cross-purposes with people who choose, quite legitimately, a suburban way of life. There's a lot that they like about the suburbs, especially the schools. But there's a lot they don't like, and that they would welcome working on. And that means working across urban and suburban lines.

**Elizabeth Padjen:** Christopher Alexander's observation suggests, in my mind, a wholly different value system from what is the reality of our society today. If every move is to heal the larger whole, that suggests a communitarian sense of sharing, or working toward the common good, that in many respects is a very old-fashioned idea. It's an idea that comes out of rural tradition, but is it really afloat in modern society? Can that work? A lot of sprawl is driven, subdivision by subdivision, by incremental decisions and incremental growth — individuals deciding what they're going to do with one piece of property.

**Charles Euchner:** The solution doesn't have to have a communitarian flavor to it. But it has to have a problem-solving flavor to it that responds very directly to people's immediate desires and anxieties.

**Phil Herr:** Alexander's work is at least as much about process as it is about prescriptive rules. What you find is that there are ways of both providing healing for the larger context and satisfying the interest of individuals. That requires a way of talking together that we are not as good at as we should be, although there are a lot more people today who are able to create processes of that kind than there used to be. I don't expect individuals to act altruistically, and I don't expect municipalities to act altruistically, but it's in their self-interest to work with others. That isn't just dream communitarianism — it is achievable.

**Armando Carbonell:** You could say that the current situation comes from mostly rational behaviors by individuals trying to solve problems in their own lives, within the options that are available to them. And in many cases they are making decisions that seem very sensible when seen on the micro-scale, but when seen in the aggregate, don't make sense at all. Planning, to put it very simply, is about giving people a process for looking beyond their individual decisions, for understanding their ability to shape the physical environment and their lives by working together with others in a way that achieves a better result.

**Elizabeth Padjen:** My sense is that people today are more sophisticated about understanding the complete system — how pushing on one edge will eventually have an effect on the other edge. They understand that planning is not done in a discrete little box.

**Armando Carbonelli:** And yet we constantly see examples of how unsophisticated we are — simple solutions for very complicated problems that can actually be made worse by the simple decision. Both politicians and citizens need to understand the tools and options that are available to them and what the costs and benefits for different approaches will be.

**Wig Zamore:** I suspect that more people are aware of the ramifications of their decisions than they were in the past. They understand that sprawl is not an isolated problem. But I'm not sure that most people know where to find solutions. Increasing the knowledge base is a challenge in itself — it rarely happens when the advocacy gets too feisty.

**Charles Euchner:** People have a hard time knowing when they can push back. When they see a giant big-box retailer like Wal-Mart show up and say, “We need a footprint of this size, and we need a parking lot of that size, or otherwise we won't come, and our headquarters back in Dubuque says this is non-negotiable,” people tend to accept that as a reality. And then they have to make a decision: either go with the monster box, or forego the tax revenue. In fact, a lot of national retailers are willing to negotiate and make their structures fit into the local context. They'd rather use the cookie-cutter, but they will negotiate in order to get access to a market. There are pockets of amazing knowledge about this sort of thing, but you can't find it everywhere. We're very lucky in Boston, Cambridge, Brookline, and Somerville to have people who have been through these wars. Other communities don't have this experience, and they don't have the density of people who care about these things, or who have the time to care about them. We've got some pretty decent tools that are already available; we just need to know how to use them.

**Phil Herr:** We've got good tools for some things. I think of sprawl as happening in three scales. The first is the small scale, where development sprawls all across a parcel. The parcel may have land of varying qualities or character, but with “parcel sprawl” it all gets treated the same. We've known how to address that problem for as long as I've been in practice. The simplest solution is cluster development, where you put the houses where they belong and the open spaces where they belong. Then there's the issue of sprawl that occurs at the municipal scale, where portions of the community that have very different attributes of access or land quality or history get treated in ways that don't respect those qualities, and you wind up with “municipal sprawl” that homogenizes the community. That's a problem that can be addressed with the

most traditional tools of municipal planning, although we've more recently added some newer tricks like growth boundaries and transfer of development rights.

And then there's the third scale of sprawl, at the regional level. If growth is accommodated uniformly across the region, we'll be sprawling across the region in a very destructive way. That's a problem that requires yet another set of tools, and that's where we in this part of the world aren't well equipped. We need new tools to address the pattern of growth at the regional scale. Is it a good idea that a huge share of the growth in the next decade is going to occur along Route 495? Is that what we want? Do we want to take vitality out of our civic places and put it out in those communities? I suspect few people think that's a good idea, but it's hard to even think about the complexity of the problem, let alone address it.

**Armando Carbonelli:** Regional planning is a subject that deserves more attention in Massachusetts — it's true that we have no real mechanism right now for thinking about growth at that scale. And there's really no good reason to explain the lack of a mechanism. Other states have figured out how to do this. One interesting example is Maryland, which has a very deliberate policy of focusing development in areas of existing infrastructure and directing state investments to support that.

**Jack Clarke:** It's a policy that comes right from the governor's office.

**Randolph Jones:** We talked earlier about the differences in the sprawl discussion of 20 or 30 years ago. That was an era when the Commonwealth of Massachusetts actually had an Office of State Planning — which it used very effectively. One example was Wang — which is no longer around, but was then a wildly successful homespun high-tech company in Lowell, which was encouraged to stay within the city. Another example was Pyramid Companies — the Office of State Planning negotiated their relocation to downtown Pittsfield, with what was the largest UDAG [Urban Development Action Grant] in the country at that time. So there was a time when we enjoyed an active, state-level, public policy that said, “We are concerned about the location of new development, and we are going to do something about it.”

**Phil Herr:** But that lasted less than four years. It grew out of a great process, in which the majority of the municipalities in Massachusetts participated actively, and the great majority of people who were activists concerned with these issues really felt that their voices had been heard. The policy was really a consensual one, and people rallied around its nifty tagline: suburbs didn't want to become cities, rural areas didn't want to become suburbs, and the cities didn't want to become wastelands. Those agreements were turned into a very coherent set of actions that required no new legislation and no new form of government. They simply took a state government prepared to use the authority and resources it already had to lead us in a new direction.

## WHY SHOULD WE CARE?

### Our sprawl is happening quickly...

Percentage of developed land in Massachusetts  
in 1996: 25%  
in 2010: 33%

Percentage of all class-A office space in downtown Boston:  
in 1985: 70%  
in 2000: 40%

### We're severely straining our social fabric...

More than 75% of African-American and Hispanic-American citizens live in cities.

In 2000, almost 60,000 low-skill workers in Boston were competing for 10,000 available jobs.

Household income in core communities is less than 50% of the household income of outer communities.

**Elizabeth Padjen:** I remember apparently simple things, like determining where curb-cuts would be allowed. What would seem to be dumb little tools became pretty potent when used coherently. So why did all that evaporate?

**Randolph Jones:** The recession loomed and we hit the skids — it was a very different economic time.

**Jack Clarke:** And unfortunately we haven't revisited those policies. The closest we've come is providing tax incentives for the redevelopment of brownfields — directing industrial and commercial development to existing contaminated industrial sites. But we haven't broadened that thinking to direct growth where we want it. I think Maryland Governor Parris Glendening has certainly done it for his state. Vermont Governor Howard Dean has reduced sales taxes on Main Street and increased it at the malls, encouraging people to shop and build new retail space in town centers, not by prohibiting it in any one area, but by providing financial incentives.

**Charles Euchner:** One thing that we need to think about is keeping things as simple as possible. I know that we live in a complex world, I know that there are all kinds of factors that enter into a decision about where and how you are going to build. But it's important to develop incentives that are easily understood, and therefore have some legitimacy. I think the genius of Parris Glendening is that he came up with something that was very straightforward. He said, "I'm not going to prevent you from developing in undeveloped areas, I'm just not going to help you. However, I *am* going to help those who already have something to offer, and simply need a little bit of a boost to make it on their own." I think it was a very straightforward deal that he cut with the people of his state. One of the things that concerns me is that many of the ideas that are springing up seem to add to the complexity and the confusion of public policy, rather than stripping away the more negative aspects and the perverted incentives.

Let me pose a possibility. In Minnesota, a civil war is going on over the tax structure. Governor Jesse Ventura, wants to replace property taxes with a new income tax and sales tax regime. It would do much to alleviate the kind of balkanization of that state, because one of the major reasons people move to suburbs is that they want better schools, and people in wealthier communities can afford to pay for better schools. It's a very straightforward way of removing a perverted incentive. I don't know if Jesse Ventura particularly cares about sprawl, but he's attacking a very fundamental inequity that's built into the system. And if we get back to our discussion of choice, that's really what's at stake here. Some people have choice and some people don't. We can't look for a magic bullet, because there's never going to be one. But we should be looking for a handful of major perversions that we should remove. And that can make a bigger difference than creating another apparatus on top of our existing apparatus.

**Armando Carbonell:** I wouldn't argue with greater clarity in public policy. I think we need to create incentives that are much more transparent and consistent, and that we should use the power of government in a much more intelligent way. But I think there's another challenge to our colleagues in the design fields. We need real projects on the ground that really make use of everything we've learned about building places and designing communities. It's a tremendous opportunity for the people who are the audience of *ArchitectureBoston* to think not just about large-scale policy choices, but also to do the kind of empirical work that becomes a model for others. The small town of Ipswich, Massachusetts, for example, has crafted a plan that makes a lot more sense than the standard model and demonstrates to other communities that it can be done. Massachusetts has had a couple of experiments in planning, the Cape Cod Commission and the Martha's Vineyard Commission. These are considered quite unusual across the country. I no longer advocate copying them in a specific way — communities should respond to their own needs and conditions — but I think they demonstrate that it's possible for communities to craft a set of solutions that work in their own geographic and human context. I hope we can encourage simpler, clearer policies at the state level without discouraging the kind of experimentation and progress that can be made in individual communities at a very finite, small scale.

**Elizabeth Padjen:** Let's return for a moment to Jesse Ventura's tax proposal — simply because it poses a fascinating hypothesis. Is the property tax a “hidden persuader” in its influence on sprawl? How much in planning, how much in terms of individual choice as we've discussed it, is based on the simple mechanism of the property tax? Let's play that out and imagine no property tax — simply a combination of income and sales tax. What would be some of the differences here in Massachusetts?

**Phil Herr:** My view is that the impact would be smaller than many people think. I work in many communities which, a generation ago, were powerfully influenced by fiscal consequences, but are much less so now. Partly because they've learned to live with Proposition 2½, which limited the growth of property taxes in Massachusetts, partly because there is an increasing understanding of the equalizing effects of state aid, and partly because of an increasing aversion to the broad impacts of projects that are otherwise tax-lucrative. The city of Cambridge [Massachusetts] recently underwent a searching, multi-year re-examination of its development controls, at the end of which it substantially reduced its potential for non-residential development in order to accommodate more room for residential development. That's not the best way to approach development from a fiscal perspective, but the city chose it because people thought it would create a better city.

**Charles Euchner:** But one of the central concerns with property taxes is who gets the money to have better schools and therefore who gets the money to draw the affluent families. But there's another aspect, too, which is that our reliance on property tax encourages certain kinds of new development, such as big boxes, because they are exempt from the limits of Proposition 2½. So if you're a town manager, you've essentially got a situation where you can either ask for an override [a vote to increase the allowed tax limit], which is not very politically popular, or you can take the new revenues from the big box. It's our reliance on the property tax in the first place that is driving us to accept things that we don't really want.

**Wig Zamore:** I would say that there's an unevenness in understanding of fiscal impact, not just among the general public, but among the people who run our cities and towns. Cities like Boston and Cambridge and some of the more affluent towns understand the cost-to-benefit ratios of different kinds of commercial properties. They look at a proposed office building in terms of revenue per unit of traffic and jobs per unit of traffic. The communities that take the big boxes believe they are going to gain fiscally, but rarely do, given their alternatives. Because 15 acres of big boxes will create as much traffic as 15 acres of mixed-use development and only 1/10th the tax revenue and jobs. That unevenness of understanding creates a circular situation. It puts the less able towns in a worse and worse position to pull themselves out.

Somerville, for example, is so dense that the city spends \$100,000 dollars per acre per year in services. A big box will only generate \$50,000 per acre per year in taxes, so it only generates half the spending rate. It's like running a lemonade stand where you guarantee a dollar's worth of lemons in every 50¢ glass. It's very hard to get ahead, doing that.

**Elizabeth Padjen:** Okay, but it's easy to beat up on the big boxes. Let's continue with the no-property-tax scenario. Can you imagine that it would lead to no growth? That development would come to a screeching halt? What would be the incentive for a city or town to take on new office, commercial, or industrial development if the residents perceive that it's noxious or that it generates traffic?

**Wig Zamore:** There wouldn't be one, unless they wanted the jobs. Families need jobs, and it's better to have jobs close to where you live.

**Phil Herr:** I work with a couple of communities in the Blackstone Valley [in central Massachusetts], where the power lines and gas lines cross, so they are being courted by power-plant developers. The town of Bellingham has one plant in place, one under construction, and a third just approved. It is widely believed that because of the huge taxes those plants pay and the low demands they make on services the town should have no fiscal problem for many, many years.

## WHY SHOULD WE CARE?

### We are literally driving ourselves crazy...

Boston has more freeway miles per capita than Los Angeles.

Regional annual vehicle miles  
1970–2000: up 75%

Regional population  
1970–2000: up 10%

### We're paving our way to pollution...

Despite clean air and water laws, over the next 5 years:

Massachusetts air quality will get worse.

More Massachusetts rivers will not meet EPA standards.

15% of Massachusetts animal and plant species will be endangered.

EMC then came along and said it would like to accommodate 2,700 workers in a million or so square feet of office building. The town loved the idea. They loved the prestige that goes with having that campus and they loved having good jobs nearby. So I think there are still attractions, even when you take away the fiscal incentives. However, that same community is now giving a cold reception to developers coming along proposing little strip malls. The town just isn't very interested in those right now. Fiscal freedom from immediate property tax concerns has indeed changed the equation.

**Randolph Jones:** It sounds as if it's given the community choice. It gives residents the ability to say no as well as yes.

**Phil Herr:** And of course there are other ramifications. Fiscal resources also give the town the ability to hire good staff, so it is now managing its own affairs far better than ever before. It is making the leap from being underserved to being very nicely served. The education issue is of course far more complicated than just access to tax dollars. Boston, for example, spends more per pupil than all but one municipality in all of Massachusetts. But the perceptions of what are good schools don't perfectly correlate with what is spent on them.

**Charles Euchner:** Suppose we were to have equal state funding of schools and suppose we were to say that we are going to embrace a diversity of schools, as long as they meet basic curriculum requirements, and basic civil rights and fairness requirements. You would have a situation where on the one hand you would have centralization of funding, and on the other hand you would allow an incredible level of dynamism at the local level. That's how we should be thinking in regional planning. We should make sure that we have some very compelling tools, but we should also allow localities to decide how to use them in their communities. A lot of smart-growth people are going to be uncomfortable with that. But ultimately we have to think not about creating a cookie-cutter approach or a top-down approach, but creating incentives that allow great experimentation throughout the region.

**Wig Zamore:** But, unlike education, you can't give each city and town a transportation budget or the right to build a subway station. If we look at the forces behind sprawl, transportation has to be pretty close behind land-use or schooling choices. Equity in transportation infrastructure is a tough problem. One of the big things that has changed in the last 20 to 30 years is that people lost faith in roads as the solution to everything. And now we are still faced with the need to supply transportation. The closer you get to a city, the more often transportation can work as a regional system because of the greater density. But there's an inequity if the state or the federal government isn't giving equal access to public transportation to cities and towns of similar densities. One local example is the plight of Chelsea and Somerville — the two densest cities in Massachusetts. They have one subway stop and one commuter rail station between them.

**Phil Herr:** You have to wonder why we're investing in air-conditioned commuter rail to New Bedford, when it is still so hard to get from Somerville to Boston.

**Charles Euchner:** Must these communities be served by a transit station? Are there other alternatives to automobile travel? Transportation is obviously one of the most difficult aspects of sprawl, because it involves such a complex mixture of choice and uneven opportunity. If you live in Chelsea and work in Framingham, good luck getting there. Can we open up the possibility of private vendors providing experimental new services?

**Elizabeth Padjen:** Chelsea and Framingham describe an inherent part of the problem — the growing distance between homes and workplaces, as people move away from jobs in the center city. That's exacerbated by the fact that people need flexibility in their schedules. Employers are demanding longer working hours. No one is out of the office by five o'clock and a lot of people can't predict in the morning when they'll come home at night. And maybe they'll need to run an errand or pick up kids from daycare. Transportation alternatives have to accommodate the changes in the work environment.

**Charles Euchner:** But let's go back to an earlier observation — if we can reduce sprawl by even one third, we might not solve everything, but it would make the world a hell of a lot better than if we do nothing. Maybe we should think of transportation in that way. Let me suggest that there's a kind of tipping-point dynamic to this. I live in Jamaica Plain. I walk a lot and drive my car maybe twice a week. I have it in case I need to do a big buy or visit my sister in New Hampshire or something like that. What would get me to give up my car and what would get other people to give up at least their second cars? The car-sharing concept, such as Zipcars, [rentals by the hour] is very promising. We need to find solutions that can turn things back without fighting inexorable forces. The car is here for good. But do we need the car for every quick trip we take? No.

**Elizabeth Padjen:** But when you need a car, you're still going to use a car. It doesn't matter if it's your car or a car you share. The fact that there may be multiple cars in a household doesn't mean that they are all on the road at once.

**Charles Euchner:** But you're more likely to use a car if it's sitting in front of your house than if you have to go down two blocks to pick it up. And car-sharing could diminish one of the biggest blights on our urban neighborhoods now, which is the proliferation of surface parking. One of the biggest fears that I have is what I call internal sprawl, where we are making our cities like the worst aspects of our suburbs, with Walgreens and Stop-and-Shops surrounded by huge parking lots.

**Wig Zamore:** And we are seeing a behavioral shift in car-sharing people. They have to pay for every mile they drive, so there's much more incentive to monitor how many miles they drive. The people who have switched to car-sharing drive fewer miles than they did when they drove their own cars.

**Phil Herr:** One of the fundamental roots of sprawl is that the cost of travel has been hugely reduced, so it is much cheaper now to travel long distances than it was two generations ago. When we support the highway bond act, we are in fact subsidizing sprawl. When we make rail travel cheap, we're subsidizing sprawl. There are Tokyo corporations that give commuter passes for the bullet train to their executives as a perk. Some of those people are now commuting 100 miles from Tokyo. That's subsidizing sprawl.

**Charles Euchner:** And that brings up the issue of political will. Politicians don't want to contradict their constituents. Politicians need to push back a bit when their constituents say "I don't want density," or "I want parking because I need to be able to bring my dry cleaning into my house," or "I need to be able to have my customers park right in front of my store." But density is one of those issues where anyone who's concerned about sprawl and livability needs to speak with a strong voice.

Boston is about a third less dense now than it was a century ago. Which means there are a third fewer customers for local businesses. Doesn't that matter to anybody? Can't we agree that that is a significant problem, rather than letting ourselves be cowed by people who say that more people mean more traffic? That's ultimately what's going to give the smart-growth agenda some traction. We in this country have all become so used to having everything we want. We can have a wonderful urban neighborhood, we can have a wonderful park, we can have big sprawling school campuses, we can hop in our car and drive across town and commute across the state. But ultimately this comes down to choices. We need to understand the consequences of our choices.

**Wig Zamore:** It's often very difficult to reconcile altruism with self-interest. But a lot of people have an interest in protecting their community fabric, because it's a reflection of their own identity — their life, their work, their home. And maybe recognizing that a simple yearning for a sense of place is something most of us have in common is enough to start us in the right direction. ■■■