Moving Beyond the PVC Farm: Smart Growth Solutions to Stalled Communities

learning objectives
1) Learn the factors contributing to development successes in recent years and what led to stalled projects.
2) Analyze the planning and design attributes of poorly performing developments and how they differ from successful communities.
3) Examine how smart growth, quality planning, and design factors influence financial performance in suburban community development.
4) Gain a perspective about how adjustments to an existing land-use program and master plan can enhance existing stalled development.

description
In many locations across the country neighborhood developments that were initiated, and in some cases partially completed, have stalled. Where occupied homes sit next to vacant construction sites – many with utility stub-outs protruding from the ground; the *pvc farm*...

presentation outline
Questions to be addressed include:
1. What are the dynamics necessary to move beyond this stalled development?
2. What can be done to change the pattern; management, design retrofit, marketing or to simply wait for the demand to increase?
3. Are there new models that can be applied to bring these open ended situations to completeness?
4. The panel will investigate Smart Growth options from management, design, change of land use.

a. The Real Estate Developer View
b. Public Sector Perspective
c. Design as Solution
d. Dialogue / questions and answers

a. the real estate developer view

richard peiser
Richard B. Peiser, Ph.D., was appointed the first Michael D. Spear Professor of Real Estate Development in the Department of Urban Planning and Design at the Graduate School of Design of Harvard University in 1998. He teaches real estate development and finance, coordinates the executive programs in real estate at GSD, and is Director of the university-wide Real Estate Academic Initiative at Harvard. Before joining Harvard, he served as director of the Lusk Center for Real Estate Development at the University of Southern California, and Academic Director of the Master of Real Estate Development Program, a program he founded in 1986. He has blended his academic career with professional real estate experience. Among his publications is Professional Real Estate Development: the ULI guide to the Business (2012).
An overview of real estate development from the private sector perspective; Smart Growth Solutions to Stalled communities:

How to get stalled projects moving again
Impediments to restarting stalled projects and how to resolve them
- Bankruptcy issues
- Bad debt – non-performing loan resolution
- Transfer of ownership to new developers

Ways to stimulate demand for stalled communities
- Repositioning projects
- Product mix and price-point strategies – maximizing product options
  - Role that landscape architects and land planners can play
    - Land planning and landscape modifications

How cities can invest to bring returns to stalled project accounts
- Project obligations and commitments

Case illustration – San Diego Downtown Apartment Block Repositioning

b. public sector perspective

Kjersti Monson is the Director of Long Range Planning for the City of Minneapolis. Her division is responsible for the comprehensive plan, small area plans, strategic initiatives, urban design, urban research, and the public art program. Kjersti’s team is currently working on several large scale initiatives including an 80-acre riverfront business park north of downtown, an innovation district with ties to the University of Minnesota, and a redevelopment plan for 40 acres of “downtown east” Minneapolis, an underutilized district abutting the downtown core near the riverfront and surrounding the planned Vikings stadium.

Prior to joining the City of Minneapolis, Kjersti worked as a consultant on a wide variety of projects in planning, urban design, and real estate strategy in the United States, Europe and Asia. As the founding Real Estate Strategy market sector leader at AECOM, she explored new approaches to planning and urban design services, pushing the development of new strategies to navigate the contested territory between public and private interests. As a Fulbright Fellow, she explored the policy origins of increasing disinvestment in cities, and the emergence of coping mechanisms by cities facing privatization of public interests. Kjersti is passionately interested in the future of cities, striving to promote and contribute to innovation and thought leadership in urbanism.
Public Perspective Notes – The Changing Role of Cities:

In his book, Metropolitan Revolution, Bruce Katz observed that cities are at the forefront of solving America’s problems, now more than ever. At City of Minneapolis, we have taken strong steps toward a proactive public role in some of our toughest challenges. We are moving to establish strategic and coordinated policy, planning, and public investment around place-based objectives. We are furthermore establishing a powerful technology platform in partnership with IBM to guide our work with performance-based criteria. Increasingly, the City of Minneapolis is looking at its planning department as a strategic actor with proactive goals. The recent reorganization of the Community Planning and Economic Development department has created a new face of planning, comprised of expertise in:

- urban design
- policy planning
- purposeful asset and land management
- public art and creative citymaking
- research
- technology

Repositioning Property: the Role of Government

Achieving qualitative outcomes in the revitalization of stalled communities requires the creation of a strategic framework that can serve to coordinate planning across multiple agencies, guide public investment, and establish a clear path for private development. This session will touch on three key aspects of the public sector’s contribution to that process, including a discussion of the following three pillars:

- Policy toolkit
- Development/investment toolkit
- Capital projects/public realm toolkit

Repositioning projects through design:

- The role of the landscape architect?
- How can physical planning and design positively influence community building and financial performance?

1. Investigation:
   A. Who – is affected?
      • Comments from developers, municipalities and home owners
   B. What - is the pattern?
      • Define the form of stalled suburban communities
   C. Where - are the most affected places?
      • Map existing pattern
   D. Why - are those places the most impacted?
   E. How – can design help to change the dynamics to move beyond PVC Farms?

2. Identify:
   A. Specific and unique elements that share a common pattern in stalled development
   B. Identify constraints to changing existing land use, density and entitlement of the land plan

c. design as solution

todd hill moderator

Todd Hill, ASLA, LEED®AP; is a landscape architect and land planner. He is the Director of DTJ Design’s Atlanta office and has built a 27 year career with EDAW, Inc. and AECOM. His work covers a range of scales, from large land strategies to detailed site designs. He leads the creative process on his projects to combine high-design, with innovative sustainability design strategies. His portfolio of global projects includes award winning master planned communities, resorts, urban regeneration projects for exiting cities, and signature parks and public gardens. He manages large multi-disciplined teams involving market economists, environmental and policy planners, designers, architects and engineers.
3. Conceptualize:
   A. envision solutions to the problem
   B. Investigate potential design solutions to move beyond the pattern
   C. Examine real estate program changes that may break the pattern
   D. Study real estate program mixes, land use amendments and physical design changes that may catalyze change
   E. Ways to stimulate demand:
      a. Broader market offering
      b. Strategic repositioning game plan
      c. Urban design and landscape modifications
4. Present theoretical master plan alternatives to retrofit stalled communities
5. Strategize:
   A. How to avoid repeating the same problems again...
   B. Implement ‘step change’ to break the pattern
   C. Determine funding strategies necessary to implement design
   D. Investigate available P3 or government programs available
   E. Establish ranking scenarios to determine feasibility of community retrofit – should some areas reclaimed as a natural state?
   F. Provide conclusions to findings and potential next steps

Conclusions

- First and last step comes down to capitalization; the owner needs to recapitalize to get project moving again
- Public policy toolkits can facilitate development, investment, and capital projects in the public realm
- Diversification and mix of uses reaches broader market
- Design solutions may help reignite stalled development

- The reality is that we will repeat this debacle moving forward... how can we be better positioned to deal with it?