Sustainability + Regeneration: A Cultural Exchange with France

Over the past two years the French-American Foundation has hosted tours, lectures and conversations about the future of French cities, inviting an exchange between French and American designers, educators, journalists, city officials and thought leaders. These are their stories.

Learning Objectives:
Session participants will gain a new understanding of French and American approaches to postindustrial redevelopment.

The session will highlight the cultural & political differences between urban development in France and the United States as well as the unique challenges each country face.

Participants will also gain insight into French funding models in comparison to those we use in the United States.

The session will also give an in-depth perspective on EU Green designation and its application in Nantes.

Moderator & Speaker Bios:
Moderator:

**Professor Joe Schilling** leads the Virginia Tech Institute’s Sustainable Communities and Urban Regeneration Initiatives that explores the intersection of design, planning and collaboration in the development of sustainable regions, communities and neighborhoods. His field work serves as a living laboratory for research, service learning, and policy change by extracting and disseminating model programs and practices through case studies, policy roundtables and planning studios. Schilling is an accomplished public policy facilitator having organized dozens of research, policy, and community forums. Professor Schilling teaches courses in Negotiations and Community Involvement, Land Use Law, Public Health, and Environmental Policy and Sustainability Planning at Virginia Tech and Sustainable Regional Growth for George Washington University Law School.
Speakers:

Susannah C. Drake, AIA, ASLA is the founding principal of dlandstudio pllc. dlandstudio is the recipient of National and International urban design awards from the AIA, ASLA and Chicago Athenaeum among others. As one of very few designers of her generation with professional design qualifications in Architecture and Landscape Architecture, Susannah is leading a movement to make cities more ecologically productive and resilient to climate change. Susannah is the former President and Trustee of The New York ASLA, Trustee of the Van Alen Institute and visiting studio professor at the Cooper Union and Harvard University. She is the author of Elastic Landscape: Seeding Ecology in Public Space & Urban Infrastructure which was recently published in the collection of essays entitled Infrastruktururbanismus.

F. Kaid Benfield is one of the nation’s foremost authorities on smart growth, sustainable communities, and green urbanism. He is special counsel for urban solutions at the Natural Resources Defense Council in Washington, DC, where he works on positive, forward-thinking approaches to environmental challenges in the places where Americans live, work, and play. Kaid also teaches regional planning and sustainable development practices at the George Washington University School of Law.

A longtime leader of the smart growth movement, Kaid co-founded LEED for Neighborhood Development, a national process for defining and certifying smart, green land development under the auspices of the US Green Building Council. He is also a founder and board member of Smart Growth America, a nationwide coalition working on revitalizing cities, building better neighborhoods, and stopping the spread of suburban sprawl.

Prior to holding his current position, Kaid served as NRDC’s director of sustainable communities, director of its Land Program, and legal affairs coordinator. He has represented NRDC in some of its most important litigation. Prior to coming to NRDC, Kaid served in the US Department of Justice and worked in private legal practice in Washington, DC.


Follow Kaid’s blog on sustainable communities at www.kaidbenfield.com. Follow Kaid on Twitter: @Kaid_at_NRDC.

Terry Schwarz is the director of Kent State University’s Cleveland Urban Design Collaborative. Her work at the CUDC includes neighborhood and campus planning, commercial and residential design guidelines, and ecological strategies for vacant land reuse. Terry launched the CUDC’s Shrinking Cities Institute in 2005 in an effort to understand and address the implications of population decline and large-scale urban vacancy in Northeast Ohio. As an outgrowth of the Shrinking Cities Institute, she established Pop Up City, a temporary use initiative for vacant and underutilized sites in Cleveland. In 2009, Terry received the Cleveland Arts Prize for Design. She
Charles Kolb is President of the French-American Foundation, located in New York City. The French-American Foundation is the only non-governmental organization in the United States dedicated specifically to strengthening the relationship between the two countries. It does so by bringing together leaders, policymakers and a full range of professionals to exchange views, share best practices, and consider how each country might benefit from the expertise and experience of the other. Mr. Kolb has held this position since August 2012. Prior to joining the French-American Foundation, he was president of the Committee for Economic Development (CED) from 1997 to 2012 and served as General Counsel of United Way of America from 1992 to 1997.


Presentation outline:

Executive Summary:

For the past two years the French America Foundation in partnership with the French Ministry of Culture & Communications sponsored a Sustainable Cities exchange program. The aim of the program was to foster dialogue between American and French professionals on the topic of "Sustainable Cities."

In 2011 & 12 French delegates visited Washington DC, Chicago and Cleveland, and New York City. Delegates from the US were then taken to French cities. The program focused on policies and practices that promote social justice and equal access by underserved residents to basic amenities and services within the sustainable city (green space, affordable fresh produce, cultural activities and public transportation). The official delegation invited by the French-American Foundation was composed of six U.S. leading experts in architecture, urban planning and sustainability.

Format for presentation:

I. Overview on the program by Charles Kolb, is President of the French-American Foundation.
   a. Goals
   b. Participant selection
   c. Lessons learned to date

II. Moderator Joe Schilling
    a. Introduction of panelists
b. Frame the experience & discussion

III. Susannah Drake
   a. Perceptions of Sustainable practices in NYC by French visitors
   b. Landscape, engineering and public art strategies used in Lyon, St Etienne, Nantes
   c. Relationship between sustainability & culture in France

IV. Terry Schwarz
   a. Overview of idea of urban regeneration in France
   b. Distressed and transitional areas of France.
   c. Role of arts and culture in regeneration of more suburban and rural sites.

V. Kaid Benfield
   a. European Union Green Designation - definition and impacts
   b. Building a civic brand
   c. Major redevelopment in the center of a city
   d. Planning for ‘my city of tomorrow’ – public engagement

VI. Panel Discussion – Starter questions that will then open up to a broader forum

VII. Questions from the Audience

**Sustainable Cities Program description**

Founded in 1976 and building on more than two centuries of shared ideals between France and the United States, the French-American Foundation—United States works to enrich a transatlantic relationship that is essential in today’s world. With its sister foundation, the French-American Foundation – France, the Foundation brings together leaders, policymakers, and a wide range of professionals to exchange views and share experiences in areas of mutual concern for mutual benefit.

Since 2011, the French-American Foundation, in partnership with the French Ministry of Culture and Communication, has organized a reciprocal exchange program on the issue of sustainable cities for French and American professionals. Each year, the program consists of two study tours, one in France, one in the United States, which showcase successful models and innovative approaches to urban planning and sustainability.

In 2011, the program focused on cities-in-transition and the rehabilitation of run-down neighborhoods, specifically in old industrial cities such as Lille (Nord-Pas-de-Calais region) in France, Cleveland OH and Baltimore, MD. A preliminary visit of the French and U.S. capitals (Paris and Washington, DC) provided a national perspective on urban planning policies and sustainability issues in each country. The city of Lille, former European Capital for Culture in 2004, is rebuilding the city on its old foundations and enhancing its 19th century industrial heritage, incorporating artistic and cultural projects in its urban development plans. As one of the pilot cities of the Obama administration's federal program “Strong Cities, Strong Communities”, Cleveland was an interesting laboratory for exploring neighborhood-based development with its many old industrial sites. Baltimore, as a true “shrinking” city, introduced
key issues such as affordable housing and neighborhood revitalization in a difficult economic context.

Green infrastructure and sustainability was the focus of the 2012 program with much discussion dedicated to understanding the challenges of regional planning in the New York region, in the wake of Super-storm Sandy. In France, the delegation traveled to Lyon, (France’s second largest economic center) which has been pioneering efforts in the area of sustainability with the Confluence Project, a large rehabilitation plan to transform an old industrial district into a city center. The delegation discovered Nantes, France’s sixth largest city and European Green Capital in 2013. Nantes was the first city to introduce the tramway in France, in 1987 which led to a reduction in car usage among city inhabitants. The city also brings site-specific art to public space in the Nantes Estuary, meant to complement the local landscape, whether natural or industrial.

This year, the program will focus on how to make cities more livable through arts, culture and sustainable policies in Seattle, WA and Marseille, France. Seattle is a hub for “green” industry but more importantly a model in the U.S. for sustainable development. Cultural projects have been opportunities for the city to develop more sustainable buildings, public spaces and neighborhood. Immigration is also an important part of Seattle’s identity with a strong Asian-American community.

Marseille, Provence Alpes Côte d’Azur, is a port city located on the Mediterranean, a multicultural hub that welcomes an important immigrant population. Named the European Capital for Culture in 2013, Marseille is positioning itself on a regional and European level by implementing successful strategies that seek to promote the region’s attractiveness, its economic development, urban renovation and social cohesion.
Former participants

2013 U.S. Participants
Kate Borders, President and CEO, Downtown Fresno Partnership
Ariella Cohen, Executive Editor, Next City
Toni Griffin, Founder, Urban Planning and Design for the American City
Professor of Architecture and Founding Director, J. Max Bond Center on Design for the Just City,
Spitzer School of Architecture, City College of New York
Chris Rogers, Founding Partner and CEO, Point 32

2012 U.S. Participants
Kaid Benfield, Director of Sustainable Communities, Natural Resources Defense Council,
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Michael Braverman, Deputy Commissioner for Housing, City of Baltimore, Maryland
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Katherine Gajewski, Director of Sustainability, City of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
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Joe Schilling, Interim Director, Metropolitan Institute, Virginia Tech, Alexandria, Virginia
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2011 U.S. Participants
Margaret M. Cowell, PhD Assistant Professor of Urban Affairs and Planning at Virginia Tech,
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Mary Hardy, Architect, Siegel & Strain Architects, mhardy@siegelstrain.com
Christopher B. Leinberger, President of Locus, Responsible Real Estate Developers and
Investors ; The Charles Bendit Distinguished Scholar and Research Professor, George
Washington University School of Business ; Nonresident Senior Fellow at Brookings Institution
in Washington DC ; Founding Partner of Arcadia Land Company,
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Terry Schwartz, Director, Kent State University's Cleveland Urban Design Collaborative (CUDC),
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Christopher Zimmerman, Member, Arlington County Board, Czimmerman@arlingtonva.us

2012 French Participants
Marie-Hélène Contal, Architect, Deputy Director for the French Institute of Architecture, Paris
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Catherine Cullen, Deputy Director for Culture for the City of Lille, President of Agenda 21
ccullen@mairie-lille.fr
Sophie Landrin, Environment Reporter, Le Monde, landrin@lemonde.fr
Nicolas Michelin, Architect and landscape architect; Director, Nicolas Michelin & Associés Agency, Paris, nm@anma.fr
Nicholas Taylor, Urban planner, in charge of Research and Development, Nicolas Michelin & associés Agency, Paris, ntaylor@anma.fr
Jean-Baptiste Cuzin, Director, Office of International and Multilateral Affairs, French Ministry of Culture and Communication, jean-baptiste.cuzin@culture.gouv.fr (JB Cuzin was included as a French participant although he was a member of the MCC and he was active and engaged throughout the exchange)

2011 French Participants
Jean-François Ehrlich, President and Founder of ARKOS, jfe@grbox.cz
Pierre Lefèvre, Journalist, Revue Ecologik, Sciences et Vie, Alternatives Economiques, Radio France International, France Inter, pierre.lefevre@free.fr
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