

NORMAN, OKLAHOMA

The Strong Towns Curbside Chat

Norm Van Eeden Petersman
Director of Membership & Development



The background image shows a city street scene. On the left, there is a multi-story building with a stone facade and large windows. A sign above a doorway reads '620'. In front of the building, there is a black umbrella with the text 'MEDICINE HAT' and 'EST. 1914'. A metal railing is visible in the foreground. On the right, a street with cars and a pedestrian is visible under a clear blue sky.

Strong Towns

**A member-supported
non-profit changing the
development pattern of
North America**



NORMAN

**How do we set in motion a
process that strengthens and
builds great places?**

Public Investment Process for a Strong Town



1

Humbly observe where people in the community struggle.

2

Ask the question: What is the next smallest thing we can do right now to address that struggle?

3

Do that thing. Do it right now.

4

Repeat.

“It is critical that the responses considered are the next smallest thing that can be done ... there is no need for years of study or deliberation. Little bets can be quickly undone if they don’t achieve the desired results, or if they have unanticipated negative consequences.

This allows a neighborhood to iterate.”

CORE MESSAGE

Our current path, meant as a means of securing prosperity for all, has unwittingly trapped us in a system that is incapable of building lasting prosperity

An aerial photograph of a city during autumn, with trees in shades of yellow and green. A dark blue rectangular overlay is centered on the image, containing white text. The background shows a mix of residential and commercial buildings, with a clear blue sky and some clouds at the top.

PROMISE

**A local path to gradually
restore the capacity to
create and sustain local
prosperity**

A night sky with a star trail and a bright star. The background is a dark blue night sky with a star trail and a bright star. The star trail is a long, curved line of light that starts in the upper left and ends in the lower right. The bright star is located at the end of the star trail, on the right side of the image. The text is centered in the middle of the image.

NORTH STAR

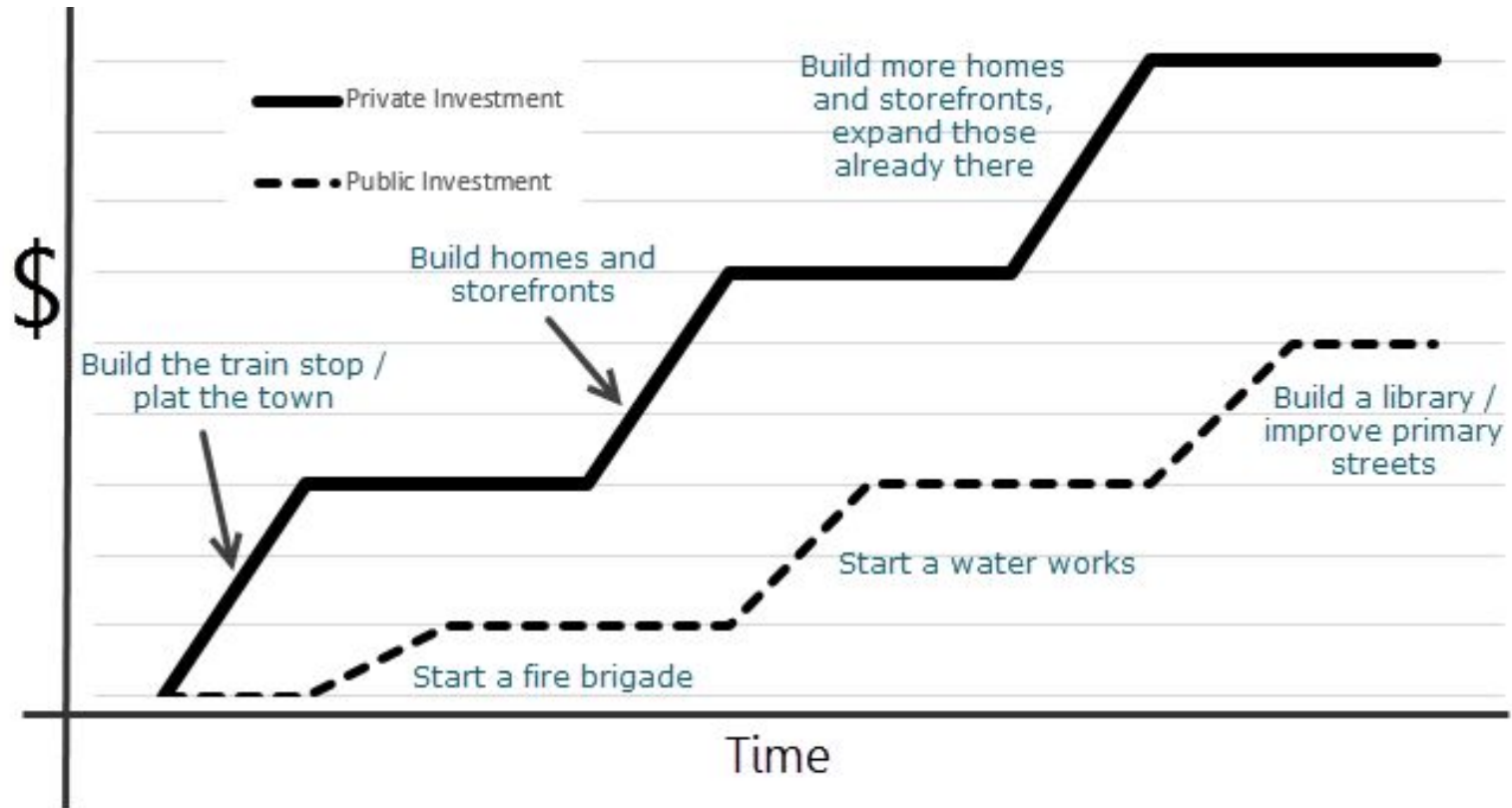
**The traditional development
pattern offers a reliable path to
freedom
from the trouble we've gotten into**

What have we done?

We have traded a robust incremental approach for a complicated and fragile pattern of suburban-style development



Traditional Development Pattern



125 E Main St

\$4.8 million/acre

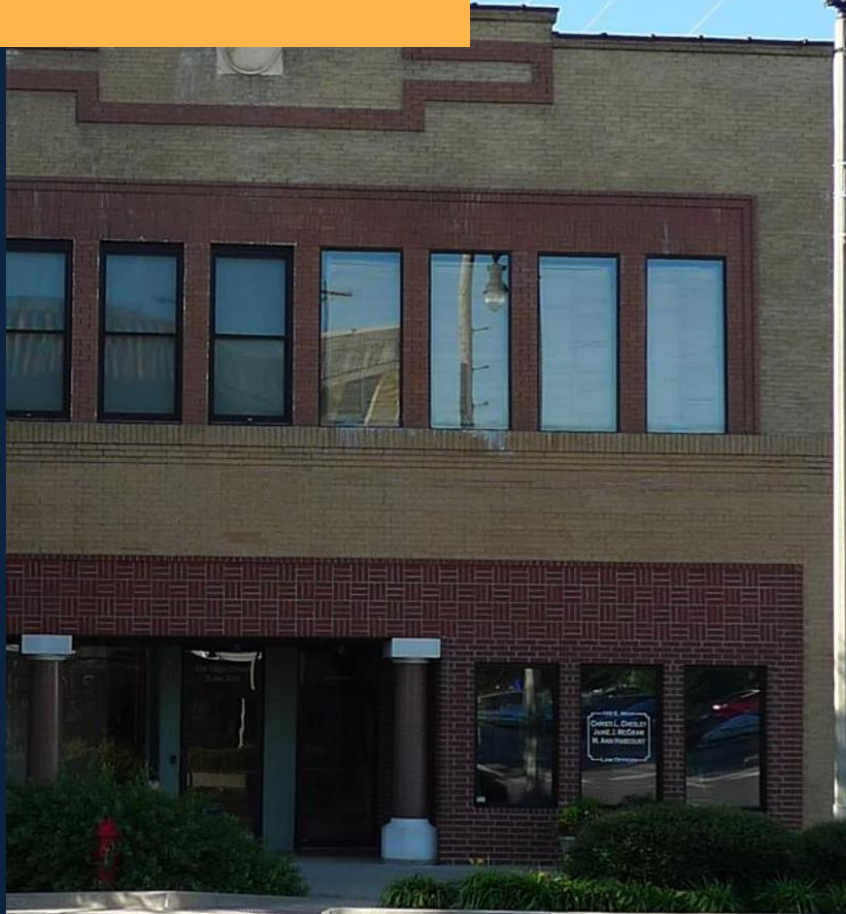
Assessment Details

| | |
|----------------------|------------------|
| Market Value | \$593,800 |
| Taxable Value | \$593,800 |
| Land Value | \$70,000 |
| Gross Assessed Value | \$71,256 |
| Adjustments | \$0 |
| Net Assessed Value | \$71,256 |

[View Taxes for R0023713](#)

100 E Main St

\$7.4 million/acre



Assessment Details

| | |
|----------------------|------------------|
| Market Value | \$593,800 |
| Taxable Value | \$593,800 |
| Land Value | \$70,000 |
| Gross Assessed Value | \$71,256 |
| Adjustments | \$0 |
| Net Assessed Value | \$71,256 |

[View Taxes for R0023713](#)

102 W Main St

\$7.8 million/acre

Assessment Details

| | |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| Market Value | \$1,241,348 |
| Taxable Value | \$331,825 |
| Land Value | \$140,000 |
| Gross Assessed Value | \$39,819 |
| Adjustments | \$0 |
| Net Assessed Value | \$39,819 |

[View Taxes for R0024384](#)

132 W Main St

\$9.2 million/acre

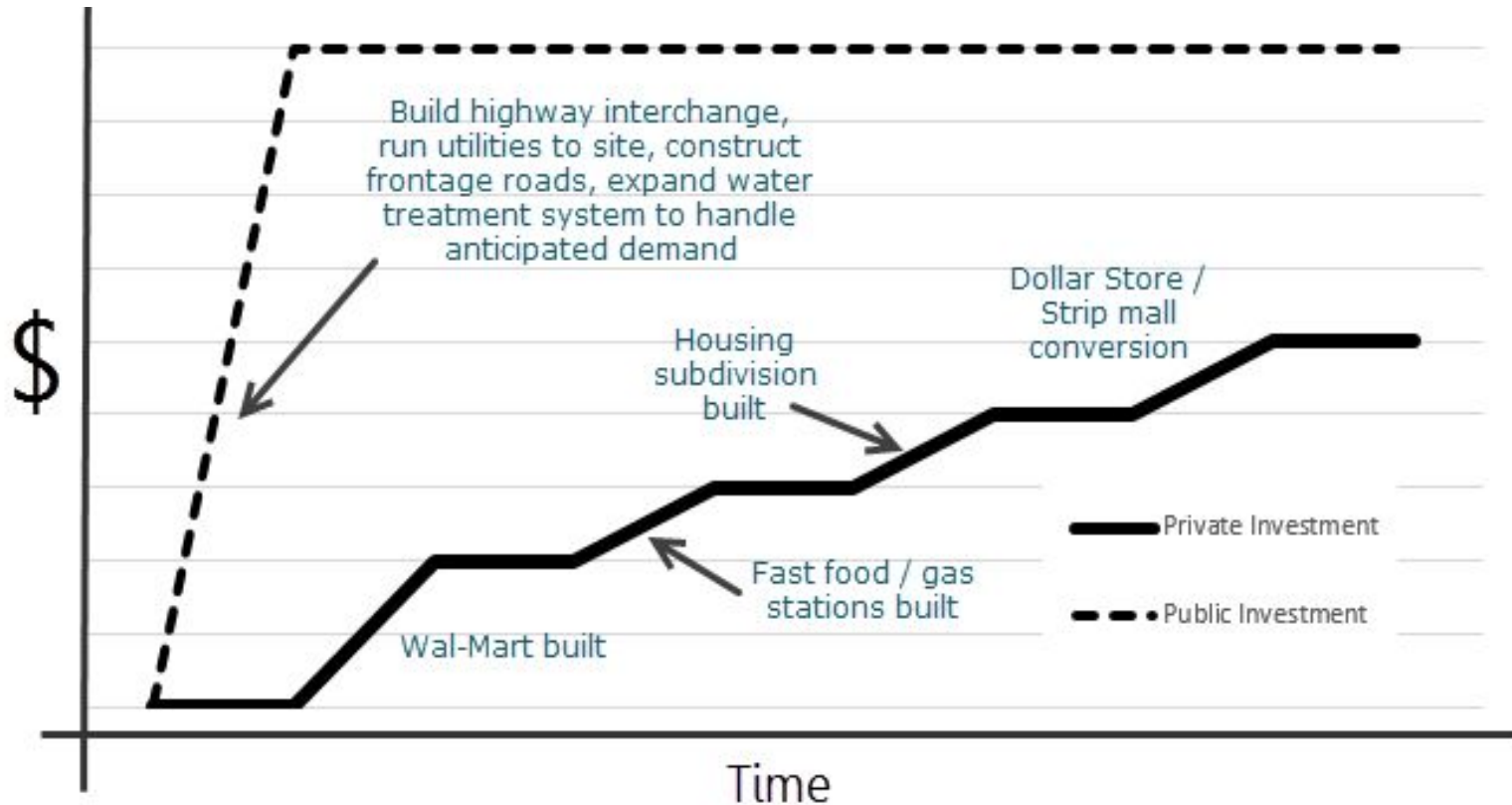
Assessment Details

| | |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| Market Value | \$1,481,218 |
| Taxable Value | \$858,138 |
| Land Value | \$140,000 |
| Gross Assessed Value | \$102,976 |
| Adjustments | \$0 |
| Net Assessed Value | \$102,976 |

[View Taxes for R0024374](#)



Suburban Experiment



615 W Main St

\$2.8 million/acre



Assessment Details

| | |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| Market Value | \$6,000,000 |
| Taxable Value | \$6,000,000 |
| Land Value | \$1,803,550 |
| Gross Assessed Value | \$720,000 |
| Adjustments | \$0 |
| Net Assessed Value | \$720,000 |

[View Taxes for R0025535](#)

1500 24th Ave

\$1.4 million/acre



Assessment Details

| | |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| Market Value | \$22,031,444 |
| Taxable Value | \$22,031,444 |
| Land Value | \$8,285,112 |
| Gross Assessed Value | \$2,643,773 |
| Adjustments | \$0 |
| Net Assessed Value | \$2,643,773 |

[View Taxes for R0151824](#)

1400 24th Ave

~~\$1.3 million/acre~~

Assessment Details

Market Value **\$20,058,749**

Taxable Value **\$14,902,106**

Land Value **\$6,751,800**

Gross Assessed **\$1,788,252**

961K /acre

Net Assessed Value **\$1,788,252**

[View Taxes for R0146134](#)

2550 Mount Williams

~~\$1.3 million/acre~~

Assessment Details

Market Value **\$14,430,616**

Taxable Value **\$10,417,325**

Land Value **\$2,931,594**

Gross Assessed **\$1,250,079**

928K /acre

Net Assessed Value **\$1,250,079**

[View Taxes for R0166085](#)



333 N Interstate Dr

~~\$889k /acre~~

Assessment Details

Market Value **\$20,252,226**

Taxable Value **\$13,071,651**

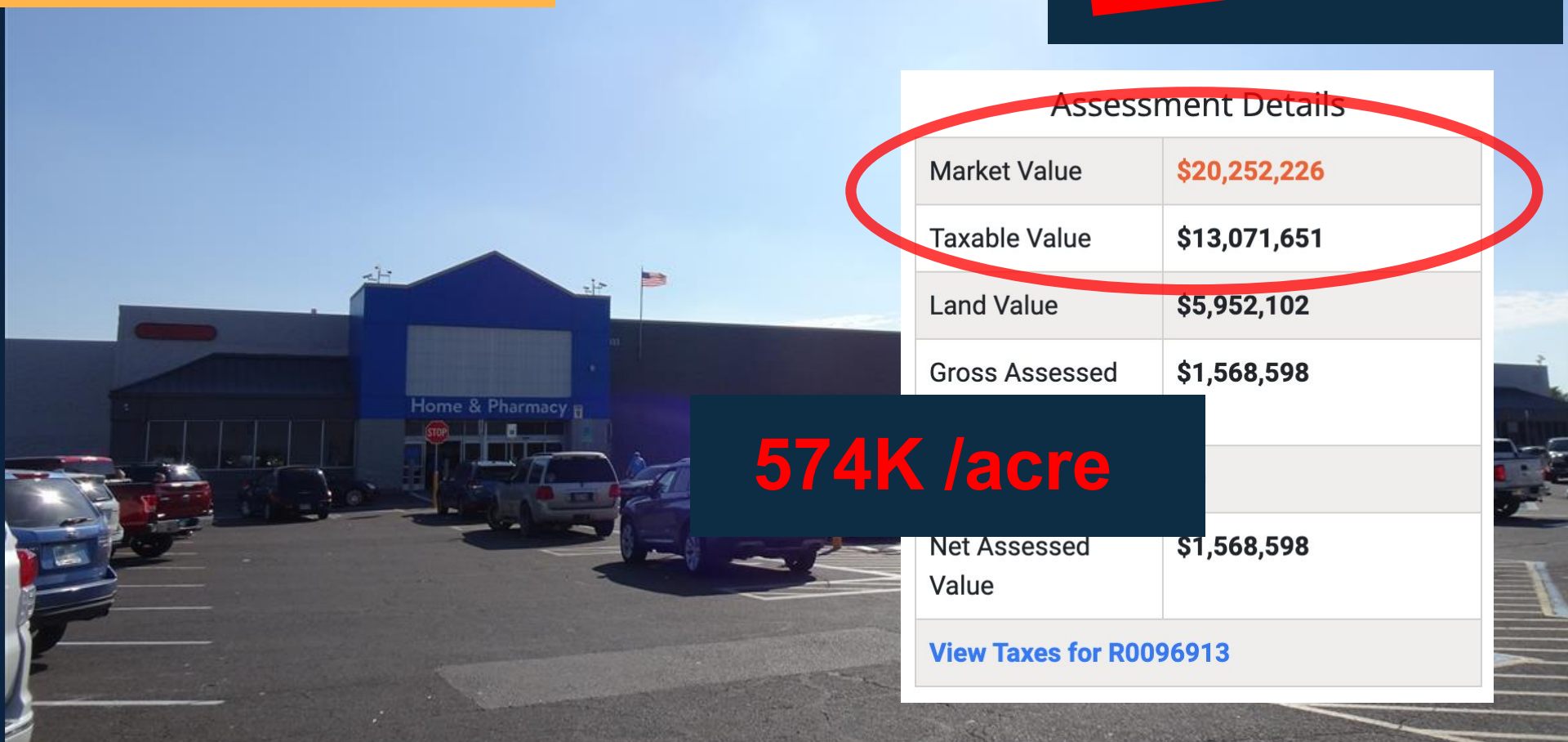
Land Value **\$5,952,102**

Gross Assessed **\$1,568,598**

574K /acre

Net Assessed Value **\$1,568,598**

[View Taxes for R0096913](#)



333 N Interstate Dr (22.8 acres)



W Main St (22.9 acres)



1500 24th Ave

\$22 million

\$1.4 million/acre

Jam

\$1.2 million

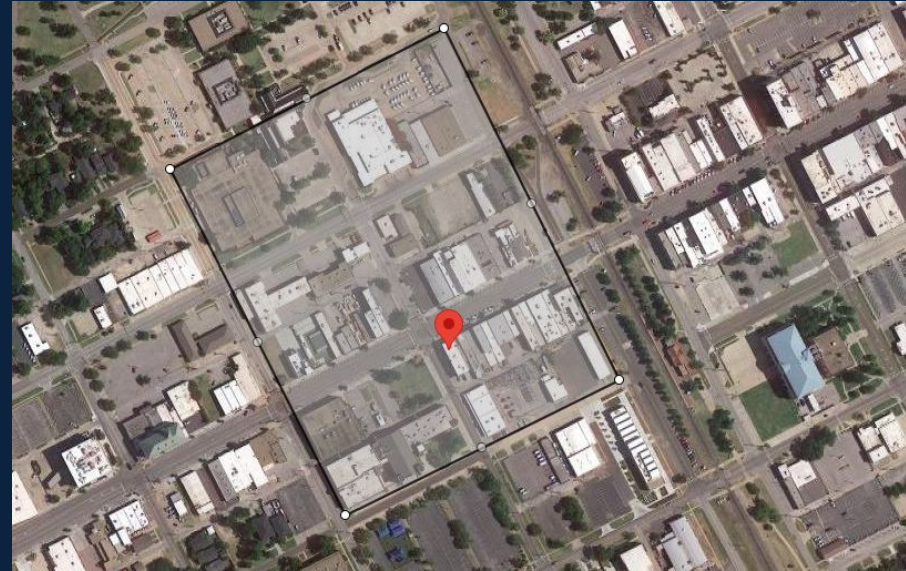
\$7.8 million/acre

How can we improve a \$22 million property to be worth a comparable \$123.63 million?

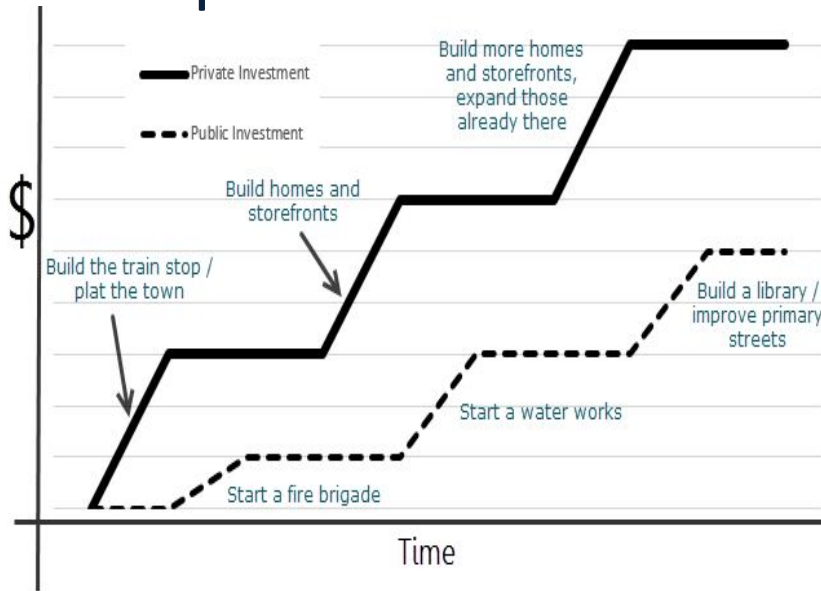
333 N Interstate Dr (22.8 acres)



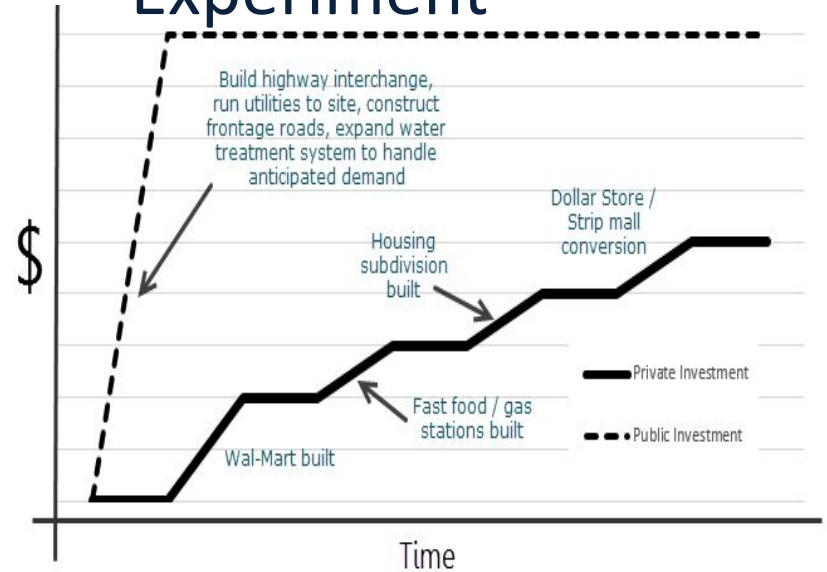
W Main St (22.9 acres)

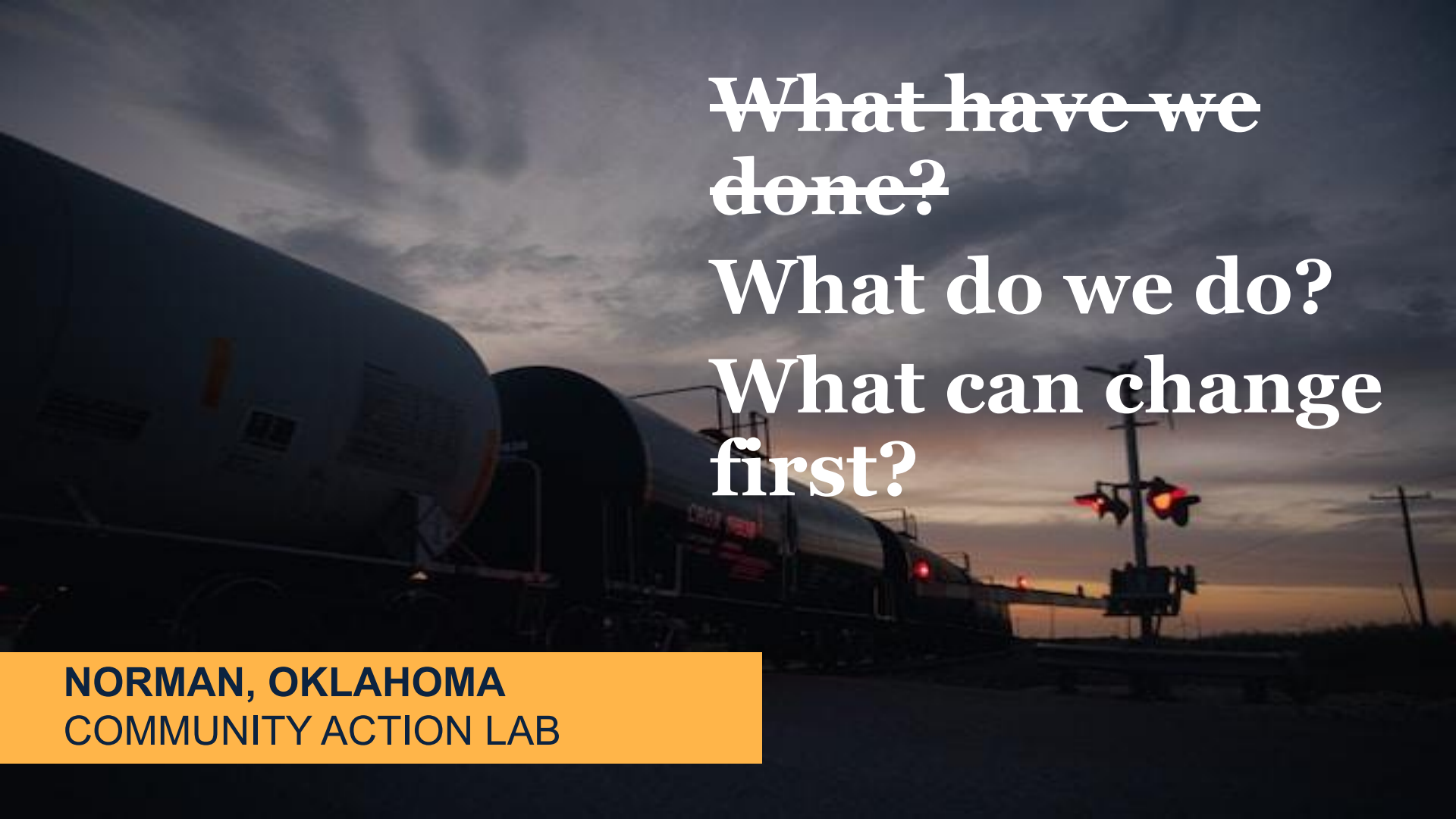


Traditional Development Pattern



Suburban Experiment



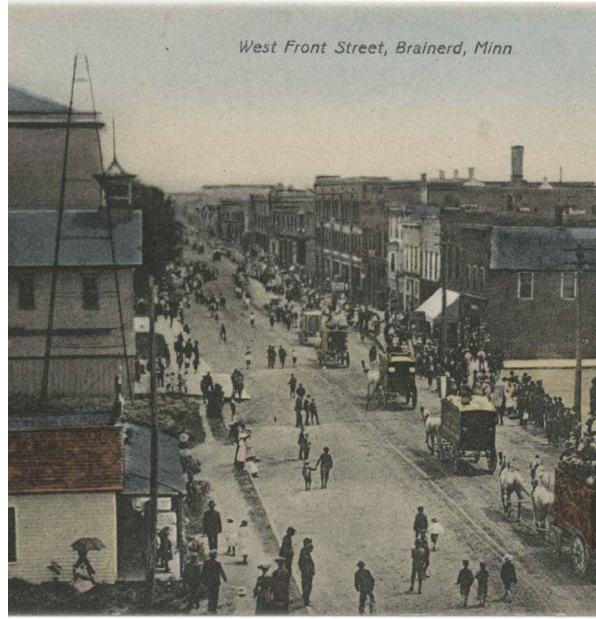
A photograph of a train consisting of several white tanker cars stopped at a railroad crossing. The scene is set during sunset or dusk, with a dark, cloudy sky and a low sun on the horizon. A signal post with two red lights is visible to the right of the train. The overall mood is somber and contemplative.

~~What have we
done?~~

What do we do?

What can change
first?

NORMAN, OKLAHOMA
COMMUNITY ACTION LAB



Allow the Next Increment “By Right”

- a minimum amount of regulatory friction to increase housing density
- approval to build to next increment OR seek permission to skip increments

A sepia-toned historical photograph of a street scene. On the left, a building with a sign that says "THEATRE" is visible. In the foreground, several people are standing. On the right, a horse-drawn carriage is being pulled. The background shows a tall building with a gabled roof and a utility pole.

CORE PRINCIPLE

**No neighborhood should be
subject to radical change**

**No neighborhood should be
exempt from change**

A night sky with a star trail and a bright star. The background is a dark blue night sky with a star trail and a bright star. The star trail is a long, curved line of light that starts in the upper left and ends in the lower right. The bright star is located at the end of the star trail, on the right side of the image. The text is centered in the middle of the image.

NORTH STAR

**The traditional development
pattern offers a reliable path to
freedom
from the trouble we've gotten into**



What do we do?

**Identify ingredients of genuine,
durable value**

**Focus improvements in these
areas and stop harming them**

**NORMAN, OKLAHOMA
COMMUNITY ACTION LAB**



PROMISE

**A local path to gradually
restore the capacity to
create and sustain local
prosperity**

A man with a mustache and glasses, wearing a plaid shirt, is focused on working with a tool in a cluttered workshop. The background is filled with various tools, materials, and equipment, creating a sense of a busy, hands-on environment. The lighting is warm and focused on the man, highlighting his concentration.

Tim's Contention

**“We have lost sight
of what it takes to
build enduring
prosperity”**

A modern, multi-story building with a facade of light-colored stone or concrete panels and large glass windows. The building is set against a clear blue sky. In the foreground, there is a concrete walkway, some greenery, and a sign for the Norman Public Library Central.

~~What have we
done?~~

~~What do we do?~~

What can change
first?

NORMAN
PUBLIC
LIBRARY
CENTRAL
103 W ACRES STREET

Public Investment Process for a Strong Town



1

Humbly observe where people in the community struggle.



2

Ask the question: What is the next smallest thing we can do right now to address that struggle?



3

Do that thing. Do it right now.



4

Repeat.



LOWER THE BAR OF ENTRY

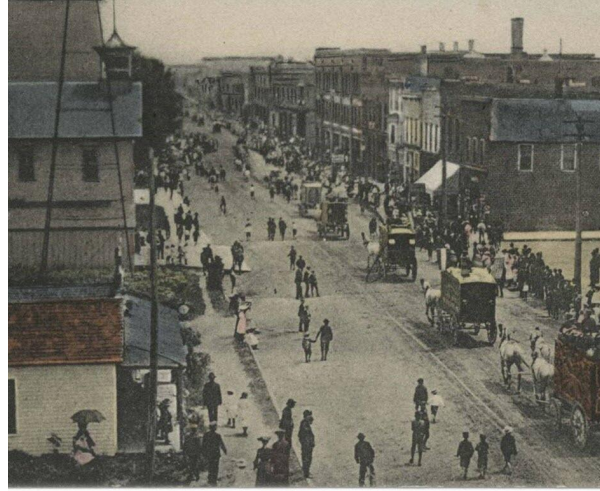


“This is the building block or ladder of prosperity and we've taken that lower rung off”

LOWER THE BAR OF ENTRY

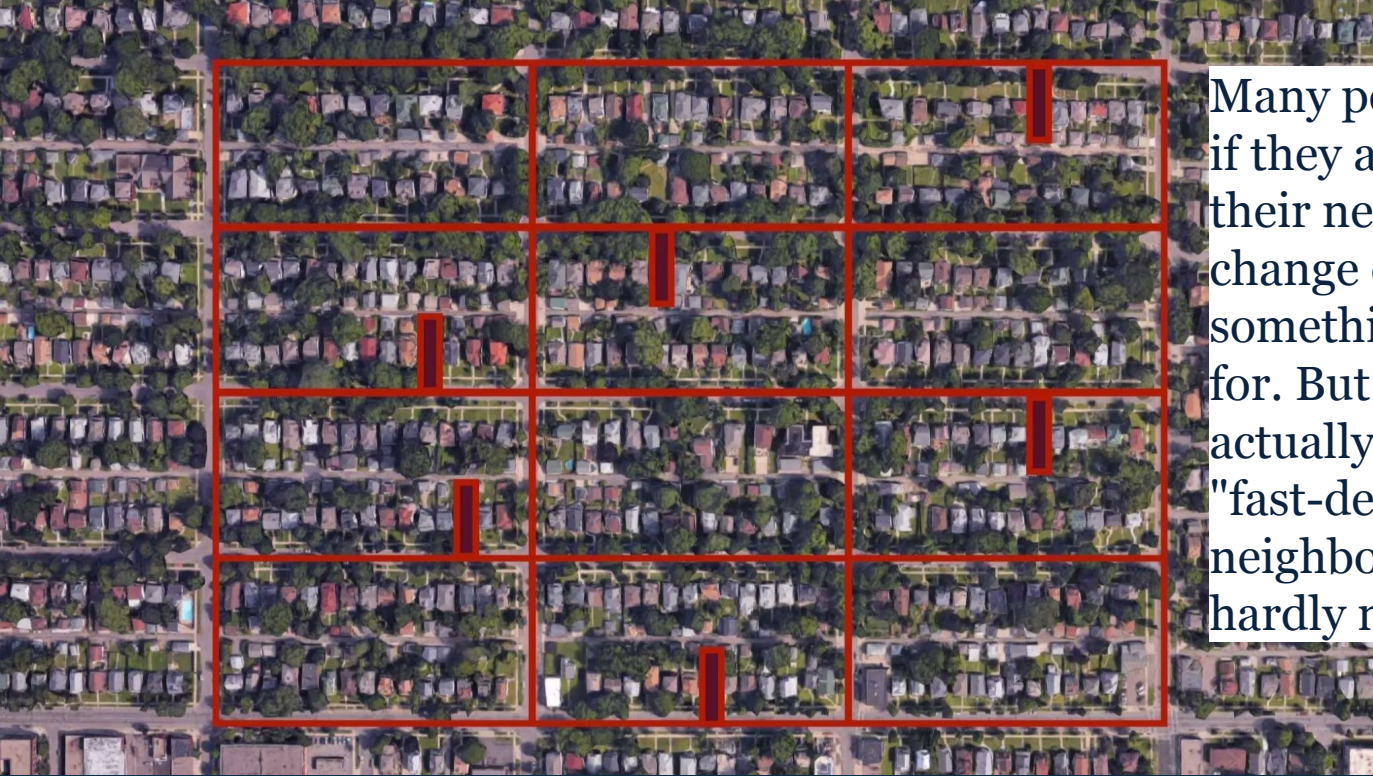


ALLOW THE NEXT INCREMENT



Allow the Next Increment “By Right”

- a minimum amount of regulatory friction to increase housing density
- approval to build to next increment OR seek permission to skip increments



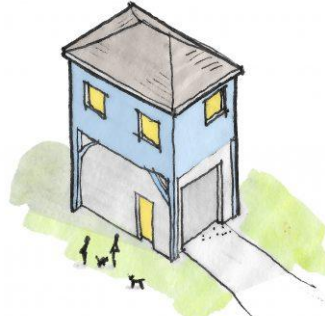
Many people seem to fear that if they allow development, their neighborhood may change drastically & become something they didn't sign up for. But when zoning reform actually occurs, even in "fast-developing" neighborhoods, the change is hardly noticeable.

The median pace of neighborhood change is close to 1 in 48 homes built new every six years: it's as if only the homes shaded dark red in this image were torn down and rebuilt in a six year period

EMBRACE ADUs (even HOAs)



STAND-ALONE DETACHED



ADU OVER A GARAGE



ATTACHED ADU



BASEMENT ADU



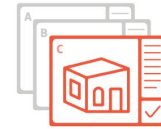
Pre-approved DADUs

To simplify and streamline permitting, the City of Seattle developed pre-approved DADU construction plans that offer a faster, easier, and more predictable design and permitting process. **Here's how it works:**

Browse the gallery



Select a design



Prepare a site plan



Get your permit



END THE APARTMENT BAN



LOWER MINIMUM LOT SIZES



ALLOW RESIDENTIAL IN “COMMERCIAL” AREAS



PROVIDE PARKING DISCRETION



brigh MLS

**STRONG
TOWNS**



Toronto's Curbside Patios Made 49 Times More Money Than the Parking They Replaced

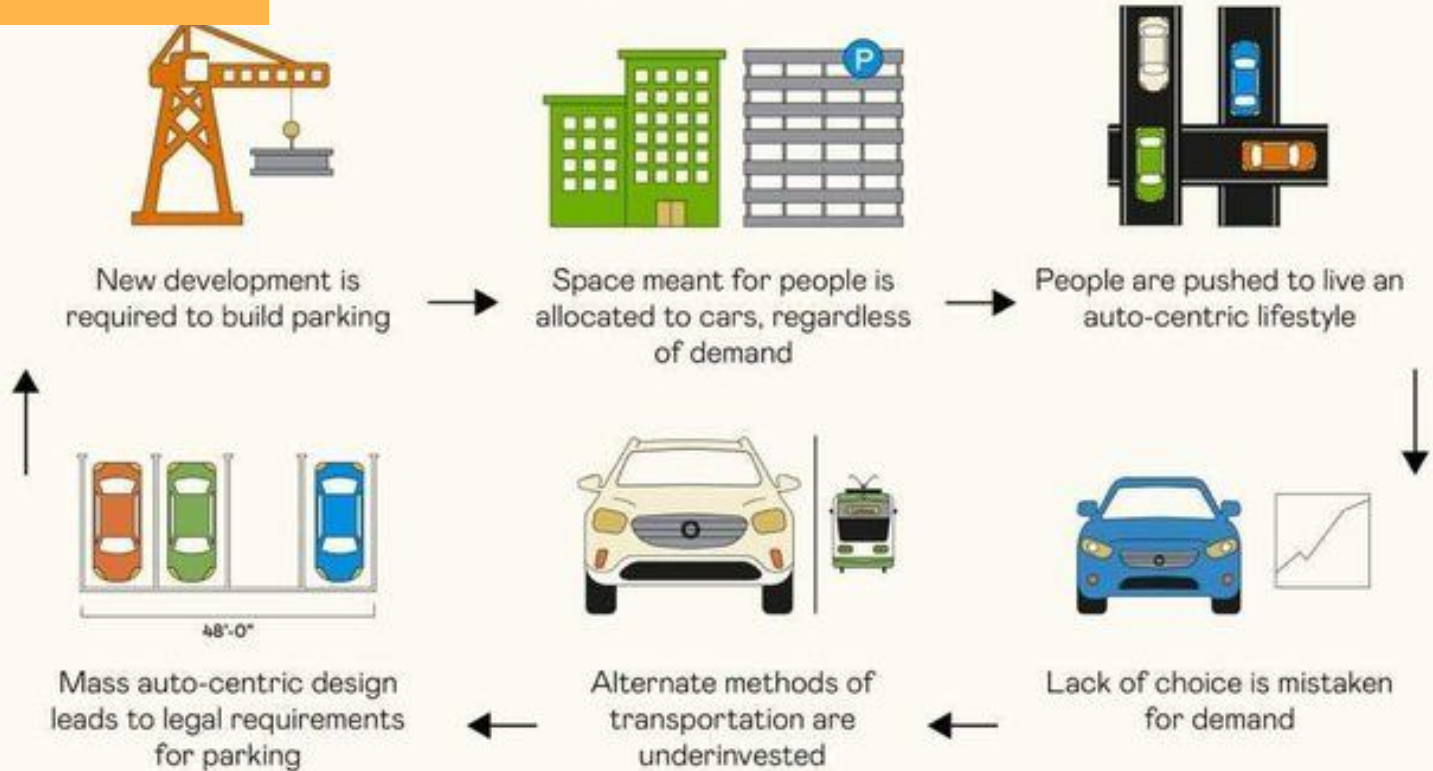
Seairra Sheppard · November 22, 2022



A curbside patio in Nelson, BC. (Source: [adrimcmj/Flickr](#).)

PROVIDE PARKING DISCRETION

The Vicious Cycle of Parking Requirements



ALLOW COMMERCIAL IN “RESIDENTIAL” AREAS



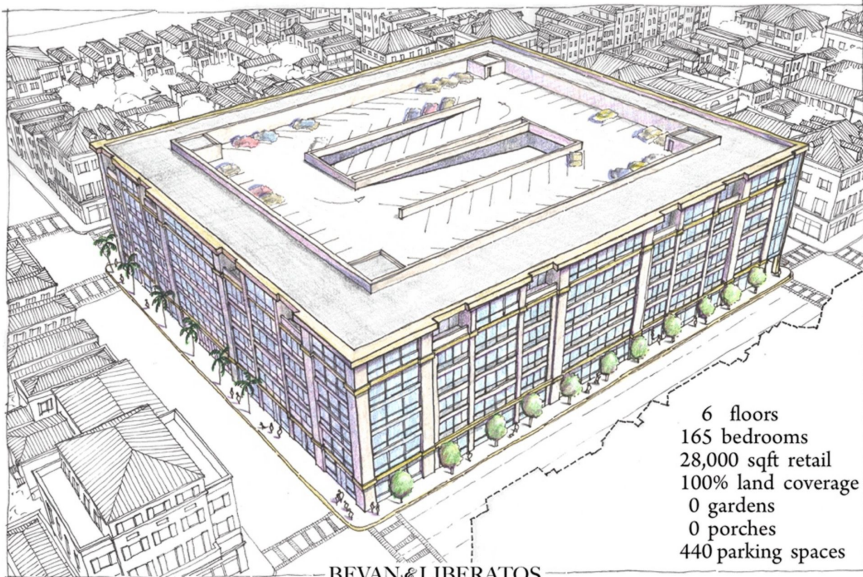
ALLOW COMMERCIAL IN “RESIDENTIAL” AREAS



REDUCE “DISCRETIONARY” REVIEWS WITH AS-OF-RIGHT

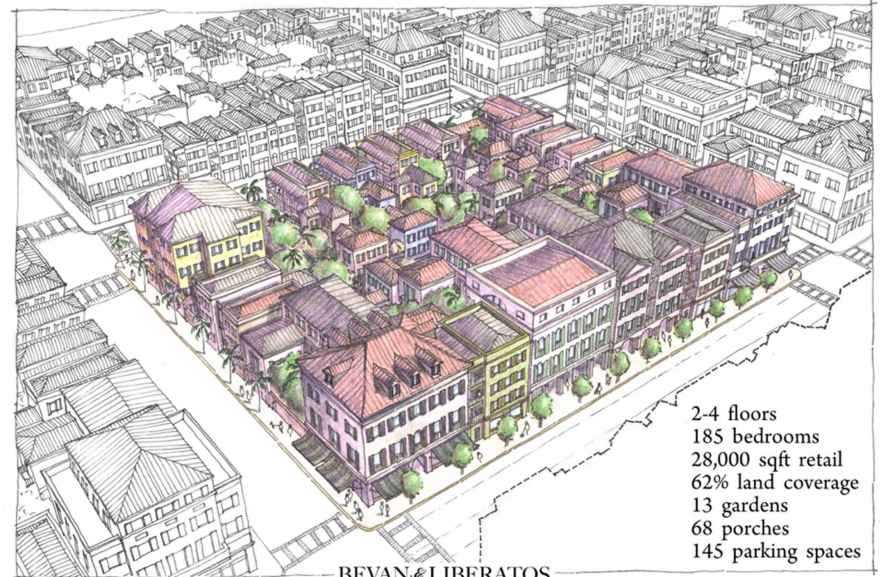
Subsidized in Charleston!

Industrialized, internationalist architecture + car-centric urbanism:



Illegal in Charleston!

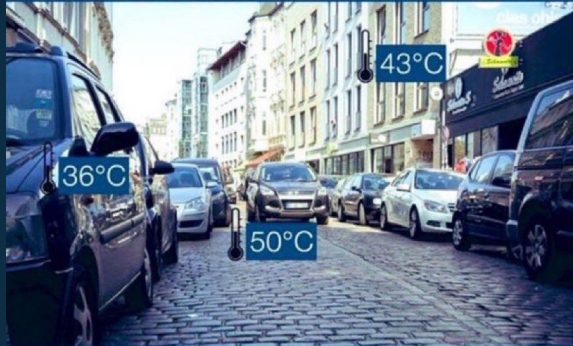
Locally-built, authentic Charleston architecture + authentic Charleston urbanism:



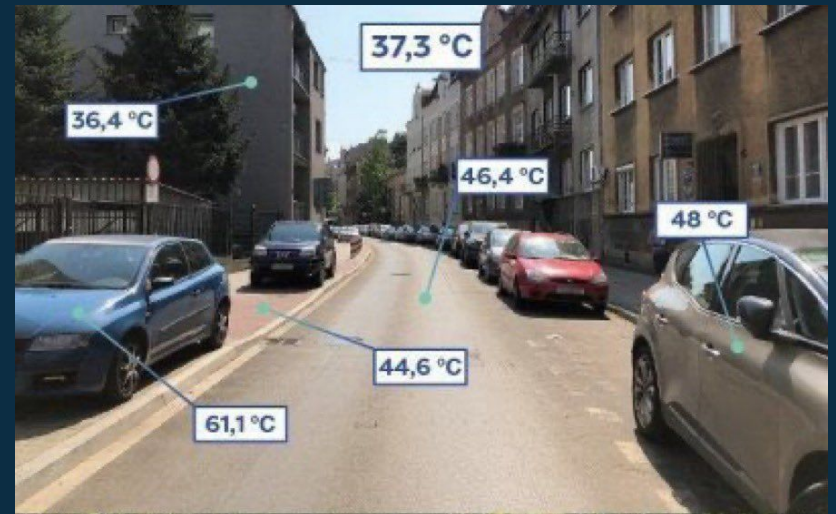
PLANT STREET TREES

(apologies for the metric)

WITHOUT TREES



WITH TREES



PLANT STREET TREES

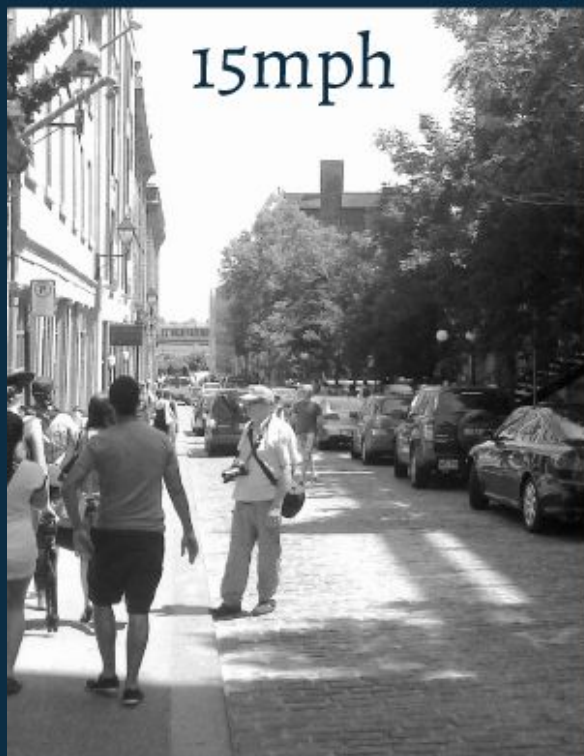
TULSA, OK



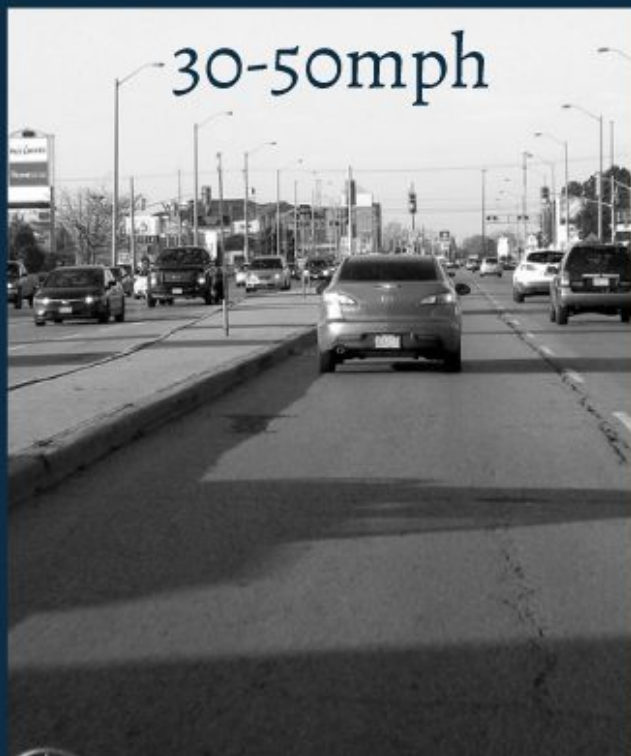
SLOW THE CARS

DESIGN MATTERS

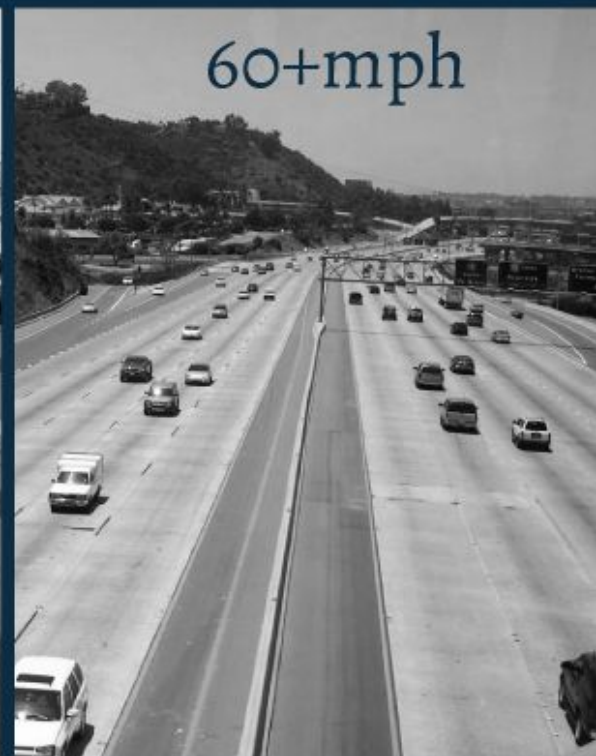
STRONG
TOWNS



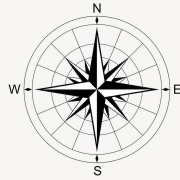
Safe



Deadly



Safe



NORTH STAR

**The traditional development
pattern offers a reliable path to
freedom
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By Right. This Might Not Be Right?!

What exactly is “by right” development, and how might it not match what’s *actually* built in your community?

[Read More →](#)

Edward Erfurt · Apr 7, 2023



Strongest Town Contest



We have our finalists—get ready to hear live from both towns’ representatives Monday, April 10!

WWW.STRONGTOWNS.ORG