

NEW URBAN NEWS

ROBERT STEUTEVILLE,  
EDITOR AND PUBLISHER

PHILIP LANGDON,  
SENIOR EDITOR

LISA A. ROSENTHAL  
PRODUCTION/RESEARCH ASSOCIATE

RENEE GAYLE BRUTVAN  
PRODUCTION ASSOCIATE

SARAH K. BROWN, ACCOUNTS & PAYROLL

NEW URBAN NEWS, PO Box 6515  
ITHACA, NY 14851  
(PH) 607/275-3087  
(FAX) 607/272-2685

EMAIL: MAIL@NEWURBANNEWS.COM  
WEB: WWW.NEWURBANNEWS.COM

NEW URBAN NEWS IS AN INDEPENDENT  
PUBLICATION OF NEW URBAN  
PUBLICATIONS INC.

NEW URBAN NEWS IS PUBLISHED EIGHT  
TIMES A YEAR (EVERY 6.5 WEEKS) BY NEW  
URBAN PUBLICATIONS INC., 202 E. STATE  
ST., SUITE 303, ITHACA, NY 14850. ISSN  
# 1096-1844.

POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO  
NEW URBAN NEWS, PO Box 6515, ITHACA,  
NY 14851.

PERIODICALS PERMIT APPROVED AT ITHACA,  
NY, AND ADDITIONAL MAILING OFFICES.  
SUBSCRIPTION IS \$89/YEAR IN THE U.S.  
AND CANADA. IN OTHER COUNTRIES,  
SUBSCRIPTION IS \$99/YEAR. STUDENT RATE  
IS \$45. SINGLE ISSUE, \$12. MULTIPLE BACK  
ISSUES, \$7.50/ISSUE.

Statement of Ownership, Management and  
Circulation

Publication Title: New Urban News; Publication Number: 1096-1844; Filing Date: October 1, 2008; Issue Frequency: eight issues/year (every 6.5 weeks); Number of Issues Published Annually: eight; Annual Subscription Price: \$89; Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication: PO Box 6515, Ithaca, NY 14851-6515; Tompkins County; Contact Person: Robert Steuteville, Telephone: (607) 275-3087; Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor: New Urban Publications Inc., Robert Steuteville, PO Box 6515, Ithaca, NY 14851; Owner: New Urban Publications Inc., Robert Steuteville, P.O. Box 6515 Ithaca, NY 14851; Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: October/November 2008; Extent and Nature of Circulation: Actual No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date, Total Number of Copies: 5,800 (6,350 avg. last 12 months); Paid or Requested Mail Subscriptions In/Outside-County: 4,217 (4,544 avg. last 12 months); Other Classes Mailed: 302 (299 avg. last 12 months); Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation: 4,519 (4,843 avg. last 12 months); Nonsubscriber Distribution by Mail: 748 (765 avg. last 12 months); Free Distribution Outside the Mail: 100 (100 avg. last 12 months); Total Free/nonsubscriber Distribution: 848 (865 avg. last 12 months); Total Distribution: 5,367 (5,708 avg. last 12 months); Copies not Distributed: 433 (642 avg. last 12 months); Total: 5,800 (6,350 avg. last 12 months); Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation: 84.20% (84.85% avg. last 12 months).

COMMENTARY

For a green economy, create incentives for smart growth

ROBERT STEUTEVILLE

In the bestseller *Hot, Flat, and Crowded* (see book review on page 15), Thomas Friedman argues for economic incentives to create a green economy. Friedman demands fundamental shifts in policy that would drastically reduce our collective carbon footprint — not the current feel-good programs that work around the edges. Without US leadership on this issue, the world has little hope of making the transition away from dirty fuels in a timely manner, he argues. And, from a nationalistic point of view, he notes that our economy and foreign policy will suffer if we stay on the sidelines.

While the biggest incentives must come from the federal government, there is much that can be done by states and municipalities. A great example of this is featured on page 8. A green development, Verano, is about to begin construction just southwest of San Antonio, Texas, supported by \$250 million in tax-increment financing (TIF) from the city and other jurisdictions.

The plan includes a 694-acre state university campus, 10,000 to 12,000 housing units, shops, workplaces, and open space. Walkable, mixed-use Verano will, it's hoped, be connected to rail transit. The development may eventually reduce driving per capita by 50 percent if recent studies are any indication (see the September *New Urban News*). The buildings themselves will meet green standards, cutting down further on energy use. That means fewer future tax dollars required for the maintenance of roads and bridges — and reduced riches flowing to petrodictators in Saudi Arabia, Iran, Russia, Venezuela, Nigeria, and other lands. Residents will save on their energy use and transportation costs. Most importantly, the project will help to meet carbon-reduction goals.

The TIF infrastructure investments are covered by tax revenues generated by Verano. In the long term, the development is expected to add \$2 billion to the city's tax base.

Scott Polikov, the planner who designed Verano, says the TIF financing was needed to get the project off of the ground. "Without that incentive, we wouldn't be able to do the scores of pocket parks, 50 miles of new streets and 10 miles of new alleys without going bankrupt in the early years of the project," he says. New urban development requires bigger infrastructure investments than conventional development, Polikov says, but the value created by these investments is greater in the long run.

INCENTIVES SPEED THE TRANSITION

Many new urban projects are built successfully with no public subsidies. But without incentives, the transformation to smart growth takes place much too slowly. Green technologies require a helping hand to compete in the mass market. Industry is heavily invested in current methods, and transition costs are high. Comfort with the status quo and fear of the unknown are barriers to change.

Smart growth is the green technology of the real estate development industry. Consumers are most familiar with houses on automobile-dependent one-acre lots. One way to encourage more people to try something new is to build a really high-quality public realm loaded with parks and amenities, as planned in Verano. This approach costs money. Today's smart growth is not your great grandfather's urban neighborhood — where they laid down a basic grid of streets and let the builders do the rest.

In most municipalities, builders are strongly discouraged from creating anything but automobile-dependent suburbs. Zoning generally requires dumb growth, and developers are forced either to build sprawl or plead for permission to do something better. Where Verano is planned, officials got rid of that disincentive by approving the SmartCode. The new zoning is, like the TIF, appealing to the developer because as long as the plan meets the SmartCode, public approvals are streamlined.

Do we want a green America that spends less of our national treasure propping up dictators? We can move in that direction by removing regulatory incentives for sprawl and adopting tax incentives for green development. The development industry will respond with smarter plans that offer residents transportation choice. ♦