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MISSION STATEMENT
AND SUBMISSION GUIDELINES:

The ColoradO Urbanist is aimed at:

- Advocating New Urbanist principles in Colorado
- Stimulating a deeper level of thinking about urbanism
- Outlining exemplary local practices
- Providing a local forum for urbanist ideas and explorations.

The Colorado Urbanist focuses on lectures, panel presentations and other events organized by the CNU Colorado Chapter Organizing Committee. As such it welcomes submissions on following items:

- Responses to the lectures, panel presentations and other events organized by the CNU Colorado Chapter Organizing Committee
- Responses to the content of the previous issues of The Colorado Urbanist
- Opinion letters and short essays on any subjects pertaining to the issues outlined in the Charter of the New Urbanism.

Please email your submission as a Microsoft Word attachment to the editors and write “The Colorado Urbanist” in the subject line.

FROM THE CHAPTER

This is an exciting time for all of us. CNU-17 is coming to Denver this June and CNU-Colorado has just been recognized as a local chapter. As some of you may know, the Colorado Chapter Organizing Committee has been meeting since last February. The Committee has placed the priority on organizing several events; presentations, panel discussions, tours to exemplary projects. In addition to the events, the committee has decided to focus on The Colorado Urbanist as a publication to share the content of and the lessons learned at these events.

We have decided to publish three issues of The Colorado Urbanist each year and encourage the participants of the events to contribute. As we did with this issue, we are planning to distribute hard copies by mail to all the Chapter members free of charge. According to a new CNU policy, each CNU member is automatically a member of the local chapter, if there is one in the region of residence.

The primary objectives of these events have been to bring together practitioners who have devoted their practices to enhancing urbanism and to create a forum to review, discuss, and underline the value of urbanism. In order to extend this forum and provide lasting value we have decided to include the presentations, discussions, reflections, and lessons learned of these events, in The Colorado Urbanist. We have included the Holiday Neighborhood event in the first issue of The Colorado Urbanist and the South Main Place and Urbanist Boulder Bike Tour events are included in this second issue. This issue was supposed to come out two months ago but was postponed so that we could announce the establishment of the chapter. Also, we have an interesting event coming up: a panel discussion on what urbanism means and why we need urbanism. (Please see the back cover for the details.)

A few words about the CNU-Colorado’s Board of Directors. The regular meeting attendees of the Colorado Chapter Organizing Committee designed the structure of the CNU-Colorado following the policies established by CNU. The current nine member Board of Directors include myself, Sean O’Hara, vice president (EV Studio); vice president, John Olson, treasurer (Thomas and Thomas); Cynthia Patton, secretary (City of Denver); Kevin Handley (Tryba Architects); Peter Park (City of Denver); Ronnie Pelusio (Wolff-Lyon Architects); Gary Taipalus (Fentress Architects); and Jeff Winston (Winston Associates). I should also add that the work produced by the Board is voluntary work with no compensation.

Please contact me or any of the board members if you are interested in becoming active in the chapter. We can always use more help in organizing events, editing The Colorado Urbanist, or broadening the scope of the chapter towards new horizons.

Korkut Onaran
President, CNU-Colorado
Principal, Wolff-Lyon Architects
A VISIT TO SOUTH MAIN PLACE, BUENA VISTA, COLORADO

One of the late summer events coordinated by the CNU-Colorado Chapter Organizing Committee, was a tour to South Main Place, an exciting new urbanist project with unique attributes in Buena Vista, Colorado. On August 2, 2008, the developers Katie Selby Urban and Jed Selby graciously hosted a walking tour and provided lunch for a group of approximately twenty-five architects, landscape architects, and planners. The Colorado Urbanist expresses sincere gratitude to Katie and Jed. The following is a series of articles about the event. The first is a summary by John Olson, who was very helpful in organizing this event; and his interview with Katie. Next follows two reflection essays by two participants, Scott Schigur and Ronnie Pelusio. We hope these essays will encourage you to attend our future events and contribute to The Colorado Urbanist with your thoughts.

A SUMMARY:
SOUTH MAIN TOUR

John Olson,
Treasurer, CNU-Colorado
Urban Designer, Thomas - Thomas Planning, Urban Design, Landscape Architecture

The tour to South Main Place began at the offices of South Main, Inc. in downtown Buena Vista, where participants followed hosts Jed Selby and Katie Selby Urban to the project site. The knowledgeable hosts spent the day explaining the different facets and aspects of the project to the group. Katie graciously opened her South Main home for a lunch and brief presentation, which concluded the day’s events.

While South Main officially sits on 41 acres, the young and ambitious brother and sister team have purchased additional blocks of land including parcels along the existing Main Street in downtown Buena Vista. South Main is situated along the headwaters of the Arkansas River and surrounded by thousands of acres of preserved open space across the river. According to Katie, the headwaters of the Arkansas River attract 600,000 visitors each year who visit the beautiful setting to enjoy whitewater rafting, kayaking, and fishing.

An all-star cast of architects and new urbanist designers were involved in the creation of South Main including Victor Dover, Steve Mouzon, Peter Swift, Allison Ramsey Architects, Opticos (Architects), and Kenny Craft and Minet Mahoney. Currently, Craft and Mahoney serve as architects for South Main Development Company, which streamlines the architectural process and makes the costs to the consumer more economical. In addition, in January 2008 the team started their own construction company for the South Main project to further save costs. In the past, buyers purchased lots with the intention of construction within two years. Now consumers can actually purchase lots with immediate access to architectural and construction services reducing the total time and cost required.

As with many new urbanist communities, charrettes were held at the beginning of the process. Organizers achieved a high level of public participation through advertising in local newspapers and news stations. The meetings helped formulate a vision and gave opposition a chance to articulate their concerns. Certain parameters of the project were established at this time with public officials in attendance in order to minimize later conflict. In initial charrettes, local Longmont Civil Engineer, Peter Swift laid out the street types and asked for the City to sign off on the street design to mitigate future surprises.

Sustainability is a major aspect of new urbanist communities with a focus on pedestrian circulation and

Katie Selby Urban and Jed Selby on porch stairs of a building on South Main Street.
The group at the Buzz Boulevard, a boulevard with 10 foot wide one-way couplets.
Katie Selby Urban and Jed Selby
creating community. This is definitely true with South Main. Not only will residents of South Main be able to easily walk to the retail and live/work options in their immediate neighborhood, they will also be just a short walk away from supporting downtown businesses. South Main structures are also sustainable and are all required to meet “Built Green” standards. According to Katie, the architecture is timeless, and the homes will not seem dated in the future. Many of the goals and objectives of South Main will blend into the existing fabric of downtown Buena Vista. Development on the newly purchased land between current South Main site and downtown Buena Vista will add to the fabric.

Re-use and sustainable practices at South Main include the recycling and grinding of excess wood and drywall to be used for mulch. The site also has an abundance of large boulders which have been used in several ways including the creative approach to flatten the central park along the Arkansas River. Boulders have also been broken down and used for the road base for the site as well.

The kayak park in South Main, which is of course a central focus of a community created by professional kayakers, includes three kayak surf waves and a great river pedestrian trail. State funded grants were given to South Main, Inc. for the rehabilitation of the riverfront. The team took great advantage of the grants and helped mold a once forgotten and neglected piece of riverfront into fantastic amenity for Buena Vista. During the tour, it was obvious that these natural settings are certainly utilized by neighborhood and surrounding residents. Future plans for the riverfront park include Eddyline Restaurant and Brewery, which officially broke ground on the first of November. The restaurant will include walk-out views of a whitewater wave feature. Future plans include an artificial rock climbing wall along the river as well as an additional surf wave.

Careful planning went into South Main’s street design. Terminated vistas in South Main include the courthouse tower in downtown Buena Vista, the natural beauty of the Arkansas River Valley and, of course, the Collegiate Peaks.
Peaks. Upright trees enhance and complement the major view corridors with the alteration of Lanceleaf Poplar and Patmore Green Ash. The alteration of the upright trees creates a rhythm along the streets and preserves views of the mountain region. Cottonwoods have been installed along other streets due to their quick growth and shade assets. One of most recognizable streets in South Main is also one of the narrowest. The parkway measures 10' from the face of the curb to the edge of the road and includes a median. Vehicles may park between the trees on the outside (or non-curb) of the parkway.

Swift Circle, though not currently fully developed, will be one of the more intimate streets in South Main. Coincidentally, Katie has made this street her home address. A proposal for the street to utilize 6-12” rock from the river was mocked up for the City, but not approved. A decision on paving material is still to be determined for this street, but undoubtedly its character is likely to be first-class.

I enjoyed the tour of South Main and am especially thankful to Katie and Jed for providing insight and history on the project. The team is obviously passionate about this project, its objectives and their commitment to creating community. A personal favorite of my visit to South Main is the village park. A lot of care and detail considerations have already gone into the park. Future possibilities for this space are remarkable. I would encourage everyone to take a road trip to Buena Vista this upcoming spring to see the progress firsthand.

AN INTERVIEW WITH KATIE URBAN SELBY OF SOUTH MAIN INC.

John Olson,
Treasurer, CNU-Colorado
Urban Designer, Thomas - Thomas Planning, Urban Design, Landscape Architecture

John: What was it about the site where South Main sits that made you choose it, a landfill, over other riverfront property in the Arkansas River Valley including Salida?

Katie: From the beginning, we felt that the property on which South Main now sits was very unique. As professional freestyle kayakers, the ability to build one of the longest and best whitewater parks in the world was our first true inspiration, long before ‘New Urbanism’ was part of our vocabulary. In Salida, where we lived prior to moving to Buena Vista, the river corridor is mostly private, with only about 1/4 mile of public trail fronting the river. Here in Buena Vista, our property ties into the town’s 100+ acre river park and hundreds of miles of public trail systems for hiking, mountain biking, etc. Despite bordering the Town’s old landfill and our property having been used as a trash dump, it is stunning river front property. It is adjacent to downtown and is an infill location. We had the ability to donate our river corridor to the town to make it a permanent public park, tie it into the existing trail systems and extend the whitewater park to include several more surf waves.
John: Did the initial development dream include the mixed-use, pedestrian friendly environment that we see before us today? If so, how were you introduced to the new urbanism?

Katie: Initially, the inspiration was the river park. But as environmentalists, we weren’t about to just build another development. Jed and I went to Boulder to do research and found Suburban Nation in the CU library. Then, at a friend’s house later that evening, someone told us about Prospect New Town. So we drove out there having no idea what to expect, and the interesting thing we noticed later was that one of our initial responses was to look at each other and wonder why we were driving rather than walking. We got out and explored Prospect on foot.

We made it over to the information office and asked the woman there who the developer was. She reluctantly gave us his number, and as soon as we told him what we were up to, he told us not to go anywhere and he’d be right there. At that moment, Kiki Wallace became our New Urbanist mentor and advisor. He helped us over the next several months choose our urban designer, Dover, Kohl and Partners. He also was an extremely valuable resource for a number of key decisions we would make over the next year or so and in general, helped lead us in the right direction on decisions from architectural review to engineering.

John: What are some of the civic amenities in South Main that makes this neighborhood unique?

Katie: The main civic amenity that makes South Main unique is the ~3 acre river corridor that we donated to the town as a permanent public park. It used to be private, overgrown and inaccessible and now is a beautiful public river park with trails, kayaking surf waves, interpretive signs, a tile outdoor living room, a grass square that holds an ice skating rink in winter, etc. All this park space is either overgrown and inaccessible and now is a beautiful public

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John: For South Main, why was traditional architecture chosen? How big of a role did Steve Mouzon play in the architectural design of South Main?

Katie: Traditional architecture was chosen in South Main because we believe that it is timeless and proven. It was the way we could ensure that what is built is loved for generations, which is a key aspect of sustainability. Loved places are protected, which is important given that buildings use an enormous amount of resources to be built. It was also a way that we could be sure that so many homes and businesses of varying types and sizes would work well together in close proximity.

Dover, Kohl and Partners did our initial development standards, which defined in general our architecture. Steve Mouzon did our architectural reviews for a period of time and helped us define more specifically what the ‘South Main style’ is. Kenny Craft now does our architectural reviews and designs architecture in-house, along with Minette Mahoney. We have very few reviews now that most buildings are designed in-house, which has made the process of getting built at South Main much easier for our customers.

John: With the beautiful setting Buena Vista is blessed with, has there been any consideration of introducing rental cottages or some sort of seasonal lodging?

Katie: We are launching the South Main Vacation Rentals program as we speak and there will be homes available for rent in 2009. Our website will have all the information on this program.

John: With the arid climate of Buena Vista, were there any considerations by the developers or the City to utilize low water-use plant material rather than bluegrass between the curbs and sidewalks?

Katie: Yes, we tried to use lower water plants or grass for our tree planting strips. Unfortunately, the town felt strongly that bluegrass was the only way to go and that it recovers from droughts better than other grasses and plants in their experience. In the approval process of a neighborhood such as South Main, you win some and you lose some. This one, we lost.

John: When is the projected timeline for full build-out of the 41 acre site?

Katie: It’s really hard to say, especially with the current economic situation of our country. We’re also in a small town and are trying to plan ahead for growth that will occur over a long period of time, so that it can be smart and well-planned. I’ve always told people that it would be fully built out anytime in the next 10-100 years.

John: How do the demographics of South Main compare to the rest of Buena Vista? What is the cost differential in land value in South Main comparatively to the remainder of Buena Vista?

Katie: South Main’s homes are owned by a wide variety of people. We have the full spectrum from young singles and families to retirees. This generally corresponds to our local demographics. Also, about 50% of our houses here are second homes. My sense is that this corresponds with the rest of the market in our area. Lots and homes in South Main are somewhat more costly than the rest of town. This is, however, offset by the lower utilities in an energy-efficient home, as well as the reduced driving as compared to much of the suburban housing in our area. We’ve also refined our home designs to be efficient and well-designed so people can build smaller homes than they otherwise would have wanted. Our hope is also that people will continue to
recognize the unique amenities provided in South Main and the impact they have on quality of life.

We have also worked hard to get product in lower price ranges and our least expensive property is currently a condo for $199,000. In the 200’s, we have row houses, single-family cottages and a duplex for sale. We also have the full range of homes available with the most expensive worth over $1 million.

**John:** What have you learned from the process that you would do differently in the future?

**Katie:** It’s hard to say, as each step has taught us a lot and has been a part of the process. Maybe our first phase would have been smaller, but how we did it made sense because of the fact that the first phase had to include 40% of our infrastructure. In the beginning, it was hard to get going because we didn’t have design or construction in-house. This made it challenging because we’d have to help a customer get architecture, get it reviewed and ready for bid. Then when the bid would come in, we had no control over pricing, which often came in high and occasionally stopped someone from moving forward. I don’t think we could have integrated design and construction into our business sooner, but if we could have, it would have accelerated the build-out significantly.

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**AN ESSAY:**

**SOUTH MAIN OBSERVATIONS**

Scott Schigur,
Senior Associate,
Wolff-Lyon Architects

The morning of Saturday, August 2, 2008 was cool and calm. I rolled over in my sleeping bag and thought, “Life is good.” After a night of camaraderie and camping, I was well-rested and ready for a day of touring and observing. The sun was beginning to warm the ground, and the scent of pinion pine was filling the air. I thought, “What a perfect day to visit the South Main development.” Little did I know that this scenario, this feeling, was an apt parallel to the project. The day held so much promise, and as it follows, the sun is just beginning to rise for South Main. It has the beginnings of a great community.

Siblings, Katie Selby-Urban and Jed Selby teamed-up as development partners to create South Main. They saw the former Buena Vista city dump and its riverfront acreage as a development opportunity to create a world-class river park and a community that reflected their common interests. Both are avid recreationalists and strong environmentalists, and these qualities have guided their decisions from the project’s inception.

Katie and Jed became interested in New Urbanism because it represented the potential to create a lasting community that would compliment and strengthen the existing Main Street district in Buena Vista, and also because it would provide the critical mass to support future businesses. They studied the New Urbanist paradigm and hired a team of experienced professionals to design and defend their dream. A week-long public charrette provided valuable community input and incidentally, it also provided a tremendous amount of needed public support. It has been more than three years since this project began, and now that homes are built and occupied and the river park has been established, the community is gaining momentum.

Design excellence has been an important criterion in the making of South Main. In order to design a walkable community, it was critical to carefully consider the street design. Peter Swift, a Longmont-based traffic engineer, was instrumental in convincing the City that a narrow street
is the safest street. The widest street with parking on each side is 32 feet, and 10 feet is the narrowest one-way street. The site design has a bit of whimsy as in the wave-shaped set of lots adjacent to the river. Swift Circle will be lined with river rock and it is adjacent to Wave Street. There are also other notable aspects of the site design such as the river park as the focal point of the community, the town square and the well-thought road alignments that frame mountain views. Katie and Jed have also formed a design review committee to help ensure a consistent and well-detailed host of buildings, inspired in part by local vernacular.

In all, South Main has proven it has the potential to become a desirable community in the coming years. Everything from the street design and public amenities to the architectural details and green building practices, they speak of an honest attempt to create an enduring place. It seems apparent with Katie and Jed at the helm, the sun will shine brightly on South Main.

A free-hand sketch of Katie’s porch by Ronnie Pelusio.

AN ESSAY: SOUTHPACIFIC REFLECTIONS

Ronnie Pelusio,
CNU-Colorado, Board of Directors
Senior Associate,
Wolff-Lyon Architects

Sitting on the porch of Katie Urban’s house, and looking out at the panorama of narrow streets and partially framed houses amidst the backdrop of the mountains, it’s easy to become overwhelmed with the scale of the task that Katie and Jed have undertaken, as well as enchanted by the magic of the potential of South Main.

While wandering through the grid of infrastructure and viewing the spattering of construction, Jed stops to greet an old friend. We happen upon Jed’s dog lying in the shade of a partially built home and he follows us on our walk along the bank of the Arkansas River. Jed and Katie point out various lots where people that they have known and others that they are just meeting will live. We stop at the park by the river and see the well-used community grills. It’s in these instances accompanied by the clarity and passion in Katie and Jed’s voices that show the seed characteristics of the culture of this New Urbanist neighborhood.

Most people do not immediately see the value of this type of neighborhood culture until they’ve experienced it. Most developers focus on the more tangible aspects of selling homeownership such as selecting granite countertops. While I’m sure that granite will be an option, Katie and Jed are creating a deeper value through the strengthening of a community, creating an atmosphere where one would know their neighbors and by giving South Main an identity and a sense of place. These characteristics, and ironically even the “coincidental” encounters, are designed through the tools of density, the detailing of right of ways, building setbacks and the innocent but critical front porches.

At Katie’s house the columns and brackets attract my attention along with the other designers that are present. They are simple yet well detailed. The depth of the porch accommodates various seating and a sense of enclosure. The shallow landscaping bed and the steps up to the porch add to the procession of layers on the way to the front door. Looking out past the details of Katie’s porch, the future of South Main is framed. In their moment of clarity the details challenge the scale of the project. The culture of a vibrant community has already taken root and it seems inevitable that neighbors will greet one each other as they pass by.
A BIKE TOUR THROUGH PAST AND FUTURE OF THE URBANISM IN BOULDER

Korkut Onaran, Ph.D.
President, CNU-Colorado
Principal, Wolff-Lyon Architects

The urban experience Boulder offers is rich and unique. Many factors in the city’s history created this richness over time. An outline would include a compact, diverse, and walkable downtown; the traditional residential neighborhoods around the downtown; a strong network of parks and green corridors; and the breathtaking views of the Flatirons. We hear a lot about Boulder’s commitment to investing in open space and protecting views. Another story less frequently told is the story of Boulder’s urbanism. We should start with acknowledging the early decisions regarding the city’s block dimensions and street widths, without which the current urban environment could not be achieved. The traditional pre-WWII neighborhoods in Boulder are exemplary. Oftentimes in writing codes or drafting neighborhood plans, I get out of the office and have a walk in some of these neighborhoods. There is so much to learn from them. The alleys, detached garages, well-scaled street facades, ample porches, right streetscape decisions, . . . the list can go on.

And yes, there are many examples of the 50’s and 60’s car-oriented, single-use neighborhoods that can be characterized as sprawl. As did many cities, Boulder took a hit from the post-war suburban building rush as well. On the other hand, in Boulder there are those examples of developments that treated the urban vibrancy as an asset and elevated it to a higher level. The Pearl Street Mall has been one of the most successful downtown pedestrian malls in the nation. In the late 90’s, at a time the downtown residential market was believed to be very limited (for some, downtown was for affordable apartment units at best), downtown Boulder observed some pioneering mixed-use developments with residential units. These early iterations survived as investments and proved that street life was indeed an asset. Now, after about ten years, the value of downtown residential properties is so high that we have a problem of a different kind: the high residential market is causing homogenization of the demographics in central Boulder. In other words, urban amenities are being so valued today that living in downtown is often an amenity only the rich can afford.

One solution to this problem is to provide more options to balance the market. Here is how this solution’s logic works: If urban vibrancy is a valued but rare amenity, it should be created in new developments as well, so that it
becomes less rare. But how can street life, something that evolves in time, be created from the scratch? This of course has been one of the major challenges the CNU has been addressing for more than two decades.

Boulder addressed this issue as well. (How successful the city has been in this, is open to discussion – and would perhaps be a premature discussion). The City states that 'providing diverse housing’ is a priority objective on its agenda and acknowledged the fact that a mixed-use, compact, and walkable environment with a strong public realm is the way to achieve affordability and urbanity. In this line Boulder has seen some unique developments. New neighborhoods have developed on the fringes where there was nothing but underused light industry and odd-ball businesses. It is refreshing to observe flourishing street life and urban vibrancy in some of these new neighborhoods. The list includes the Steel Yards, Iris Hollow, Uptown Broadway, and Holiday Neighborhood (see the previous issue of *The Colorado Urbanist* for a detailed discussion on Holiday Neighborhood). It is important to note that this has been an effort on many levels: from changing the street standards to innovative zoning revisions, from preparing sub-area plans, to the city acting as an active developer and collaborating with local developers to achieve desirable outcomes.

The Urbanist Boulder Bike tour covered some of the exemplary developments which represent the mentioned efforts to create and support a rich and vibrant urban life. The tour began at Chautauqua, a community that was built at the turn of the century. Tim Van Meter (of Van Meter, Williams, Pollack), who lives in Chautauqua, received us on his porch and provided a brief history of Chautauqua. Then we moved downtown, stopped by Wolff-Lyon Architects, walked through the Pearl Street Mall, and visited Coburn Development. We received four valuable presentations: John Wolff, of Wolff-Lyon Architects, talked about infill developments on West Pearl and John Koval, of Coburn Development, reviewed Coburn’s developments on East Pearl. Koval also briefly discussed Iris Hollow and the Steelyards Projects. Marilyn Haas gave an insightful presentation about the history of the pedestrian mall. Peter Pollock provided an inspiring summary of the development of Boulder’s green corridors and the Olmstead Plan. After our time downtown, we biked through the Boulder Creek corridor to see some of the recently developed communities; Steelyards, Irish Hollow, Holiday Neighborhood and
Uptown Broadway. We biked close to 15 miles and covered a wide variety of developments. In the rest of this essay I will quickly summarize some of the impressions and lessons learned visiting these places.

Chautauqua: A simple grid with small blocks that sits in a beautiful valley. Small cottages are the background buildings with community buildings around small parks forming the foreground. There is a timeless presence in the architecture of these cottages. The rustic character of the streetscape, the porches close to the street, the narrow streets, and small house sizes create a pedestrian friendly place. There is something in this environment that feels cozy.

Coburn Development’s projects on East Pearl that enhanced the diverse urban character of the corridor:

- **Pearl Cove:**
  - Uses: Retail, office, residential
  - Building Area: 27,535 sf.
- **Apple Building:**
  - Uses: Retail, office
  - Building Area: 13,000 sf.
- **Boulder Century:**
  - Uses: Retail, office, residential
  - Building Area: 14,000 sf.
- **12 Maples:**
  - Uses: Retail, office, residential
  - Building Area: 14,000 sf.
- **East End:**
  - Uses: Retail, office, residential
  - Building Area: 24,500 sf.
- **15 Pearl:**
  - Uses: Retail, residential
  - Building Area: 46,172 sf.

(All the pictures included on this page are provided by the Coburn Development).
and inviting. Everything is close together. All the porches and building entrances, including those of the community buildings, are close to the road which gives the pedestrian a welcoming message. The private realm is limited, large backyards are rare and very few are fenced.

Wolff-Lyon on West Pearl / 8th and Pearl and 9th and Pearl Buildings: Wolff-Lyon Architects designed, developed, and built the 8th and Pearl complex. Since I work in the building it is hard for me to be impartial. One big lesson here is the scale. The businesses are small, yet large enough to provide life for the small courtyard plaza, which is actually a very small place to be considered an urban space. Yet, since it was built in 1999, it has seen a high frequency of use. It wouldn’t be an exaggeration if we claimed that this courtyard, in spite of its young age, is already taking a significant place in Boulderites’ lives, and as such is already part of the image of Boulder. The 8th and Pearl Complex won the CNU Charter Award in 2001. It is one of the earliest mixed-use projects in the downtown area that included residential units. The residential units, which are row houses, are organized on each side of a small linear courtyard. Under the courtyard is the parking garage built into the slope. The values of these units have almost quadrupled in the past decade. 9th and Pearl, built a few
years after 8th and Pearl, placed residential units above businesses as walk up units. Large balconies and living room towers demonstrate the rich possibilities of residential architecture in mixed use buildings.

Coburn Development on West Pearl: Coburn Development has designed and developed six infill projects on each of the six blocks east of Pearl Street Mall. These projects can be characterized as variations on a theme of small mixed-use infill complexes with residential units. Like jewels on a necklace, each contributes to the unity of the whole, which are, in this case, the vibrancy and the richness of East Pearl. One of the lessons here is the value of incremental growth by means of relatively small projects. Among the six projects Apple Building (between 17th and 18th Streets), the smallest and the earliest, has 13,000 square feet of building floor area; the Pearl Cove, the largest and the latest, has 27,500 square feet of building floor area. These amounts are actually not too high for an

Through small lots, skinny streets, and small buildings placed close to street, a strong and welcoming place is created in Iris Hollow. Iris Hollow is designed and developed by Coburn Development.
urban context. But because of the smaller sizes of non-residential spaces, we observe small local businesses taking place in these buildings, which is an important part of East Pearl’s character. Another interesting aspect about Coburn projects on East Pearl is that, even though they have similar sidewalk to building relationship and similar presence on the street, each looks different from each other, creating diversity both in massing and architectural expression.

Steel Yards Development: The Steel Yards Development is an example of a recently constructed traditional neighborhood in an area where previously there was underutilized light industry. The location gained importance after RTD decided to locate the rail station for the commuter line to Denver at the end of Bluff Street, which abuts the Steel Yards Neighborhood. Steel Yards, designed and developed by Coburn Development, is truly a mixed-use neighborhood. Approximately ninety residential units are mixed with live/work units and small studios for light industrial use. Offices and retail businesses facing the 30th Street have proven that even streets such as 30th can be transformed to accommodate and even encourage walking when the right urban design response is provided, that is when buildings come close to the street and address the sidewalk. The dense row house streets provided in the interior of the neighborhood is successfully balanced by the central pocket park located in between residential and office blocks. The Steel Yards’ vibrant character is already affecting some of the neighboring developments.

Iris Hollow: Iris Hollow is one of the earlier examples of a small traditional neighborhood that reintroduced street oriented residential architecture and renegotiated setbacks, street widths, and lot sizes with the City of Boulder. Again designed and developed by Coburn Development, Iris Hollow challenges the assumption that new urbanism and affordability are incompatible. The majority of residential units in Iris Hollow are permanently affordable. Through small lots, skinny streets, and small buildings placed close to street, as in the Chautauqua Neighborhood developed close to a century before, Iris Hollow is a strong and welcoming place.

Uptown Broadway: The idea of creating a higher density mixed-use neighborhood center at the Uptown Broadway location was introduced by the City’s 1995 North Boulder Area Plan. After long negotiations the City convinced the
The context:
Imagine Boulder in the early 1900’s. There were about 12,000 people living in town, a little more than a tenth of Boulder’s population today. There were no paved streets and Boulder’s focus as a mining supply town was still in full force – there were numerous smelters and mills located right along Boulder Creek. While Boulder had been selected as a site for the university in 1861, it didn’t open until 1877, and in 1910 graduated just 163 students.

The client:
Before there was an official city commission dealing with parks and planning (1918), and before there was city zoning (1928), and certainly well before there was a planning department (1951) there was the Boulder City Improvement Association (BCIA). This group of public-spirited citizens first got off the ground in 1890, but got really active in 1903. Their goal was “the improvement of Boulder in health, growth, cleanliness, prosperity and attractiveness.”

In 1907, based on the recommendation of a local landscape architect, W.W. Parce, the BCIA sought the services of Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. of Brookline, Massachusetts. Their letter to the Olmsted Brothers stated, “We are a small but ambitious little town of 12,000, situated 30 miles northeast of Denver. We want advice, and the best obtainable, as to how to improve our city as to Parks, Boulevards and general plans for Civic betterment.”

Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr.:
In Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. (FLO, Jr.) the BCIA found one of the most significant leaders in landscape architecture and the emerging field of city planning in the country. The son of Frederick Law Olmsted, FLO, Jr. was born in 1870, graduated Harvard in 1894, and became an assistant to his father in 1895 in the firm Olmsted, Olmsted, and Eliot. (The other Olmsted referred to in the firm name was John Charles Olmsted, FLO, Jr.’s half brother).

After Frederick Law Olmsted retired, FLO, Jr. then partnered with John Charles Olmsted in the firm known as the Olmsted Brothers. FLO, Jr. was also a founder of the American Society of Landscape Architects and the first professor of a professional landscape architecture course in

Colorado Department of Transportation to give the control of Broadway to the City, which was previously a state highway. This allowed on street parking and road dieting. Uptown Broadway, developed by Loftus Development and designed by Van Meter, Williams, and Pollack, created a valuable and vibrant street front where a previously underutilized car-oriented strip development existed. Today in Uptown Broadway we observe successful pedestrian oriented businesses occupying the frontage. Small plazas are already well-utilized and memorable meeting places for the community. The Uptown Broadway brought the city grid back to the area. The mixed use buildings along Broadway tamed the street and made it walkable. In spite of the three story density of these buildings the blocks adjacent to Broadway do not employ underground parking, which supports the overall affordability. Instead, surface parking is ingeniously divided by garage rows and is kept at a reasonable scale. Uptown Broadway is full of suggestions for the future; a perfect place to end a bike tour that started in Chautauqua, a simple neighborhood constructed at the turn of the century. Some of the basic principles of urbanism worked there and they still work at Uptown Broadway.
the United States at Harvard – he taught there from 1901 to 1914. He dropped Jr. from his title in 1908, leading to some confusion about which Olmsted did which plans.

The visit:

FLO, Jr. came to Boulder in May 1908 after having been to Chicago, continuing his train trip west. He lodged with BCIA members and experienced one of our famous spring snow storms. He bicycled, drove up Flagstaff Mountain and Boulder Canyon, climbed Mount Sanitas, and scrambled along Boulder Creek. And he also made a visit to Denver with W.W. Parce.

The products:

The firm submitted a report, The Improvement of Boulder, Colorado on November 9, 1908, about six months after his visit. It is some 30 pages of dense text with a centerpiece illustration that was also produced as a wall map: Plan of Improvements, March 1910.

The report covered broad themes, but also details like proper street lights, street trees, and the use of macadam for roads. He called for a city of fine homes and limited manufacturing. The plan focused on what was under public control: streets, waterways (both creeks and ditches), parks and open space, and public buildings. He proposed many new street connections and a street hierarchy. And he suggested new sites for parks and advocated the protection of the mountain backdrop.

In philosophy the plan is clearly of the city beautiful movement, but opposed to mere decoration and more essentially supportive of finding beauty in order. Olmsted
also addressed the progressive era themes of good government, the appropriate use of the police power, and taxation to support the development of infrastructure.

Boulder Creek:

Plans for Boulder Creek were addressed under the heading, “Waterways and Related Parks Opportunities.” His treatment of the Creek stemmed from the issue of floods. He counseled that where land values are high, hard channels should be considered. Otherwise, he advocated using parks, but not overly decorated parks, as spillways for flood waters.

“With the exception of a few days in the year these ‘washes,’” as such lands are called in the English midlands, are dry ground, available for any kind of use not inconsistent with the free passage of the flood waters when the time comes. To make a “park” of such ground in the sense in which that much abused term is often applied, as indicating something very highly polished and exquisite with costly flowers and other decorations of a kind that would be ruined by flooding, would be foolishness. But the plan of keeping open for public use near the heart of the city a simple piece of pretty bottom-land of the very sort that Boulder Creek has been flooding over for countless centuries, of growing a few tough old trees on it and a few bushes, and of keeping the main part of the ground as a simple open common, where the children can play and over which the wonderful views of the foothills at their best from the shaded paths and roads along the embankment edge - this would give a piece of recreation ground worth a great deal to the people. And at the same time it is probably the cheapest way of handling the flood problem of Boulder Creek.”

He listed Boulder’s advantages as its beautiful sunny climate along with the presence of water, views of the foothills, and views of the plains from higher ground. Therefore, he wrote, the landscape response should be a densely shaded promenade or grove of trees where one could “look out upon an open space bathed in the brilliant sunshine, even if it be but a little open courtyard or lawn or a street…”

For Boulder Creek itself he called for a concentration of tree planting mostly along the roads and paths of the bordering embankments and “limiting tree and shrub growth so as to not interfere with best views.” As to the surface treatment he called for the use of alfalfa for pasture or hay and hoped that an artificial clipped lawn would not be used as it was a “foolish extravagance.”

He identified specific parcels of land, “public holdings,” he thought should be acquired to create the Creek park and specific alignments for paths and roads. He anticipated the placement of these paths under bridges to make a continuous path.

Today visitors to the Boulder Creek path and its adjacent park land, and the myriad other paths along the various tributaries of Boulder Creek and South Boulder Creek, are experiencing the product of the vision of an early and powerful influence on the planning of Boulder, Colorado, Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr.
In the 1960’s as shopping malls were springing up across the country, a group of forward-thinking citizens that owned property and worked in downtown Boulder began to look for ways to keep the historic center of the City of Boulder attractive and economically sound. In 1966, the Boulder Committee for the Exploration of Core Area Potential (BECAP) was formed. The group mostly consisted of city officials and downtown property owners but, thinking it vital that citizens participate in all aspects of the planning process, opened their meetings to all interested persons. Thus many, many people in Boulder feel they had a part in developing the Mall. (A good move to build support, I might add!)

The group changed its name to Boulder Tomorrow and during the eight–year process considered two Mall designs. The first design from Gruen Associates in Los Angeles included the construction of off-street parking structures; a civic center (which integrated a new municipal building, a small theater and a museum); improved traffic circulation to and through the core; and, a superblock/pedestrian mall. Their design was never implemented, as many of their changes were deemed too impractical, like the proposed lake. Their warnings that without redevelopment, sales and property tax revenues would drop negatively and affect the entire community, did not fall on deaf ears, however, and giant steps were taken toward the construction of the Mall.

The second design from the Boulder architectural firm of Carl Worthington Partnership developed another downtown plan. It was Worthington who recommended that a pedestrian mall be built on four blocks of Pearl Street. His plan also included underground parking below the mall and was rejected as too expensive and impractical.

With each step, more doors were opening toward construction of the Mall and in 1970; Governor John Love signed the Public Mall Act into law. Among other things, the law allowed Colorado cities to close downtown streets in order to build pedestrian malls and detailed the suitable methods of financing such projects.

In 1974, the committee selected another design team, headed by Art Everett of Everett, Zeigel, Tumpes and Hand Architects in Boulder (now OZ Architecture) to coordinate the new plan. The team they put together included Stu Dawson, Sasaki & Associates, Watertown, Massachusetts (landscape design); Henry Beer and Richard Foy, Communication Arts (graphic/industrial design); Larry Smith and Company (economics); the administrative team of the Boulder Dept. of Planning & Community Development and the Boulder Dept. of Public Works. The community described the cooperation that went into the project as “wonderful…for the first time business, City and community worked together.”

The funding to build the Mall was another great example of cooperation. A Mall Assessment District was formed.

Views of Pearl Street before the construction of the pedestrian mall. Covering the historic facades of the ‘main street’ buildings with aluminum siding or with stucco was common in the 50’s and the 60’s. Large signs and narrow sidewalks created an environment that catered to drivers. (Pictures are provided by Communication Arts).
The City of Boulder applied for and received a federal grant from the 1974 Community Housing and Development Act for $650,000, or 1/3rd of the cost, and the property owners for assessed themselves for 20 years in a graduated system that resulted in $1.2 million, or 2/3rd’s of the cost, to build the four block, brick paved pedestrian mall.

On June 12, 1976, amongst much gayety and celebration, Pearl Street was closed between 11th and 15th Streets. The people of Boulder were ready to embark on their adventure. The merchant association planned events for curiosity seekers and to draw shoppers into their businesses during construction.

At Christmas time all construction stopped for the holiday shopping season, and sidewalks in front of stores were always passable as the construction workers striving to keep the area as clean as possible. Admittedly, it wasn’t all smooth sailing, but the construction schedule stuck close to its timetable.

Project designers, managers and engineers lending great assistance to the actual construction were William Zmistowski, Robert Martin and Paul Tremontozi. Zmistowski says they often had to adopt a “bite the bullet attitude” and aim for the long-range goal. Their stories and experiences in working with the bricklayers, to traveling the country to find the right trees and storing them in the coolers at Coors Brewing Company in Golden to keep them dormant until ready to plant were historic adventures in themselves.

The time, effort and cooperation of all involved in the building of one of the most successful pedestrian malls in the country should not go unrecognized. It was a community partnership and collaboration that let all the citizens of Boulder feel proud and want to visit their “Crown Jewel,” as the Mall was dubbed by a Boulder attorney. Dedication day, August 6, 1977, was a proud day for the City of Boulder and all enjoyed a weekend long party.

By 1997, when we celebrated the Mall’s 20th anniversary, DBI invited the original design team back to discuss the successes and problems we had encountered over the years. We burned the last of our assessment certificates and headed to the Boulder Theater for a “charrette.” The basic consensus of the group was that our “jewel” was showing her age. Once more the public and private sectors went to work!
The timing was perfect! We had already formed a Downtown Alliance to discuss “preserving and enhancing” this quality of life that we had created. The outcome of the Alliance’s suggestions would be brought before City Council to incorporate into a new 1998 City Comprehensive Plan. The Mall area is a historic area and we wanted to be sure it remained vital. We decided we wanted more residential downtown and considered the success our first major mixed-use project, 8th and Pearl built in 1998, to be a great example that people wanted to live downtown. Thus the Alliance, through bulk charts and defined zoning codes that had a mandatory design review and compliance process, created new guidelines and these were unanimously accepted by City Council and included in the Comprehensive Plan.

Today as you tour the Mall you will see its ambience and vitality extends in the blocks west and east of the Mall and predominately south of the Mall along Walnut and Canyon streets. The historic Boulderado Hotel anchors the Mall on the north side at 13th and Spruce, and to the west at 9th and Walnut, the new St. Julien Hotel serves as an anchor and entrance to downtown.

We’ve had ambitious infill projects built, mainly in the 1400 block and there have been almost a dozen mixed-use projects built since the acceptance of the Guidelines in 1998 in all of downtown. Connections have been added between streets (notice the south side of the 1000 block of Pearl next to the Daily Camera building as you walk) and pedestrian friendly features such as more cafes, and rooftop terraces. Even a plaza for dining in warm weather and ice skating in the winter was built when 13th Street, south of the Mall between Walnut and Canyon, was approved to be curved.

On the Mall itself, the original grassy areas in three of the blocks, the bus shelters and half-walls at either ends of the Mall were removed and our small but expensive “Taj Mahal” restrooms were replaced with a more conventional building that had room for the storage of cleaning supplies and a sound system to play classical music to keep vagrants from spending too much time in them. The 1100 block received new benches and boulders and is referred to as “the Mall living room.” Also in the 1300 block, an entertainment plaza was built as well as a pop-jet fountain water feature for children to play in on summer days while parents enjoy a noontime or evening concert.

Historic signs have been added to each block on the Mall, telephone kiosks have been removed, and new directional signs are in place. Along with this new facelift on the Mall, most buildings abutting it have been reclaimed and restored to their original historic architecture. All of this was accomplished by 2002 when we celebrated the Mall’s 25th anniversary.

Presently, in downtown there are two major areas under construction – on Canyon at 10th is a mixed-use project, and on east Walnut at 17th is a completely residential project.

The original maximum build-out for downtown as established by the Alliance in 1998 was 1,138,536 square feet. We anticipated 73% or 831,900 square feet to be built in 20 years. From my original calculations and the old Alliance records, I believe we are at approximately 76% of build-out in 10 years. It has happened much faster than we originally thought!

Although the Mall has become much more of an entertainment district than when it was created, the addition of residents that complement the existing businesses in this authentic, historic area has made for a vibrant place to socialize and work. The City of Boulder turns 150 years old in 2009 and I think the original Boulder Town Company “fathers” who founded us, would be proud of what we have created.
WE NEED MORE FOUNDERS FOR CNU-COLORADO

This is the time to support the Colorado Chapter of the CNU, by becoming a “Chapter Founder.” Your $5,000 donation will help us establish the chapter on strong financial foundations. We are conducting this “founders” program only during the year of 2009. Beyond the honor and your well-appreciated support to the cause of urbanism, being a “founder” of CNU-Colorado will award you with the following benefits:

• One full registration to CNU 17 (or CNU 18 if recruited after CNU 17).
• Acknowledgement in the “The Regional Book” that will be distributed in CNU 17.
• Acknowledgement in each issue of The Colorado Urbanist by a large print list till the end of the year of 2010 (see below), then by a smaller print listing all founders for the duration of the publication.
• Acknowledgement in hand-outs for events organized by the CNU-Colorado, by means of a small logo or name, till the end of the year of 2010, then by text listing all founders for events after 2010. Some events may not have hand-outs.
• Acknowledgement in CNU-Colorado website, by means of a linked company name for the duration of the website. (The links may be on a page other than the front page.)
• A CNU-Colorado Founder certificate signed by members of the Board of Directors.

If you are interested in becoming a “CNU-Colorado Chapter Founder” please do not hesitate to contact Korkut Onaran: korkut@wlarch.com (303.557.8188) or Sean O’Hara: Sean@evstudio.us (303.322.4964).

A PANEL DISCUSSION : “WHY URBANISM?”

Time:    Thursday, March 12, 2009, 6:00 pm
Place:   Tryba Architects,
         1620 Logan Street, Denver

Tentative schedule:
6:00 pm:  Introductions
6:05 pm: Three Presentations
   1. Scott Rodwin, Principal, Rodwin Architecture
      Sierra Club -Sprawl and Transportation Committee
   2. John Desmond, Vice President, Urban Planning
      and Environment, Downtown Denver Partnership
   3. John Norquist, President and CEO
      Congress for the New Urbanism
   6:35 pm: Questions, answers, comments
7:05 pm: Cocktails

Our next event is a panel discussion that will be hosted by Tryba Architects on Thursday, March 12, 2009. The topic is “Why Urbanism?” Urbanists sometimes take the value of urbanism for granted and forget the long-term benefits of creating healthy urban centers. Given the current economic crisis and the level of environmental degradation in our close surroundings, the urgency of implementing good urbanism is ever pressing. Remembering good arguments for urbanism will be one of the objectives of this event.

This event is a collaborative effort with the CNU-17 Local Host Committee. Also, there will be a fundraising Component. CNU-17 will be in Denver between June 11 and 14, 2009 and it needs our help.