

Congress for the New Urbanism Strategic Plan

2024 Update

CNU's Strategic Plan was approved by the Board of Directors in March 2020. Since that time, we have weathered a global pandemic that has permanently disrupted work, housing, and transportation patterns that were foundational to our understanding of planning and design; we have experienced some of the most extreme climate chaos in modern history; and we have watched the increasing inequities in this country be exacerbated by fear, scarcity, and a historical lack of access to housing, transportation, and neighborhood services. This 2024 update recognizes that much of the directive of the strategic plan is left to be done, but must be achieved through the lens of our current reality.

Fortunately, the principles and call to action embodied in the Charter remain a strong touchstone for the work, resilient and prescient enough to be responsive to the challenges of this time. With this updated plan, we define our purpose as an organization, demonstrate our aspirations for the future, and declare the ambitions that drive our work. Anchored in the principles of the Charter of the New Urbanism, this document maps out what CNU will accomplish in the next three years.

VISION: CNU envisions a world where cities, towns, and neighborhoods are intentionally designed and managed to foster community, preserve the natural environment, and improve the lives of all people.

MISSION: CNU is dedicated to making the design of cities, towns, and neighborhoods a part of how we respond to complex societal challenges, realizing their full potential to expand the social, economic, and environmental opportunities available to all members of each community. By highlighting effective design principles and lowering barriers to change, CNU amplifies the grassroots power of our thousands of members to build and rebuild their communities in ways that improve sustainability, increase accessibility, and promote equity.

LONG-TERM OBJECTIVES

CNU works across geographical locations, physical place types, professional disciplines, and urban systems in order to address the critical issues that cities, towns, and neighborhoods are facing. Likewise, CNU is the essential driver of the New Urbanist movement, a diverse international community of practice whose members work locally to improve lives through systematic reform. With that context in mind, the following Long Term Objectives direct our organization to address the urgent challenges where CNU must prioritize our impact:

- **Reform Detrimental Regulations:** Removing institutional barriers to the design and implementation of urbanism that is rich with a diversity of people, places, uses, mobilities, services, and open spaces has the capacity to improve the physical and psychological

well-being of individuals, and raise public health as a result. Furthermore, fair access to the environmental, economic, social, and cultural benefits of urbanism is a hallmark of a just approach to community design, and is an outcome embedded in the best of what New Urbanist principles bring to our cities, towns, and neighborhoods. The Charter provides a framework for urbanism that can produce not only beautiful and lovable communities, but ones that are healthier and more supportive for all members of society. But to do so, CNU's vision must be made legal at every level of governance.

- **Equalize Access to Affordable Urbanism:** To adequately meet CNU's vision for diverse, equitable, accessible, and inclusive neighborhoods, New Urbanists must develop bolder initiatives that make a meaningful impact on neighborhood affordability and housing access across all income levels. Outdated exclusionary zoning is a crucial piece of the housing affordability puzzle, and critical tools demonstrating the intertwined costs of both housing and transportation¹ must be better integrated into efforts to understand affordability comprehensively. But we must go further to advance both design and policy solutions to the rising unaffordability, segregation, and displacement on display in most cities in the wake of urban reinvestment. In doing so, CNU must support every member in centering equity within our city-building work.
- **Respond to the Rapidly Changing Climate:** The complex challenge of responding to an ever-changing global climate requires a multi-disciplinary, multi-scaled, multi-beneficial plan to encourage comprehensive change in our communities. As the human impact on the changing climate demands increasing levels of mitigation and reinforces the extensive ramifications that climate adaptation will require, CNU must engage with this constantly evolving and interrelated urban crisis. Design of resilient urbanism in the face of the unpredictable impacts of climate change must be foundational to the work of CNU.

CNU recognizes that these urban challenges are intersectional. Existing land use regulations routinely prohibit an urban environment that provides equitable outcomes for all members of the community while simultaneously reinforcing the disparate impacts of the changing global climate on the very communities that have been disinvested for generations. CNU is committed to bringing the urban design principles of the Charter of the New Urbanism to the interrelated community-building challenges posed by the rapidly changing climate, the lack of housing accessibility, and the outdated regulatory regimes that are foundational to both climate change and unfair housing conditions.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

¹ Developed by the Center for Neighborhood Technology, the Housing + Transportation (H+T™) Affordability Index provides a more accurate metric of financial burden than simply measuring housing costs, for details see: [Housing + Transportation Affordability Index](#)

Over the next three years, CNU will leverage the strengths of our staff, membership, and allies to convene a broad spectrum of multidisciplinary practitioners and advocates who work on reforming city-building, to accelerate change in communities across the US and beyond. CNU will share best practices in urban design, policy, and implementation, opening doors for our members to enact meaningful change in their communities; and we will use our convening and networking capacity to amplify the grassroots power of our members working to build and rebuild their cities and towns in ways that improve sustainability, accessibility, and equity for years to come.

These delivery mechanisms - *Convening, Educating, and Collaborating* - are the avenues through which CNU will make measurable progress toward affecting the strategic objectives outlined above. The following strategies and tactics describe how the organization will implement this plan:

Strategy 1: Advance Collaboration to Improve the Design of Urbanism.

- A. CNU will accelerate the continued growth, diversification, and engagement of our multidisciplinary membership.
- B. CNU will discover, develop, and distribute new resources, education, and training that will expand the capacity of our membership to accelerate change.
- C. CNU will convene, organize, and mobilize our membership through topical gatherings, Chapter and affiliate networks, and our annual Congress to inspire, motivate, and energize practitioners working across sectors.

Strategy 2: Deliver a Framework to Advance Community-Building Best Practice.

- A. CNU will lead the reform of local, state, and federal policies that prioritize conventional development and stand in the way of equitable, people-centered urbanism.
- B. CNU will develop research on the impact of institutional barriers to walkable, sustainable, equity-supportive urbanism and measure the success of current approaches to reform.
- C. CNU will expand the availability of practical tools that our audiences can tailor locally, and provide peer networking and technical assistance at every level of decision making.
- D. CNU will drive the expansion of community-supportive reform processes that ensure change is fully informed, inclusive, and collaborative.

Strategy 3: Promote the Importance of Integrating Design and Policy.

- A. CNU will serve as the key national advocate for understanding the damage caused by sprawl to the environment, to economics, to the urban fabric, and to social cohesion through publications, communications, and outreach.
- B. CNU will strengthen partnerships with allied organizations to promote stronger design integration into urban development through collaborative, intersectional discourse.
- C. CNU will identify, support, and uplift new voices and perspectives in our communications channels and educational resources to deepen the knowledge base of our membership and expand the reach of our work.
- D. CNU will document and archive the history of the New Urbanist movement and the legacy of its understanding, to create an authenticated and shared understanding of our past.

Strategy 4: Provide the Organizational Structure to Increase Programmatic Impact.

- A. CNU will establish a robust operational structure, support individual development, and provide expanded resources to increase the talent, tenure, and effectiveness of our staff.
- B. CNU will grow capacity and diversity of funding sources to support sustainable programmatic growth and scale of impact.
- C. CNU will refine committee structure and responsibilities within the Board of Directors to improve its efficiency and capacity.
- D. CNU will align all organizational actions with our established organizational values: Diversity, Equity, Sustainability, Innovation, and Accountability.