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NORTHWEST ARKANSAS TO HOST 34TH ANNUAL CONGRESS FOR THE NEW URBANISM

Washington, DC - Cities of the Northwest Arkansas region - including Bentonville, Rogers, Springdale and Fayetteville, - will welcome more than 1500 architects, urban planners, policy experts, and real estate professionals for this annual gathering of the Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU), a nonprofit membership organization based in Washington, DC advocating for walkable, sustainable, and equity-supportive urbanism in more places.

“Northwest Arkansas is unlike any recent location for our annual Congress.” said Mallory Baches, CNU’s President. “We are incredibly excited to bring our flagship event to a region offering CNU an opportunity to support a connected network of individual cities and towns. We are committed to leaving a lasting impact on the evolution of this fast-growing region, one that will ensure better outcomes for the existing population as well as the thousands of people projected to call Northwest Arkansas home in the coming decades.”

“When we select a Congress location, we identify major trends and key issues within the local context that we believe our attendees and our broader membership can explore and take important lessons from.” said Margaret Gattis, Executive Director of CNU. “In Northwest Arkansas, we see a rapidly changing region that can benefit from smart applications of coordinated density and increased connectivity, as well as partners that are eager to work with us – and our attendees. It is a part of the country that is already innovating and growing in ways that we can learn from.”

The Northwest Arkansas Congress will be held in late spring 2026 and will include dozens of sessions, multiple workshops and technical assistance projects, and a variety of tours that will help attendees engage with communities across the region. CNU’s last annual event in 2024 was held in Cincinnati, OH and drew nearly 1500 attendees, and its upcoming event in 2025 taking place in Providence, RI is expected to draw a similar attendance. The annual Congress brings an average of \$3M in economic impact to its host region.

“Each year, the Congress is the chance to learn from the best urban change-agents in the country, so we are thrilled that CNU has chosen to bring that knowledge to our community,” said Ward Davis, who is serving as co-host for the Congress local host committee. “This event will be a call to action for our local planning, policy, finance, and implementation industries, to think strategically about the quality of life



that we will leave for future generations here in Northwest Arkansas.” Davis is a local developer who has been designing and building using the principles of New Urbanism in the region for decades.

“Accommodating the pressures of growth while maintaining those aspects that make this region unique is a challenge that each municipality in Northwest Arkansas is facing,” said John McCurdy, Director of Community Development for the city of Rogers and local host committee co-chair. “Being able to dive into the details of that challenge firsthand with thought leaders in planning, development, and policy that are the actual authors of best practice is a rare opportunity that we can’t wait to share with our regional partners.”

The Northwest Arkansas Congress provides a unique opportunity for CNU to partner with organizations already making a significant impact in the region. ULI Northwest Arkansas, a regional chapter of the national real estate and development organization Urban Land Institute, has been showcasing that denser urbanism can work in this part of the country through partnerships and gatherings such as the annual Place Summit. CNU and ULI Northwest Arkansas intend to work together to ensure the conversations to develop innovative solutions start well before - and continue well after - the 2026 Congress. This is one of the ways the annual Congress can have a lasting impact locally.

"This partnership represents a transformative opportunity for our region," said Wes Craiglow, the ULI NWA Executive Director. "Together, we will showcase Northwest Arkansas's dynamic growth and innovation while addressing some of our most pressing land use challenges. By convening the expertise of ULI and CNU members multiple times, we aim to create lasting, impactful solutions that reflect the values and aspirations of our communities."

About CNU and New Urbanism:

The Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU) is a member-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit championing better design of cities and towns to improve lives and strengthen communities for all. For over thirty years, CNU has been the leading organization in reforming city-building across the country, gathering the broad spectrum of practitioners and advocates who share our 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.

The practice of New Urbanism demonstrates that the built environment is capable of offering profound social, economic, and environmental benefits. Built on the principles of our Charter, New Urbanism is more than a set of design guidelines or policy recommendations. It is an intersectional way of practicing urbanism - of *building community* - that requires policy, design, and development to all play a role in achieving our shared vision for the future.

The annual Congress is an international gathering of our multidisciplinary cohort, but it is also a core programmatic effort of CNU, providing an opportunity for our attendees to convene, to educate, and to collaborate in service of a world where cities, towns, and neighborhoods are intentionally designed to foster community, preserve the natural environment, and improve the lives of all people.

