

The future neighborhood essay sample



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Introduction

During the industrial revolution, an exodus of people moving to the city became a trend that made cities a center of urbanization. With the congestion and pollution of cities buoyed up advancing transportation technology, many people later moved out of the cities to seek for a more peaceful and quiet life in the suburbs, which in turn initiated suburban sprawling. Lately however, at the height of the escalating financial recession that stemmed from the sub prime mortgage crisis in the US sometime in 2007, many brand-new, high-end residential suburbs became bare ghost towns. What this reflected is inadequacy of long-term planning and poor design in building communities. Frank Gruber's new concept of Cityism, dubbed as the fourth urbanism, pertains to the restoration of our cities that will transform them to a more sustainable and preferable place to live.

Cityism

Gruber's cityist perspective basically shares the same objectives with New Urbanism of sustainability in which neighborhoods are designed to be accessible (walking distance). This highlights a self sufficient neighborhood with complete amenities such as grocery stores, schools, hospitals/ clinics, and other critical services which are conveniently walkable in order to lower the environmental impact of residents in terms of energy consumption and carbon emission (No need to use automobile). Cityism however differs with new urbanism because it focuses on the restoration of existing cities, which prevents further land conversion that also has great environmental repercussions. Cityism is specifically targeted in remodeling existing cities.

Thus, the future neighborhood is a return to the traditional big cities that had become centers of industrialization.

As part of maximizing and capturing the economic value of city real estate, optimizing the use of expensive land property required designing residential infrastructures in cities to be constructed upwards in contrast to outwards to squeeze in or accommodate more people, offices and other functional services in smaller parcel of land in the city. Hence, instead of a diverse range of houses, residential houses are made into tall buildings, which is more cost effective. In other words, residential houses are more aptly described as residential buildings in the future. However, the residential units also come in different sizes and types to accommodate and target different ranges of household sizes and incomes.

Domestic service needs of the residents such as a grocery store or supermarket can also be located within the infrastructure or in proximate places. A residential building becomes equivalent to one residential community in which the basic minimum standards of public services are available to achieve sustainability. This includes schools, healthcare facilities (i. e. clinics) and community facilities for leisure and relaxation (i. e. restaurants, sports areas, bars, etc). Incidentally, the leisure facility is an important aspect of the modern community. They serve as the channel for promoting the local culture of the community which is a primary source of pride and they help facilitate social cohesion among residents which ultimately provides a “ sense of home” for the place.

Smaller spaces and cooperative building schemes help drive infrastructure cost which ideally translates to cheaper homes. Affordability is one of the most important drivers to make people go to these residential buildings which can be achieved through more effective and supportive government housing and subsidy programs. For instance, the local government can introduce “rent to own” programs in which people can rent a space and have the option to purchase using the amount paid for rent as one’s initial down payment. Another alternative is the “home swap” program where a unit or space in a newly renovated residential building can be exchanged or traded with a person’s existing home in the suburb.

Cityism is characterized by contemporary architecture that follows the context of the city. By contemporary architecture, sustainability is at the core in the design of the residential buildings. Buildings are principally designed to make them energy efficient in terms of allowing natural sources of ventilation, heating and lighting for the building. Sustainable design or eco-Design is the art of designing physical objects to comply with the principles of economic, social, and ecological sustainability in the context of the city.

As part of the attempt to incorporate nature, the buildings will include urban gardens composed of flowering plants and vegetables that can serve as miniature parks within the building. Parks and garden provide residents with healthy green to make city dwelling more desirable. Such gardens are strategically located within the infrastructure such as under ground floors or people’s junctions in every floor. Another option for providing a place of relaxation for city residents which is already a trend in many large cities

around the world is the creation of urban city parks (similar to the Pershing Square in Los Angeles, which can be located at the heart or center of the community of residential buildings.

The urban city park serves multiple functions for the community such as a venue for concerts, community cultural activities (i. e. exhibits) and other public activities. This is in accordance to the Cityist principle that “architectural designs (i. e. of building or a street) needs to have multiple functions”. (Gruber, 2009, part 3) Also in line with this principle, underground car parking can be constructed beneath the urban parks to alleviate parking congestion. Such facility should be open to the general public for a minimal fee. This innovation serves an economic function that extended the pragmatic purpose of the park without compromising its original purpose.

Finally, peace and security are essential ingredients of the future neighborhood. While the issue of peace and order are generally regarded as primary responsibility of the national and local government, neighborhood and street wardens can be employed to help in managing crime and dealing with delinquent behaviors so as not to destabilize the quality of life in this modern neighborhood.

Conclusion

The future neighborhood is a return to the city whereby people live in refurbished residential buildings where all amenities and public needs are conveniently accessible. Nature is brought to the city through gardens and parks which also functions as venues for community activities. Peace and

order is addressed and managed by the collaboration of the local community and the government. The future neighborhood closely adheres to the concept of sustainable development and environmental protection.

References

Gruber, Frank. In Search of a Fourth Urbanism. The Huffington Post. 2009.
Retrieved from: <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/frank-gruber>