

## Denver's Stapleton Is a Living Example of an Urban Village

For years now, we have been learning about the concepts of new urban design—that is, building neighborhoods like the ones we used to build back in the first half of the 20th Century, before we began to build suburban car-oriented subdivisions. During the *East Downtown* (EDO) Charrette in Albuquerque in September 2003 (see *Sierra* May/June 2004), we learned of the principles of Great Streets and Urban Villages:

- Pedestrians First
- Traffic Speeds Compatible with Urban Villages
- Park Once and Walk
- Daily Needs within Walking Distance
- Traditional Building Types with a Mix of Uses
- Variety of Housing Choices
- Live above Stores and Businesses
- Beautiful Public Spaces, Constantly Occupied
- Quality Transit

These principles began to create a picture of a place for us, but we wanted to see a real place where these principles were put into practice—actually built. We did a bit of searching and chose Denver.

### A Great Example: The Old Denver Airport

What drew us to Denver was Stapleton—the city's old major airport. When Denver opened its new airport far outside of town, it worked through a process to decide what to do with this valuable property covered with concrete runways, terminal buildings and other airport structures. Forest City—the same company that will develop Mesa del Sol in southeast Albuquerque—was selected to be the master developer.

So we headed to Stapleton. We parked behind the stores of the Town Center and walked past shops and restaurants with offices above, to the Founders Green—a large green space with new landscaping and sculptures—the community gathering place. We continued past attractive modern condos built around a plaza with all the garages neatly hidden behind. From there, it is a block or so to a senior apartment building, where we toured several nice roomy apartments designed for and available to lower-income older folks. The supermarket is conveniently across the street, with the Town Center still a short walk away.

Just across the street is a small complex of town homes with porches, not garage doors, facing the street. These are “workforce homes,” available to families with low to moderate incomes. Across the street is a greenway, and the elementary school is near enough so that kids can walk or ride bikes there.

In a few blocks more, we passed larger homes on small, well designed, landscaped lots set close to the street or fronting on small community parks. Again, porches are in front so that residents can greet their neighbors walking by, and the garages are in back along alleys—no garage doors to dominate the street here.

In another block, still larger homes selling for \$800,000 and up are in great demand—just a few blocks from the workforce homes and the senior apartments! Other homes at Stapleton offer a variety of housing choices for singles, young families, older folks—something for everyone.

Nearly a third of Stapleton's 4,700 acres are parks and open spaces. Sand Creek runs through the property and will become a part of Denver's trail system. Westerly Creek, which flowed in a pipe when Stapleton was an airport, now flows naturally, and riparian vegetation is beginning to thrive along its edges. More parks are planned so that every resident can walk to a park and walk, bike or skate on trails.

### Can We Bring This Home to Albuquerque?

Can we bring these concepts to Albuquerque? We believe the answer is, “YES!” Forest City fully intends to bring the great streets, urban villages and choices of housing types to Mesa del Sol—the 13,000 acres of lovely, rolling, desert mesa only 15 minutes from Downtown Albuquerque. We look forward to watching that take shape!

For more information, contact Susan Gorman and Blair Brown in Albuquerque (259-7190, bblairb2@aol.com).

—Susan Gorman and Blair Brown



The Town Center in Stapleton, the community that the Denver has developed on the site of its old airport (photos by B. Brown).



Porches, not garage doors, face the walks around a community park, encouraging neighbors to visit.



“Workforce” housing is designed for low- and middle-income families. A few blocks away, larger homes selling for \$800,000 and up are in great demand.

## Club's “True Cost of Food” Campaign: Eat Low, Local, Organic

The United States, with less than 5% of the world's people, consumes more than 25% of its resources—and the rest of the planet is scrambling to catch up with our lifestyle. For these reasons, the Sierra Club Sustainable Consumption Committee has launched a new, national grassroots campaign focused on our dietary lifestyle. The campaign highlights the environmental impacts of the food that we consume, and gives people tools for decision making and influencing their food vendors.

American food production has a huge impact on the environment. For instance, it takes 2,500 gallons of water to produce a pound of beef.

- Agriculture is the largest source of water pollution in the United States.
- Our industrialized farming poisons the soil, encourages pests, and destroys biodiversity.
- 75% of the land in the continental United States is devoted to agriculture or grazing, and much of the cropland produces grain for cows, not people.

The Club expends enormous resources fighting the symptoms of unsustainable agriculture—from water pollution and toxins in the food chain, to loss of habitat and species. The Club has not, however, seriously challenge the *root cause* of the above: American food-consumption patterns. Now, our goal is an America that eats:

- low on the food chain,
- organically produced food, and
- locally grown food when practical.

This campaign has three strategies:

- Educate. Produce brochures and fact sheets for activists, and articles for local newsletters.
- Build a nationwide network of activists who will urge local markets to provide more food that is organically grown, locally produced, and reasonably priced.
- “Sustainable Tuesdays” when, we encourage everyone to make a fun-filled foray into the realm of living more lightly on Earth.

For more information, contact the Southwest volunteer mentor, Sonya Guram in South Carolina (303/318-8889; sonya.guram@rnc.sierraclub.org), and see our web site ([www.sierraclub.org/sustainable\\_consumption](http://www.sierraclub.org/sustainable_consumption)).

—Sonya Guram



New Mexico  
Solar Energy  
Association

### RENEWABLE ENERGY PROGRAMS

4th Tuesdays • 6:30-8:30 PM • at Albuquerque Chapter Meetings

Open to the public and free of charge!

Sept. 24: Solar Hot Water (held at AAA Solar: 2021 Zearing NW)

Oct. 26: Solar Hot Air (held at AAA Solar)

Nov. 23: Pros/Cons of PV Components: Panels, Inverters, Batteries (held at REI: 1550 Mercantile, NW of Jefferson and I-25)

For more information or to register:  
246-0400 • [www.nmsea.org](http://www.nmsea.org)