Book Review

Sustainable Urbanism: Urban design with nature

Douglas Farr

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Douglas Farr is an architect and urban designer and chair of the US Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) for Neighborhood Development Core Committee. He has written an important book and has assembled the input and contribution of numerous experts who have enriched the book. Farr says on page 10 that 'This book is a strategic call for leadership in the design and development of the places where Americans live, work, and play', and on page 296 'I believe firmly that there is a parallel between this book's advocacy for sustainable urbanism and the moon shot of an earlier generation. Sustainable urbanism requires the improbable: that the base of the pyramid-millions of us "get it" and act in concert. National leadership is absolutely essential...', and 'The far bigger challenge is changing the values, perceptions and dreams that cause us to persist on the wrong course when we all know better. I believe that the time is ripe for the United States to turn the page and adopt sustainable urbanism as our generation's moon shot'. These are wonderful and encouraging words from the author who has undertaken a very difficult task for producing this extensive resource and manual.

The book is divided into four parts that contain eleven chapters. The first part establishes the case for sustainable urbanism by clarifying where we are today and where we need to go. The second part addresses leadership and communications and the necessary processes and tools for implementation. The third part identifies important rules and metrics as thresholds that are of necessity

interdisciplinary, such as density, corridors, neighborhoods, biophilia and high-performance buildings and infrastructure. Numerous individuals and groups of experts have contributed to chapters five through nine in this part of the book. Here one finds extensive materials that is essential as references and are points of departure for developing sustainable urbanism.

Part four is a valuable collection of built and unbuilt projects from many countries that demonstrate the utilization of numerous ideas that promote and achieve sustainable urbanism. The projects represent infill and greenfield developments. Eleven built and nine unbuilt projects are included. Ten are from the United States, four from the United Kingdom, two from Australia, one from Canada, one from Mexico, one from Germany and one from China. They include small and large-scale projects. They are all illustrated and provide a point of departure for their further study elsewhere.

Part one of the book, pages 19–61, is a must read, whereas the rest of the book can be used as a resource and reference as needed by those involved in sustainable urbanism projects. They can identify the sections of relevance to their projects and can find further, more technical, information elsewhere. In this way the book is an essential first resource for the practitioner and a learning reference for the student.

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