

Summary: March 5, 2015 East NOLA Retrofitting Suburbs Workshop- Ellen Dunham-Jones

East NOLA Business Development District hosted a leadership workshop of 40 participants in a packed conference center at the New Orleans East hospital on March 5th with top experts on suburban redevelopment. **Sean Bruno, Board Member, East NOLA Business Development District, welcomed** the group and introduced **Councilman James Gray**, District E, and **Mario Garner**, CEO, New Orleans East Hospital to give opening remarks.

Featured speakers were: (1) **Ellen Dunham-Jones**, Professor of Architecture and Urban Design and author of "Retrofitting Suburbs", (2) **Henry Hanisee**, AIA, Manning Architects and; (3) **Aaron Chang**, Waggonner Ball Architects. **Sponsors of the event included Liberty Bank and the Regional Planning Commission.**

Highlighting specific plans and noting examples from around the country, the presenters underscored the unique opportunity to create a distinctive 300+ acre "Town Center" in the vicinity of Lake Forest Boulevard corridor that is walkable, people-centered, transit oriented and vibrant in its mix of retail, office, residential, medical, recreational, educational and cultural development. The proposed "Town Center" development positioned the New Orleans East hospital, with 6.4 acres of city owned land around it, as a "health and wellness campus" with 125,000 square feet of retail and office space; 60 units of residential; and people centered courtyards, playgrounds and water front promenade. The "Town Center" proposal also incorporated water management practices, proposed in the Waggonner Ball Architects Urban Water Plan, which addresses the critical issues of flooding and subsidence and creates new opportunities for increasing land values, recreational opportunities and commercial activities around waterways in East NOLA.

Keynote presentation: Ellen Dunham-Jones underscored the huge economic and demographic shifts that are compelling communities across the country to rethink their suburbs. She noted that both "millennials" and "empty nester" markets are seeking "walkable urbanism" that offers social interaction, entertainment and greater housing densities and types. Almost 2/3's of suburban households in the U.S. do not have children. Furthermore, these types of suburban developments are commanding market rates that are 40% to 100% higher than average suburban rates. Ellen's power point presentation which reviews these suburban redevelopment trends and best practices can be accessed at: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/pujzcfyaxt92a78/RS%2021C%20NOLA%20x%20copy.pptx?dl=0>.

Small Group Discussion. Participants were divided into groups to provide feedback on the "Town Center" concept and neighborhood strategy presented. There was general group consensus among participants for the town center development concept including the following elements: (1) retail, retail, retail ;(2) walkability; (3) incorporation of regreening/water management practices management; (3) connections with Joe Brown Park and other surrounding uses; (4) public space for families/community; and (5) Lake Forest Boulevard as a pedestrian-oriented retail corridor.

Key issues and implementation considerations discussed: 1) compatibility and intensity of adjacent areas; (2) removal of regulatory hurdles to support a "town center" development; (3) need for a realistic market study assessing latent market demand; (4) incentives to encourage preferred development patterns; and (5) identification of financing mechanisms (e.g. tax increment financing, federal funding, transit oriented financing; and business improvement district).