



**REGIONAL COUNCIL OF MAYORS**  
**February 9, 2009**

**DISCUSSION**

**Bill Morrish: How to re-fill—rather than infill—housing**

Bill Morrish, professor of architecture, landscape architecture and urban and environmental planning at the University of Virginia (and former director of the Design Center for the Urban American Landscape at the University of Minnesota), says sustainability in housing needs new ideas for design. The standard models for density don't have to work in every situation.

Morrish shared some of the thoughts from his new book, *Growing Urban Habitats, Seeking a New Housing Development Model* <http://www.urban-habitats.org/>, which will be available in June. The impetus for the book started with a trailer park in Charlottesville, VA, <http://www.cvilledesign.org/> that was to be converted to a site with 56 housing units. Morrish and his team were asked to develop a competition for the design. "It was to be a design for row houses," he said. "My question was, why are row houses the only solution for density?"

There were 175 entries in the competition and the result was a variety of designs of smaller (1,200-1,300 square feet) units with garden spaces for each one. Half of the units are market-rate, half affordable housing.

Morrish said the book offers 16 principles for how to think about design for suburban areas. "I like to call it not infill but re-fill," he said. Steve Berg of MinnPost talked further with Morrish about the Charlottesville project and the book at [http://www.minnpost.com/steveberg/2009/02/12/6618/hard\\_times\\_the\\_trailer\\_park\\_as\\_a\\_21st-century\\_housing\\_model\\_seriously](http://www.minnpost.com/steveberg/2009/02/12/6618/hard_times_the_trailer_park_as_a_21st-century_housing_model_seriously).

**Bill Melton: When it comes to the economy, you ain't seen nothin' yet**

Bill Melton, an economist now with Macroeconomic Advisors, who has worked for the Federal Reserve and formerly was chief economist at Ameriprise, said he doesn't like to make forecasts, but he made one anyway: The recession will end sometime late this summer, probably around September.

"But what an economist means by recession is not what normal people mean," he said. "A recession is a period when the economy is retracting. It's a statement of direction, not about the level of the economy." He pointed out that in the first months after the end of the recession, the economy may be at a lower level than it was in the middle of the recession.

Melton said the government has pretty much exhausted what it can do with monetary policy. "The Federal Reserve has lowered interest rates to zero to a quarter of a percent," he said. "It's pretty obvious they can't go lower, so anything that happens from here on has to either fix whatever is

spooking the credit markets or use fiscal policy by increasing spending or reducing taxes or some combination of the two.”

He said that said that every dollar spent by the government brings in about another 50 cents in private spending. The impact of tax cuts is much smaller: Every dollar in tax cuts brings in another half to three-quarters cent in private spending. But, he said, tax cuts can be applied much more quickly. “It takes longer to get even shovel-ready projects up and going.”

## **RCM BUSINESS**

### **Regional strengths**

Stan Harpstead, mayor of Arden Hills, urged mayors to consider joining in regional development strategies for the region, looking at business clusters with high potential for growth. “Right now, there’s a gap in who is going to lead us,” he said. He said that lack of a coherent regional strategy stifles development growth and innovations potential.

As an example, he talked about ideas for medical technology companies in Minnesota, developed by the Bio Business Alliance <http://www.biobusinessalliance.org/>.

Harpstead said that the Regional Council of Mayors could:

- Develop a comprehensive 10-year plan for cluster development.
- Broaden participation by mayors.
- Develop multi-industry contacts.
- Convene regional economic cluster groups.
- Participate with the Bio Business Alliance stakeholders.
- Develop and support short-term policy actions.

A number of mayors volunteered to be part of a committee to look at what the Regional Council of Mayors can do to help support and expand key business clusters in the region.

### **Live where you work**

Caren Dewar, ULI Minnesota executive director, proposed that the Regional Council of Mayors look at St. Louis Park’s Live Where You Work program, which provides \$2,500 in financial assistance to new homeowners who have worked in the city for at least six months. “This is a potential regional program,” Dewar said.

She said she will come back to the mayors with ideas for a regional program similar to that of St. Louis Park, designed to connect housing with jobs and access to transportation options.

## **REPORTS**

Burnsville: The Performing Arts Center has opened.

Falcon Heights: A new master plan is being developed.

Shoreview: City officials have been meeting with businesses to discuss plans for business retention and expansion.

Lake Elmo: Plans call for 1,000 units of a walkable downtown. "Well be ready when the economy is," said Mayor Dean Johnston.

Eagan: After a "goals retreat," the city council came out with a narrower set of goals for the city, said Mayor Mike Maguire, "and we're very energized by it."

Richfield: The Lyndale Avenue bridge was taken down, adding to confusion, said Mayor Debbie Goettel. "You can't get through Richfield without encountering road construction," she said. "And it's only 7-1/2 square miles."

Edina: Plans were approved for a hotel at 77th St. and Hwy. 100. "But, again, financing ..." said Mayor Jim Hovland.

## **COMING UP**

### **RCM February meeting**

The next RCM meeting will be Monday, March 9, 11:30am-1:30pm, Dorsey & Whitney, 50 S. 6th St., Minneapolis, 15th floor-Seattle Room.

## **ATTENDEES**

### **Mayors**

Terry Schneider, Minnetonka; Stan Harpstead, Arden Hills; Mary Hershberger Thun, Victoria; Jim Hovland, Edina; Dean Johnston, Lake Elmo; Elizabeth Kautz, Burnsville; Steve Lampi, Brooklyn Park; Sandy Martin, Shoreview; Debbie Goettel, Richfield; Randy Gilbert, Long Lake; Mike Maguire, Eagan; Nick Ruehl, Excelsior; Bill Droste, Rosemount; Peter Lindstrom, Falcon Heights; Tom Furlong, Chanhassen; Ken Willcox, Wayzata

### **Staff**

Caren Dewar, executive director, ULI Minnesota; Pat Arnst, ULI Minnesota coordinator; Linda Picone, publications coordinator; ULI Minnesota

### **Advisors and guests**

Cathy Bennett, Bennett Community Consulting; Michael Huber, Blue Cross Blue Shield; Bob Schreier, City of Brooklyn Park; Emmett Coleman, Comcast; Colleen Carey, The Cornerstone Group; Eric Ruzicka, Dorsey & Whitney; Jay Lindgren, Dorsey & Whitney; Elizabeth Ryan, Family Housing Fund; Carolyn Olson, GMHC; Lee Munnich, Humphrey Institute; Kevin Frazell, League of Minnesota Cities; Andriana Abariotes, LISC; Joanne Barron, Metropolitan Council; Guy Peterson, Metropolitan Council; Paul Burns, Metropolitan Council; Tina Smith, City of Minneapolis; Katy Lindblad, Minnesota Housing; Steve Berg, MinnPost.com; Kristine Smitten, Smitten Group; Michele Schnitker, City of St. Louis Park; Kevin Locke, City of St. Louis Park; Sarah Grewing, City of St. Paul; Cecile Bedor, City of St. Paul; Erika Carter, Target; Lea Schuster, Transit for Livable Communities; Bill Melton.