

# Keeping LANCASTER Current

AN HOURGLASS PUBLICATION

Lancaster County Growth Management Issues

April 13, 2010

FYI

**URBAN CORE GROWING FASTER THAN OUTER “BURBS”** – New study from the [US Environmental Protection Agency](#) (EPA) finds that permits in central cities and first-ring suburban neighborhoods are outpacing greenfield developments. Smart growth proponents have long predicted that the ever-greater expansion of suburbia would one day reach its limit, prompting a renewed interest in central city living. [“Residential Construction Trends in America’s Metropolitan Regions,”](#) a new report from the EPA, suggests that this trend is well underway, with residential permits in downtown areas and close-in suburbs more than doubling since 2000 in 26 of the nation’s largest metro regions. **The shift has been especially pronounced in some big cities**, such as New York, which saw its share of regional permits increase from 15% in the early 1990s to 48% by 2008. In Chicago, housing permits inside city limits rose from 7% to 27% over the same time period. **Rapid revitalization is sweeping many smaller cities as well.** Some experts say economic and demographic factors such as constrained consumer finances, smaller households, and changing lifestyle preferences are driving increased demand for urban-style neighborhoods. Still, **the infill frenzy has yet to significantly alter America’s housing landscape.** New residential construction projects continue to move forward on greenfields at the urban fringe in many markets, the study found. And even in cities with significant urban revitalization, **this market segment continues to represent only a small slice of the housing pie; urban core neighborhoods still account for fewer than half of all new residential units in most regions.** [To read the full report.](#)

## WALKABLE URBAN THOROUGHFARES: A CONTEXT SENSITIVE

**APPROACH** – A groundbreaking [manual](#) for walkable urban thoroughfares jointly created by the Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU) and the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE). Available previously as a draft recommended practice, the manual **provides welcome relief from conventional design guidelines that prescribe wider lanes and faster speeds to move more automobile traffic, with almost no regard for the environment created for pedestrians or the ability of the street to support sidewalk commerce such as sidewalk cafes and storefront businesses.** As a recommended practice, it now carries the weight of ITE approval and can be used to find flexibility to create more context-sensitive streets within the parameters set by manuals such as the “green book” from the American Association of State Highway Transportation Engineers.

## STREETCARS ARE POISED FOR A DRAMATIC COMEBACK

*(New Urban News)* - *Up to 22 US cities could be laying track within two years.* Thanks to the Obama Administration, **streetcars may soon be reintroduced into many cities that haven’t had them for more than 50 years.** Since the middle of last year, the US Department of Transportation and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) have largely reversed policies of President George W. Bush that favored bus rapid transit and made it difficult to spend federal funds to build streetcar lines. In December, the Department of Transportation announced that it would make grants of up to \$25 million each for “urban circulator systems such as streetcars and rubber-tire trolleys.” It noted that **these systems foster “the redevelopment of urban spaces into walkable mixed use, high density environments.”** [To read the full article.](#)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**The Future of the Past – New Economic Realities for Traditional Revitalization – June 13-16, 2010** Downtown Lancaster. [Pennsylvania Downtown Center’s](#) 2010 Annual Statewide Conference – Lancaster County Convention Center. [For conference information and registration info.](#)

## INTERESTING PUBLICATIONS

### [Portland A Hotspot for 'Stormwater Tourism'](#)

Portland's "Green Streets" program is becoming a new tourist attraction in the city, which officials from other cities are visiting to learn from the Pacific Northwest's model water treatment infrastructure. The **program replaces the typical curb-and-gutter system** of many streets with plantings, permeable ground covering and innovative catchment systems that help reduce pollution from runoff.

### [Demolished! 11 Beautiful Train Stations That Fell to the Wrecking Ball](#)

Almost like a rite of passage, cities across the country embraced the era of Interstates, Big Macs, and suburban sprawl by tearing down their train depots. (Frequently, they just did the Joni Mitchell thing and put up a parking lot.) But time and experience are showing that **train stations are vital organs in a healthy city**, and removing them deadens the entire organism.

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