Planning for the New Normal

Post-Covid-19 Planning & Zoning Discussions
WHO WE ARE?

• John Steinmetz, FAICP
  Jsteinmetz@bartonandloguidice.com

• Ted Kolankowski, RLA LEED AP
  tkolankowski@bartonandloguidice.com
Nothing About New York’s Outbreak Was Inevitable

Politicians and pundits are acting like the city was destined for a tragedy. They’re wrong.

By HENRY GRABAR

America’s Biggest Cities Were Already Losing Their Allure. What Happens Next?

The urge among some residents to leave because of the coronavirus may be temporary. But it follows a deeper, more powerful demographic trend.

The Pandemic Will Change American Retail Forever

The big will get bigger as more and more people shop online. In the short term, our cities will become more boring. In the long term, they might just become interesting again.

Planners and Pandemics: Identifying Problems and Providing Solutions

Planners are professional problem solvers. Let’s see how our methods can be applied to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Todd Litman | March 27, 2020, 9am PDT
What will Post-Covid-19 Planning & Zoning Look Like?
COMMUNITY MINDSET

- Transactional (aka Managerial)
- Transformational (aka Visionary)
Budgeting & Taxes

Replacement of existing infrastructure in kind

Dotting the "I"s & crossing the "T"s during the administration of development proposals (SEQR)

Engineering comments (Drainage, Traffic)

Legal Issues

Community Character - Architectural comments

Community Priorities - Planner comments
“People who are lonely or socially isolated have 29% higher risk of disease, new study finds.”

~ University of York
“An estimated 6 out of every 10 adults in NYS is overweight or obese.”

~ BRFSS
“People who live in neighborhoods with sidewalks are 47% more likely to be active at least 39 minutes a day.

~ AARP
NATIONAL POPULATION TRENDS

~ We are getting older and will continue to do so ~

Source: U.S. Administration on Aging & U.S. Census Bureau
NATIONAL HOUSING TRENDS

Market Share of Householders

1990-2010
- Peak: 77%
- Downsizing: 23%

2010-2030
- Downsizing: 74%
- Starter: 10%
- Peak: 16%

~Household trends to downsize are increasing~

Source: Arthur C. Nelson, Reshaping Metropolitan America (2013)

Courtesy of Urban Advisors
NATIONAL HOUSING TRENDS

~ Housing supply is not meeting demand ~

Source: Arthur C. Nelson, Reshaping Metropolitan America (2013)

Courtesy of Urban Advisors
In contrast to the past, a time when homebuyers wanted their own space, future buyers will want everything closer. “People want density, they don’t mind living in a certain place as long as they have access to walkability, amenities, and leisure around them.”

~ ULI
“What’s less obvious, but also important, is that talent flows to cities because of its amenities. If these amenities are diminished, that makes NYC less attractive, but it also makes the City less hip-seeming to some 20-something in Albany thinking about moving.”

~ W. Kerr
HOW WILL SOCIAL DISTANCING IMPACT PLANNING?

New Urban Flight?

Source: Bloomberg analysis of U.S. Census data

Bloomberg News, August 29, 2019
EXISTING MIGRATION TRENDS

900,000 New Yorkers Move Annually
• 400,000 stay in city
• 300,000 move to suburbs
• 200,000 move out of state

Source: StreetEasy.Com; US Census

Post Covid-19 Factors?
• Affordability of Housing
• Employment Opportunities
• Cost of Living
PAST EVENTS: 9/11, 2008 RECESSION, HURRICANE SANDY

9/11

• An estimated 2,000,000 left NYC between 2000 - 2010

• Another 1,000,000 between 2010 & present

US Census Bureau

Another 1,000,000 to 2,000,000 leaving between 2020-2030?
Current Trends

Vs.

Future Trends

Urban Living is Desirable
Explosive Growth in High Density
Apartments & other Multi-Unit
Housing

Vs. ??

Crowded City Undesirable
Decentralized Services
Social Equity benefits all
WORKING REMOTELY

- Professionals
- Private Industry
- Local Governments
- Education
DENSITY IS IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER
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“Only one new large mall has opened in the US since 2007”
• Online retail has averaged 1% growth per year over last decade

• Has jumped from 10% to 25% during COVID
The Atlantic

The Pandemic Will Change American Retail Forever

The big will get bigger as mom-and-pops perish and shopping goes virtual. In the short term, our cities will become more boring. In the long term, they might just become interesting again.
WHAT ABOUT RESTAURANTS?

- Since 2015 US spent more money in restaurants than grocery stores
- Golden age of dining...since pre-Prohibition
- **Reduced, relocated, & repurposed**
  - Closed
  - Suburbs, food truck, etc
  - Scanners, temp checks, dining cubicles, etc

*Our dining options will get more limited in number & offerings*
EDUCATION

- Social Distancing
- Reduced Class Size
- Long Term Online Learning
- Technology Inequities
- Staggered Lunch, Gym and Recess

Schools Reopen in Denmark.
From ‘What Will Post-Pandemic School Really Look Like?’
We Are Teachers, Post by Alexandra Frost on April 27, 2020
https://www.weareteachers.com/post-pandemic-school/
POST COVID-19
ADAPTIVE ZONING

• Euclidean or Traditional
• Performance
• Form Based
• Hybrid

*Be flexible on USE not DESIGN*
PUBLIC SPACES WILL BE MORE IMPORTANT
FOLLOWING THE FUTURE OF POST COVID-19 FUNDING

Labor Force/Wage Stabilization Funding
Large & Small Business Support Funding
Disaster Mitigation Funding
Economic Stimulus Infrastructure Funding
TAKEAWAYS

• People still want interesting places & human interaction...even from six feet away
• Flexible, mixed-use zoning is critical
• Design is still important because walkability is more important now
• Biking infrastructure
• Parks & greenspaces
• Home downsizing & less maintenance may be on a very short pause
“For decades, American cities have fought a battle against monotony, and, according to some, the war was lost long ago. It was Tennessee Williams who allegedly said, “America has only three cities: New York, San Francisco, and New Orleans. Everywhere else is Cleveland.”

~ D. Thompson