

An overview of New Urbanism communities in Canada

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This highlight note summarizes the findings of an inventory of new urbanism projects in Canada conducted in the summer of 2006. Research methods included literature review, web surveys, and contacts with planners and developers across Canada. In some cases the projects listed are completed; in other cases, they are still in the last stages of project planning.

- The survey found forty-two (42) communities in Canada called “New Urbanist” (NU) by a range of sources. Most of these communities are located in the areas surrounding Toronto and Vancouver.
- The popularity of NU appears fairly constant, with new communities being built every year.
- Most NU communities are low density (<12 units per acre).
- Many communities are small (<249 acres), but there are also some very large communities. Half of the NU communities feature over 1000 housing units each.
- Over three-quarters of NU communities are greenfield (suburban) developments.
- We find roughly two types of NU communities: low-density developments that are suburban in character and higher-density developments that are more urban in character. Low-density developments are usually located on the urban fringe, and cater to families, while higher density developments are often found in the urban centre and cater to young professionals or empty nesters.
- Most NU communities cater to families. Some attract young professionals and empty nesters. Almost all communities cater to the middle-class, offering mostly single-detached dwellings, quality open spaces and sometimes luxury amenities such as golf courses, boutiques and cafés. Very few offer affordable housing options.
- Most NU communities offer a range of housing options (single-detached, semi-detached, townhouse, apartment), but housing is often segregated by type. We found a strong preference for single-detached housing. All but eight of the 42 NU communities feature single-detached housing.

- Most of the NU communities include a mix of uses. Commercial uses are found in three-quarters of NU communities.
- The form of NU communities seems to be changing in response to market realities. Commercial land uses are often found along the periphery of the community, along major roads, not in the centre of the project. Only half of NU communities have a main street. Certain communities feature big-box retail. Most communities employ a modified-grid or hybridized street pattern (including some cul-de-sacs and/or loops). Developers seem to be using this hybridized form to cater to a variety of markets. Lower end housing is often located on major streets, while higher end housing appears on cul-de-sacs which offer greater privacy. Lanes are often found only behind higher density housing, presumably because such features do not appeal to the higher end housing market.
- Quality open spaces (e.g. with water features or monuments) are common in NU communities. They are an important selling feature and provide a space for residents to congregate.
- NU communities generally encourage the use of alternative transportation. Almost all communities are highly walkable, with sidewalks and landscaped streets, and offer access to transit (usually bus, sometimes train). Suburban projects have lesser access to public transportation than do urban projects.
- NU communities located near bodies of water often integrate naturalized stormwater management techniques (e.g. on-site infiltration).
- The popularity of traditional housing styles may be decreasing.
- New Urbanism is being adopted by small historic towns seeking to preserve their unique character.
- NU communities integrate traditional neighborhood design (TND), transit-oriented development (TOD) and Urban Village principles to varying extents.
- *Note: some of the projects listed are fully developed, while others are still in the planning or design stages.*

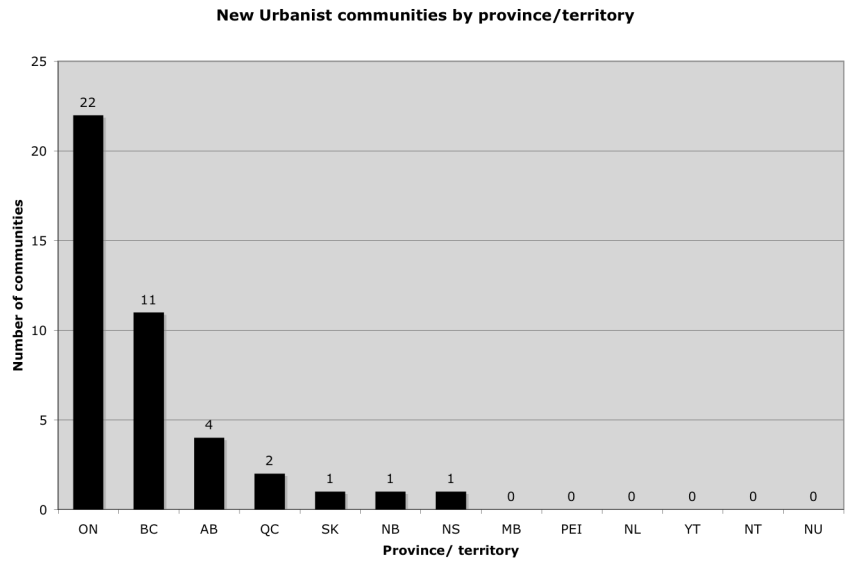
GENERAL INFORMATION

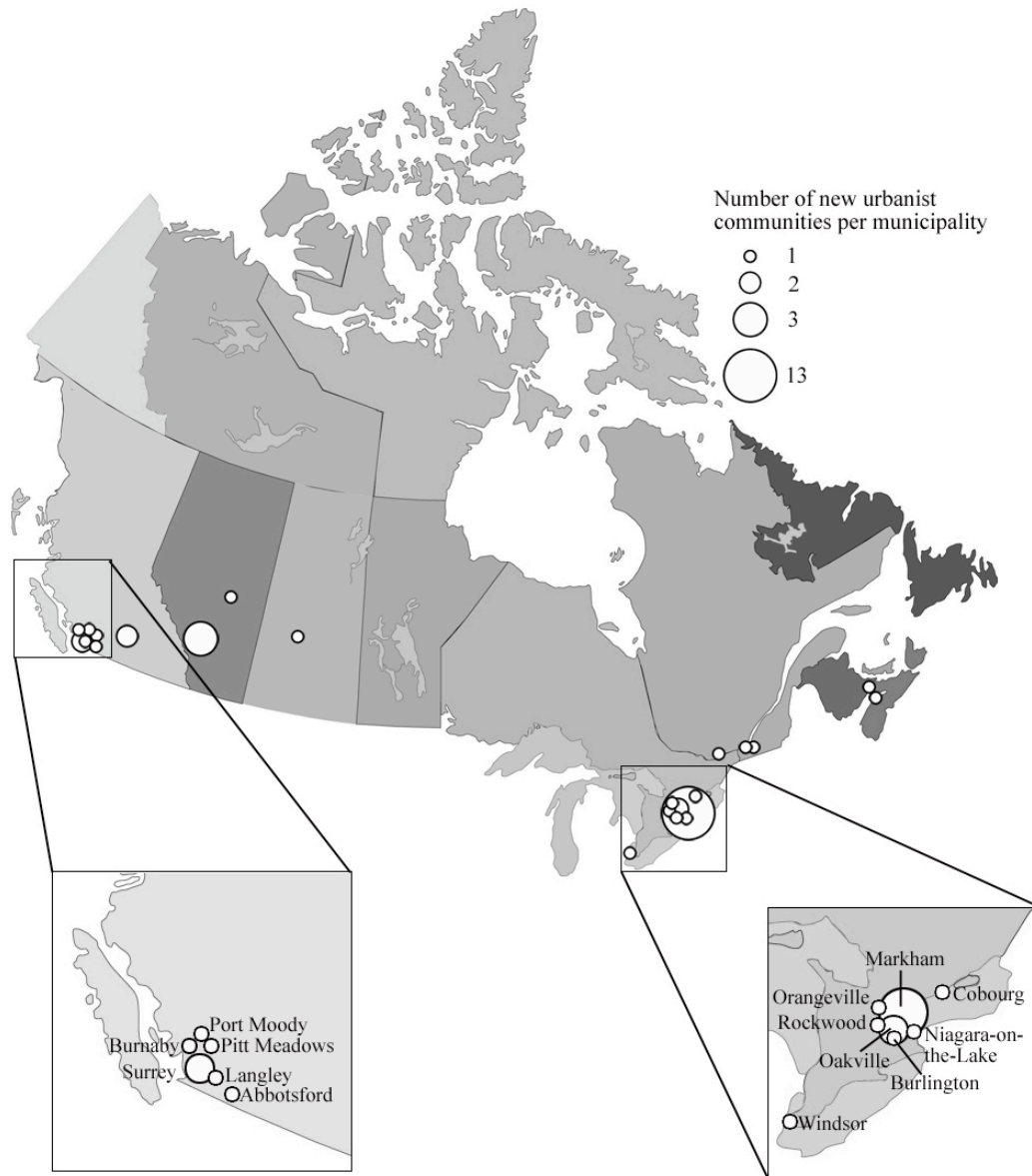
Communities by province

PROV.	MUNICIPALITY	DEVELOPMENT NAME
BC	Abbotsford Burnaby Kelowna Kelowna Langley Pitt Meadows Port Moody South Surrey Surrey Surrey Vancouver	Auguston UniverCity Kettle Valley Brandt's Creek Crossing Murray's Corner Morningside Newport Village Rosemary Heights Clover Valley Station East Clayton Southeast False Creek
AB	Calgary Calgary Calgary Edmonton	Garrison Green (CFB West) Garrison Woods (CFB East) McKenzie Towne Terwillegar Towne
SK	Saskatoon	Willowgrove
ON	Burlington Cobourg Kanata Markham Markham Markham Markham Markham Markham Markham Markham Markham Markham Markham Markham Markham Markham Niagara-on-the-Lake Oakville Oakville Orangeville Rockwood Windsor	Orchard Community New Amherst Village Green Angus Glen Berczy Village Cathedral Community Cathedral East Community Cornell Downtown Markham Greensborough Legacy Markham Centre South Unionville Times Galleria Villages of Fairtree Wismer Commons The Village Morrison Common Oak Park (aka Uptown Core) Montgomery Village Rockwood Ridge East Riverside
QC	Montreal Mont St-Hilaire	Bois-Franc Village de la Gare
NB	Moncton	Franklin Yards
NS	Truro	Farmington Village

PROV.	# of NU communities
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ON	22
BC	11
AB	4
QC	2
SK	1
NB	1
NS	1
MB	0
PEI	0
NL	0
YT	0
NT	0
NU	0
Total	42





- The largest number of New Urbanist communities occurs in Ontario (52%) and British Columbia (26%). Those located in Ontario tend to be near Toronto, while those in British Columbia are located in or around Vancouver. The Greater Toronto Area has been called the “capital of New Urbanism in North America” (Warson, 1997). It would seem that NU communities concentrate in areas experiencing rapid growth; however, other factors may also play a role given that relatively few NU communities appear in the rapidly growing city of Calgary. The fact that a recent portion of McKenzie Towne, the first Calgary NU community, has been developed as a conventional suburb (Anonymous, 2002) may indicate that the market for NU in Calgary may not be as receptive as it is in areas around Vancouver and Toronto. The market for TNDs in Calgary is said to be approximately 300 units per year (Anonymous, 2002).

- Manitoba, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland & Labrador do not have NU communities.

Development size

Development size (acres)	# of NU communities
0-249	16
250-499	10
500-749	6
750-999	4
>1000	3
Unknown	3
Total	42

Development size (units)	# of NU communities
0-499	7
500-999	8
1000-1499	2
1500-1999	3
2000-2499	2
2500-2999	4
3000-3499	0
3500-3999	2
4000-4499	1
4500-4999	3
>5000	7
Unknown	3
Total	42

- The largest NU communities (both in acres and in number of units) are located in Markham, ON. Markham's municipal land use policies specifically encourage new urbanism development.
- The size of NU communities (in acres) varies considerably. Many (16) NU communities are quite small (<249 acres). The smallest communities are Morningside, Pitt Meadows BC (10 acres), and Oak Park in Oakville ON (13 acres). The largest communities are over 1000 acres in size. The largest NU communities are Cornell (2400 acres) and Markham Centre (1436 acres), both in Markham ON.
- A large portion of NU communities (15) have less than 1000 housing units, but over half (24) of Canada's NU communities have over 1000 units. Seven have over 5000 units, most located in Markham, Ontario. The other very large projects are McKenzie Towne in Calgary, and Southeast False Creek in Vancouver.
- Certain NU communities have had to be scaled down or repackaged so as to not exceed market demand or because demand for the product proved weak (e.g. McKenzie Towne, Calgary; Montgomery Village, Oakville; Bois-Franc, Montreal).

Development density

Projected density (UPA)	# of communities
0-5.9	13
6.0-11.9	10
12.0-17.9	4
17.0-23.9	4
24.0-29.9	4
30.0-35.9	0
>36.0	3
Unknown	4
Total	42

- A wide range of housing densities appears in NU communities. Densities can be as low as 2.7 units per acre (East Riverside, Windsor) and as high as 81.3 upa (Southeast False Creek, Vancouver). However, most NU communities (23) are low density developments (i.e., have less than 12 units per acre). A density lower than 12 upa is generally considered insufficient to run an efficient bus system.
- The majority of the medium (12-36 upa) and high density (>36 upa) NU communities are in Markham.
- NU principles suggest that higher density housing should be located in the centre of a community, and densities should decrease with distance from the centre. Many NU communities do not follow these principles: instead, they place higher density housing along the edges of the community, with lower density housing in the centre (e.g. East Clayton, Surrey; Rosemary Heights, South Surrey; McKenzie Towne, Calgary; Cathedral Community, Markham).
- Developers often build lower density housing (i.e., single detached) before building higher density housing (semi-detached, townhouses, apartments, etc.) (e.g. Rosemary Heights, South Surrey; McKenzie Towne, Calgary; Angus Glen, Markham).
- Higher density housing (narrow lots and shallow setbacks) is often found along main corridors, while lower density housing (larger lots and deeper setbacks) is usually located on cul-de-sacs. (This follows conventional building patterns.)
- Developers sometimes achieve a higher density development through the provision of small-lot, single-detached homes as opposed to other types of housing (e.g. semis, townhouses), indicating that there is still a strong market preference for single-detached housing (e.g. Morningside, Pitt Meadows).

Year of construction

PROVINCE	YEAR CONSTRUCTION BEGAN				Total
	Pre 1995	1995-2000	2000-present	Unknown	
BC	2	4	4	1	11
AB		2		2	4
SK				1	1
ON	2	5	3	12	22
QC	1	1			2
NB			1		1
NS			1		1
Total	5	12	9	16	42

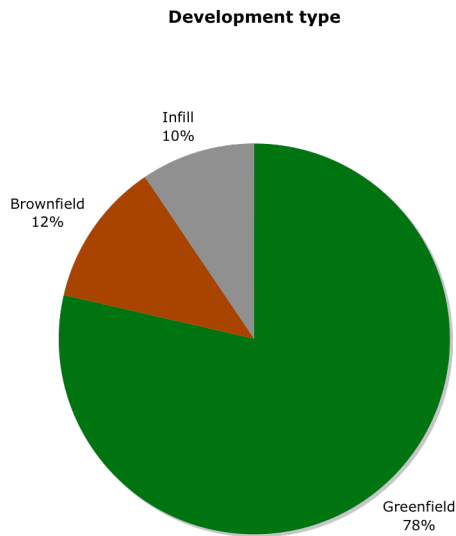
Year of construction	# of communities
Pre 1995	5
1995-2000	10
2000-present	11
Unknown	16
Total	42

- Given that we could not find the dates for when construction began with many projects, it is difficult to draw any conclusions about the overall trend in NU community development in Canada. It would be worth investigating this matter further.
- If we discount the unknowns, it appears as though the popularity of NU development has remained fairly constant since the mid 1990s, at least in particular market areas.

Development type

Location	Development type	# of NU communities
Urban	Greenfield	0
	Brownfield	4
	Infill	3
Suburban	Greenfield	30
	Brownfield	1
	Infill	1
Small town	Greenfield	3
	Brownfield	0
	Infill	0
Total		42

Development type	# of NU communities
Greenfield	33
Brownfield	5
Infill	4
Total	42



- The vast majority of NU communities in Canada are greenfield developments. This may perhaps be explained by the high development costs associated with neo-traditional design, which encourages the developers to build larger communities, as these tend to guarantee a higher return. Given that large tracts of land are generally greenfields, NU may actually encourage suburban development on previously non-urban land.
- The five brownfield developments are: Brandt’s Creek Crossing, Kelowna; Southeast False Creek, Vancouver; Bois Franc, Montreal; Village de la Gare, Mont St-Hilaire; Franklin Yards, Moncton. Canada Lands Company is the developer for two of them (i.e. Brandt’s Creek Crossing and Franklin Yards). These were developed on industrial sites. Two additional projects, Garrison Woods and Garrison Green in Calgary, involved redevelopment of Canadian Forces bases.
- Both of Quebec’s NU communities are brownfield developments.
- All of Ontario’s 22 NU communities are greenfield developments.

Target market

Target market	# of communities
Families	30
Empty nesters	9
Professionals	8
Seniors	6
Tourists	5
Students	2

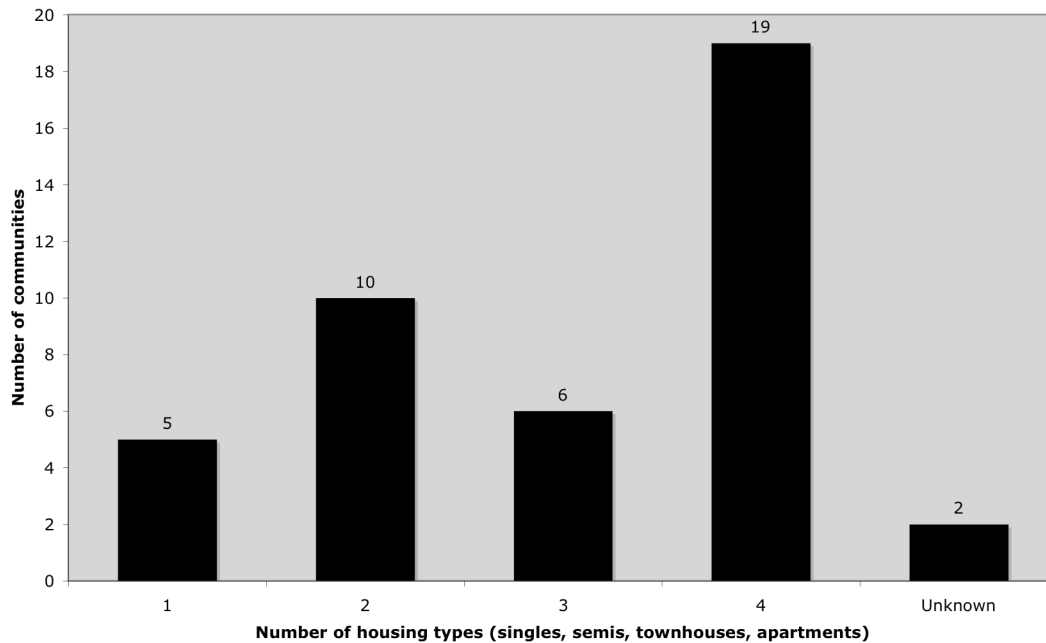
- We identified roughly two types of NU communities: low-density developments that are suburban in character and higher-density developments that are more urban in character.
- Low-density, suburban-type NU communities tend to cater to families. They feature a large proportion of single-detached housing, located at the edge of a municipality. Most Canadian NU communities fall into this category.
- Higher density NU communities often feature little or no single-detached housing. These NU communities cater to empty nesters, professionals, tourists and students. These communities are often located near the centre of a municipality and offer “urban amenities” such as cafés, boutiques and restaurants. Only two of the nine communities catering to empty nesters feature golf courses (Markham Centre and Bois-Franc).
- The nine NU communities catering to empty nesters are: Brandt’s Creek Crossing, Kelowna; Newport Village, Port Moody; Willowgrove, Saskatoon; Downtown Markham, Markham Centre, and Times Galleria, Markham; Rockwood Ridge, Rockwood; Bois-Franc, Montreal; Farmington Village, Truro.
- The NU communities catering to tourists feature a hotel and are located in a centrally. These are: Brandt’s Creek Crossing, Kelowna; Downtown Markham, Markham Centre, and Times Galleria, Markham; and The Village, Niagara-on-the-Lake.
- NU communities catering to seniors (i.e. those that feature a senior’s home) are more difficult to characterize. They can be located in outlying areas (e.g. Kettle Valley, Kelowna) or in more central areas (e.g. Markham Centre, Markham). NU communities featuring senior’s housing are: Kettle Valley (Kelowna); Garrison Woods, Garrison Green and McKenzie Towne (Calgary); and Markham Centre. All the NU communities in Calgary include senior’s housing.
- The age demographics of NU communities would be worth studying in greater detail, but we could not locate detailed information.

HOUSING

Housing type

Housing type	# of NU communities	# of housing types	# of NU communities
Singles	33	1	5
Semis	25	2	10
Townhouses	35	3	6
Apartments	28	4	19
		Unknown	2
		Total	42

Housing diversity



- Most NU communities offer a range of housing options. Nineteen of the projects offer four types of housing (singles, semis, townhouses, and apartments).
- All but eight of the NU communities include single-detached dwellings. The communities without single-detached dwellings are: UniverCity, Burnaby; Brandt’s Creek Crossing, Kelowna; Newport Village, Port Moody; Southeast False Creek, Vancouver; Downtown Markham, Markham Centre, Times Galleria and Wismer Commons, Markham.

- In certain cases, townhouses have been replaced by semi-detached and single-detached housing, presumably in response to market demand (e.g. Oak Park, Oakville).
- Principles of NU call for mixed housing, but in Canadian NU communities housing generally tends to be segregated by type (e.g. Willowgrove, Saskatoon; Bois-Franc, Montreal). While housing was initially mixed, later phases of McKenzie Towne began to segregate housing by type because it made it easier to market single-detached housing.
- New Urbanists often advocate providing affordable housing, but only three NU communities offer affordable housing options (i.e. Southeast False Creek, Vancouver; Garrison Green, Calgary; Farmington Village, Truro). Later phases of McKenzie Towne include starter-level homes for purchase. NU communities tend to be upper scale developments, sometimes featuring luxury housing and amenities such as golf courses, cafés and boutiques. Affordable housing was eliminated from the plan for Cornell, Markham, due to local resistance.

MIX OF USES

Land use	# of communities with	# of communities without	# of unknown
Open space	37	1	4
Commercial	33	5	4
Institutional	26	12	4
Office	20	18	4
Recreational	20	18	4
Services	14	24	4
Industrial	4	34	4

# of non-residential uses	# of NU communities
0	1
1	1
2	1
3	10
4	10
5	8
6	4
7	2
Unknown	5
Total	42

- Most NU communities are mixed-use, featuring three or four non-residential land uses. The scale and spatial pattern of mixing varies. The two most common non-residential land uses are open space and commercial uses. Institutional uses are also quite common, and these tend to be schools, although some communities also

feature churches. Only one community (Legacy, Markham) features a school without also featuring commercial land uses. Most communities feature both.

- Commercial uses are often located at the edge of NU communities along major roads, instead of in the centre of the community as prescribed by NU principles. Examples: East Clayton (Surrey), Orchard Community (Burlington), Berczy Village (Markham), Cathedral Community (Markham), Montgomery Village (Orangeville), Rockwood Ridge (Rockwood).
- Certain NU communities feature large-scale, or big-box, retail, despite the fact that this type of retail is frowned upon by New Urbanists. Examples: Village Green (Kanata), Cathedral Community (Markham), Oak Park (Oakville). In the case of Oak Park, the plan called for a traditional main street, but this was rejected due to concerns over marketability.
- Almost one quarter of NU communities feature at least one church. The nine NU communities with churches are as follows: Auguston (Abbotsford), Garrison Green (Calgary), McKenzie Towne (Calgary), Terwillegar Towne (Edmonton), Willowgrove (Saskatoon), Greensborough (Markham), Villages of Fairtree (Markham), Morrison Common (Oak Park) and Montgomery Village (Orangeville).
- Most communities feature spaces for residents to congregate. In most cases, these spaces are parks, but certain communities have community centres (e.g. McKenzie Towne, Calgary; Angus Glen, Cornell and Greensborough, Markham). Others have a town hall (e.g. Terwillegar Towne, Edmonton). Sometimes, the developer use more direct ways of promoting interaction among residents, presumably to help market the community. For instance, Carma (the developer of McKenzie Towne and Terwillegar Towne) set up a website with chat rooms to help residents meet. Metrontario (the developer of Oak Park, Oakville), hired an events planner to organize community activities. This trend in the suburbs is what Harris (2004) calls “hiving”: residents making efforts to interact with their communities.
- Open space often plays an important role in NU communities:
 - as a structuring element;
 - as a community centerpiece;
 - as a buffer between different neighbourhoods, densities, and land uses;
 - as a marketing tool (especially golf courses).
- Some NU communities have been planned around the provision of employment (e.g. East Clayton, Surrey). At least three plans for NU communities include a business park (East Clayton, Surrey; CFB West, Calgary; Cathedral Community, Markham).

STREETS

Street patterns

Street pattern	# of communities
Grid/modified grid	15
Loops/cul-de-sacs	6
Hybrid	18
Unknown	3
Total	42

- Many NU communities feature a hybridized street pattern (i.e. a grid/modified grid pattern as well as loops and/or cul-de-sacs). Almost as many NU communities have a grid/modified grid pattern.
- Often, a community's higher end housing will be located on cul-de-sacs (McKenzie Towne, Calgary; Terwillegar Towne; Greensborough and South Unionville, Markham).

Lanes

Rear lanes	# of communities
With rear lanes	21
Without rear lanes	13
Unknown	8
Total	42

- Given the high number of communities for which we could not find information on rear lanes, we cannot draw firm conclusions about the extent to which rear lanes feature in NU communities.
- Only two of the communities without rear lanes feature a loop/cul-de-sac street pattern; the other 11 are on a grid/modified grid.
- We see little correlation between the presence of rear lanes and development size, density, or location.
- Generally, the communities without rear lanes tend to be more recent. Most were built after 1999. However, some recent developments do feature rear lanes (e.g. East Clayton (2003) and New Amherst (2004)).
- Many communities have lanes only behind higher density housing (Willowgrove, Saskatoon; Berczy Village and South Unionville, Markham).

- Sometimes, lanes have not been built even though the development plan called for them (e.g. West Village). Markham has rejected some development plans on the basis of the project lacking lanes (e.g. various neighbourhoods of Cornell). This inconsistency in development patterns in Markham may be due to the plans being evaluated by different staff members or policy changes over the years.

Garages

Garages	# of communities
Attached	8
Detached	2
Both	10
None	2
Unknown	20
Total	42

- It was difficult to find information about garages in NU communities without site visits.
- Often, when homes have attached front garages, they are recessed slightly so as to not dominate the building face.
- Certain communities have lanes as well as attached front garages. In such cases, the garages are often found on single-detached homes while lanes are located behind higher density housing (e.g. townhouses) (e.g. Willowgrove, Saskatoon; Berczy Village and South Unionville, Markham). In other cases, garages are found on larger single detached homes, often on cul-de-sacs, while smaller homes are serviced by lanes (e.g. Auguston (Abbotsford), Kettle Valley (Kelowna), McKenzie Towne (Calgary)). Garages may be an important selling feature for upscale housing.

Access

Community access points	# of communities
1	2
2	4
3	3
4	2
>4	17
Unknown	14
Total	42

- A large number of NU communities (17) have over four access points.
- Two communities described in some documents as NU are also said to be gated (i.e. Brandt's Creek Crossing, Kelowna, and Greensborough, Markham). [This

has yet to be confirmed.]

- One community (Morningside, Pitt Meadows) was designed with only one access point in order to increase safety.
- Many NU communities are inwardly oriented:
 - o major roads along the periphery make it difficult to integrate with surrounding communities, especially when cul-de-sacs abut the major roads;
 - o some communities are being developed in pod-like forms, with few entry points into the community;
 - o the number of entry points into the community are sometimes being reduced to address safety concerns.

ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION

Transit

Access to transit	# of communities
Bus, 1 route	8
Bus, 2-5 routes	14
Bus, 6-9 routes	2
Bus, >10 routes	1
No transit	1
On periphery only	3
Unknown	13
Total	42

- NU communities generally have access to transit. Only one community (Kettle Valley, Kelowna) is known to have no transit service. Seven communities near large urban centres (Vancouver, Toronto) have access to commuter train service within walking distance or within a short bus ride.

Sidewalks

Sidewalks	# of communities
One side of street	9
Both sides of street	10
None	0
Unknown	23
Total	42

- It was difficult to find information regarding sidewalks in NU communities. However, given that all of the 19 communities for which we found information indicated that there were sidewalks on at least one side of the streets, we can

hypothesize that the trend will apply to the other NU communities.

- Sixteen NU communities are known to feature paths/trails; providing opportunities for pedestrian activity is an important design consideration for many NU communities.
- Communities are generally walkable (trails, sidewalks, attractive streetscapes, traffic calming), but few benefit from good transit service because densities on the fringe are not high enough to sustain good transit service. The form and amenities featured in NU communities encourage the use of alternative transportation within the development, but personal vehicle transportation often remains the most viable option for most to travel outside the development.

ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

Stormwater management

Naturalized stormwater management features	# of communities
1	7
>1	7
None	25
Unknown	3
Total	42

- We had initially thought that NU communities were beginning to increasingly integrate stormwater management features into their design. Upon closer inspection of the data, it seems that most communities do not integrate such features.
- Most of the NU communities with naturalized stormwater management features are located near or adjacent to a body of water (e.g. stream, lake, etc.). The plans for Montgomery Village, Orangeville, and Rockwood Ridge, Rockwood, called for extensive stormwater management, but certain features (i.e. swales, pervious pavement) were eliminated from the design because of municipal concerns over maintenance.

Natural features

Preservation of natural features	# of communities
Topography	8
Natural areas	22
Trees	3

- Over half of the NU communities (25) integrated the preservation of at least one natural element into their design (e.g. topography, natural areas, trees). This does not appear to be correlated with the age of the community. Both older communities (e.g. Kettle Valley, Morrison Common) and more recent developments (e.g. UniverCity, Downtown Markham) make use of natural features as structuring elements in their design. This practice does not appear to have grown in popularity over time.
- Existing natural areas are often integrated into recreational amenities, such as greenways and parks.
- Developers ensured the preservation of existing trees in the development of Garrison Woods, Cathedral Community and Morrison Common in order to lend these new communities a lived-in feel.

ARCHITECTURE

Architectural styles

- Eight NU communities are known to integrate “traditional” architectural styles. As seven of these were built prior to 2000, the popularity of traditional styles may be decreasing. Given the small sample size on which we can confirm style, we cannot draw definitive conclusions.
- Of the four NU communities located in small towns, three were developed as New Urbanist communities in order to preserve the town’s historic character (i.e. New Amherst, Cobourg; Rockwood Ridge, Rockwood; The Village, Niagara-on-the-Lake).

Porches

Porches	# of communities
Communities with	20
Communities without	13
Unknown	9
Total	42

- Nearly half of the NU communities (20) are known to feature homes with porches. Fifteen of these communities were built prior to 2000.

Main streets

Main street and/or town centre	# of communities
Communities with	18
Communities without	18
Unknown	6
Total	42

- As many communities appear to have a main street and/or town centre as those without.

Communities with a main street and/or town centre	# of communities
Built before 2000	9
Built after 2000	7
Unknown	2

- The presence of a main street and/or town centre does not appear linked to the age of a community.

Communities with a main street and/or town centre	# of communities
Less than 10 UPA	8
10 or more UPA	7
Unknown	1

- The presence of a main street and/or town centre does not appear to be correlated with the density of a development.

Communities of 10 or more v_y	# of communities
With town centre or main street	6
Without town centre or main street	5
Unknown	1

- Higher density developments do not necessarily feature a main street or town centre.

INTEGRATION OF DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

What follows is a quick summary of the extent to which Canada's NU communities integrate the principles advocated by TND, TOD and Urban Village development approaches, taken from Grant (2006). When insufficient information concerning a particular characteristics (e.g. street parking) was available, the boxes are marked with (?).

	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
TND principles				
Mixed uses and housing types	x			
Classical architecture		x		
Space for civic activities	x			
Medium and low densities	x			
Street parking	?	?	?	?
Front porches		x		
Short distances from home to town centre		x		
Short setbacks	?	?	?	?
Narrow streets	?	?	?	?
Quality urban design	x			
TOD principles				
Public transit to structure region and neighbourhood			x	
Walking distance to transportation node			x	
Mix of uses	x			
Highest density in centre		x		
Lower density on the edge		x		
Pedestrian scale	x			
Defined public space	x			
Mix of population	?	?	?	?
Compact form		x		
Civic and commercial centres along transit corridors			x	
Open space networks			x	
Attractive public spaces	x			
Environmental responsibility			x	
No design formula	?	?	?	?
Urban Village principles				
Compact form		x		
Mixed housing and uses	x			
Focus on job creation			x	
Coherent neighbourhoods		x		

This preliminary inventory offers a snapshot of new urbanism communities in Canada. It may form the basis for additional detailed investigations and comparisons.

SOURCES

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Warson, A. 1997. New urbanism: trick or treat? These instant communities are made to resemble the best, turn-of-the-century downtown neighborhoods. Buyers like them and builders are catching on. *Building*, 47(4): 21.