

# URBAN DESIGN

## Building for the "Missing Middle"

*We need more great developers, or at least ones who make positive contributions to our communities*

By Mark Schnell



It's a difficult time to be a developer: community opposition to new development is high, financing is difficult to secure and the risks of developing in a fragile economy are very real.

What's that you say? You have no sympathy for developers? "Cry me a river," you say?

It's a sentiment that has been earned over the years. One can point to plenty of terrible developments created by the stereotypical "greedy developer." They waltz into a community located far from their own home and build whatever is profitable, regardless of the impacts on the community. At this point, it seems like developers are somewhere between criminals and politicians (or is that redundant?) on the scale of public esteem.

Of course, that's all a massive simplification. There are many great developers who have shaped our communities for the better. And I'm guessing that you, my dear reader, probably live in a residence or community built by a developer. Unless you live in a cave, you can most likely thank a developer. We all live in the human habitat, and developers play a big role in shaping it.

If you are reading this column in *The Seaside Times*, you are probably familiar with Seaside, and you might even be enjoying a coffee while reading the paper near Central Square. We can thank the visionary developers Robert and Daryl Davis for this wonderful



community. So let's begin with the premise that developers can — and often do — create great places.

It may seem like a fool's errand to defend developers, but I'm doing this for good reason: we need more great developers, or at least ones who make positive contributions to our communities.

According to an article on Planners Web by Patrick Fox of The Saint Consulting Group, 79 percent of Americans want no new development projects in their communities. I have bad news for that incredibly high percentage of Americans: most privately owned land can be legally developed in some way, shape, or form. And if you live in a place that's growing, there's a decent chance that empty parcel near you will eventually be developed.

So development is going to happen, whether we like it or not. And

therefore, it's in our best interest to encourage those "good" developers instead of encouraging the "bad" ones.

I recently attended a workshop in Seaside conducted by the Incremental Development Alliance, and hosted by the Seaside Institute. It was a boot camp for those who would like to become small-scale developers.

They are trying to fill a hole in both the housing market and our communities. They call it the Missing Middle. This is a term coined by Daniel Parolek of Opticos Design. It refers to the housing types between detached single-family houses on one extreme, and mid-rise and high-rise multi-family buildings on the other. The Missing Middle consists of housing types including duplexes, small (three or four unit) apartments, townhouses, and live/work units, among others. Re-

fer to MissingMiddleHousing.com for a nice illustration of this. These housing types were built with some frequency long ago in America, and they are a hallmark of many great old neighborhoods, but they are not built very often today.

In walkable urbanism — a development pattern that is in high demand today — these buildings are essential pieces. They are the right scale to blend with a wide range of existing development (particularly the single family houses), avoiding the giant scale changes that have a negative effect on a neighborhood (such as a giant condo tower next to a single family house). And the Missing Middle housing types would help to shrink the current deficit of affordable units (especially rental units), a phenomenon that is straining communities across the country. These buildings can also be mixed-use, providing some neighborhood-scale commercial development along with the residential units. And most small-scale developers are working in their own communities, so there is an incentive for them to build compatible places. In short, small-scale developers of the Missing Middle can make a positive contribution to our communities.

By starting small, the group might be training the next generation of large-scale developers, too. One needs to start somewhere, and some of those who do well on the small scale might try something larger. Before you know it, we'll have a few more of those "good" developers.

This is a group and an effort that emerged from the larger New Urbanist movement that was born in Seaside. In order to be successful, we need to change some of our zoning laws to allow these building types. Many in the New Urbanism world are working on this, but it

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## Aging Gracefully

*Positive thoughts and spoken words allow victory in training*

By Lori Leath Smith

*The body does not want you to do this. As you run, it tells you to stop but the mind must be strong. You always go too far for your body. You must handle the pain with strategy... It is not age; it is not diet. It is the will to succeed.*

—Jacqueline Gareau (Canadian runner who won the Boston Marathon in 1980)

Visualizing myself running across the finish line victorious has been the mental component — the staying power — of my training these past 10 weeks. Roughly three months ago when I decided to participate in the Seaside Half Marathon, I never dreamed I'd learn so much about training, especially about the mental aspect of running long distance.

At the start of my training, my good friend, Jon, told me, "If you tell yourself now you're going to do it, then you will." At the time, I didn't realize what an impact that phrase would have on my mental attitude these past few weeks. When I embarked on the goal of getting a half marathon under my belt, I had no idea that the mental component could be the most important factor. But I found out.

I researched how I should train, what to eat and drink for optimal health and recovery, and even what kinds of running belts to wear. I just started accumulating the miles. But I discovered this underlying theme: running is 90 percent mental, and the rest is physical. The mental capacity and toughness for believing I can do it is just as important as developing physical strength and stamina. The mental aspect is what got me through, kept me up and allowed me to endure, propelling one foot in front of the other repetitively, even when my body was screaming that it wanted to stop.

I had to keep building myself up positively or I wasn't going to reach my goal that day. I learned that allowing negative thoughts to control my thinking could destroy performance because it says to my body that it's not good enough. I've learned that the body will follow the mind.

When I look back on the past 10 weeks and the days I did my best, my mental disposition (including my emotions and overall beliefs about how I could do), had just as much impact as the physical. You've heard of football teams that won out of sheer determination and will? Well, I found that same type of resolve was necessary for me to keep on keeping on. Once I prepped my mind for the number of miles I needed to achieve that day, that's the amount I could accomplish whether three or 10.

Overall, I tried to energize my mind with positive thoughts throughout the duration and beyond. Before a longer run, I pictured myself accomplishing the goal in my mind before I began. The reality is that some aches and pains could physically manifest and negative

thoughts try to encroach. But, Michelle Cederberg of michellecederberg.com says, "By becoming aware of your thoughts and attempting to manage them, you can directly influence your emotions and actions in a positive way." I kept visualizing myself victorious. I tried to notice what I was thinking and saying to myself. When negative thoughts arose or I began to feel tired, I acknowledged the negative thoughts and the physical feeling, then pushed them backwards, pulling up the positive ones. I saw myself strong and durable, able to regain energy and renewed enthusiasm.

**"Positive self-talk can help you win the race or the day."**

Polly Campbell

Also important is speaking the positive thoughts out loud. In an article in *Psychology Today*, June 14, 2011, "Positive self-talk can help you win the race or the day," Polly Campbell says that by "...paying attention to how we talk to ourselves, we can use language that best supports the action we're after." I saw (and continue to see) myself full of energy, health and vitality and told myself constantly while running, speaking out loud, that I can do this! I am strong, healthy and feeling great. Each time doubts crept into my mind, I repeated those lines over in my head and the positive determination and resolve returned. My body started to believe my mind. I found out through sheer experience that I must talk positively to myself while I'm running, jogging or walking, to keep myself going.

I used phrases that inspired, motivated, or reminded me to focus and keep moving such as, "I got this," "I am successful," "Just keep the pace," which helped me refocus if my mind started to wander. And then, I repeated them to myself when needed. I might say, "I CAN do this!" and then 45 minutes later, needed to repeat it to myself again. This might seem funny, but many times, the movie *Forrest Gump* entered my mind and I would think about "Forrest" when he was running and told myself out loud, "Run, Forrest, Run!" It just made me feel good, motivated me and even helped with a burst of renewed energy.

The following also helped contribute to my positive outlook:

**Set goals and visualize:** I set little goals for myself during long runs such as "only two miles until three to go!" It makes no sense in actuality, but it seemed to help at the time. Sometimes, to regain energy and "trick my mind," through a longer run, I broke it up into smaller amounts and just focused on a goal of "one more mile" and then gave myself permission to stop. But when I reached that goal, I usually

velopers that's trying, despite all the challenges, to build the kind of places that will make a positive contribution to your corner of the human habitat. 🌱

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set another until I had completed the entire distance. I also would break the distance up into three or four parts, especially if it was an area I was used to running, such as Scenic Hwy. 98. I knew that when I reached a certain point, I had accomplished a certain distance and it was true brain booster. I would also say phrases like, "halfway home" once I reached the halfway point and tell myself it was downhill from there.

**Prepare:** Though this is a physical tip, when you feel prepared, you'll also feel ready to move forward with success. Just knowing that I was adhering to healthy eating habits and good training goals helped me feel confident. Then when a little anxiety tries to create doubts in your mind, you can say, "I won't accept that. I am prepared and ready."

**Listen to music and focus:** I strongly believe that music can be essential — a tool that transports you to another place, and keeps you going when you don't feel like it. I listen to positive, uplifting and inspirational songs and focus on the lyrics as much as possible. Focusing on the words helps alleviate boredom and seems to make the time go by faster.

**Enjoy:** I was caught up initially in the stress of completing a half marathon (something I had never done before). However, it should also be a celebration of accomplishment and all the hard work, dedication, and time! And though not every training session is going to feel awesome, and it will be challenging most likely, it's the mental state that's important. When I thought of

it as something fun, I just felt better instead of being filled with dread. I remember one day when my goal was to complete 10 miles, something I had certainly never accomplished. When I hit mile 8, I started smiling. A lot of people walk, bike and run where I usually train, and folks were looking at me funny as I passed by because I had a big smile on my face. Well, I was feeling victorious! But they were probably wondering what was wrong with me! I might not have completed the half marathon at that point, but I had achieved something I'd never done before. Racking up these victories, small and large, helps maintain positivity.

Although I've used training for a half marathon in this article, I believe the mental component and speaking to ourselves positively, out loud, is important for any aspect of our lives, whether it be training for a half marathon, completing a challenging project at work, or raising children, for example. These are tips we can all use in our daily lives and in the quest to "Age Gracefully." 🌱



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remains a challenge.

There will always be some "bad apples" in the development world, of course, but clearly not all developers are bad. So, next time you sharpen up your pitchfork and light your torch to protest a new development, please consider what the developer is trying to do. That developer might be part of this new generation of small-scale de-

## Did you miss an issue?

Catch up on some good beach reads, and learn more about the history, people and merchants of Seaside.



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