

Tucker Village Marketplace – Walkable Urbanism

The 1985 film [Back to the Future](#) reflects both of the two ways the built environment can be developed. Marty McFly (played by Michael J. Fox), the lead character, is a teenager growing up in fictional Hill Valley in 1985. His life revolves around the regional mall and his single-family home in the suburbs.

He lives in a drivable sub-urban place, a well-understood place where people rely on car transportation for nearly all trips from the home (Marty McFly hitches rides behind cars on his skateboard).

Drivable sub-urban is a development pattern that was introduced in the 1950s and became virtually the only kind of development in the U.S. since then.

McFly goes to the 1985 downtown at one point in the movie; it is down on its luck with X-rated movie theaters and boarded up storefronts. That was the condition of most American downtowns in the 1980s; they had been thrown away and most people stayed away.

The movie transports Marty McFly back to 1955 Hill Valley—a very different place. The downtown is the heart of the community; the city plaza with fountains, restaurants, businesses, City Hall, apartments, clothing stores, the high school; virtually everything needed for daily existence is downtown or within walking distance of downtown. The 1955 downtown Hill Valley was a walkable urban place.

Drivable sub-urban and walkable urban places are the only two types of built development available. Drivable sub-urban places are all low density and have a “could be anywhere” character, since they are built according to well-understood national formulas.

Walkable urban places have great variability, starting with the lower-density small downtowns like Hill Valley or East Milton Square, through higher-density places like the traditional downtown of Boston.

Americans are voting with their feet to abandon suburban sprawl, embracing instead a new type of community where they can live, work, shop, and play within easy walking distance. Government policies have tilted the playing field toward one form of development over the last sixty years: the drivable suburb. Rooted in the driving forces of the economy—car manufacturing and the oil industry—this type of growth has fostered the decline of community, contributed to urban decay, increased greenhouse gas emissions, and contributed to the rise in obesity and asthma.

The American Dream is shifting to include cities as well as suburbs. The financial and real estate communities need to respond to build communities that are more environmentally, socially, and financially sustainable.

Compact, walkable communities—the opposite of poorly planned sprawl—are the solution to some of our biggest shared challenges, from childhood obesity to social isolation, from crash

deaths and disappearing farmland. They're even one of our most powerful weapons against climate change.

But the main reason to love walkable neighborhoods is their human energy: they're fun, lively, memorable... not boring. They're the kinds of places where you might bump into a friendly neighbor.

The proposed 'Tucker Village Marketplace' will add tremendous value to west Milton in creating a walkable community with amenities for its residents. The bonus here is that we'll also retain what currently exists: the Temple Shalom and the Campbell Pre-School.