

people and automobiles, a solution that favors the automobile usually wins approval. These circumstances have prevailed in the United States since 1940. Until recently even suggesting an alternative approach often brought a negative response. Thus the family's car has been accommodated at the expense of the family's environment.

The postwar suburban growth of the fifties and sixties began in the 1970s to give way to the sprawl of the 1- and 2-acre "estates." These trends reflected the growing and strong economy and an employee-friendly leisure-work lifestyle and high standard of living that were unprecedented. The environmental costs of the industrial revolution were only beginning to be recognized in the fifties. By 1970, the attention of science was turning toward our natural environment, and much of the news was not good. Today, 30 years later, we understand that we are responsible for the results of our actions, and we are beginning to adapt to the requirements of a sustainable world and economy. We also know now that the optimal solution is not necessarily to stop development but to do a better job of it.

Modern parking requirements, for example, are concerned with calculating the minimum spaces needed. Past design standards called for huge, mostly unused expanses of parking around shopping centers and malls for most of the year. Communities found, however, that although the reserve parking was useful for a few days each year, that low level of demand did not justify maintaining those parking spaces the rest of the year.

Many alternatives exist for better designs, and communities should look for good design solutions confidently. In fact, by accepting the impacts of a poor design, a community is choosing to subsidize the interests of a commercial enterprise at the expense of the community's environment. It should not be unreasonable to ask those who benefit from the development to either reimburse the community for any damage the development causes to the surrounding environment or invest more startup money to prevent the environmental damage in the first place. Pervious paving systems, even reinforced turf paving systems for overflow parking areas, may cost more initially, but the cost will most likely be offset by the enhanced value of the preserved environment in and around the development.

In many places neighborhoods were built with streets so wide that pedestrian traffic is discouraged and may actually be dangerous. In these situations, pedestrians must cross neighborhood streets more than 30 ft wide that were designed to standards for vehicle speeds in excess of 40 or even 50 mi/h, even though posted speeds may be much less. Very few of these standards allowed for any aspect of use and function beyond that of the automobile. But today the practice of street design is moving away from some of these automobile-centered standards toward a more balanced approach.

Street Design

For purposes of this discussion, streets will include local streets only; highways, collectors, and high-volume commercial streets will not be included