

Rural by Design: Planning for Town and Country

By Randall Arendt

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For America's suburbs, small cities, and rural areas, new challenges demand new solutions. Author Randall Arendt meets them in an entirely new edition of Rural by Design.

With 80 percent new material, the second edition of this planning classic shifts the focus to infilling neighborhoods, strengthening town centers, and moving development closer to schools, shops, and jobs. New chapters cover form-based codes, visioning, sustainability, low-impact development, green infrastructure, and more, while 70 case studies show how these ideas play out in the real world. Readers -- rural or not -- will find practical advice about planning for the way we live now.
"It has been a decade since I read the first edition, and I was struck by how useful the information is to rural and urban alike. In many ways the title of the book is a misnomer, because this book is a great tool for new urbanists, small town enthusiasts and those that want to preserve and enhance the open space we all need."
n *Christopher Parker, Assistant City Manager: Director of Planning and Strategic Initiatives, City of Dover, NH*
"The second edition of *Rural by Design* is worth the 20 years necessary for its update. Arendt's latest work is thorough and well researched.. This is a must - have book for every planner's library. The concepts are transferable and clear, and the rationale is directly on point and understandable to all audiences."
Rick Bernhardt, FAICP, Executive Director, Metropolitan Nashville-Davidson County Planning Department
"Randall Arendt has managed to take a great book and make it even better. This newest version has been expanded to make it even richer in content, including nearly doubling the number of case studies and graphics. It has also evolved to remain relevant to current planning philosophies."
Philip Walker, AICP, Principal, The Walker Collaborative, Nashville, TN

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Editorial Review

Review
"Rural by Design is not just for practitioners in small cities and suburbanizing towns. New Urbanists will also profit from an array of strategies and examples for concentrating development and minimizing impacts. Most of all, it provides professors in planning and landscape architecture a text for their most important task: training students to apply ideals and principles in practice." -- Bruce Stephenson, Professor of Environmental Studies, Rollins College, Winter Park, FL

The new second edition of *Rural by Design* is much, much more than an updating of the original, seminal volume. Arendt has expanded the book considerably and covers many recent trends in urban planning and design. While it still emphasizes the rural context, it covers many topics relevant to urban and suburban areas. What makes this new work especially valuable is that it includes thoughtful discussion about the practical challenges facing communities in implementing strategies to become more livable and sustainable. It is easy to read, has many photographs and illustrations, and includes numerous case studies from a wide range of contexts. This is a book that should become a standard reference for every planner (Paul Zykofsky, AICP, Associate Director, Local Government Commission, Sacramento, California)

If you liked the first *Rural by Design* as much as I did, you will like the second edition even more. Randall Arendt has gone well beyond the typical update to this classic planning text book. He has made it highly relevant and useful to practicing planners by a more broadly defined notion of ‘rural’ that will help planners, developers, policy makers, and citizens to improve the quality of our ‘urbanizing’ suburbs, and to make better land-use and development decisions for rapidly growing communities. If you are a planning student, practicing planner, or land-use policymaker, I highly encourage you to consult this volume, as it is a planner’s treasure chest. I find it incredibly inspiring and applicable to contemporary practice. (Fred Merrill, FAICP, Principal, Sasaki Associates, Watertown, Massachusetts)

This updated version of the 20-year-old classic is a how-to guide to creating walkable towns in rural and urbanizing suburban North America, bursting with examples, many not yet built when the original book was written. It also shows how metropolitan residents can have a connection to nature that is so crucial for human settlements no matter the density. We are witnessing the end of sprawl, and this book provides the blueprint for how it is being replaced by environmentally sustainable, socially equitable, and economically successful ways of building the country. (Christopher B. Leinberger, George Washington University School of Business, Professor)

In this update to his classic book, Randall continues to shape rural planning by integrating current discussions of town centers, sustainability, biophilia, and green infrastructure into his timeless advice for maintaining rural character, creating a detailed reference guide that everyone involved in planning the towns and open spaces of the American countryside should have at their side. Though full of case studies and supporting facts, this edition is organized to give quick, easy access to the practical tools needed to create great places. (Daniel K. Slone, Congress for the New Urbanism and the Resilient Design Institute, national land-use and sustainability lawyer)

Rural by Design: Planning for Town and Country (second edition) is a valuable resource for anyone interested in how to promote and protect small-town quality of life through proactive community design strategies. Arendt’s new edition is a comprehensive, extremely readable, and practical resource for staff as

well as local leaders and community partners. His inclusion of critical lessons learned over the past 20 years, illustrated case examples, and new emphasis on greenways as a recurring theme in town planning are especially helpful in education and advocacy work. (Sherry Barrett, Upstate Forever, Sustainable Communities Program Associate)

What a delight to find not just a new edition to a great foundational work but a total modernization and sharing of the most current capture of town form and planning history. Standing on Arendt's shoulders to inform your next work, or to just broaden your knowledge or plan of action in your community, is just one of many benefits to be drawn from this deep well. (Dan Burden, Blue Zones, Director of Innovation and Implementation)

Randall Arendt has done it again! The second edition of *Rural by Design* focuses on newly emerging trends evident in rural Hunterdon County, New Jersey, such as focusing development in town centers, broadening housing choice, and creating greenways. The reemergence of historic town centers, the desire for increased connectivity, and a defined vision for a sustainable future are all highlighted within the pages and photographs of this book. The new *Rural by Design* will, no doubt, become a standard for all planning professionals. (Sue Dziamara, AICP, Director of Planning)

Rural by Design, Second Edition comprehensively links different areas of planning practice in a new and unique way. Most importantly, Randall Arendt connects form-based placemaking, creating vibrant, and walkable human habitats with the preservation and enhancement of natural and cultural landscapes. He also squarely faces the political, economic, and practical obstacles that confront both robust urbanism and effective land preservation. By weaving together diverse strands of planning practice, this magnificently illustrated book shows how to improve our human habitat while preserving the fragile ecological systems on which we all depend. (Joel Russell, Form-Based Codes Institute, Director)

The second edition of *Rural by Design* is worth the 20 years necessary for its update. This book is a tremendous resource explaining the issues associated with successful land conversion and the absolute importance of design as the fundamental component of the preservation of place. Arendt's latest work is thorough and well researched. It provides planners with the critical tools necessary to actually create great places, especially at the rural and suburban end of the transect, by explaining the best of historic town-building principles and updating them with the latest in current practice. This is a must -have book for every planner's library. The concepts are transferable and clear, and the rationale is directly on point and understandable to all audiences. (Rick Bernhardt, Metropolitan Nashville-Davidson County Planning Department, Executive Director, FAICP)

Rural by Design represents a lifetime of experience and wisdom. Randall Arendt is a passionate proponent of the value of good design for planning more humane and healthy communities. His grasp of the history of planning new communities — and his deep personal involvement in making numerous plans across the United States — inform *Rural byDesign*. This expanded edition includes considerable new information, notably concerning sustainability. Arendt's clear and informative writing make *Rural by Design* an invaluable resource for practitioners, educators, and students in planning, landscape architecture, architecture, civil engineering, law, and real estate. (Frederick Steiner, University of Texas at Austin, Dean, School of Architecture)

If you have an interest in planning as a form or a function, this book will be educational, entertaining, and evocative. In this edition, [author Randall] Arendt has successfully pulled together many diverse areas of planning practice and, most importantly, he communicates their value and their impacts in a vibrant and highly readable manner. As I read the text and browsed the clear illustrations, I was struck by how useful the

information is to rural and urban alike. This book is a great tool for new urbanists, small-town enthusiasts, and those who want to preserve and enhance the open space we all need. (Christopher G. Parker, City of Dover, New Hampshire, Assistant City Manager, AICP)

The new edition of *Rural by Design* is part reference manual, part guidebook and part inspiration. It should be on the shelf of every planner, developer, and citizen interested in better land development. This book proves that small towns can grow without losing the attributes that make them unique and valuable. We have choices for how we grow. Randall Arendt's new book tells us what they are and how to achieve them. (Ed McMahon, Senior Resident Fellow, The Urban Land Institute)

From the Author

From the Introduction

When writing the original edition of *Rural by Design* my goal was to create the kind of resource book I wish had been available when I was a graduate student and young planner, forty years ago. The topics it addressed were those I felt would be of the greatest value and interest to people interested in and concerned about land-use planning, including students in degree courses, those teaching them, those working in the profession, and those preparing for professional exams, in addition to the unsung heroes in our communities who donate their time to serve as members of local boards and commissions. All of these people need relevant information, and my goal then, as now, was to create a comprehensive resource filled with useful material and examples they could easily access, understand, and apply in their work.

As the world of planning has evolved over the past two decades, this new edition has been re-tooled and largely rewritten to reflect those changes, providing a greater amount of information on a wider range of topics. For example, it expands coverage of town centers, commercial corridors, housing options, village and hamlet planning, and individual case studies. It also contains entirely new chapters on subjects not addressed in 1994: form-based coding, visioning, sustainability, low-impact development, green infrastructure networks, and transfers of development rights. Additional new topics addressed include complete streets, pocket neighborhoods, official mapping, gateway planning, redeveloping commercial corridors, mitigation banking, vernal pool protection, waterway daylighting, and restoring wetlands, grasslands, woodlands, and floodplains. Seventy new case studies, photos, and drawings have been also added to enrich the learning experience, including ten on greenways and greenway development.

The focus of this edition has changed somewhat to reflect shifting development trends, hence its greater emphasis on infilling neighborhoods, strengthening town centers, and transferring development from outlying areas to locations closer to schools, shops, and jobs. A chapter on blending the new urbanism with greenway planning has been provided to fill a significant hiatus in the literature. However, recognizing the inevitability of further greenfield development in unserviced areas, it provides guidance on a range of techniques to deal with those challenges as well.

New planning approaches and more sophisticated or effective versions of older techniques have substantially improved the results that communities are able to achieve, compared with twenty years ago. As noted in Chapter 19, an estimated 180,000 acres of land have been preserved through conservation subdivision design, one of the techniques advocated in both the earlier and current edition. Sprawl has been curtailed in some jurisdictions through downzoning (noted in Chapter 6) and by innovative TDR programs (Chapter 18). Public resistance to increasing density and mixing uses has generally lessened due to the influence of improved physical design, as detailed in the chapters on form-based coding, town centers, and highway corridors, and in many of the case studies. As a result, the semi-rural parts of most metropolitan regions (the focus of both editions) are in better shape today, although planning is always a "work in progress", and much remains to be done.

Foreword: Broadly Defining "Rural"
When this book was first written twenty years ago its focus was not on truly rural areas where there was typically little growth and change, but rather on the suburbanizing edges of metropolitan regions where farm and forests were being replaced by subdivisions, shopping centers, and office parks.

Its main premise was that elements of rural character could be retained through insightful planning and progressive regulations to create places where the old and new could gracefully co-exist. In this modified landscape, various natural features can be designed around and maintained while inevitable growth is ideally accommodated in more compact building patterns reminiscent of the ways traditional towns evolved prior to World War Two, with walkable neighborhoods and mixed uses, in contrast to the conventional postwar model of suburban sprawl with excessively separated land uses.

Many of these places are no longer rural by most objective measures. Wildlife and livestock no longer outnumber the human inhabitants, and fields and woodlands no longer dominate the landscape. Many of these communities have become increasingly developed, although pockets with rural character - typically family farms and woodlands with wetter soils or steeper slopes - have survived until the present.

In such situations the concept of rurality is partly a state of mind, and partly an attitude that can inform local planning processes to help communities maintain elements of their natural and cultural landscape as they cope with the challenges of dealing with changes caused by growth pressures. In dealing with such challenges, many residents and officials look for ways to combine the best of both worlds, as they try to shape growth so it does not obliterate their natural heritage and replace what is left of their once-rural character with generic suburban sprawl.

This 20th anniversary edition of *Rural by Design* acknowledges the continuing applicability of the original book's core message: that the broad concept of "rural" lies largely in the eyes of the beholders, and that rural elements are not only appropriate, but indeed necessary, for the healthy functioning of the more densely developing communities of the 21st century.

This volume therefore pays special attention to various planning techniques for producing a more livable future, answering fundamental human needs for greenspace and parkland (described by E.O. Wilson as biophilia), while at the same time building more responsibly, efficiently, and sustainably where urban services exist or can be easily extended.

Possibly the most promising avenue for exploration is the basic greenway concept, which can be adapted to areas as different as rural hinterlands and urban cores. Greenways provide connectivity within ecological systems and provide linkages within and among human settlements. The best land-use plans are therefore based on greenways, with communities designed with nature and for people. Greenway planning, in its broadest sense, is therefore a recurring theme of this new edition. As noted in chapter 8, this enlightened approach can be easily integrated into both new urban planning and conservation design.

About the Author
Randall Arendt is a senior advisor at the Natural Lands Trust in Media, Pennsylvania, and the former director of planning and research at the Center for Rural Massachusetts, University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

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George McDaniel:

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