

Reflections from Our Readers

We welcome letters to the editor. Letters may be edited for length and clarity. Please send your thoughts, ideas, and inquiries to publications@lincolnst.edu.

I APPRECIATED your article on green infrastructure financing [“Riches of Resilience,” January 2020]. Notably missing, however, was any mention of natural green infrastructure and financing its conservation. In many urban areas, flood problems are substantially related to the failure to conserve natural wetlands, waterways, and banks. Protecting and enhancing these areas would go a long way toward reducing flood damages. All landforms are not created equal, and the failure of our planning, zoning, and legal systems to safeguard floodways is a continuing problem. Sound land use planning à la Ian McHarg would include protection of these features. I believe it would be worth a follow-up article to investigate good examples of protecting, restoring, and enhancing natural features for flood management. We would all be a lot better off for it.

Barry Pendergrass
Albany, New York

Ed. Note: We agree that conservation is a key piece of the climate resilience puzzle. We hope you'll enjoy this issue's feature on natural stormwater management in Shenzhen, China. We especially appreciate the way author and landscape architect Kongjian Yu describes the importance of conducting urban planning with conservation in mind: “You plan what's not built. You plan what's protected.”

I ENJOYED George McCarthy's October President's Message [“Lessons Never Learned,” October 2019]. It's tragic how much effort and public funding has been spent pursuing what seemed to be a worthy goal: “A decent home and a suitable living environment for all Americans.”

It seems that the broader idea got reduced to the first phrase without the second. And the first phrase—a decent home—cannot exist without the second—a suitable living environment.

So how should we define a suitable living environment? I like the definition of “neighborhood” by Congress for the New Urbanism: “A walkable area of limited size, on a grid of connected smaller streets, with mobility options, containing a variety of housing types, numerous workplaces, adequate shopping, and most or all of the facilities for education, worship, recreation, entertainment, and civic life.”

The goal should be “affordable living,” not affordable housing. How can housing be affordable to the working poor if they must own an automobile to get to a low-wage job? Many and probably most of the 2.5 million Low Income Housing Tax Credit units were built in suburban areas where walking and transit and cycling are simply not an option.

The federal government approach to affordable housing needs to be



completely revamped, to direct public policy and public funding assistance to the private sector building complete neighborhoods as defined above. Affordability comes from the neighborhood structure, not just the home.

Rob Dickson
Albuquerque, New Mexico

CORRECTION: In our feature about the elimination of single-family zoning in Minneapolis [“Rezoning History,” January 2020], we incorrectly identified Mapping Prejudice as a joint project of the University of Minnesota and Augsburg University. The project is housed at the John R. Borchert Map Library at the University of Minnesota. We regret the error and have updated the online version of the article. □