

CNU Lecture Series: Looking Back and Forward

Written by Eric S. Brown

Tuesday, 17 January 2012 13:10

As we have recently closed the book on 2011, it's a great time to celebrate our amazing Lecture series from 2011. Our local Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU) group brought Beaufort a series of world class speakers. We are currently planning 2012 and look forward to our third year of bringing pertinent speakers to Beaufort.

The CNU Beaufort group is part of the larger CNU Carolina's chapter, and our mission with our CNU Lecture Series is to raise the overall level of positive discussion in Beaufort. Our conversations include wide ranging topics, but they always circle back to the mission of making Beaufort grow into a place that is of its own nature, not Myrtle Beach, not Atlanta, not Anywhere, USA. Beaufort is special and our methods, principals and beliefs all help see that it grows but does not lose sight of what is has been.

We were fortunate to open the 2011 series with world famous author and social critic, James Howard Kunstler. Jim has authored many books, including the *Geography of Nowhere* and the *Long Emergency*, both predicting national trends, good and bad, in our society. Jim spoke on the need to believe in our local economy and to rid ourselves of our carbon (oil) addictions.

Mary Newsome had the job of following Jim as our Spring speaker. Mary is a well-known journalist and social critic based out of Charlotte. She spoke about the policies and politics of growth and how to balance that side of the equation with the needs of a community, and how to make community building a political policy unto its self.

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The summer saw us bring in the rock star of biodynamic organic farming, Daron Joffe (or Farmer D). With a packed house, Farmer D talked to Beaufort about the benefits of local organic agriculture, both at a personal level and at the community level. He helped us understand how blessed the Beaufort region is with its rich agricultural and aqua-cultural heritage.

We finished the year with the respected Peter Katz speaking on community growth and tax base. Peter presented the report prepared under him as director of Planning of Sarasota County in Florida; it showed that mixed use areas actually outperform a typical Walmart from a tax basis standpoint. This is something to consider as the Beaufort area continues to grow and our local governments must choose wise paths of fiscal guidance for the community.

2012 will continue the level of excellent, nationally known speakers, starting with Christopher Leinberger this January 26th. Christopher will be speaking on sustainable economics, development and also highlighting his recent book, *The Option of Urbanism*.

We will follow with nationally renowned retail expert Robert Gibbs. Bob is a veteran of the commercial real estate world and works with all the major national retailers, helping them fit into the best New Urbanist and infill projects in the nation. He will be speaking about the current state of retail in both the nation and the Lowcountry, as well as giving an overview of his new book, *The Principals of Urban Retail Planning and Development*.

This summer we will have a speaker (TBA) addressing the topic of healthy communities. The lecture will discuss how the way communities are structured can affect their overall health. The role of multiple use transit options, such as bike ways, and how that helps raise the level of health in a community will also be discussed.

Finishing the year will be the topic of Suburban Sprawl Repair with internationally known planner, Galina Tachieva. She will address the macro level whys and hows of repairing a carbon based community over time, and also highlight her latest book, *The Sprawl Repair Manual*.

With the strength of this 2012 line up, Beaufort has out done most major cities in terms of bringing world class speakers to address timely topics. We are proud to enter into our third year of the Lecture Series and are pleased with the wonderful positive feedback from the broad community.

The Beaufort region has been blessed with many things over its 300 years of existence. Our mission is to insure that the community continues to make holistic long-range choices about how our treasured community should grow for the next 300 years. We would like to thank our CNU Beaufort group for their support of this effort and also our 2011 series Sponsors, CNU Carolina, The City of Beaufort, the South Carolina Coastal Conservation League and Brown Design Studio. Additional support has been generously provided by the Lewis Group, Moser Design Group, Tucker Building Corp., Lowcountry Real Estate, the Beaufort Tribune, Lowcountry Weekly, the Habersham Land Company and Maggies Pub. Our deepest thanks for your leadership in 2011, and we look forward to continuing our role in 2012 with your support.

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