(254 hectares) of working farmland that has been in the ownership of one family since it was granted during the reign of King George III. The land was conveyed by the British admiral and peer, Lord Anson from what was then Anson County, which extended all the way from the Charlotte area to the Mississippi River, about 600 miles to the west, illustrating the vast scale of colonial America. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places this land is destined by family decree to remain undeveloped for generations to come. While this is prime developable land (all good farmland is!) which would allow improved connectivity between Cornelius and Davidson, its presence as a huge 'central park' immediately next to centers of denser development, has great environmental and historic benefit for the community. Accordingly, in our final study, we concentrated future development well away from this land, and around the location of another future commuter train station at the southern edge of this master plan area, two-and-a-half miles south from the location of the Cornelius town center station. Here we created a new employment-led TOD merged with a park-and-ride facility, as the conditions were very similar to the Mooresville/Mount Mourne case study in Chapter 9: good road access to Interstate 77, and large tracts of developable land held by only a handful of property owners. This plan was just recently finished when this book was completed in the early summer of 2003. We await with interest to see if this companion development to the Cornelius town center and the Mount Mourne employment center reaches an equivalent level of fulfillment!

CRITICAL EVALUATION OF CASE STUDY

We have many good things to say about this case study, having been involved in its initial phases and then observing the concepts coming to fruition by virtue of the skills and talents of others. We have one caveat, however. This bold, entrepreneurial vision of a new town center has been implemented in a series of conservative neo-classical buildings. These structures use the past as something to copy as a restrictive model, rather than something to interpret afresh, as a typology. This retreat into imagery from the past to concoct a style for new buildings is a common American problem, and well known in Britain too, where the fine line between a discerning respect for tradition and a cozy nostalgia for an invented past is often blurred. In this instance, as in many others including Huntersville's Birkdale Village, historicist architecture has been the means of gaining popular and economic success. It is a perplexing commentary on our times that if the bold planning and urban design moves in the town center of Cornelius had been rendered in equally bold contemporary architecture (which can be perfectly compatible with New Urbanism) it is most unlikely that elected officials would have backed the project, nor the citizens embraced it. In 2003 in America, we live in a time of very conservative popular taste, and while as artists and architects we long for the opportunity to marry contemporary design with Smart Growth planning, as urban designers, we realize it may take another generation before our society's cultural quest for shallow nostalgia deepens into something more aesthetically profound.

On a much more positive note, it is clear that this case study has achieved the highest level of implementation of any in the book. This is due largely to its lengthy time period, early plans in the form of student projects having been discussed as far back as 1993. It has taken 10 years to reach its current status, still unfinished but moving forward piece by piece. The successful implementation of good design ideas has been driven by the proactive leadership of the town, both elected officials and staff, and their aggressive seeking of public–private partnerships that could combine the energy and efficiencies of the private sector with the long-term vision of the public authority, and using modest public investments to leverage major private money.

Of particular note are the connections made by the town outward from its new central core. Town officials recognized that to be an active center, the old mill site had to become the focus of something larger than itself. Accordingly, through several changes of elected officials, most of whom shared a common vision, town staff made sure the new town center was connected to high-density transit opportunities – and compensatory open space preservation – along the rail line they shared with their neighboring towns. This perspective is an exemplar for us all, and reinforces our fundamental belief in the connectedness of scales in Smart Growth and New Urbanism. Even when we work at the scale of the block, we are always thinking beyond the site boundaries and grappling with the larger context. One block relates to the blocks around it, then to the whole neighborhood, and then to the whole town, and in this instance to a collaborative regional vision with adjacent municipalities. The block is the crucible of the region as much as the region is the incubator of the block.

Afterword

This book has attempted to weave together several strands of urban thought into one coherent narrative around a central premise: the best way to plan communities is to design them in detail. We chose to illustrate this theme with an insider's view of the design and planning process, believing that laying bare the successes and disappointments of our own work could accomplish five things. First, for those who find urban design a fuzzy concept, using case studies of typical projects could demystify the concepts and techniques of the discipline, rendering it more accessible to non-designers. Second, the detailed description of real-life examples could reveal the potential that Smart Growth and New Urbanist strategies have for communities large and small in their struggle for more sustainable ways of living and building.

Third, we hope that our case studies will illuminate the similarities in technique and the differences in political context between British and American practice. Fourth, by displaying our concepts, theories, and results on site, the work can function as an open book for students in both countries, demonstrating how professionals work in practice, and how ideas taught in studios and lecture halls by architecture professors can be directly relevant to critical practice. And fifth, it could support others like ourselves who work hard to save America from itself. We are not alone.

One of the first things architects learn as professionals is something they are rarely taught at in school, except perhaps as a lecture in Professional Practice: their work as architects and urban designers is founded on collaboration and compromise. Furthermore, compromise need not be the dirty word that besmirches architectural genius. Clients, contractors, surveyors, engineers and planners all play valid and important roles in creating buildings, and what is true for architecture is magnified in the wider worlds of urban design and town planning. The charrette is justly touted as a great method of getting community input and buy-in to complex planning issues, but that forum is equally useful in contextualizing the designer's skill, casting him or her in a role that goes beyond that of an independent professional. The urban designer is part of a creative team that includes representatives of many other disciplines as partners, along with non-professionals and citizens.

When minds are open, charrettes can be great learning vehicles for designers as well as the general public. Throughout the book we've emphasized the use of traditional urban forms and typology as a means of bridging past, present and future, and of using history and theory to enrich our designs amidst the development realities in American towns and cities. Being alert to the power of traditional sources does not imply that architectural design can't or shouldn't evolve. Within the urban frame of people-centered public space, architecture can experiment, evolve and adapt. Similarly, using typologies doesn't imply our designs are fixed; we do not necessarily know the solution before we begin.

Typologies are starting points for designers, generic foundation stones of structures that take particular shape according to local circumstances. This local understanding comes only by listening and involving local people as partners in the enterprise of shaping their community. One reason why the Mooresville and Greenville charrettes were successful was because local participation was excellent. The design team learned a great deal from people in the area, and the master plans were greatly improved by the process.

Through our case studies, we have deliberately illustrated a real-life mixture of success and disappointment. We don't say 'failure' because none of the projects 'failed'. Even the Raleigh example, where our contract did not include any provisions for implementation, leaving the master plan alone and vulnerable to the vagaries of future decisions, did not 'fail', although it did certainly not succeed as much as we would have liked. We take some heart that in knowing that planners in Raleigh, as in many cities across the USA, are working hard to improve the planning system, and our plan might have made the task of our Carolina colleagues a little easier. Our plan also helped support the efforts of the Triangle Transit Authority to bring commuter train service to the region, and, especially we think, helped the community to appreciate the economic and social