The Mixopoly Workshop Method

Developed by:
Thomas E. Low
AIA CNU LEED AICP ASLA
Chair, The Civic By Design Center
119 Huntley Place
Charlotte | North Carolina | 28207

Background:

In a Mixopoly workshop we form small groups to develop templates for neighborhoods of multi-price point housing in a mixed use environment. We are identifying several locations in different parts of the region and are inviting neighborhood leaders, housing advocates and others to identify potential mixed-income housing sites in their community. These can be an infill site, a few blocks or a broader neighborhoods. This is the beginning of the process of developing communities for people with different backgrounds across Charlotte-Mecklenburg. Our first Mixopoly Workshop was held Thursday, November 10, 2011 from 9:00am — 3:00pm at the Charlotte Museum of History.

What happens in a Mixopoly workshop:

- about 50-75 participants typically attend
- includes elected officials, neighborhood leaders, housing advocates and others
- work for 6 hours on ideas for mixed-income communities
- use the Mixopoly Interactive Community Design Tool
- form small groups and using
  Mixopoly block templates create neighborhoods of multi-price point housing in walkable, compact, connected, mixed-income, mixed use, and sustainable neighborhoods
- the people attending pick specific locations to study in round-table groups.
- the groups picking these locations are people that live, work, and socialize there and have a connection to it and/or the location means something personally to them
- the teams use the Mixopoly block templates to create site design solutions for re-developing these communities for people with different backgrounds
- teams present their ideas

The November 10 workshop included the following site selections:

- The Shamrock Drive corridor area
- The Eastland Mall / Wilora Lakes areas
- The Rea Road and Colony Road Intersection including the McAlpine Creek area
- The Sharon Amity corridor between Addison and Castle area

As one organizer and active participate in the event described the outcome of the event this way "This was an excellent learning event... an excellent (Magnifico!)presentation and preparation...and facilitation, it was great (bellissimo!)! ...it would be nice to use something like that for a meeting with public officials...Great job and thank you...and I am sure I speak for all the MIHC as well as those in attendance... Your efforts made a big difference."

Here are some images from the November 10 event with captions describing the specific process:

Participants gather around tables in the main conference room of the Charlotte History Museum. Mary Newsom, Associate Director of the UNCC Urban Institute and Tom Low, Chair, the Civic By Design Center kick off the forum with presentations on why Community Matters and why Physical Form Matters. People then break into round table teams to create their own neighborhood designs using the Mixopoly templates. Each team calibrates their Mixopoly block templates for the desired mix of affordable, medium, and high income housing and mixed-use.

Using Mixopoly block templates, each team collaborates to create a walkable, compact, connect, mixed-income, mixed-use neighborhood — every neighborhood design is unique and personal — like snowflakes. Included here are Sara Shaw, Hickory Grove and Shannon Park Neighborhood Association; and Eugene Bradley, planner with the City Neighborhood and Business Services.

Participants listen to a presentation by the Shamrock Drive Development Association team on their idea of a Mixopoly community. Included in the picture are Aldersgate Board Past Chair BIll Jeffries and newly elected City Council members LaWana Mayfield, and John Autry.

A team presents their ideas to the entire group. The design layout includes a transit loop, a greenway, and a cultural crossroads linking different parts of the neighborhood. Included in the group are Jeanie Welch, East Side Neighborhood activist, Terry Robertson, Co-chair E.A.S.T., Angie Ford, advocate for the homeless, Gene Buccelli, MIHC, Steve Lineberger, architect, and Peg Chapin, League of Women Voters.

Each team comes up with very interesting and special neighborhood patterns and features. This group includes Ross Vogel presenting, Bert Green, Director of Habitat for Humanity, Tom E. Bowers, MIHC, and Linda Levy, League of Women Voters.

Each team creates a unique and personal design. Eric Orozco, planner presents a Mixopoly neighborhood design anchored by a lake. Included here are Billy Maddelon of Van Landingham Estate and E.A.S.T., and newly elected City Council members Claire Fallon and LaWana Mayfield.

Once each team completes there neighborhood design they then move to the Community Buffet and select their preferred community type and home location, i.e., Urban Core, City Neighborhood, Small Town, Rural Village, and Agrarian Hamlet. Included in this picture are Louise Woods, former school board member, MIHC board, and Co-chair E.A.S.T.: Shannon Weekley, recent graduate UNCC Architecture: and Dean Brodhag, retired Wells Fargo.

Participants arrange their Mixopoly block templates on the Community Buffet regional map. Included in this picture is newly elected City Council member John Autry and Brenda Hayden, Area Director of Builders of Hope.

They next phase includes new teams re-assembling to look at site specific locations in the Charlotte region. Brenda Hayden, Area Director, Builders of Hope is shown here describing her team's vision for the area around the intersection of Colony and Rea Roads. Looking at the base land use map it was obvious the area is exclusively high-end housing and has auto-centric commercial shopping centers. Missing is infrastructure and development that is more walkable, compact, and connected providing a broader range of housing choice and access to daily needs. Proposals for a more connected network of thoroughfares including additional walkways, bikeways, and trails; establishing a public square anchored by the church; more direct access points to the greenway along McAlpine Creek; traffic calming along the main thoroughfares including islands and crosswalks; and infilling/lining the surface parking lots with additional active uses. Also included here are Dean Brodhag, Wells Fargo retiree and community activist: Sarah Shaw, Shannon Park Neighborhood Association; Mary Newsom; Tom E. Bowers, MIHC Executive Committee; Peg Chapin, Advocacy Chair League of Women Voters; and Roger Coates.

Louise Woods, Shannon Weekley, recent UNCC architecture graduate, and Ecem Ecevit-Pogge, architectural designer describe this team's void analysis observation for the greater area around Eastland Mall. Looking at the color-coded base land use maps it was obvious there is too much affordable single-family housing (shown in yellow), too many pods of suburban apartment complexes (orange), and the only commercial (purple) is auto-centric. What is lacking includes:

• a great school to anchor the community,
• amenities to attract higher incomes,
• open space in the form of a central park,
• smaller neighborhood parks and playgrounds,
• a system of greenways connected to the Carolina Thread Trail,
• cultural destinations such as an outdoor plaza on the model of Rockefeller Center including an outdoor skating rink, and
• recovering the former Wilora Lake proposed to be uncovered, with activities

planned around it.
Other issues pointed out by team members include a lack connectivity throughout the surrounding sub-divisions, and a desire for a much broader range of housing choice including high-end mansions, houses with front porches, cottages for young people and active adults, townhouses, live-works, and urban condominiums.

One giant super-block is transformed into over two dozen Mixopoly blocks with a large greenway as the organizing spine. Designers Shannon Weekley and Ecem Ecevit-Pogge present their team's ideas for re-planning and connecting Eastland Mall and the Wilora Lakes neighborhood. The resulting design include a new pattern of connected streets and blocks that feather up in mixed-income density as they extend into the Eastland Mall site re-planned as a town center.

Frank Quattrocchi local businessman and Shamrock Drive Development Association President presents their team's vision for re-planning the frontage along Shamrock Drive. Participants looking on include Mary Klenz, Chair of the MIHC and National Board for the League of Women Voters, Gene Buccelli with MIHC, Jeanie Welch, and Sara Shaw. Looking at the color-coded base land use maps, it was obvious there is an over abundance of suburban single family housing compared to other potential housing choices. And multifamily housing exist as isolated apartment complexes. Large institutional uses including Aldersgate and the Charlotte History Museum are isolated from the surrounding community. The area clearly lacks a town center destination. The proposed site layout uses Mixopoly blocks templates to demonstrate how to incrementally feather-in a range of different compatible densities of mixed-income housing and mixed-use blocks. This ultimately replaces a traffic conduit with a place-based destination creating a Shamrock town center.

Dean Brodhag presents this team's ideas for the Sharon Amity corridor between Addison and Castle Drive. Looking at the color-coded base land use maps it was obvious there is a predominance of high-end single family housing, the only multi-family housing is in an isolated apartment complex pod, and there is a complete lack of mixed-use. Open space is also disconnected or inaccessible except through private back yards. The team ideas include using the Mixopoly block template site design details for taking vacant lots and creating in their place a small town center with more housing choices and shops for daily needs with connections to the surrounding neighborhoods and the greenway. This is an another excellent example of citizens proactively taking a stronger site design focus on retrofitting suburban nodes to become new town centers with infrastructure that is more walkable compact, and connected providing a broader range of housing choice and access to daily needs.

The Mixopoly workshops enhance citizen's design skills for advancing their community needs in physical form.

Thomas E. Low
AIA CNU LEED AICP ASLA
Chair
The Civic By Design Center
119 Huntley Place
Charlotte | North Carolina | 28207
T: 704 948-8141 | C: 704 996-0349
info@civicbydesign.com
www.civicbydesign.com
Civic By Design on Facebook
Civic By Design on Twitter

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