Jason Epstein's Introduction to the 50th Anniversary edition of Jane Jacobs' *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* makes this powerful intellectual connection:

> *Death and Life* … [is] about the dynamics of civilization, how vital economies and their societies are formed, elaborated, and sustained, and the forces that thwart and ruin them…Her sympathies are with the slow accretion of custom and skills, of social norms and ingenious solutions to practical problems…
>
> To use a much abused term, Jane was a conservative, indeed a radical conservative, mistrustful of abstraction, suspicious of large ideas and concentrations of political and economic power: a genius of common sense, as far from an ideologue as it is possible to be. Toward the end of her life Jane was fascinated by urban traffic tangles as evidence of bureaucratic idiocy resulting in perverse, even deadly, outcomes: the man-made difficulty of getting safely where one wanted to go when one wanted to go there. Jane herself used a bicycle. She thought of these tangles as fractal versions of Soviet five-year plans. But she preferred to expose such faults in her own country than indulge in anti-Soviet bombast. I never asked Jane if she admired Edmund Burke but I believe that Burke, were he alive, would admire her. Predictably Jane's book was praised by the libertarian right and denounced by the social engineers of the left. Jane took little note of either group.

I've never heard Jacobs compared to Burke, but Epstein's argument makes sense. And it points to an opportunity for constructive conservative environmental thought — an opportunity that the American Right has decided to abandon in deference to plutocratic thinking.

## Edmund Burke: An Old New Urbanist

Jacobs' work can be seen as the urtext of New Urbanist land use planning.  Her emphasis on the functions of streets, on mixed uses, on building communities for people, on walkability, etc. essentially was taken up by organizations such as the

Congress for the New Urbanism.

These themes dovetail with much conservative thinking about land use. CNU filed an amicus brief on behalf of Susette Kelo. If you are looking for the most overregulated sector of the American economy, local land use is pretty much the winner hands down.

So you would think that conservatives would embrace new urbanism. Not so; at least not on the state and federal levels. Although some libertarians such as Jeff Riggenbach, and people at the Mises Institute and the Reason Foundation honor Jacobs herself, when conservatives and Republicans see attempts at actually implementing the new urbanism, they reject it. At the federal level, EPA has been a leader in showing how new urbanist planning can reduce environmental impacts, but that has not stopped conservatives from relentlessly attempting to zero out the agency. And when California enacted SB 375, perhaps the best example of attempting to enable new urbanism, conservatives hysterically attacked it as Soviet-style planning.

It's not quite clear why the American Right would hate something in keeping with what its theoretical ideals are. As Jonathan Levine has powerfully demonstrated, new urbanism (and its close colleague, smart growth) are *de*regulatory strategies. The cynic in me suspects that while conservatives and Republicans *say* that they believe in the free market, their prime social policy goal is economic inequality, which they believe to be the natural state of things. Anything that could lead to more affordable housing or mixed-income neighborhoods is therefore suspect. Perhaps a weaker form of the theory is just about signalling: if you are convinced that your political adversaries are secular socialists equivalent to Nazis or Stalinists (while somehow simultaneously being Muslim radicals), then anything they want is necessarily bad no matter *what* they are saying.

In any event, if we are serious about real conservatism, then it is those who support new urbanism and smart growth who qualify. Shortly before *Death and Life* was published, Russell Kirk, who had an environmentalist streak, insisted that "Edmund Burke was a liberal because he was a conservative." Kirk was more correct than he knew.