



Christopher Leinberger

Land-use strategist, professor, researcher, developer and author Christopher Leinberger is a visiting fellow at The Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C., where he concentrates his work and expertise on downtown and suburban town center de-

Business Journal: What challenges does Seattle face going forward?

Leinberger: Transit, NIMBYism (the infamous "not in my backyard" syndrome), affordable housing and homelessness. Regarding transit, Seattle could learn some lessons from the great strides Denver is taking regarding transit investment — invested 80 percent locally — and transit-oriented development. Transportation drives development, and that transportation option should be switching the majority of investment to transit for too many reasons to note here.

All cities need to increase densities to create walkable urbanity in many places, decrease reliance on cars and fossil fuels, and to get exercise. There is a moral imperative to increase densities to slow down climate change, and there will be no answer to climate change without getting people walking. NIMBYism (Not In My Back Yard) needs to be overcome to allow for this increased density, which will change the character of neighborhoods, especially the conversion of obsolete strip commercial to mixed-use places.

The pent-up demand for walkable urbanity has driven up prices ... there is not enough supply. Aggressive affordable housing programs, including inclusionary zoning, must be in place throughout the region. Homelessness needs to be addressed in a comprehensive way of making the homeless "homeful," not via Band-Aids (such as feeding lunch during the work week). That does little in the end.

Business Journal: What do you see Seattle doing right, or wrong, to remain strong economically?

Leinberger: Your export industries are very strong. Grow them. They are the reason you exist as a metro area. Don't fall for the "grass is greener" syndrome. Focus on quality of life issues, such as investment in transit and encouraging more special places that have walkable urbanity, public education, and the ultimate quality of life issue. Do not invest in buying firms to come to Seattle — make yourselves such an attractive place from a quality of life perspective that firms are naturally attracted to expand or move there.

Business Journal: What responsibilities does the downtown Seattle business community hold in current and future development? How about the residential or government community?

Leinberger: Downtown Seattle's business and residential communities need to recognize that they are the strategic planners and managers of the place. It is not the city or the state, it is the private sector. I like to see private/public partnerships (not the opposite) in the management of downtown, which means the private sector taking the lead.

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velopment. He is director of the Graduate Real Estate Development Program at the University of Michigan, as well as a founding partner of the Arcadia Land Co., where he heads New Mexico operations. Leinberger will be keynote speaker at the Downtown Seattle Association's annual luncheon event on June 16.

The *Puget Sound Business Journal* asked Leinberger some questions about his take on Downtown Seattle's present and its future.

By ERIKA VANWICK
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Business Journal: Your topic for the key speech of the DSA Champion awards luncheon is "As regional competition grows, how can downtown Seattle stay on top?" What put it there in the first place?

Leinberger: The general market demand for what I refer to as "walkable urbanity" or mixed-use (neighborhoods) that satisfy most of everyday needs within walking distance of one's home. Walking distance is

1,500 feet. Downtown Seattle and the surrounding neighborhoods had the infrastructure to satisfy this market demand in the 1990s so it jumped ahead.

Business Journal: In your opinion, how does Seattle as a business community stack up to other metro areas in the country?

Leinberger: It is near the top in my book. It is a very engaged business community that is committed to the city and to its downtown core.

That is why downtown Seattle never drifted down like many other downtowns in this country during the adversity of the 1970s and 1980s. You also rebounded earlier.

The character of your export industries is also more cosmopolitan. Aerospace, software, the port, tourism, and coffee retailing are all international businesses, and business leaders and their customers are more interested in walkable, special places ... unlike, say, Detroit, which has a car-oriented export sector that has been antithetical to walkable urbanity ... until very recently.