

# WASHINGTON BUSINESS JOURNAL

## GREEN LINE = NEW RED LINE?

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Christopher Leinberger, a Brookings Institution expert on walkable urbanism, gave a pep talk last week to business owners and supporters of the Capitol Riverfront, or "The Front," as they now like the neighborhood to be called.

Leinberger gave a PowerPoint presentation on this walkable urbanism concept ([accessible here](#)).

Admittedly, I missed the [Dec. 17 annual meeting](#) where Leinberger spoke, but the slides make some interesting points. For instance, did you know that only 14 percent of new households over the next 20 years will have children? This certainly makes Mattel sound like a [bubble stock](#).

So we say, "Bring on the red light districts!"

(Wait. That's what The Front used to be, back before the [strip clubs were razed](#) to make room for baseball and government contractors.)

With the changing demographics, Leinberger projects that there will be more "boredom" with driveable suburbanism, as frustrated (and presumably childless) yuppies decide that "more is less."

Thirty years ago, he says, driveable suburbanism was all the rage. Today, the tables have turned and walkability is strongly associated with higher housing values in nearly all major U.S. metropolitan areas, notwithstanding the failing schools.

Still, in virtually every American mega-city, development tends to cluster into "favored quarters" — and one doesn't need to be a real estate agent to see which quarter that is in the District of Columbia.

Our best shot at tugging on the edges of that quarter, Leinberger says, is for neighborhoods and business improvement districts along the Green Line to band together to tout the economic power waiting to be unleashed along that corridor.

Leinberger's presentation also has some nice before and after shots of the Washington region, highlighting the progress we've made by building up and around Metro stations. He also includes some jaw-dropping shots of Chicago's Loop and downtown Portland, Ore., both of which serve as powerful reminders that we have a long way to go before the Washington region really lives up to its aesthetic potential.