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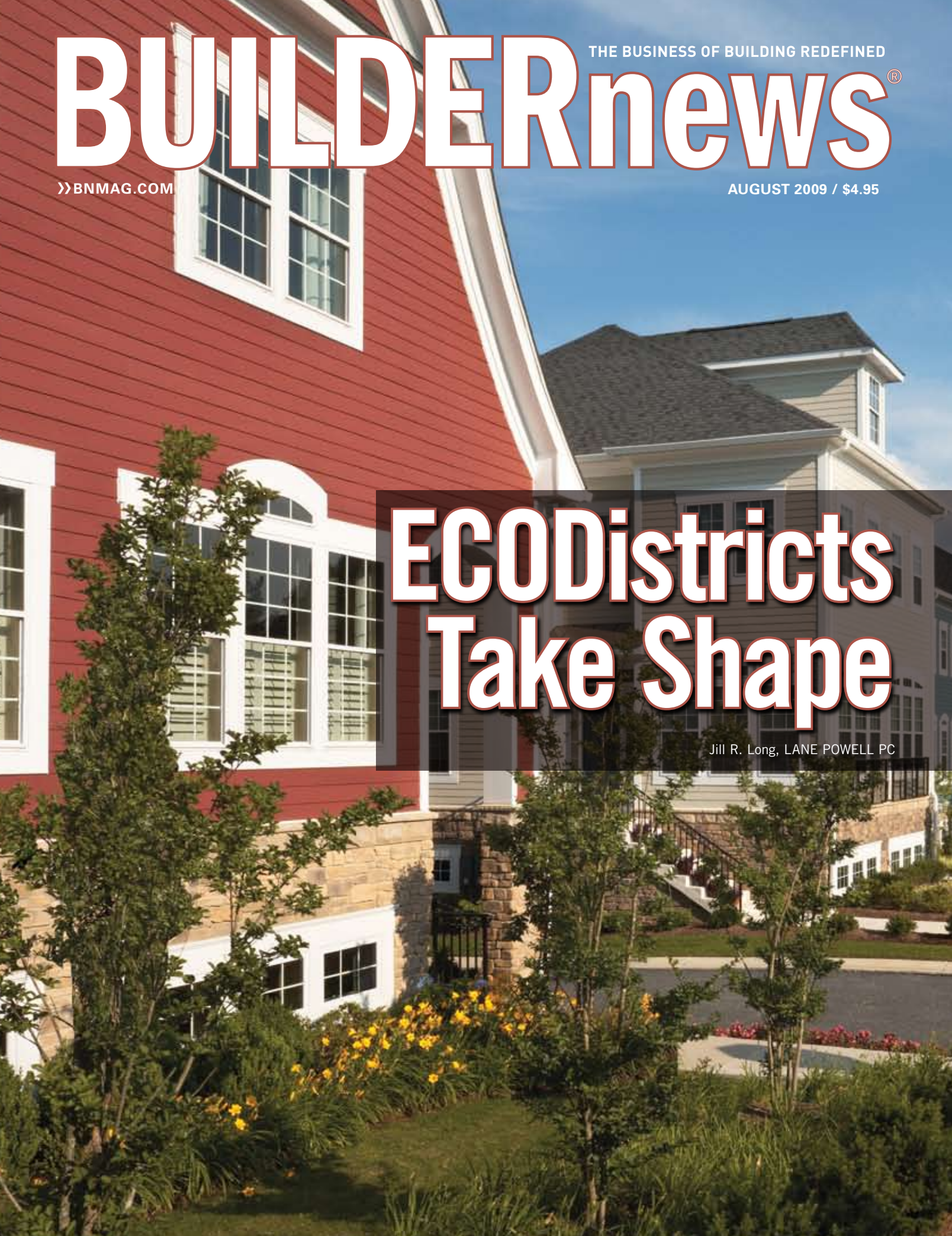
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ECODistricts Take Shape

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ECODistricts take shape

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The newest planning tool being talked about in the world of sustainability is the ECODistrict. It's a unique Green building concept that takes the most successful elements of sustainable practices in the environmental, social and economic fields and combines them into a single neighborhood to achieve a new level of sustainability.

Although ECODistricts have been discussed throughout the world, from the North America to the U.K., very few jurisdictions have spent much time working through the details of what exactly will make a successful ECODistrict. Furthest along this journey is a unique public-private partnership in Portland, Ore. The City of Portland, already known for its sustainable practices, has partnered with the Portland + Oregon Sustainability Institute ("P+OSI") to create the first ECODistrict and

blueprint for the first ECODistrict by the end of this year.

While the concept of providing building guidelines and community-shaping benefits through planning tools isn't new, an ECODistrict goes a step further by combining these elements of environmentally and socially responsible development into a concentrated area that creates a more tangible impact on the triple bottom line.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The environmental piece of the triple bottom line will provide for the greatest efficiencies in Green building and development practices. For example, the ideal ECODistrict will be able to independently produce energy, collect water and process waste. Another example of the innovative opportunities unique to an ECODistrict is that of district energy.

District energy provides heating and cooling systems to a large district of users, rather than to a single building.

The cost and environmental impact of district energy is significantly lower

than its traditional counterpart. Successful district energy plants can produce enough power for an entire neighborhood filled with mixed-use activity and send excess power back to the grid. Furthermore, many states have adopted statewide goals for reducing pollutants such as greenhouse gas emissions. Planning tools such as ECODistricts can help achieve that type of statewide goal by incentivizing developers with amenities such as bonus height, increased density and public financing to make investments in Green infrastructure (such as district energy).

SOCIAL IMPACT

The triple bottom line will provide accountability for providing community benefits such as parks, open spaces and community centers. A commitment to finding the right combination of community benefits in any given ECODistrict is an integral component to the ECODistrict model. Additionally, the ECODistrict framework contributes to the social good by creating an example of superior planning and a regulatory framework that other developers may follow in the future. The benefit of a single ECODistrict will be substantial, but the ability to create a series of ECODistricts throughout an entire region will fundamentally improve our community.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

Thoughtful urban developments can drive economic growth. Well-planned neighborhoods with appropriate amenities and LEED-certified buildings have been shown to claim higher absorption rates, rent and occupancies. By increasing transportation services and amenities, property values increase. These, and a variety of other factors, can combine to create economic growth for both the district itself and the greater region. The regulatory framework for an ECODistrict can provide a flexible analytical tool that supports economic growth on a project-by-project basis.

Exactly how the first ECODistrict will take shape is unknown, but it is clear that the ECODistrict concept has significant support and the ability to change how Green planning achieves its goals. Stay tuned to follow how this exciting new planning tool may change the physical landscape of our neighborhoods. <#>

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corresponding regulatory framework. In turn, P+OSI has partnered with private and public stakeholders who will collaboratively decide on the fundamentals of an ECODistrict. The group has published a concept paper that sets forth the ECODistrict idea and establishes an aggressive timeline. It also calls for "triple bottom line" accountability in these new eco-friendly neighborhoods. The triple bottom line won't just preserve and care for the physical environment, but also secure the social and economic well-being of its residents. With these essential components in place, Portland should well be on its way to having a detailed



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EcoDistrict

LEED- ND (Neighborhood Development) Neighborhood Pattern & Design



View from Poplar Street looking at Phase 1



View from 5th Avenue "Festival Street"



Public Spaces

Friendly Streets

Public Transit

Open Community **C** **Z** **D**

All streets open to the public.

Compact Development **C** **Z** **D**

Clusters of density allow for shared open space & amenities and use land more efficiently.

Diversity of Uses **Z** **D**

Mixed residential and commercial functions put people within walking distance of shops and basic services.

Diversity of Housing Types **C** **Z** **D**

Townhouses, single family homes, live-work studios, condos, and apartments serve a range of family sizes, ages, and incomes.

Affordable Housing **C** **Z** **D**

10% of units to be affordable to those within 80 - 120% of area median income.

Reduced Parking Footprint **C** **Z** **D**

Off street parking to side or rear of buildings, lot sizes limited.

Walkable streets **C** **Z** **D**

Entryways, sidewalks, setbacks, storefronts, and street trees all promote a pedestrian-friendly experience.

Street Network **C** **Z** **D**

No cul-de-sacs; pedestrian paths extend through-connections.

Access to Public Spaces **C** **D**

All buildings are within 1/6 mile walk from a park or green space, more than 50% of units are within 1/4 mile of bike path.

Community Outreach and Involvement

Neighborhood and official input during design phases helps shape plan.

Tree Lined / Shaded Streets **C** **Z** **D**

70% of new/existing streets and 40% of shade on sidewalks from building /trees

- C** Review / Confirmation by City
- Z** Zoning Requirement
- D** Design Requirement / Design Guidelines

Pervious paving

Rain water / snow melt harvesting

Public plaza

Street trees provide shading reducing heat island effect



Compact Development

90% of buildings within 1/4 mile of basic shops & services. Denser development helps support the demand for local shops, public transit.