

**Statement of Congressman Earl Blumenauer
International Public Markets Conference
Closing Plenary Speech
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Thank you very much for the generous introduction and for the work that you are doing here. I think it is safe to say that you can't have a livable community without these fundamental building blocks that are human scale and bring people together.

The public market harkens back to an earlier era in this country where we naturally constructed our cities and towns to be livable. It was something that we did not have to sell to people, they understood the elements: a vibrant, diverse, welcoming community, a community that has a wide range of choices for people in terms of employment, transportation, and housing that's accessible and affordable for people all across the spectrum - a safe place to live. Part of that is simply having that sort of interaction, that dynamic, that human scale - something that was sustainable. Earlier in our history we did a much better job of understanding what practices and activities were sustainable over time and, frankly, our thrifty forefathers and foremothers understood how to make some of these simple, commonsense investments that stretched the dollar. We are having a lot of fun these days in our efforts to promote livable communities going back to some of the very simple elements that made a bigger difference a century ago.

The reference to the bicycle - a very simple and commonsense way to produce a livable community. It is the most efficient mode of urban transportation ever devised, an opportunity for children to actually be able to get to school on their own rather than having to be carried, and when kids are motoring on their own you have less of a problem with morbidly obese 5th graders. It is starting to make sense to people again and I'm pleased that the most recent transportation bill provides hundreds of millions of dollars for bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

The notion of streetcars - Some of you may know that in Portland we are working to reintroduce the historic streetcar into our neighborhoods. We like to claim that we developed the first modern streetcar in the last 55 years that goes through the hearts of some of our redeveloped areas in Portland, Oregon. Now we have neighborhoods that are fighting over where it will be extended. It is human scale: people actually know where they are when they are on it. It is in the right-of-way, so you are not spending huge amounts of money and it takes about three weeks per block phase to construct it. Now we have 82 cities around the country that are looking at the potential of reintroducing streetcar to their communities, we have a little streetcar coalition that's been founded, we are doing a little political work on it, and we were able to achieve some Small Starts legislation in the transportation bill.

I mention it because it is part and parcel to the phenomenon you are involved with, where people are going back to the future for things that make sense, that were human scale, that were in fact, part of the community structure that was the center of most of the mature cities in this country. I think the approach that we've been taking with the

streetcar is something that you might emulate in terms of a true public markets movement here in our nation's capital.

The public market is going to be key to whether or not we can give people the array of human scale, cost-effective, simple developments that will in fact bring people together. When we go to these communities around the world--I appreciate the laundry list you gave a few moments ago--one of the first places that sophisticated travelers go (and even people who are not very sophisticated but read the guide books or talk to people), is to the markets. Some of my best memories are in Istanbul looking at the Grand Bazaar, the Night Market in Chiang Mai. I visited a public market in the Cotswold a few years ago that I recognized as the scene where they filmed the *Canterbury Tales*—this market could have been dated back 700 years ago and it was still in use.

Portland, Maine has a market I have really enjoyed. With only a few benefactors (well seven million shekels I guess, it is all relative) it has provided a terrific viewpoint for local products, restaurants, and small-business. Seattle's Pike Street Market and even our own Eastern Market are two other fantastic examples.

It's not a very difficult sell to acquaint people with the benefits - being part of a neighborhood and city vitality. They are fun, they are exciting, they add a dimension of street life, and they are a public safety device. In many cases, we have opportunities for redevelopment of markets in areas that aren't particularly safe these days because nobody goes there. As soon as you put people on the street they get safer overnight; it is the Times Square phenomenon. People are concerned about New York and the big city, but where are you safer than in Times Square on New Year's Eve with a gazillion people standing around? You can do that with the public market.

You have an opportunity to provide a catalyst for small enterprise. This is the buzzword these days - everybody believes in small-business (they say). Well, what can you do in communities that really has more of an impact on jumpstarting a number of small locally owned enterprises than providing the opportunity to be located in a public market? Add to this the local production, this notion of being sustainable, having a local imprint. The public markets do this with a vengeance. I was told that the Chinese are investing a billion dollars in public markets. I don't know if we will be as advanced as the Chinese any time soon (after all they are proposing to increase fuel efficiency with their vehicles), but the fact is that we need your help, your creativity, and your support as we start exploring avenues of federal support for public markets.

Again, the Small Starts program in the transportation bill provides an excellent example. Let us work with you to identify what is the most efficient location in the federal government to have a startup small scale program that allows people to receive federal support. Think about it- - an ideal program, what would it look like? What do you want? How would you design it? I know that it sounds a little bit far-fetched, but this is Washington, DC and sometimes far-fetched things happen.

For two and a half years I worked on legislation to beef up our laws governing transit security. I had been concerned for years that almost half of the terrorist incidents worldwide involved transit systems. We introduced legislation, worked with a variety of interest groups, and couldn't get a hearing. September 12, 2001 people started to get interested in the bill. In a matter of weeks we not only had a hearing, but people had taken this little model piece of legislation that we had introduced, picked it up, and dropped it into the Patriot Act. I personally thought the Patriot Act was an egregious piece of legislation and ended up voting against it, but there in the bill were these provisions that we had been working on to help transit agencies deal with security and it was simply because we'd done the homework, beaten the drum, drafted it, and worked with a wide variety people so that it was ready when the change came. I don't know exactly when the change is going to come for you, but I think perhaps sooner rather than later as a result of your work here this week and the work you are doing at home and abroad.

But the fact is that change will come and it will happen sooner if we lay the foundation where we can drop something in an appropriate legislative vehicle and be ready to move. There are a lot of areas that you ought to scout. Willie Sutton, was famously quoted explaining why he robbed banks: "Because that's where the money is." Well, let's think about where the money is.

Next year we will be spending a million dollars a minute on the Department of Defense. Well, what are the opportunities in the vast sweep of that department? Some of you may be in communities that have surplus military property. The Department of Defense right now cannot tell you how many millions of acres are polluted with military toxins and unexploded ordnances, but the fact is that there is a change that is underway. We have gone through a round of base closings. Is there a military facility in your community that could be recycled?

Transportation. The enhancement funding in the previous transportation bills have made a big difference in areas of historic preservation and some facilities adjacent to development. Well, is there something in transportation that is a hook up for what you want to do?

My current favorite target for your consideration is the Department of Agriculture, which is going through dramatic change. People make fun of how the bureaucracy within the Department of Agriculture keeps churning along, not necessarily in tune with today's agriculture and the needs of today's communities. Mayor Williams, here in DC, was the Chief Financial Officer for the Department of Agriculture and he has a little story that he is fond of telling. The third day he was at work there he arrived early in the morning and came upon a guy who was sobbing uncontrollably outside his office. Tony was quite concerned - he didn't know the person well and had only seen him a couple times - so he sat down beside him for a second and said, "Sir, Sir what's the matter? Did something terrible happen? He says, 'Yes, my farmer died.'" Think about how many employees we have in the Department of Agriculture versus how many true family farmers we still have today. The numbers are pretty staggering.

We have a structure that dates back almost a century to where a significant portion of the American livelihood was derived from the farm and in and around small town America. Today, we have barely a half-million family owned and managed farms. We have a big superstructure and we're spending huge amounts of money. Seventy percent of that goes to the top 10 percent of the farms in terms of their wealth, 62 percent of the crops come from just 3 percent of the farms. The subsidies are given primarily to farms that are producing too much of things that most of the world doesn't need at a pretty significant price. The men and women who are involved with your markets around the country receive almost nothing. As we strategize together we can find ways to redirect some of this money to go into the hands of the men and women who really need it and use it to support sustainable agricultural practices, whether organic or not, dealing with water quality and quantity, open space, development rights...we can come up with a litany here of things that would dramatically impact communities across that the vast majority of the states. We would be better off financially and would be able to diversify the food supply.

The farmers markets-I don't have to tell you-are amazingly popular and they are successful when we are able to just plant the seed and blow on the embers. Think what would happen if we had a sustained program through the Department of Agriculture to help communities large and small across the country to establish not only a farmers market, but beyond that - a community market, a public market, to help in the revitalization particularly of small-town America. It would also have a dramatic effect in major metropolitan areas.

We have ignored agriculture in the major metropolitan areas around the country and it is a tragedy. In part, as you know, the reason that most cities arose was because they were in prime agriculture land. So we have city after city across the country occupying prime agricultural real estate and there are still people who want to do something with it. You are in a position to help in metropolitan areas, to help in small towns, to be able to help build the coalition that will make a difference in literally every state in the union and virtually every community.

I won't spend a lot of time giving you ammunition about the agriculture system, but I feel very strongly about it. There is a convergence of forces on this issue. The fiscal conservatives don't want to subsidize growing cotton in the desert or paying huge amounts of money to clean up the Everglades that are in part polluted because we've spent a huge amount of time and effort artificially subsidizing sugar prices so you pay two or three times the worldwide price. This is a vicious cycle and it is creating a churn in Congress. Fiscal conservatives are joining goofy left coast people like me to try and change it.

There are serious problems in terms of what happens with our patterns of subsidy around the world and an argument can be made that we are literally undercutting to the point of starvation people in poor countries with the subsidy that we have with cotton. What's happened to poor struggling Mexican farmers because of dramatically subsidized American corn? They are driven off their land and come here, creating other churn in

Congress. You have a chance to take these threads that speak to the environment, that speak to international economics, that speak to helping small and medium sized farms, that speak to rebalancing resources amongst the states. Half the resources for agriculture floated to just six states for these 13 commodities, but the nursery industry and row crops (fruits, nuts, berries) get virtually nothing out of this equation. You can help with a rebalancing of the equity in a way that will be very healthy for the majority of states and make a difference for communities.

This issue, however, goes beyond saving agriculture and revitalizing neighborhoods in small-town America. You represent one of those rare issues that really nobody is against. Think about it: every farmers market, every public market project that I've seen touches a wide range of participants. You have people of all different political persuasions, philosophies, economic backgrounds that are brought together because they love a public market. If we can get it on the radar screen and have people focus on it we can make it part of a larger reform. I think you would be amazed by the breath and the depth of the support for your agenda which is why your being here is so important. I hope that you all did what Ron Paul did today-stop by and beat up on me and the staff and just sort of make eye contact, make sure Congress is not forgetting about you. But at a time when there is a little bit of partisan crankiness, where so much of what we're looking at is hopelessly expensive, you are offering something that brings people together, that is cost-effective, that generates local activity, that speaks to everybody's hot button issues in a positive way. So your success, I believe, will help heal the body politic here by making it more capable of providing output and the responses you want in a whole wide array of areas from education to international development. You will help people understand how to solve problems by working together on things that people care about.

I thank you for being here. I appreciate the work that you are doing in each of your communities and your thinking about what a broader agenda would be so that the federal government will maybe do a tenth of what the Chinese government does in the foreseeable future, making your jobs easier and making all of our communities more livable.

Thank you very much.