

# PC in the rail yard with diamonds



## Permaculture in Practice

by Nate  
Downey

Picture yourself in a train at a station where organic farmers do not sell French fries. Suddenly someone is there at the turnstyle, the girl who sells strawberry pies. Perennial flowers of yellow and green greet you as you're walking home. Gaze at the rooftops that collect the rain. Pick a peach! This is how the rail yard could be.

Picture yourself in a home on a small street where out your front door is a beautiful park. One of your neighbors stops by for a nightcap. It's safe walking well after dark. There's a few taxis, but you take the bus, each day when you go to work. Climb in the back with your head in the clouds. Read a book! This is how the Santa Fe rail yard could be.

Since permaculture is about creating sustainable systems, a final design for the rail yard would have to fit within existing financial parameters. Fortunately, at least for the visionaries among us, I don't know these parameters.

However, the more we flounder waiting for the perfect plan, the harder it will be to excite funding in the future. This makes me feel more confident as I put this relatively uninformed bug (a Beetle, perhaps?) in the community's ear.

The Farmers' Market would be an integral element of a permaculture-based rail yard. There is nothing more basic to our bio-region's sustainability than local farmers selling their produce locally. It's also a great way to build community among diverse people.

There would also be a public park full of edible plants, fruit trees and places to relax in the shade or to be protected from the wind. Hopefully there would be noise-buffering trees and view screens near major intersections.

A good-sized gazebo for small community performances or other events would draw people in. It would be built right in the middle

of a traditional plaza surrounded by locally owned businesses serving community needs. (Have you ever seen those pictures at First National Bank? There was *corn* growing where we now have lawn!).

Right nearby this new plaza would be a large parking garage (preferably underground) and a major Santa Fe Trails hub. Both would likely be within easy walking distance to the train station, which would be converted into a mostly elevated high-speed rail powered by renewable energy or at least clean-burning fuel. Sidewalks and bike trails would replace car-filled streets.

Every impervious surface (roofs, roads, walks, trails, driveways) would direct precipitation into a cistern system for use inside buildings then, after treatment, for subsurface irrigation to nourish a gorgeous, drought-tolerant landscape.

New structures would be built to take advantage of solar gain for heating in the winter and with convection-cooling systems for the summer. Hopefully they'd be built out of non-toxic, eco-friendly and

recycled materials wherever possible.

My guess is that such a project could be financially feasible only if we changed our beloved view-enhancing, one-story-house pattern. In fact many buildings around the plaza and in the downtown area have more than one floor. It may be that in order to get the necessary return on investment many buildings have to be several stories high.

This would *not* mean hotels but rather affordable housing and indoor shopping. What better place to provide affordable housing than in a place where most people wouldn't need a car?

This kind of New Urbanism strategy has been talked about for years in Santa Fe. Some courageous developers are even attempting it. The time has come for our elected officials to get on board.

*Nate Downey is president of Santa Fe Permaculture, Inc. a local landscape design, consultation and installation company. Inte-rested readers may contact Downey at 424-4444 or nate@sfpermaculture.com.*

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