



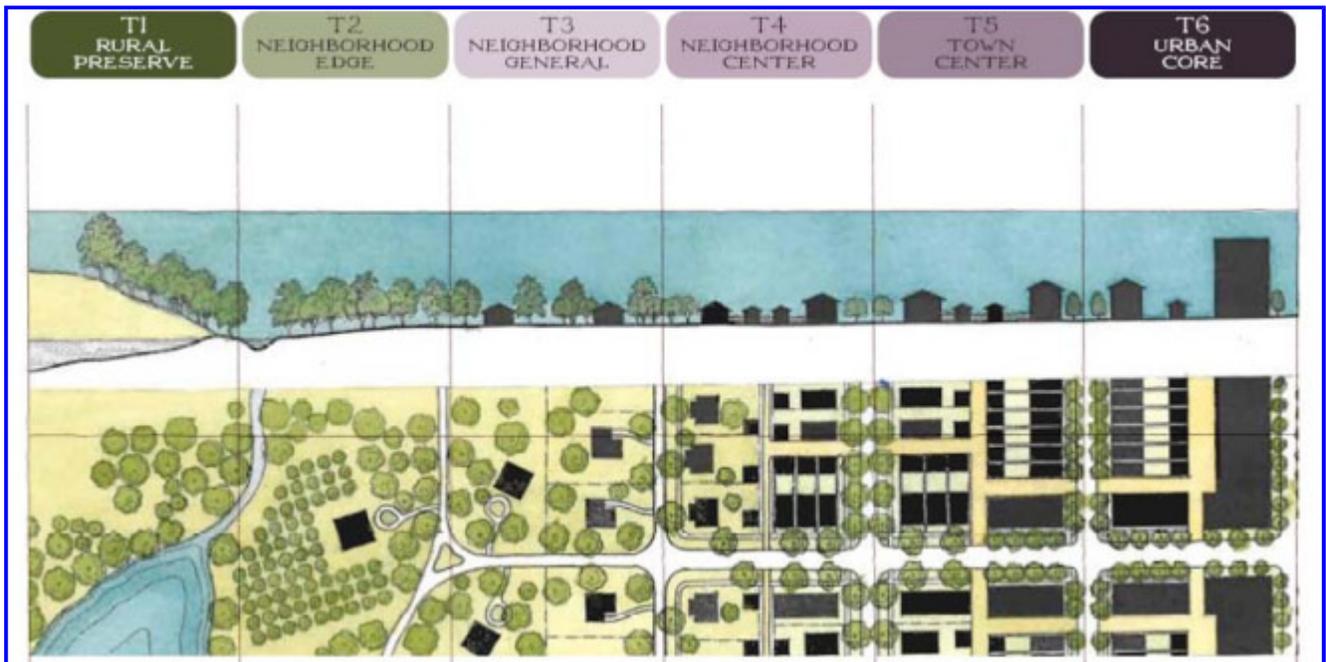
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## Is Sarasota doing right by the Bay?

in [Community](#), [Newsletter](#) / by [Lisa Nisenon](#) / on June 18, 2013 at 4:08 am /



The rural-to-urban transect. Image courtesy of Lightimprint.org.

If you totally know who **Andrés Duany** is, but have no clue what his topic, Light Imprint, is—fear not. *This Week In Sarasota* turned to **Tom Low**, a principal of the architecture and planning firm [Duany Plater-Zyberk](#) and author of the [Light Imprint Handbook](#), to learn more. We asked him to hit the most important points on Light Imprint, and here they are:

### **Sarasota is seen as a leader in Low Impact Design (LID), but you offer Light Imprint as an alternative. What are the shortcomings with LID?**

LID attempts to manage stormwater quality by using on-site design techniques (such as bio-swales and pervious pavers). The primary concern with LID is its origin in managing water in auto-centric development. Its techniques are applied without significant variation to conventional suburban residential and commercial developments and to some urban areas with suburban characteristics (such as Portland and Seattle). While advocating for sustainable stormwater management tools, LID offers only a limited set of techniques for suburban land uses.

Due to the nature of some of its techniques, LID may actually prevent sustainable development. Many LID practices involve lot-based (rather than block- or neighborhood-based) solutions. This increases the need for large residential lots and fragmented commercial development.

### **What is an example?**

Despite their environmental benefits, requiring rain gardens in front of houses increases the front setback significantly. To foster Walkable Urbanism, the houses need to be close to the sidewalk.

### **What about Conservation Subdivisions?**

Residents of conventional suburban development rely heavily on their automobiles for transportation to provide daily needs. From a broad planning and sustainability perspective, clusters of single-entry housing cul-de-sacs are not a solution. A better strategy is to weave sustainable stormwater management into compact, walkable, connected neighborhoods and communities.

### **So how is Light Imprint better?**

Light Imprint is a transect-based stormwater management system that integrates community design with tools found in LID and other Best Management Practices (or BMPs). It uses natural drainage, traditional engineering infrastructure and infiltration practices collectively at the sector, neighborhood and block scale. The transect is a system that describes the development context. At one end of the scale we have undisturbed nature, while at the other lies the highest level of urbanism and development in cities. In between, there are four transect levels to describe common urban, suburban and rural landscapes—not just one. In this way, context-sensitive design solutions work together at the community level.

### **So how is Sarasota doing?**

You'll have to come out and see at the joint meeting of the Sarasota City and Sarasota County Commissions at **1:30 p.m. on Wednesday, June 19** in the Commission Chambers (1660 Ringling Blvd.) in downtown Sarasota. If you cannot make it in person, the county hosts "[Meetings on Demand](#)" with live coverage and archived films. Make sure to go to the June 19 program.



**Lisa Nisenson**

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