



## Call for Session Proposals Guide

The Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU) is a member-based nonprofit championing better design of cities and towns to improve lives and strengthen communities for all. For over thirty years, CNU has been the leading organization in reforming city-building across the country, gathering the broad spectrum of practitioners and advocates who share our mission. CNU is dedicated to making the design of cities, towns, and neighborhoods a part of how we respond to complex societal challenges, realizing their full potential to expand the social, economic, and environmental opportunities available to all members of each community. By highlighting effective design principles and lowering barriers to change, CNU amplifies the grassroots power of our thousands of members to build and rebuild their communities in ways that improve sustainability, increase accessibility, and promote equity.

The practice of New Urbanism demonstrates that the built environment is capable of offering profound social, economic, and environmental benefits. Built on the principles of our Charter, New Urbanism is more than a set of design guidelines or policy recommendations. It is an intersectional way of practicing urbanism - of building community - that requires policy, design, and development to all play a role in achieving our shared vision for the future.

The annual Congress is an international gathering of our multidisciplinary cohort, but it is also a core programmatic effort of CNU, providing an opportunity for our attendees to convene, to educate, and to collaborate in service of a world where cities, towns, and neighborhoods are intentionally designed to foster community, preserve the natural environment, and improve the lives of all people.

In this guide, you will find:

- Information About CNU 35 Twin Cities
- Description of the CNU 35 Focus
- Key Questions to Address through Session Proposals
- What CNU is Looking For
- Submitting a Session Proposal
- Session Types
- Terms & Conditions

## About CNU 35 Twin Cities

CNU is coming to the Twin Cities, a region that has long been at the center of critical national conversations about public space, equity, safety, and belonging. Few metropolitan areas have grappled more publicly or more honestly with the tensions and opportunities that define urbanism today, from the legacy of highway construction through historic neighborhoods to bold investments in transit, affordable housing, and park infrastructure. The Twin Cities bring both the challenges and the aspirations that CNU members work to address every day, making this an especially meaningful and timely gathering.

CNU 35 will be anchored in the Mill District of Minneapolis, a walkable, connected neighborhood that reflects the city's industrial history and its ongoing commitment to adaptive reuse, riverfront access, infill housing, and multimodal transportation. Through walking tours, local project showcases, and conversations with practitioners and residents shaping the region's future, attendees will experience firsthand how the civic realm can serve as a foundation for community connection and bring that energy back to their own communities.

## CNU 35 Focus: The Building Blocks of Community

Beyond its buildings and streets, and infrastructure, the strength of a community lies in the connections among its residents—connections that foster belonging, build trust, and enable communities to respond to challenges and shape their collective futures.

The places where these connections take root are essential to community life. Streets, sidewalks, parks, squares, civic spaces, and the places where buildings meet the street form the public realm—the physical foundation of our social infrastructure. When thoughtfully designed and accessible to all, these shared spaces encourage community interaction, strengthen social bonds, and create opportunities for civic life.

*At CNU 35, we will explore the potential of public realm as a foundational building block of strong, connected, and resilient communities.*

The Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul provide a compelling setting for this conversation. Recent events have brought national attention to questions of justice, democracy, and belonging, underscoring the importance of public spaces in shaping community identity, fostering civic participation, and building trust.

The [Charter of the New Urbanism](#) establishes the physical definition of streets and public spaces as places of shared use as a primary task of urban architecture and landscape design. Public space is not simply a byproduct of good urban design; it is an intended outcome.

*CNU 35 challenges us to consider not only how we design and build communities, but how the places we create strengthen the relationships that sustain them.*

## Key Questions to Address

Creating a strong public realm requires more than good design. It demands collaboration among the disciplines that shape our communities, including urban planning, architecture, landscape architecture, transportation engineering, real estate development, public policy, community development, and civic leadership.

For decades, conventional development practices, disconnected land-use policies, and automobile-oriented infrastructure have fragmented communities and diminished the quality of public spaces. Addressing these challenges requires us to move beyond professional silos, reconsider established practices, and place the shared public realm at the center of community planning and investment.

CNU invites practitioners, researchers, policymakers, community leaders, advocates, and allied professionals to propose sessions that examine how the planning, design, development, and stewardship of the built environment can strengthen social connections and foster more inclusive, vibrant, and resilient communities.

We are particularly interested in proposals that explore questions such as:

- **Designing for Social Connection:** How can the physical form of streets, neighborhoods, civic spaces, and building frontages encourage social interaction, strengthen community identity, and foster a sense of belonging?
- **Reclaiming the Public Realm:** How can communities transform automobile-oriented streets, disconnected neighborhoods, and underutilized spaces into welcoming places that prioritize people and shared civic life?
- **Connecting Design and Community Resilience:** What role does the public realm play in strengthening social networks, supporting local problem-solving, and helping communities respond to economic, environmental, and social challenges?
- **Rethinking Transportation Planning, Engineering, and Street Design:** How can transportation planners, engineers, and designers move beyond conventional traffic engineering practices and automobile-oriented performance measures to create safe, connected, multimodal streets that function as vital public spaces? What changes to street design standards, transportation policies, and infrastructure investment priorities are needed to balance mobility and access with walkability, human-scaled design, and vibrant community life?
- **Advancing Inclusive Public Spaces:** How can planning, design, and public investment create places that are accessible, welcoming, and meaningful to people of different ages, abilities, backgrounds, and incomes?
- **Breaking Down Professional Silos:** How can planners, designers, engineers, developers, public officials, and community organizations collaborate to create a coherent public realm rather than a collection of disconnected projects?

## Key Questions to Address Continued

- Aligning Policy, Investment, and Design: What changes to zoning, transportation standards, development regulations, financing, and public investment are needed to make connected, human-scaled communities easier to build and sustain?
- Learning from Implementation: What can successful projects, emerging practices, and lessons from unsuccessful efforts teach us about creating and maintaining public spaces that support vibrant community life?

## What We're Looking For

CNU 35 seeks engaging, substantive, and forward-looking sessions that advance the principles of New Urbanism while offering practical insights for the people working to transform communities.

We encourage proposals that:

- Bring together multiple disciplines and perspectives to address complex challenges in the built environment.
- Present innovative ideas, successful practices, and lessons learned from real-world projects.
- Explore the relationship between physical design, public policy, economic development, and social outcomes.
- Challenge conventional approaches to planning, transportation, development, and community investment.
- Offer actionable strategies, tools, and approaches that participants can apply in their own communities.
- Encourage meaningful dialogue, critical inquiry, and active participation rather than relying exclusively on traditional presentations.

We welcome proposals addressing the Congress focus as well as other important and emerging topics in New Urbanism, including those that examine regional planning, neighborhood design, housing, transportation reform, climate resilience, equitable development, and implementation.

### Help shape the conversation at CNU 35

Join us in the Twin Cities to explore how the spaces between buildings can become the places that bring communities together—and how our collective work can strengthen the public realm as the foundation of community life.

## Submitting A Session Proposal

### Session Requirements:

Proposals for Educational Sessions, Implementation Sessions, Project Showcases and Meetings will be accepted through the abstract submission portal, Open Water. Prior to starting your proposal application please review the Congress Focus, the Problem Space, and Key Learning Goals outlined above.

*(Note: Have your CNU 5-digit account number handy for your proposal application. You can find that number in your online profile of the CNU Constituent Portal by logging in [here](#). A CNU online profile doesn't require a membership. If you don't already have a CNU online account, you can create one [here](#).)*

### Continuing Education:

As CNU provides continuing education units (CEUs) in partnership with the American Institute of Architects, American Planning Association, and American Society for Landscape Architects, a majority of the sessions at Annual Congress require clearly written Learning Objectives. While Education Sessions, Implementation Sessions, and Meetings require four (4) Learning Objectives, a Project Showcase will require only one (1).

Rather than describing topics to be covered, learning objectives or outcomes are statements that clearly define what the participant will know or be able to do as a result of having attended the program. Each learning objectives must be observable and measurable and completes the sentence: "By the end of this session attendees will be able to...." and uses action versions. Avoid words that are vague and open to interpretation, such as know, learn, and understand. More guidance on Learning Objectives may be found online.

### CNU 34 Review Process and Timeline:

All submitted proposals will be reviewed by this year's Congress Program Committee, an ad hoc Board committee of subject matter experts responsible for providing oversight of the development of session types and program format, reviewing the call for proposals, reviewing and ranking all sessions, and curating and placing the sessions in the schedule. Congress Program Committee members will complete the initial review of submissions in mid-December.

You may be asked to make changes to your proposal, provide more information on your proposal, refine proposed learning objectives, or combine your proposal with another submitted proposal.

## Submitting A Session Proposal Continued

### Key deadlines:

1. October 29, 2026: Request for proposals released to CNU Members
2. November 2, 2026: Request for proposals released to the public
3. December 5, 2026: Request for proposals closed
4. January 25-29, 2027: All submitters notified of proposal status
5. March 1, 2027: Deadline for selected presenters and speakers to register for Congress as confirmation of program delivery

## Session Types

### Educational Sessions

Formerly known as “classes” or “core courses”, Educational Sessions provide the backbone of Congress learning opportunities. They are designed to teach foundational concepts to attendees and can be introductory, intermediate, or advanced level examinations of core New Urbanist principles and practice. Educational Sessions provide an opportunity for presenters to share knowledge with attendees, and require that attendees receive a document with key points and resources in addition to the PowerPoint presentation, after attending.

**Facilitator:** Each educational session should have a facilitator who ensures the presentation is cohesive and delivers on the learning objectives, especially if there are multiple presenters.

**Time and placement:** Each session will be between 60-75 mins, depending on subject matter and number of speakers.

### Proposal information required:

1. Main speaker contact information and expertise
2. Session title (10 words or less)
3. Session description (150 words or less)
4. Additional speaker contact information (if applicable)
5. What New Urbanist principle is being examined? (50 words or less)
6. Proposed learning objectives; four (4) minimum
7. Relevance to the Congress Focus (optional)

### Implementation Sessions

To help expand the body of built examples and adopted policies that make up the practice of New Urbanism, Implementation Sessions are designed to provide attendees with a demonstration of the effective implementation of a policy, strategy, or design technique used in achieving our shared vision. They provide an opportunity for practitioners of various levels of experience to share knowledge and direct experience of implementation with attendees.

## Session Types Continued

### Implementation Sessions

**Facilitator:** Each implementation session should have a facilitator who ensures the presentation is cohesive and delivers on the learning objectives, especially if there are multiple presenters.

**Time and placement:** Each session will be between 60-75 mins, depending on subject matter and number of speakers.

**Proposal information required:**

1. Main speaker contact information and expertise
2. Session title (10 words or less)
3. Session description (150 words or less)
4. What technique or policy is being examined?
5. Additional speaker contact information (if applicable)
6. Proposed learning objectives; four (4) minimum
7. Relevance to the Congress Focus (optional)

### Project Showcase

Submit a single, or themed group of (4 max), projects that aim to set an example for attendees. Project Showcase sessions can include critiques, practical analysis, lessons-learned, demonstrations of success or failures, the disconnect between the plans and reality of a project, or project outcomes. Each project will be allocated 15-minutes for a Showcase presentation, with a maximum of 4 separate projects comprising a 1-hour Showcase.

Single project submissions will be combined by the Congress Program Committee into cohesive sessions that are topical, thematic, or otherwise make sense together.

**Project Showcase Facilitator:** In the instance of combined projects, CNU may assign a facilitator to ensure the session remains cohesive for the attendees within a 75 or 60 minute session.

**Proposal information required:**

1. Main speaker contact information and expertise
2. Single project or group of projects?
3. Single project: Title, location
4. Single project: showcase image
5. Single projects: 1 speaker
6. Group of projects: describe what the group of themed projects demonstrates
7. Group of projects: Titles, location for all projects- Max 4 per group
8. Group of projects: 1 image per project
9. Group of projects: 1 speaker per project

## Session Types Continued

### Meetings

Meetings are an opportunity for attendees to gather and advance New Urbanist discourse on a certain topic. The main activity in a meeting is collaborative discussion, with the outcome being a call to action. Examples include coalition building for an advocacy platform, a discussion on the agenda of a caucus or affiliate, compiling attendees' recommendations for reform.

**Meeting Facilitator and Scribe:** Each meeting should have a facilitator to lead the discussion towards the intended outcome and a scribe to capture the outcome.

Proposal information required:

1. Meeting Facilitator contact information and expertise
2. Meeting title (10 words or less)
3. Meeting's Call to Action or Goal
4. Additional facilitators and scribes (if applicable)
5. Meeting description (150 words or less)

## Terms and Conditions

By submitting a proposal for review by the Congress Program Committee, applicants acknowledges the following:

**Session Format:** CNU reserves the right to ask you to change your session type format (i.e. Education Session, Project Showcase, etc.).

**Session Description and Learning Objectives:** Applicants may be asked to clarify or update the session description and/or the learning objectives in order to meet continuing education eligibility requirements

**Session Practice Areas/Topics:** The Congress Program Committee may request applicants to confirm an alternate primary practice area or secondary topic to better align with the overall Congress program structure