

# Portland Architecture

all about the design, planning and construction of the rose city

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## A Cran-Do Attitude

Last Sunday an article in *The Oregonian* by [Randy Gragg](#) assessed the successes and failures with regional town centers throughout the greater Portland area that are a cornerstone of Metro's 2040 plan: the success being Metro's planning, the failure arguably being implementation.

Randy extensively quotes longtime Portland architect/planner George Crandall, FAIA, principal with [Crandall Arambula](#), whose experience gives him a great amount of credibility in analyzing Metro's efforts. And that's what I want to focus on here.



As their website says, Crandall and his firm (which includes partner Don Arambula) "integrate urban design, planning, architecture, and economics to create redevelopment strategies for cities." Their success stories include work in several American cities that are much better for the firm's involvement, from Tennessee to Wisconsin and of course Portland. Crandall oversaw the second Central City Plan in 1988 and was a longtime chair of the influential Urban Design Committee at AIA/Portland.

I wrote about and interviewed Crandall and Arambula last year, and came away very impressed. Nobody else in town, or practically the country for that matter, is doing what this firm does.

Crandall Arambula is not a traditional architecture firm, and that's important. Because they focus only on the planning and investment strategies, clients don't waste time wondering if their efforts are ever self-serving, cloaking a desire to get building commissions that come out of their planning.

And while some may question their emphasis on government investing in development, which is traditionally left to the private sector, actually private developers are some of their biggest fans.

"Development is an unsure thing," Crandall told me then. "Why would you want to develop downtown unless you think it's a worthwhile investment? By doing these revitalizations, it makes for a more sure return on the developer's investment. It's all about setting the stage for development to become easier and more effective."

Indeed, as Randy's article pointed out, Metro has done a wonderful job of planning Portland's future from a vantage point that sees all of the region. But what we need to do now to make these town centers effective is to get into micro-management as well as macro. We need to work with private developers to make these higher-density developments around key mass transit stops happen.

Randy's article was far from the first time George Crandall has been quoted as the wise man of local planning and development. I'd really like to see this guy have a larger and more official role in setting the course for Portland and its environs. I'm not sure what capacity that would be in. But I'd like to see more than quotes in a newspaper and evidence of success in cities far from our own.