

PHOENIX

Bold ideas for desert metropolis

By Tom Zoellner
The Arizona Republic

Giant colorful ribbons strung over the streets. Vacant lots turned into date palm farms. A chain of newspaper and candy kiosks.

These are some of the unconventional and oddly appealing concepts for downtown Phoenix to come out of the hothouse of ideas at the Arizona State University School of Architecture.

Nan Ellin, associate professor and author of the book

Slash City: Towards an Integral Urbanism, encourages her students to stretch their creativity when thinking about ways to bring more life to Arizona's premier urban core.



Nan
Ellin

"Downtown lacks dynamism," she said. "We need to have an urbanism that's appropriate to the topography. We need to have something nobody else has, something exciting."

Ellin believes there are four basic guidelines to reinvigorating Phoenix: democracy, diversity, dynamism and density.

This last point has a crucial shade of meaning. Instead of high-rises, Ellin visualizes points of congregation for pedestrians, such as libraries next to day-care centers next to coffee bars.

"We don't want to be a huge dense Manhattan," she said. "That's not us. We're a desert metropolis. We want a low-density urbanism of various things that bring people together."