

# Architect Michael Tavel and the Subdivision of the Future

By Jonathan Weber , 4-10-09

Michael Tavel grew up in Ohio and Colorado, and after training as an architect at UC Berkeley (and getting to know the now-famous new urbanism planner [Peter Calthorpe](#)), he returned to Denver as a lecturer in architecture in 1991. His focus was the integration of town planning and the natural environment - something that seems like it should happen as a matter of course, but usually does not.

"How do you take new urbanism and integrate it with the natural and historic conditions of the place?," asks Tavel. After years of teaching and studying the issues, he decided it was time to practice what he was preaching, and he launched [Michael Tavel Architects](#) six years ago.

One of his first major projects was the award-winning Solar Village Prospect, a mixed-use project in suburban Longmont, Colorado that was completed in 2006. And he's now pushing hard on the Geos Neighborhood, touted as the nation's largest "net-zero" subdivision. With the use of a wide range of renewable energy and conservation technologies, the 250-home subdivision in Arvada would produce as much energy as it consumes.

Tavel cites a number of innovations that make the net-zero goal possible, including efficient storm water management, use of passive solar designs, geo-thermal heat exchange systems, and high-performance "building envelopes." Tavel, together with landscape architect David Kahn and developer Norbert Klebl, have been working on the Geos Neighborhood for four years, and while construction has been delayed by the economic slump, he expects it to move forward soon.

Tavel will give a presentation on the Geos Neighborhood and his broader thinking about the marriage of natural settings and new urbanism next week at NewWest.Net's Designing the New West conference at the Gallatin Gateway Inn near Bozeman. For more information on Tavel and the full conference program, visit [www.newwest.net/design](http://www.newwest.net/design).



The Geos Neighborhood

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