



COMMUNITY NEWS

&
VIEWS

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THEME: SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

Reflections on a Sustainable America

Vice President Al Gore

After the recent National Town Meeting for a Sustainable America, the MSU Center for Urban Affairs invited Vice President Al Gore to offer his reflections on the topic of sustainability for this edition of Community News and Views.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to offer my views on the National Town Meeting that we held in Detroit on May 4, as well as the larger topic of urban sprawl and livable communities. I thought the meeting was a great success, and I appreciate having this chance to follow-up.

Our gathering was a tribute to the effectiveness of local and national efforts to address the growing problem of sprawl in the country. More than 60,000 people participated in the meeting – people from cities, suburbs, and rural America; family business owners and family farmers; industry leaders, environmentalists, mayors, teachers, parents, legislators, and ministers. The message of this diverse movement is clear: when we work together to make the right choices, we can craft solutions that can sustain our prosperity, improve our quality of life, and restore a sense of community for all Americans.

Many communities across the nation already are coming together to develop their own initiatives to help curb urban sprawl. They are using a wide variety of approaches, investing in public transit and intelligent transportation technologies to help ease traffic congestion; turning dilapidated and abandoned structures into family attractions such as aquariums, magnet schools, and revitalized factories; and creating “smart growth” plans for future development.

The President and I have worked hard to make



Al Gore

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sure that the federal government supports the local efforts going on across America. In January, we launched our Livable Communities initiative to help communities across America grow in ways that ensure a high quality of life and strong, sustainable economic growth. Our initiative seeks to provide communities the tools and resources they need to preserve open space, ease traffic congestion, and build a stronger sense of community. While we have proposed a series of new tools, our initiative rests on the bedrock principle that land use decisions are local matters and that each community should grow according to their own values.

The Livable Communities initiative builds upon our ongoing efforts to empower communities. For example, our community empowerment strategy is bringing billions of dollars in private investment to improve central cities. We also have passed targeted tax cuts for families, small businesses, and communities. Additionally, we are putting 100,000 “community policing” officers on the streets and helping communities modernize or build new schools to meet the educational needs of our nation’s youth.

Yet the federal government will have only a limited role. Our national government should not be making local planning decisions or try to serve as a beauty commissar or national zoning board. Instead, we must empower those at the grassroots level by giving them the tools and resources they need to create the communities they want. If local residents want parks, playgrounds, and subways instead of contaminated brownfields, strip malls, and highways, they should be able to make that choice – and we should help them.

Gore, continued on next page

Over the past six years, as Chairman of the Community Empowerment Board, I have held forums across the country with parents and community leaders. In Sacramento, I met townspeople who reclaimed an old brownfields site and turned it into a thriving residential community. In Portland, I helped dedicate a new light rail system to build, in the locals' own words, a Portland with "fewer arteries and more heart." And in Detroit, I am proud that I led our Empowerment Zone initiative, which has brought more than \$4 billion of new investment to the area.

This sense of cooperation and empowerment is what our comprehensive new Livability Initiative seeks to promote today – to help give communities the tools and resources they need to preserve green spaces, ease traffic congestion, improve schools, and enhance economic competitiveness. I believe that refocusing communities across the country on ways to sustain prosperity while improving quality of life is one of the greatest challenges we face as a nation. If we can build that same sense of energy, that same sense of urgency, that same sense of possibility in every community in America, we create a new prosperity for all Americans.

In last fall's elections, more than 200 communities discussed – and more than 70 percent adopted – measures to pursue smarter growth into the 21st Century. I firmly believe that places matter to people and the livable communities, comfortable suburbs, and vibrant cities, connected by green spaces rather than just bulldozed plots and utilitarian roads, will have an immeasurable benefit for our environment and our society. Please be assured that we will work tirelessly toward this goal.



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National Town Meeting on
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www.sustainableusa.com/

New Jersey Governor
Christine Todd Whitman
www.state.nj.us/governor/

Senator Carl Levin
www.senate.gov/~levin

U.S. Dept of Energy
Sustainable Development
Center of Excellence
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Hart Environmental Data
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Technology
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Great Lakes Renewable
Energy Association
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glrea/](http://ermisweb.cis.state.mi.us/glrea/)

Partners for Smart Growth

New Jersey Governor Christine Todd Whitman

The following is excerpted with permission from a speech given December 15, 1998 at the Smart Growth Conference in Austin, Texas.

Thirty years ago, astronauts Frank Borman, James Lovell, and William Anders boarded Apollo 8 for the first manned spacecraft to leave Earth's gravity and reach the moon. While they did not land – the Apollo 11 team had that privilege – they were the first people to see the moon up close.

These were American heroes, risking their lives to help our nation win the space race. At the same time, their photographs of the earth gave us a remarkable, deep space perspective on our planet – a view we never had before. As Lovell described the experience, "It makes us realize what you have back on earth,"

Those pictures showed us all that the earth and its resources are beautiful and majestic – and limited.

Thirty years later, states like New Jersey and many others across the nation are once again engaged in a space race. This time, however, it's not outer space but open space. This time the enemy isn't the Soviets but sprawl. And this time, the focus isn't on how to land on the moon but how on earth to save the land.

America, we have a problem. We are no longer the land of infinite wilderness, but our planning doesn't reflect the awareness. So often, what was natural land three decades ago – or even three years ago – is now a shopping center or a housing development or an office building.

As governor, I spend a lot of time in a car going from one part of the state to another. Spending the past five years seeing New Jersey roll by has given me a sense of urgency about our future – an urgency that I know many of you share about your communities.

Every state suffers when it develops haphazardly. Sprawl eats up open space. In state after state, sprawl creates traffic jams that boggle the mind and pollute the air. Sprawl can make one feel claustrophobic about the future our children and grandchildren will inherit.

On the one hand, we know that we can't sustain



Christine Todd Whitman

the pace of development our nation has experienced in the past few decades. On the other hand, we have to accommodate a growing economy and a growing population, which will reach an estimated 400 million or higher in the next 50 years.

We have to work toward what governor George W. Bush has called "balanced stewardship" of the resources in our towns, our states, and our country. That is, clearly, the essence of smart growth: to promote profitable development, livable communities, and environmental integrity.

New Jersey is tackling the problem of sprawl from two sides: saving precious open land and promoting smart growth everywhere else.

I have spent the past year crisscrossing the state to promote my proposal to preserve 1 million acres of open space and farmland within the next decade. Last November, by a 2-to-1 margin, the voters said yes to that plan. When you consider the size of New Jersey, and then add our new commitment to the million acres we have already saved over the years, you're talking about the voluntary preservation of 40 percent of our total land mass.

What will that mean for my state? It will mean the survival of farming in the Garden State-and also that of some endangered species. It will enable us to create more recreational spaces in our cities and towns. Preserving this land will keep our air clean and purify our water naturally. And this voluntary preservation will allow future generations to know the character of a state I'm proud to call home.

Let me emphasize the word *voluntary*. Again and again in New Jersey, citizens have voted for open space purchases at the state and local levels, usually by large majorities. And it's not just the "greens" who are pulling the voting lever. In fact, we had a coalition to support my million-acre plan that included developers and other leading business people.

I think part of the reason for the broad support was that we have allowed for growth. We've said: New Jersey has 2 million acres left; let's save half of that and still be able to develop the rest – we hope in an intelligent, sensible way.

To complement our open-space commitment, we are working hard to reshape our cities and town centers as areas of growth and development.

Fortunately, we are not starting from scratch. New Jersey already has a strategy, some 12 years in the making, called the State Plan – a blueprint to redevelop cities, relieve congestion, and contain sprawl. It's called "Communities of Place" because we envision a better future in which people can live, work, and raise a family.

We in government will use it to make funding and permit decisions, but I want to emphasize that New Jersey's State Plan is not a top-down, command-and-control, Big Brother kind of document.

While government will use it to make investment decisions, the State has spent the past decade working diligently with each and every municipality to develop a plan that achieves their vision of their communities – they are truly the co-authors of this plan. In fact, between our 566 municipalities and 21 counties, the State Plan has been the subject of the most comprehensive series of town meetings in the nation.

What I've tried to do as governor is to keep the spirit of our State Plan and encourage development where it makes the most sense.

For example, we believe communities should make their own development choices. At the same time, we know some decisions focus only on the tax revenues new development will generate but ignore the cost of services like roads, sewers, and schools. Towns are discovering that, over time, approving some kinds of development that run counter to the State Plan has cost them dearly.

So we are putting together a guidebook to help towns do the math and then decide for themselves whether it's prudent in the long run to put a shopping mall or office building here, or build a school or create a park there. By providing this information, we are helping towns see that smart growth makes sense.

We're also creating model communities based on smart growth principles. For instance, we're building state-of-the-art light rail systems and working with developers to build transit villages within walking distance of railroad or bus stations. And to help one town deal with sprawl, we plan to reroute a state highway so they can create an entirely new, mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented town center while preserving natural lands nearby.

We also just announced a pilot project with our state's largest energy provider, PSE&G, to finance 100 units of affordable housing that are at least 30 percent more energy-efficient than typical new construction. That will be good for homeowners and for the

environment.

New Jersey's million-acre preservation plan, and other land preservation efforts in states like Florida and New York, has drawn a lot of attention from environmentalists. I think they deserve equal interest from planners and developers.

Preserving open space and strengthening cities go hand in hand. Preservation refocuses development to areas where infrastructure already exists—our cities and older suburban areas.

Over the years, all the incentives for building encouraged sprawl in that they pointed against redeveloping in our cities. They were too much trouble.

Old factories, for example, had dangerous chemicals in the ground, so you couldn't build there. Where you had wonderful old structures in promising neighborhoods, the cost of bringing them up to code made redevelopment here all but impossible. And even with new construction, the permit process could drag on for years.

One by one, states like New Jersey have tried to fix these problems so we can begin to fix our cities. We passed brownfields laws in my State that encourage people to clean up and convert former industrial sites to productive use.

New Jersey was the first state in the nation with a special building code for rehabilitation that, in effect, says, this wonderful old building doesn't have to have perfectly level floors or totally plumb doors to a safe and livable.

We're beginning to see our cities come alive. There are 99 new affordable housing units standing on what was once a trash-strewn lot in Elizabeth. There are homeowners – and a brand new homeowners' association – along a Newark street that once was a junkyard and vacant lots. And the New Jersey Performing Arts Center in downtown Newark is a national model of how the arts can spark development.

I don't need to tell you that investing in a city's rebirth must be more than simply supplying bricks and drywall. You can't revitalize a city at Home Depot. You revitalize a city at home – in the neighborhoods... in the churches and synagogues and mosques. You invest in those with the most to gain: the people who live there.

In New Jersey, we are setting up a Faith-Based Community Development Initiative. It's a clumsy name but a simple idea. Our houses of worship support their neighborhoods in remarkable ways – from housing to childcare, from tutoring to job training. Why not give these everyday heroes technical and financial help so they can do even more good? To me, that's the best

Senate Smarth Growth Task Force

Senator Carl Levin

As a former Detroit City council president, I know how important it is to focus on issues of “smart growth” where citizens and governments work together to build sustainable communities.

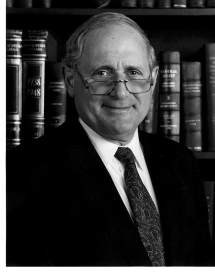
There is a growing consensus on the problem of unsustainable development and growth. We have experienced the negative aspects of growth without thoughtful planning. These costs include congestion, wetland and farmland loss, urban decay, lack of affordable housing, degradation of environmental quality, and more.

Most people worry about sprawl and the grinding up of open space and farmland. This concern and a desire for smarter growth was evident in the November 1998 elections when 200 state and local ballot initiatives proposed commitments of an estimated \$7 billion to conservation, farmland protection, urban revitalization and other smart growth policies.

In our State Houses across the country, governors and legislators, Republican and Democrat alike are working to provide incentives to businesses and communities to redevelop brownfields, maintain and revitalize urban centers, and preserve farmland and open space. Through public-private partnerships, states with as diverse growth management issues as Vermont and Utah are demonstrating creative approaches to smart growth.

In the United States Senate, we are tackling this issue in a bipartisan manner. I have joined with Senator Jeffords of Vermont in creating the Senate Smart Growth Task Force. This 25 member, multi-regional working group will give Senators a forum to discuss and coordinate efforts concerning sustainable growth patterns and it will identify federal programs that can assist and complement state and local efforts to promote smart growth.

There are exciting initiatives on sustainable development underway across the state of Michigan today, from Grand Rapids to Traverse City to metro Detroit -- everywhere people are looking for ways to balance our need for economic growth and a quality of life that cannot be measured in economic terms alone. I think part of that quality of life is to be part of a whole greater than community-to-community, region-to-region. And that is why I found so much meaning in General Motor's decision to take down the wall that has separated the Renaissance Center in Detroit from downtown Detroit. It is a statement that we are in this together and we won't let barriers come between us.



Carl Levin

We're not talking about creating government mandates to achieve the goal of smart growth. We're talking about focusing on what is the heart of this movement: identifying those aspects of smart growth, which naturally appeal to people. People want an alternative to sprawl and we can help achieve this by providing incentives to achieve smart growth alternatives. Rather than

restricting choices or opportunities for where people can live, we should give them more choices about where and how they can live. We can do this by creating more cohesive communities, both in the cities and in the suburbs, and making those communities and our existing land use more multi-use and more appealing. By connecting our neighborhoods, designing them for pedestrians as well as for cars, providing access to public spaces and parks, we can bring people together for a greater sense of community and overall better quality of life.

The government's challenge in helping to achieve the goals and components of smart growth should be positive not negative. The Federal government can assist citizens' groups and state and local government efforts to build sustainable communities by helping to provide better schools, safer neighborhoods, and revitalizing downtowns and city centers, both new and old. Rather than restricting people's choices of where they can live, we should work to make those choices more appealing, more cohesive and ultimately more sustainable.

As we rebuild our cities and celebrate lives together, let us build those places where people are truly together. The people-places and the links between them. The pedestrian and the sitting-places. The running-places and the sunning-places. The walking-places and the talking-places. Places where we strengthen our respect and tolerance and defense of our differences. The places of the heart and the memory where our diverse American people can grow ever more comfortable with each other. So as we look at this issue of sustainable development, I hope we will remember that as a people, we have not only been sustained by economic activity and the beauty and abundance of our natural environment but by our commitment to work with our neighbors to build this place we call America.

Carl Levin is the senior United States Senator from Michigan, currently in his fourth term.

Senator Levin is a native of Detroit.

The Third Sector: Creating Sustainable Communities

Rex L. LaMore

This past May, I was given the opportunity to visit Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj, Romania. As a visiting scholar with the faculty of the Public Administration Department at the university, I worked with the faculty and students of this Eastern European school as they strove to create their democratic society and their free market economy. During this trip, as is often the case in international travel, I learned a great deal about Romania and the emerging democracies of Eastern Europe and *a great deal more* about my own society.

One of the most revealing insights I gained about our communities and the challenges confronting the emerging democracies of the former Soviet Union is the role of the third sector in creating healthy viable communities. Citizen-based organizations (from neighborhood groups to human service agencies to civic organizations, etc.) since the turn of the 20th Century have become a fundamental element of civil society in the United States. Through overcoming the limits of government bureaucracies and the “bottom line” emphasis so critical to private enterprise, the non-profit sector provides an important foundation for civic engagement in our communities. Working together to help others is a strongly held value that is deeply instilled in our shared consciousness. This moral obligation is often taught to us by our family and reinforced by our religious institutions, our teachers and our public and private leaders. As a result, in our society we actively support through our time and money a vibrant third sector engaged in addressing many of the needs of our communities. While the emerging democracies of Eastern Europe seek to create effective public and private sectors, they are equally challenged to establish an ethic of civic engagement and the third sector so critical to community development.

A free people, engaged in a great cause, are a phenomenal force for social change. As we seek to identify the essential elements of sustainable communities, the participation of citizens and their freely created civic organizations will be pivotal to that process. Robert Kennedy observed that:

“The gross national product does not include the beauty of our poetry or the strength of our marriages, the intelligence of our public debate or the integrity of our public officials. It allows neither for the justice in our courts, nor for the justice of our dealings with each other.

The gross national product measures our wit not our courage, neither our wisdom nor our learning, neither our compassion nor our devotion to country. It measures everything, in short, except that which makes life worthwhile.”

It is all too often true that “what we measure is what we change” and this may be the case in determining and assessing the essential characteristics of sustainable communities. If we are to measure “that which makes life worthwhile,” then the role of the third sector will be critical to that process.

Rex L. LaMore, Ph.D., is State Director of the Michigan State University Center for Urban Affairs, Community and Economic Development Program.

Indicators of Sustainability

by Maureen Hart

An indicator is something that helps you understand where you are, which way you are going and how far you are from where you want to be. A good indicator alerts you to a problem before it gets too bad and helps you recognize what needs to be done to fix the problem. Indicators of a sustainable community point to areas where the links between the economy, environment and society are weak. They allow you to see where the problem areas are and help show the way to fix those problems.

Indicators of sustainability are not the traditional indicators of economic success and environmental quality. Because sustainability requires a more integrated view of the world, the indicators should link the economy, environment, and society of the community. An economic indicator that does not include environmental or social effects will not help move in a sustainable direction. Likewise, an environmental indicator that does not take into account economic or social impacts will not provide adequate insight into the best way to improve a community's health and vitality.

Traditional indicators of community well-being tend to look at one part of a community. For example, the Gross National Product (GNP) measures a country's imports and exports. It is used to show the health of a country's economy. However, because GNP does not link economic health with the social and environmental health of the community, it can point in the wrong direction for improving overall community health. When the Exxon Valdez tanker ran aground, the spilled oil killed millions of animals and cost millions of dollars to cleanup. The jobs created from clean up activities made the United States' GNP go up.

Using the GNP as an indicator suggests that we should get more oil tankers to run into rocks more often. The GNP is a one-dimensional indicator that measures the health of the economy at the expense of the environment and the society.

...trying to run a complex society on a single indicator like the Gross National Product is literally like trying to fly a 747 with only one gauge on the instrument panel...imagine if your doctor, when giving you a checkup, did no more than check your blood pressure.

- Hazel Henderson, Paradigms of Progress

Indicators of sustainable community are useful to different communities for different reasons. For a healthy, vibrant community, indicators help monitor that health so that negative trends are caught and dealt with before they become a problem. For communities with economic, social, or environmental problems, indicators can point the way to a better future. For all communities, indicators can generate discussion among people with different backgrounds and viewpoints, and, in the process, help create a shared

What Is A Sustainable Community?

"Sustainable" means continuing without lessening. A *"community"* is a group of people who live and interact in a certain area. A *"sustainable community"* seeks to maintain and improve the economic, environmental and social characteristics of an area so its members can continue to lead healthy, productive, enjoyable lives there.

"Development" means improving or bringing to a more advanced state. *Sustainable development* improves the economy without undermining the society or the environment. Sustainable development is not an economic theory. It is not an environmental movement. Instead, sustainable development requires the understanding that a healthy environment and a healthy economy are both necessary for a healthy society.

These three parts of a community – economy, environment, and society – are linked in complex ways. A sustainable community takes these links into account when planning for the future.

Maureen Hart is an environmental data analyst and author of the newly released *Guide to Sustainable Community Indicators* (2nd edition). She is a featured workshop presenter at the 1999 Summer Institute, sponsored by the CEDP and the U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Economic Development Administration.

Material reprinted with permission from the website www.subjectmatters.com/indicators.

How Does Farmland Conversion Affect Sustainability?

Kurt Norgaard

If you have picked up a newspaper lately, you have probably read statements like “farmland pays \$1.40 in taxes for every dollar of services it uses, while new residences pay only 60 cents.” These numbers probably came from a Cost of Community Services Study, the methodology for which was designed by the American Farmland Trust, a private conservation organization that works to prevent the loss of productive farmland.

But a very different story is told in a recent study by the Housing Education and Research Center (HERC) at the Michigan State University Building Construction Management Program. Using methods that incorporate the economic activity of the builders and new homeowners, they report that new residential construction has a substantial *positive* economic impact for a community. This study’s methodology was designed by the National Association of Homebuilders, a private organization whose mission is to enhance the climate for housing construction and the building industry, and to promote policies that will otherwise improve the lot of its members.

Given these contradictory findings from two different models, one must ask which is correct: is new residential growth economically positive or negative for a community? According to Dr. Burchell, Center for Urban Policy Research, Rutgers University, only office parks, industrial development and some forms of housing are cost-revenue positive for a community while farmland and open space are neutral. This is presented in a Cost-Revenue Hierarchy of Land Use in a recent report *Fiscal Impacts of Alternative Land Development Patterns in Michigan* published by the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, SEMCOG (*see sidebar, right*).¹

The difficulty and complexity of accounting for all the costs and benefits involved in development leads to these significantly different results. Regardless of which study you believe, it can be inferred that for a community’s long term financial sustainability, a mix of land uses is favored.

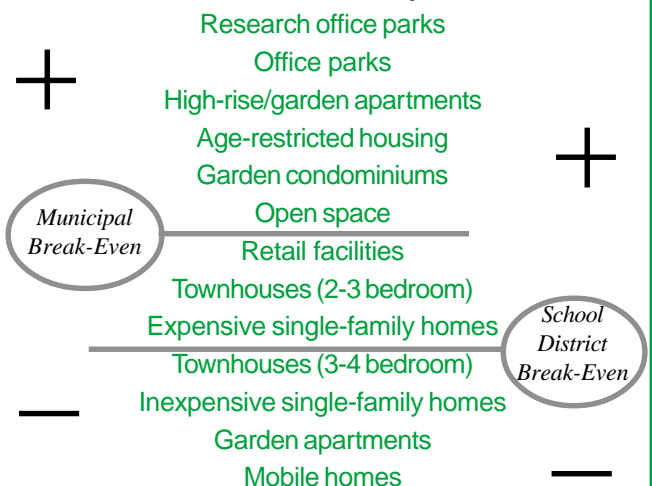
Beyond the financial sustainability question, often the most compelling reason why communities seek to change their development patterns is the impact of land development on the individual. One of the most common concerns related to land use change is the increase in the price of land. Price increases can occur as a result of land speculation years in advance of any

large population increase. Increased potential demand for land for residential use in an area, together with its ultimately fixed supply, will over time raise the price of land in that area. This is generally viewed as positive if you are a seller and negative if you are a buyer. A local landholder’s response is not as clear to predict. Increased demand for land may increase its assessed value and thereby increase an individual’s net worth. However, such an increase in land value also increases the property taxes due (although in Michigan the annual increase in taxable value was limited by passage of Proposal A to five percent or the rate of inflation).

Another concern raised by individuals is the additional traffic that accompanies new residential development. To a certain level, more vehicles are not a concern; eventually, however, increased traffic will contribute to additional road maintenance and/or traffic congestion. Overburdened roads also tend to become unsafe as additional driveways and traffic are added. Finally, in any discussion of the development of agricultural land and open space, the loss of rural character is usually mentioned. Fields that once grew corn are now sprouting up new houses. Open views are being obscured by rooflines and sheds. In addition, conversion of open space to housing adds to the amount of impervious surfaces, which may affect the watershed (i.e., ground water recharging and changes in flooding patterns).

Norgaard, continued on page 10

The Cost Revenue Hierarchy Of Land Use



Source: Fiscal impacts of Alternative Land Development Patterns in Michigan. Southeast Michigan Council of Governments. 1997.

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Sprawl, Highways, and Pockets of Poverty: A Systems Approach

Ralph Levine, Ph. D.

At 5:30 in the afternoon, I come to my exit on the freeway. Oh, oh, look at that line waiting on the exit ramp. Twenty minutes later, I finally get enough nerve to turn left onto Grand River Avenue. I make the turn and go into a little strip mall to pick up a gallon of milk. Within minutes I am in traffic again, going bumper to bumper down Grand River Avenue until I find the entrance to my subdivision.

This is pretty typical of people who live in the suburbs and drive to work someplace else. Actually, this lifestyle is only about forty or fifty years old. The purpose of this article is to understand some of the origins of sprawl from a systems perspective. A systems approach seeks to understand the dynamics within interrelated and often complex networks of individual components, rather than placing emphasis on the components themselves.

Act I: In The Beginning.

Picture yourself in the late Forties, just after the end of the Second World War. There were mainly two-lane highways going from one city to another. As more and more middle class families acquired cars, there could be some traffic congestion at the periphery of the city during peak hours. Congestion becomes a problem because it increases the time it takes to make a trip to home from work or to a store and back.

Around that time, people began to put pressure on politicians to either widen the roads or to construct new, larger roads into the suburbs. Such pressure led to constructing superhighways which, after a delay, gave plenty of road capacity to reduce the original problem of traffic congestion and long trip times. It was a way of coping with the problem of traffic congestion. Indeed, building more highways was and is the principal manner with which we deal with congestion.

Although road building temporarily took care of the congestion problem, from the long-term perspective there were some unintended consequences that have since neutralized the solution. When travel time was reduced, the people who were already using the highway system found it very attractive. The lack of congestion made it easier to make more discretionary trips. This increased traffic volume, which in turn again *increased* congestion. Now we are back to pretty much the same problem as before, namely a lot of congestion, but now we have lost land to roads.

Act II: Moving Out To The Suburbs.

As travel time decreased, people realized that they could leave the city and move out on the periphery, and still get to work on time. So, gradually, as good roads, highways, and affordable housing for middle class workers became available, many families followed the American dream by moving to the suburbs. Moving to suburbs was enhanced by the availability of jobs and the ability to move out of the core city with the new superhighways.

So what happened to those people who could not afford to leave for the suburbs? As more middle class workers moved to the suburbs, the proportion of residents left in the cities who were economically deprived increased. This lowered the tax base and strained the core city's service capacities. A decrease in capacities lowered the quality of service, which in turn made the suburbs even *more attractive* for the middle class population.

As a result, the geographic concentration of low-income people increased in cities, leading to extremely high pockets of poverty. Crime, drug use, and alienation went up, which led to an even greater incentive for those in the middle class to abandon the core city for the suburbs.

Act III: Business Moves Out, Too.

The middle class workers were not the only ones who were monitoring the opening of the suburbs through the freeway system. Many businesses were located in poor neighborhoods, where crime and vandalism were increasing as the poor became more concentrated. In some cities, the business structures themselves were growing older and less useful. Finally, as more of their labor force moved to the suburbs, businesses began to realize that if they relocated in the suburbs, they would still have a source of labor available to them. These became incentives for moving to the suburbs. As businesses left the city, they took their jobs with them, which increased poverty and crime even more. To make it even worse, this increase in crime led to more businesses leaving the area.

Act IV: The Shift Of Power To the Suburbs.

As businesses and population shifted to the suburbs, more political entities, in the form of townships, villages, and municipalities were formally created. Gradually, as the suburbs have increased in their economic and political strength, they have come to

Farmers, the majority of non-public landholders, are particularly impacted by residential growth in rural areas. Due to the nature of their business, many farmers have a significant investment in land, and their expectations on future uses of the land affect how they view change. A recent survey of 1,000 farmers in Kent County had some revealing results. Most if not all of those surveyed were concerned with loss of land and open space but were unsure what could or should be done about this rapid loss. In addition farmers stated they were having trouble moving equipment from place to place, and trespass and nuisance from neighbors were common complaints. However, a large number of respondents stated that they enjoyed the increased value of the land and were opposed to any changes that might jeopardize their ability to develop the land and thus increase its value.

In summary, research has shown that the large-scale conversion of farmland and open space to residential use is generally considered a net financial loss to a community. However, for a given individual, depending on where the person presently lives and the future plans he or she may have, these changes can be desirable for their impact on personal wealth.

Yet, if there are more losers than winners in a community, why is farmland conversion still permitted to occur? In many cases the true costs are difficult to measure – for example, how do you measure the benefits of “rural character”? And even when the costs are clear the effects are usually long term and not obviously linked to local decision-makers. For example, consider the recent change in funding K-12 education in Michigan from a principal reliance on property tax to reliance on sales tax. Township and county officials responsible for making land use decisions are not required to provide education, yet were usually sensitive to the fact that the tax base was providing the revenue to support public education. The connection between land use and provision / cost of education was further eroded when K-12 education was funded through the State sales tax.

Combining these factors with the fact that the present political culture and momentum are usually strong advocates for current trends, significant political capital is needed to make non-marginal changes to land use trends. Whether communities will be able to arrest the current trends in their communities, only time will tell.

¹ The SEMCOG report also showed that when the pattern of growth is compacted there can be savings in farmland, utilities (water/sewer) infrastructure (roads) and development costs.

Kurt Norgaard, Ph.D., is an Extension Land Use Specialist with the Michigan State University Department of Agricultural Economics.

have a profound influence on the allocation of resources. They eventually gained substantial political clout. One result was to be able to allocate more state funds for roads to the municipalities that surround the city and less to the core city itself. In the case of many metropolitan areas, a majority of the investment in highway construction takes place in the most rapidly growing affluent suburbs in the area.

Act V: It Never Seems To End. I have outlined the slow process by which roads and other forms of infrastructure have had a leading role in opening up suburbs and contributing to sprawl and the concentration of poor residents in inner cities. But the cycle does not end there. As time goes on, inner-ring suburbs fill up with houses, business and commercial structures and, given enough time, with roads and highways. As the total fraction of occupied land increases, construction in these older suburbs grinds to a halt. The highways become congested, but the favorite trick of building more roads becomes impractical. Agricultural land beyond the existing belt of suburbs becomes a prime target for development. The cycle described for the core cities begins to occur for the aging “inner suburbs.” Sprawl takes on a new characteristic, namely making the outlying greenspaces much more attractive for development than the original suburbs around the inner city.

The cycle of building road capacity extends into new territory to form the “outer suburbs.” These new roads, and infrastructure like sewers, provide the opportunity for people and businesses situated in the inner suburbs to move to the new outer suburbs. As the inner suburbs age, so does their housing stock. Some lower-income people are able to leave the oppressive conditions of the core city for newly affordable the inner suburbs. Over time, as more low-income people seek such housing, the tax base is reduced, which triggers another exodus of middle class people out of the older suburbs and into the affluent newer suburbs.

Thus, the dynamics of sprawl seem to play over and over again. They seem never to end as long as people are willing to convert agricultural land to other uses. It will be very difficult to reverse the process, yet the cost of sprawl in terms of lost agricultural lands, pollution, and sustained human suffering is mind-boggling. We will need to rethink how we might at least slow down the process of sprawl and deal with the highly concentrated residual pockets of poverty in our cities and inner suburbs.

Ralph Levine is a professor of Community and Ecological Psychology at Michigan State University.



FOCUS on LANSING



Urban Options *Bette Downs*

Comedian Tom Foote entertained children of all ages. Mid-Michigan environmental organizations publicized their programs. Wildlife biologist Jim McGrath invited his audience to handle snakes as he discussed their diversity. Urban Options, a Lansing area environmental agency, presented these and other events to celebrate earth Day on April 18. But "Every Day is Earth Day," an Urban Options publication proclaims.

Incorporated in 1978, the non-profit organization delivers multiple services through workshops, classes, tours, demonstrations, and school visits. In 1998, Urban Options made 60 presentations at elementary schools and provided over one million people with energy information. Through Urban Options, 60 households benefited from natural landscape consultations. Four hundred households received lead hazard information. Four thousand children and adults learned about composting. Three hundred low-income families had lessons in energy efficiency.

Urban Options operates Michigan's only Energy and Environmental Demonstration House, a combination headquarters and center where colorful displays illustrate conservation techniques. Glossy wood floors, pristine walls and natural light create an airy background for tips on everything from pest resistance to prevention of air leaks.

A detailed brochure sends a visitor on a self-guided tour. Each room carries specific messages. The living room provides insulation information, how to turn houses into cozy homes with affordable cooling and heating devices. One form of insulation utilizes recycled newspapers.

The sun room publicizes a traveling compost exhibit and shows how worms, nature's compositors, "help recycle food waste into valuable fertilizer." An Eco Store sells books and products for the "enthusiast and penny-pincher." A carefully planned landscape includes herbs and native plants rescued from areas slated for development.

The kitchen demonstrates conservation with recycled carpet, tile, plastic lumber, dry wall, and rag rugs. A passive solar system adds comfort. Urban Options director LeRoy Harvey proudly points out a new rain water collection system. Energy analysts from Urban Options assist businesses and homeowners through energy ratings, weatherization plans, energy audits, home improvement ideas, and money-saving energy tips.

Recently, Urban Options joined a growing number of organizations committed to the program of the President's Council on Sustainable Development. This national movement encourages the expansion of environmental groups and the formation of new ones. Participating organizations are urged to tailor their action to local issues.

The Rocky Mountain Institute Economic Renewal Program defines sustainable development as "the careful, economical, long term management of land, community, and resources." It further states, "The term sustainable development is rooted in a traditional value of stewardship. A growing number of communities are discovering that there is an alternative to economic development...based on expansion.



LeRoy Harvey

Urban Options

Downs, continued from page 11

[These communities] are embracing...a more balanced approach that weighs social and environmental considerations alongside conventional economic ones."

Early in May, the President's Council on Sustainable Development and the Global Environment and Technology Foundation chose Detroit for a National Town Meeting for a Sustainable America. The four-day conference searched for ways to harmonize economic, social, and environmental goals.

A Sustainable Lansing Community Forum followed on May 15. The cities of Lansing and East Lansing, the Michigan State University Center for Urban Affairs, and the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission were among the event's co-sponsors (*see article on page 13*).

Impetus for the Lansing Forum came from the Green Team, a discussion group of 40 concerned citizens, chaired by Urban Options board members Deborah Davis and Dr. Phil Shepard. The Community Forum emulated the Detroit Town Meeting in looking for ways to integrate economic, social, and environmental programs.

The Green Team is also considering strategies for measuring progress toward the desired blend. On June 22 and 26, as a follow-up to the Forum, Urban Options will host workshops focused on indicators or yardsticks for measuring success in the creation of sustainable communities; and the Green Team has established another possible avenue for measurement. "Green Teas," informal gatherings for dialogue about community sustainability are held at Urban Options on the first Saturday of each month and are open to the public.

Deborah Davis points out that measurement requires a look at quality as well as quantity. In measuring employment, for example, it is necessary to examine childcare and medical insurance provisions along with statistics on numbers working. Or, looking at transportation, it is important to see relationships. What is the relationship between asthma and the pollution caused by the automobile? Two other measurements, air quality and water quality, determine progress in the quest for a sustainable community.

The Urban Options Energy and Environmental Demonstration House is an ideal site for review of the goals set by the President's Council on Sustainable Development. The staff of nine, plus 15 volunteers and interns, tackles economic, social, and environmental issues.

Households benefit economically by following the energy efficiency tips offered by the Demonstration House. The home improvement programs of Urban Options upgrade neighborhoods and curbs the social pathology of urban sprawl. The ecological landscape at the Demonstration House nurtures the natural environment through good design, soil preparation, and water conservation techniques. All the elements of an integrated society are found in microcosm at the Urban Options Demonstration House.

Bette Downs is a regular contributor to Community News and Views. She lives in Lansing.

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"Community Voices" Are Heard Across Ingham County *Faron Supanich-Goldner*

The Ingham County Health Department is coordinating an initiative to enhance the individual and community health status of the Lansing area, with particular emphasis on the under-served. Community Voices, as the project is called, integrates four related community mobilization components:

Leadership Institutes: With the assistance of community partners, neighborhood infrastructure will be analyzed for targeted Lansing area neighborhoods. In conjunction with this assessment, leadership training needs will be identified and community health success indicators will be generated with residents and other partners.

Community/Neighborhood Health Summits: Facilitated by the area hospitals, Summits will be organized to report the findings of Leadership Institutes and to begin developing and prioritizing strategies for responding to health success indicators. These Health Summits will be hosted in several areas of the City of Lansing.

Democratized Data: This component of the Lansing Community Voices work will result in a resource for storing relevant data about the community in a system that is accessible to all citizens for various purposes. The Democratized Data project will also provide technical assistance to community and project partners to prepare them to use the data storage and retrieval system.

Health Realization Trainings: The final component of the Community Voices project is to offer training to residents in the principles of Health Realization, developed to facilitate change, reduce stress, and improve collaborative relationships among participants.

The W. K. Kellogg Foundation, as part of its Community Voices Initiative, is funding the five-year project. Community Voices is intended to achieve the following broad outcomes:

- Sustained increase in access to health services for the vulnerable with a focus on primary care and prevention;
- Preserved and strengthened safety net in the community;
- Changed delivery system in which quality care is delivered in a more cost-effective way; and
- Models of best practices that provide examples of different approaches and strategies for other communities to adapt and use.

The Community Voices effort in Lansing is coordinated by the Ingham County Health Department. For more information, contact Doak Bloss at (517) 887-4503.



FOCUS on LANSING



Sustainable Lansing Looks for Local Bottom Lines *The Green Team*

What sort of community do we want to be in the 21st century? How do we define progress so that local families, businesses, and environments are sustained and enhanced? How do we best meet present needs without reducing the ability of future generations to meet their needs?

Communities all over the country are finding out that they need to focus on many different bottom lines in order to assure that progress continues for everyone. It's not enough to have just a few healthy businesses if social and community structures and the environment are deteriorating. And, it's not good if popular indicators, like the gross national product or unemployment rate look like they're improving while local conditions are staying the same or getting worse.

Through broad-based participation and dialogue, each community can bring forth its own definition and understanding of sustainable progress. "Sustainable Lansing" is a local group that has begun to grapple with these issues for the Mid-Michigan area. Similar groups are active in hundreds of U.S. towns and cities, and more are joining in all the time.

The first Sustainable Lansing Community Forum was held May 15, 1999, at Lansing Community College. Some 60 people from the greater Lansing area shared accomplishments and began to explore the work needed to shape a sustainable future that affords fair opportunities for a high quality of life to all residents. Also in attendance was Michael Shuman, who discussed with the group the principles set forth in his book *Going Local*.

"Sustainable Lansing" is organized through the efforts of the Lansing area Green Team, an affiliate of Urban Options (*see article on page 11*). The next steps in this effort are day-long "Sustainability Indicators" workshops, on June 22 and June 26, at Urban Options. Participants will explore effective measures of whole community life

quality. They will brainstorm and refine indicators on their specific concerns about the local community, taking into account links among social, environmental, and economic factors. With other organizers of the Sustainable Lansing Community Forum, Phil Shepard will present a featured case study at the July 8 "Creating Sustainable Communities" Summer Institute at MSU's Kellogg Center.

Green Team meetings are open to anyone who shares the broad goals of sustainability. Anyone means all ages, backgrounds, vocations, and interests. Meetings are usually from ten to noon on the first Saturday of each month at Urban Options. Urban Options hosts a web-site for Sustainable Lansing at and maintains an Internet mailing list about sustainability in the greater Lansing area (*see links on page 2*). For other information, call Urban Options at 1-888-999-MICH, or send email to "info@urbanoptions.org".



Tom Stanton

Participants view posters to learn about sustainability efforts underway in Mid-Michigan. About a dozen area groups displayed posters at the forum.



Tom Stanton

David Wiener, Executive Assistant to the Mayor of Lansing, instructs participants on the process of holding afternoon dialogue sessions.

thing government can do for a community: empower the people to help themselves and each other.

I can't pretend that bringing our cities back to full health will be easy, or quick. But we must work together to make it happen.

We need our cities to be great cities. We need our cities to be thriving places where we celebrate the best of art and culture, of commerce and community. Dynamic cities are essential to everyone's quality of life, whether you live in downtown Dallas or the suburbs of Princeton. And they can also show smaller, suburban communities how much good can come from planning the way you develop and grow.

Saving open space and rejuvenating cities are, I believe, two essential ingredients of the smart growth we want in every state across this great nation. And the best way to make them happen is to build a consensus for those goals among the people in each community.

That means educating citizens about the long-term human and economic costs of sprawl. It means showing a better way, with model projects like transit villages. It means gaining the public votes -- or the private will -- to save land forever. Or removing barriers to smart growth, as we did with our rehabilitation subcode. And it means creating strong incentives for builders and lenders to invest in sensible, forward-looking development.

Let me finish by taking you back aboard Apollo 8 for a moment. Some of you may recall that the crew did a live TV broadcast on Christmas Eve, in which they took turns reading from the Book of Genesis.

As the crew beamed back pictures of the earth and the moon, Frank Borman finished the passage by reading "*And God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering together of the waters he called the Seas; and God saw that it was good.*"

Ladies and gentlemen, it was good. And it is good. This earth may be a crowded house, but it's the only home we've got. We owe it to ourselves and to our families to win the race for open space by promoting profitable development, livable communities, and environmental integrity. More to the point, we owe it to the generations that will follow us. We must make sure the children of our grandchildren will still be able to look upon the earth and the seas and this land called America and that is good.

Christine Todd Whitman is currently serving her second term as Governor of the State of New Jersey.

CEDP

CEDP Launches Affordable Housing Study

Faron Supanich-Goldner

The MSU Community and Economic Development Program has begun a two-year research effort to assess the capacities and needs of community-based affordable housing development organizations in Michigan. The project is supported by the Fannie Mae Foundation and by Michigan State University's Office of the Provost, Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies, and Agricultural Experiment Station. The research will be conducted in conjunction with community partners including Habitat for Humanity and the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC).

The research will consist of three phases. First, a detailed survey will be conducted of community-based housing organizations in three regions of Michigan (representing greater Detroit, greater Lansing, and a six-county region at the tip of the lower peninsula). This set of interviews will provide a wealth of information about the operation of these organizations, and will identify similarities and differences among the three regions in terms of organizational capacities and development needs. The survey will be followed by a more in-depth examination of a smaller number of key organizations, to be presented as a set of case studies to highlight the particular issues of community-based affordable housing development. In conjunction with these two elements of the project, a set of three policy briefs will be produced to describe in detail specific public policy questions or issues that impact the work of the organizations being examined.

The affordable housing research team is composed of CEDP faculty and students who have been joined by faculty members John Metzger (Urban and Regional Planning) and Matt Syal (Building and Construction Management) from MSU. This project will result in reports from each of the stages of the research, which will be available from the MSU CEDP.

Faron Supanich-Goldner is a Community Development Specialist at the CEDP and a member of the affordable housing research team.

Community Income and Expenditures Tool Implemented by Michigan Communities

Melissa Huber

The Community Income and Expenditure Model (CIEM) has reached an important milestone this year. After several years of CIEM projects being implemented by CEDP with support from the communities, five communities have initiated the implementation of the project on their own. With the support of CEDP, the CIEM is presently underway in Luce County, St. Ignace, Cheboygan, Onaway County, and Presque Isle County. This transfer of technology represents an important achievement in the CEDP's goal of providing tools that can be used and sustained by communities.

The CIEM was developed by the MSU Community Economic Development Program (CEDP) with support of the Economic Development Administration, U. S. Department of Commerce, to help communities identify their economic assets and opportunities for future economic growth by examining how money flows through the community. Using a community-based method of surveying, communities can discover how much money enters the community and how much of it remains local. The more money that is spent locally, the more it contributes to economic growth in the area. The number of times money circulates through the local economy before leaving the area is referred to as the "multiplier." Increasing the multiplier rate is particularly important in distressed areas because the fast pace at which money "leaks" out of the community is as much or more of a problem than the low volume (amount) of income to the area.

To help improve the multiplier effect, the survey is designed to identify large amounts of money being spent outside of the area. In the surveys, residents, businesses, government offices, and non-profit agencies are asked to report their expenditures in various categories, and the percentage of each that is spent locally. Expenditure categories are devised by each community and include different types of goods or services (such as groceries, clothing, lawn maintenance service, office supplies, raw materials, employee wages, etc.). In the same surveys, respondents are asked to report how much income they receive, and how much of this comes from local sources.

By understanding the flow of money into and out of the community, communities can begin to identify potential strategies for retaining more of the money locally by developing new businesses, expanding existing businesses, or attracting new development. With the involvement of the community stakeholders throughout this process, the community can determine to pursue growth strategies that are consistent with their values and way of life. In this way, the goals of community development and economic growth can be integrated and locally owned.

Melissa Huber is Project Director of the CIEM Team and a graduate student in Community Psychology at Michigan State University.

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