

Arnold Weinfeld Transcript

REX:

I'm Rex Lemore, I'm with the MSU Center for Community and Economic Development and I am pleased to welcome you to our continuing series examining Resizing Communities in a Just and Equitable Manner. Today's sessions will look at what our future holds and at some of our global partners who have also addressed some of these challenges with a presentation from Professor Uttke in Germany.

Let me say a little bit about the webinar series in preparation for our presenter today. We're hoping that this material will provide information from leading practitioners and scholars from across the world on the methods and strategies for resizing communities in a fair and equitable manner and facilitate thoughtful discussion and innovation collaboration amongst community partners and stakeholders engaged in resizing their communities. It's more than just a series of webinar presentations though; we are archiving this material so that you're able to bring it up at any site where you might have access to the internet to discuss this material and the lessons that are being shared from other practitioner/scholars around the world. So this will also facilitate conversations in your local communities around this topic. In addition we've created a collection of readable materials and other materials that are available on our website at ced.msu.edu/annualinstitute2011. Again this is in our effort to help you gain information to guide the resizing process.

Now if you haven't registered, it's no big deal this is open and available to everyone, however we would ask you do register so that we can keep you informed of additional events and opportunities as we continue to pursue this topic of resizing. And as we get through this session you will notice in the lower left hand corner of your screen a chatbox and we'd ask that you offer questions and comments for our presenters so they might respond to your concerns.

And with that let me introduce our presenter today, and I am particularly proud to do this having known Mr. Weinfeld for several years. He's Director of Strategic Initiatives and Federal Affairs for the Michigan Municipal League. Arnold is responsible for the planning and development of new programs, services, publications and outreach strategies to support the League's broad policy initiatives and related program. He also coordinates the League's federal advocacy efforts working directly with Michigan's congressional delegation and national local government organizations such as the National League of Cities. He also serves as the President of the Michigan Municipal League Foundation where he works to carry out the Foundation's mission of educating local officials in coordination with League programs. He is a graduate of Michigan State University with a Bachelor's degree in Social Science. He was an elected member of the Waverly Community School Board from 1994 to 2002 where he served as Treasurer of the Board and is currently serving and Treasurer of the Waverly School Foundation. So I will draw up Mr. Weinfeld's presentation here. Arnold?

MR. WEINFELD:

Thank you very much, Rex I appreciate the opportunity to be here today and to be a part of this annual institute and the webinar. As Rex said my name is Arnold Weinfeld and I am a part of the Michigan Municipal League. For those of you who are not familiar with the Michigan Municipal League, we are a nonprofit statewide association for cities, villages and communities across the state of Michigan. We provide a number of services for them, our main office is in

Ann Arbor and we have an office in Lansing, Michigan as well. We provide advocacy services both at the state and federal level and that's a nice way of saying that we lobby on behalf of issues of importance to communities across the state of Michigan. We also have a broad array of education programming that we do for local officials, putting on 70 to 80 education programs a year including an annual convention and a legislative conference. And we provide access as well to several fee based services for our members.

What we're about is creating communities for the next fifty years, not for the last fifty years. Over the course of the last few years the Municipal League has done quite a bit of research and exploration on what it is that is making other cities, states and regions across the country and across the world vibrant? And we held a series of public policy forums where we brought in speakers from across the state of Michigan and across the country to talk to us about those attributes that were present in those cities that were being successful.

We felt it was necessary to change the conversation for our members and felt that in the end that really it has little to do with Lansing or Washington or tax structure, the Headlee Amendment which is a revenue limitation amendment or revenue sharing which is what cities rely on in Michigan with funds back from the state. Not that these things aren't important, but that there are other ways that communities can move themselves forward. So before we go forward you have to understand where you've been and I'm sure that those who are taking part in the webinar now and doing this at a later time are all too familiar with the fact that Michigan over the last century has been a one industry state; auto manufacturing was the primary industry here and good jobs didn't require a four years degree. Jobs brought the people and our major city, Detroit, was a thriving urban center. I believe the picture you see there is of Woodward Avenue circa 1945/1950, crowded, busy, shoppers everywhere.

And looking back too, you also have to understand where you are and face what we call the brutal facts. And the fact of the matter is that the quality of life in our state, in our cities has been declining over the course of the last decade. Some of the latest figures we have from 2008 ranked Michigan 34th in per capita income which was a drop of 19 places in just 8 years. It's important to remember that while most of the United States has entered into a recession just since the financial crash of a few years ago; Michigan's recession has been ongoing for more than a decade. And mostly that's because manufacturing as we know it is gone and Michigan in particular did not adapt quickly enough to the knowledge based economy. And during the course of our recession we began under investing in two key anchors that help to make a state vibrant and that's our university system and our community colleges. And we have found that because of these actions that talented Millennials or young college graduates or whatever you want to call them, they don't want to live here anymore. We partnered with the associations of public universities in this state, did a survey and found that 46% of those that graduate from Michigan colleges leave Michigan following graduation. So the goal is to try to get them to stay here. We have some wonderful public and private universities here, quite a number of them as a matter of fact, but the key is to keep them here once they graduate.

So again what happened and what has been happening, the impact of the global economy, it's now knowledge based. We know that education counts and degrees matter. The know that the population is mobile and while technology allows people to work from anywhere, they're clearly choosing cities. And the old adage when the internet revolution started back in the 1980s that people where going to go live on their favorite mountain and work mobile from there just hasn't come to pass. Technology does allow you to work from anywhere but people are choosing cities and we are finding that place is attracting people. Young professionals and college

graduates are choosing where to live first and then looking for work. Several surveys over the last few of years have actually found that up to two thirds of college graduates ages 25 to 34 look for a place to live first and then look for a job. So for the Municipal League, an organization representing cities, that says to us that we better have some darn good places for people to live in if we are going to capture that talent. And there is a worldwide competition for talent.

So the U.S. is changing fundamentally and technology is driving new economic realities. We are entering more into a service economy and that is also happening in other countries as well, so it's not just simply a U.S. phenomenon. What we have here, this chart shows six of the top ten nations in the world by size of their labor force. China itself actually is 21% of the world's labor force and Germany is 1.4% of the world's labor force. But China, even China has seen its service sector grow by 191% in the last 25 years. So this evolution that we're seeing actually represents the single largest labor force migration in human history. Global communications, business and technology growth, urbanization, and low labor costs in the developing world are all in part responsible for this dramatic shift. The world in essence is becoming a giant service system and we need to better understand what this means and what skills 21st century workers who will be living and leading in this new market place will need to bring to the table.

And along with that the shift from rural to urban continues, not just in the United States, but across the world. This is a chart here from the United States and shows that in 1920 about 50% of the population lived in urban and about 50% in rural areas and today that's—as of 2000—was 79 to 21%. And we know that gap has even widened more, the United Nations has even done a lot of studies finding that the world is urbanizing at a faster pace than at any time and cities; more people are migrating to cities than any time in the world's history. So again, if we know what's happening in the marketplace we are able to understand what is needed at the city level in order to serve people.

And so then what does matter? Well as I've said it's a competition for talent. And what we have found is that states prospering in the United States have at least one major thriving metropolitan area with a high concentration of young creative talent. If I could blow this map up for you, you would see that in the southeast corner of Michigan is a large red area and that is a concentration of communities without children. And the west of the urban areas identified here Grand Rapids to the west, Lansing/East Lansing in the middle, Flint and Saginaw all have a certain percentage of young talent and it is aggregating in urban regions. If I was able to show you maps of Minneapolis or Madison, Wisconsin, other areas across the country we would see that here in Michigan what we have found out is that we are lagging greatly in the number of young professionals, young talent in our regions.

We firmly believe that we have to start measuring jobs in ones and twos, not thousands, for sustainability. The day of capturing the next big box manufacturing plant is long gone in Michigan and we believe in states and cities across the country. And we need instead of to hunt for the next big box manufacturing plant, we believe firmly in the principle of gardening your economy and working with local firms to build local jobs.

So what does matter? We know that this group of young professionals called Millennials matter. Whether you call them Generation Y or Millennials, doesn't make a difference what you call them but they are the most mobile group and the largest population group after Boomers in our society. As a matter of fact within the next few years they will probably overtake Boomers as the largest group in society. So it's important to understand if this group within your population is about to be the largest segment, how they live, what they desire. And we know that they like to

live and move together from place to place and that they seek interesting and unique places to “stumble into fun”: cafes, arts and culture, bike paths. And those informal “third places: the coffee shops, the restaurants, the bars. They do not buy 2,000 square foot homes, they rent 800 square foot lofts in downtowns, they entertain in these third places. So again, understanding the likes and dislikes of this large population group will help us to develop our cities to attract them.

We also know that connections count: social networking—I’m sorry—social networking, the art of civic acupuncture or utilizing small projects to institute big change. It’s not just one big thing that’s going to make our cities right again, it’s a host of small things that will turn them around we believe. And cities have to become the host of the party. They don’t have to be the life of the party but just create the situation to grow your communities, to help entrepreneurs, to attract those young talented people and give them the kinds of things they’re looking for in the places they live.

So we strongly believe in this thing called sense of place and it’s a term that’s banded about quite frequently these days and it’s often used to describe the emotional component of place making. It is about turning your neighborhood, your town or your city from a place you can’t wait to get through to one you can’t wait to leave. We’ve done a lot of work with people from across the country, one of them is Fred Kent from the Project for Public Spaces out of New York city and he says the differences between great cities and good cities is the quality of their public spaces and do you have good public spaces where people like to gather and come to?

Place making itself is the process and the result of creating a place with unique features that people want to use, be in, enjoy and/or remember because it was interesting or pleasurable to them, again that emotional element. It’s typically tied to physical places such as a good public space or a good restaurant. It’s always authentic and linked to one’s surroundings and again it creates that emotional feel, that sense of place. Think about the neighborhood you may have grown up in or the favorite city, a favorite city of yours, what makes it that favorite place? And it always goes back to an emotional feeling about that place.

So within that sense of place, place making is about accessibility. You want people to easily circulate in public spaces; you want them again to be able to “stumble into fun”. You want them to be comfortable, it has to be a clean, safe place that is unique with its own character and charm and one that creates a physical fabric where people can connect with one another. Sitting outside of your favorite restaurant and people watching is a favorite activity and creates that sociability. And people watching is an age old art that I think we’ve made too little of in the recent past but it goes a long way to creating that kind of sociability within the social fabric of your community.

So what works? Creating dense places, walkable places, arts and parks. We firmly believe that cultural economic development has to be an important element of a community’s overall economic development plan. And certainly green spaces and parks are a part of that as well. Even small towns with libraries and small historical museums need to take advantage of their culture. Leveraging anchor institutions such as libraries and universities, local communities need to understand who the anchors are in their communities and work with them to create a vibrant place.

The concept of a thousand nights: those in your community have a 1,000 nights by which it can hold these young people. And the concept of 1,000 comes to us from a good friend of ours by the name of Paul Shut. And what Paul came up with was the fact that most people wait about ten years now after graduating college to get married and they go out about twice a week during

those ten years, so you do all that math and it comes out to about 1,000 nights of fun. So does your community, does your region have about 1,000 nights of fun to attract people?

Transportation, transportation in its broadest form is something that is very important to local cities, local communities, and regions as a whole. And we're not just talking the automobile here anymore; we are talking about things such as high speed rail, light rail, trolleys, street cars, walkability. The concept of complete streets is important, making sure that your streets are places that are as friendly to pedestrians as they are to other forms of transportation. I recently took a trip out to Portland; it was the first time I had even been out to Portland, Oregon. We hear a lot here in Michigan about cities and Portland always comes to the top of the list and I was amazed in Portland's downtown in particular there were three lanes of traffic on their downtown streets: one was dedicated to automobiles, but another was dedicated to bicyclists and another was dedicated to their light rail system. And as we visited Portland we were told that, "Here the pedestrian is our first class passenger, don't be surprised when you are crossing the street that cars stop for you without honking" and sure enough there were times when that occurred. So transportation in its broadest form, making sure that people have a number of options in order to get around.

Diversity or being welcoming to all is certainly an important asset. People of all types of cultures in communities help spur economic development. Being green sustainable and again this is in its broadest form, having parks and pathways and green areas that people can enjoy. And access to technology whether it's in your downtown area or across your community is important as well.

Entrepreneurship, making sure that your city is again creating and having a place for creating those jobs by ones and twos and not just for that big box manufacturing plant. We don't say that we're totally going to give up on manufacturing in the state of Michigan or in our communities or in cities across this country, we still need to make things, but our economic development policies must also include policies that will help young entrepreneurs start their businesses and grow their businesses.

Every community has a story to tell as well and it's important that each community understand its own assets and leverage these attributes in a positive manner. Communities shouldn't become something they're not, there's only one for instance Frankenmuth in the state of Michigan which is a German culture community. Every community has their own assets and they need to leverage them. And collaboration and network are essential to doing that. Understanding who your anchor institutions are, collaborating with them, networking to leverage those assets. And this just isn't for big cities, small communities can certainly adopt to, adapt to and capitalize on their assets, but they have their challenges there's no doubt about it. Small communities are struggling to retain economic viability in the face of globalization, their struggling to retain their cultural identity and character in a changing world and develop their own sustainable niches that will help them to play a pivotal role in regional, national and global economies.

Small communities as well have a role in their own regions. And they have to learn to think regionally along with their larger urban communities. We need to understand that clusters drive local economies and that resource sharing between communities is important. Communities should have an asset driven regional plan with a rural focus probably on agriculture, tourism and recreation that helps to compliment an urban focus. Again you can't try to be all things to all people and it's important to recognize the inner relationships between rural communities and

urban communities. No longer can communities move forward simply on their own, there must be a regional plan, an economic plan between communities.

So at the municipal league we will be taking all of this information together that we've developed and researched over the last few years, we've created what we call the Center for 21st Century Communities and it is our primary tool for moving strategies out to local officials so they understand how to become a vibrant community for attracting economic development. And it's build around several various assets that have pictures with them much like the multiculturalism one and I don't know why they aren't showing up here. But the eight assets and I've kind of talked about them already.

Physical design and walkability, again this applies to big or small communities, it creates a physical fabric that helps promote social connections. Green Initiatives, critical asset of any viable community, impacting our natural resources, quality of life and financial bottom line. We are going to think we worked toward telling our local officials that we represent is that going green saves green. And to that end we've created the Green Communities Challenge that many cities, villages, townships, counties across the state of Michigan are participating in as they look to become more energy efficient in their processes as well as in their buildings and local environment aspects. Cultural economic development, it plays a huge role be believe in developing and preserving a community's identity and must be part of any long term strategy for community sustainability. It encourages civic engagement and its social benefits completely transform a community. Again entrepreneurship and the need to focus on creating jobs in the community by ones and twos for long term sustainability, people need to be invested in the community. Multiculturalism, again being welcoming to all. Understanding that with a global work force people can work from anywhere and they bring different disciplines, perspectives and a new way of looking at things. Messaging and technology, allowing people to connect and collaborate like never before, understanding that communities don't own the message anymore and need to find ways to reach out to younger people and engage them. Transit, I talked about that already. We are talking about the entire transportation system when we talk about transit, about creating connections between point A and point B where people quite frankly don't have to use a car anymore. And education, the entire K-16 education system is central to growing a knowledge based community and communities need to make sure they are leveraging these kinds of resources.

So to that end we have a number of strategies that we employ in terms of our member communities. The center itself provides member education and public outreach. We talk about these assets and bring in speakers from across the country. About 80-90% of our public education outreach with our members is based around our Center for 21st Century Communities program. We've developed a Speakers and Expert Bureau that we make available to our members, we have developed a Resource Clearing House where the best practices that we've identified with suggested websites and working with some of our smaller communities we've even been able to bring in people like Dan Burden who is a well known international walkability expert to our communities.

We've developed a series of technical services, right now we have five pilot projects in communities going on across the state of Michigan. For instance in our upper peninsula Sault St. Marie is working on a town down strategy between the city and Lake Superior State University and how to better connect students with the city. The city of Alpena in northeast Michigan is working on a cultural economic development strategy. The cities of Lapeer and Lake Thorpe Village are working on walkability strategies and the city of Ypsilanti in southeast Michigan is

working on entrepreneurship strategies. And we help them do this through the strategic partnerships that we've created. I talked about Fred Kent from Public Spaces, other national partners include the Congress for New Urbanism, CEOs for Cities, as well as in state partners such as Michigan State University here both their Land Policy Institute and their Center for Community and Economic Development have been strong partners with us in moving out these strategies to local communities across the state.

So this is what we believe it is going to take to right size communities moving forward. First of all we have to change the culture; we have to change our DNA. We have to, in Michigan in particular, be open to a new way of doing things. These kinds of strategies are somewhat new here in Michigan and it's going to take a while for us to move things forward. But we are changing the conversation, just last year for instance our state Legislature and then Governor signed into law complete streets legislation and Michigan now has more communities that have adopted policies or complete street policies or ordinances than any other state in the country so we are starting to move forward. We need to market ourselves differently using the web; we need to recognize that quality of life trumps taxes. Yes taxes are important for those of you out there, but there's no question that quality of life is most important in this effort. Any survey of business leaders that you find ranking one through ten what's most important for them, it is quality of life standards, it is safety, it is a skilled work force, it is education in the community and taxes usually winds up about 7th or 8th on that list. Understanding that communities have to highlight their own uniqueness and expand creative regionalism within those communities as well. And what we need are bold and visionary local leaders both within and on the outside of local government. We're starting to get more involved in the area of civic engagement, working with neighborhood leaders and nonprofits on the neighborhood level to help create more vibrant communities. Local government cannot do everything, government cannot do everything but what we can do is set the stage for creative growth and we believe that very much.

And that is our program. That is what we believe will right size communities. Our Center for 21st Century Communities and the Michigan Municipal League is at the forefront of working with cities across the state: large, medium, small, rural, urban and suburban and moving them forward. We're always going to have our political issues, we're always going to have challenges whether it be at the state Legislature or in Washington D.C., but the fact of the matter is that there are things that local leaders can be doing in each and every one of your communities to help to move them forward and we believe the strategies are at the forefront.

Rex, that's the presentation. I'd be more than happy to take any questions. I see actually you have one up there from Jen Malloy.

REX:

Yep and I responded to Jen, she was asking about the June 7th event. Our intent is not to webinar that, but we will do a summary of the series that will be a part of the discussion on June 7th.

But let me encourage participants to offer questions in the chatroom section of our webinar. As a way of beginning let me ask you a question, given the budget challenges that local governments faced, the strategies that you identify as being critical for our future, how are we going to be able to finance those types of activities from transit to place making? It seems that they are also going to be relying on public resources at a time when those resources are most stretched? Any insights on that challenge?

MR. WEINFELD:

Yeah I think that's a great question. A lot of the strategies I talked about are to us policy priorities. There is no question, you're right, when it comes to an issue such as transit and transportation there is going to be a lot of work there that needs to be done at the local, state and federal levels. And it is going to take, again, a shift in priorities. I think we've already seen that at the federal level with the Sustainable Partnership that's been created between U.S. Department of Transportation, the EPA and HUDD as they move forward with their policy priorities and we've seen, again, some of that in terms of funding. But when it comes to, for instance, the walkability and physical design strategy that's more a question of at the local level in particular, the zoning ordinance. For instance, does the community zoning ordinance allow for mixed use residential and commercial spaces? Over the course of time we have not allowed for that and it's very important that communities understand, again, that these mixed use places especially in the downtown areas are going to help to attract the kind of businesses and talent that are coming to cities now. So there are things within each of those strategies that we think communities can move on at very little cost, it's just a question of thinking differently, thinking creatively and realigning your priorities.

REX:

Thank you. Any other questions from participants? Well Arnold I don't see anything coming in so thank you for joining us today, I really appreciate your insights. And let me—

MR. WEINFELD:

I appreciate all your efforts and those of this institute and look forward to seeing the other webinars.

REX:

Thank you. Let me just offer a couple of closing comments here. Thank you to Arnold. There are additional series coming up particularly looking at the planning process, Mr. Weinfeld just spoke to that, also looking at public policy implications related to resizing our cities.

Also let me remind participants that on June 7th here in East Lansing we're hosting a face to face gathering where we're encouraging participants who have attended the webinar to come together to talk about what have we learned in the webinar, what more should we know about this process, what seems to be promising activities that we could implement in the short term and what might be some of the long term challenges we might focus on in resizing our communities in a fair and just way. So please join us on Tuesday June 7th at the Hannah Center in East Lansing.

Again if you haven't registered please do so and submit your information so that we can keep you informed of other events and additional materials related to this topic. I want to offer special thanks to our cosponsors in this event including the Michigan Municipal League and many other organizations in Michigan that have helped us plan and develop this event. And of course our advisory committee who helped us identify the content and the presenters who are joining us in this webinar series.

With that I'd like to thank folks for joining us today and we will be continuing our webinar series.