Partnerships for Smart Growth

CITIES AND CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

University-Community Collaboration for Better Public Places




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editors

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Preface and Acknowledgments

This book is the result of an initiative by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to increase cooperation with academic organizations to highlight university-community partnerships related to smart growth issues. It was the EPA's hope that this project would encourage more universities to become involved in partnerships with community organizations and local governments. As the federal agency responsible for the protection of our natural environment, the U.S. EPA has a strong interest in identifying and promoting best practices; it will encourage universities and communities to use the material in this book to develop their own projects. The Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning, the learned society for university-based schools of planning, is committed to helping its members implement innovative programs of teaching, research, and professional practice aimed at improving our physical and social environment.

We solicited chapters through a request for proposals and were very pleased to receive more than seventy proposals. This testifies to the prevalence of these partnerships and the national concern about the nature of urban, suburban, and rural growth and development and its effect on the environment and quality of life. We chose projects that best exemplified an innovative practice, a long-term partnership, or a demonstrated impact, and that were likely to be replicable.

We appreciate the initiative, support, and substantive advice given by the EPA's Carlton Eley and Amber Levofsky, who moved on to other responsibilities before the project's completion. Kevin Nelson ably replaced them at the EPA, and we are grateful for his assistance, as well as that of Geoffrey Anderson, who contributed to the introductory chapter. We also thank Katie Petrone, at the National Center for Smart Growth, University of Maryland–College Park, and Kristen Kepnick, at the College of Business Administra-

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Most important, we thank the authors of these chapters, and all the faculty, students, community residents, and public officials who were involved in the projects highlighted in this volume. We hope that they continue to be proud of what they did—for the beneficial effects on their communities, for their contributions to students' learning, and, now, as possible models for others.

Wim Wiewel and Gerrit-Jan Knaap

Introduction

Wim Wiewel and Gerrit-Jan Knaap

The subject of this book lies at the intersection of two topics of increasing interest. The first concerns recent attempts to improve urban growth decisions and practices. Often referred to as smart growth, efforts to create safe and convenient neighborhoods and to increase opportunities for walking, biking, and transit, as well as investing in existing neighborhoods before pouring money into new ones, have captured the attention of elected officials, businesses, and neighbors in communities across the country. The second topic relates to increasing interest in connecting universities' activities with their surrounding communities. Pressured by growing student interest in learning that is focused on real-world problems, by policy makers who view universities as catalysts for economic and social development, and by donors who want to see their contributions have impacts, universities have become increasingly involved in community outreach.

Universities occupy a significant position in many communities—as generators of economic activity, as land developers, as neighbors and property owners—so perhaps it is not surprising that, as universities have sought greater involvement in the community, they have chosen smart growth as a focal point. Nor is it surprising that communities have welcomed university involvement in land use development decisions. Universities and their respective neighborhoods strive for the same thing: an enhanced quality of life for residents, students, visitors, and workers. From the community's standpoint, the university can bring expertise, multidisciplinary resources, and academic rigor to the development discussion. The only real surprise, perhaps, is that more collaboration has not already happened between universities, with their planning departments, public policy schools, architecture studios, and economic development training, and the communities that have a need for these skills.

The Issue

Over the last fifty years, one pattern of development has dominated in the United States. Sometimes referred to as sprawl, it can be described as development that is spread out over large land areas, separating houses, offices, and shops from one another—leaving the automobile as the only practicable transportation option between them—and channeling investment to new communities and away from existing neighborhoods. Academicians and professionals have often raised concerns about problems associated with these development patterns. Lately, such concerns have reached the general public, as citizens have spent more time in clogged traffic, witnessed the loss of open space, and worried over tax increases and school crowding, while paying for infrastructure to support development outside their communities as their own infrastructure languished.

Often breaking down into a simplistic "growth versus no growth" debate, arguments have revolved around a number of issues. For some, concerns about the current development patterns are driven primarily by the perceived effect on the environment, as natural areas, agricultural land, and other open space are built up. Others focus on broader effects on the quality of life, such as the time spent in traffic, or an assumed loss of community. Inner-city advocates are usually more concerned with the equity consequences, as the ability of central cities to generate taxes is drained away by suburban growth. Yet others feel that the proliferation of separate municipalities associated with sprawl is inherently wasteful, or that the fragmentation of government will affect the economic competitiveness of a region. In each case, commentators, activists, elected officials, and policy makers are identifying areas where the costs of a given development pattern are not borne by the same people who reap the benefits, thus justifying public intervention.

Recently, however, the dialogue has changed. Communities are becoming more sophisticated, using smart growth strategies to catalyze job and revenue growth and to increase housing and transportation choices, while shielding them from negative impacts that can accompany new development. In essence, the debate has shifted away from dead-end growth versus no growth to new questions: How and where should we grow? How can communities grow so that they maximize growth's benefits and minimize its detriments?

The Role of Universities

Universities have become one of the major institutions addressing metropolitan development policy issues. Driven in part by the severity of urban

problems, as well as increased calls for accountability and "engagement," institutions of higher education have started to play active roles in bringing their intellectual and institutional resources to bear on their immediate environment. This movement has been actively supported by the federal government through such programs as the Department of Education's university-community partnership program and the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Outreach Partnership Center program (COPC). Within universities, departments of urban or regional planning have often been leaders in creating partnership projects, involving faculty and students with community and civic organizations. This involvement often has been of very long duration, moving from project to project, enhancing the public debate while providing research opportunities for faculty and broad educational value for students.

For instance, in the early 1990s the Center for Urban Economic Development at the University of Illinois at Chicago conducted a study of the relative costs and benefits of brownfield redevelopment compared with greenfield development on behalf of the Brownfields Forum, a collaborative project involving the EPA, the city of Chicago, the MacArthur Foundation, and several civic organizations (Persky and Wiewel 2000). That project led to a joint conference on the interdependence of city and suburbs organized by the University of Illinois at Chicago, the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, and the Brookings Institution (Greenstein and Wiewel 2000). This was followed by a request from the Civic Committee of the Commercial Club for the university to help produce an annual "regional report card" that measures progress on a range of sprawl-related indicators. A number of other policy documents, research papers, and articles were also published, all involving faculty, students, and civic organizations. The university also has been a participant in Chicago's Campaign for Sensible Growth. Thus, starting with one specific EPA-sponsored project, there has been a decade-long stream of policy-relevant research that has greatly contributed to the civic energy around the issues of sprawl, growth management, smart growth, and urban redevelopment in Chicago.

To explore these topics, this book contains case studies of efforts to promote smart growth at universities. The case studies were selected from a large number of submissions in response to a request for proposals. They provide examples from all parts of the country and different types of institutions, and involve university faculty, students, and staff. Despite their dissimilarities, however, they can be grouped into four categories: those that are embedded in university curricula; those that involve the work of a research center; those that result from collaborations; and those that involve the university as an integral member of the community.

Smart Growth in the Curriculum

The fundamental mission of universities is to educate students. And there is no better way to teach students than to involve them directly in real-world problem solving. To provide students with such an opportunity, most design-oriented programs—such as architecture, urban planning, and landscape architecture—offer or require pupils to take studio courses. In such courses, students often work directly with local governments, nonprofit organizations, or neighborhood associations dealing with the messy, complex issues of the real world. For many communities such problems involve some aspect of urban sprawl; thus, the remedy often includes smart growth.

The principles of smart growth are applicable not only in the design professions. Indeed, smart growth has become embedded in the curricula of programs in environmental studies, public policy, engineering, law, and others. Further, the nature of the studio course can vary a great deal. In some cases, the topics differ from semester to semester, problem to problem, site to site. In other examples, a sequence of studios can address the same problem in an ongoing relationship with one organization. Each approach has its strengths and weaknesses, but all can serve to promote smart growth.

Jim Cohen of the University of Maryland, College Park, writes about his studio course, in which he and his students worked with an advisory committee made up of residents and policy makers in Perryville, Maryland. Like many rural communities across the United States, Perryville suffered from the loss of manufacturing firms, a dying downtown, and haphazard, sprawling growth. To address these problems, the students referenced the smart growth principles espoused by Smart Growth America and the smart growth policies adopted by the state of Maryland. Based on these, the students offered the advisory group three scenarios—A Great Place to Live, A Great Place to Work, and A Great Place to Visit—and a specific set of recommendations for implementing each. In revisiting the community sometime later, Cohen found that the residents had implemented only a few of the recommendations. Still, according to the town administrator, the student report had so many useful references and innovative ideas that it has been used frequently as a guide and foundation for new policies and grant proposals.

Michael Greenwald and Nancy Frank of the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee (UWM) write about a sequence of studio courses led by Peter Park, a recent graduate of UWM's joint program in architecture and urban planning, director of planning for the city of Milwaukee, and adjunct professor at the university. Park used these courses to explore and expand ideas about removing a freeway spur in downtown Milwaukee. This spur, once part of a large-scale plan to encircle the downtown in freeways, formed a major barrier

between the downtown and otherwise healthy inner-city neighborhoods. In the studio courses, students constructed models and developed conceptual plans that showed how removal of the spur could help reconnect the neighborhoods with downtown, remove unsightly automobile infrastructure, and open up a large area for infill development. Through the persistent efforts of Park and the compelling evidence provided by students in his workshops, community leaders were persuaded, and the spur was removed. In its place there will be a revitalized, lively, mixed-use and pedestrian area—physical evidence of the power of students in promoting smart growth.

At the University of Oregon in Eugene, writes Robert Parker, the use of studio courses to promote smart growth is nothing new. In fact, the practice is older than the term *smart growth* itself. Oregon is widely recognized as an international pioneer in growth management. In 1973 the state adopted a land use program that featured farm- and forestland preservation, urban growth containment, and environmental conservation. Shortly thereafter, in 1977, the University of Oregon established the Community Planning Workshop (CPW), an experiential learning program closely allied with the Department of Planning, Public Policy, and Management in the School of Architecture and Allied Arts. Operating much like a consulting firm within the university, the CPW serves three basic functions: (1) it helps master's students meet their two-term practicum requirements; (2) it assists students by defraying their educational expenses; and (3) it provides professional-quality planning services to state and local governments at reasonable prices. Over the past twenty-five years the CPW has completed more than 250 projects ranging in focus from land use for transportation planning to affordable housing to rails-to-trails conversion and more.

Smart growth has also become an integral part of the curricula at the Conservation Clinic at the University of Florida, Gainesville. As described by Thomas Ankersen and Nicole Kibert, the Conservation Clinic was created in 1999 and is housed in the law school. The clinic became a formal component of the training and skills curriculum and the environmental and land use law certificate program. Launched with a donation from a generous former student, the clinic has developed a significant record of helping local governments meet the legal requirements of Florida's growth management system. The clinic helped the town of Marineland, for example, develop a sustainable tourism element as part of its comprehensive plan. It helped the city of Gainesville develop new policies for wetland regulation. And it helped the city of Cedar Key designate a community redevelopment area and a redevelopment plan to retain its traditional waterfront. Through these and other interdisciplinary projects, the clinic has helped train a new generation of smart growth lawyers and has shown graduate students in other disciplines how the law can be used to implement smart growth.

Smart Growth at Research Centers

Another fundamental mission of universities is research, some basic, some applied, and often conducted at research centers. Centers help universities pool resources and concentrate expertise on important and contemporary subjects. The National Center for Smart Growth at the University of Maryland is a prime example. But as the following cases make clear, a research center need not have "smart growth" in its title to promote its implementation. What centers often need, however, is funding from sources outside the university. With such financial support, they are able to apply highly advanced knowledge and technical skills to particular problems. For smart growth, this often means the application of geographic information systems (GIS). Because of its power to convey complex information in a simple visual format, GIS has the capacity to make urban problems better understood and amenable to various forms of analysis.

As described by Christine Danis, Laura Solitare, Michael Greenberg, and Henry Mayer, the National Center for Neighborhood and Brownfields Redevelopment at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, New Brunswick, is a prime example of a center that promotes smart growth. The center was established in 1998 in the Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers. New Jersey is well known for its statewide land use plan, under which local governments in designated urban centers must collaborate to implement the plan. For local governments in Somerset County, the center helped them do just that. With assistance from center staff, local governments in Somerset County formed a steering committee and began collecting information. With this information the center was able to identify opportunities for infill and redevelopment and highlight challenges common to each jurisdiction. The center then developed a GIS model to evaluate redevelopment and rezoning impacts. Those results were then used to identify projects that required intermunicipal and county cooperation. Its use of GIS technology in assisting Somerset County demonstrated how the technological capacities of university centers can provide not only a clearer regional vision but also serve as a vehicle for promoting intergovernmental cooperation.

Another interesting example of how the research capacities of a center can be used to promote smart growth is provided by Greg Lindsey, John Ottensmann, Jamie Palmer, Jeffrey Wilson, and Joseph Tutterrow. In 1981 the Indiana legislature abolished the State Planning Services Agency, leaving few places for local governments to turn for help on land use issues. To fill this void, the Center for Urban Policy and the Environment at Indiana University–Purdue University, Indianapolis, has served as a proponent for smart growth in an otherwise unsupportive environment. It does so through

collaboration with nonprofit organizations like the Indiana Land Use Consortium, and with such state commissions as the Indiana Land and Resource Commission. Working with these and other organizations, the center launched several major research projects to inform and promote smart growth in the state. One of these projects involves the mapping and monitoring of land use change in Central Indiana. This project has helped policy makers understand the extent and impact of urban sprawl. Another involved a smart growth audit of land use planning practices and policies, which provided current and comprehensive information about the state of planning in Indiana. A third project focused on the development of a land use forecasting model. This model gives state policy makers tools for exploring future development possibilities. While the work of the center has not moved Indiana to become a leader in land use reform, it has provided the foundation for improved state land use decision making.

Smart Growth by Collaboration

Universities are large, complex institutions. In many places they are among the largest employers in the community; in most places, they are communities unto themselves. Yet universities and their administrative units must collaborate with external organizations to succeed. They work, for example, with professional organizations on curricula, local governments on community development, and state and federal agencies on government policy. Universities also collaborate with a variety of organizations to promote smart growth. As the case studies demonstrate, this can occur through their work with nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and other universities.

As described by Priscilla Geigis, Elisabeth Hamin, and Linda Silka, Community Collaborative is an innovative partnership between the state's Executive Office of Environmental Affairs and the University of Massachusetts–Amherst. The seeds of the partnership took root in both organizations. They grew in part from the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, which launched a Preservation Initiative in 1999 to provide tools and information to local leaders to help them make informed decisions about land use and growth. They also grew from the Citizen Planners Training Collaborative offered by the University of Massachusetts Extension and Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning. Its mission is to provide training for members of official planning boards. With overlapping interests and the desire of both groups to expand their missions, the collaborative was formed and the Community Preservation Institute was launched. The institute provides education and training to local citizens, activists, and local government officials. Since its inception, it has trained 252 individuals from 136 communities.

A different kind of collaboration was formed at Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, according to David Gross and Edward LeClear. The Cornell case involves the university's Department of Natural Resources and the Edward L. Rose Conservancy, a land trust in Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania. As a nonprofit land trust, the goal of the conservancy is to protect natural resources, provide sanctuary for wildlife, and preserve the scenic beauty of the county. Susquehanna County, like much of Pennsylvania, is threatened by urban expansion, habitat fragmentation, and erosion of the agricultural economy. Together, the department and the conservancy have worked to conduct inventories of natural assets, develop resource conservation plans, and protect lands permanently from urban encroachment. In the process, this partnership provides real-world content for classes in conservation planning, senior practicum courses, and internships for master's students.

United Growth is the product of a collaboration between Michigan State University Extension, in Kent County, and the Michigan State University Center for Urban Affairs, in Grand Rapids. As a result, write Richard Jelier, Carol Townsend, and Kendra Wills, United Growth has an inherent urban and rural mission. Originally supported with a grant of $176,000 from the Frey Foundation, the project has since been able to generate over $800,000 from more than twenty-five funding agencies. With these funds, the project has provided training to rural audiences on farmland preservation, natural resource conservation, and alternatives for low-density development. It also has provided training on disinvestment and central-city revitalization to urban audiences. Funds were used as well to develop Michigan's first land use curriculum for elementary schools. This curriculum was piloted in fifteen classrooms in 2001 and served as the basis for teacher training in 2003. Finally, funds have been used to provide mini-grants and to support student projects, which include business district revitalization, neighborhood planning, crime prevention through neighborhood design, and historic preservation. As a result, United Growth has become a focal point for smart growth activities throughout Central Michigan.

Another example of intrauniversity collaboration is provided by the Community Design Team, which involves the Department of Landscape Architecture and the University Extension Service at West Virginia University, Morgantown. Modeled after the Minnesota Design Team, according to Christopher Plein and Jeremy Morris, the Community Design Team sends groups of faculty, professionals, and students into rural communities to help local residents address planning issues. Each team consists of twelve to twenty individuals with backgrounds in engineering, public administration, landscape architecture, forestry, medicine, public health, and other disciplines. Members of the team stay with host families on four-day visits, during which

the team listens to presentations from local leaders, participates in walkabouts across the community, develops a set of community plans, and participates in an open forum to discuss the plans. Because the design team focuses on rural communities, plans often include presenting new ideas on how to protect farmland, safeguard historic commercial areas, and revitalize the community. Through this process, the Community Design Team has pioneered new applications of smart growth principles to rural areas.

Smart Growth in the Community

Regardless of their particular missions, universities are integral parts of their larger communities. As such, they occupy space, shape the character of neighborhoods, and participate in public policy decision making. Universities can help implement smart growth on campus, in the surrounding neighborhoods, and in the larger communities that they are intended to serve.

The University of North Carolina is the dominant institution in Chapel Hill. According to Richard Thorsten, it is home to more than 25,000 students and has over 11.87 million square feet of floor space. To accommodate an anticipated additional 8,400 students and employees over the next ten years, the university launched a major master planning process in 1997. With the aid of several consultants and extensive input from residents of the greater Chapel Hill community, the plan sought to enhance an environment that already embodied many of the principles of smart growth. To make the campus even more attractive, efficient, and sustainable, the master plan promotes many smart growth principles, including providing more infill housing, mixing land uses, making the campus more pedestrian friendly, and protecting open spaces and environmentally sensitive areas. Under a development ordinance and other agreements with the city of Chapel Hill, the university will cover 40 percent of fare-free bus service to students and Chapel Hill residents. The North Carolina master plan and planning process illuminate why universities remain leading examples of the principles of smart growth.

As described by Meredith Perry and John Schaerer, the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (UTC) has been an instrument of smart growth even beyond the campus boundaries. UTC adjoins the historical and once-fashionable Martin Luther King District to form the urban core of Chattanooga. As part of the first phase of an ongoing urban redevelopment effort, UTC formed an alliance with the Martin Luther King Neighborhood Association, based on the university's need to grow in a landlocked campus and for the MLK district to stem its decline. Toward both ends, the university chose not to develop satellite facilities at the urban fringe, but to redevelop on the existing campus and its nearby neighborhood. Elements of the project included

the construction of new university facilities, including student housing and two schools, and the rehabilitation of existing homes through the provision of neighborhood amenities and home ownership incentives. As a result, the MLK district has improved dramatically, the university has a more secure and prosperous environment, and the UTC's philosophical approach to its metropolitan mission—that people and partnerships matter more than projects and funding—has proved to be an effective way to promote smart growth.

Brian Ohm is a lawyer and member of the faculty in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. In his case study, Ohm describes his role in the collaborative process that led to the passage of Wisconsin's comprehensive planning and smart growth law in 1999. As in many states, land use emerged in Wisconsin as a prominent policy issue in the 1990s. In response, Governor Tommy Thompson issued an executive order in 1994 creating a land use council comprised of state agency officials and a task force of various interest groups and local government officials. Like many such task forces, it produced a report that went nowhere. Subsequently, the Wisconsin Realtors Association approached Ohm to broker a meeting between the realtors and 1000 Friends of Wisconsin, a progressive interest group. Building on this alliance of longtime adversaries, Ohm enlisted the support of other stakeholders and eventually accumulated sufficient support for land use reform. As a result, in 1999 Governor Thompson signed into law Wisconsin's version of smart growth legislation. Though many challenges remain, Ohm helped build the constituency for new, smarter growth in Wisconsin—the first state in the Midwest to adopt smart growth reforms.

Summary

In their curricula, as part of a collaborative, as the home to a research center, or as a member of the community, universities across the United States are protagonists of smart growth. No two universities are the same, and no two promote growth in the same way. Still, evidence is ample in this volume's chapters that universities can promote the principles of smart growth.

The U.S. EPA has identified ten smart growth principles:

1. Mix land uses.
2. Take advantage of compact building design.
3. Create housing opportunities and choices for a range of household types, family size, and incomes.
4 Create walkable neighborhoods.
5. Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place.

6. Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas.
7. Reinvest in and strengthen existing communities and achieve more balanced regional development.
8. Provide a variety of transportation choices.
9. Make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost effective.
10. Encourage citizen and stakeholder participation in development decisions.

Including smart growth in the curriculum is an obvious way to promote it. Jim Cohen's studio at the University of Maryland was framed by Maryland's smart growth statutes and the EPA's ten principles of smart growth; it thus addressed every one of those principles. The Community Collaborative at the University of Oregon, because of its coevolution with Oregon's pioneering land use program, had long been promoting the principles of smart growth. The series of studios by Joe Park at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee led to the removal of a freeway spur; it thus helped direct development toward existing communities and promote transportation options. Finally, the law clinic at the University of Florida helped foster ecotourism and preserve wetlands, thereby enhancing distinctive, attractive places with a strong sense of place.

Collaborative efforts have been equally effective in promoting smart growth principles. Using collaborative training programs, the University of Massachusetts and the Office of Environmental Affairs directly encouraged community and stakeholder collaboration. Through the permanent preservation of rural land, the Department of Natural Resources at Cornell University and the Rose Conservancy have preserved open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas. In providing assistance to both rural and urban communities, United Growth at Michigan State University helps create a range of housing opportunities and choices to urban as well as rural residents. And via its Design Team, the Department of Landscape Architecture and the University Extension Service at West Virginia University helped to create walkable neighborhoods and foster unique, appealing places.

Research centers have both directly and indirectly facilitated smart growth. In providing advanced knowledge and technical assistance, both the Center for Urban Policy and the Environment at Indiana University–Purdue University, Indianapolis, and the brownfields redevelopment center at Rutgers University help make development decisions predictable, fair, cost effective, and better informed.

As integral members of the community, universities directly facilitate smart growth both on and off campus. The new master plan for the University of

North Carolina not only calls for more walkable environments, but also takes advantage of compact building design, preserves open spaces and environmental areas, and provides a range of transportation choices. Recent activities at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga led to much of the same, but by investing in the historic Martin Luther King neighborhood it elicited community collaboration and directed development toward existing communities. Finally, through his active involvement in Wisconsin's land use statutory reform, Brian Ohm played a part in moving an entire state toward a smarter form of growth.

While all four approaches to promoting smart growth are within reach of every university, the studio approach is perhaps the easiest and least costly. As Jim Cohen's example makes clear, all it takes is a single instructor and a single class. Sustained efforts, of course, such as those at the University of Oregon and the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, will likely lead to greater impacts. Collaborative efforts, like any marriage, take more effort, but can be more fulfilling. Land trusts, state agencies, and extension centers have capacities that academic units do not. As shown in Michigan, New York, and Massachusetts, collaborations of these kinds can extend geographic reach, enlarge the scope of staff expertise, and expand the limits of legal interventions. The Indiana and Rutgers examples show that the best way to influence policy may be to bring knowledge and technology directly to policy-making bodies. Of course, this is easier with grant support. Finally, a university's influence on its environment is inevitable. Here, the choice is not whether to influence community character, but whether that influence will promote or inhibit smart growth.

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