

NEWS & VIEWS

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American Planning Association
Economic Development Division
Making Great Communities Happen

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News & Views, published quarterly, is the newsletter of the Economic Development Division of the American Planning Association.

We welcome articles, letters, suggestions and information regarding workshops and other educational opportunities for economic development professionals. Please forward your submissions by email to our Editor, Shani Porter (address below).

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NEWS & VIEWS

October 1, 2010

Downsizing Detroit: How the Motor City is Using “Shrinking” as an Economic Development Strategy

by Alison Bates

Detroit's "right-sizing" plans reflect a seeming paradox: the luxury of contraction planning. By now, many of us have heard the grim statistics about abandoned housing stock, rising crime rates, and an unemployment rate of nearly 30% in the Motor City. The truth is that Detroit is a massive, sprawling city that is unsustainable in its current incarnation. "Today in Detroit 900,000 people navigate 139 square miles, an area that could contain the cities of Boston, San Francisco, and the island of Manhattan combined."¹ The population of Manhattan, Boston, and San Francisco is more than twice that of Detroit, and so in this situation we're dealing with a very low-density city with severe economic problems. Co-location and densification of limited resources can help alleviate some of these problems and begin to breathe new life into the city. Detroit's right-sizing strategy would do away with dilapidated building stock and open up land for farming and agricultural uses.

Although contraction planning aims to consolidate resources and

(continued on page 5)



Side-by-side houses in Detroit, MI.

OUTGOING CHAIR'S MESSAGE



Our annual meeting at the national conference in New Orleans was well attended. Besides addressing the business meeting formalities, we recognized our winner of the Donald E. Hunter Excellence in Economic Development Planning — Arlington County, Virginia, Neighborhood Employment and Revitalization Project. This was the first time we have given the award in the name of Donald Hunter, a long-time member and supporter who passed away several months ago. Several people talked about Donald's contribution to our field and profession, and Arlington County was well deserving of his memory.

An Honorable Mention was given to the International Center for Entrepreneurship and Community Development, State of Gujarat, India for their project, Rehabilitating Widows of Gujarat.

We also gave out our Student Scholarship Awards to Kate McCarthy and Eric VanderMass from Cornell University for their paper, *Industrial Wind Farms, Economic Development and Land Use: What Planners Need to Know* (see page 14). We also recognized Evan Robertson from Georgia Tech who received an Honorable Mention for his

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paper, *Hacker Spaces: User-Led Innovation and Economic Development* (see page 10).

Arlington County generously contributed their \$1,000 award to go towards the two scholarship winners, which was a welcomed surprise to Kate, Eric and Evan.

The Economic Development Division received a few awards itself from APA, including the Communications Effort Award for our EDD Blog and Social Media Outreach. We must really thank Shana Johnson for leading this project, which enables members and non-members to ask questions and trade ideas. Our most recent webinar in March attracted over 600 people nationwide.

We also received the Overall Division Performance Award for Leadership Succession Plan and Implementation. In the spirit of this award, I now pass the Chair's letter to Bob Lewis, who took over as Chair at the annual meeting. It has been an honor to work with the division as Chair, and a pleasure to work with the Board, during the last two years. I will still be involved as Past Chair and will be serving APA as the Board representative for Region VI. Thank you everyone for maintaining that important link between economic development and planning.

Here's to you, Bob! ■

— Bill Anderson, FAICP
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THOUGHTS FROM THE CHAIR



Every two years, the Economic Development Division rotates its elected leadership, and 2010 is the year for such changes. As outgoing Chair Bill Anderson, FAICP, notes elsewhere in this edition of *News & Views*, I accepted the gavel from him at APA's annual conference in New Orleans in April. Bill has the great knack for inspiring pride and good work by involving all members who want to chip in. Active participation by more of us in our own Division is the best way to grow, learn, and achieve. Many thanks to Bill for superb leadership!

Bill is not going away, however. He remains on our executive committee as Immediate Past Chair, the position held most recently by Rhonda Phillips, AICP. Rhonda has earned a well-deserved break from years of Division leadership in several capacities, but she always seems to have an idea for a project or conference session, so, like Bill, she'll still be around and I know her phone number. Many thanks to you, too, Rhonda!

Moreover, congratulations are due to Bill for being elected to the APA Board of Directors this year. We will take advantage of his inside knowledge and his access to the chief policy makers of the Association.

Our Division Annual Meeting at the APA National Conference in New Orleans was very well attended with a healthy diversity of senior and junior members. We were very proud to give Division awards to three students for two outstanding research papers (reproduced herein, too) and we gave an award to Arlington, Virginia, for best practices in economic development planning in its Shirlington neighborhood.

Our best practices award was officially renamed the Donald Hunter Economic Development Planning Award. Don passed away at the end of 2009 and had been a tireless supporter of both planning and economic development in APA and the International Economic Development Council. Remembering him annually with this award is an honor for the rest of us.

The New Orleans conference also ushered in a new Executive Committee. My position as Chair was actually determined two years ago when voted in as Chair-Elect. This time, the Division voted Julie Herlands as Chair-Elect. Julie is employed by TischlerBise in Bethesda, Maryland, and has served as

our Secretary-Treasurer for two terms. Julie will rotate to the Chair position in 2012.

Taking Julie's place as Secretary-Treasurer is Shana Johnson of Civic Synergy, LLC, in Springfield, Virginia. Shana had served the Division as Communications Director and still oversees our blog and various social networks.

The Executive Committee also includes several appointed volunteers. J.T. Lockman of the Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission serves as the representative for the former Resort and Tourism Division which is now part of the Economic Development Division. Shani Porter, most recently with Platte County, Missouri, is our new editor of *News & Views*. Jeff Mills of J.M. Communications in Vernon, Connecticut, will continue as our publisher of *News & Views*. And Adam Ploetz of the MetroWest Corridor Partnership in Westborough, Massachusetts, is our Conference Coordinator for the 2011 annual conference in Boston.

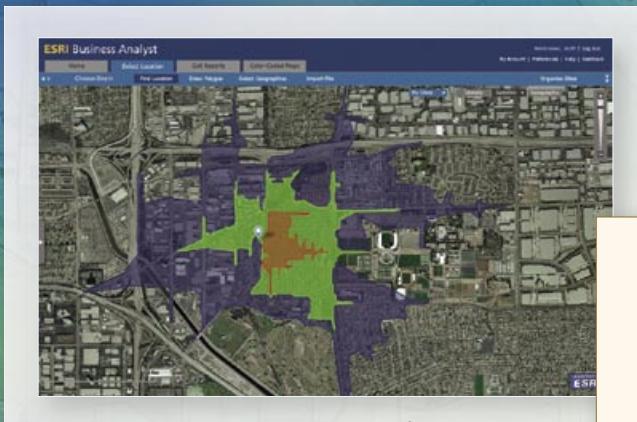
All of us are presently hard at work finding additional volunteers to contribute in various ways. Not only do we need authors for *News & Views*, but we need members to serve on various committees. In fact, we won two awards from APA for our active and creative work this year, so we need to keep it up! We will call on some of you to help with our bi-annual all-day workshop on Economic Development tools at the national conference. This attracted 70 participants at the Minneapolis conference!

Still, it is often a lot easier for all of us to contribute to the profession in our state chapters and local sections, so we urge you to volunteer close to home as officers, committee members, speakers, mentors, and authors. As you do so, talk up the importance of planning in economic development — and vice versa — both to increase the general conversation and to generate additional members for the Division.

Toward that end, the Division has a supply of colorful "postcards" touting our great advantages and benefits. We'd be delighted to send some to you for distribution at local and state meetings. Just let me know! And never forget how easy it is to find us on the APA web page. Just click toward Divisions and click on Economic Development.

Thank you for being an EDD member and helping to advance our mission. ■

— Bob Lewis, AICP
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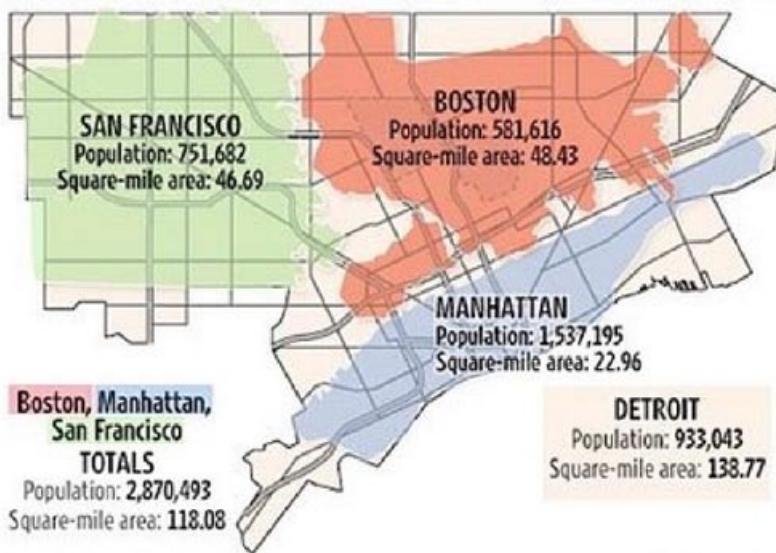
DOWNSIZING DETROIT, CONT. FROM P. 1

create a more economically efficient urban system in the long run, the fact remains that contraction is a costly process in the short term. Detroit can only condense if the city has access to substantial funding to properly research city parcels, and to safely demolish buildings and dispose of debris. "It costs the city about \$10,000 to demolish each single-family home."² The city aims to demolish 10,000 homes, which of course makes the total price tag for the demolition alone \$100,000,000. The city has already acquired \$20,000,000 from "federal Neighborhood Stabilization Program money and about \$6 million from other funds"³ to demolish between "2,500 to 3,000 of the roughly 10,000 dangerous houses that are on the demolition rolls."⁴

Much of the data used to inform the planning process comes from Data Driven Detroit (D3), a research organization intent on being a one-stop-shop for all pertinent City data. D3, in conjunction with two partner organizations, conducted "a survey of every residential parcel in the city of Detroit (around 350,000 parcels)."⁵ This is the survey credited with revealing that one third of the houses in Detroit are vacant. D3's primary data collection also assessed building type, condition, existing schools, hospitals, and recreational areas. From this data, D3 was able to construct maps to begin to overlay shapefiles to get a clear understanding of the current condition of the city. For instance, these maps revealed areas of high concentrations of occupied buildings in good condition, and also illustrated clusters of existing resources such as hospitals and schools. Detroit is fortunate in that D3 is funded by private organizations ("\$1.85 million from the Kresge and Skillman foundations").⁶ Without private investment in D3, the parcel-by-parcel primary data collection would not have happened, and planners would not have access to informative and accurate maps of current neighborhood strengths and weaknesses. Contraction is a planning process like any other. The same data collection and analysis that is required of expanding or redeveloping a city is needed for reducing a city's size and functions.

Plans to turn tracts of land in downtown Detroit into farmland comes from an assessment process involving the use of economic indicators. As much as possible, research groups are attempting to draw conclusions about how to downsize based upon current assets and opportunities. One interesting finding in the proposed

Comparing Detroit to three other major cities



Source: University of Detroit Mercy

Detroit Free Press

downsizing plans is the universal commitment to a "triple bottom line" when assessing economic strengths. For instance, the Community Development Advocates of Detroit (CDAD) mentions in their plan for revitalization that "CDAD believes that we can and must reinvent Detroit and account for the triple bottom line, and the strategies suggested here adhere to that belief."⁷ The American Institute of Architects' plan for a "Leaner, Greener Detroit" contends that true economic development for Detroit will occur "where economic opportunities are created in ways that are environmentally responsible and socially just."⁸ This approach to determining environmental and triple-bottom line indicators of economic growth allows for areas of agricultural land and the establishment of urban homesteads to be viewed in terms of their positive economic influences. While in an older paradigm of identifying economic indicators, large tracts of underdeveloped rural land may have been thought of as exhibiting high opportunity costs, the reigning indicator definition in Detroit today includes measures of increased health potential, reduced emissions, and calculates the unemployed and underemployed manufacturing labor-base as assets to the city.⁹

The CDAC recently released a plan containing specific recommendations for Detroit's "right-sizing." "The CDAC recommends the city's neighborhoods — and even pockets of neighborhoods — be classified as one of 11 different 'zones,' ranging from naturescape, to urban homestead, to green venture zones and industrial areas,

(continued next page)

DOWNSIZING DETROIT, CONT. FROM P. 5



Abandoned school in Detroit.

to strip mall shopping and urban villages, and dense city neighborhoods and an active riverfront, all connected by a series of 'greenways'.¹⁰ The plan takes care to allow those who wish to remain where they are the ability to do so, while providing incentives and assistance to those who relocate to more dense areas. The zone designation is fluid and flexible, allowing for the reevaluation of zones over the next five years to determine if these areas should again change their zone designation and land use. "In some cases, zones are designated as 'transition' zones; these areas are improved in the short term, but their future is up to those who live in the neighborhood."¹¹

The Kresge Foundation is also responsible for the acquisition of famed urban planner Toni Griffin to head the downsizing plan. Griffin recently gained attention with her plan to reawaken dilapidated downtown Newark, NJ, and is now focusing her efforts on Detroit. "While Griffin will work inside the city's planning department, she won't be on the public payroll. Her salary, plus the cost of assembling a team of consultants, is covered by Kresge."¹² Informed plans for contraction and well experienced planners with real world experience in this sort of urban planning to lead the process are made possible in distressed areas through public-private partnerships. In this sense, Detroit is lucky to have leveraged this support. "Detroit can't possibly accomplish all these goals on its own. Nor can the philanthropies. Even if the dozen or so major foundations currently active in Detroit were to pitch in a billion dollars over the next decade — which is possible — it wouldn't begin to fill the bucket."¹³ Since planned contraction is a strategy for distressed areas, and since the process itself requires costly planning and resources, public-private partnerships are a key ingredient in initiating an informed and effective right-sizing plan.

While none would claim that Detroit has been lucky as of late, the ability for the city to amass a body of dedicated and committed investors to help pay the hefty costs of contraction planning has been fortuitous. The costs of becoming a smaller city are immense, and for cities in need of down-sizing, the costs seem all the more unobtainable. Any city that finds itself in need of contraction planning likely does not have millions of dollars immediately available to carry out the process. Detroit has been fortunate in that it has gained access to the capital by bringing together many stakeholders to create an informed planned for a smaller city. ■

Alison Bates is an economic development specialist in Saratoga Springs, New York. She can be reached at alisonbates0303@gmail.com.

Endnotes

¹ PBS. Blue Print America: Beyond the Motor City. Blue Print America: PBS Reports on Infrastructure. Minute 59:00. www.pbs.org/wnet/blueprintamerica/reports/beyond-the-motor-city/video/939/. Last accessed 3/12/2010.

² Hackney, Suzette. Detroit Can Afford to Tear Down at Least 2,500 Homes, Council is Told. *Free Press*. February 22, 2010. www.freep.com/article/20100222/NEWS01/100222031/1320/Funding-exists-to-tear-down-at-least-2500-Detroit-homes. Last accessed 3/12/2010.

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⁵ Data Driven Detroit. Detroit Residential Parcel Survey. <http://datadrivendetroit.org/>. Last accessed 3/4/2010.

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¹⁰ Detroit Yes. A new Detroit: CDAD Neighborhood Revitalization Framework. March 10th, 2010. www.detroityes.com/mb/showthread.php?t=4899. Last accessed 4/19/2010.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

Determining the Fiscal Need for Public Intervention in Redevelopment

by Bob Lewis, AICP, CEcD, Principal, Development Strategies, Inc.

Communities are often barraged with requests for “development incentives” when proposed projects just do not seem to earn a sufficient rate of return. How do public officials figure out which projects deserve incentives?

Any site can be placed on a continuum that indicates the relative balance between the value of the land (i.e., ignoring improvements on the land) and the value of the improvements (i.e., ignoring the land). Almost all property taxing jurisdictions distinguish between the two — land is valued separately from what’s on the land. It’s possible to use the ratio of land-to-improvements value in evaluating incentive requests.

Ideally, the relationship between land value and improvements value will be balanced in a fully thriving community. As the economy is manipulated by the invisible hand toward equilibrium, so says the theory, all real estate values will achieve an appropriate balance. This doesn’t mean that land value is equal to building value, but that there is an appropriate balance that is effectively expressed in the “rents” that the property generates — sufficient income to pay all operating and maintenance expenses, debt service, and a competitive rate of return to the owners.

We all know, however, that a perfect balance for all properties all the time never happens.

To one side of the equilibrium continuum, therefore, would be sites where the ratio of improvement value to land value is too high. To the other side would be sites where the ratio of improvement value to land value is too low.

Properties that have perfect balance do not need public intervention because the economy is operating as it should. Likewise, properties on the “stimulative” side of the continuum do not need public intervention because the underlying value of the land is a strong enough incentive for property owners to develop or redevelop in order to “capture” that value through higher economic rents. That is, if the land value is so strong, then high paying tenants will want to occupy the location, so the property owner needs no economic incen-

tives to, say, build a bigger or better building and attract such tenants.

Where intervention might be necessary is on the “blight” side of the continuum. This is where the value of the improvements is high, but the location value is relatively low. For example, there might be a very expensive building on the site, but the site is too poorly located to attract tenants willing to pay rents that reflect the value of the building. So the building remains underutilized, probably with poor maintenance, and can become a blight in the community.

All cities have experienced varying degrees of these conditions. The corner of “Main and Main” in a vibrant downtown, for example, represents a site either in balance or in a stimulative condition. But a formerly

successful shopping center on a major arterial road might no longer be well located because major retailing has moved to the interstate highway interchange. Demographic and household income shifts also change the location value of shopping centers.

“Blighted” might be too strong a word in some cases, but there are properties that are clearly blighted while others we tend to call “marginal” because they show early signs of imbalance favoring the value of the improvements. For whatever reasons, the value of the land is diminishing

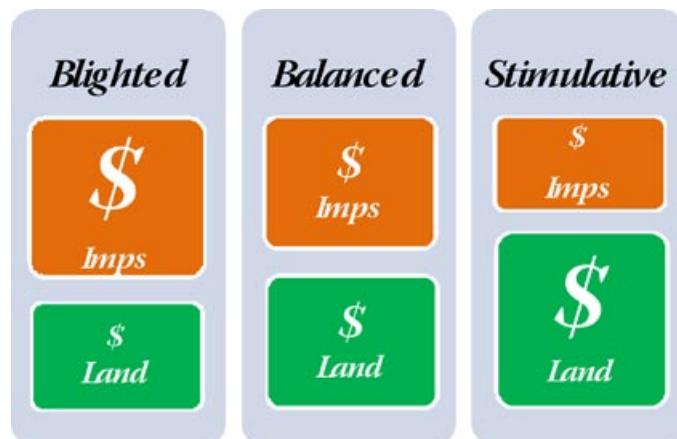
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Any site can be placed on a continuum that indicates the relative balance between the value of the land and the value of the improvements.

successful shopping center on a major arterial road might no longer be well located because major retailing has moved to the interstate highway interchange. Demographic and household income shifts also change the location value of shopping centers.

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PUBLIC INTERVENTION IN DEVELOPMENT, CONT. FROM P. 7

relative to the operating costs and value of the building. In such cases, there is technically no economic incentive for the property owner to improve the property to a higher value. Stronger rents cannot be achieved at that location. Thus, the building is effectively allowed to deteriorate to a value more in balance with the value of the land — and rents will inevitably decline.

Ridding that blight requires improving the value of the land and/or reducing operating costs. A city government might work harder to reduce crime, increase the quality of the utilities, or re-pave the street to increase the site's location value. Indeed, these are useful intervention techniques for properties just beginning to go out of balance on the blight side of the continuum.

More drastic measures, however, are required for more advanced stages of blight. Thus, cities often offer to buy the land and turn it over to a developer at no cost, thus reducing the new property owner's exposure to the rate-of-return imbalance. Or substantial public infrastructure investments might be made to increase the location value. Tax increment financing is often an appropriate tool in this case because higher values, triggered by the "new" infrastructure, should generate "new" taxes, some of which can be siphoned off to pay for the needed improvements. Tax abatements, tax credits, direct payments, etc., may also reduce the property owner's exposure to the improvement/land imbalance and/or to increase the location value of the site.

What defines "balance," however? In most communities, a simple indicator could be the aggregate value of all land divided by the aggregate value of all improvements (or vice versa). This is, in effect, the average for

the entire community. Individual property ratios that significantly deviate from this ratio can be identified as opportunities for higher value development (stimulative) or opportunities for public intervention (blighted).

Multi-year measures of this aggregate balance can be utilized to minimize statistical variations year-to-year.

Perhaps even better is to determine the equilibrium ratio using a much larger geographic area, say a county-wide or metropolitan-wide measure. A central city might have its own balance, but that ratio might not be the same as, say, the adjacent suburban county.

properties fall into the blighted end of the continuum while the suburban properties are more weighted in the other direction.

In any event, this equilibrium concept can be an effective indicator of properties needing public incentives and those that shouldn't need such incentives. Public officials need to marshal resources as carefully as the private sector, so the use of such statistics can guide better decision-making. ■

The premise of this article is drawn from a panel session on Spatial Economics at the 2009 national conference of the American Planning Association. Panelists were Steven Shwiff, who heads the Department of Accounting, Economics and Finance at Texas A&M University; Robin McCaffrey, who is a principal with Mesa Design Group in Dallas; and Carissa Cox, an associate with Mesa Design Group. Interpretations of the panel's presentation in this essay are entirely the author's, however.

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Arlington County, Virginia, Neighborhood Employment and Revitalization Project Wins 2010 Excellence in Economic Development Planning Award

The Shirlington area of Arlington, Virginia is the 2010 recipient of the Donald E. Hunter Excellence in Economic Development Planning award from the American Planning Association. The award is the presented by APA's Economic Development Division.

"Making Shirlington a Magnet" is an economic development plan that enabled neighborhood to quickly become one of Arlington's top neighborhoods, drawing a variety of people from around the region to its eclectic mix of theater, shopping, dining and entertainment. Located just minutes from Washington, D.C., its proximity to the District, the Pentagon, and major transportation arteries which create easy access to the rest of Arlington and Alexandria, and a variety of residential options make it a superb location for young professionals, families, and empty-nesters.

Of particular importance for the Awards Committee was the length of time that Shirlington's plan has been working, a demonstration of sustainability and relevance. In the late 1970s to early 1980s, the County, together with the community, developed a plan for the revitalization of Shirlington, a then-aging commercial area adjacent to a major interstate, I-395. An extensive and intensive community process — a hallmark of Arlington development — guided the creation of Shirlington's Phased Development Site Plan (PDSP) and the associated Shirlington Design Guidelines.

Shirlington's success has been the result of an extraordinary partnership between the County, the property owners and the community. Shirlington showcases an exceptional mix of uses — residential, retail, office and hotel — complemented by the Shirlington Library, Signature Theatre and access to nearby County and regional parks, and exemplifies the benefits of a careful and comprehensive planning process. Shirlington supporter and business owner Warren Brown, owner of Cakelove with locations in Washington, Silver Spring, and Shirlington says it best. Brown, who made *Inc. Magazine's* list of 26 Most Fascinating Entrepreneurs, opened a Shirlington location of his popular D.C. bakery in 2007, said "I'm going to Shirlington 'cause it's the bomb. People know it for its food. And it looks really cute, too."



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This is a grass-roots economic development program that required intensive planning and extensive faith in its potential. The results have been dramatic, and represent the best of the Donald Hunter award's selection criteria of originality, transferability, quality, comprehensiveness, implementation and contributions to the community.

Runner-up in the Awards selection was an innovative and exciting program in the State of Gujarat, India, that assists an unusually large number of widows to obtain economic independence. The International Centre for Entrepreneurship and Career Development (IC-ECD) has achieved remarkable success with thousands of otherwise impoverished widows.

The Excellence in Planning Award, which is accompanied by a \$1,000 grant, was formally given to the Arlington at the annual conference of the American Planning Association in New Orleans during the Economic Development Division's annual meeting on April 12. Arlington, however, returned the grant so that it could instead fund an additional student scholarship from the Economic Development Division.

The awards committee consisted of four members of the division: Bob Lewis, principal of Development Strategies, Inc. in St. Louis; Shani Porter, Community & Business Outreach Coordinator for the Platte County, Missouri, Economic Development Council; Matt Asselmeier, Associate Director of Public Relations and City Council Liaison for the City of Alton, Illinois; and Alison Bates, a graduate student at the State University of New York in Albany.

Donald E. Hunter passed away in late 2009. He was a long-time and very active member of the American Planning Association, always urging greater attention for economic development planning. He was President of Hunter Interests Inc., an award-winning real estate development and consulting firm based in Annapolis, Maryland. Don also served as a board member of the International Economic Development Council (IEDC) and the International Downtown Association (IDA). He was a frequent speaker on real estate trends and leading edge development and financing techniques, and received recognitions and many other national awards during his long career. ■

The following article is a reprint of an outstanding research paper which won a Student Scholarship Award at our Division Annual Meeting at the APA National Conference in New Orleans.

Hacker Spaces: User-Led Innovation and Economic Development

by Evan D. Robertson, Graduate Student, School of City and Regional Planning, Georgia Institute of Technology

Evolution works like the Nairobi market, not like the throwaway society of the wealthy West. You can evolve further only by using what you have in new and interesting ways. Organisms have no equivalent to currency for acquiring something truly new; they can reconstruct only from their own innards.

— Stephen Jay Gould

A problem plagued evolutionary biologists in the mid-nineteenth century: if evolution is a series of incremental stages, then at some point a bird's wing would have only been five percent of its current size rendering it useless for flight. How then did this useless trait become an appendage absolutely necessary for flight? The solution posed by Darwin was that the bird's wing was first used to regulate body temperature; flight was the "latent potential" of the nascent wing (Gould, 1996). Much like evolution, innovation is reliant upon the latent potential housed within a society's economy. Teflon's first purpose was to provide a non-reactive surface in the manufacture of nuclear weapons, iconic Kleenex was first used as a sanitary cold cream remover before its widespread use as something to blow your nose into, and Thomas Edison's phonograph was marketed as a business correspondence device (Kawasaki, 1999). Each innovation was a dormant economic force until circumstance allowed the latent potential to become manifest.

Evolution, Innovation and Economic Development

The link between evolution and innovation is important as it provides economic development planners with an opportunity to learn from this natural process. The success of evolution is based on its ability to provide the planet with infinite diversity. No one species, arguably until Homo sapiens, had complete dominance over the eco-system; allowing life to burgeon in a fairly stable environment for billions of years. In contrast, the traditional methods of innovation focus solely on the rapid commercialization of latent potential. This divides the population into two groups: those who innovate and those who consume innovation. The division leads to

homogeneity, a lack of diversity; thus, a dearth of latent potential. The evolutionary process teaches us that diversity and latent potential are intertwined. Our current method of innovation does not reflect the codependency.

User-Led Innovation

Everyone has the innate ability to innovate. For example: when you're about to drive a nail into the wall and you realize you are without a hammer, you may decide to use the nearest heavy book to take the hammer's place. At the moment you first strike the nail with the book you have engaged in an elementary form of innovation. This type of innovation is what Eric Von Hippel calls "User-Led" (Von Hippel, 2005). You, the user, had demand for a product that was not readily available and took it upon yourself to modify an existing resource to meet your specification. While the example is a singular act of one person, user-led innovation is a process that requires a community of innovators. User groups are composed of "firms or individual consumers that expect to benefit from using a product or a service" (von Hippel, 2007, p. 294). The open source software industry is a good example of the diverse groups that spawn around user-led innovations. In this industry, users can consist of individual programmers, programmers working for small open source software firms, or programmers in multi-national companies such as Google, Oracle and Microsoft. These programmers, regardless of firm size, all use their intimate knowledge of an available product's shortcomings to create a new innovation.

Users in the open source software industry begin the innovation process "because they are not satisfied with the existing software or simply because the required software feature does not exist" (Bitzer & Schröder,

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p. 223). Software programmers alter the freely available open source code to meet their individual needs. Many times the alteration sparks interest among fellow programmers leading to the creation of a user innovation group. Apache, an open source web-server software, grew from a user community centered around a server run by the National Center for Supercomputer Applications (NCSA). NCSA allowed users to freely access the source code and asked for the group to make modifications to it. The project eventually lost the support of its developers and was scrapped by the NCSA. At this critical point, the users of the server software decided to carry on the project with the open source ethic. A recent Netcraft survey demonstrates the project's impact. Netcraft surveyed 206,741,990 websites and found that 53.84 percent ran Apache (Netcraft, 2010). Microsoft's server software, according to the same survey, ran on only 24.08 percent of servers. The success of Apache is partly due to the user innovation network's ability to perpetuate the project once the lead developer lost interest. The success is also based on the three principles of user-led innovation.

Hippel suggests three main conditions which allow user-led innovation networks, such as Apache, to spawn into successful ventures: 1) some users innovate, 2) some users freely reveal, and 3) users can self-manufacture their products cheaply (von Hippel, 2007). The first condition is met when at least one innovator within a network begins the innovation process. This sole innovator is usually called the "lead-user" (Von Hippel, 1988). All users needn't join the lead-user in designing the product or service, but all are welcome to attempt. Indirect innovators within network can still aid the development of the product or service by giving valuable user feedback on how the product or service functions over normal and extreme use. Secondly, the open exchange of information is a key to the success of the user-led innovation process. Users don't attempt to patent or secure copyrights to their ideas. Instead, they freely share their designs and the processes required to make the innovation to all members of the network.



Indeed, this runs counter to the conventional economic development view of the importance of intellectual property as Nunn and Worgan state, "Innovations and the property rights to them directly affect the income and economic vigor of regions" (Nunn & Worgan, p. 237). Intellectual property rights, however, stymie the economic and innovative potential of user-led networks. The user group acts as a problem solving network requiring a free exchange of knowledge in order to create an optimized final product. Moreover, the free exchange of ideas gives user groups considerable advantages over conventional manufacturers largely because of their direct access to users' needs and the low cost associated with sharing ideas over the Internet (von Hippel, 2007). Finally, users are able to commercialize their products and create viable businesses only when mass manufacturers are unwilling to supply the market because they deem it unprofitable or are unaware of the product's demand. This gives the user innovator enough time to gain a strong foothold in the niche market. "The very special skills of the lead users and their connectivity with the community" (Hienerth, p. 287) are key competitive advantages the user manufacturers can enjoy even after mass manufacturers have entered the market. When mass manufacturers do enter the market place they can remain unaware of the innovative power of the user community for up to five years (Hienerth, 2006).

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Implications for Economic Development Planners

The difficulty in fostering user-led innovation networks within a local economy is that these networks operate over a medium which is ubiquitous; it is not tied to place. Someone's idea can become another area's innovation leading to a new industry in yet another area. This is both blessing and curse: innovation can happen anywhere, and innovation can happen everywhere. Normally, it would be closer to a curse except that there is one type of user-led innovation network that is beginning to coalesce in physical form. This location-based, user-led innovation network is called a hacker space. A community, once dedicated to the collaborative power of the Internet, is beginning to value face-to-face interaction. One member of a hacker space voices the realization, "In our society there's a real dearth of community. The Internet is a way for people to key in to that need, but it's so inadequate" (Tweney, 2009).

Hacker Space Defined

Hacker Spaces are "community-operated physical places, where people can meet and work on their projects" (Hackerspaces.Org, 2010). A hacker, in this case, is not someone who is attempting to access your bank accounts, steal corporate information, or engage in other forms of cyber mischief. Hackers are, as Nick Bilton describes, "a pretty wide variety of people, but definitely all geeks. Not Dungeons and Dragons-type geeks, but more professional, working-type geeks" (Tweney, 2009). Think of them as technology-oriented Do-It-Yourself enthusiasts. The projects they work are complex, but each involves the modification of some existing product into a new use. For example, a member of HacDC took a Nintendo Wii controller (Nintendo Wii is a popular video game console that uses a motion sensor controller) and turned into a musical device (Musgrove, 2009). One such organization is located in Atlanta, Georgia.

Freeside

The first meeting of Freeside, a hacker space in Atlanta, was rather brief. The February 2009 meeting note contains one sentence, "6 people, talked about

basic community outreach and classes and stuff" (Freeside, 2010d). The brief meeting evolved into a "Georgia nonprofit corporation, organized to harbor a community of coders, makers, and information security researchers in order to promote collaboration and community outreach" (Freeside, 2010c). The nascent organization's meeting notes focus on two key issues: financing and location. Funding for the organization was raised largely from a \$300 membership start-up fee and monthly

membership dues. As the organization continued to meet at Manuel's Tavern, a local Atlanta pub, these do-it-yourself entrepreneurs began to gather a strong following. After enough money was raised, members voted on a list of locations across the metro area. The Freeside members chose a 5,500 sq. ft. industrial space a few minutes' walk west of MARTA's West-End station.

Freeside engages in two key activities: teaching classes and carrying out projects. Instructional classes provide one outlet for Freeside to accomplish its community outreach goals. A list of weekly courses offer an eclectic arrangement of skills and knowledge: a Saturday sewing lab, a Sunday night basic welding

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course, on Thursday night a Python programming class, and circuit bending on Wednesday night (Freeside, 2010a). Members of the public are encouraged to attend these courses which are generally free. The programs offer the community a chance to interact with technology in a new way, develop a basic understanding of how to manipulate technology and the ability to judge whether a certain subject is of personal interest. Moreover, the courses allow the individual to explore what types of innovations they can concoct; building their innovative capacity. For more advanced professionals, hacker spaces offer a helpful environment in which to hone one's skills.

Freeside's second function is to support individual and group projects. One of Freeside's active group projects is building a Replicating Rapid-Prototyper (RepRap) (Freeside 2009d). A RepRap machine is a 3D printer which, using plastic, prints 3D objects (Bowyer, et al., 2010). Essentially, the machine allows someone

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who has created a three dimensional model in a computer program to “print” that model. Another completed project is Freeside’s mini-foundry. Creative Loafing describes the foundry as, “A combination of two metal buckets, some concrete, and the same propane gas tank used for standard home barbecue grills, the foundry is a simple tool offering limitless possibilities” (Williams, 2009). Both the Foundry and the RepRap machine will allow Freeside members to self-produce necessary parts to aid their individual projects thereby reaching organizational self-sufficiency. Individual projects fall into various assortments of categories and reflect the individual’s interest in a given field. One member is working on a dog house that is cooled by a solar powered fan (Freeside, 2010b). The individual benefit of innovating in a collective environment is, “If you’re hitting a roadblock on your latest project, the chances are good that somebody else in the group will be able to help” (Musgrove, 2009). Hacker spaces give individuals access to group resources and, most importantly group knowledge.

Conclusion

The local economy is a Nairobi market. A local economy’s capacity to innovate is dependent on its “innards,” its intrinsic resources. Instead of relying on a bifurcated innovation structure, user-led innovation networks focus on diversifying the economy’s innovation base. The diversification leads to an increase in the latent potential housed within a local area’s economy; thus, there is greater potential that an economy’s resources will yield an innovation. Hacker spaces create innovative diversity by introducing the individual to their innate innovative mind. These place-based innovation networks act as a bridge between the local economic development planner and user-led innovation. Planners can collaborate with their local area hacker space to create strategies that will broaden the community’s capacity to innovate. Strategies could involve linking high school students interested in technology with the organization or weekend workshops in which professionals design and build their own innovation. A list of hacker spaces and their locations can be found at the following link: http://hackerspaces.org/wiki/List_of_Hacker_Spaces. The direct economic impact of these organizations is uncertain. Members of hacker spaces are vehemently opposed to commercializing any innovation that occurs at the space. More importantly, commercialization undermines the spirit that drives the space’s innovative engine. The indirect impacts of hacker spaces are more substantial. These place-based user innovation networks are founded upon a culture of innovation. They trans-

form the passive consumptive habits of society into an active, critical interaction with consumer products. Hacker spaces foster a culture which is constantly discovering something new. ■

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The following article is a reprint of an outstanding research paper which won a Student Scholarship Award at our Division Annual Meeting at the APA National Conference in New Orleans.

Industrial Wind Farms, Economic Development, and Land Use: What Planners Need to Know

by Kate McCarthy and Eric VanderMaas, Department of City and Regional Planning, Cornell University

Planners, economic development professionals, and local officials¹ find themselves at the center of discussions about industrial wind farms because these developments have both economic development potential and major land use impacts. For some towns, hosting a wind farm may be an exciting opportunity for economic growth and "green" industry. However, as countless newspaper articles, websites, and town

meetings have revealed, these projects can tear at the very fabric of towns whose sense of community is their greatest source of pride.

Federal subsidies, increasing awareness about climate change, and states' promotion of energy production with renewable portfolio standards mean that the issue of industrial wind will remain important for years

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to come (U.S. Department of Energy 2009). Because of this, planners need to answer two questions: First, how do wind farms contribute to local economic development? Second, what are the implications for planners and local officials, who must “re-tool” to manage the wind development process? To answer these questions, we will define “industrial scale” wind farms, explore how they promote local economic development, and then suggest actions to manage wind development at the local level. We will close by questioning how local economic development and land use decisions might change in the future. Our paper uses interviews and research from upstate New York, a busy site for wind development.

The Basics of Industrial Wind

Planners are being called upon to manage all types of wind development — small wind, community wind, and industrial scale wind farms — but this brief focuses on industrial scale wind power. These “farms” can range from a few, to hundreds of turbines, and produce power that is sold to a utility company and distributed via the electrical grid (American Wind Energy Association, 2010). A wind farm’s classification as “industrial” depends on the size of the turbines and how much power they are rated to produce; generally including turbines with generation capacities over 1MW. Many sleek-looking models stand over 400 feet tall from their concrete base to the blade tip. Wind companies usually lease land from private landowners rather than buying it, with leases typically lasting from 20 to 30 years. Negotiating these leases can be a challenging situation for private landowners and planners, who may be unfamiliar with negotiating such contracts. The lack of knowledge can leave many issues unaddressed. For example, who is responsible to decommission and remove the turbines upon project termination (Barton 2009)?

Common concerns about industrial scale wind include noise, the “flicker” from spinning blades’ shadows, ice throw, bird and bat fatalities, and visual impacts. Careful siting of turbines minimizes some of these problems, but they remain important questions for residents. Because of this, some states have created model wind ordinances, and many localities have tailored plans and

ordinances that address local concerns related to wind development.

In the wind development process, there are companies — we call them “wind developers” — who liaise with large wind energy companies to orchestrate wind farm installation, much like a general contractor. Developers assemble land leases, obtain permits, and purchase and install the turbines. Because the energy companies who manage the farms are often multi-national firms (Aeon, First Wind, and Gamesa, for example), wind developers represent a bridge between a global industry (turbine manufacturing and energy) and local projects (wind farms). A global wind energy market means that developers must compete against other developers for turbines. In addition, they must install the turbines in time to fill their reserved (and contracted) space on the electrical grid, and face penalties if they fail to meet the reserved capacity. These factors combine to make industrial wind development risky even without the local approval processes that can stall a project or tie it up in litigation.

For town officials — many of whom are volunteers — this development process consumes substantial time and resources during negotiation, permitting and build-out. Equally challenging, local officials have the role of balancing the rights of private land owners with broader, larger community goals. They must consider whether these efforts are worthwhile for the payments, leases, and jobs the development will bring.

Economic Development I: Taxes, PILOTS, HCAs, Land Leases

■ Alternatives to the Property Tax

Like other types of development, a wind farm increases the land valuation where it is built, yielding a high property tax assessment (Reynolds 2009, Isamann 2009). This benefits the local tax rolls but some developers say it makes building cost-prohibitive (Reynolds 2009). New York’s real property tax law, §487, tries to make it less cost-prohibitive by providing a generous 15-year shelter from real property taxes for industrial wind installations (New York State: Office of Real Property Services 2010).²

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In addition, in New York, towns, developers, and county Industrial Development Agencies (IDAs) can utilize two financial tools to compensate towns. The first is the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT), made by the developer to the town. These payments start off small at the beginning and grow as the project becomes profitable. Like taxes collected by a local government, PILOT revenue is split, by formula, among the different public services (schools, special service districts) and governments (town, county). This can be problematic if the local government's share represents the smallest percentage of the formula, since it may not cover the time and money spent during the wind development review process.

In New York, the county's Industrial Development Agency (a private benefit corporation independent of local government, charged with promoting economic development) is empowered to negotiate PILOTs with the developer, separate from the local government. While the intention of this arrangement aims to assist economic development, it means that the locality earns less since the PILOT payment is lower than a standard property tax assessment. So, while a PILOT payment may be better than no tax revenue at all, its negotiation by the IDA limits local power over the revenue benefits of development (Hevesi 2006).

To balance the PILOT payments, which start small, some municipalities negotiate a "Host Community Agreement" (HCA). With the HCA, the developer makes payments up front directly to the municipality. In contrast to the PILOT, the payment amounts decrease over time. This arrangement allows the town to cover its up-front development-related costs.

■ Land Leases

The leases that developers sign with landowners can be very lucrative and generally leave the land available for continued farming. While profitable, landowners may find themselves in the same position as the local government: having to accept a negotiation without much knowledge of their land's worth as an industrial

wind site, since it is likely a new use. Increased landowner knowledge may help to bolster the bargaining power of communities as they develop an understanding of wind development and the regional market for it (Tegen 2008).

Economic Development II: Employment

■ Local and International Jobs

The most important question for economic developers is how many jobs wind farms create. Per unit of energy, the construction, manufacturing and installation processes needed to create a wind facility produce more

jobs than coal and gas facilities (Kammen, Kapadia and Fripp 2004).³ However, the bulk of jobs lie in turbine manufacturing, much of which takes place outside the U.S. (Kammen, Kapadia and Fripp 2004). The challenges to establishing wind manufacturing in the U.S. are twofold: first, it is significantly less expensive to manufacture overseas, and second, the U.S. has been inconsistent with its incentive programs (i.e. the Renewable Energy Production Tax Credit) and energy policy (Tankersly 2010). As wind development continues to grow in importance, debates about whether to provide subsidies to international conglomerates manufacturing wind turbine parts outside the U.S., will continue (Chipman and Duce, Bar Funds for China-Backed Wind

Farm, Senator Says (Update 1) 2009).⁴

Locally, most hiring comes from the 12-18 month construction phase. After that, operation and maintenance creates a permanent job for every 10 to 20 installed turbines (Hunt 2009). The exact number of jobs and required training varies with technology and location, but the limited manufacture of turbine parts in the U.S. means that job creation potential of wind power is not being fully realized (Tankersly 2010).

■ Wind Compared to Other Development Types

Compared to other economic development like regional retail, industrial wind farms are different in two

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main ways. First, when a leading retail store expresses interest in a community, it often generates additional store development — a very visible type of growth. Wind farms do not share this trait: they generally do not attract additional wind farms. Second, wind farms generate almost no sales tax revenue (multiplier effects from local employment aside). There may be tax on the electricity consumed, but wind farm presence does not necessarily affect regional electricity usage.

Wind may be a good economic development strategy for some towns, but it has limitations. Wind installations are not generators of growth like regional retail, and the jobs during construction are limited, even if they are filled by local residents. Ongoing operations and maintenance jobs provide some benefits, but perhaps fewer than touted. However, PILOTS, HCAs, and leases can benefit a town's coffers, as well as individual property owners, and wind installations do create more jobs than a comparable non-renewable plants (Kammen, Kapadia and Fripp 2004). These benefits need to be balanced directly with the shared positive and negative externalities (advancing renewable energy, possibility of a reduced property tax rate, viewshed, community concerns) and the opportunity cost(s) of occupying land with turbines. The benefits take on greater importance in rural areas that lack other economic development opportunities — wind might look pretty good. Marketing information from wind companies can also obscure the actual economic development benefits, making this a difficult decision. The balance sheet for each community will look different depending on their location and the other available economic development options.

Planning for Wind Development: Now and Later

We conclude that while industrial wind energy has economic development potential, its benefits may be overstated. For many reasons, however, including state and national goals for alternative energy production, the building of industrial scale wind farms will continue. With this in mind, what steps can help manage the wind development process? Given the current context — local review of energy siting decisions — we present four ideas, gleaned from research and interviews, to help public officials and planners manage wind development.

■ Four Actions that Help Manage Wind Development

Work with community members early and often — Discussing how (and if) wind fits in with a town's future before a wind developer arrives allows people to have their questions answered and voice their concerns

without having to "take sides" in the face of change. Assessing a community's potential for development (i.e., windiness) can help determine the urgency of this work.

Involve a neutral third party — Including a knowledgeable third party can help engage residents in a conversation about wind, develop ordinances and, perhaps most importantly, help towns negotiate for the maximum benefit if they decide to permit development. An attorney can be a key player, but engineers, foresters, and mediators can also help.

Gather information about the developer — Wind developers take many different approaches to negotiation, working with communities, and dealing with environmental and conservation issues. Because of this, it is essential to gather information about a wind developer's previous projects. Looking at financial statements, talking with local officials where the developer has worked, and searching for newspaper articles are a few "due diligence" approaches that officials can take.

Develop zoning and wind ordinances — Many prime wind farm sites lie in towns without zoning or comprehensive plans. This gives landowners flexibility on how they use their land, but leaves towns without any way to regulate wind turbine siting or other industrial development. We strongly recommend that town officials spend the time and money to develop guidelines that reflect their town's goals. A comprehensive plan, a zoning code, and/or a wind ordinance can define things like setbacks and bonding for decommissioning. This may be challenging in places that have not traditionally regulated land uses, but it is worth considering to manage development on this scale.

■ A Possible Future: Centralization of Siting Decisions?

Even as we consider how local planners and officials can manage industrial wind development, we need to ask a tough question: how long will energy siting decisions remain local? In New York, the complexity and costliness of the wind development process, along with the stated Renewable Energy Portfolio Standards, suggest that the state may be poised to increase its control over wind farm siting decisions. Lawsuits by developers represent companies' frustration with the inefficiencies of some local processes but at the same time, it is easy to understand why towns take their time. This is new, it is complex, and whatever the potential of wind, they want to proceed cautiously.

The now defunct legislation known as Article X, which streamlined and centralized permitting and

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review for energy plants over a certain size, is again being debated in New York. Specifically, suggestions to reduce the 80MW review threshold to 30MW would capture more wind projects (Assembly 2010). This could lead to efficiencies from centralized (state) permitting, but also less local control over the review and permitting processes.

Ostrow and Salkin, recognizing both the importance of wind energy and its externalities, suggest a model of "cooperative federalism" similar to the Telecommunications Act (TCA). A federal wind siting policy would set general parameters that serve overall energy goals, while leaving specific siting decisions to local governments (Ostrow and Salkin 2009). They suggest that, just as the TCA facilitated quick creation of a nationwide wireless communications network, a federal policy could encourage alternative energy production in a timely fashion.

If more states centralize approvals for industrial wind farms, our research about whether towns should pursue industrial wind as economic development may become moot. The new questions for economic developers will include, "How can towns with wind farms bargain for economic benefit when they have less control over the siting process?" "How can local expertise, vision, and needs be aligned with the goals of energy policy via centralized decision making?" and "Who bears the costs for any externalities caused by wind turbines?" Experience with other types of natural resource extraction (natural gas, coal, oil) may offer lessons.

The work of planners, economic development professionals, and town officials is just beginning. The volatility of gas and oil prices, continuing subsidies for wind, plus advances in turbine efficiency will likely increase wind's importance to upstate New York and elsewhere. Decision-makers will be under significant pressure to balance local economic development needs and options with land use impacts and quality of life concerns. At this point, the best approach that communities can take is a proactive one that considers what they want for their town's future, and whether wind, as a specific economic development strategy, fits that vision. Wind may be "green," but it is still industry, and planners and others will need to find a way to manage it as such, both in terms of economic development potential and land uses. ■■■

Kate McCarthy graduated with a Masters of Regional Planning from Cornell University in May of 2010. Her planning and research interests include voluntary approaches to regional planning; the connections between transportation and land use; Smart Growth; the resiliency of fast-growing metropolitan regions; and planning and growth issues in Maine and New England. She

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Eric VanderMaas is a second year graduate student in the City and Regional Planning Department at Cornell University. Returning to graduate school after a professional career owning a municipal building firm, he brings a practical knowledge of balancing budgetary limitations and political will with community sentiment surrounding capital investments. He now studies the changing interplay of land use planning and economic development in response to the climate and energy era. He currently interns with the Adirondack Park Agency within the divisions of Regulatory Programs and Planning, and expects to complete his degree in December of 2010.

Endnotes

¹ We include "planners, and economic development professionals," along with "local officials" while recognizing that many of the rural towns where wind farms are located do not have planning staff — indeed, many have volunteer elected governments. These factors can make the questions of economic development, negotiation, community benefit, etc. even more challenging for a relatively new type of development like industrial wind energy.

² The law provides the following exemption as a local option: "With respect to solar, wind, or farm waste energy systems constructed after January 1, 1991 and before January 1, 2011, each county, city, town, village and school district (except the city school districts of New York, Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, and Yonkers) may choose whether to disallow the exemption. The option must be exercised by counties, cities, towns, and villages through adoption of a local law and by school districts by adoption of a resolution."

³ This research makes this comparison while observing the differences in capacity factors inherent to each form of energy production. The capacity factor is the average energy production over time as opposed to total possible production capacity.

⁴ The solar panel manufacturing industry is in the same boat.

Resources

NYSERDA Small Wind Explorer. <http://nyswe.awstruewind.com/>. This searchable map of New York wind resources generates average velocity measurements and energy potentials for small wind projects.

Wind Resource Explorer. <http://windexplorer.awstruewind.com/NewYork/NewYorkWRE.htm>. This site contains interactive and static maps at elevations up to 100 meters above ground level.

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Daniels, Katherine for NYSERDA. Wind Energy: Model Ordinance Options. www.pownaturally.org/programs/wind/toolkit/2_windenergymodel.pdf. Discusses wind ordinance models and makes specific suggestions about ordinance content.

Dixmont, Maine. Wind ordinance and ordinance primer. Primer: www.dixmontwind.org/home/wind-ordinance-primer. The primer discusses the purpose of wind ordinances and suggests some considerations for their development.

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Database of state incentives for renewable energy and energy efficiency. www.dsireusa.org/. State by state searchable database for incentives and policies that promote renewable energy and energy efficiency.

Office of the New York State Comptroller, Industrial Development Agencies in New York State. www.osc.state.ny.us/localgov/pubs/research/idabackground.pdf. This report discusses policies of IDAs and includes information related to their processes, authority and accountability.

NYS Public Service Commission; Implementing regulations for Article 10. www.dps.state.ny.us/articleX.htm. Article X expired in 2003, but the link details projects that submitted while the law was still in effect.

Carter Ledyard & Milburn LLP and The New York Area Alliance. Carter Ledyard & Milburn LLP: www.clm.com/publication.cfm/ID/173. NY Area Alliance: www.area-alliance.org/documents/ArticleX.pdf. Two separate opinion pieces regarding Article 10.

NYS Department of Environmental Conservation. Environmental Impact Statement, Italy, NY: www.ecogenieis.com/reports.html.

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EDD Wins Two of Four APA Awards for Divisions

The Economic Development Division was prominent at the annual awards ceremony at the New Orleans national APA conference. Our dedicated work and the devotion of many members earned us the Overall Divisions Performance award and the Communications Effort award.

APA gave us the Overall Divisions Performance award for our "leadership succession plan and implementation." While we have joked that we routinely accomplish changes in our leadership without bloody revolutions, the truth is that our nomination, election, and succession process is exemplary, not least because we have a strong cadre of active members willing to take on leadership roles. Bob Lewis, AICP, accepted the award for the EDD as the newly-installed chair (the night before!), though the award lists our immediate past chair, Bill Anderson, FAICP, as the official designee. We trust that he is prominently displaying the certificate in his office.

The Communications Effort award was presented for our "EDD blog and social media outreach." Shana Johnson, our newly installed Secretary-Treasurer, accepted this award because of her tireless work in leading our Communications Committee to diversify our interactions with members of EDD. If you aren't seeing routine and non-routine messages from EDD and opportunities to contribute your opinions and insights, then you don't have a computer. Shana has done wonders to quickly advance EDD well into the 21st Century in ways that other divisions will now clone. Of course, we'll provide all the advice we can.

The other division awards are Contribution to the Planning Profession — Large Division given to the International Division for its World Town Planning Day/Online Conference (Beth Offenbacker, Chair); and Contribution to the Planning Profession — Small Division presented to the Planning & the Black Community Division for its Vision for Broadway (Philip Taylor, Chair).

In short, the EDD "done good!" The challenge is to both maintain and increase our level of service to members. We look forward to everyone's help and participation in that regard. Thank you to all the members for achieving this recognition. ■

Should Impact Fees Be Reduced in a Recession?

by Julie E. Herlands, TischlerBise, Inc.

The current recession and economic climate have focused significant attention on impact fees, particularly because of the role the housing market played in the downturn and the overall slowdown in new development. In many places, the result has been pressure to reduce, waive, or defer impact fees. But is this a good idea? What factors should be considered when making this decision?

At the heart of the debate is whether reducing or waiving impact fees will spur growth. To date, there has been no definitive research on this specific question, in large part because reductions are relatively recent.

However, anecdotal evidence has shown that waivers and reductions have not produced the intended results. One example is from Marion County, Florida, where building permit activity dropped from a peak of 1,396 single family permits for the first six months of 2007 to 148 during the same period in 2009. In the midst of the slowdown, the county reduced its transportation impact fees for a 90-day period and, "[w]hile the number of housing permits jumped the first two months after the 2008 ban was passed, the numbers retracted in the third month to pre-ban levels and continued to fall."¹ Furthermore, the reduction in nonresidential fees did not spur commercial development or reduce the unemployment rate. Despite this evidence, the County enacted another 90-day moratorium on transportation fees in early 2010.

But assume for a moment that reducing impact fees might kick-start housing construction. The question then becomes whether housing demand is strong enough, or whether a locality would be trading temporary construction jobs for housing that remains unsold, becomes blighted, and drains local resources? With foreclosures and tighter mortgage loan requirements, it is likely that most localities have more than an adequate

housing supply to support business attraction and retention efforts. In fact, it is currently estimated that there is an 8.3 month supply of unsold housing units, with a normal supply being 6 to 7 months.² And this varies by region of the country with some metro areas well above the 8.3 month figure such as Charlotte, NC (17.7 months), Jacksonville, FL (14 months), Atlanta, GA (9.9 months), and Tampa, FL (9.3 months).³

Perhaps more important is the role that impact fees play in funding infrastructure. Sufficient infrastructure capacity provides localities with a competitive advan-



tage to attract new businesses and retain existing ones, especially when it comes to transportation networks, water and sewer availability, and schools. Since impact fees can only be used for growth-related infrastructure improvements, the suspension or elimination of fees and the subsequent loss of local government infrastructure investments hampers economic development efforts and contradicts the importance of infrastructure spending in restoring the economy.

Furthermore, the demand for additional infrastructure capacity from new development does not disappear if impact fees are reduced. Suspending or eliminating

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IMPACT FEES, CONT. FROM P. 20

Impact fees are a common regulatory tool used to offset the costs of providing infrastructure to serve new development. The fee is a one-time payment at the time of development used by local governments to build additional capacity in facilities such as schools, roads, utilities, parks, etc. Fees are paid by residential and nonresidential development, depending on the fee categories in place. For example, school impact fees are paid by residential only; road fees would be paid by both residential and nonresidential.

fees will require communities to subsidize the impacts of new development with other revenues — most likely broad-based taxes on all residents and businesses, thus increasing business operating costs. The alternative is declining levels of service, as existing infrastructure becomes burdened with additional demand — or outright elimination of facilities and services. By way of example, Marion County's impact fee moratorium of 90 days is estimated to cost the County \$1.3 million in road funds. And if fees are reduced now, what happens when the economy recovers? Not only are local governments faced with significant unfunded capital needs, reinstating a fee program is always politically challenging.

Research has shown that local government spending has a positive effect on the economy. According to a recent whitepaper prepared for ICMA, nearly all the economics literature reviewed estimates that cutting local government expenditures hurts local economic recovery more than raising taxes. The positive effect of local government spending is particularly strong for facilities and services that have a direct relationship to business and industry (i.e., roads, bridges, water, sewer and other basic infrastructure).

With caveats examined, a waiver for economic development purposes may be appropriate for some jurisdictions. However, impact fees carry particular challenges that must be considered. For instance, equal protection is required — that development is treated the same and application of waivers is not arbitrary. Also, if a community decides to provide a waiver, growth-related improvements need to be fully funded from other revenue sources to ensure that previous fee payers are not short-changed. Finally, it's important to consider whether the long-run ability to provide sufficient infrastructure is

more important than the short-term incentive, especially if the impact fee program is developed in a manner to support economic development efforts.

One example highlights the challenges. In 2006, the Home Builders Association of Central Arizona sued the City of Prescott, Arizona, for not charging impact fees on nonresidential development. Although the city initially won the case, it is currently being appealed and is still in the courts — four years later. Given these challenges, there may be other more workable and effective incentive options — such as tax abatements and TIF districts — available for economic development purposes. ■

Julie E. Herlands is a Principal with TischlerBise, Inc. (www.tischlerbise.com), a fiscal, economic, and planning firm specializing in cost of growth and revenue enhancement services. Ms. Herlands specializes in fiscal and economic impact analysis, infrastructure financing strategies, economic and market assessments, and impact fees for clients across the country. She is the Chair-Elect of the Economic Development Division.

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Endnotes

¹ Bill Thompson, "County Will Suspend Impact Fees Temporarily," Ocala.com (online version of the Star-Banner daily newspaper for Marion County and Ocala, Florida), January 6, 2010.

² National Association of Realtors, June 2010.

³ "Where Housing Is Headed," *The Wall Street Journal* (*Wall Street Journal* quarterly survey of 28 major metro areas), July 20, 2010, (accessed at <http://online.wsj.com/public/resources/documents/HagertyQuarterly.html> on July 22, 2010).

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EDD Member Survey Shows Much Interest in Volunteering

by Bob Lewis, AICP, Division Chair

Most of our readers will recall that we sent out a membership survey early this year to help us structure a work program for the coming year. The full survey results (with graphs and tables) are available online at www.planning.org/divisions/economic/index.htm in a pdf report. Here are the highlights:

1. The survey was conducted online in February and March 2010.
2. There were 129 responses, 19.5% of full membership roster (at the time) of 663.
3. Our four mission statements are considered generally very important, but we could do much better in communicating the division's accomplishments within the context of the mission statements — perhaps a regular "report card." A quarter of respondents suggest revisiting the mission statements — probably a good idea now and then whether we think so or not.
4. The EDD blog seems to be fairly well known among members, but not overwhelmingly. Very clearly, more communication through multiple media is necessary to keep the membership informed and interactive.
5. That said, the preferred ways to reach members are chapter conferences, webinars, and the national conference, in that order. We should sponsor more outreach activities by the division at chapter conferences. We are instituting a webinar series, and we're doing well in sponsoring events and panels at the national conference.
6. The division's quarterly newsletter, *News & Views*, is read widely, but articles not relevant to individual members are not read. Topics of highest preference are: (1) case studies and best practices, (2) economic development metrics and statistics, and (3) local and regional focus as opposed to national issues. Some 30 specific topic ideas were written in by respondents.
7. 53% said "maybe" when asked if they'd write an article for *News & Views* if given a specific topic. Another 26% said "yes." Three dozen specific topics that individuals would be willing to write on were suggested by respondents. Therefore, we'll be putting out feelers...
8. It looks like we don't have a shortage of volunteers for division work. 44% said "maybe" when asked if they'd like to get more involved in division activities. Another 29% said "yes." The top three preferred ways to get involved: (1) contributing an article to *News & Views*, (2) participating in online discussions, and (3) organizing division events for chapter and national conferences.
9. Half the respondents are on Facebook, 60% are in LinkedIn. There are all kinds of ways to find you out there and to keep you informed. No excuses for not knowing what's going on with the division.
10. There was a healthy distribution of age groups responding to the survey. 21% age 26-35, 23% age 36-45, 25% age 46-55, and 24% age 56-65. Some young, some "mature," some more comfortable with technology in communications media, some less so.
11. We're a white group, however. 85% of respondents answer to "Anglo, Caucasian, White." We need to work on diversity. This may be a function of APA's membership itself and/or the types of people involved with economic development. More research is necessary to help us understand this opportunity for racial and ethnic diversity.
12. 62% of the respondents are male, 38% female. Another diversity opportunity for us. We just elected two women to the three elected positions of division leadership. That's a start.

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MEMBER SURVEY, CONT. FROM P. 22

13. Almost half of the respondents have been members of APA for 16 years or more. Then again, about half of the membership is age 46 or more. Still, 52% have been members of the Economic Development Division or the Resort and Tourism Division (which is now a "section" of EDD) for five years or less.
14. Local chambers of commerce (50%) and the Urban Land Institute (45%) are the most common "overlap organizations" to which division members belong. 30% are also members of the International Economic Development Council (IEDC) and 28% belong to state economic development organizations.
15. 62% of the respondents are AICP members. In fact, only 46% of the full division roster is in AICP, so the survey responses seem to be weighted more toward the opinions of certified planners. This suggests that more outreach is needed toward the rest of the membership.
16. Only 7% of the respondents are certified economic developers.
17. Seven out of ten respondents say that they have an economic development element in their local comprehensive plans — seems like a strong and healthy trend. A third of these are mandatory elements, 58% voluntary. Only 26% have tourism elements in their comp plans.

If anyone is interested in obtaining the full database of results for your own statistical analysis (class projects for students?), send an email to me at blewis@development-strategies.com and I'll send you the Excel file. ■

Useful Calendars

American Planning Association

www.planning.org/calendar/

International Economic Development Council

www.iedconline.org/?p=Conferences

Lincoln Institute of Land Policy

www.lincolnist.edu/news/lectures.asp

National Association for Business Economics

www.nabe.com/calendar.htm

Urban Land Institute

www.ulic.org/Events.aspx

Upcoming Events

Save the DATE! 2011 **APA National Planning Conference**, April 9-12, Boston, MA. Visit www.planning.org/conference/index.htm for more details.

For a complete listing of ***all APA-related events*** go to www.planning.org/calendar and click on Economic Development

International Economic Development Council (IEDC) Annual Conference, Sept. 26-29, Columbus, OH. More info: www.iedconline.org/AnnualConference/index.html

International Economic Development Council (IEDC), Building Strong Economic Development Board-CEO Partnerships In Challenging Times, September 16, 2:30-4:00 p.m. EST. More info: www.iedconline.org/?p=Board-CEO_Partnerships

International Economic Development Council (IEDC), Understanding Social Media, www.iedconline.org/?p=Understanding_Social_Media

- Part 1: Introduction to Facebook, October 6, 2:30-3:30 EST
- Part 2: Introduction to LinkedIn, October 13, 2:30-3:30 EST
- Part 3: Introduction to Twitter, October 20, 2:30-3:30 EST
- Part 4: Introduction to YouTube and Flickr, October 27, 2:30-3:30 EST
- Part 5: Introduction to Blogging, November 3, 2:30-3:30 EST

2010 NABE Annual Meeting, Mile-High Challenges to Economic Prosperity, October 9-12 in Denver, CO. More info: www.nabe.com

Planning the World — World Town Planning Day, 2010 Online Conference, November 8-9. More info: www.planningtheworld.net

For a complete listing of all National Economic Development Organizations see www.eda.gov/Resources/NationalEDOrganizations.xml

Welcome to Our New Members...

Allison Abbott	Alexandria, VA	Thomas E. Eddington, AICP	Park City, UT	Frances I. Mossman, AICP	Honolulu, HI
Jessica S Abrahams	Tucson, AZ	Somina Francillon	Fort Lauderdale, FL	Lee Nichols	San Antonio, TX
Ahmed Abukhater	Redlands, CA	Kelly Ganczarz	Buffalo, NY	Annaka L. Norris	Ferndale, MI
Nadir Ait-laoussine	Waltham, MA	Jamaal Green	Durham, NC	Marc L. Older	Charlestown, MA
Scott Albertsen	Crystal Lake, IL	Robert T. Hanifin	La Jolla, CA	Adam Perkins	Denver, CO
Mariela A. Alfonzo	Washington, DC	Kristin E. Hoffman-Kassner, AICP	Hamilton, MA	Sam Powers	Memphis, TN
Sara Frances Amaral	Chicago, IL	Ryan Holmes	Champaign, IL	Luciano Ramos	Tallahassee, FL
Edgar Arroyo	Los Angeles, CA	Elizabeth Ann Hude	Mason, MI	Kevin J. Salzer	Tampa, FL
Jenn L. Atkinson	Garden City, ID	Mark R. Johnson, AICP	Shawnee Mission, KS	James A. Segedy, FAICP	Pittsburgh, PA
Alison Bates	Troy, NY	David B Kanarek	Vero Beach, FL	Varsha Sehgal	San Diego, CA
Susan A. Baumann Berley, AICP	Morganton, NC	Christy Kwan	Alexandria, VA	Elizabeth R Shimkus	Chicago, IL
Neiset Bayouth	Highland Park, NJ	Morris P. Lippens, AICP	Indianapolis, IN	Aimee M. Shipman	Moscow, ID
Andrew P. Blouet	San Antonio, TX	Donald M. Lopp	Floyds Knobs, IN	Katrina Simon-Agolory, AICP	Stone Mountain, GA
Thomas D. Burdett, AICP	West Jordan, UT	Ian G. MacDougall	Newburgh, NY	Jason A. Smith	Omaha, NE
Russell J. Burke, AICP	Worcester, MA	Christine A. Maguire, AICP	Garland, TX	Sharon Song	Bellflower, CA
Dawn H. Burlew	Corning, NY	John Marron	Indianapolis, IN	Martha L. Taylor	Newbury, MA
James B. Campbell	Durham, NH	Kell J. McAbey	Tacoma, WA	Ronald Lee Thomasson, AICP	Panama City, FL
Josh Clements	Madison, WI	Laura McGLamery Million	Racine, WI	Silvia Vargas, AICP	South Miami, FL
Ronald Combs	Clemson, SC	Kelly M. McGowan	Cleveland Heights, OH	Teresa Vazquez-Evans	Seabrook, TX
Marlon P. Connley	Houston, TX	Michele A. McIntoshross	Sandy Springs, GA	Elizabeth S. Via, AICP	Manassas, VA
David L. Cooper	Mableton, GA	William D. McLain	Pittsburgh, PA	Michael Vickers	Roswell, NM
Lincoln Daley	Stratham, NH	Jack Dudley Meadows	Siler City, NC	Caroline Elizabeth Wells, AICP	Warren, RI
Charles E. Davies, AICP	Bel Air, MD	Roshana T. Moojen	Aztec, NM	Courtney Williams	Brooklyn, NY
Elizabeth Delgado	Berkeley, CA	Katherine M. Moore	Mckinney, TX	Kirsten E. Wolfington, AICP	Philadelphia, PA
Rebekah Dohrman	Salem, OR	Brendan Moriarty	Bozeman, MT	Vince A. Zaragoza, AICP	Bakersfield, CA
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