

Celebrating 10 years



10 Years of Convening Partners for Stronger Communities

■ Anthony Flint

It was in New Orleans before Katrina, as a reporter for *The Boston Globe*, that I first had a glimpse of the teeming gathering that is New Partners for Smart Growth. With all the sessions and talks and people chatting in the hallways, I had the sense there was a big party going on, full of promise and purpose and ferment. What struck me in particular was the mix of people from different disciplines — the AARP, National Association of Realtors, and environmentalists in hiking boots; police chiefs and teachers alongside professionals from the Centers for Disease Control, and advocates for something called local food. Somehow each and every one of them had a connection to more compact, mixed-use, transit-oriented human settlement.

“The leaders of the smart growth movement say it’s the power of their ideas that is attracting such a wide variety of adherents,” I wrote in a story headlined ‘Smart Growth’ Expands its Thinking — Advocates Seek a Political Footing, sent by laptop from the hotel near the French Quarter. “Doctors worried about obesity want to get people out of their cars and into walkable neighborhoods; seniors prefer compact urban settings, too, over the sterile environs of a retirement home.”

I daresay that today, no copy editor would insist on putting smart growth in quotes — as if it was some nascent, unrecognized movement. And that is a tribute to the New Partners for Smart Growth conference, celebrating its 10th anniversary as a collaboration of the Local Government Commission and the Environmental Protection Agency, this year in Charlotte. By bringing together so many different thinkers and practitioners and activists and elected officials from across the political spectrum, New Partners has guided a strong and diverse movement grounded in the values of sustainable communities.

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—Judy Corbett, Executive Director
Local Government Commission

New Partners for Smart Growth

10 Years of Convening Partners for Smart Growth

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For Andrés Duany, partner at DPZ of Miami and a founding member of the Congress for the New Urbanism, the most notable partnership starts at the top. The Local Government Commission, which had a role in the founding of CNU with the Ahwahnee Principles for more sustainable development, emphasizes best practices and implementation. The EPA, historically more concerned with combating air and water pollution, signals with its involvement a commitment to much more.

“There are hundreds of environmental organizations in this country, but a very small proportion deal with human habitat and particularly town planning. So it’s a good thing that they are around,” Duany said. “When you’re dealing with the human habitat, everything plays a part, from art to health. There is a kind of unified theory, that gives everyone a part to play.”

The New Partners conference evolved over time and had a bit of a side-ways genesis – much like smart growth itself (beginning, arguably, with Senate Bill 100 in Oregon in 1972, through the “growth management years,” to Florida and Massachusetts and finally Maryland in the 1990s). The idea of a national conference to focus on environmentally sensitive growth began with the EPA in 1995. In 1997, the EPA co-sponsored the first “Partners for Smart Growth” conference with the Urban Land Institute.

The Local Government Commission, meanwhile, had been active in California, training officials in best practices and model programs and policies promoting livable communities. LGC started as a part of Governor Jerry Brown’s first administration, implementing local conservation and alternative energy programs in California cities and towns. It then spun off into a membership nonprofit organization and expanded nationwide, with the same mission of helping develop and implement sustainability policies at the local level. The LGC partnered with the Centers for Disease Control, the California Department of Transportation and Penn State University to produce the multidisciplinary event “Redesigning Community: A Smart Growth Approach to Street and Neighborhood Design, Crime Prevention, and Public Health and Safety” in San Diego, and participated in the EPA-ULI Partners for Smart Growth conference in San Diego, hosting a third day focused on smart growth in the Western States.

Immediately following that event, the EPA approached the LGC about merging their collective efforts. They agreed to call it “New Partners for Smart Growth,” reflecting the multi-disciplinary approach, and each year the gathering built momentum, in New Orleans, Portland, Miami, Denver, Los Angeles, Washington, DC, Albuquerque, and Seattle, covering private real estate investment, public health, progressive transportation policies, transit-oriented development, economic development, open space protection, public space, water resources management, equity, and land use and climate change.

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– Geoffrey Anderson

“The basic principles of smart growth have not changed, but the realization of their importance is growing as more professionals and interest groups recognize that smart growth can be a solution to their problems. We intentionally tap into this,” said Corbett. “Importantly, however, our focus on the implementation of smart growth has not changed from year to year.”

This year’s conference, for example, includes an emphasis on the greening of the economy and a cutting edge session that looks at smart growth and its relationship to financing, overall economic health and jobs. “I firmly believe that smart growth is a necessary, if not sufficient, way of addressing the economic crisis we face today,” Corbett said.

Anderson, now president of Smart Growth America, said New Partners remains a unique place for networking and finding the most up-to-date practices, current research, and emerging leaders in the field.

“I’d say we’ve seen an explosion of acceptance of smart growth as really mainstream development – it’s no longer a niche idea,” he said. “You have a proven product that has done well in the market. It’s not lost on people that smart growth neighborhoods have held their value. From the rhetorical side right through to implementation, it’s becoming more the norm.”

“Does everyone do it perfectly? No. But there’s been a rapid acceptance and adoption both in the public and the private sector. Because it’s a way of building that we haven’t done seriously for most of the previous half-century, people are learning all the time. They come to the conference instead of starting from scratch. You get a chance to learn what’s working.”

Kaid Benfield from the National Resources Defense Council, a regular blogger for *The Huffington Post*, applauds the convening of discourse about the built environment, and calls New Partners “one of the most important incubators of ideas and collaborations that have given our cause its substance and innovation.”

The conference, he said, provides “an opportunity to think about what we have learned and how we might apply our learning to evolving the field

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■ Judy Corbett, Executive Director, Local Government Commission

The people who have attended the New Partners for Smart Growth conferences have accomplished a great deal over the past ten years. I am proud of them, and proud of heading the organization that brings them together year after year and helps them stay at the cutting edge of their disciplines.

One of the first new partners that we involved, the health sector, has gone on to significantly influence policies with which they were previously unfamiliar — local land use planning and, in California, cutting-edge greenhouse gas reduction legislation. Our newest partners — social equity and environmental justice activists — have added greatly to the quality, breadth and relevance of our event, and to our collective goal of creating more livable and equitable places.

In the coming years, I see this conference and the people who attend as being increasingly important. Two of the very most serious problems facing the world in the future — oil shortages and climate change — cannot be addressed without implementing smart growth on a massive scale. This means helping our current partners become even more effective, and it will surely lead to more partners being added to our midst in the future. We are looking forward to this!



“We have the ability to make things better. The answer largely depends on how well governments manage growth, how well we use existing infrastructure, how well we conserve and reinvigorate our existing neighborhoods, and how often we stretch our imaginations and use our creativity.”

— Parris Glendening, Former Governor of Maryland

Smart Growth Partners for Stronger Communities

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further over the next five to 10 years. Let’s never stop doing that. I’m looking forward to attending the conference, renewing old friendships and debates while perhaps beginning some new ones. There’s no better place for that.”

David Goldberg at Smart Growth America and Transportation for America has a similar reflection. “The conference program has become increasingly sophisticated over time, and the organizers have been extraordinarily quick to adapt as the movement has advanced and new issues have arisen,” he said. “Whether it was presenting an advance look at the findings in *Growing Cooler*, or incorporating discussions of transportation reform in anticipation of this year’s likely federal authorization, New Partners has been, and likely will continue to be, the place to find the cutting edge on thought about growth and development issues in America.”

“This conference has helped move smart growth from pie in the sky 10 years ago to vibrant communities on the ground today,” said John Frece, who now heads EPA’s smart growth program as director of the new Office of Sustainable Communities. “The big tent keeps expanding. Now, we’re talking about ways to finance development that is not only sustainable over the long term, but more equitable as well. And, because of the work of those who come to this conference year after year, we can now see how being smarter

about how and where we grow will help restore prosperity to communities and serve as a foundation for our nation’s economic revival.”

Back in 2003, in that dispatch from New Orleans, I added, “The expansion of the smart growth coalition is fundamentally a political strategy, designed to keep the movement alive as individual champions, like former Maryland governor Parris Glendening, come in and out of power. Adding groups with vast memberships and clout is seen as a way to keep sprawl on the agenda, even as concerns about the economy and war take center stage.”

It’s eerie that concerns about the economy and war are again — or still — at center stage. The challenge for New Partners for Smart Growth is to stay on the agenda for the next 10 years. Judging by the last 10, the prospects look very good indeed.

▼ Anthony Flint is a fellow and director of public affairs at the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy (www.lincolninst.edu), and author of *Wrestling with Moses: How Jane Jacobs Took on New York’s Master Builder and Transformed the American City* and *This Land: The Battle over Sprawl and the Future of America*. He is a frequent contributor to Citiwire.net, co-editor of *Smart Growth Policies* and the author of three blogs.



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— Geoffrey Anderson

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— John Frece



■ **Geoffrey Anderson, President/CEO, Smart Growth America**

When we worked with Judy Corbett and the LGC to start the New Partners for Smart Growth Conference, it was because we knew that better communities and a better economy were not going to emerge without action from the public sector, the private sector and citizens in communities across the country.

In the 10 years since New Partners began, it has become a “must attend” conference for great networking, learning about best practices, recruiting smart growth talent, and publicizing our work. More than this however, the New Partners conference has been integral as a place where smart growth itself grows and evolves, responding to the changing environment, and reflecting the knowledge gained from years of practice. Issues of social justice, economic development and job creation, affordable housing, displacement, green building, vacant properties and green infrastructure have all gained prominence and greater attention in smart growth.

Smart growth as an issue and a movement continues to evolve to meet the challenges we face as citizens of our communities and people of a nation. For me, New Partners is an annual touchstone where those united in our efforts to make great communities come together to update our approaches and reaffirm our commitment to making great neighborhoods for all the citizens of this great nation.

■ **John Frece, Director, Office of Sustainable Communities, U.S. EPA**

Smart growth has always been an inclusive, “big tent” movement. Each year for the past decade the New Partners for Smart Growth Conference has provided the literal “big tent” under which all the many partners for smart growth — both new and old — have met, presented, debated, taught, learned, argued, and (usually) agreed.

There simply is no other single place where one can meet and learn from so many people knowledgeable about — and dedicated to — approaches that will help our nation grow in smarter, more sustainable ways.

Through the work of those who go to this conference, smart growth has evolved from novelty to mainstream; from collaboration to implementation; from an idea to a movement.

I believe the work advanced by the New Partners for Smart Growth Conference has helped us all do a better job protecting our fragile environment and the health of the general public.

■ **Julie Seward, Director of State Policy, Local Initiatives Support Corporation**

LISC has been a partner of the New Partners conference for eight years. LISC has adopted a national strategy, Sustainable Communities, that is founded on redevelopment of places, building the assets of low-income citizens, expanding educational opportunities for all people, and supporting sustainable neighborhood environments. The New Partners for Smart Growth Conference provides a proactive approach to linking smart growth and neighborhoods, and a learning opportunity for so many people who support sustainability at the community level. Its unparalleled curriculum, commitment to long-term smart growth strategy, and access to best minds continue to influence the direction of smart growth and plant many of the seeds that are redefining sustainability, reframing policy, and rebuilding communities. As a longtime member of the conference committee, LISC values our partnership and emerging opportunities that seem to grow with the years.

■ Harriet Tregoning, Director of Planning, Washington, DC

The New Partners for Smart Growth 10th anniversary is a milestone event. Many of us look forward to this annual gathering of practitioners, public officials, development professionals, journalists, philanthropists, advocates, and civic organizations all year as an opportunity to connect with experts from across the country and catch up on the evolving best practices in smart growth.

Having worked on these issues from the federal level, the state level and now at the local level as the Director of Planning for Washington, DC, I always want to know who's having success in their state or community and what they are doing. It's been thrilling to see how our colleagues are reinventing development and transportation practices and reshaping development patterns in cities, towns and suburbs in every state.

Traditionally, within our communities, goals for housing, transportation, equity, economic development, public involvement, infrastructure, and the environment have been pursued separately with conflict as a frequent by-product. Smart growth is taking the approach of intentionally seeking multiple benefits from each investment.

With resources as scarce as they are now, smart growth has become not just a good idea but an economic and fiscal imperative. Simply, cities and communities will have to learn to do more with the resources they have. Whether it's making the smartest use of limited public infrastructure funds, positioning your community for the knowledge economy, or buffering households from future oil price shocks, the 10th anniversary conference provides smart options and effective approaches when our communities and their citizens need them most.



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– Harriet Tregoning

■ Christopher B. Leinberger, Metropolitan Land Strategist and Developer, The Brookings Institution

Little did anyone know what smart growth could accomplish when the first New Partners for Smart Growth conference was held in San Diego in 2002. From its birth as an EPA initiative under Harriett Tregoning and Geoff Anderson to the creation of Smart Growth America under Don Chen and the model that Maryland became under former Governor Parris Glendening, no one could have guessed at its impact. And the impacts keep on multiplying.

The reason for this was best explained to me by Governor Glendening, during a trip to mountainous New Mexico, where he was twisting the arm of my then Governor, Bill Richardson, to support smart growth. Smart growth is like a mountain peak rising from the plains; there are 360 degrees by which you can climb to the peak, including the health trail, the economic trail, the environmental trail, but they all get you to the same peak. So many public policy issues require smart growth to address them in a meaningful and sustainable manner.

The leading urbanist, Peter Calthorpe, has just written a book, *Urbanism in the Age of Climate Change*, that shows the impact of smart growth. Much of the discussion about reducing energy consumption and green house gas emissions has focused on the supply-side; how to get more efficient in the use of energy. Calthorpe clearly makes the case that only by focusing on the demand-side, structurally reducing demand by implementing smart growth policies, can we achieve the 80-90% reductions science tells us we must achieve by 2050. Smart growth development will get us most of the way there.

Smart growth is what the market is demanding, promotes the knowledge economy, is more affordable for both municipalities and households, and will be a major contributor to solving our environmental challenges...who would have guessed all this 10 years ago?



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— Dan Burden



“Suburban sprawl has been exposed as an epic failure. New Partners for Smart Growth is ground zero for forging the alternative for America’s future.”

— Rick Cole

■ Dan Burden, Executive Director, Walkable and Livable Communities Institute

It is a challenge to hold back superlatives for the New Partners for Smart Growth Conference. During the course of the past decade I have had the opportunity to attend many national and international conferences, including many health, town making, development and governance professional annual training sessions. The New Partners conference stands above the rest, and by far.

New Partners is unmatched in stitching the evolving town making pieces together. Speakers provide fresh and helpful insights as they capture the latest research, tools, methods and process to re-envision and rebuild our communities from the ground up. Town making is a complex task, and each facet must be understood in order for the separate parts to come together to work together, energize and synergize one another.

When doing my work in the field, I find those towns easiest to work with have sent their scouts, their leaders to New Partners, and they have already cleared much of the brush for my work to take root.

I also feel that New Partners is the most important place for networking, getting further grounded in best practices, and validating those principles and practices that make sense and make a difference.

It is fun to roll into a town to do work and learn that top town administrators who, post-conference, drove back to their towns and never stopped talking about each workshop and what they will do next. I hear this often.

■ Rick Cole, City Manager, Ventura, CA

It is hard to imagine today just how much momentum suburban sprawl had ten years ago. But to get an idea, just look at Las Vegas. Without water or coherent planning, suburban housing tracts and shopping centers exploded across the desert landscape. It was the epitome of dumb growth — the ultimate symbol of what went wrong in America over the past decade.

Yet, at the same time, the tide was turning across America. New infill, new transit, new policies and new regional collaboration took root. The difference: new partners for smart growth.

There have always been advocates for building our cities for people instead of cars. But since World War II, road builders, homebuilders and the vast industrial complex that enables sprawl have routinely steamrolled opposition.

What’s different today? A growing counter coalition, not just of planners, architects and urban policy experts — but of environmentalists, historic preservationists, public health advocates, mixed-use developers, transit and bike activists, local food promoters, affordable housing supporters, public safety experts, elected officials and regional civic leaders.

Where did this influential mix of heroes find each other? At the annual gathering of New Partners for Smart Growth. It’s where new ideas were hatched that have inspired metropolitan regions, city neighborhoods and rural and suburban towns. It’s where fresh dialogue has enriched our common understanding of what’s right for communities and what’s healthy for people. It’s where ground-breaking new alliances have emerged.

Suburban sprawl has been exposed as an epic failure. New Partners for Smart Growth is ground zero for forging the alternative for America’s future.

■ Richard J. Jackson, MD, MPH, Professor, UCLA

In 2001 when I was at CDC, we helped sponsor and I attended and spoke at my first New Partners meeting. At that point in my life I had attended many hundreds of medical, pediatric, regulatory, toxicology, epidemiology and environmental meetings – but this one was different and powerful, and life changing.

I went back to CDC and told everyone: “I was just at a meeting with health people, educators, developers, elected officials, urban planners, architects, and yes...police officers, and the message we absorbed was that building places that work for socializing, for teens, for elders, for local businesses, for living...was good for each isolated specialty. We need to support each other to build such places; a good solution like smart growth solves many problems.”

I met many new experts and leaders at New Partners, and cultivated more in public health, and yes, it changed my life trajectory.

■ Deeohn Ferris, President/CEO Sustainable Community Development Group

The New Partners for Smart Growth are taking on a new dimension. In Charlotte, the conference is positioning stakeholders to collaborate on the deep and complex work of narrowing gaps between smart growth goals and policies and efforts to address issues affecting socially, economically and environmentally disadvantaged communities. It’s exactly the right time.

This is the era of the perfect storm – climate change, peak oil, the Deep Horizon disaster in the Gulf, the credit crisis, high unemployment, profound health disparities, seismic foreclosures and shrinking budgets. It’s also the dawning of the green economy and growing global consensus about the significance of environmental protection. This nexus of the good and the bad presents new, historic opportunities to ensure that low-income communities and communities of color are engaged in and benefit from national strategies to achieve sustainability.

■ Paul Morris, FASLA, Former President, American Society of Landscape Architects

The impact of this event continues to be felt through the creation of more livable, sustainable and vibrant communities across the country. Coming from 30 years of practice in the private sector and a national leadership perspective with the American Society of Landscape Architects, I have seen how the event has grown in size and reputation, crossing geopolitical boundaries to touch the lives of cities and towns small and large, urban and rural.

So many disciplines have been involved in sharing their knowledge and collaborating on ways to advance quality growth and development that it now attracts a more diverse audience than any conference or symposium I attend.

Success is measured best by the many who, 10-15 years ago, didn’t see a connection to their work and smart growth – but who now see how the pursuit of practical innovation, sharing of best practices, and guidance to effective implementation help focus and address their many varied concerns.

And as my view has been from a distance over the past few years, I can attest to the fact that this event continues to make a meaningful difference in the lives of those I serve and the work I do in communities across America.

“At that point in my life I had attended many hundreds of meetings – but this one was different and powerful, and life changing.”

– Dr. Richard J. Jackson, Professor and Chair, Environmental Health Sciences, UCLA School of Public Health

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— Jim Charlier



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— Joseph Molinaro



■ **Jim Charlier, President, Charlier Associates, Inc.**

For the past decade, the annual New Partners for Smart Growth Conference has been the most important meeting ground in the U.S. for people working on smart growth issues. This is where leading-edge concepts and new strategies have emerged first, appearing later in journals and the media and only much later becoming common practice.

Because the event is independent of any specific profession there has been an extraordinary amount of cross-discipline synergy and creativity. This is the national conference at which planners, engineers, developers, health professionals, architects, landscape architects, environmental scientists, elected leaders and general citizenry mingle and interact to address how to grow responsibly and sustainably.

Over the years there have been keynote addresses and plenary events that literally have represented “group aha” moments. The session featuring Victor Dover and Walter Kulash in Miami in 2004 comes to mind in that respect. Geoff Anderson’s speech in Albuquerque in 2008 was the first time I heard passenger rail and transit referred to as the “second half” of building the nation’s transportation system.

Over the years I have had clients attend this event and go back home to change their position on key local issues. I have introduced colleagues to one another at this conference and then watched as they went on to develop productive, professional relationships. I do not especially like conferences and I often miss the annual meetings of other organizations relevant to my profession. But I try never to miss New Partners.

■ **Joseph R. Molinaro, Managing Director, Smart Growth and Housing Opportunity, National Association of Realtors®**

Like no other conference on smart growth or sustainable development, New Partners for Smart Growth brings together a diverse group of elected officials, planners, citizen activists, and real estate professionals to focus on the hard work of improving communities for all citizens.

The conference’s inclusive approach encourages debate, the challenging of assumptions, and an atmosphere of collaboration with an eye toward finding practical solutions that can be used back home. All of the issues that smart growth needs to address and reconcile, including transportation, affordable housing, social justice, and environmental protection, are on the table and part of the discussion.

The New Partners conference has been vital in fostering a dialogue between real estate professionals and smart growth proponents and practitioners. Our participation in the conference has brought more Realtors® into the smart growth discussion, and has helped educate local officials and planners about the opportunities for working with real estate interests as well as the business realities that can make smart growth development so challenging.

I was struck by the conference connecting everything together. I have always looked fairly holistically at the things I do in the world, but this took it to a new level.

I remember one public health official talking about smart growth and the linkage to public health. I then know my job to be much more connected to everything...and much harder to pull off when so many folks live with blinders on. This helped me as an elected official.

In New Mexico (2009 Albuquerque conference), a speaker from the Metropolitan Study Group at the University of Utah explained the huge oversupply of exurban building lots. That helped me to understand an adjoining county’s situation in trying to recover from an oversupply in a changed world.

— Eric Schertzing, County Treasurer and Land Bank Chair, Ingham County, MI

■ Vernice Miller-Travis, Vice Chair, Maryland Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities

From the articulation of fundamental principles of smart growth, to the expanding conversation about just and equitable development, this conference has served as a critical space for this essential dialogue. The New Partners for Smart Growth conference has created a platform within the broader environmental and community development spheres to connect the dots for those working to build more livable, sustainable and equitable communities.

This conference also provides a critical space for federal agency staff and leadership as well as state and local government staff to mingle with some of the leading thinkers in the nation to discuss ways that public policy and local practice can, and must, work together to provide the support that local communities need to tackle the challenges presented by growth, development, environmental protection, gentrification, and equity.

Though the equity conversation has been long in emerging, recent efforts to bring this dialogue front and center have been earnestly undertaken, and heartily received. Last year's first-ever, day-long, pre-conference equitable development workshop saw 300 eager participants come out.

I personally enjoy the high-caliber panelists and plenary speakers, the engaging sessions, and most especially the tours that draw attention to local efforts underway in the host city to make smart and equitable growth a reality. It's also great to come together with like-minded folks from across the country who care deeply about the future of our communities, and the need to strike a harmonious balance between growth, environmental protection and community livability.

■ Sue Schwartz, FAICP, Former President, American Institute of Certified Planners (APA)

For ten years, the New Partners for Smart Growth Conference has been bringing together a broad cross section of professionals, elected officials and community activists to share ideas, to learn from each other and inspire action for quality growth and investment in communities across the nation. It has become a treasured resource.

One reason it is such a special event is the dual focus both of practical hands on sessions that help with your "toolbox" and also a wealth of national experts and policy makers. You can find sessions that delve in to more detail on smart codes or green building techniques from practitioners and then also hear from members of the President's cabinet on national policy initiatives. The conference partners also haven't been afraid to bring cutting edge ideas or even controversial topics. It was one of the first conferences to profile the impact that sprawl was having on our health.

What I have come to appreciate most is the thoughtful crafting of the agenda that encourages networking among the participants. Over the last 10 years, I don't think I can count how often I have called on someone I met at New Partners for Smart Growth over coffee to follow up because I was now facing something similar in Greensboro and vice versa.

The last decade was just the beginning! As we come together each year and continue sharing, innovating, inspiring, just think of what we will be saying about the impact ten years from now!

Fontana is one of the fastest-growing cities, so interjecting smart growth into the equation has been good. The conference helped to inspire me to work more with developers and help the community grow in a smarter way.

— Acquanetta Warren, Mayor, City of Fontana, CA

■ Putting New Partnerships to Work in Wyoming

Casper, Wyoming, is very heavily energy-dependent. When its economy goes downhill, there is very little development. In the late 1990's, however, there was a turn around in energy prices. Wyoming's energy industry picked up and started to build for the first time in 20 years. This led to a development boom. They realized that they were not prepared for this large amount of development and they didn't have a lot of experience to deal with it.

They got councilmembers, planning committee members and staff to go to the New Partners Conference, hoping it would be worthwhile. They first worked on raising awareness to try and show the City of Casper how things could be done differently; and then started changing codes to bring about the desired changes. Following the code reform, they began working on a number of private development and school siting projects.

"Attending the New Partners conference and gaining an understanding of community by design has made a world of difference for us here in Casper."

The biggest change has occurred in the industrial area on the edge of the downtown. After the conference, they redeveloped this area based on a form-based code, included mixed-use, and emphasized "complete streets" improvements.

The City conducted a street enhancement study to look at how they can narrow the streets and make them more pedestrian-friendly. Based on the study results, they decided to take a wide block of streets and convert them into a plaza for a transit stop and greater pedestrian activity.

They are also working to implement a zoning amendment to expand the mix of uses because, currently, residential uses are not allowed in commercial zones, and vice versa. Their subdivision regulations have also been amended.

— from Tom Forslund, City Manager,
and April Getchius, Community
Development Director, Casper, WY

■ Implementing Smart Growth: Taking ‘New Partners’ Lessons Back Home

The New Partners conferences inspired us to be proactive instead of reactive. More importantly, we learned what was possible, and what had been done in other jurisdictions. Developers could no longer tell us something “couldn’t be done,” because we had seen it elsewhere. It also helps us to create our own forward-planning documents, so that we tell developers what we want upfront. Some developers even attended a conference or two to see what we were learning, so they would know what to expect from us!

Our planning director has referenced what he learned from the conference a number of times as we update our planning documents and create new ones. We have updated our planning documents to incorporate smart growth principles and TOD policies. We are currently working on a Train Station Area Plan. We have three forward-thinking, vision planning documents, and are in the beginning stages of a Station Area Plan for the half-mile around the train station. The policies in these four plans include “complete streets,” incorporating much of what we learned at the conferences. We are beginning to think about how to incorporate these policies into our General Plan update when we start working on it in 2011.

We have been working toward design of streets that will make bicyclists and pedestrians feel more comfortable along our roadways so that more residents will get around town without having to use their cars. We are updating our 1997 Design Guidelines, and incorporating them into our Public Works’ engineering documents for the streets and infrastructure of future development in our town, and also for redesign of existing streets as we are able.

— Debora Fudge, Councilmember, City of Windsor, CA

■ Think Nationally, Act Locally

The Center for Planning Excellence staff make many contacts at the New Partners conference every year. Based on these contacts, they decide who is most relevant to local work and invite them to speak at the local smart growth summit they hold every year. They also secure sponsorships and grant funding at New Partners as well.

Over the last three years, the Center has given conference scholarships for 10 local elected officials from Louisiana. These local officials have begun to implement what they have learned at the conferences — new applications, put plans into place, etc.

The New Partners conference was a direct inspiration for the annual Louisiana Smart Growth Summit that the Center holds in Baton Rouge every year. Topics at the 2010 summit included disaster response and dealing with the oil leak, transit-oriented development, healthy communities, green construction, coastal planning, progress made since the 2005 hurricanes and mobility and transportation in Louisiana.

— from Rachel DiResto,
Executive Vice President,
Center for Planning Excellence

■ Finding Health Solutions in Smart Growth

The conference made a real impact on me. We have projects aimed at preventing and reducing childhood obesity in the poorest section of Washington, DC. We had been focusing on improving nutrition and increasing physical activity. After attending the conference, I had an epiphany — we must add environmental change to the mix.

When we asked some community people what change in their environment would help most in preventing childhood obesity, they said, “Somewhere safe for my children to play.”

We searched the community for a demonstration site for a playground, and got in touch with KaBoom (which builds playgrounds all over the country). Thanks to grant funding from Kaiser and playground equipment funding from the Kraft Foods Foundation, we built a playground in a community that has 70 families with 100 children in October 2010.

We have already seen a change in residents. They are talking more about nutrition; and they want a sidewalk around the playground, so the adults can “get some exercise.”

— Canary Girardeau, MS, RN, Senior Program Associate,
Summit Health Institute for Research and Education, Washington, DC

As a public health professional, New Partners has contributed significantly to my understanding of planning and smart growth disciplines, mostly through hearing about concepts, terminology and best practices. There are a number of factors (including the New Partners conference) that have contributed to our success at integrating health into transportation, land use planning, and community development in the Portland Metro region.

Some of our activities include integrating health into the comprehensive plan update; integrating health assessment and measures into Portland’s urban planning framework; conducting health impact assessments on transportation, and climate change policy and projects; revising zoning codes to support small scale urban agriculture; and promoting bike storage at multi-family, affordable housing sites.

— Noelle Dobson, Project Director, Community Health Partnership, Oregon Public Health Institute

I have been working with the Smart Growth Partnership of Broward County (Fort Lauderdale, FL) for a couple of years now. One of our projects is educating the public about how the principles of smart growth can be tied to health and health outcomes. For instance, providing more transit opportunities and compact design has a huge impact on obesity, social isolation and building a sense of community. We are currently working with the MPO and several university partners on a corridor study to more efficiently locate transit stops.

In Florida, each city and county has to submit a comprehensive plan to the state for approval and has to evaluate its successes every seven years. We have at least 15 staff members across the 67 county health departments participating to address built environment issues in their communities. We actually have two other trained planners in Sarasota and Orange counties as well as myself. We have managed to insert health considerations in at least six comprehensive plans and contribute comments on evaluations. Alachua County (Gainesville) actually is the first county in Florida to adopt a health option in its plan. We are making inroads, slowly but surely.

— Sandra F. Whitehead, Environmental Health Planner, Florida Department of Health

■ Strategies and Inspiration for Community Involvement

The New Partners for Smart Growth conference continues to inspire me because it gives me the opportunity to meet new people and hear their stories about activism, education and social issues. I take what I learn with me and incorporate it into my everyday life. I've been able to work with professionals to come up with innovative ways to solve problems. Participating in the New Partners for Smart Growth conference has given me the tools to take an active part in the work I do within the community I live in. I have learned how to engage others in the work I do, including urban development, going green, sustainable housing, working with civic leaders, working with the community by organizing annual events and teaching leadership skills to school-age children.

— Steve Kinberger, Service Coordinator, Albuquerque Health Care for the Homeless, NM

■ UniverCity: Sustainable Community, Canadian Style

The lessons that Professor Michael Geller (Simon Fraser University Centre for Sustainable Community Development and past President of the SFU Community Trust) learned about the correlation between good planning and good health at the New Partners Conference led to the creation of SFU's award-winning UniverCity community.

Geller was the key creative force behind laying out UniverCity, a billion-dollar development on Burnaby Mountain. The project boosts the university's endowment and builds a real community that will add housing, retail and vitality to a one-dimensional commuter campus.

UniverCity will house 10,000 residents in a pedestrian-friendly environment and contain a range of housing types. The project's financing mechanisms make the condos with green features affordable to faculty, staff and students.

UniverCity designers implemented sustainable solutions by using a geothermal energy source, heat recovery ventilation, high insulation standards, energy-efficient light fixtures, water saving showers and toilets, pervious pavers for the parking, swales and storm water retention. It also offers a cooperative car network to help reduce the use of individual automobiles. UniverCity integrates mixed-use developments and shopping centers that support small businesses. Public amenities also include hiking trails.



■ Tackling Obesity

"Eventually you feel like you want to step up," said Anthony DeLucia of Kingsport Tomorrow (Tennessee). "Some of the best sessions are the ones that made me think, 'This is doable.' I couldn't be doing the work I do today without having gone to the New Partners conferences and taking home a multitude of lessons."

"Kingsport Tomorrow has received a Pioneering Healthier Communities grant for childhood obesity from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. On the obesity issue, considerable attention has now been turned to our dysfunctional food system and it is exciting that planners are getting involved. After attending the Loudon County agriculture tour as part of the Washington, DC, conference, I have begun incorporating equity, land use principles, sustainability, etc., in to my work — especially my grant writing and community outreach efforts."



People working on the West County HEAL Collaborative went to the conference during the project's initial planning stage. The conference helped frame and jump-start the work and program that they have been doing for the past four years.

— Coire Reilly, Project Director, West County HEAL, Richmond, CA

New Partners 2011



■ Don Chen, Metropolitan Opportunity Program Officer, Ford Foundation

The New Partners conference has been a game-changer over the past decade in many different ways. The first conference was a major affirmation of emerging interest in smart growth, and subsequent conferences have provided a popular venue for galvanizing private sector support, offering can't-miss networking and learning opportunities for practitioners, and showcasing the stories and leaders that represent the field's most advanced work.

I have found the conference's recent focus on social equity to be especially valuable. Like many people, I'm alarmed to see the U.S. nearing a level of economic inequality not seen since the 1920s. And because of the subprime mortgage crisis, we've witnessed an unprecedented loss of wealth among African Americans and Latinos. We know that these inequities manifest themselves in harmful ways across geography, and that metropolitan areas that are sharply segregated by race and class exhibit a wide range of dysfunctions, from lower rates of economic participation to higher levels of traffic because many can't afford to live near their jobs.

By providing a venue for collaboration, learning, and relationship-building, New Partners has already helped its attendees develop strategies that can help reduce metropolitan inequities, including improved regional public transit systems that can better link people to opportunity, affordable housing programs that enable hard-working individuals to avoid the high costs and stress of long commutes, and innovative civic engagement efforts that ensure that everyone — regardless of time availability, language, or income — has a say in their community's future. I am pleased that New Partners will continue to make a critical difference in addressing these challenges as it enters its second decade.

“Cars are happiest when there are no other cars around. People are happiest when there are other people around.”

— Dan Burden

February 2011



“This conference is important because it can help us turn the corner collectively by providing the space and resources necessary for a meaningful dialogue about how to create livable cities and communities for everyone. These complex disparities require the engagement of urban, rural and waterfront communities of all belief systems, races, ages and ethnicities to make it work.”

— Elizabeth C. Yeampierre, Executive Director, UPROSE



New Partners for Smart Growth

■ Conference Organizer

Local Government Commission



The Local Government Commission is an award-winning, 31-year-old nonprofit membership organization of forward-thinking, locally elected officials, city and county staff, and other interested individuals. The LGC helps local officials address the problems facing their communities and maximize their civic, environmental and economic resources.

In 1991, the LGC developed the Ahwahnee Principles for Resource-Efficient Communities, which helped pave the way for the smart growth movement. The principles call for a diverse and balanced mix of housing, jobs, businesses and recreational activities located within easy walking distance of one another and within regions that preserve agricultural lands and open space.