

# MOVING MICHIGAN FORWARD

April 8, 2011



special report

national thought leaders speak on  
new economy, new strategies, new places



## Editors

John D. Warbach

*Associate Director, Faculty Research Development, Land Policy Institute*

Soji Adelaja

*John A. Hannah Distinguished Professor in Land Policy and Institute Director*

## Student Interviewers from Michigan State University

Jordan Blekking

*Environmental Studies & Applications*

Katherine Cole

*Geography*

Catherina-Dorothee Grubel

*Environmental Studies & Applications*

David Ivan

*Community, Agriculture & Recreation Resources*

David Katanski

*Economics*

Jae-Young Kim

*International Planning*

Tom Larkin

*Environmental Design*

Jordan Skole

*Interdisciplinary Studies in Social Science - Environmental Policy*

Rachel Soloman

*Environmental Studies & Applications*

Jeff Stivenson

*Urban & Regional Planning*

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# Introduction

## Background

It is time in Michigan, and in other distressed places, to develop and implement a new set of strategies to help achieve prosperity. There are an increasing number of voices from within and outside the state that say that we can no longer chase our economic past—we need to understand that the world economy has changed and with it, different drivers of prosperity, requiring us to embrace new strategies. It appears that this mindset change is hard for this state to adopt. Yet it remains true that the success we achieved following a path set a century ago has run its course. For the past 50 years we needed to embrace a new path, but have not. The good news is that we still can, and there are many people who have astutely observed what we could and should do differently.

Readers may be surprised to learn that at the heart of the state's economic decline were policies that promoted inefficiencies in how we used our land, which promoted disinvestment in productive people and place quality, and that favored fractured decision-making in economic development. We are now paying the consequences.

Fortunately, our nation is blessed with perceptive and articulate thought leaders involved in economic development, land use, the environment, and society; and who track global, national and regional trends. Many of these thought leaders are pioneers in that they saw the big picture early and connected land use and land strategies to many of the issues that face society. Leaders across America are paying attention to the ideas of these thought leaders about national economic recovery strategies. Civic leaders in Michigan need to pay attention to their contributions as well, as the state seeks



to move the economy forward, especially in its most distressed places. Economic progress will require the implementation of strategies grounded in the context of the New Economy, globalization, a “flat world,” knowledge industries and the concentration of economic activity in the most vibrant places where they will stick. Students also need to pay attention, as they are expected to become the leaders of the future in increasingly challenging times.

National thought leaders were asked to provide information from their perspectives that Michigan could use on: making places that will attract people and economic growth, working at the regional level, including specific references for Detroit; addressing the importance of renewable energy; identifying how attitudes among leaders and citizens affects the state's future; and finding investment assistance to make the improvements Michigan needs. National thought leaders contributing to this piece include:

- Janet Barlow, Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist, President of Barlow Design and Accessible Design for the Blind, a nationally recognized authority on accessibility issues for the visually impaired and people with other impairments.

- **Lester Brown**, President of the Earth Policy Institute and author of “Plan B 3.0: Mobilizing to Save Civilization” and “Plan B 4.0.” The Washington Post called Brown one of the world’s most influential thinkers. He holds numerous honorary degrees, including a Doctor of Humanities from Michigan State University.
- **Majora Carter**, President and CEO of the Majora Carter Group, Founder of Sustainable South Bronx and the Bronx Environmental Stewardship Training Program. Carter is a former host of the Sundance Channel Green Program.
- **Carol Coletta**, Executive Director of CEOs for Cities and host and Producer of the nationally syndicated radio show, *Smart City*.
- **Douglas Farr**, Architect, inaugural Chair of the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) for Neighborhood Development Committee, Founder of the 2030 Communities Campaign and author of “Sustainable Urbanism: Urban Design with Nature.”
- **Christopher Leinberger**, private developer, Professor and founding Director of the University of Michigan Graduate Real Estate Development Program, member of the Urban Land Institute and Visiting Fellow at The Brookings Institution. Leinberger is also author of “The Option of Urbanism: Investing in a New American Dream.”
- **Richard Longworth**, former Foreign Correspondent and Senior Editor of the Chicago Tribune and United Press International, Senior Fellow at the Chicago Council of Global Affairs and author of “Caught in the Middle: America’s Heartland in the Age of Globalization.”
- **John Norquist**, President and CEO of the Congress for the New Urbanism and former Mayor, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
- **John Powell**, Ph.D., Director of the Kirwan Institute at The Ohio State University.
- **David Rusk**, Urban Policy Consultant, President, Metropolitan Area Resources Corporation, national strategic partner of the Gamaliel Foundation and former Mayor of Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Additional information about how this information was obtained appears in the Appendix located at the end of this booklet.

Decision-making inertia was accused of being a crippling factor holding back progress by several thought leaders featured herein. In concert with much of the academic and planning profession press, sprawl was identified as a major negative trend. However, the New Urbanism trend of walkability was cited by several subjects as a sign that land use and economic development were heading in a positive direction. The trends the leaders identified ranged from those with global impacts, including resource degradation, water table lowering, climate changing emissions and a continued reliance on fossil fuels, to those framed as having more local impact, including sprawl, fragmented governance, out-of-date zoning, brownfield redevelopment and transportation.

# Placemaking to Attract People and Economic Growth

**P**lace is becoming a multi-disciplinary topic, as the place concept has been discussed in literature with such topics as geography, regional science, planning, architecture and economics. Economists are now using the term to convey the idea that the attributes of different locations can be configured to influence economic growth.

Although multiple disciplines now address Place, places in economic distress need for those disciplines to more fully integrate their work to enhance the performance of places, and for those disciplines to actively transfer their knowledge to policy makers—state and local officials and other leaders—and to students who will become

the researchers, teachers and policy makers of the future.

What constitutes successful placemaking? According to Christopher Leinberger, private developer, member of the Urban Land Institute, Fellow of The Brookings Institution and recent Director of the University of Michigan Real Estate Program, we can answer that question. “If there are models across the country for success, we can look at what common denominators cities that have experienced success and growth in recent years share from a planning and developmental perspective.”

Thought leaders had concrete advice on what placemaking activities are important to metro success. These include making walkable urban areas, improving transit, and insuring that our urban buildings, streets and spaces are attractive. This requires both understanding what makes an area walkable and attractive, and taking the action to reform the zoning regulations that now make good planning and design illegal, and the policies that make our metros auto-dependent.

John Norquist, former Mayor of Milwaukee, WI, and President and CEO of the Congress of New Urbanism, said, “Planners should look that they add value to their economy. They should make society more enjoyable. Things have been screwed up in the last 50 years, and it is important to see those things. Bucharest [Romania] is a bad example. This beautiful city was tied down so vehicles could move.” He continued, “Make beautiful places into more beautiful places, and ugly places into functional places. Add value to a place. Planners really made a mess in the U.S. and that needs to be corrected. Young people have new ideas; they haven’t done anything wrong, so they don’t have to feel responsible for anything that had been



**CHRIS  
LEINBERGER**

PROFESSOR AND FOUNDING  
DIRECTOR, REAL ESTATE  
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM,  
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN;  
VISITING FELLOW,  
THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION;  
AUTHOR OF  
“THE OPTION OF URBANISM”

done wrong in the past. So, when students go and start working in the real world they should start making things better.”

### Transportation and Place

We are a society that has become accustomed to easy and complete mobility, and our transportation systems have been instrumental in shaping our built environment to provide that luxury. Following a long period in which transportation planning has worked to move people out of cities, and to the doorstep of every possible destination, there is recognition

“Communities are undoing the damage that has been done over [the] last 60 years. They are connecting their roads to the grid again; they are revisiting their zoning ordinances to allow urbanism once again.”

John Norquist

that the result is an uninspiring, often unsafe and time-consuming setting for daily life. There now seems to be pent-up demand by people to get back into cities, and that the realization that walking and biking are enjoyable modes of movement. Higher densities and the

desire by a more highly educated workforce for attractive, sociable environments suggest that auto-dominant transportation and planning and urban design will have to change.

“Communities are undoing the damage that has been done over [the] last 60 years. They are connecting their roads to the grid again; they are revisiting their zoning ordinances to allow urbanism once again,” said John Norquist.

“The transportation infrastructure is almost inappropriate for urbanism. The problem is that the roads built are not urban streets. The streets are too big; they encourage fast and long-distance driving. The policy goal for

transportation is wrong. For example, the goal of some state Departments of Transportation is to defeat congestion. Movement is the first goal of streets, but social and economic vibrancy at the block level are others that are not considered,” Norquist said.

### Walkability and Mixed Use as Success Strategies

While decades of building conventional subdivisions established a vast web of winding, unconnected streets that made walking impractical and lifestyles that were neither urban nor rural, the up-and-coming generations say they want more vibrant communities. According to Carol Coletta, Executive Director of CEOs for Cities, “Clearly, the market now values walkability and locations closer to a vibrant core.”

David Rusk, Urban Policy Consultant, and former Mayor of Albuquerque, NM, notes that a walking distance within a radius of 1,500 to 3,000 feet “used to be the primary option offered to Americans living in metropolitan areas. It was how we had been building cities since mankind started building them. However, within the past 60 years, since the end of the Second World War, this paradigm has shifted to what may be called drivable sub-urbanism. This means that we get in our car for nearly every trip we take, because the buildings are arranged in a very low density. Hence, the reference to sub-urbanism became the basis of the American economy, the unofficial domestic policy and the American dream.”

There are other solution models across the country. Christopher Leinberger described the Washington, D.C. region as being the model to which we are growing in this country. “Seventy percent of the region is suburban and 15 years ago the downtown was not at all a safe place.

**“Higher-density, mixed-use design is good, since it makes the city more compact and easier to get around for the blind.”**

**Janet Barlow**

However, Detroit, MI, does not resemble what D.C. was 15 years ago, because Detroit’s economy collapsed. The D.C.’s economy never collapsed regionally. The D.C. region’s success was due, in part, to it being one of three regions that received funding in the 1970s for a subway system. The District of Columbia had the rail transit backbone, as well as great civic leadership. They rezoned the areas around each of the stations to maximize high-density, walkable urban development. The other thing is, in the last 20 years or so, we have been moving into the knowledge era and it appears as if the knowledge-based workers have a propensity to want to live in walkable urban areas.

Washington, D.C., has the highest educational level of any metro area in the country, so they have the more advanced market, civic leadership and backbone infrastructure. That is the reason that Washington, D.C. seems to be in the lead.”

Leinberger noted that for Michigan communities that are worried about disinvestment and are interested in renewal, there are tools available to create more livable and attractive places. “Two-thirds—70%—of walkable, urban development will take place within the [Michigan] suburbs like Royal Oak, and Birmingham, etc. They will get the highest demand for walkable urban development,” he said.”

Janet Barlow, President of Barlow Design and Accessible Design for the Blind, notes both positive and negative public policy outcomes: “Higher-density, mixed-use design is good, since it makes the city more compact and easier to get around for the blind. On the other hand, big box stores and those store’s parking lots

are difficult to negotiate for the blind. Single-lane roundabouts were not always a problem, as they can narrow a street crossing in places. But street crossings should have been designed in accordance with ADA [American’s with Disabilities Act] guidelines by 1995. Many localities are not in compliance and are subject to lawsuits.”

John Norquist suggests that in order to implement New Urbanism: “The first step is to legalize it. It is hard to build urban buildings. For example, in Dortmund [Germany], you may find it common to have a coffee shop with apartments above. Here that is mostly a code-violation. Separate zoning is very widespread in the U.S. In Bloomfield, MI, you may find some bookstores with apartments above downtown. It is not that consumers reject it [in most places], it is just not offered.”



**JANET BARLOW**

**CERTIFIED ORIENTATION AND  
MOBILITY SPECIALIST; PRESIDENT,  
BARLOW DESIGN AND ACCESSIBLE  
DESIGN FOR THE BLIND**



Some very specific tools can play a role in supporting strategic thinking about placemaking. For the past 20 years, David Rusk has been fully behind and championing the idea of inclusionary zoning as a way of carefully and strategically zoning cities in an attempt to discontinue urban sprawl, as well as stop environmental segregation. Inclusionary zoning

**"By keeping the state and federal funds in the urban centers, urban decay may be avoided and the cycle of urban sprawl stopped before it even begins."**

**David Rusk**

(IZ) is the concept of zoning mixed-income housing, instead of zoning based on income. When zoning is not mixed-income it typically can cause economic segregation. This segregation is by itself unacceptable

but when sprawl is input into this formula, it gets even worse. As was previously stated in regards to the cycle of urban decline, as soon as cityscape deterioration occurs, those that can afford to move out will and the cycle will continue and continually worsen.

This idea of inclusionary zoning may be paired with the use of incentives to stop urban sprawl and promote urban growth. In 1997, the State of Maryland implemented the Smart Growth Act. This piece of legislation was created in order to control "urban sprawl and, in the process, to revitalize urban areas through redirecting market investment back into older core communities." This legislation requires that each of Maryland's counties—the most basic designation of local government in the state—to identify and then designate areas that should receive priority funding. To combat sprawl, Maryland will only allow state and federal funds to be used on those areas that have been designated as priorities.

Rusk says this use of incentives may be paired nicely with the idea of IZ in avoiding economic segregation in certain areas. By keeping the state and federal funds in the urban centers, urban decay may be avoided and the cycle of urban sprawl stopped before it even begins. Furthermore, the use of incentives can increase awareness and improve transparency. It allows for more community involvement in the land use planning process.

Rusk suggests that there are important solutions available to urban revitalization problems in the use of brownfields for redevelopment: "Brownfields can benefit from nearby city cores. They are often located near inner city locations and, therefore, developing them can be a contribution to revitalize the city."

Rusk notes that developers are viewing similar dilapidated facilities, such as factories and warehouses, as living spaces and working areas, which possess some of the same redevelopment advantages.

Rusk feels that "abandoned multi-story factories and warehouses will never be redeveloped as new factories and warehouses because the labor-saving imperatives of both manufacturing and wholesale distribution now require one-floor facilities with maximum use of labor saving equipment . . . However, in urban settings, such abandoned buildings are increasingly being redeveloped as offices and, even more often, as apartments and condominiums."

According to Carol Coletta, "Places need talent—lots and lots of talent, as defined by a higher percentage of college grads in their populations. It also now looks like cities with strong cores are withstanding the rise in gas prices much better than those without.

And now, we're learning that homes in more-walkable neighborhoods are more valuable than identical neighborhoods in less-walkable neighborhoods, with walkability defined as being close to multiple daily destinations."

Despite the budget woes of cities, I expect the trend of great public and semi-public buildings and spaces to continue. With the aging of baby boomers, I expect to see more demand for condos and vibrant urban cores. And with improving urban school options, I expect to see more Millennials raising children in cities," she said.

According to Coletta, "The rapid adoption of biking is having a noticeable effect and if NYC's [New York City] pedestrianization efforts catch on in other cities, I think we'll see major shifts quickly. Even the speed with which Sunbelt cities have adopted transit is a shock. So, I don't believe we are looking at decades at all."

However, Richard Longworth, former Foreign Correspondent and Senior Editor of the Chicago Tribune and United Press International, wants us to keep our eyes on the big picture of what it takes to reinvent cities and not to be satisfied with baby steps. He says, "Cities in Michigan need a lot more assistance than a few new bicycle paths."

Longworth is also concerned about the plight of smaller communities. Many smaller farming towns, he acknowledged, will disappear much like communities have disappeared for centuries after their economic purpose dissipates. Mid-sized communities, like Lima, OH, will likely exist in some fashion, he said, but their role will be diminished.

Majora Carter, South Bronx [New York, NY] activist and environmental consultant, suggested that an important common

component of revitalization is local business development. "If the same street is home to local mixed-use businesses, there is a sense of place and personal sacrifice to keep their business[es] safe and operating."

Carter went on to say that there may be tough times and slower recovery for big businesses, but the city will be more resilient in the end. "There can also be restaurants and bars that stay open later than superstores, as well as performance spaces, comedy clubs and cinemas. Mornings can be filled with local breakfast places and so on. The longer the hours of operation for a city built upon local community members, the more the city can build their economy, and can keep the streets safer by not having abandoned empty land for trouble to take place." She added, "adaptability is crucial and we have to favor it through land use policy."

John Norquist notes that the Congress of New Urbanism aims to promote walkable, neighborhood-based development as an alternative to sprawl. The organization tries to influence the built environment by transforming growth patterns from the inside out, and to make it easier for people to live healthy lives.

"They stand for the restoration of existing urban centers and towns within coherent metropolitan regions, the reconfiguration of sprawling suburbs into communities of real neighborhoods and diverse districts, the conservation of natural environments and the preservation of our built legacy," he said.

"If the same street is home to local mixed-use businesses, there is a sense of place and personal sacrifice to keep their business[es] safe and operating."  
Majora Carter



**DOUG FARR**  
ARCHITECT; INAUGURAL  
CHAIR, LEED NEIGHBORHOOD  
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE, 2030  
COMMUNITIES CAMPAIGN; AUTHOR  
OF "SUSTAINABLE URBANISM"

Architect Douglas Farr is the Founder of the 2030 Communities Campaign, which aims to reduce vehicle miles traveled per year in half by 2030. Growing up in Detroit, Farr relied on the public transit regularly to get to school, as well as the other places he needed to go. He said it was this connection with the transit system that played such a large role in his motivation to start the Campaign.

"The 2030 Communities Campaign proposes to reverse the increase in VMTs [vehicle miles traveled] and adopt LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) for Neighborhood Development [LEED ND] as a municipal standard by 2030. The challenge calls for a 50% decrease in VMTs from the 2005

baseline of 8,000 VMT per capita; to 4,000 VMT; and aims to have 100% of public and private development projects achieve LEED-ND Platinum certification by 2030. Working parallel to the 2030 Architecture challenge, this Campaign serves as a viable standard to address the challenge of climate change in the transportation sector, while improving community health and well-being," said Farr.

Lester Brown, President of the Earth Watch Institute, has a world view of what it will take to reach sustainability for the earth and the people on it, which he writes about in his book, "Plan B, 4.0." However, sustainability has a local, on-the-ground element as well. About land use policies, he noted the need for designing cities for people, such as new urbanism, complete streets, ecological views, urban farming, livable and walkable communities.

### Clean and Green and Blue Strategies

The newly emerging, educated, creative and energetic members of the workforce have a preference for clean and protected environments, prefer to live a lifestyle with a reduced carbon footprint, and enjoy urban and rural parks and waterways. This is useful information for regional leaders developing placemaking strategies to enhance economic development. Green infrastructure, reclaimed waterfronts for public use, buildings that feature LEED construction, renewable energy, a welcoming environment for diverse populations, and communications and information technology infrastructure are all important features for attracting a game-changing population.

Lester Brown said that at the place scale, cities need to be designed for people but not for automobiles, raising energy efficiency and a more efficient food economy.

“Clean water can almost be considered an American value,” said Majora Carter. According to Carter, as more water is cleaned up, more riverbanks and riparian zones become attractive for developers and homeowners. Blue alongside green infrastructure can increase a city’s draw for residents. The elimination of brownfields, which may potentially contain contaminated material, makes a city cleaner and more desirable to live. In addition, parks, like the Hunts Point Riverside Park that Carter started, can get people interested in a place and provide them with something to connect with.

Majora Carter is concerned about social justice at the community level, both in terms of how the environment can either jeopardize or enhance the life of residents, and of how the nature of business activities impacts the economic health of neighborhoods. She explained how one big business on a block can shut down the local economy. Take, for example, when a superstore moves in and purchases and develops a vacant lot, eventually local small businesses and store owners cannot compete. The rest of the entire block may become vacant and when the superstore closes for the day, which is usually in the evening, the street shuts down. The empty street leaves room for dangerous activity. There are no longer “eyes on the street.”

David Rusk noted that one concept that has come to the table in Michigan is the idea of strategically shrinking a community in order to more effectively use the land and a city’s services. This is currently being done in cities across the U.S. like Youngstown, OH. Here in Michigan, the idea is being used in the City of Flint. As Dan Kildee, the former Genesee County Treasurer remarked, “Decline in Flint is like gravity, a fact of life.”

John Norquist believes there are options to support placemaking at the regional scale through neighborhood level activities. He believes that LEED for Neighborhood Development is a new tool that helps communities work towards green urban neighborhoods. Currently, there are efforts to make LEED standards mandatory in local zoning requirements.

“[LEED-ND] is an option. I think Bloomfield, [NJ], has gone for the LEED neighborhood award. This is a useful tool in particular. The basis is getting the award. The award ranges from certification to platinum. It is not appropriate in every community. It is not like zoning standards, because zoning addresses many more issues than may be covered by LEED. Some aspects might be beneficial but some may not fit,” said Norquist.



**DAVID RUSK**

URBAN POLICY CONSULTANT;  
PRESIDENT, METROPOLITAN AREA  
RESEARCH CORPORATION; FORMER  
MAYOR, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

# Regionalism

If we have entered the era of placemaking, the context for this era is the metro region. It is the only economically successful geographic unit in the New Economy. It provides both urban opportunities to its core and suburbs, and rural food

"We're recognizing the importance of regional land use strategies, which we've never done in the past, but we are truly only scratching the surface."

Richard Longworth

production and amenity at the fringes. We have upset the sustainability of metro regions through sprawl and a mindset that allows the individual units of regions to compete

against each other, sapping the potential of the entire region.

"We're recognizing the importance of regional land use strategies, which we've never done in the past, but we are truly only scratching the surface," said Richard Longworth, author of "Caught in the Middle: America's Heartland in the Age of Globalization." Longworth was also surprised at the lack of communication and cooperation among communities: "The fact that many people were operating in isolation, the fact that nobody was talking across town lines or even state lines, the isolation of universities, the fact that Michigan State [University], for example, does not talk to the University of Illinois in any coordinated fashion, the overall balkanization of communities really jumped out at me."

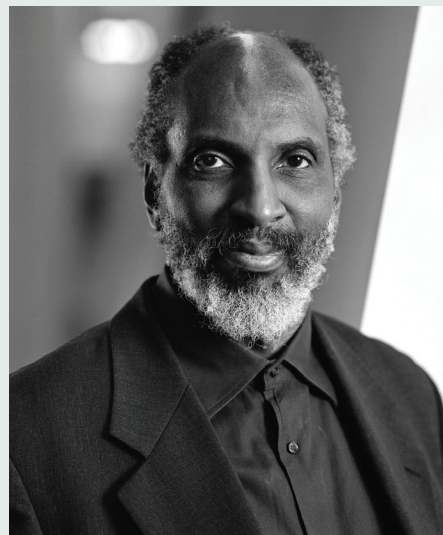
David Rusk makes a severe indictment of sprawl and of the [poor] capacity of places in certain states to convert its policies to foster more prosperous places: "There are many [experts] that argue that urban sprawl was a contributory

cause of the current recession, with the sub-prime mortgage industry a primary cause."

He goes on to say that during the 1990s, urban sprawl occurred throughout much of the United States. The only places where sprawl did not occur were in "some metro areas with strong, anti-sprawl land use controls in effect."

As Rusk points out, through a lack of aggressiveness in dealing with it urban sprawl has become an economic, environmental and planning mess in Michigan.

Dr. John Powell, Director of the Kirwan Institute at The Ohio State University, notes that most of the rest of the world is much more centralized in land use planning. He says that both becoming aware of that and, in a sense, being in a competition with those other societies will call us to rethink some things.



DR. JOHN  
POWELL

DIRECTOR, KIRWAN INSTITUTE,  
THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

We need to recognize that our regions compete with other regions around the world. Longworth, who also serves as a Senior Fellow at the Chicago Council of Global Affairs, indicated that the Council's Global Midwest Initiative is designed to break down communication barriers among communities by encouraging on-going dialogue and information exchange, and education about global affairs.

Longworth also noted that the importance of regionalism applies to the smallest of farming towns, as well as such major cities as Chicago, IL, and Detroit.

Much as he encouraged all Midwestern communities to consider themselves from a broad regional perspective, Longworth emphasized the importance of Michigan communities to also seek smaller regional links.

"If you're in West Michigan, I say hook onto Chicago as you're already part of the Chicago economic region."

He acknowledged that most West Michigan communities prefer to tout that they are not Chicago, but for their economic future they need to adjust parochial attitudes. Longworth also noted that great opportunities also may exist in developing stronger regional links with Ontario, Canada.

"I've spoken to many Canadian communities and they are very interested in strengthening their ties with Midwestern communities and regions," he said. "The tendency of globalization is to enhance urbanization, to pull everything into bigger cities," Longworth said. "So for most of the larger urban centers there will likely be a place for them in the New Economy."

Some smaller communities that are built around innovation, such as Warsaw [IN],



## RICHARD LONGWORTH

**FORMER FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT  
AND SENIOR EDITOR,  
CHICAGO TRIBUNE AND  
UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL;  
SENIOR FELLOW, CHICAGO COUNCIL  
OF GLOBAL AFFAIRS; AUTHOR OF  
"CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE"**

will likely do fine, according to Longworth. Additionally, he acknowledged that smaller towns near larger cities or universities that can function as both bedroom communities and as places for nearby industry will also likely exist, as will small towns where someone comes up with a good idea and establishes a firm locally (emphasizing the importance of fostering entrepreneurship). The future of other places, however, remains questionable.

Longworth indicated that for communities to compete in the New Economy they need to look regionally: "You can't do it on your own," he said. "So, figure out what your region is and, oftentimes, this means different regions than they normally have considered in the

past and begin working on regional initiatives. Look outside your town, outside your county, outside of your state. Don't stop at old political boundaries, because the challenges most communities are facing are simply too big for them to address on their own."

David Rusk believes the state should look to come together into some kind of county or sub-county unit order for planning. Michigan is made up of 1,775 municipal units (villages, townships and cities). All these 1,775 units have the same essential needs for and strains placed on resources like fire and police protection, education and even garbage pickup. This idea of a county government to form a county-wide unit is thought of as "communities of common interest." What this is designed for, and implemented to help, is mutual inclusion of all joined municipalities with one another. Instead of having 1,775 separate municipal units, the state would have a smaller number of municipal units that would work together. These

municipalities would not formally combine but would form compacts, in which operating guidelines have been laid out. The whole idea behind this concept is to empower a county's citizens to demand and, in return, receive more from their publicly funded services. He argues that comprehensive land use planning cannot be done with smaller "highly-independent" units carrying out the zoning and planning. Instead, it has to be done on a larger scale.

Norquist wraps up by stating, "No more separate zoning and good transportation. See, the computer industry was kind of a toy until the internet was discovered. Transportation is a network, instead of linear. Then they [transportation planners] started to simplify the network. In an urban setting, complex is good—the reason why Manhattan, why New York is so great is, because it is so complex."



## Detroit

Detroit has received national attention for both its problems and the attempts to reinvent itself. Media critics claim Detroit can not get a break, as the media enjoys pointing out its crime problems and decay. Loyal Detroiters and its new administration point to the concerted efforts to raise a New Economy Phoenix out of the city's ashes. The national thought leaders paid special attention to Detroit, noting its faults and promise, and the duty of the nation to help one of its most important cities recover.

John Norquist noted the turn around in fortune of Detroit, and the impact of shrinking financial resources and public policy: "During World War II, Detroit was the most productive city in the world; all the tanks and equipment were produced there. We did not just equip our troops, we equipped Russia as well. Germany lost because of Detroit. And when you look at Berlin after World War II, all that was destroyed and Detroit, what a great city it was; and look at them now, you might think that World War II was in Detroit. Detroit is empty." Additionally Norquist states, "Detroit has defeated congestion but, on the other hand, it is an empty city. Michigan has done this for years. The road matrix is wrong; look at Flint. These roads are only made for vehicles. There is no place for social meetings. In fact, the only social meeting you may have is when the police officer gives you a ticket. If you put in a street that has a four-meter—about 12-foot-wide—sidewalk, they are pleasant for walking. But this does not happen in most cities. The next step is to adopt this practice again. It's been like this for the past 60 years and people have to learn how to build and develop urban streets and urban buildings again."



JOHN NORQUIST

PRESIDENT AND CEO,  
CONGRESS OF NEW URBANISM;  
FORMER MAYOR OF MILWAUKEE, WI

Majora Carter says that urban quality of life, social health, human health and economic health can benefit from using some urban land for community gardens and urban agriculture. She adds that in order to see this sort of business take off in Detroit, it [the city] needs to get out of the past. Detroiters placed a lot of faith in the auto industry and we have now reached a time where it is unlikely they are going to continue to succeed in going forward.

Carter challenges Detroit to step up and be a leader: "We have to remove all of those fears associated with leaving the auto industry behind and start again as a pioneer city. Detroit is home to the assembly line—an innovation that ended up changing the world of manufacturing. There is potential again to start something global and definitely be a leader nationally." She continues, "It really is up to Detroit residents now, and those



living in the surrounding communities that feel a sense of place for Detroit, to make a valuable change and stop holding on to what made them successful in the past. The economy around the nation has put stress on local champions. Detroit needs to find its footing and run with it. Detroiters have to start using forward thinking and stop trying to build upon past success.”

Dr. John Powell says that the Detroit metro region has to do more to act regionally. “As you know, Detroit has its bus system and then as you get to the next suburb, they have their bus system and the jobs are way out over here. You’re crossing three or four bus systems that are totally unrelated, totally uncoordinated, which means that they don’t work. They’re dysfunctional. The region isn’t just 607 small municipalities, it’s something else.”

“Part of the brokenness of Detroit is the thinking that it’s separate from the rest of the region,” says Dr. Powell. “People outside Detroit believe that, and people inside Detroit believe that.”

He notes “Only 25% of the students graduate from high school in Detroit, 20% if you are an African American male. Sixty percent of African American males spend time in jail. Something is seriously wrong and so people and resources leave.”

Richard Longworth suggests “The fact that there are still cars made in Detroit [and Flint] is preventing them from moving to where they likely need to be in the future. The fact that GM still employs approximately 4,000 workers in Flint has probably been a handicap as they attempt to move to the future.”

Dr. Powell offered this about what Michigan and Detroit needs: “I think, first, it takes leadership; but not just leadership, a leadership that is inclusive. You can look at Birmingham,

“Part of the brokenness of Detroit is the thinking that it’s separate from the rest of the region. People outside Detroit believe that, and people inside Detroit believe that.”

Dr. John Powell

England, a post-industrialized city; there are a lot of post-industrialized cities more emptied out than Detroit. What happened in Detroit was a function of mistakes here on the ground, but also national policy. You have this big sprawling

"There used to be neighborhood business districts and 300 departments stores, I mean, 2 million people lived in Detroit; it was a very interesting place . . ."

John Norquist

metropolis; the area lost population but not a whole hell of a lot of population. What it really lost was population density, and it was racially encoded, and it

was facilitated by subsidizing by the federal government, the state government. Then they say, 'Okay, now you fix it.' They spent all these resources to create this mess, but want to say, 'Okay, now you fix it,' it's not going to happen. Once it became fragmented, it becomes

dysfunctional, but people are invested in it, no matter how dysfunctional it is. People feel like, 'this is my city,' 'this is my school system,' 'this is my neighborhood' and that needs to shift, we need regional appropriation."

He goes on to say, "I have a meeting later today with a foundation that wants to invest a lot of money in Detroit. I say great but make sure it's related to what's happening in the region."

John Norquist maintains that Detroit is simple: "There used to be neighborhood business districts and 300 departments stores, I mean, 2 million people lived in Detroit; it was a very interesting place, and now it turned into something stupid. Some people say it is because of the auto industry. But just because there is an auto industry doesn't mean the place has to look like a garbage dump. Look at Wolfsburg [Germany]; it is a beautiful city, even though there is the auto industry."



# Renewable Energy

With the sun providing thousands of times more free energy to the earth than all of civilization uses, it begs the questions of how we take advantage of it and what makes sound energy policy. Also, compared to other states, Michigan has substantial amounts of solar and wind energy available within its own borders. It has the beginnings of policy to take advantage of that energy for the economic development of Michigan. It has the engineering and advanced manufacturing capacity to drive an economic development sector around renewable energy, and appears to be rising above the ground floor in that sector.

Based on knowledge of trends across the earth, Lester Brown provided “Plan B” as an economic, environmental and social sustainability model that could be substituted for the current economic model, by using abundant sources of renewable energy: primarily wind, solar and geothermal. It also requires acknowledgement that we do not accurately convey the full costs of our energy use when discussing energy policy. The Plan B model can be achieved by incorporating the real costs of oil and other conventional resources. This requires shifting subsidies and taxes on environmentally destructive activities to incorporate indirect costs into market price, such as a gasoline tax, a carbon tax, environmental taxes, shifting subsidies from road construction to rail construction and so on.

Brown offered suggestions on how Michigan can make changes that require different actions by the people, not just a new set of policies by a government, including the role of stakeholders. He said, “There are two levels. One is what we can do individually, things like recycle

newspapers, cans, change light bulbs, drive more energy efficient cars and choose a bicycle instead of a car. We can do all of these things at a personal level. But we also have to change the restructuring of the economy. Right now [in 2009], for our energy economy, Congress [was] trying to develop policy for a sustainable energy economy but what they proposed [was] too weak. The preferred way to restructure the energy economy is by restructuring the tax system. That is lowering taxes on income and raising taxes on carbon. If we do that, it will begin to drive the entire restructuring. It will be not only a shift from fossil fuels, such as oil and natural gas, to wind and solar energies; it also will affect many other things as well. It will make recycling much more profitable, for example. I think it is the key to restructuring our energy economy that we lower income taxes and implement carbon taxes. And it will begin



**LESTER BROWN**

PRESIDENT, EARTH POLICY INSTITUTE;  
AUTHOR OF  
“PLAN B 3.0” AND “PLAN B 4.0”

to affect the entire economic structure. It also does not change the amount of taxes people have to pay. In the Clinton government, there

**"I think it is the key to restructuring our energy economy that we lower income taxes and implement carbon taxes."**

**Lester Brown**

was a movement to raise gas taxes. It is difficult. If we lower income taxes and raise carbon taxes, I think people will support it."

According to David Rusk, Michigan must enter into new industries and capital ventures. Through the previously mentioned example of Flint, the results and aftermath of the automotive industry leaving the city—and the state as a whole—can be easily recognized. One venture that the state is currently pursuing, and should pursue, is their effort to find a foothold somewhere in the renewable energy industry. Specifically, wind and solar energy sources have the potential to be very promising for the

state through energy production and equipment production. On the energy production side, Michigan ranks 14th out of the 50 U.S. states in potential wind resource capacity. Nearly the entire West coast of the state and Thumb of Michigan are prime real estate locations for these large turbines. These are also areas, especially along the Southeast Coast of the state, where development has occurred in the past and now there sits abandoned and dilapidated buildings.

Rusk commented on the suitability of redeveloping brownfields and abandoned structures with renewable energy systems, by pointing out the importance of location: "Presumably, wind energy production occurs primarily on isolated rural sites, where fields of wind turbines can be erected. Solar energy panels can be fit on the roofs and sides of buildings in an urban environment, but large solar energy sites will continue to be located primarily in rural areas."



# Mindset: How Attitudes among Leaders and Citizens affect the State's Future

The national thought leaders observed that part of the challenge Michigan and other distressed places in the Midwest face is attitudinal. The population, including its leadership, demonstrates antiquated, isolationist and unrealistic beliefs about how to create jobs in the 21st Century.

Richard Longworth has studied Midwest communities and says, “While the East and West Coasts and, to a lesser extent, the southern states have adapted to New Economy realities, the Midwest is failing to find its role in this new economic paradigm.” He adds, “But, I don’t believe anybody has ever sat down and contemplated is this the best possible use of this land. Rather the communities said ‘wow, we’re losing jobs and here is how we are going to get more jobs.’”

Longworth continues, “We’ve never really looked at our land use strategies from a sustainability lens, because we’ve been able to sprawl into the nondescript suburbs, which surround most of our cities. Many of our past land use decisions have failed us; none of this comes naturally to Midwesterners.” He adds, “Most of these places are communities where people grew up and in the past everything felt very safe, very secure, very regular—an established way of life. Over the past 20 to 30 years those same safe, secure and stable communities have been turned upside down and we’re having a very hard time coming to terms with these new realities.”

“But, mostly I have found places that were created for a certain economic reason—as a farming town, a railroad town, a mining town or a factory town, and it has existed for that



economic reason for the past 100 to 150 years. That reason has now gone away, as farming and mining operations have consolidated, factories have closed, railroads have gone away, and whatever economic reasons that the town initially existed or prospered have disappeared. And now you have to reinvent yourself, which is really hard to do,” he said.

The isolation of communities was further represented by the leaders who serve them, according to Longworth: “Most of the leadership represents people who grew up here, who are invested in the place, and who are elected by people you live with in a certain place (state, town, etc.), and your job description says you have to do something for that area.” For example, Longworth continued, “if you are the Mayor of Boone, IA, you are not supposed to do good things for neighboring Ames, IA, even though half the citizens of Boone work in Ames. And if you’re the Governor of Michigan you’re not supposed to help Ohio get a factory that opens two miles south of the Michigan border, even though a number of the workers will come from Michigan.”

Longworth said that the ability of leaders to act in the broader regional context that is necessary is very difficult for most of them. Concurrently,

many elected officials have difficulty relating their local economic challenges to the larger global arena. “So you have good leadership that is not necessarily, at this time, up for the job that the situation requires,” he said.

David Rusk observed that a chief reason why urban sprawl has become a problem is that there has not been much help in the way of organization from the government. Specifically, the federal government has had little to do with planning and zoning. Due to the U.S. Constitution’s lack of delineation of powers, the power of land use planning and zoning authority has been left up to state and local governments. Because of this, the United

States has never had a clearly designed, uniform national land use policy from which state governments can take cues. Likewise, state governments often choose to designate these planning powers to the smaller local governments. What this means is that with no standards from which to work, local governments only create land use policies from which to follow, as they are required or as the states see appropriate.

When “new things occur, the people in charge are over-challenged with them. This leads to rejection of the new development.”  
Douglas Farr

“Worse off,” stated Rusk, “only about a dozen states have any pretence of statewide land use policies, and only a handful [of] state policies [are] really effective.”

Changing public policy can be very difficult. As Doug Farr observed, when “new things” occur, the people in charge are over-challenged with them. This leads mostly to rejection of the new development. Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design for Neighborhood Development (LEED-ND) also covers many different aspects, such as green technologies, which are usually beyond a planning official’s term of office.

Majora Carter says “the past may seem like a ‘safe’ route to go but there are better ways out there and we have to try them all in a fair and competitive arena that will allow our very best to succeed and bring the rest of the nation and the world along with us.”

Carter believes that Michigan’s biggest barrier is “inertia.” Non-government organizations (NGO) like SSBx (Sustainable South Bronx)



## MAJORA CARTER

PRESIDENT AND CEO, MAJORA  
CARTER GROUP; FOUNDER,  
SUSTAINABLE SOUTH BRONX  
AND BRONX ENVIRONMENTAL  
STEWARDSHIP TRAINING PROGRAM;  
FORMER HOST, SUNDANCE  
CHANNEL GREEN PROGRAM

that she started and ran for seven years have “taken the initiative on reclaiming abandoned industrial land for re-use as parks and housing. However, they have struggled with the New York City Economic Development Corporation that still favors high-end condos, stadiums and prisons over local green construction. Michigan has a similar problem in getting the ball rolling on building green infrastructure and especially when it comes to obtaining funding.”

Dr. John Powell agrees that inertia and resistance to change is crippling progress in the state: “In some ways, I think that right now globalization has created a global anxiety. People are trying to hold onto something. In the United States, there is a false assumption that ‘I control my destiny.’ There’s this new movie coming out with Nelson Mandela. I just saw the trailers, and they kept saying, ‘I control my own destiny.’ I had the pleasure of meeting Nelson Mandela, and I just don’t think he really said that or if he did, I think it’s out of context because he is much more sophisticated than that.”

Dr. Powell states that he thinks it’s a very American thing, the attitude that “I’m an individual, so I can control my own destiny. I can be whatever I want to be. I can do whatever I want to do. In a sense, the falseness of that is becoming more and more apparent. General Motors doesn’t control its own destiny; the United States banker now is China. With global climate change, what happens in India affects what happens in California.”

Dr. Powell added that inter-connectedness creates anxiety; it especially creates anxiety in Americans because we do want to control our own destiny. “That’s really driven by fear; the desire for control is really a response to fear. I think in terms of our land use planning. First

of all, its served through its base, its local control, states rights, how do I keep out the others? The idea of a high school being controlled by the community; how many people graduate from your high school and stay, everybody leaves! You want them to leave, you want them to go to college and they maybe never come back. You’re not preparing them to live next door; you’re preparing them for the world. What does your local community say about the world?”

Dr. Powell suggests that the assumption was, up until five minutes ago, that the world would appear to us: “Globalization was just a fancy way of saying American foreign policy. The consensus was that we have the best schools; we have the best economic system, etc. All that is being called into question now. When it’s being called into question, that doesn’t necessarily mean that people won’t follow us uncritically, it means that they will hold up a mirror and say, ‘eh, I don’t think so.’”

Lester Brown believes, “It is possible to change with the existing political structure. Surely it takes the leadership that [the] U.S. demonstrated in the Second World War. I described this in the last chapter of my book ‘Plan B 4.0.’ And we totally restructured [the] U.S. industrial economy in the 1942. I used



that example to show that it is possible to restructure our economy, such as the energy economy, as much as we need. It would be very quick if we had leadership and commitment. I think it is more a matter of leadership and the clear understanding of problems than anything else.”

Asked if the circumstances of this problem are different from those in response to the Japanese invasion of the U.S., Brown said, “It is much more difficult. We don’t have yet a Pearl Harbor. So we do not have the same wake up call. That does make it difficult. At the time of a catastrophic event, if we make change gradually, it could be late.”

A change in mindset can be a powerful solution. Richard Longworth indicated that he does believe that people understand the challenges and issues facing them. He indicated that he has traveled more than 28,000 miles, since his book was published in 2007. “Basically I’ve discovered that I haven’t told anybody anything that they didn’t already know,” he says. “They understand that their economic challenges, which transmit into social and political challenges, are the result of fundamental change. A lot of them were doing this thinking on their own—in isolation—not really connecting it to the global economy and certainly not connecting it to a regional problem.”

Longworth also indicated that most of the community leaders he has visited with are relieved that there are others out there like themselves with similar challenges, and they are eager to talk with others about their plight. “Getting people together to talk is a very powerful process,” he says. “These forums provide opportunities to learn from communities that are doing great things, like Madison and

even small town Warsaw. Nobody has ever heard of Warsaw but they have a great story; and Kalamazoo and what they are doing with their educational promise. Oftentimes they have to look on the map to find out where these successful communities are located and then they ask themselves ‘can we do something like this?’”

Longworth says that the Midwest’s challenge is not to reclaim what it has lost, but to seize a new future. When asked about what he meant by that statement, he indicated that many communities continue to cling to past economic ventures, because they believe that is what will lead them to a better future when the economy recovers.

Longworth said that Chicago’s advantage, if one exists, is that during the decades of the 1960s and 1970s the community lost everything—steel, metal working, stockyards, [leather] tanning, television manufacturing—all of the economic contributors that made Chicago an economic powerhouse in the Midwest.

“I think the total loss of those industries helped to transform Chicago into a global city today,” he said.

“I’m of the opinion that if we would have just let the auto industry go down the tubes those cities may be better in the long-run, because they can focus on New Economy industries, such as transit.”

Despite his harsh criticism of both the leadership and economic priorities of many Midwestern communities, Longworth indicated

“... Many communities continue to cling to past economic ventures, because they believe that is what will lead them to a better future when the economy recovers.”  
Richard Longworth

"A shift in mindset is needed. Look at the transit in Germany . . . when you walk down Oranienburger Straße, there runs the streetcar and it is such a nice place to walk."  
Christopher Leinberger

that some success themes emerged from those communities that are achieving vitality.

He acknowledges Michigan's specific challenges: "I am deeply concerned with Michigan's future. It is going to take a very long

time for the economic adjustments to work themselves out in Michigan and perhaps Indiana, too."

Longworth suggested that other communities can learn from successful examples if they do two things: "First, you have to talk to successful communities. This is a new idea for a lot of people, as most Midwesterners hate to admit their weaknesses and learn from others."

"Second, is to realize that the past is gone; now build on the past by figuring out what you know and what you're good at," he said. "If you're a medium-size manufacturing community, you're probably not going to become the center of a microchip development center," he continues. "But if you've always worked with materials, perhaps you consider manufacturing processes involving nanotechnology, which may mean that you identify a good university nearby that is conducting research on nanotechnology processes that can provide assistance."

Third, he states that communities need to change how they approach basic economic development: "If your local ED [economic development] office is still focusing

on recruiting businesses, then fire the entire staff and get busy on local entrepreneurship," Longworth said. "If you're going to survive, it may be from local, home-grown ideas."

Despite the challenges facing the state, Longworth indicated that opportunities exist for Michigan: "You have great universities, abundant water and some examples where things are going well, like Grand Rapids. But things are going to have to change if the state is to become a player in the New Economy."

Longworth has a consistent message to groups in states like Michigan: "Yes, my message is simple; the past is gone, so get busy on the future."

Longworth agrees that the message is harsh, so he usually shares with audiences a historical description of how the Midwest has declined to its current position: "Basically, I try to do what journalists always attempt to do, and that is to point out a problem, make them aware of the problem, define what it means to them, and then challenge them as citizens to do something about the problem with the hope that they will," he said.



He also says it is important for communities to look at other assets that they may possess, and can build upon, as they are likely not going to be able to completely reinvent themselves.

“A shift in mindset is needed,” said Christopher Leinberger. “Look at the transit in Germany. When they spend money, they add value. For example, look at Berlin, at Prenzlauer Berg and when you walk down Oranienburger Straße. There runs the streetcar and it is such a nice place to walk. So, with investment in transit they add also value to the economy. When the Berlin Wall came down, I thought they might tear down those streetcars in East Berlin and do it like in the West, all U-Bahn and S-Bahn, but they did not, they invested in them, repaired them and added value.”

Leinberger noted that studies have shown there has been a generational change in preference back to urban life, rather than rural life. This change will greatly affect the demand for walkable, urban development and spur investment in urban and suburban areas. If communities are worried about urban disinvestment, they will need to find a way to attract the younger knowledge-based generation through forms of placemaking, such as mixed-use zoning and amenities.

He stated, “I grew up in Grosse Pointe, MI, which is a walkable neighborhood similar to Birmingham. There are two kinds of real estate—regionally significant and local serving. Regionally significant are [Michigan] places like Troy and Birmingham with the malls and office buildings, and local serving areas are communities, such as Grosse Pointe. There

are also two kinds of ways you can develop real estate—walkable urban and drivable suburban—so there are four options. Grosse Pointe’s downtown is a local serving downtown that just serves the community. Birmingham’s downtown serves the region. Those areas were built in the ‘20s back when they were still building walkable urban areas. If they were built in the ‘60s, they would have been a bunch of strip malls.”

Dr. John Powell noted that people in suburban communities believe themselves to be different.

“They would rather let the entire region die than make the needed changes. You can get past that. The biggest thing is that they cannot imagine the changes. Part of it is examples but a big part of it really is leadership. Leadership that is multi-racial, multi-dimensional and multi-jurisdictional and, then, start having little nodes of success. What happened in Cleveland is that they hit rock bottom and Detroit has hit rock bottom, too. Hitting rock bottom is not enough. You also have to have someone to take advantage of that shock and say, ‘okay listen up, this is something that we can do; we’re not going to do more of the same thing.’”

Majora Carter adds a final thought on mindset, “adaptability is crucial and we have to favor it through land use policy.”

“. . . Adaptability is crucial and we have to favor it through land use policy.”  
Majora Carter

# Finding Investment Assistance to Make the Improvements Michigan Needs

Placemaking requires strategic investments to be successful. In an economic climate of scarcity with decades of diminishing resources and government downsizing in Michigan, and other Midwestern states, this is difficult. However, Michigan is beginning to capture the attention of investment sources, such as the federal government through the development of good ideas and strategies, but it still has a long way to go.

Dr. John Powell argues “You need to grow new opportunities [in Southeast Michigan]. There are not enough resources that people can just

redistribute them and be fine. This is what I call a low-capitalized region, and a low-capitalized region doesn’t have enough opportunity, period.”

Dr. Powell adds, “We just did a major project in Cleveland where we said you do no redistributing of existing resources. What you redistribute is

future resources. As you grow future resources, you redistribute them in a way that is equitable, but what you don’t do is start by taking the one community in Cleveland that is functioning and say okay we are going to take everything from them. For one thing, politically that’s hard to do. The way we used to deal with it was

that each little locality would solve its own problems, but these are not local problems.”

Lester Brown says that we should be shifting subsidies and taxes on environmentally destructive activities to incorporate indirect costs into market price, such as a gasoline tax, a carbon tax, environmental taxes, shifting subsidies from road construction to rail construction and so on.

According to Brown’s calculation, the Plan B model cost will be \$190 billion annually. Compared to the world military budget; it is 1/6 of the military costs. Therefore, Brown argues we already have the enough resources to eradicate poverty, stabilize population and protect the earth’s natural resource base.

Richard Longworth says that economic development efforts must fit a global society. The emphasis should be placed on innovation: “Communities need to ask themselves how do we get innovation going; how can we work better with our K-12 school system, our neighboring colleges and universities; and how can we get venture capital in place locally to bring the innovation we foster to the marketplace,” he said.

He indicated that communities like Chicago and Madison have excellent track records in creating marketable innovation. Peoria, IL, has also made recent gains, according to Longworth, on building innovation with representatives from CAT, Bradley University and their medical institutions working collectively in a new innovation center in concert with the establishment of local venture capital. Also, local philanthropy can play a role. Communities, such as Grand Rapids and Kalamazoo in

“Communities need to ask themselves how do we get innovation going; how can we work better with our K-12 school system, our neighboring colleges and universities; and how can we get venture capital in place locally to bring the innovation we foster to the marketplace.”  
Richard Longworth

Michigan, and St. Louis, MO, with the Danforth Institute, are examples of communities with major philanthropic commitments that are changing their economic fortunes.

He further stated that communities must tap into local assets and use them differently. He referenced St. Louis which is strategically tapping into the expertise at Washington University and Monsanto to become a player in the biotechnology arena. Peoria is utilizing Bradley University and the U.S. Department of Agriculture research lab in new and innovative ways that, according to Longworth, is positioning the community for success.

He continued by saying that successful communities have stronger ties with their local universities and colleges: “This is one of the easiest, yet most often overlooked strategies to fostering innovation and transferring knowledge to local firms.”

Longworth said that economic development professionals within Michigan must acknowledge that they can no longer look to the state for any type of assistance. He encouraged them, rather, to promote entrepreneurship versus attempting to recruit companies from abroad. Also, stronger links should be made with schools and community colleges with regional operations.

Longworth again acknowledged that the state is not in a position to provide leadership for the type of transformational change, which is necessary: “This is not a knock against [former Governor Jennifer M.] Granholm, or her administration. She [didn't] have the resources or the focus to do what needs to be done to effectively reposition Michigan.”



John Norquist believes Michigan should “First, stop doing so much damage. They are spending millions of dollars every year for the wrong goal [referring to the transportation planning]. Michigan has been continuing this policy for years.”

Christopher Leinberger says that Detroit is economically on the ropes. He notes, “There is nothing like a crisis to bring a region together. One of the models to look at is Denver [CO]. In the 1980s, Denver was hit by the collapse of the energy market. In the late ‘70s, oil went through the roof, Denver, Houston [TX], Dallas [TX] experienced phenomenal, explosive growth. Then energy collapsed in the mid-80s and Denver collapsed. As a result of that complete collapse in the economy, the regional leadership—suburban and city officials—got together and put in a series of huge infrastructure projects that has made Denver one of the most successful metropolitan areas as far as economic growth. Much of that would not have happened without the crisis. Michigan has the opportunity to take advantage of the crisis so that Dave Bing [Detroit’s Mayor] and L. Brooks Patterson [Oakland County Executive] can work something out.”

**“There is nothing like a crisis to bring a region together.”**  
**Christopher Leinberger**



## CAROL COLETTA

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
CEOS FOR CITIES;  
HOST AND PRODUCER,  
SMART CITY RADIO SHOW

He continues, "Another example from Denver, when John Hickem became Mayor, the first thing he did was he pulled together all of the county executives and city leaders and made it a point to work together. First, they raised their sales tax to put in what is now the largest light rail system under construction in the country. Until Oakland County and Detroit sit down and stop feuding we won't get much done. Michigan has some great civic leadership that gets it. Much like in the 1970s, when Michigan lost control of several million dollars to create a rail transit system because of a failure to agree, we are still facing these issues 30 years later. Because of problems, such as racial segregation, income disparities and planning agendas, we

have been stuck to do nothing and change nothing, rather than compromising to find a better solution. We are missing out on funding opportunities because our leadership is unable to agree on what to do with it, how to spend it, where to spend it, and so on."

Carol Coletta provided a range of strategic growth opportunities for the state: "Keep the talent Michigan develops at its great universities. Make sure graduates are ready to re-invent Michigan's economy rather than 'get a job.' Figure out how to use the state's engineering and design talent (in great abundance in MI) for purposes other than making cars. Invent and manufacture next-generation transportation. Sell Michigan's beaches. Figure out what to do with the water resource and proximity to Canada and specifically Toronto. Develop the specialty food/wine business."

Dr. John Powell concludes, "You have a foundation saying that they want to invest, literally hundreds of millions of dollars, you tell them 'don't invest it in the status quo, invest in something new.'"

"Keep the talent Michigan  
develops at its great universities.  
Make sure graduates are ready  
to re-invent Michigan's economy  
rather than 'get a job'."  
Carol Coletta

## Summary and Conclusions

For places experiencing decline in population, quality of life, economic activity and social inspiration, which includes many of Michigan's metro regions, rebounding will require a new sense of purpose, positive attitudes and the development and implementation of innovative strategies. Michigan and other distressed places have assumed the automatic success model that built their economies and cities would continue. In that model, education was not important. The environment had to struggle against the belief that economic success and environmental protection were incompatible. Population gains were the norm, as people flocked to the state to work in the vast network of factories. The mindset of the private and public sectors was one of entitlement to success and minimal need for change. Michigan also suffers because the state's approaches to land use planning, place strategies and economic development were not forward looking. These approaches led to unsustainable, low-density, auto-dependent settlement patterns that some suggest was partly responsible for the state's economic decline. This antiquated land use paradigm was so prevalent, that it guided Michigan's

investments in its future. For example, Michigan did not invest sufficiently in the infrastructure to re-make its major metro regions into distinctive, attractive and vibrant places that would attract the highly educated or skilled, energetic, entrepreneurial, innovative and talented people who could grow an economy and create jobs.

Today, needed infrastructure includes urban amenities, broadband, green infrastructure and transit. However, Michigan has continued investing in new roads, road repairs and services that are not critical to success in the New Economy. The automatic success model has ended, and citizens and leaders need to adopt planning strategies that attract the talented. This means Michigan places need to develop walkable urban sectors, develop urban amenities, welcome diverse people and provide the infrastructure to support knowledge businesses. People and governments also need to adopt different attitudes that are welcoming and collaborative. Those elements will help develop the foundation for the success model of the future.



# Summary Figure: National Leaders' Thoughts on Land Use Trends, Threats, Solutions: Advice to Michigan and Young Professionals

Combined, the national thought leaders identified some of the key challenges facing the nation, the Midwest, and its communities. They also suggest a number of ways forward for Michigan and for the next generation of professionals. We summarize, in this conclusion, their findings in the diagram that follows.

## Major Trends in Land Use

- The automatic success model for Michigan ended, but the antiquated attitudes among leaders and citizens about land use and the economy perpetuated investment in supporting an industrial economy at a time when the state needs substantial transformative infrastructure investment.
- Poor land use decision-making at root of economic devastation.
- Communities are not making places that will attract people and economic growth.
- We are only now beginning to work at the regional level.
- Detroit is an example of an emptied-out city, due in large part to disinvestment policies.
- Renewable energy is becoming increasingly important.
- Market now values walkable urbanism.



## Threats

- Widening economic, social and environmental gaps.
- Poor land use decision-making.
- Economy not reflecting real costs.
- Midwest failing to see its role in New Economy.
- Poor capacity to convert old policies.
- Regulations prohibit urbanism.
- Local control that isolates communities.
- EDAs favoring business attraction over people attraction.
- Inertia and resistance to change.
- Over estimation of Midwest value to the world.
- Poorly capitalized metro areas.
- Prejudice.
- Abandoning places and people.
- Trying to reclaim what is lost.

### Specific Recommendations for Michigan

- Adjust parochial attitudes.
- Forward-looking, futuristic attitude.
- Regionalism.
- Better economic links with Ontario and bordering states.
- Ask for federal help.
- Economic Development offices should focus on placemaking not attracting companies.
- Regions, not local governments, do comprehensive planning.
- Advanced renewable energy, mostly wind.
- Fit brownfield sites for renewable energy.
- Placemaking at regional scale.
- Re-organize City of Detroit.
- Engage farmers in urban farming.
- One vision for Detroit region.
- Keep talent in Michigan.

### Advice to Future Professionals

- Make society more enjoyable.
- Add value to the economy.
- Make places beautiful.
- Look to the young for ideas.
- Make communities more complex.

### Solutions

- A moral equivalent to war effort to solve global resource problems.
  - Global education reform.
  - Global health reform.
  - Global environmental reform.
- Cooperative, integrative mindset.
- Seizing a new future.
- Emphasis on innovation.
- A new, renewable energy future.
- Brownfield and vacant property and building redevelopment.
- Placemaking to attract talent.
- Walkable urban design.
- Local business development.

# Appendix: MSU Course and Project

## How This Information Was Obtained

As part of a research project, students enrolled in the fall 2009 semester of the Michigan State University course, “Smart Growth and Strategic Land Use Decision-Making,” were asked to interview national leaders on such topics as economic development, land use, the environment, urban design, government and social justice. There were three primary purposes for this assignment:

1. To promote contact between students and leaders, so that students can feel more comfortable with national leaders and leadership thinking;
2. To broaden the scope of a student’s education by enabling them to learn more about issues presented in class in greater depth and from a national perspective; and
3. To enhance the preparedness of students to become future leaders themselves through a better understanding of how leaders think and act.

Students were provided with a list of notable national leaders but encouraged to explore beyond this list. With the aid of course professors, Dr. Soji Adelaja and Dr. John Warbach, the students each prepared a series of questions to ask their interview subject, based on that person’s background and expertise and issues discussed in the course. In addition, they were required to ask the following specific questions:

- What is your view of how the land use and policy areas you have been involved with have changed over time?
- What do you think are opportunities for Michigan, as an example of a distressed place, to recover?

The comments the students received from their subjects were intriguing, timely and of great potential value to policy makers in Michigan, other distressed states and the nation. Therefore, this publication is a compilation of edited interview results reported by the students.

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### **Land Policy Institute**

The Land Policy Institute at Michigan State University provides policy makers at the federal, state and local level with science-based tools and solutions that help build a better quality of life, strengthen the economy and protect the environment in ways that are fair to all. LPI works to encourage collaboration among land use researchers, policy makers and community organizations. [www.landpolicy.msu.edu](http://www.landpolicy.msu.edu).

## **The Special Report**

The Special Report is available for download at [www.landpolicy.msu.edu/MovingMiForwardSpecialReport](http://www.landpolicy.msu.edu/MovingMiForwardSpecialReport).

The Executive Summary is also available at [www.landpolicy.msu.edu/MovingMiForwardSpecialReport/Summary](http://www.landpolicy.msu.edu/MovingMiForwardSpecialReport/Summary).

Additional research reports elaborating and expanding on this work are forthcoming from the Land Policy Institute. Check our website for updates at [www.landpolicy.msu.edu](http://www.landpolicy.msu.edu).

MICHIGAN STATE  
UNIVERSITY

Land Policy Institute

LAND POLICY INSTITUTE

Michigan State University  
1405 S. Harrison Road  
3rd Floor Manly Miles Building  
East Lansing, MI 48823

517.432.8800  
517.432.8769 fax

[www.landpolicy.msu.edu](http://www.landpolicy.msu.edu)