

# Community Growth Options: Helping Communities Address Development Challenges

The McKnight Foundation recently awarded two complementary grants to project partners CURA, the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, and 1000 Friends of Minnesota to fund Community Growth Options, a joint project to assist local communities on the edge of the Twin Cities metropolitan area in their efforts to manage the consequences of growth and development in their communities. 1000 Friends of Minnesota received a two-year grant of \$1.5 million to work with 10 rapidly growing Minnesota communities. CURA and the Humphrey Institute received a two-year grant of \$400,000 to engage urban planning faculty and graduate students in research that will serve participating communities and the educational community. The grants support the first two years of a planned six-year demonstration project.

The 1000 Friends component of Community Growth Options (CGO) will provide direct financial assistance to 10 communities in their work with local planning firms to help foster greater choices in how they grow. “The funding of this project by the McKnight Foundation represents an important shift in how Minnesota plans for its future,” says Jeff Heegaard, executive director of 1000 Friends of Minnesota. “At the conclusion of the six-year project, we will have demonstrated a process whereby growing communities can develop their vision and then implement that vision to ensure the healthiest future for their community—one that addresses livability, local identity, physical well-being and planned open space and conservation.”

The University’s component of Community Growth Options (U-CGO) will provide direct support to edge communities through faculty and student research assistance on community-defined projects. U-CGO will also create and maintain a web portal that will identify tools and techniques to help edge communities manage growth in ways that make development more sustainable, environmentally responsive, and economically efficient.



“Communities at the metropolitan edge generally welcome assistance that helps them identify the problems and possibilities that come from growth, and that helps citizens and decision makers plan for the long term and respond to immediate issues and pressures,” says Jim Solem, CGO advisory committee chair. “The University of Minnesota can be a great resource in this regard if the assistance can be structured to meet the needs of local communities. Community Growth Options will provide the right combination of resources and people to really help growing communities understand and respond to the issues that lie ahead.”

Faculty and graduate students who participate will also benefit directly. “The Community Growth Options program provides a wonderful teaching, research and outreach opportunity for the University,” says professor Ed Goetz, director of the Urban and Regional Planning program at the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs. “Our students will be able to supplement their classroom experience with direct involvement in the growth challenges facing communities on the rapidly developing fringe of the metropolitan area. Faculty will have the opportunity to pursue research with direct applicability

to the needs of edge communities. And communities will benefit from the expertise, energy and insights of University students and faculty.”

The Community Growth Options project partners are currently accepting applications for assistance. 1000 Friends of Minnesota invites proposals from edge communities seeking direct financial support for planning activities. Eligibility requirements and the complete RFP are available at [www.1000fom.org](http://www.1000fom.org). The deadline for responses is May 15. For more information, contact Lisa Bigaouette, associate director of 1000 Friends, at 651-312-1000 or [cgo@1000fom.org](mailto:cgo@1000fom.org).

Edge communities seeking applied research assistance with growth-related issues or projects can apply for University assistance through U-CGO. Eligible communities define a research project, submit an application, and if accepted, are matched with appropriate student or faculty resources to carry out the research. Eligibility requirements and application materials are available at [www.cura.umn.edu/cgo.php](http://www.cura.umn.edu/cgo.php). Applications are accepted on an ongoing basis. For more information, contact U-CGO program coordinator Mike Greco at 612-625-7501 or [cgo@umn.edu](mailto:cgo@umn.edu).