Neighborhoods and Citizen Participation:
a Search for an Effective Model
by Esther Wattenberg

The subject of citizen participation is fraught with connotations: its champions and detractors debate the concept with partisan passion. The defiant slogan Power to the People caught the spirit of an age associated with the War on Poverty and Model Cities. The slogan captures the spirit of that time, in which it was hoped that citizen participation could transform neighborhoods from powerlessness to powerfulness, cure the fear and trembling of a decaying urban life, and send a lively and invigorated pulse throbbing through the feeble body of a dying urban center. The spirited controversies finally boiled down to a general conclusion that the past decade, dating chiefly from the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) days, placed a high value on the process of consultation with grass roots citizens but few effective models for doing so emerged.

Despite the spoiled identity of the '60s, citizen participation as a powerful vehicle capable of enlarging benefits to the powerless is now revived once again as a necessary instrument of urban revitalization. There is a general recognition, articulated in the President's Urban Policy Statement, that rebuilding inner city areas will require the partnership of neighborhood people, community groups, and the public sector. Moreover, the recently established Office of Neighborhoods and the National Commission on Neighborhoods reinforces the notion that this political administration stresses, at least in ideology, the concept of citizens at the local level participating in decisions that will affect their lives. Further, we note that every piece of major social legislation in the last five years supports and indeed, in some instances, mandates consultation with citizens: Community Development Block Grants and Title XX are illustrative.

It is reasonable to assume that for the next decade an essential aspect of urban revival will be focused on neighborhoods and attention will once again be paid to how to involve the grass roots in shaping the environment of the local community.

To what extent can settlement houses and neighborhood centers articulate the needs and aspirations of neighbors, strengthen community groups to participate in the planning and restructuring of services, and provide a credible vehicle for reflecting the mosaic of interests on the local level?

The proposition in this paper is that defining and testing models of citizen participation can be a valuable contribution for settlements whose historic association has always been rooted in their knowledge and understanding of how people live, endure, survive in neighborhoods. To assist citizens in articulating what is known, transforming this information into programs, and presenting these as priorities for the funding streams in the social services is a partial but essential task requiring the involvement of citizens.

In this paper one model of citizen participation will be presented along with some underlying concepts that may be used as guidelines. Before describing and offering some analysis of the form of citizen participation that was designed in Minneapolis to allocate 17 million dollars in Community Development funds, a few observations on the contemporary context of political decision-making are in order.

Firstly, we live at a time of an explosion of single interest groups. They
crowd the landscape, concentrating on their individual constituencies, and lighting fiercely with partisan ardor for the narrow and particular issues of the groups or causes they represent. Coalitions are painfully wracked and easily destroyed. Secondly, while the special interest groups abound, there is a general apathy to public issues. The age has sometimes been called the Narcissistic Era, and one that is primarily absorbed in private interests. People appear to be resigned to the notion that life-shaping decisions are beyond their control. Throughout the country there are general reports of dwindling public participation in elections and a widespread and deep distrust of elected officials. These phenomena are perceived as troublesome if not dangerous for a democratic society. The search for a way to bring citizens into a substantial and significant partnership with government, augmenting the role of elected officials, persists since, despite the detractors and cynics of the '60s, few could dispute the value of a participating community. At this point, it might be of interest to review from the experience of the '60s, some of the positive outcomes and features of organized citizen participation. Here are some general agreements. An active, involved neighborhood increases the bargaining power of the least advantaged. Further, it provides a source of intimacy, social attachment, and mutual support in an increasingly alienated world. Moreover, citizens organized to express and articulate the needs of their neighborhood provide the mediating role between their own small geographic space and that of the larger complex world, which is often represented in structures such as city hall. To amplify the private troubles and covert them into public issues is essentially the nature of organized citizen participation. Perhaps the last and in some ways the most enduring value is the knowledge (learned from OEO and Model Cities) that organized citizen groups provide a training ground for upward mobility of indigenous leaders.

It was against this background that a number of citizens active in the political and community life of Minneapolis gathered to design a model of citizen participation that would serve to work with elected officials to allocate community development funds designated for neighborhood rehabilitation.

The key question which they faced was "Who speaks for whom?" the representation issue. How does one select participants who represent the infinite variety and competing interests so characteristic of urban neighborhoods? This puzzling question which must be answered in a way that will ensure credibility and trust leads us to consider, as Minneapolis did, the various methods of selection. Citizens may be: (1) appointed by publicly elected officials or administrators of social agencies; (2) self-selected (self-appointed spokespersons who are interested and have the capacity to speak for others are occasionally known as indigenous leaders); (3) elected, in which case they must pass the test of having a larger community legitimize them as spokesperson; or (4) any combination of these.

A further word about the nature of selection will help us with our understanding of the Minneapolis model. Elections may be based on two procedures. In the first instance one can have what is commonly called a friends and neighbors election. Here one can set out some general qualifications such as age and residence, but generally it is an off the street process. In the second instance the election is organized by group representatives; that is, each organized group, by an election process, sends forward its representatives. Both have limitations as well as positive features. It is generally recognized in a friends and neighbors election that people can emerge with almost no known base for their neighborhood interests. There is almost no accountability and they can seldom be retired because the ballot box may not even draw in sufficient numbers to turn them out. Moreover, in a general sense, these persons tend to be concerned with personal and sometimes particular issues: that is, they may be concerned with their own employment, but not necessarily with employment programs. The group representation process on the whole turns out more skilled, better educated, leadership persons who have gone through a competition for representation. Furthermore, it builds up group strength by having a legitimate and recognized role for groups, and this tends to strengthen community building. Its major deficiency is that it is difficult, if not impossible, in election from organized groups to capture representation from the unaffiliated, which may be a large segment of a community.

The Minneapolis model, developed in 1974, derived a citizen group of forty-seven members reflecting three different sources of representation. The neighborhood representation came out of an election in which 239 community organizations out of eighty-four neighborhoods elected twenty-nine members to serve on a city-wide task force. Thirteen representatives were appointed by the aldermen and five by the mayor. The cross-section that emerged was extremely interesting. The elected representatives were, on the whole, young, mostly under thirty-five years of age; virtually all of them were renters and mobile within the community. They were highly educated and marginally employed, mostly working in white collar publically funded jobs. In their choices for allocation of funds, they leaned heavily towards social services and only in minor ways did they support housing rehabilitation and physical improvements in the neighborhoods.

The city council appointees were chiefly older, homeowners with a history of residential stability in the neighborhood. One-third had a vocational-technical education, and only a few had any college background. Their incomes were moderate, and they worked chiefly in the private sector. Minority representation came out of appointments (generally, minority representation from the election process tends to be disproportionately sparse). The priorities of this group for expenditure of funds were for physical rehabilitation projects and housing. The mayoral appointees were on the whole highly educated, high income managers and executives. In many ways they were known as the establishment figures. The differences, demographically and in preferences for funding priorities, between the elected and appointed groups went even further. The elected members presented an adversarial relationship to the technical staff in contrast to the appointed members who gave the staff high marks for effectiveness and the quality of information they provided. The suspicions of the elected members appeared to be rooted in an anti-establishment ideology whereas the appointed members expressed a conventional respect for professional staff and trust in elected officials.

Indubitably, the resultant representation from this model of elected and appointed citizens presented a fair cross-section of neighborhood interests, ideologies, and demographic features. (Less well represented, however, were the young, the old, and minorities.) Could the diverse interests and attributes be conciliated?

It is important to note that in interviews with all of the participants,* they uniformly gave high marks to the process that took place at the city-wide level in which they had to examine proposals, rank them, and give the city some sense of the diversity of needs that needed to be funded out of the Community Development Block Grants. Indeed, most of the participants in the first year of this

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*Details of the interviews and study data compiled on the first year citizen participants is available in miniggraphed form.

*A Report on the Minneapolis Citizens Advisory Committee on Community Development: the Characteristics of the Elected and Appointed Officials" from Esther Watteberg, School of Social Work, Room 400 Ford Hall, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN 55455
Citizen groups, like this one in Minneapolis, will continue to be an essential part of the urban revival. In these groups, "Who speaks for whom?" is a key question.

process stated that they had come in with strong parochial interests that dealt chiefly with their own neighborhood but that they had emerged with a sense of what the city as a whole needed, and they all stated that their understanding had grown enormously during the discussions. Ninety-five percent of their recommendations were accepted by the City Council. The exchange theory appeared to have worked; the citizens presented neighborhood needs and shaped decisions on them and the elected officials received recommendations that relieved them from the politically thorny problem of sorting out competing interests.

In the next four years the process was reviewed and modified. The chief structural change was a shift in the representation process to a friends and neighbors election.

Did the process retain the confidence of participants and elected officials, as the years went by? It is a fair assessment to say that, in fact, expectations on both sides have not been realized and this past few months (Spring of 1978) some major reorganization, after stormy hearings, were recommended by the City Council. The changes are worth noting because they reflect the nature of the erosion of confidence that occurred. In the new model, as before, each neighborhood would be allowed one delegate and one alternate for every 1,500 residents, but at least eight people must be present to elect each delegate (one-half of 1 percent). The City Council can appoint where no elected delegates emerge. Further, delegates would have to sign a no-conflict-of-interest statement and remain in the committee for not longer than two years. As before, the elections will start from the neighborhood and indeed the neighborhood representation will review all funding proposals affecting their communities.

The city-wide task force made up of thirty-nine members now, will be selected by broad-based neighborhood elections.

Despite the disappointments, indeed, the anger of some elected participants and elected officials (administrative complaints have been filed by a group of elected citizens complaining that the monies were improperly allocated in the last three years of the process), the city-wide citizen participants were given two additional highly significant tasks: 1) assisting in the development of the city's Comprehensive Plan and 2) forming a task force for the city's budget review process.

Can a closer examination of the experience contribute to our understanding of what strengthens or inhibits the partnership between citizens and elected officials?

Firstly, the elections persisted in low turnout. Nationwide, this continues to be a serious problem. We certainly need ideas on how to engage the wider community in an interest in neighborhood elections. Moreover, the problem of drop-out and high levels of absenteeism plagued the Minneapolis model from time to time. Enormous amounts of time and a high tolerance for frustration are two essential characteristics for citizen participants and the burn-out rate is high. The pool of available citizens for these intensely absorbing tasks is small.

Secondly, and perhaps related to the above, a significant level of distrust emerged between the elected citizens and certain of the elected officials. City Council members lodged charges of conflict-of-interest. Did the elected citizens truly represent their neighborhoods or were they trying to get their own projects funded? Latent political ambitions were suspected and allegations were made that the community activists, the aging flower children of the '60s, had captured the city-wide committee and were using it as a new staging area for harassing the establishment.

Elected citizens, on the other hand, frequently questioned the hidden agendas of the council members and continuously wondered whether or not allocations had already been made. Was their hard work simply going to legitimize a procedure which in fact perhaps had no substance?

Thirdly, differing interpretations on the purposes of Community Block Grants created sharp controversies. The elected citizens contended that the intent of the law was not being observed; namely, that the monies were not going predominantly to persons with low and moderate incomes. The City Council, on the other hand, felt that this stream of money was intended to be used for hard services such as street paving and the physical needs of housing rehabilitation. "They [elected citizens] are going to the wrong pot. This program is from HUD [Housing and Urban Development] not HEW [Health, Education, and Welfare]," commented one observer.

Could a reconstructed model benefit from these experiences? The following recommendations could be suggested:

1. Elections should proceed from organized groups so as to establish accountability and community group development, and to assure a wider base of participation.
2. Appointments should fill in the gaps of the election process so that young, old, and minorities that may not emerge in the election process can be assured of representation through appointment.

3. A period of negotiation should follow the recommendations made to elected officials.

Experience shows that citizen participants can do excellent work in examining the often hundreds of proposals that emerge from neighborhood needs. They can prioritize them, and give an overall sense of how these might be integrated into the perspective of the city as a whole. The City Council perspective, however, is shaped from a concentrated interest in the tax base and the need to revitalize, in an economic sense, the spirit of the city. What is needed, then, is a period of negotiation between these two substantial interests. In the process it would appear that both could exchange views and broaden each other's understanding, and come to a successful negotiated position, thereby strengthening confidence in each other's judgments and bringing the partnership of elected officials and elected citizens to a successful conclusion.

A clearer understanding of the perspective of all participants is required. For the elected citizens, participation gives personal satisfaction in status, role, and attachment. It is not inconceivable that a few might use this role for political advantage, for self-interest, but if they are elected from organized groups (here you will note my own bias), then it seems to me that they have a base to which they have to be accountable and, indeed, the group must have the responsibility to call these individuals to account.

For the elected official, citizen participation often gives two irreconcilable messages. On the one hand, elected officials are bound to be suspicious of the latent political ambitions of certain elected citizen participants. They may indeed see them in their confrontative manner as bothersome adversaries, and they may perhaps continue to suspect that they represent themselves and not a broad constituency. However, they will also respect elected citizens, for they will understand that they do, on the whole, represent neighborhood interests, that they are valuable as go-betweens between the elected officials and the sometimes confusing and competing interests of a neighborhood. Above all, they are needed for legitimacy in explaining how tax monies are spent for grass roots needs.

There is an issue emerging which I believe will strengthen and revive a flagging interest in citizen participation. It is the issue of location of community-based facilities. This is a significant and crisis-laden issue. There is an over-concentration of these community-based facilities in areas that have not been able to organize to defend themselves against the location. The question of equity in distributing these facilities throughout neighborhoods is a compelling one. It seems to me that settlements and neighborhood centers which are very closely involved in networks of agencies and in the informal support networks of kin, family, and friendship, can play a leading role here. Involving citizens groups in a structured kind of representation, not only to make recommendations for equitable distribution of community-based facilities, but also to assume the control of resources and program direction for these enterprises is an essential task.

Even though many neighborhoods are in swift change, so that the mobility patterns are almost beginning to look like nomads vs. settlers, there is now a realization that cities cannot survive without redevelopment in their neighborhoods. It is time for a constructive reappraisal of citizen participation. We need wide experimentation with different models in order to construct the widest cross-section of community involvement and procedures that will enable citizens to make effective contributions. We need to define more clearly the different kinds of structures that can deal in a collective sense with neighborhood needs and to connect these to the wider needs of our total communities. I do believe that citizen participation is alive and well, although breathing hard from time to time. It would be my judgment that the long and admirable history of settlements and neighborhood centers prepares them to play a formidable role in constructing ever more effective models.

A footnote to our readers: The Citizens League has recently published a report on community representation: Community Plans for City Decisions (June 6, 1978). It is available for $1.00 from the Citizens League, 84 South 6th Street, Minneapolis, MN 55402.
The Community Classroom:
How Student Involvement in Community Design Projects Has Evolved at CURA

by Judith H. Weir,* CURA Staff

As the mayor of one small Minnesota community put it:
I'm glad the city got involved in this type of project because I think it's good for the student. Plus I think it's good for the community to see different aspects of what can be done to certain areas that we live in, you know, and get new ideas. And, because I'm sure that a lot of us that have lived here all our lives don't think of projects and the possibilities of the way things can be expanded.
The project the mayor refers to was a year long program involving students of architecture and landscape architecture in community design proposals for a small city in rural Minnesota. It was one of many projects which CURA has helped foster over the past ten years.
CURA is not directly involved in teaching, rather it identifies resources in various parts of the University, brings them together and focuses them on community issues. It links University faculty and students to appropriate groups or agencies when the connection will be helpful in exploring and finding possible solutions to community problems. This CURA function has helped create some challenging new models for student and faculty involved in community projects.
CURA's Urban Education Center has housed these service-learning projects for eight years. Within this period it has involved more than 400 students from a dozen disciplines; some twenty-five faculty members from architecture, housing, geography, sociology, rural sociology, journalism, photojournalism, urban studies, and landscape architecture; hundreds of low-income urban community groups and individuals; more than twenty small communities throughout the state; and over 100 practicing professionals from such disciplines as architecture, landscape architecture, planning, engineering, housing, and social work in more than a thousand community serving projects of every conceivable shape and size, from logo designs and brochure layouts to building remodeling designs and overall community plans. The Urban Education Center has helped to generate over $250,000 in grant funds to broaden its service-learning outreach. Table 1 lists those parts of the University and community which have been involved in major roles with the Urban Education Center.

Over the years, the Center has sought to combine service to the community with learning experiences for students. It has served as a broker, linking community groups in need of service with students and faculty able to provide those services in a way compatible with sound learning objectives. Not surprisingly, execution of this service-learning thrust has required a number of variations in program structure and organization. Certain dimensions of the program have grown. Others have come and gone as needs, desires, commitments and/or resources have changed.

Beginnings

The Urban Education Center came into being as the collective brainchild of a small group of students and faculty meeting during the winter, spring and summer of 1969 to seek a viable model for community-based learning which would be of service to low-income people. Key people in this early planning were Roger Clemence, associate professor of architecture; L. Scott Helmes, architecture senior; Esther Wattenberg, director of the Office of Career Development; and Tom Walz, director of the Living Learning Center.

Two broad operational objectives were agreed upon to guide the fledgling Urban Education Center:

*Swith apologies to Roger Clemence and Robert Morse, whose report "Urban Education Center: Eight Years Revisited" formed the base for this article.
1. the provision of valid and relevant educational experience for students seeking closer contact with disadvantaged communities, and
2. the development of a student service corps with the capacity to help the community help itself.

The early planning of policies and methods of operation extended over many months but by the summer of 1969 a concept was ready for testing. The Urban Education Center received its first commitment for financial support from the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs and the program began.

The Early Years

The Urban Education Center students of 1969-1971 were characterized and bound together by a rising tide of anti-war feeling and a deep commitment to help resolve the economic and racial injustices spotlighted by the Great Society programs of the mid- and late-1960s. Design, planning, and engineering practitioners from the Community Design Center of Minnesota (CDC) shared many of the same concerns, and in the fall of 1970 joined forces with the Urban Education Center (UEC) to establish the joint CDC/UEC program for advocacy design, a program which has continued in varying forms, ever since. These were turbulent times marked by a deep surge of idealism which drew together people of all ages in a common commitment to peace and social justice.

The service-learning projects of that time were typically urban in location, small in size, and primarily design-focused. Examples include a building remodeling for Southeast Free School, designing a Model Cities Communication Center van, creating an office layout and a logo for the St. Paul Model Cities program, and an inventory and analysis of the Holmes Renewal Area neighborhood in Southeast Minneapolis to help document problems and potentials of the physical environment.

A year was spent renovating the third floor at 118 East 25th Street, Minneapolis where CDC and UEC shared quarters. The sharing of both place and program gave each group a significantly greater capacity for serving the needs of low budget community groups throughout the metropolitan area and helped develop a sense of camaraderie and commitment.

Expanded Horizons

Then came the Bird Island Study of 1971-72, and with it the start of a program of service-learning with outstate communities using many disciplines. The Bird Island project, which focused on a study of county planning, brought a new direction to UEC that complemented the on-going urban focus and ultimately became the largest component of UEC. From this small beginning, a major interdisciplinary program grew — the Renville County Development Program. Funding was provided by a grant from the Minnesota Higher Education Coordinating Board with federal Title I monies matched by University funds.

Looking back some years later, Father John Brunner, a principal actor in both projects, noted:

The effect of UEC in Renville County could never be properly assessed. Why? The effects today are too far reaching. From a small beginning, vast results are felt in Bird Island, Olivia, Hector and Fairfax. The people of these towns in Renville County are now open to unified planning and long range planning. They are open to change. All these positive qualities came to UEC. Because there is not the population turn-over of a more populated area, the effects of UEC contact in Renville County is still evident today. This will continue for many more years. Today UEC is not needed as a beginning push in Renville; they have caught the spirit of unification and long range inter-city planning.

The Renville County study of 1972-73 indicated that there was a substantial potential for matching rural and small town low budget groups with the learning interests of many types of University students. Long distance travel did present logistical problems, but the concept of outstate service by UEC showed great promise.

In Renville County, sixteen study projects were completed. Each of these projects started with a need identified within the county. Forty-two students from seven disciplines participated. Ten different types of clients/sponsors were involved, including village councils, local planning commissions and their committees, service clubs, school districts, local newspapers, the 4-H program, a non-profit housing corporation, school superintendents, the County Fair Board, and an association of farmers.

Completed projects included design studies for the county fairgrounds, rehabilitation proposals for the business districts of four communities, a course examining the environment through photography for 4-H members, community study projects for local high school students, a study of high school students post-graduation plans, a service area study, and articles for the local newspapers.

In 1973-74 a similar program evolved in Lincoln County. As the student interest in outstate involvements enlarged, the capacity to cover metropolitan projects might have been threatened. This possibility was averted through a decision by the Federal ACTION Agency that brought Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) to CDC and the University Year for Action volunteers (UYA) to UEC in the spring of 1973. With the combination of UYA and the outstate programs of Renville County and Lincoln County, UEC/CDC moved from its scattered Twin Cities storefront beginnings of 1969-1970 to a solid, on-going, year-round, set of programs serving a wide variety of Minnesota communities.

Project Rediscovery

Spring of 1974 brought funding from the Minnesota State Arts Board and the National Endowment for the Arts for the
first year of Project Rediscovery, a program of service to outstate small towns which grew in subsequent years to become the central feature of UEC.

Roger Clemence, UEC director, defined the new program in this way:

The thrust of Rediscovery is just what the name implies. It is a program to help selected small towns in Minnesota look at themselves, at their present and their past, and, in the spirit of rediscovery, to look at future choices with that combination of zest and imagination so essential for good design and good living.

Our hope is that Project Rediscovery can be a catalyst for inspiring new ideas. Hence, one of the primary purposes is to help create an open forum within the community so that people better recognize the unique characteristics of their town and sharpen their awareness of its needs and potentials.

Rediscovery programs spanned the years 1974-77. Efforts centered in architecture and landscape architecture. Since continuity and follow-through were important it was desirable to have students who would be available throughout the year. Undertaking such projects involved a real commitment to the selected communities. Ties with the Agricultural Extension Service were strengthened. Their community resource development area agents suggested outstate communities where student work might prove useful and provided initial community contacts for the program.

In all, ten small Minnesota communities worked with University students and professors in Project Rediscovery: Lake Benton, Hoyt Lakes, Mora, Staples, Deerwood, Ironon, Lanesboro, Wabasha, Red Wing, and Lake City. Projects ranged from the historic restoration of a drill site in northeastern Minnesota to proposing plans for expanding a city marina on the Mississippi River.

The projects and the program proved to be very popular with citizens in these communities. Two citizens have commented:

...Well, choices have to be made. I don't think we can always keep everything as it is, nor should we... and this is why Project Rediscovery has been helpful, I think. Sort of brings to mind what there is here and what your choice is and gives you something to choose from.

...I think this whole business of all sorts of ideas just helps people realize that, you know, it's a group of students with some ideas of their own but also having had the willingness to visit with store owners, store managers, government people, business people, ah, just Mr. and Mrs. Red Wing, as to what their ideas are. It just shows that there can be most anything happen if somebody wants to put an idea to work.

During the first years of Project Rediscovery, balancing community service with controlled learning experience proved to be a problem. Students were either trapped by their desire to design

A student confers with Professor Richard Forsyth in planning new design concepts for Lake City.
something practical or were diverted into community-organizing efforts. While the results in each case were useful to the involved communities, the students did not concentrate enough on the design process to satisfy faculty goals. By the last two years of the program, however, a good balance was struck.

Faculty goals were carefully drawn up and it was agreed to concentrate efforts in one region over several years. A single issue focus — recreational development — was chosen. The new structure changed the nature of projects from preparing immediate practical proposals with high potential for follow-through to studying emerging issues in a more academic manner.

UEC sought issues the community felt were important but were as yet unresolved. Questions about new directions for the community which were currently being discussed by residents were identified. Opportunities were sought for students to think in broad alternatives and contribute them to the community planning process. Emphasis was placed on contributing alternatives to an ongoing city development process rather than producing an immediately buildable proposal. If a feasible design proposal resulted, it was seen as an extra benefit.

The Red Wing Project

The project in Red Wing is illustrative of how the new service-learning project model worked. The year began with an overall study of the Lake Pepin area. In five weeks, students tried to get a sense of the landscape, visual character, economy, transportation, settlement patterns, and major issues facing the region. In teams of two to four, they chose areas of study — the entire region in some cases, corridors, counties, or single communities in others.

Students presented their impressions at a public meeting held in mid-November at Frontenac. Resident reactions suggested that the students had accurately perceived the major issues facing the region.

Following their overview of the region, students divided into two groups, each focusing on one town. The next two projects were concerned with the same problem in both Red Wing and Lake City — studying expansion of the city marina. Both communities were concerned about a perceived increase in recreational activity in their areas and its effect on their marinas. A follow-up project involved refinement of the marina concepts. These ideas were then presented at public meetings held in each community.

In Red Wing, the last two projects focused on downtown rehabilitation. In the last four years there had been growing concern in Red Wing about the historic character of the central section of town and the need for increased commercial space and parking in the downtown. In 1977 this concern was sharpened when a developer proposed building a large shopping center on the outskirts of Red Wing. An issue surfaced in which students could make a contribution.

During the winter quarter, students completed a study of building masses and open space, exploring the feasibility of inserting new commercial space among existing buildings. The final project, involving the entire spring quarter, focused on the rehabilitation of individual buildings on a single block downtown. Students worked with building owners and managers to program and design remodeling efforts. The students also proposed a system of enclosed walkways to link the stores on the block. This proposal so intrigued the owners that they formed a corporation to carry out more detailed explorations of the student proposed changes.

A program paralleling that of the University students was conducted with sixth graders in the Red Wing public schools. By introducing architecture and environmental design into the public schools, ideas that the University design students were exploring with the community might be better understood in the short term and an appreciation for architecture and planning might live on after Project Rediscovery had gone. The project with the public schools proved quite successful and plans to expand this type of program are being explored.

Administrative Changes

The evolving separation of UEC's outstate service-learning efforts from the normally more urban-focused University Year for Action projects was formalized in the spring of 1976 with the administrative shift of UYA to the College of Liberal Arts's Office of Special Learning Opportunities (OSLO). The program grew there from its earlier design-focused projects to embrace a multi-disciplinary program involving six to eight different majors. The program continues now under the administrative wing of University College.

During a year of evaluation, 1977-78, CURA examined the UEC experience and decided to continue its brokerage function, broadening both its community and University relationships. The UEC functions have been absorbed into the Office of Land Use and Housing Research. The community classroom service-learning model is very much alive and available to be applied in a great variety of situations; some of them similar to previous experiences and others new and different. Currently, a major program in the St. Croix Valley is underway in addition to a series of projects in St. Paul.

A Service-Learning Model

Eight years of experience in the Urban Education Center have helped CURA evolve a model for combining service to the community with practical learning experience for the student. The educational activity may include field study, internships, independent

UES director, Roger Clemence, discusses new ideas for the community with a citizen in Red Wing.
study, or class projects — tasks which have academic validity as determined by an instructor. Studies can involve everything from developing a model for elementary level environmental education to collecting oral histories from older citizens; from preparing a proposal to rehabilitate an old railroad depot into a museum to staffing a citizen effort to create a county planning commission.

Each participant experiences unique benefits. Faculty members have an opportunity to monitor current issues, to develop new links for further research, and to develop new learning opportunities for students. Communities can increase the variety of issues receiving attention, can have issues raised in an objective atmosphere, and can more clearly define areas of action requiring professional activity. Students have a chance to relate theory to real-world concerns. They can test their newly acquired skills, and can join collaborations in which the results of their study may ultimately be of direct use to the community.

Service-learning activities can involve various disciplines, differing numbers of students, groups and sizes of communities, and varying issues, amounts of time, and study approaches. Any successful project, however, must expect to achieve three core elements.

1) A Community Consultant Relationship

The presence of a community consultant or group which is interested in the study effort is of prime importance for the model of service-learning. This presence increases motivation to do a thorough project. Students can learn about community issues and problems, and have the independence to pursue a variety of solutions — even unpopular ones. The community has the opportunity to examine many ideas. Since the community is free to select only those ideas it values — or none at all — an atmosphere of real study is created.

2) Project Selection

While the community consultant relationship creates the atmosphere for a project, project selection provides the structure linking the participants. Projects are selected that benefit all the participants (faculty, student, and community).

Projects are developed around current issues which are perceived by the community as important, are still in the questioning stage, are accepted by faculty as legitimate academic exercises, and do not duplicate existing public or private efforts. A final product is envisioned which is acceptable to the faculty, potentially useful to the community, and able to focus student effort.

3) Institutional Support

Sufficient support must be provided to enable the project to function smoothly. An organizing staff is needed to identify projects, initiate and maintain contact with communities, advise on project selection, and provide liaison between students and the community. (Often, Agricultural Extension Service area and county staff have assisted in these tasks.)

Enough lead-time is needed to make local contacts, identify major issues needing action, and insure faculty planning prior to that portion of the school year in which the project will occur. Since students are involved, projects must be scheduled to fit the school calendar. And money is needed to facilitate community contact, buy supplies, and produce the final product. Community contact typically involves travel expenses for students and staff, and phone calls. When lodging is needed it may be provided by community residents, thereby allowing the University students to become better acquainted with townsfolk and understand the community more fully.

The Community Classroom in New Settings

Now through the Office of Land Use and Housing Research, CURA is prepared to respond to many different kinds of community issues and seek out student-faculty resources which can make meaningful contributions. Currently, two classroom areas have evolved allowing us to expand the number of disciplines involved in service-learning projects.

St. Paul Mississippi River Plan

In 1976 the governor of Minnesota designated the Mississippi River corridor between Anoka and Hastings as a critical area. The City of St. Paul has responded by developing plans for that section of the corridor which falls within the city limits. Two St. Paul offices — the Department of Parks and Recreation and the Department of Planning and Economic Development — have been primarily responsible for working on the project in conjunction with University students and faculty. To date, students from two university units have been involved: the Law School and the Department of History.

Draft legislation has been prepared in the form of new ordinances and suggested consolidations of existing ordinances that will provide standards and regulations for the Mississippi River Plan. A history of settlement on the river is also in preparation, providing background information to be used in various projects along the river as the plan materializes. We anticipate that other sections of the University will be brought into the project in the near future.

St. Croix Study Program

A joint project with the University of Wisconsin-Madison is bringing students and faculty from both Minnesota and Wisconsin together to study an area we both share — the St. Croix River Valley.

The study program, at present, includes some eighty-five students and twelve faculty. Students from Wisconsin are looking at the regional landscape patterns and corridors. They will prepare
an overview analysis of the region and then concentrate on physical design and planning problems in selected townships.

Students from Minnesota will study selected development issues in the St. Croix region as well as comprehensive planning, institutional constraints, and land-use planning. Architecture and landscape architecture students will collaborate in a regional analysis followed by the development of physical planning and design alternatives for selected communities and recreational sites.

Agricultural Extension Services from both Universities are helping with community contacts. They have arranged a series of local meetings throughout the year where students and faculty will exchange ideas with community people and representatives of groups concerned with planning and development in the St. Croix region. A major regional conference is planned for May 1979, at which results of the study and design alternatives will be presented to the leaders and citizens of the region. Materials for the conference will form the basis for a traveling exhibit for use throughout the St. Croix Valley.

In all, nine units of the University of Minnesota are involved in the program: Agricultural and Applied Economics, Agricultural Engineering, Agricultural Extension Service, Architecture and

Sixth grade students in Red Wing examine University students' proposal for renovating one block in the downtown area.
Landscape Architecture, CURA, Forest Resources, Horticulture and Landscape Architecture, Humphrey Institute, and Soil Science. Three units from the University of Wisconsin-Madison are included: Agricultural Extension Service, the Environmental Awareness Center, and Landscape Architecture. Community participation spans five Minnesota counties and four counties in Wisconsin. The program hopes to provide a fresh look at the problems and opportunities in the region, an area that is now one of the fastest growing in the upper mid-west, and to suggest policy and physical design alternatives to the people who live there.

The year long project concept, used for so long in CURA’s community classrooms, has been expanded in the St. Paul and St. Croix Valley programs. The scope of the projects clearly indicates that more time is needed. It is hoped that the longer program period will allow more community contact and a more extensive follow-up on projects as they develop in the community.

B. Warner Shippee, director of CURA’s Office of Land Use and Housing Research, is coordinating these new community classroom efforts. Questions or comments may be directed to him at 2001 Riverside Avenue, Minneapolis, MN 55454 (612/376-3684).

A limited number of Urban Education Center publications are available free of charge from CURA’s central office. See p. 12 for a list and order form.

New CURA Publications

Postwar Housing in National and Local Perspective: A Twin Cities Case Study by Rebecca Lou Smith, CURA 78-4

Hundreds of thousands of small houses were produced in American suburbs and cities in the late 1940s and 1950s with V.A. and F.H.A. funding. Hailed as ticky-tacky boxes and the slums of the future, these houses provided the first homes for veterans’ families after World War II. Rebecca Smith in Postwar Housing in National and Local Perspective reports on the experience. She considers the events and conditions that molded the postwar housing boom at the national scale and examines how these various forces were muted in the case of housing construction in the Twin Cities area. The history of residential change in some fairly typical Twin Cities postwar neighborhoods is analyzed in depth. 63 pp. Individual copies available free of charge.

Recent Population Change in the United States by David J. Borchert and James D. Fitzsimmons, CURA 78-5

For most of American history people have gravitated toward large urban centers, but currently that trend seems to have reversed. The nation’s metropolitan areas are either losing population or experiencing a slowdown in growth rate while rural areas, even some very remote areas, after decades of population loss, are now gaining population. Borchert and Fitzsimmons present a series of twenty-six maps to document these changes in population growth rate. Based on population estimates from the Census Bureau for 1975 and the population count for 1950, 1960, and 1970, the maps present data on population change, net migration, natural increase, and per capita income on a county by county basis. The atlas also includes population changes and net migration patterns for Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas. All maps were prepared so that direct comparisons are possible without any need to make extra mental calculations. 30 pp. Individual copies available for $2.50 plus 50¢ postage and handling.

A Student Guide to University of Minnesota Courses and Programs in the Environment 1978-80, by Mary Trigg and Lorna McKeen

Prepared every two years by the All-University Council on Environmental Quality, this course bulletin is designed to aid anyone wishing to take courses related to environmental concerns at the University of Minnesota. All relevant courses and programs from any discipline are listed. The bulletin covers the Twin Cities campuses and also the Duluth, Morris, Crookston, and Waseca campuses. 75 pp. Available free of charge from the Information Booth in Williamson Hall (Minneapolis Campus) or by mail from the Service Bureau, University of Minnesota, 110 Williamson Hall, 231 Pillsbury Drive S.E., Minneapolis, MN 55455

Recycling the Central City: The Development of a New Town-In Town by Judith A. Martin, CURA 78-1

What actually happened in Cedar-Riverside? This book presents a detailed account of how a failing neighborhood in Minneapolis became the first planned new town-in-town. Judith Martin chronicles the story behind the current West Bank controversies, through the first stages of construction and occupancy at Cedar Square West. 176 pp., 56 photos, 10 maps. Individual copies available for $6.00 plus $1.00 postage and handling.

CURA publications may be ordered by phone (612/373-7833) or on the CURA Publication Order Form, p. 12 of this Reporter.
CURA Publication Order Form

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☐ Recent Population Change in the United States, David J. Borchert and James D. Fitzsimmons, CURA 78-5. 30 pp. $2.50 + $0.50 postage and handling.

☐ Recycling the Central City: The Development of a New Town-in-Town, Judith A. Martin, CURA 78-1. 161 pp. $6.00 + $1.00 postage and handling.


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