Chapter IV
Place Making Through Participatory Planning

Wayne Beyea
Michigan State University, USA

Christine Geith
Michigan State University, USA

Charles McKeown
Michigan State University, USA

ABSTRACT

Community planning is facing many challenges around the world, such as the rapid growth of megacities as well as urban sprawl. The State of Michigan in the United States is attempting to re-invent itself through place making by using participatory planning supported by new information tools, models and online training. The Michigan State University Land Policy Institute framework for place making includes Picture Michigan Tomorrow, an informatics initiative to democratize data and incorporate it into scenario planning methodologies and tools, and Citizen Planner, an on-ground and online training program for local planning officials. Still in the early phases of implementation, these initiatives provide promising models for use in other regions of the world that seek consensus among citizens, developers and government on the vision and plan for their communities.

INTRODUCTION

Community planning is the art of envisioning and implementing a common goal for a community’s future physical development. More than simply regulating land-use, planning is a process that gives communities a forum to build a common vision, a process for engagement and a way to build consensus about land-use policy issues. The community planning process varies globally depending on legal frameworks, local traditions and priorities.
In the United States (U.S.), the planning process reflects a strong tradition of individual rights and local government, and nowhere more so than in the State of Michigan, where strong land-use planning rights are granted to the smallest units of government. Michigan has a total of 1,815 local units of government with planning authority. This presents a unique challenge relating to educating local officials, providing planning and informatics tools, and elevating the level of knowledge so that wise decisions are made. In addition, Michigan, once a global industrial giant as the home of the auto industry, has been impacted negatively by globalization more than any other state in the U.S.

The Land Policy Institute (LPI) at Michigan State University (MSU) is developing and implementing tools, methods of engagement and a framework for moving the state forward. Reliance on traditional tools will not be sufficient to meet the challenges in Michigan. A new strategy of engagement and building understanding has been developed. This strategy includes in-depth training, information structures, and technology tools so communities have a fundamental understanding of their critical assets in order to enable wise land-use decisions.

In this chapter, we describe a strategic framework that is being implemented in Michigan for engaging communities in addressing the state’s challenge. This chapter presents a review of urban planning challenges and how those challenges manifest in Michigan. It also provides an overview of the importance of participatory planning. The chapter features the strategies that MSU’s LPI has developed in response to Michigan’s needs. These include the Picture Michigan Tomorrow data democratization and community engagement project and the Michigan Citizen Planner program that provides on-ground and online training to citizens in planning roles. The solutions being developed in Michigan, can be informative to other regions of the world that are addressing similar issues of population and land-use change.

**BACKGROUND**

**Urban Planning**

The growing population of the world continues to gravitate towards population centers to meet basic human needs such as housing, employment, food and water. Demographers with the United Nations have noted “the world is in the midst of a massive urban transition” (Hill, Wolfson & Targ, 2004). According to statistics prepared by the United Nations Population Division and Environment programs:

In 1975, just over one-third of the world’s population lived in urban areas. Currently, nearly half of the world’s population (47 percent) lives in urban areas, a figure which is expected to grow by 2 percent per year during 2000 - 15. By the year 2025, the United Nations estimates that almost two-thirds of the world’s population will live in densely populated metropolitan areas. Much of this growth will continue to occur in megacities like Tokyo, Japan; Cairo, Egypt; Sao Paulo, Brazil; Mexico City, Mexico; Bombay, India; and Buenos Aires, Argentina. (Hill, Wolfson & Targ, 2004)

The growth of megacities will have profound impacts on the quality of life on vast numbers of the world’s people. Methods for responding to growth through city planning vary considerably among nations around the world. Much of the variation is deeply rooted in each country’s value system. The system imposed by each nation provides unique opportunities and constraints for addressing human settlement planning concerns within each nation. In Europe, for example, there is a strong tradition of top-down land-use planning in many countries. However, recent trends have been to transfer some of this authority to local municipalities. In Brazil, statutes emphasize a citizens’ right to sustainable cities and the participation of municipalities and citizens in development decisions. In China, the law sets