

Title: Revitalizing Massachusetts Cities and Towns

Project Leader: Michael DiPasquale

Project Overview

Studies show that American cities are rebounding after years of decline. New immigrants and younger people are especially drawn to dense urban areas for their “economic opportunities and freer lifestyles” (Chakrabarti, 2013). In addition to the economic benefits they provide, revitalized cities foster sustainable development: they conserve land, save energy and provide transportation options that reduce carbon emissions.

Yet, even as many urban areas experience renewal, other cities continue to struggle. This is especially true for many of America’s former manufacturing centers, including the Massachusetts cities of Holyoke and Springfield. This situation is being addressed in a range of ways, and for a variety of reasons. Without vital urban centers, people continue to move to outmoded large lot developments on the metropolitan fringe. This type of development is often compounded by outdated land use and zoning policies that are not sustainable. Indeed, urban success stories notwithstanding, land consumption in the United States continues at an unsustainable pace, quadrupling since 1945.

Recognizing the environmental benefits of promoting strong urban centers in Massachusetts, The UMass Amherst Center for Agriculture Food and the Environment together with the Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning has created the position of Extension Assistant Professor to coordinate a range of research and Extension outreach programs to assist cities and towns that continue to struggle.

Activity Summary – 2017

- Workshops for members of Planning Boards and Zoning Boards of Appeals held across the state and sponsored by 12 Regional Planning Commissions (25)
- Citizen Planner Training Collaborative Spring Conference (1)
- Serve as director of major outreach center, UMass Amherst Design Center in Springfield. Work includes outreach and presentations to local organizations, community groups, businesses, non-profits, etc. Work also includes outreach to Springfield youth, in collaboration with other Springfield organizations (1500)
- Collaboration with UMass Extension 4H after school program at Make It Springfield workspace (16)

- Update and maintain UMASS Amherst Design Center Website (1)
- Publicize UMass Extension work through social media (240)
- ***Total Educational contacts***

	Youth Contacts	Adult Contacts
In Person	52	2125
Indirect Contacts (Print, etc.)	250	3050

Narrative Summary and Impact

Six hundred participants attended workshops sponsored by the Citizen Planner Training Collaborative (CPTC).

Two important UMass Extension initiatives (Springfield Design Center and Make-It Springfield) based in downtown Springfield continue to thrive with increased number of participants and new collaborative workshop options related to sustainable cities and economic revitalization.

LARP Graduate Design studio in Springfield in Spring 2017 created an urban design plan for the "Revitalization of Apremont Triangle District". Plan presented to Springfield community members and civic leaders/stakeholders.

Department of Agriculture Hatch Grant (Revitalization of Cities) research project completed 2nd year.

Make-it Springfield makerspace celebrates one year anniversary and is awarded \$50,000 in planning grants from MassDevelopment and MassMutual Foundation to develop additional programming including collaborations with UMass Extension 4H (Lauren Dubois), and UMass Engineering program, and UMass LARP.

In 2017 the Citizen Planner Training Collaborative recognized as the only statewide training program for members of Massachusetts Planning Boards and Zoning Boards of Appeal. For the first time, all workshop registrations are completed and paid for through a new online platform.

The UMass Extension "Make-It Springfield" makerspace in downtown Springfield celebrated its first anniversary in June 2017. What started out as a one month "demonstration" pop-up is now an active community asset offering dozens of free or low cost arts and STEM workshops each month.

UMass/LARP graduate design students taught by Michael DiPasquale receive urban design award from Boston Society of Landscape Architects for downtown Springfield revitalization plan.

Collaborating Organizations

- Department of Housing and Community Development
- Massachusetts Association of Planning Directors
- Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies
- Massachusetts Chapter of the American Planning Association

