

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.

Even so, many American cities struggle. Without vital urban centers, people in these areas 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 This type of development is often compounded by outdated land use and zoning policies that are not sustainable.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 – 2018

- Workshops for members of Planning Boards and Zoning Boards of Appeals held across the state and sponsored by 12 Regional Planning Commissions (25)
- Attended meetings as a Board Member of Citizen Planner Training Collaborative (CPTC) the only statewide organization in Massachusetts that provides training programs for members of municipal Planning Boards and Zoning Boards of Appeals (21)
- Serve as Director of the UMass Amherst Design Center in Springfield, a major outreach center for UMass Amherst 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. (1)

- Update and maintain UMass Amherst Design Center website. Website presents learning tools and highlights "success stories" related to UMass Extension's work in Springfield and western Massachusetts related to the sustainable revitalization of cities and towns. Successful strategies include "Tactical Urbanism", and a range of projects and research initiatives conducted at the UMass Amherst Design Center in Springfield/UMass Extension (1)
- Update and maintain Make-it Springfield Facebook page (1)

Total Educational contacts

	Youth Contacts	Adult Contacts
In Person	1200	3756
Indirect Contacts (Print, etc.)	895	1150

Narrative Summary and Impact

Key Activities in 2018:

Springfield Maker Space continues to thrive, providing workshops to over 3000 residents/year.

Design Center produces plans for several downtown Springfield sites: Stearns Square, MarketPlace Center, Duryea Way, and Worthington Street Dining District.

UMass LARP students propose new designs for Apremont Triangle neighborhood.

UMass Design Center proposes restoration of historic Underwood Typewriter Building in Springfield.

Successes: Stearns Square and Market Place Center are implemented in downtown Springfield

Make-It Springfield receives \$50,000 grant and celebrates 2 year anniversary.

Michael DiPasquale presents Springfield projects and Lawrence (Mass) Urban Renewal and History Conference.

Citizen Planner Training Collaborative received state grant for \$200,000.

UMass Extension Design Center and "Make-It Springfield" makerspace received prominent attention in Springfield media. Both initiatives reach diverse residents, over 3,000 people, including over 500 people of color, youth and elderly populations.

"Make-It Springfield" forms Board of Directors and plans to move to larger space, hires staff person.

UMass Extension and "Make-It Springfield" are part of a collaborative planning Springfield's first outdoor "Mural Festival".

UMass Design Center and Make-It Springfield reach over 3,000 Springfield residents (youth and adults) mostly people of color.

Make-It Springfield develops 4H youth "Urban Design" curriculum for Springfield middle school students.

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