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Institutions and Citizen Preferences in Land Use Decisions

Attitudes toward Smart Growth in Small Communities

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The incentive based approach of statewide smart growth programs makes their implementations rely mainly on local government decisions to manage urban growth. Few studies explore smart growth applications in small cities/towns that represent the majority of American communities. This research paper fills that gap in the planning literature partially by examining elected officials' attitudes toward smart growth in small cities/towns located in the US Eastern States. Many of these states have adopted smart growth programs; which enables comparisons of officials' support in states with and without smart growth programs, and allows examinations of effects of statewide smart growth programs on elected officials' attitudes.
The research paper investigates two major questions: to what extent do elected officials support smart growth policies to reduce urban sprawl? and do state smart growth programs contribute to elected officials' support of these policies? To address the research questions, I surveyed mayors of small cities/towns (10,000 to less than 50,000 people) that are located in 17 Eastern States (N=481). Then, I constructed two multiple logistic regression models to explore effects of state programs on elected officials' support of smart growth policies. In the first model, the dependent variable is elected officials' support of the term "smart growth" in general (yes=1, no=0), while in the second model it is officials' perceptions of the ability of smart growth policies to resolve their city/town problems (agree=1, disagree=0). In both models, the explanatory variable is the location in a state adopting a smart growth program, and the independent variables are respondent characteristics (age, race, gender, and educational attainment); and city/town contexts (growth perceptions, population, and governmental forms). Findings of the regression analysis provide useful insights into factors contributing to elected officials' support of smart growth policies, which can help design effective outreach programs to promote smart growth applications.

Gentrification and Light Rail Transit: Examining the Residential Effects of Light Rail Developments

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Over the last three decades, many US cities have adopted Light Rail Transit (LRT) as a planning intervention promoting transit ridership, regional accessibility, and economic productivity, among other outcomes. Many metro areas incorporating LRT make conscious efforts to facilitate developments in station areas in the form of Transit Oriented Developments (TOD). Correspondingly, issues concerning changes in residential and commercial property

values permeate LRT land use studies. However, the question remains: Does LRT create residential change in transit station areas? Focusing on just the built environment may overlooks the actual residents of such areas. My research therefore analyzes gentrification stemming from LRT implementation using a quasi-experimental research design. My unit of analysis is the census tract. I collect racial and median income census tract level data from 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000, and 2010 U.S. censuses for the 24 U.S. cities operating LRT. Data from this range of years provides insight on the socioeconomic characteristics before, during, and after light rail operation. I use Geographic Information System (GIS) shapefile data to determine census tracts where transit stations are located. I analyze the census tract characteristics of the census tracts covering a half mile radius of the transit stations for the given years, and use non-station census tracts as controls. Preliminary results suggest LRT as a cause for transit station areas having increased median income levels and less racial diversity. Such research has tremendous equity concerns. It shifts the focus of LRT land use studies from property valuation to residential equity. LRT empirical studies focusing on residential fluctuations have not been conducted as enthusiastically as those highlighting property fluctuations. This research, then, fills a gap in current LRT studies by focusing on equity instead of economic development. The overall purpose aims to ensure LRT provides regional access to all regional residents.

On the Border: Assessing Landscape Sustainability at the Boundaries within Urban Regions

Presenter: Yuseung Kim, University of Southern Maine
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The concept of “sustainability within urban regions can be defined in many ways, but increasingly it is defined through focus “landscape” sustainability. In this perspective sustainability is seen as occurring at a series of nested geographic scales from the micro (e.g. vernal pools) to the global (climate). The ability to assess and measure landscape scale sustainability has been greatly improved by the development of computer simulation models of landscape change such as UrbanSim and CommunityViz, but this enhanced capacity must still confront the reality of highly fragmented government. One response to the fragmentation of governance is to try to move planning to the regional level, but this has experienced only limited success, at least in the New England region. The overwhelming reality in the region is of systems within economic and ecological systems that function within boundaries that for the most part bear no resemblance to the institutions charged with their governance and local governments still have the majority of responsibility for planning and implementing landscape scale change. This paper will explore ways to identify and address challenges to landscape sustainability that occur at the borders of jurisdictions. Using an UrbanSim model of the Portland, Maine metro area, the paper will examine boundary conflicts including growth nodes in one town adjacent to conservation or high ecological valued towns in an adjacent town or conflicts of differing residential or commercial densities that lead to transportation systems

stresses. The use of computer models enables us to control the strength of government responsibilities and functions in each local and regional level in the study area. The paper will develop a taxonomy of conflict types, show how they can be identified and measured in both present and forecast contexts, and suggest strategies for municipal planners to resolve or avoid sustainability conflicts on the border.

The Policy of Delay: A Multi-Level Analysis of Political Institutions, and City and County Choices in Land Use Decisions

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Development rights are a public good provided by local governments in varied institutional arrangements. Like any market exchange, delay in the provision of such a right can influence the price by imposing uncertainty and transaction costs. This paper examines the political market for land-development policy and models the effects of regulatory delay to explain differences in local government land use decisions. Land development processes and regulations that impose delay allow planners to influence the private costs of development. While some communities "grease the skids" for new development by expediting the development application and approval process, others subject development requests to lengthy scrutiny. This paper investigates what factors account for these differences for city governments and unincorporated areas within counties to identify the mediating role that political institutions play in the development review process. We provide substantive predictions as to how interest group conflicts are filtered differently under specific institutional arrangements, employing a multi-level model strategy to analyze cities and unincorporated areas within the context in which they are embedded.