

WISCONSIN LANDSCAPES

Citizens United for Responsible Land Use

A Quarterly Newsletter of 1000 Friends of Wisconsin
& 1000 Friends of Wisconsin Land Use Institute

Volume 5, Issue 4
Winter 2001

It is one of the last farms in Waukesha County. It sits on some of the most valuable real estate in Southeast Wisconsin. It is being developed by one of our state's largest corporations... *and the taxpayers will subsidize its development.*

The historic 1,500-acre Pabst Farms at the intersection of I-94 and State Highway 67 will be developed by WISPARK, a wholly owned subsidiary of the \$4.8 billion Wisconsin Energy Corporation. WISPARK will get a \$24 million subsidy from Oconomowoc taxpayers to do what it is in business to do: develop land.

The subsidy is called tax incremental financing. The TIF program was created in 1975 as a way of redeveloping blighted urban areas. Here is how it was *intended* to work. Imagine a run down city neighborhood. It needs a face-lift. So the aging sewers are rebuilt, better street lighting is installed, ragged streets and cracking sidewalks are replaced, maybe a small park is refurbished. As a result of this public investment, new businesses and homes are created and property values rise. Under TIF, the city can borrow money to pay for the improvements and then pay off the loan through the new higher property tax revenues it receives as a result of those investments. The other taxing jurisdictions, mostly the school district and the county, don't get to share in the new higher values until the loans are paid off, but this is usually fair because they benefit in the long-run when higher property values come on line.

A Good Idea Gone Wrong

That is how TIF should work and there are many success stories in which the

Past Time for TIF Reform

program has worked just as it was intended. But, unfortunately, the program has been abused in recent years to subsidize development on the urban fringe. The Pabst Farms story is not an aberration. A recent Land Use Institute study found that about 30,000 acres of open space land have been developed using TIF and almost half of TIF districts have been used to develop at least some green space.



View of the portion of the Pabst Farms known locally as Polly's Kettle. While the Kettle itself will be preserved, it will be surrounded by tax-payer subsidized development.

When TIF is abused in this way, it is doubly bad. Not only is open space developed using an unneeded taxpayer handout, but fringe development, which is by nature cheaper to develop, gets a subsidy that could have gone to even the playing field for harder to develop infill projects. The original idea behind TIF was that abandoned urban places needed help because they are more expensive to develop. Usually the land or the old infrastructure has to be cleared first before new development can occur. By

contrast, development on the fringe is at an advantage because the land is open. Using TIF for open space development just compounds the problem of sprawl. While TIF has done good things when properly used, we would be better off without TIF than with a TIF law that is perverted for the development of open spaces.

The Solution to this Sprawl Problem

Nevertheless, the solution to the recent abuses of the program is to reform TIF, not to eliminate it. **Sen. Brian Burke** (D-Milwaukee), the author of the Smart Growth law and one of 1000 Friends' best friends, has introduced a bipartisan bill to refocus TIF on its original intent of redeveloping blighted urban areas. The bill is co-authored by **Rep. Terry Musser** (R-Black River Falls). The bill, **Senate Bill 311**, was introduced in early November.

The Burke-Musser bill would limit the use of TIF to areas that are blighted or in need of rehabilitation and it requires the city or village to adopt a finding that no part of the area to be developed using TIF includes agricultural or forest land. There is already a prohibition on using TIF to develop wetlands.

Another bill aimed at reforming TIF, Assembly Bill 510, has been introduced by Rep. Michael Lehman (R-Hartford). That bill makes some limited progress, but it would not have prevented the Pabst Farms tragedy and so we cannot support it. *Please contact your legislators and ask them to support SB-311. You can reach them via the toll free legislative hotline (1-800-362-9472).*

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Why Land Use Now?

In a nation that is understandably focussed on terrorism and the economy it makes sense for us to ask if our work on land use is still relevant. I think it is. Here are four reasons:

Good Land Use is Good for the Economy. A 10% decline in construction activity in Wisconsin is predicted for next year. Sprawl is expensive, but more compact lots could keep costs down and home ownership within the reach of the broad middle class. In this way better development can actually be a way to stimulate the construction industry. In addition, development patterns that are more compact and which mix uses mean lower costs to move workers, customers and products.

Good Land Use Means Lower Taxes. One Wisconsin study found that sprawling development was 172% more expensive to serve for transportation and utilities than compact development. Everything from extending roads and sewer lines to running school buses is less expensive per unit when the development is more compact.

Good Land Use Increases National Security. We now import over half our oil and 14% of it comes from Saudi Arabia alone. Land use patterns that allow us to drive less will lessen our reliance on foreign sources of oil and make us more secure.

Good Land Use Will Position Us for Long-Term Economic Recovery. While no one would wish for a recession, this might be just the time to work for more land use policy breakthroughs, *before* the economy and the construction industry starts to heat up again. If we set the policy framework now, when the economy does recover we will start building again on a more environmentally and economically sound footing.

So far, the policy responses to terrorism and the economic slow down have not been especially thoughtful or progressive. Land use is one arena in which we can start to build the foundation of a stronger, more secure country.

David Cieslewicz
Director, 1000 Friends of Wisconsin, Inc.

Thank You Mr. Grotenroth

In 1996, when we started 1000 Friends of Wisconsin, a man named Charles Grotenroth joined us. We never had the opportunity to meet him, but five years later, Mr. Grotenroth honored us by remembering us in his will — leaving more than \$4,000 to the advocacy arm of the organization.

We could not be more grateful or humbled by this generous gift. We take very seriously our work protecting Wisconsin's landscapes — and we are heartened to know that our members stand by us in this effort. We thank Mr. Grotenroth and his family for this generous support of our work.

Remembering George L. N. Meyer, Jr.

I remember the first opportunity I had to meet George L. N. Meyer. I had been with 1000 Friends one week when I became involved in efforts to highlight our work during the state's sesquicentennial celebration. A group of preservationists were meeting in Mineral Point to discuss how to elevate preservation and land use issues statewide at a time when citizens of Wisconsin were focused on our natural and built heritage. George was at that meeting.

At the time, I was not aware of Wisconsin's leaders in the preservation movement, so I was surprised when the person sitting next to me leaned over and in hushed and awed tones whispered: "That man is George Meyer – he's a well-known philanthropist and advocate for historic preservation in Wisconsin." Although I had no doubt that he had accomplished all that the hushed tones suggested, my idea of a "philanthropist" involved images of people who wrote checks from behind big desks in large, intimidating offices, and who certainly would not show up to this "get your hands dirty" meeting in a cigar/coffee store (in a fabulous rehabilitated building). It impressed me that he seemed so approachable, so down to earth. After spending more time with him over the past 4 years at 1000 Friends, my first impression was never challenged.

The Land Use Institute made the very wise decision earlier this year to invite George to sit on our board of directors – he accepted. Unfortunately, this man who has accomplished so much to protect our state's heritage, passed away before I could spend more time with and learn more from him. One of our current board members who had the chance to know him far better than I, did learn a great deal from him. The following is an excerpt of a letter written to the Meyer family by Land Use Institute Vice President Juli Aulik:

"George is renowned for his work in historic preservation, but I've come to view his passion, commitment, and skill in different terms. George was a brilliant coach, a leader. Because of this, he didn't just preserve buildings, he built communities.

...George's legacy includes a litany of accomplishments with which we are all familiar--landmark buildings returned to vibrant use, meaningful state programs assisting communities, important laws fostering preservation--but I think it's the ranks of people sharing George's values, continuing to advance the agendas he devised, living and working in his memory that comprise his legacy and his gift to us."

The board, staff and members of 1000 Friends of Wisconsin will miss George and his guidance in the preservation movement in Wisconsin. He was not merely trying to save great old buildings. He was trying to protect our history, and by doing so give us a clearer path to follow for our future. We send his family our thoughts and warmest wishes.

Andrea J. Dearlove
Director, 1000 Friends Land Use Institute

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Smart Growth Showcase

Is your community beginning to plan for Smart Growth? If so, check out the latest addition to our website, the Smart Growth Showcase (www.1kfriends.org/smartgrowth/).

1000 Friends designed the Smart Growth Showcase for two reasons: to recognize those communities that have done an exemplary job in their planning process and to provide information about these communities to others that are about to undertake this challenging, yet rewarding process.

In choosing which communities to highlight, we looked for plans that encouraged public participation; created far-sighted, yet attainable visions for the future; used effective methods and approaches; and designed innovative responses to the issues they faced throughout the planning process.

We also asked these communities to discuss the mistakes made so that others might learn from them.

The website features background information from each community, maps, approaches to the planning process, techniques for encouraging public participation, and funding details. An interesting and helpful showcase feature is "Lessons to Share" in which community members involved in planning offer details about their experience. The respondents address their community's planning strategies and resources, reflect on their greatest challenges and successes, and offer advice to communities beginning the process. The question-and-answer section brings the planning experience to life by recounting real experiences from people who care about their communities.

The first communities featured in the Showcase represent a cross section of Wisconsin, presenting varying social, demographic, or environmental conditions. Although the experiences of each community are unique, from the rural Town of Scott in the lake country of Northwest Wisconsin, to the Village of Cottage Grove in the central urban

area of Dane County, grappling with growth is a challenge. These communities share the desire to preserve the character of their community, and both demonstrate an impressive effort to plan for growth.

The Town of Scott is currently featured on the showcase, www.1kfriends.org/smartgrowth. The Village of Cottage Grove will be added before the end of the year and the Town of Bradley in Lincoln County will soon follow.

We hope that as we share lessons learned, the planning process will become more efficient and successful. Through the showcase, we hope to provide a forum where communities can learn from each other. We invite you to share stories of your own successes and trials as you plan for your community's future.

By Dana Jensen, Land Use Institute intern & graduate student, UW-Madison, Urban & Regional Planning.

Picture Smart Growth: www.picturesmartgrowth.org

Many organizations now promote "smart growth." But what is it and what can it accomplish?

If sprawl is defined as low-density, land-consumptive, centerless, auto-oriented development (often characterized by rigidly-separated housing, stores and office areas), smart growth is the opposite. Smart growth is *not* haphazard but instead is planned taking into consideration the needs of current and future generations as well

as local and regional impacts. In addition, it strives to use our resources, including taxpayer investment, more wisely.

As Wisconsin's population grows and we make choices about where and how to live, work and play, our development choices will have an indelible impact on our landscape. No matter where you live, the quality, quantity, design and location of homes, roads, sewers, schools, businesses and commercial industries are vitally important to how well your community looks and functions. These decisions are those most important to achieving smart growth. What we do well now, we will not have to re-do or undo later.

1000 Friends' new website, www.picturesmartgrowth.org, was

designed to show examples of how communities throughout the country are trying to achieve smart growth. **They have not said "no" to growth – they have said, "we want our growth to fit us; we want to control its impact on our environment, our economy and our cultural heritage."**

Please visit our new website — at www.picturesmartgrowth.org — to see



Book Review: *Milwaukee's Growing Pains*

Reviewed by Dave Cieslewicz

In *Greater Milwaukee's Growing Pains, 1950-2000*, Richard Cutler, a veteran of almost 50 years of land use battles in metropolitan Milwaukee, writes a superb memoir from the frontlines. His cogent analysis, strong, clear pose and hard-won insight offer good reading for even those who are only casually interested in the topic – and *must* reading for those who are concerned about sprawl today, how we got to this point and what we might do about it.

A Yale lawyer, Cutler came to Milwaukee after World War II, just as the post war rush to the suburbs was beginning. Early on Cutler used his considerable legal skills to help Milwaukee's suburbs fight off annexation by the city, usually by incorporating into cities or villages in their own right.

But over time, he came to realize that this balkanization of local government was unhealthy and artificial, imposing a barrier to the kind of regional thinking that was needed. After all, air and water and even transportation impacts don't neatly respect municipal borders.

So, Cutler began a lengthy career of

public service, mostly in his free time while he built a reputation as a top Milwaukee lawyer. He was an original member of the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC), started by Governor Gaylord Nelson in 1960, and Cutler continued to serve on the commission until 1984. In his work with SEWRPC, as a member of the Greater Milwaukee Committee, and as an informal advisor to countless public officials and opinion leaders, Cutler was at or near the center of almost every major regional land use, environmental or transportation issue of that period. (He even had a hand in bringing major league baseball back to Milwaukee.)

Cutler's chapters on the planning and construction of the Milwaukee expressway system will be especially valuable for scholars studying what was probably the most important public works project in Milwaukee's history. That's not to say that I necessarily agree with his point of view about them. Cutler, like SEWRPC itself, takes a rather engineering-based approach. This is a

way of looking at planning that relies, I believe, too heavily on numbers and "experts" (who have their own biases) and which discounts values that are not easily quantified. Still, agree with him or not, the expressway history chapters make for fascinating reading and they give even those of us who have our doubts about urban expressways insight into the tenor of the times and the thinking of the men who made them happen.

This book is about Milwaukee, but Cutler's story echoes throughout America. Milwaukee's path from manufacturing powerhouse to decayed core surrounded by gated affluence to what appears to be the dawn of a new urban resurgence *is* the story of metropolitan America. Dick Cutler has offered us a rare gem that only five decades of experience – and a passion for urban planning in the broad public interest – can produce.

***Greater Milwaukee's Growing Pains* is available from: The Milwaukee County Historical Society, 910 North Old World Third Street, Milwaukee, WI 53203. The cost is \$16.85 at the**

In My Neighborhood — Celebrating Wisconsin Cities

The Institute's second book evaluates what's good about our urban homes

In an effort to highlight the vital contribution healthy cities make toward a healthy overall environment, and to change the dialogue about our urban areas from criticism to celebration, the Institute published its second anthology, *In My Neighborhood*. This book looks at the cities of Wisconsin from a more optimistic point of view; its essays celebrate the experiences available to us only in our cities and villages while they also address the many challenges they face.

This book has been well-reviewed by Milwaukee Magazine, Madison Magazine, the Wisconsin Academy, and the Isthmus as well as local papers around the state. If you'd like a book for the holidays, we are currently offering a special book price to our members.



Downtown Edgerton, by Zane Williams. One of the compelling images in *In My*

Books/Prices	Cost
First book: \$19.95	_____
Addl. books: \$15.95 each	_____
Shipping: \$2 each book	_____
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1000 Friends Land Use Institute Evaluates Planning Grant Applications

Two years ago, 1000 Friends played an integral part in writing and passing the state's comprehensive planning legislation, now known as "Smart Growth." Our goal was to provide a framework that every community could look to to create a plan that would address growth issues over the next several decades. The Smart Growth law requires that each comprehensive plan address nine elements: issues and opportunities; housing; transportation; utilities and community facilities; agricultural, natural, and cultural resources; economic development; intergovernmental cooperation; land use; and implementation.

The law contains several measures to help communities reach the goal of adopting a comprehensive plan by 2010 including the Comprehensive Planning Grant Program – an umbrella program under which two separate grant funds are administered. The first is the General Planning Grant Program, which uses state funding to aid communities in the development of comprehensive

plans. The second is the Transportation Planning Grant Program, which draws from available federal transportation funds to assist communities in preparing the transportation element of their comprehensive plans.

The state has completed the first round of funding for planning grant applications and 1000 Friends has started a program to evaluate these planning grants to see how communities are planning for growth while preserving vital resources.

After each round of funding, 1000 Friends will write reports to help communities identify "best planning practices" for dealing with complex planning issues in the areas of transportation, natural resources, housing and public participation. These reports highlight innovative, creative and effective approaches for protecting natural resources, providing a wide range of housing and transportation choices and maximizing citizen participation in the planning process.

The reports will also point to aspects of the grant applications that fall short of proposing effective means of planning for these four areas. We hope that these reports will be useful to communities working to create successful comprehensive planning grant applications, and ultimately, successful plans for a communities growth.

Fiscal year 2001 was the first year in which Comprehensive Planning Grants were awarded. 1000 Friends reviewed 103 grant applications from the first grant cycle and focused our analysis on four specific areas of the overall comprehensive planning process: transportation, natural resources, public participation and housing.

In our February/March 2002 newsletter, we will report on the results of our first round of grant application analyses. If you can't wait until then to learn what we found, please call the office in early December to request a copy of the report (608.259.1000), or visit our website at

Strong Interest in Smart Growth

Smart Growth planning efforts are underway all over the state. More than one hundred Wisconsin communities are now engaged in Smart Growth planning thanks to state planning grants (see above article) — and more will start soon.

Interest in the planning grants program on the part of local governments continues to be very strong. For the November 1st grant application deadline, 89 applicants (representing 255 local communities because many grants would cover several neighboring jurisdictions) asked for a total of \$4.6 million. Three million dollars will be available, so it will be a highly competitive process. This is good because it spurs communities to write better plans.

One important indication of this is the number of multi-jurisdictional planning proposals (communities get extra points in the scoring process if they plan with their neighbors). Fully one-third of the applications were from coalitions of jurisdictions that want to plan together, the highest number in any grant period to date. This is important because the law was designed to encourage regional thinking and there is now growing evidence that it is working.

There was also good representation in the size and location of the communities that want to plan. Communities from Ashland to Kenosha and from the City of Milwaukee to the Town of Beecher all applied for grants. Recommendations on grant awards will be made by evaluation committees, which will include 1000 Friends planner Nick Lelack, early next year. For a complete list of the communities that applied for grants visit our web site at www.1kfriends.org.

Please Consider an End of the Year Gift

As the year comes to a close, we hope you will consider a special end-of-the-year gift to 1000 Friends of Wisconsin. Whether you choose to support our public education efforts through the Land Use Institute or our advocacy work through 1000 Friends, Inc., your special gift will increase our ability to protect the quality of life in Wisconsin.

You can use the envelope enclosed in this newsletter to make your contribution.

And if you're thinking about tax deductibility, please remember that a gift to the Land Use Institute is deductible as allowed by law. Also, gifts of appreciated stock can have significant tax advantages.

You might also want to consider giving the gift of conservation by giving a 1000 Friends membership to a relative or friend. For information on either gift memberships or gifts of appreciated stock, please contact our office at (608) 259-1000.

Have a Happy Holiday Season!

Welcome New 1000 Friends Institute Members!

We would like to thank those who have joined our efforts to promote sound land use decision making in Wisconsin.

We also thank those who have increased their investment in our work.

Thank You and Welcome.

Friends Society (\$500 to \$999)

Bennett, Adrian & Nancy, 2246

Friends (\$100 to \$249)

Chabot, Dana, 2243

Staubbaum, Linda, 2242

Regular Membership (\$35 to \$99)

Ehinger, John & Lue, 2249

Kearney, Mary Ellen, 2238

LaMuro, Leslie, 2248

Lane, Bill, 454

Schauer, Ruth, 2247

Short, Julie, 2250

Welcome New 1000 Friends of Wisconsin, Inc. Members!

We would like to thank those who have joined our fight to promote land use reform in Wisconsin.

We also thank those members who have increased their investment in our organization's work.

Thank You and Welcome.

Friends (\$100 to \$249)

Door County Environmental Inc., Jerry Viste, 2239

Doneff, Bob & Lynn, 2245

Regular Membership (\$35 to \$99)

Ringhand, Janis, 2240

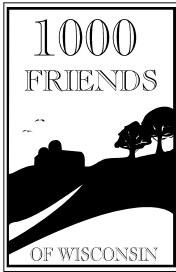
Sielski, Debora, 2244

Stubbe, Chris & Lisa, 2241

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- *Book Review: Greater Milwaukee's Growing Pains*
- *Picture Smart Growth*
- *Important Website Resource Updates*
- *Tax Incremental Financing Reform*

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