BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS TO STRENGTHEN PLANNING

This case study illustrates how TCSP project sponsors have strengthened linkages between transportation and community planning by building partnerships with a wide range of traditional and non-traditional stakeholder groups.

Transportation and Community and System Preservation Pilot Program (TCSP) has funded projects in all 50 states and the District of Columbia that link transportation, community, and system preservation practices. The TCSP program emphasizes the formation of non-traditional partnerships among public, private, and non-profit agencies and community groups. While some of these groups have had previous involvement in transportation planning, they have not always been a regular and integral part of the process. TCSP projects focus on involving non-traditional partners from an earlier stage of the process, and in a more systematic manner.

A review of TCSP experience shows that involvement of non-traditional partners has benefited the transportation and community planning processes by:

- Bringing interest groups into the planning process early, so that concerns can be identified and solutions crafted before reaching the design stage;
- Creating planning solutions that address a range of needs and concerns in an integrated manner;
- Coordinating planning across geographic boundaries; and
- Helping people with different perspectives to find common ground and reach consensus on actions.

TCSP projects have most frequently benefited through the involvement of the following partner types:

- Businesses, often through a chamber of commerce or business association. Businesses bring to the table: economic development needs, concerns, and strategies; concern over quality of life in the region, and its role in attracting and retaining a skilled workforce; financial resources for planning as well as project implementation; and a practical approach to what works and what doesn't.
- The development community, including property owners, developers, and financiers. For projects that focus on land use and transportation relation-

- ships, the involvement of the development community is critical. Public agencies can work with property owners, developers, and financiers to rethink the design of development in a way that complements transportation goals and objectives. At the same time, developers can point out barriers in existing regulations that limit their ability to "do things differently."
- Nonprofits, including community-based organizations, environmental organizations, and other stakeholder groups. These organizations can represent community and stakeholder needs and concerns as well as bring cross-cutting knowledge on specific issues, such as housing and the environment, into the process.
- Public agencies at different levels, such as metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) working with local jurisdictions to coordinate land use planning, or state DOTs working with local governments. These agencies can lead discussions of how local decisions affect regional and state planning, and develop policies of maximum benefit. Local, State, and Federal resource agencies can coordinate to bring their issues and expertise together early in the planning process.
- Colleges and universities, which can provide technical expertise in specific fields such as public involvement mechanisms, analytical tools, and evaluation; low-cost or in-kind contributions of time and materials; and training opportunities for future planners and community leaders.
- Citizen activists, who represent various community, social, and environmental interests but are not part of a formal organization or agency.



Citizens share their ideas in small groups at a forum on regional growth alternatives in Lansing, Michigan.



The following examples describe partnerships created through TCSP projects, how and why these partnerships were formed, the process by which the partners worked together, and the benefits of these partnerships for planning and project development.

RIVERSIDE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA: THE COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL TRANSPORTATION ACCEPTABILITY PROCESS

As residents of the Los Angeles basin flee eastward into Riverside County in search of lower housing costs, traffic congestion is growing and critical habitat for species such as the Quino Checkerspot Butterfly and the California Gratcatcher is being threatened. Fortunately, a diverse group of stakeholders is working together to better link community, transportation, and environmental planning before western Riverside County is fully developed and opportunities for land and corridor preservation are lost.

The Riverside County Integrated Project (RCIP) includes three interrelated efforts: development of a multi-species habitat conservation plan, identification and preservation of transportation corridors for future use, and the coordination of local planning efforts to ensure a high quality of life for current and future residents. The second component of this project, the Community and Environmental Transportation Acceptability Process (CETAP), is funded in part by an FY 2001 TCSP grant.

Led by the Riverside County Transportation Commission (the Commission), CETAP differs significantly from traditional transportation corridor planning projects. First, the goal of the project is to preserve right-of-way for future transportation use, rather than to implement a specific transportation alternative. The county does not currently have the funding to construct a major transportation project in the study corridors. However, it wants to ensure that land use planning is coordinated with future transportation investments. Second, because of its broad geographic and planning scope, the CETAP study is considered a "Tier 1" environ-

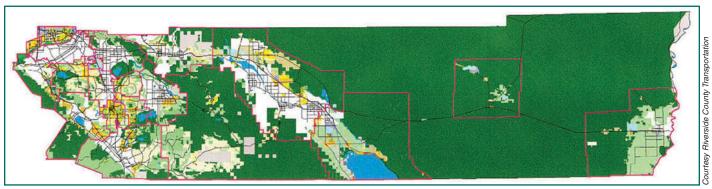
mental assessment under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) instead of the more common "Tier 2" assessment. The Tier 2 assessment is typically done for projects with a well-defined alternative.

CETAP is particularly noteworthy for its up-front involvement of a wide range of stakeholders. The project was initiated in 1999, when the Commission convened a 30-person advisory committee to meet monthly to guide the process. Committee members represent a wide spectrum of interest groups, including:

- The Building Industry Association,
- The Sierra Club and the Endangered Habitats League;
- The Farm Bureau;
- Property owners;
- Local representatives of boards of supervisors;
- The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), the MPO for the region; and
- The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans).

Starting in 2000, the Commission and the CETAP advisory committee began working with resource agencies, including FHWA, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the Army Corps of Engineers, through a NEPA/404 alternatives analysis process. A major public involvement effort also was undertaken for this process, utilizing public meetings, workshops, and the media.

According to Cathy Bechtel, CETAP project manager with the Commission, a significant objective has been to get stakeholders involved early in helping to craft the study so that they will support the outcomes. Ms. Bechtel reports that the advisory committee has worked well despite the variety of interests involved. It has taken longer than expected to explain positions and reach compromises. However, she expects the process "will pay off in the long run" because of greater buy-in from stakeholders. While few participants may



California's Riverside County stretches all the way from Orange County to the Arizona border. In this map showing land use in unincorporated areas of the county, yellow denotes urban development, light green denotes agricultural areas, and dark green denotes conservation areas.

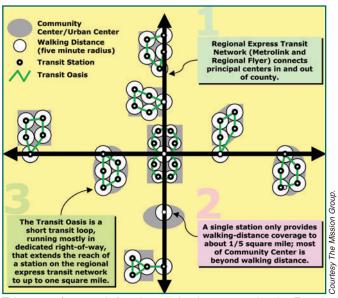


be completely satisfied with the outcomes, most feel like reasonable compromises have been reached. Also, broader-than-anticipated agreement has been reached in some areas: for example, planners, environmental advocates, and developers have all supported transit alternatives as well as increased densities in transit station areas.

"One objective of the CETAP process has been to get people involved early in helping to craft the study so that they will support the outcomes."

Cathy Bechtel, Riverside County Transportation Commission

Implementing land use recommendations consistent with transportation alternatives will require action on the part of the local jurisdictions. The county and cities have signed memoranda of understanding on "spheres of influence," for example, for road/highway responsibilities. The county and SCAG also have had numerous meetings with the cities affected by the proposed transportation corridors to discuss the importance of land use changes. While for the most part it is too early to identify specific results, one city, Temecula, is working to implement a "transit oasis" that includes a transit-friendly environment and supportive land use changes, in conjunction with a new development.



Thirty year framework for phased development under the Transit Oasis Concept.

Through the CETAP process, the county also is evaluating transportation corridors to avoid or minimize disruption to sensitive habitat for threatened or endangered species. This effort will support the multispecies habitat conservation plan, under which 153,000 acres have been designated for acquisition for habitat preservation.

CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA: GROWTH OPTIONS

The population of the three-county Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester region of South Carolina has grown by nearly 50 percent between 1980 and 2000, but developed land area has still grown six times faster than the population. The region's success at attracting business and industry has been aided by amenities including ready access to beaches, golf courses, and the gas lamps and cobblestone streets of historic Charleston. Yet this growth threatens fragile coastal ecosystems as well as water quality in the region's rivers, while also requiring increasingly expensive infrastructure investment to serve a dispersed population.

An FY 1999 TCSP grant has supported efforts of state, regional, and local agencies to address and manage growth. Under the "Growth Options" project, the Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments (BCDCOG) has brought together a broad range of partners to examine growth issues. This project includes a satellite mapping effort to track growth patterns over the past three decades; an evaluation of the infrastructure cost as well as environmental and quality-of-life impacts of "alternative" versus "conventional" growth patterns; and the creation of strategies and tools to implement a growth strategy that decreases costs and environmental impacts while preserving a high quality of life. The project is investigating alternative development strategies such as traditional neighborhood development (TND) and infill projects that reduce land consumption and the need for automobile use.

BCDCOG invited the following partners to participate in the effort:

- All governments who are MPO members;
- The private sector, represented by the Chamber of Commerce and the Regional Development Alliance;
- Developers, including homebuilders and realtors;
- Service districts and public works departments;
- · Environmental organizations; and
- Other community groups.

These groups have been involved through representation on a partnering committee, which meets quarterly to work through issues. Working committees also have been formed to address specific issues such as the development of an infrastructure cost model. Outreach has been made to the general public through an electronic newsletter, mailings, media coverage, and presentations at community organization meetings. Target lists for mailings were drawn from lists of people participating in local comprehensive planning





Urban and suburban neighborhoods contrast in Charleston.

processes as well as regional transportation planning. Public involvement also has occurred indirectly, through discussion of growth concepts within local comprehensive planning process.

According to Dan Hatley, a planner with BCDCOG, the most active partners have been local government staff and elected officials, as well as people from the development/real estate and environmental communities. Mr. Hatley reports that developers in particular have been an integral part of the process and have "led more than the local jurisdictions" in terms of supporting TND, infill, and other alternative growth concepts. In the early 1990s, developers began proposing these types of projects but had to go through an extended review process because they were not allowed under traditional zoning. Because existing ordinances often allow only suburban-style, single-use development, some developers have strongly supported creating more flexibility in zoning ordinances.

The benefits of BCDCOG's collaborative approach to regional planning have been especially evident in recent comprehensive planning efforts. Property rights groups reacted strongly to some aspects of those efforts, such as proposed growth boundaries. The same property rights groups however, have been attracted to the COG's regional process by the fact that its objective is not to limit growth or control by mandate. Instead, participants are discussing how local jurisdictions can change their ordinances to allow for "Smart Growth" through more flexibility for alternative forms of development. BCDCOG hopes that as a result of the TCSP project, some changes will be evident in the five-year updates for each county's comprehensive plan.

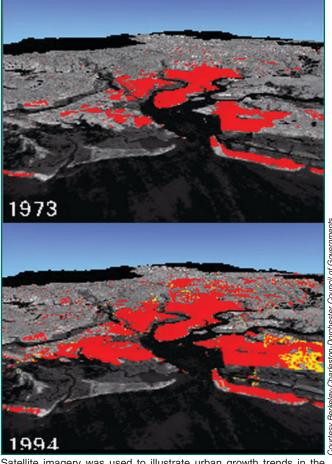
While the Growth Options project initially focused on creating dialogue among stakeholders, it ultimately is intended to influence local comprehensive plans, transportation plans, and other local and regional policies. BCDCOG recently facilitated the comprehensive plan-

ning process in two of the region's three counties and in 16 local jurisdictions, and has made use of these connections to discuss alternative growth planning measures and their potential benefits to the jurisdiction.

"We have focused on affecting patterns of development, while allowing for the same regional population and employment growth. Encouraging increased flexibility in development patterns, rather than restricting development, has resulted in keeping people with various points of view at the table for discussion."

Dan Hatley, Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments

The results of the project also will feed into the transportation planning process. BCDCOG's Hatley notes that at least two specific transportation projects already have been affected by a heightened regional awareness of growth issues. The first involves a planned parkway extension to State Highway 61. The MPO Policy Committee funded a charrette involving city, MPO, and State DOT planners, local property owners, and other



Satellite imagery was used to illustrate urban growth trends in the Charleston region and to calculate changes in developed land area over time.



interested parties to discuss the design of the project and how it would work with surrounding land use plans of the city and county. This planning work for the parkway extension was funded by Federal-aid funds flexed from highway construction to planning. The second example involves the planned Mark Clark Expressway, an inner freeway for Charleston. This highway proposes to cross a rural sea-island which is developing quickly. Upon the request of the City of Charleston, which was agreed to by the MPO Policy Committee, the project has been delayed until appropriate land use controls can be adopted on the island.

New Orleans, Louisiana: Regional Comprehensive Planning

Communities in the New Orleans metropolitan area have boldly undertaken a first attempt at comprehensive planning. Supported by an FY 1999 TCSP grant of \$450,000, the New Orleans Regional Planning Council (NORPC) is bringing the region's parishes together to discuss transportation and land use relationships, approaches to comprehensive planning, and tools to support planning. At the same time, business leaders are spearheading an initiative to develop indicators of sustainability and community health for the region.

To begin working with parishes and local communities on comprehensive planning issues, NORPC developed a public involvement tool that introduces people to transportation/land use relationships. The tool includes a presentation, a survey, and a small-group discussion guide, all of which can be implemented at a public meeting in about an hour. This process is documented in a workbook which a staff or consultant can apply after a brief training. The presentation lays out a range of transportation options including pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access, and describes how transportation options are affected by land use decisions.

Using this outreach tool, NORPC has worked with several parishes that are undertaking their first comprehensive planning efforts or are in the process of updating their existing comprehensive plans. These parishes are now mainstreaming the public involvement tool into their own comprehensive planning process, using it to conduct outreach within their communities. NORPC reports that the model has gone from being used at neighborhood association meetings with 10 to 15 attendees to being used for larger group meetings with 50 to 100 attendees.

NORPC's Jim Harvey reports that the TCSP project has either stimulated or helped to shape comprehensive planning efforts in a number of parishes. In St. Tammany Parish, which has recently completed a comprehensive planning effort, committees that previously focused in isolation and with potentially inconsistent objectives on transportation, land use, and economic development are now working with each other. The parishes' new comprehensive plan contains a much stronger emphasis on "Smart Growth" sensibilities, including:

- Significant implementation of bicycle paths, including strategies for incorporating paths into roadway projects and classifying paths by user types. The parishes' bicycle plan will be incorporated into the regional bicycle master plan almost intact.
- Establishment of "Planned Corridor Overlay" districts to address design in roadway corridors to become more aesthetically pleasing, pedestrianfriendly, and context-sensitive.
- Initiation of discussions with the Louisiana DOT regarding development of a transit system (initially paratransit). This has been identified as a need for a number of years but has not been acted upon.

To implement Planned Corridor Overlay objectives, NORPC has brought the State DOT and parish together to discuss how mutual objectives can be achieved by working together on access control and land use issues. For example, the DOT needs the cooperation of the local planning office to achieve access control, while the parish needs the cooperation of the DOT to achieve its corridor overlay objectives.



Satellite image of the New Orleans region.

Other parishes are in various stages of their planning efforts and have found NORPC's public involvement tool to be valuable. Jefferson Parish, for example, very recently initiated a comprehensive land use planning effort, largely at the behest of the business community.



NORPC worked with the parish to use its outreach tool at public meetings, as one step toward developing the transportation and land use components of the parish's comprehensive plan.

"The TCSP outreach tool has introduced the public in Jefferson Parish to the concept of integrating transportation and land use planning."

> – Terri Wilkinson, AICP, Jefferson Parish Planning Department

In addition to supporting comprehensive planning activities, NORPC allocated \$40,000 of its TCSP grant to an initiative to develop regional sustainability indicators. The idea caught fire very strongly with several groups in the region, and the Chamber of Commerce and a local business foundation contributed \$250,000 to expand the effort. The region has suffered economically in the past two decades, and businesses are concerned about finding new channels for economic growth while at the same time protecting the tourism industry that is increasingly the lifeblood of the region. Furthermore, they see the health of the tourism industry as intrinsically linked to regional growth issues: the attractiveness of the city is in large part due to its historic neighborhoods, and a stable and thriving inner-city population is essential to these neighborhoods and the economic health of the region.

Now known as "Top 10 by 2010," the indicators initiative has brought together 400 civic leaders in a series of workshops to work through and define indicators of sustainability. Participants in the effort are creating a vocabulary of indicators to evaluate the region's performance on transportation, land use, economic development, and other issues, and over time to compare outcomes to benchmark their progress. They are currently populating the indicators database with available data.



Live oaks grace a side street in one of New Orleans' streetcar-era neighborhoods.

Jim Harvey of NORPC reports that the indicators project "has taken a large number of groups and individuals who were previously at odds or working in opposite directions and focused their energy in a common direction." Groups including the Chamber of Commerce, the Business Council, environmental groups, and faith-based groups are developing agreement on common values as expressed through the indicators. One of the initiating groups is independently seeking funds to take the indicators to the community and work with other organizations to incorporate the indicators in their decision-making process. For example, several local foundations are considering asking grant applicants to describe how their project will have a positive effect on the indicators.

OTHER NON-TRADITIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Numerous other TCSP project sponsors have formed non-traditional partnerships. These partnerships are bringing unique resources and perspectives that strengthen the project and increase the chances that recommendations will be successfully implemented.

The Tri-County Regional Planning Commission (TCRPC) in Lansing, Michigan solicited the assistance of the Michigan State University Extension Service (MSUE) with a growth visioning effort. TCRPC and MSUE are sharing a full-time staff person over a multiyear period. MSUE has also contributed the use of equipment, including electronic voting equipment, and facilitators so that TCRPC was able to carry out 13 public forums at a total cost of about \$10,000. TCRPC planner Paul Hamilton notes that the involvement of land grant institution in planning for regional growth and development is a natural fit, since these institutions historically have had an interest in agriculture. In the Lansing area, MSUE initially approached TCRPC when they heard about the regional visioning effort and said "how can we help?"

Project partners in Lansing also are working to link transportation, land use planning, physical activity, and health. The Ingham County health department has contributed in-kind resources, especially for environmental assessment of the regional scenarios. The department also is generating information and newsletters regarding the environmental health impacts of land use decisions.

In California's San Joaquin Valley, an unusual coalition of agricultural, business, and building industry interests created a set of "Landscape of Choice" principles, which were adopted by all 15 cities in Fresno County. The principles call for revising zoning regulations to allow for compact and mixed-use devel-



opment in order to conserve agricultural land, provide more affordable housing options, support alternative forms of transportation, and enhance the quality of life in the valley. Supported by an FY 2000 TCSP grant, the project's private and local government partners are now working to implement the principles. The Local Government Commission, a California-based professional association, has drafted a model zoning ordinance and is pilot-testing this ordinance in the cities of Fresno and Reedley. A general plan update in Fresno was marked by intense public debate over opening new areas to development; the model ordinance gives the city a tool to accommodate development in more compact forms, and limit the amount of land conversion that is required.

"We allowed the private sector groups to take the lead on the project, which has helped them take ownership of the process and also encouraged their boards to approve the outcomes."

Dave Mitchell, San Joaquin
 Council of Governments

When the Coalition for Utah's Future in Salt Lake City. Utah initially formed Envision Utah to undertake a region-wide growth visioning effort, it invited a broad range of stakeholders from all aspects of the community to participate. In order to accept the invitation, however, each prospective partner agreed to sign a pledge form in which each was asked to overlook his or her own self-interest – including personal self-interests as well as interests of those represented - while bringing expertise to the table. Participants were thus challenged to look beyond short-term concerns and work toward the common good of the community. The extensive public process supporting the Envision Utah effort has since led to the development of a "Quality Growth Strategy" that identifies six primary goals and 32 key strategies to assist communities in their planning efforts.



Subdivisions meet farmland near Fresno, California.

With the tools and resources provided by Envision Utah, local jurisdictions are working to implement many elements of this strategy.

In the Phoenix metropolitan area, the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) has brought together local planners and regional agencies to coordinate issues related to regional growth and development. MAG has taken a collaborative approach, holding monthly planners' meetings that have grown to over 20 attendees, and forming working groups to develop technical reports on topics of general interest. Topics addressed include infrastructure, fiscal and sales taxes, economic development, demographics, affordable housing, and environmental impacts. The reports discuss local policy options that will benefit the region as a whole in addition to strengthening individual communities. Also, under Arizona's new Growing Smarter statute, MAG has the responsibility of reviewing general plan updates. MAG reports that they are "talking with local planners as much as possible" during the review process and find that they get much more done this way than with formal written comments.

"Our goal is to create linkages among agencies so that we can consider and plan for the region as a single system."

> Jack Tomasik, Maricopa Association of Governments

The City of **Providence**, **Rhode Island** partnered with the Department of Community Planning and Landscape Architecture at the University of Rhode Island to evaluate the success of its FY 1999 TCSP project. Through this project, the city's planning department is developing transit, bicycle, and pedestrian improvements to physically reconnect the largely low-income and minority Olneyville neighborhood to the rest of the city. Students in a fall 2000 studio course at the university documented baseline conditions by collecting transit ridership data, bicycle and pedestrian counts, and economic and physical conditions, and by surveying local residents and business owners about their perceptions of the community. Improvements are beginning to be implemented, and students in another studio course will collect similar data following completion of the project and compare conditions before and after the project. Residents and business owners in the Olneyville neighborhood are hopeful that the city's proposed investments will stimulate private reinvestment as well.

The Madison County Council of Governments in **Anderson, Indiana** expanded the range of partners in its FY 2000 TCSP project to include the Indianapolis



MPO and the Central Indiana Regional Citizens League (CIRCL). Originally intended to address growth in Madison County, on the northeast suburban fringe of Indianapolis, project sponsors realized that they could have a greater impact by involving other groups covering the nine-county Indianapolis metropolitan region. CIRCL, an embryonic regional citizens' group known for respecting and encouraging alternative opinions, will coordinate public forums. In addition, a non-profit educational group will assist both MPOs in developing a tool to engage primary and secondary school age children in becoming involved in the input and planning process. The Indiana Planning Association will assist the core team members in developing a certification program for training public and private officials in the use of toolkit on land preservation strategies that will be produced as part of the project.

LESSONS LEARNED

A number of lessons have emerged from these and other examples of successful partnerships established through TCSP projects.

- Focus efforts on identifying and involving key actors and stakeholders. For example, if the intent of the project is to affect land use patterns, what stands in the way of change local regulations, private-sector practices, or both? Who can make the necessary changes? If a jurisdiction wants to change corridor design practices, has the state DOT bought into the proposed concepts?
- Engage people around their specific concerns. Businesses interests in Salt Lake City became involved in regional planning because they perceived threats to quality of life and their ability to retain a skilled workforce. In the San Joaquin Valley, the development community became involved because they perceived a movement toward addressing growth and wanted to ensure that their views were considered in this process.
- Focus on the good of the community as a whole. The Envision Utah effort set a tone up front by asking

- people to think regionally rather than locally. This approach can help to avoid some common pitfalls to achieving regional cooperation, such as competition among jurisdictions for tax base or a local "not-in-my-backyard" attitude towards development.
- Allow partners to take ownership of the project. In areas such as the San Joaquin Valley and New Orleans, non-traditional groups have taken responsibility for key aspects of the project such as creating alternative land use guidelines or leading a sustainability indicators effort rather than simply attending meetings and providing occasional input. This in turn means that the partners are more committed to ensuring the success of the project.
- The development community can be a strong supporter of land use policy reform. While "top-down" growth controls are politically infeasible in much of the country, developers in areas such as Charleston have been receptive to land use ordinance changes that increase the flexibility of property use. Such changes may accommodate increasing market demand for "neotraditional" development, mixeduse, infill, and other patterns that reduce transportation and environmental impacts.
- Effective partnerships are built on relationships and require hard work and persistency to maintain. Building relationships requires a concerted effort. Support from upper management and staff continuity are key elements of this process. Having a staff person who relates well to the target audience is also critical, whether that audience is a business leadership circle or an inner-city, minority neighborhood.
- Partnership-based projects require patience. TCSP project sponsors have repeatedly noted that it took longer than expected to bring everyone to the table and to work through issues to the mutual satisfaction of all partners. The corresponding benefit is that more people are invested in the project and committed to its successful implementation.



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Phoenix, Arizona

Regional Growing Smarter Implementation Plan

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Riverside County, California

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Acceptability Process

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San Joaquin Valley, California

Creating Transportation Options Through Improved Land Use Patterns

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Landscape of Choice report:

www.farmlandinfo.org/fic/ft/landcal.html

Madison County, Indiana

Livable Community and Edge Growth

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New Orleans, Louisiana

Regional Comprehensive Plan

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Lansing, Michigan

Tri-County Regional Growth Study

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