

# United Growth Project Replication Manual



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## Dedication Page

This manual is dedicated to all United Growth members and volunteers past, present, and future. Without their participation and thoughtful input, the United Growth model would never have been realized. Special recognition goes to the brave souls who were the first to chair the two major committees:

Rich Jelier, Urban Committee Chair

Sharon Steffens, Rural Committee Chair

Danielle Bult, Urban Committee Co-Chair

A special thanks also to all of the MSU Extension staff who contributed their time and talents to building the United Growth project:

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# Welcome to MSU Extension!

Welcome! We are happy to have you as a member of our team. This manual was designed to help you, as a Land Policy Educator replicating the United Growth model in your coverage area, do your job.

## Required Skills

Extension Educators are ideal for this type of work because they embody the following abilities. Extension calls abilities ‘Core Competencies’:

- Create partnerships
- Collect and interpret data
- Facilitate group decision-making
- Manage and transform conflict
- Manage scientific and technical information

Your work as a Land Policy Educator will require you to develop skills so that you are able to play all of these roles in your community:

- Convener
- Collaborator
- Networker
- Program Designer
- Diplomat
- Forecaster
- Mediator
- Facilitator
- Trainer
- Information Provider
- Researcher
- Organizer
- Technical Expert
- Other Educational Roles

## MSU Extension Training Programs

Although Land Policy Educators will receive training and mentoring from United Growth staff, training programs to develop or advance these skills are plentiful within Extension. Please note that MSU Extension requires all employees to participate in a two day Diversity Training, Portal Training (for the new MSUE web site) as well as New Staff Orientation on campus. Talk with your County Extension Director (CED) to schedule these trainings. Your CED may have identified other useful trainings/orientation activities for you.

Specific MSU Extension training programs applicable to Land Policy Educators are:

- Land Use Area of Expertise training sessions and meetings (Required for LPEs)
- Citizen Planner Program trainings
- Facilitator Excellence Workshop
- The Logic Model and EIS evaluation training
- Strategic Futuring – Advanced Facilitation
- Communicating Your Way through Conflict
- Policy Making in Lansing

# Chapter 1: Introduction to United Growth



Congratulations on taking the challenge to form an urban-rural United Growth Coalition!

Your efforts will contribute to a statewide movement toward positive land use. Positive land use is consistent with the ten principles of New Urbanism found in Appendix A. Positive land use must also incorporate local visions for individual communities and neighborhoods.

Your objective is to educate and build capacity among the citizens and decision-makers in your county around land use issues. This effort will help people create and implement a vision for their community that is consistent with New Urbanism principles and positive land use. The centerpiece of this land use project is building from the common ground that has been identified by rural and urban stakeholders. This manual is designed to give you some tools for accomplishing this objective.

## The Urban-Rural Connection

For decades, urban core cities in Michigan and throughout the country have been suffering from disinvestment and abandonment. Symptoms of these trends associated with unplanned growth include: population loss, concentration of poverty and people of color, loss of tax base, underutilized infrastructure as well as blight caused by vacant store fronts, homes and property.



At the same time, rural areas are suffering from a loss of prime and unique farmland and natural resource areas to development. Symptoms of these trends associated with unplanned growth include: declining farm businesses, traffic, zoning changes and new residents surrounding working agricultural lands, decreasing amounts of wetland and woodlots, declining amounts of wildlife population and diversity, increasing population in rural areas, and the rapid increase in



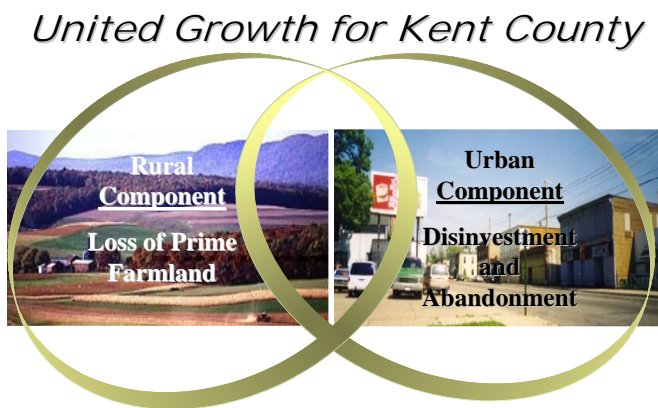
the rate of urbanized land compared to population growth.

Disinvestment and abandonment in urban areas and the loss of farmland and natural resource areas in rural areas are both caused by inefficient land use or urban sprawl. They are two sides of the same coin. The United Growth model specifically works to reverse the negative effects of urban sprawl and increase investment and revitalization in cities and urban areas while preserving prime and unique farmland and natural resource areas in rural areas. The United Growth model works to accomplish this by building a coalition of

urban and rural stakeholders who will promote better land use decision-making in the community.

### **Citizen Based**

United Growth seeks to bring about systematic change within a community by having its residents lead the effort. The United Growth model is a citizen-based model. It does more to encourage long-term changes and sustainable effort than a study or a training program can do, but it also takes more time and energy.



Land Policy Educators have a unique opportunity since they will be working with different groups of stakeholders with different perspectives and interests. Both rural and urban stakeholders must become involved in addressing the land use issues facing their communities. This “bottom up” approach distinguishes United Growth from other land use models.

### **History of United Growth**

The concept of the United Growth project was developed by Maggie Bethel, Dave Guikema, Carol Townsend, Tom

Bulten and Kim Krasevac, a former program assistant with the Frey Foundation in Grand Rapids. The Frey Foundation approached MSU Extension in Grand Rapids to develop a program that would address the issue of urban sprawl. For several years the Frey Foundation had been supporting numerous conferences, speakers and workshops on urban sprawl issues, but the foundation realized that only the leaders of local stakeholder organizations were present at these events. General citizens were not being reached, especially urban residents, and projects to reduce sprawl were not being implemented.

After several months of work, the urban-rural, citizen-based model of United Growth was created. Frey Foundation provided a small grant in the fall of 1998 to initiate the project. This grant funded the development of a survey of agricultural land owners (33% return rate with over 1000 responses) and initial commercial redevelopment work in partnership with the Creston Neighborhood Association. After the success of this initial grant, a three-year grant from the Frey Foundation started on March 1, 1999. This is the date that Kendra Wills was hired as project coordinator. This manual documents the entire 6.5 years the project has been in existence. To date, we have found no other similar model.

### **Three Phases of United Growth**

The United Growth model uses a three phase process to build a United Growth Coalition. Although the length of time spent on each phase depends upon the readiness of your participants, each phase builds on the next so they must be completed in order. The three phases of United Growth are:

Phase 1:

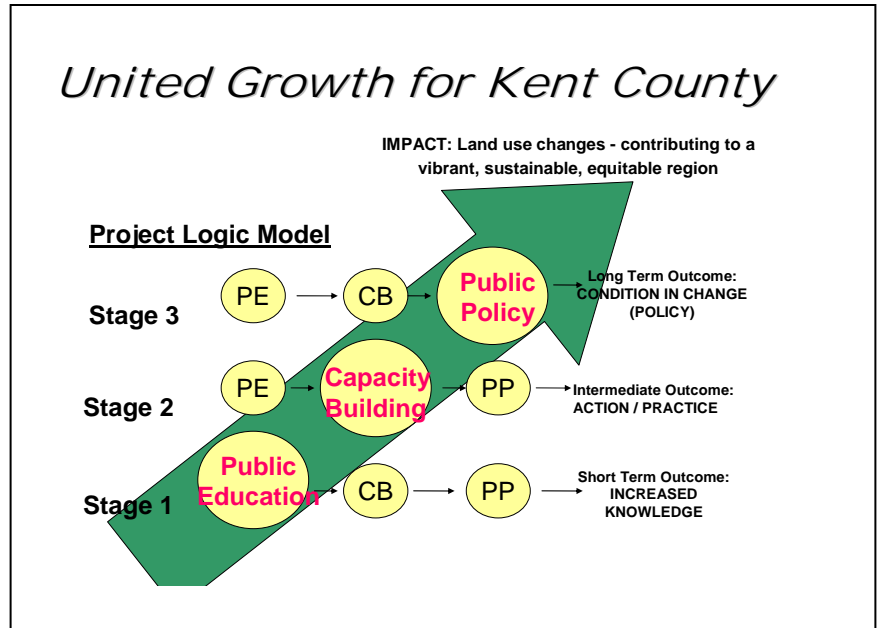
- Emphasis on **education**
- Minor emphasis on capacity building
- Minor emphasis on public policy

Phase 2:

- Emphasis on **capacity building**
- Minor emphasis on education
- Minor emphasis on public policy

Phase 3:

- Emphasis on **public policy**
- Minor emphasis on education
- Minor emphasis on capacity building



This diagram illustrates the three phases and emphasis areas of United Growth.

Chapters in this manual will walk you through a step-by-step guide for using these three phases to build a United Growth Coalition that works to implement positive land use.

### Have Fun!

Land use issues can be very controversial. Working toward systemic change among many stakeholder groups is extremely hard work. Those willing to take on these challenges must be able to keep things in perspective. Take time to get to know the people with whom you are working. Attend trainings to meet new people, share experiences and learn new skills. Take pride in the work that you are doing to better the community in which you work. Document your successes in a way that will help you remember your accomplishments so that when something (or several things) doesn't work out, you have the ability to persevere. *If this were easy, it would have been done before!*

### Supplemental Information

The rest of the chapter consists of examples for Kent County that can be used as templates for your program. Please note that a lot of the information will be different for your county/region, but the basic framework of the materials should be useful.

# United Growth for Kent County – Briefing Paper

Created in 1999

## **Situation:**

In March of this year, Michigan State University, MSU Extension, and the MSU Center for Urban Affairs – Grand Rapids began a project focused on land use in Kent County. United Growth for Kent County, funded by the Frey Foundation, strives to link the rural and urban communities of Kent County, creating a unified, citizen voice that advocates regional land use planning and policies. This unique connection is the foundation of the pioneering initiative.

## **Audience Characteristics:**

Two citizen groups – the Rural and Urban Committees – direct United Growth. Members of the committees represent the residents, landowners, businesses and organizations within Kent County. Other target audiences include township officials, neighborhood associations, community leaders and organizers, etc.

## **Collaborators/Cooperators:**

The project formed two partner teams to provide technical expertise and resources to the citizen groups. The MSU Multi-Disciplinary Resource Team consists of eleven faculty members from the Colleges of Agriculture and Natural Resources and Social Science including three individuals with Extension appointments, two members from University Outreach, as well as an Extension County Director and several agents. This team collectively donated more than 90 hours of time and effort to the activities of the project. The Collaborative Partners Team, consisting of organization and business representatives from the West Michigan community, also provided citizen groups with knowledge and expertise on land use planning and policies.

United Growth for Kent County is directed by the Project Administrative Team consisting of:

Margaret Bethel, Regional Director and Project Administrator, MSU-West

David Guikema, Director, Kent County MSU Extension

Carol Townsend, Director, Center for Urban Affairs – Grand Rapids

Kendra Gunter Wills, Project Coordinator

Kara Griffith, Kent County MSU Extension Agriculture Agent

## **Methods Used to Address the Situation:**

United Growth promotes positive regional growth through public education, leadership capacity building and citizen-based public policy development. MSU's work in the rural community focuses on the education of landowners and township officials on the costs of low-density development, while empowering rural communities to make informal land use decisions. The project's urban component assists central city residents in improving the social and economic vitality of neighborhoods and identifying and mitigating the effects of suburban sprawl. Four urban projects are being pursued on issues such as business district redevelopment, neighborhood planning for residents and businesses, neighborhood stabilization through home ownership and public education opportunities, and housing rehabilitation.

**Impacts/Evaluation Results:**

Some of United Growth for Kent County's recent successes are:

- Increased engagement of rural and urban residents and community leaders, totaling over 50 citizens representing five Grand Rapids neighborhoods and thirteen townships.
- Accumulated over \$46,000 of in-kind support from March-June 1999.
- Sponsored two Legislative Roundtable Breakfasts attended by over 80 individuals including Representatives Byl and Koetje, Senator Sikkema, and several individuals representing the Office of the Governor, US Senator Abraham, Congressman Ehlers.
- Partnered with three neighborhoods identifying and strategizing to mitigate negative effects of sprawling growth within their communities.
- Completed a number of township costs of development studies.
- Project highlighted at the Annual Meeting of Michigan Chamber of Commerce Officials at Mackinaw Island.

**Implications for Follow-up and Timeline:**

In 1999 we focused on the development of a proposal to the Frey Foundation for the project's second and third year. We were invited to pursue additional funding by Frey project staff and will also seek additional outside sources.