

# **Four Ideas for ACTING AS ONE**

**A workshop for the  
Regional Economic Collaboration Conference  
of La Crosse County  
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# **#1 EMPLOYER-CENTERED REGIONAL SCHOOLS/ EMPLOYER-ASSISTED HOUSING BENEFITS**

**parents' problem: most parents work, often at widely separated locations far from local school; "latchkey issues"**

**employer-community problem: major institutions (hospitals, colleges) often located in declining neighborhoods; high security costs; also, lost worker time when must deal with school day problems**

## **Solution:**

**city-school board-major employer  
set up regional school nearby**

- a. half of pupils are from  
immediate neighborhood;**
- b. half of pupils are children of  
employer's workers**

**school board provides enriched,  
magnet-type school curriculum**  
(Wisconsin open enrollment policy and transfer  
payments [\$5,884 in 2006-07] should facilitate program)

**city (or employer) pays to extend  
program for full work day**

**employer also provides no-interest  
downpayment loans, low-cost  
mortgages to encourage workers to  
buy homes in neighborhood**

# **#2**

## **INCLUSIONARY ZONING FOR MAJOR LAND USE CONVERSION**

**problem: La Crosse County has  
(surprisingly) high level of income  
segregation (local index: 40;  
Milwaukee 51 – USA’s highest)**

**BIGGEST TOOL:  
*EXCLUSIONARY ZONING***

- \*large minimum lots**
- \*large minimum sq ft**
- \*anti-apartment bias**

# **CONSEQUENCES OF EXCLUSIONARY ZONING**

**Low- and modest-income workers often concentrated in older city neighborhoods without ready access to outlying job centers; or must make often costly commute to lower-wage jobs;**

**Exclusionary housing magnifies school disparities  
(city schools: 41% low-income;  
rest of county schools: 23% low income)**

**Exclusionary zoning promotes urban sprawl, air pollution, and loss of farmland & open space.**

# **INCLUSIONARY ZONING (IZ)**

**Local IZ ordinance  
requires set-aside of  
affordable housing  
(usually 10%-15%)  
in market-rate developments.**

**Local IZ ordinance  
automatically  
provides density bonuses  
(usually 15%-30%),  
other cost offsets  
to protect builders'  
profitability.**

**Under best IZ programs,  
local government agency buys  
one-third of IZ units  
to help lowest wage workers.**

# **WARNING!**

**REGIONAL HOUSING MARKET  
IS FAIRLY LOW-COST;  
BUILDERS MAY NOT HAVE  
INCENTIVE TO USE  
DENSITY BONUSES.**

**ECONOMICS MAY NOT WORK  
EXCEPT WHEN MAJOR  
UPZONING OCCURS  
(SUBDIVIDING FARMLAND,  
CONVERTING FORMER  
INDUSTRIAL/WAREHOUSE  
SITES TO RESIDENTIAL)**

**PROCEED  
CAUTIOUSLY!**

# **#3 MAJOR FARMLAND PURCHASE OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS (PDR) PROGRAM**

**farmers' problem: land is often more valuable for growing houses than growing crops; value of land is farmer's 401(k) retirement fund**

**another farmers' problem: selling off some land often results in new neighbors objecting to farming operations ("right-to-farm" issue)**

**community problem: loss of open space/scenic vistas; potential groundwater contamination from septic systems; road congestion**

**Current Farmland Preservation Program based on tax credits is only temporary solution.**

**Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) is permanent, win-win solution, as having urbanites paying farmers for maintaining farmland will be cheapest way to conserve open space permanently.**

**County taxpayers should pass major bonds for PDR program to be administered by county Department of Land Conservation**

**#4**  
**LA CROSSE COUNTY**  
**“COMPACT”**  
**COMBINING**  
**ANTI-SPRAWL PLAN,**  
**UNIFIED ECONOMIC**  
**DEVELOPMENT**  
**PROGRAM,**  
**AND TAX BASE**  
**SHARING**

**FACT:**

**As 19<sup>th</sup> *local* government,  
La Crosse County  
has wide-ranging powers  
not found in many  
“little boxes” states.**

**County government should  
broker multi-year,  
intergovernmental compact  
with cities, villages, and  
towns covering**

**a. comprehensive,  
anti-sprawl land use plan  
(Lancaster County and  
Chester County, PA);**

**b. unified economic  
development  
(Montgomery County OH  
ED/GE program); and**

**c. tax base sharing  
(Twin Cities  
Fiscal Disparities Plan)**