

The role of the university in city planning: Cleveland's Lakefront Redevelopment Plan

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Introduction

We suggest in this paper that universities, through a broad definition of "education," can more completely fulfill their mission and more fully support the principles of democratic governance by playing a role in public decision-making processes. This paper describes how the Maxine Goodman Levin College of Urban Affairs at Cleveland State University adopted and implemented this broadened educational vision by developing a two-year process to encourage and inform public discussion about one of the key decisions facing the entire Northeast Ohio region in the 21st century: the future of Cleveland's lakefront and urban river valley. The university was responding to growing public concern that while many publicly and privately generated plans had been proposed for greater Cleveland's waterways and their adjacent lands, few opportunities had been offered for direct and meaningful public input to shape these important planning decisions.

We first provide a framework for understanding the urban university's role in civic planning processes and raise questions concerning its scope. Next, we use the case study of the Levin College Forum Program, which was created in 1999 to bring the university and community together to address the most pressing issues facing the Northeast Ohio community. Through the Forum Program, the university worked with a number of community partners to develop *Northeast Ohio's Waterways*, a series of public forums that facilitated interaction among local citizens, stakeholders, and decision makers. We also engaged decision makers in a dialogue about public input in planning decisions. We use the Ekistic Grid (*The Ekistic Index of Periodicals*, 2004) to summarize the type of knowledge we sought to convey in order to stimulate discourse in these forums. We then present the results of the initiative, assessed through a survey and interviews of participants, which asked them to reflect on the difference the Forum Program made. Finally, we discuss the lessons learned from our efforts to "push the envelope" of university involvement in the public planning process.

The university and public planning processes

The foundation of democratic governance is an educated and engaged citizenry. As James Madison, a founder of democratic government in the United States, said,

A popular Government, without popular information, or the means of acquiring it, is but a prologue to a farce or a tragedy, or perhaps both. Knowledge will forever govern ignorance: And a people who mean to be their own Governors, must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives (Letter to W.T. Barry, 1822, U.S. Congress 1865, p. 276).

If participation in public decision-making processes is valued as a vital part of a modern civil society, the end purpose and opportunities for such engagement are nonetheless problematic (BENEVISTE, 1989; DAY, 1997). As Boyer (1991), an educator concerned with the relationship between the university and society, noted: "Many argue that it is no longer possible to resolve complex public issues through the democratic process because citizens are not sufficiently informed to debate policy choices of consequence" (p. xv). These concerns would apply both to administrative and electoral processes (the latter beyond the scope of this paper).

In the last 30 years, administrative agencies at local, state, and federal levels in the United States have been encouraged through law and executive order to engage citizens in various stages of public decision-making processes. This engagement, ranging from public meetings for information dissemination to delegation of decision-making authority (ARNSTEIN, 1969), offers citizens an opportunity to contribute valuable information (BURKE, 1979; BARBER, 1981; RICH, 1986) and build political skills and power (ARNSTEIN, 1969; FISHER, 1993). The particular type of participation is usually a function of the objectives of the agency, the capacity of citizens for participation, and the level of commitment from both the agency staff and public (DAY, 1997; KELLOGG, 1998; KING, FELTEY and SUSEL, 1998; KWEIT & KWEIT, 1987). A well-designed and managed public participation process that is clear about the relationship of administrative decision making and democratic participation can achieve several goals:

- incorporate public values into decisions;
- improve the substantive quality of decisions;
- resolve conflict among competing interests;
- build trust in institutions;
- educate and inform the public; and,
- allow citizens to gain skills for political participation

(BEIERLE & CAYFORD, 2002; ETZIONI-HALEVY, 1993; PATEMAN, 1970). The potential for universities to support citizen participation in the public planning process is great. While the university is "without agency" (HOVEY, 2001) for making planning decisions, it can improve the level of planning literacy and help achieve goals of public participation by contributing to the information base available to citizens and decision makers. The university can and should reach beyond a one-way conveyance of the results of scholarly research to those outside the institution and beyond education of students in a formal classroom setting. We were guided by a model of more engaged interaction with

citizens and decision makers designed to discover and generate a shared knowledge base about planning issues and the function of planning in public decision making (FISHER, 1993).

We suggest that by working in partnership with public institutions "with agency" the university can enhance public planning processes through several roles – as

- an advocate for enhanced knowledge;
- an advocate for involving the public;
- a convener to encourage public dialogue; and,
- a repository of public memory.

● As an advocate for knowledge, the university can use its research and teaching to enhance the knowledge base for public decision making through university-generated research and analysis. Bringing knowledge to action can improve the quality of decisions when transferred in the context of a dialogue between actors outside the university, hopefully leading to a synthesis of new knowledge (FRIEDMAN, 1987).

● The university can also encourage better planning by supporting opportunities for the public voice to be heard in public processes. The university can help to educate citizens and decision makers about the value of planning itself and develop a "constituency" for informed and open planning (ZIEGLER, 1995). Here the university can engage the lead planning agency, thereby influencing the planning process in terms of the level and kind of public input.

● In cases where a public or private planning entity may be seen by the public as biased, or where it may be difficult for a public entity to bring competing interests to the table, the university can act as an impartial convener – impartial as an institution to the outcomes of the public planning process while an advocate for bringing a greater variety of participants and knowledge to bear on public problems. The university, without power and authority but with prestige and leverage (MAZEY, 1995) is often in a unique position to bring together stakeholders with decision makers who may have no history of working together (PERLMAN, 1995). The university can be a forum for the discussion of ideas, a "central ground for brokering and debating ideas" (CISNEROS, 1995, p. 8).

● Finally, the university can serve as a repository of ideas and their generation through public processes, ensuring a public memory that is accessible for future members of the university and the broader community. Preservation of a variety of ideas is at the core of the university's purpose (BOWEN and SCHWARTZ, 2004). Table 1 presents these possible roles of the university in public planning processes.

Table 1
University role in public planning process

Role of university	University activities	Relevance to public planning process
Advocate/facilitate enhanced knowledge for public decision-making processes	Disseminate results of research to decision makers and public through reports, web page, faculty publications	Data and analysis as input to public planning processes for decision makers and public
Advocate/facilitate enhanced role for public and build their capacity	Engage public in two-way information transfer by convening forums interactive workshops for public with university community and stakeholders	Bring public together to form improved knowledge base for planning
Convene dialogue among stakeholders engaged in planning process	Hold forums for decision makers and stakeholders in dialogue regarding public process; shape decision-making/planning process through partnership with public entity	Decision makers and stakeholders learn of each other's mandates and plans and work together
Archive record of public planning process and generation of shared knowledge base	Record all interactive session in written documentation; make audio and visual recordings of all presentations; make these available to the public via web pages and other mechanisms (CDs, reports, etc.)	Create a public memory of dialogue and information that can be accessed by those who could not attend events and for future researchers and citizens

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Waterfront development and planning in Cleveland

Cleveland is located on the southern shore of Lake Erie, the shallowest of the Laurentian Great Lakes system on the North American continent. The Great Lakes constitute the largest single body of freshwater on the planet (fig. 1), covering over 325,000 sq.km. Their basin is home to over 33 million people in the United States and Canada (HEATHCOTE, 2002). Over the past 95 years, numerous bi-national agreements and organizations have been developed to govern water quality and ecosystem management in the Great Lakes basin. These now guide two countries, eight states and two provinces in their efforts to regulate water withdrawals, investigate ecosystem conditions, and collaborate on improvement to water quality and ecosystem integrity. Decisions affecting land use in both the United States and Canada are vested at the local government level (KELLOGG, 1993).

Cleveland was founded in 1796 at the confluence of the Cuyahoga River and Lake Erie. Both the lakefront and river valley were developed for commercial and later industrial enterprise. During the mid- and late 19th century, railroad and port facilities dotted the shoreline, as Cleveland's steel, chemical and other heavy industries came to dominate (KEATING, KRUMHOLZ and WIELAND, 2002; ROSE, 1950). For example,

John D. Rockefeller founded his oil refining company, Standard Oil, on the banks of the Cuyahoga River in the late 19th century. The city's garbage was used as fill to extend the shoreline into Lake Erie, and upon this garbage was built the first lakefront road. From the late 19th through the early 20th centuries, the combination of railroad lines, city garbage dump and lakefront roads cut off the city's neighborhoods from the lake and destroyed natural areas (KELLOGG, 2002; ORTH, 1910). Significantly, the lakefront area was also an early location for several large public parks, the land for which had been donated to the City by prominent Cleveland industrialists (KEATING, KRUMHOLZ and WIELAND, 2002; KELLOGG, 2002).

Planning for Cleveland's waterfront has been, for the most part, piecemeal, narrowly focused, un-coordinated across jurisdictions, and driven by real estate and commercial interests in the city.

- The first land use plan for Cleveland's lakefront was sponsored by prominent business leaders as part of the "Group Plan" for civic buildings in Cleveland's downtown in 1903, designed by Daniel Burnham, a nationally prominent architect and planner.

- By 1927, the plan was revised to include plans for a municipal stadium, landscaped terraces, recreation and commercial piers, and a lakefront airport (the stadium, piers and airport were built later) (KEATING, KRUMHOLZ and WIELAND, 2002).

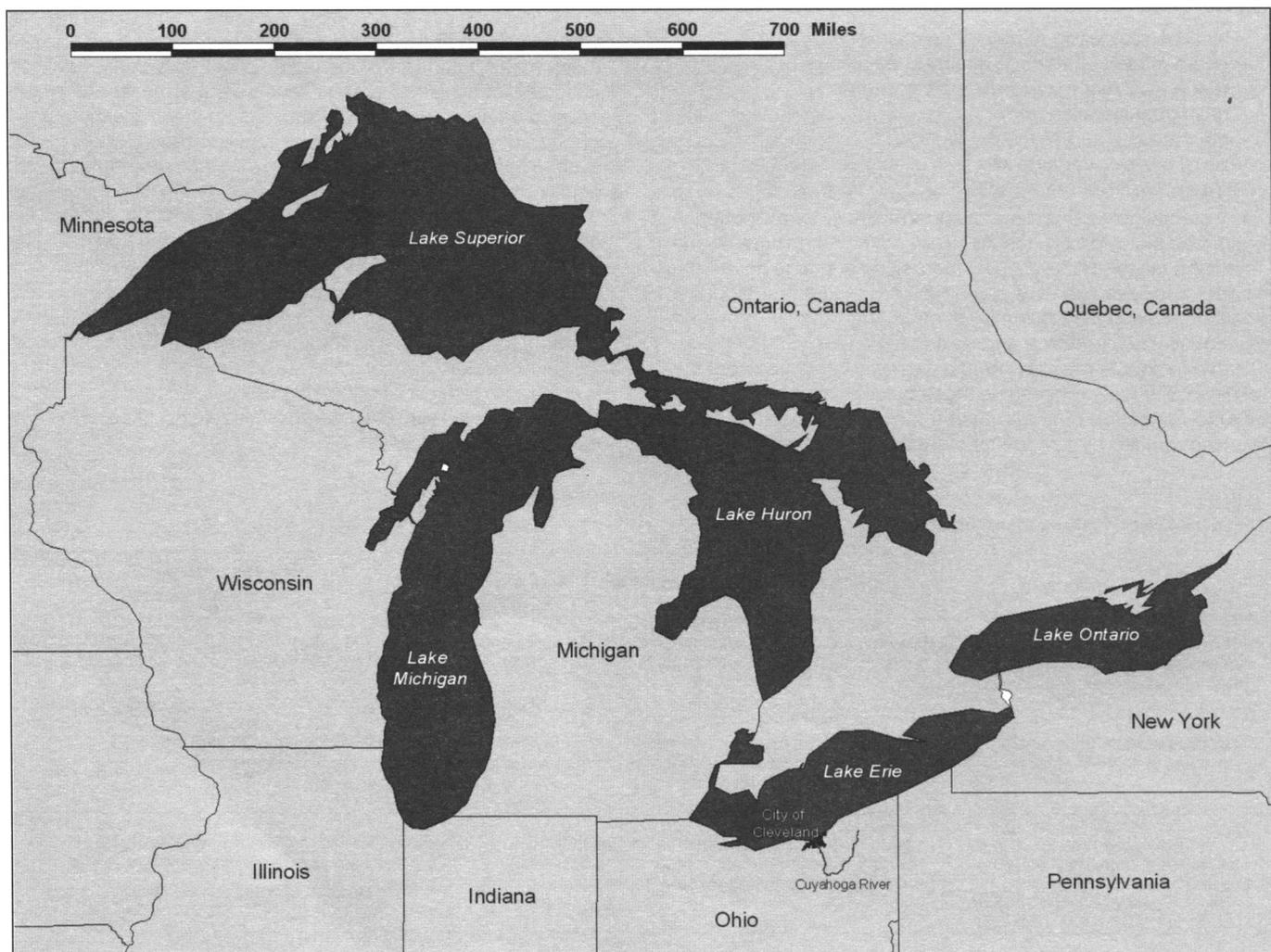


Fig. 1: The Great Lakes Region and the Cuyahoga River, Ohio.

- In 1937, the Regional Association of Cleveland, an organization that defined itself as a “a citizens non-profit organization concerned with the comprehensive physical planning of the Cleveland Region and the better housing of its people,” prepared a report on the *Lakefront of the Cleveland Region*. In the report, Ernest J. Bohn, one of Cleveland’s greatest visionaries and director of the Association, noted the lack of coordination that was endemic to the lakefront area:

There are at least 25 distinct proposals for these 18 miles of lakefront. The outstanding feature of all these plans is their lack of relation to each other, or to any comprehensive conception of the development of the Cleveland Region (BOHN, 1937).

- The City of Cleveland released its own lakefront plan in 1941, which emphasized construction of a “Cleveland Shoreway” and creation of a lakefront airport.

- By 1949, the City of Cleveland published its first comprehensive “general” plan, which also acknowledged the mixed nature of land uses along the lakefront, accommodating parkland, public and private marinas, public properties and the railroads, and a new lakefront expressway.

- Today, land use along the 29 km (18 miles) of greater Cleveland’s shoreline is still dominated by traffic arteries, industrial facilities, and other private land uses. Pedestrian and local access, lakefront parks and recreation and public land uses are secondary (CUYAHOGA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION, 2002). As the city struggles with the legacy of development decisions made over the past 100 years, new plans and projects are in motion that will shape land use and the quality of life of the city’s residents well into the future. An analysis completed in 2001 identified more than 20 local, regional, state, federal, nonprofit, and private plans in varying stages that would affect greater Cleveland’s waterways and open spaces. An estimated US\$2.1 billion in public dollars would be spent if all were implemented, along with millions of dollars in leveraged private investment (HEXTER, 2002).

Public reaction to the proposals was mixed, asking, “Who is proposing what and why?” The local newspaper’s architecture critic characterized the lakefront as the catalyst for the city to “wake itself from the highly limited vision ... to dream big dreams ... to inaugurate a true community planning process for downtown, the lakefront, [and] the river” (LITT, 2001). In a city with a newly elected mayor about to take office, there was optimism that a lakefront plan could be developed and implemented. The big question was whether the city’s public planning culture was mature enough to include a broad range of public input. The city always had, by and large, reacted to planning-oriented initiatives offered by the private sector – both for-profit and nonprofit. One outcome of this culture had been the inability of the city to identify and forge a shared vision of how the lakefront should be used.

The situation was ripe for involvement by the college. The mission of the urban university in Ohio¹ is to provide teaching, research, service, and outreach that is mutually reinforcing and is accomplished to bring benefits to the community through transfer of information and capacity-building resources. Since its founding in 1979, the college has been an advocate for and impartial convener of public discussion of issues confronting the city and the region (SWEET, HEXTER and BEACH, 1999). This role was institutionalized in the late 1990s by the creation of the Levin College Forum Program.

College engagement in lakefront planning

In light of the many proposals and plans for the lakefront and the concerns about the lack of public involvement in planning

issues, the Forum Program proposed an organized response across the teaching, research, and service missions of the college. The goal was to use the planning knowledge about the lakefront and riverfront among college faculty and staff to facilitate discussion among parties both inside and outside the university (PSOMOPOULOS, 1988; FOOKES, 2004). Our purpose was to foster a dialogue and deepen this knowledge across multiple disciplines, units of social and governance organizations, and territorial scales. As it evolved, the response consisted of four strategies:

- create an advisory committee of members both internal and external to the college to plan the Forum events;
- integrate a series of public programs with graduate planning classes that would focus on the lakefront and riverfront;
- create and deliver this series of Forum events to educate and involve the public well beyond simple dissemination of information;
- build a partnership between the Levin College and the City Planning Commission staff and director, who were the lead designers of the process.

The Advisory Committee

The college convened an advisory committee comprised of several planning faculty, professional staff, and representatives from many of the stakeholders and organizations proposing lakefront plans. These included a local newspaper, another local university, several nonprofit neighborhood development organizations, the State Department of Transportation, the Cleveland City Club (a televised public forum on issues of the day), the Cuyahoga County Planning Commission, and the Cuyahoga Valley National Park, which covers a major part of the Cuyahoga River Valley. These organizations tend to hold very different interests and be on opposite sides of many of the issues confronting the city and region. The advisory committee was key to generating an audience for the Forum Program and a broad base of information.

Planning classes and student education

Several members of the planning faculty agreed to integrate the themes of Cleveland’s waterways into courses and to provide incentives for students to participate in the Forum Program events, enhancing the teaching mission of the college. For example, a graduate environmental planning class conducted a study of a naturalizing area on the lakefront that was the subject of considerable controversy regarding its future use as either a public park and habitat area or a paved dock area for the port. Another graduate class developed plans for reuse of a peninsula in the Cuyahoga River directly adjacent to the downtown core. Students from the graduate planning and environmental studies programs also assisted during the Forum events described below, gaining first-hand knowledge about public issues, the role of citizens and stakeholders, and the public decision-making processes shaping the city’s future.

The Forum events

In February 2002, the Levin College Forum Program kicked off *Northeast Ohio’s Waterways*, a series of public events focused on planning. Figure 2 presents a timeline of the Forum events and their relationship to the city’s official public participation process. Several components comprised the Waterways series: the kick-off forum that introduced the “big picture” (including a comparison of the many plans and development proposals), a series of four issue forums on lakefront systems, a best-practices forum, an exhibit on the history of lakefront planning in Cleveland, and a Great Lakes Cities Conference that brought together academic researchers from across the Great Lakes basin.

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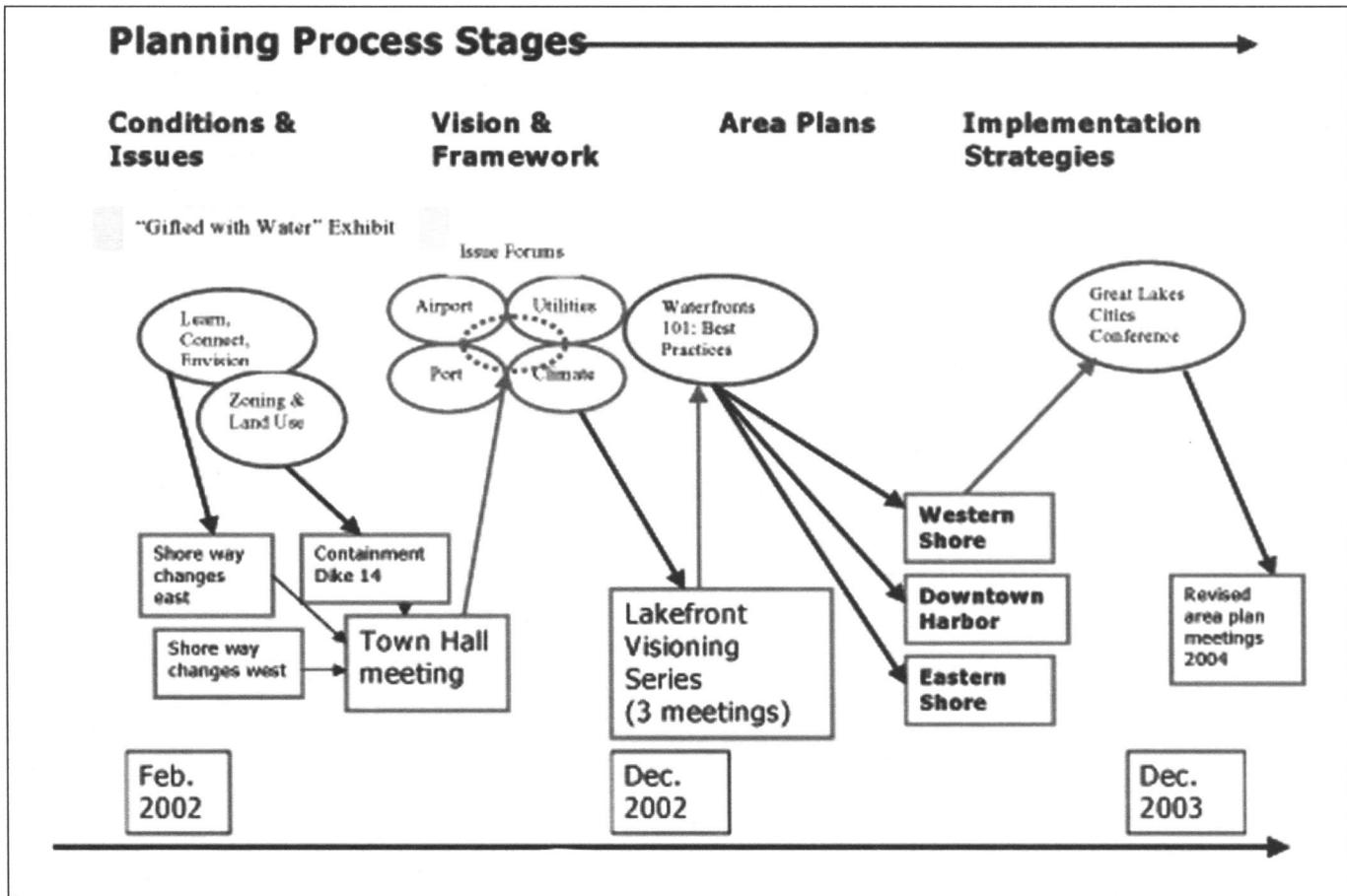


Fig. 2: College Forum and Public Consultation Process.

Elements \ Scale	Locality	Region	Globe
Nature	explore habitat restoration along the highly hardened waterfront edge.	connect the city planning process to improving water quality and ecological health of Lake Erie	connect the Cleveland Lakefront planning process to the Great Lakes region and other urban waterfronts
Anthropos	connect citizens on an individual, emotional level with the lake and river	encourage people to think of lake as a connection to a broader region	
Society	foster an understanding across the community about the need for collaborative, integrative planning and foster recognition of the regional asset constituted by the lake and river		connect the Cleveland Lakefront Plan to similar planning efforts for other urban waterfronts
Shells	identify best practices in housing construction, energy, changing land uses, and other aspects of sustainable development for urban waterfronts		
Networks	identify how the transportation, communication and present day urban structure could be modified to create a waterfront that offered increased public access points, restored habitat		
Synthesis	identify how the many plans that had been developed either support or contradicted one another across multiple aspects of the community (ecological, social, built form)	foster dialogue across stakeholder and decision-maker groups at regional and state scale	communicate Forum events, research and dialogue to greater public in archival format on Forum web page & through academic publishing

Fig. 3: Ekistic Grid for Cleveland Lakefront planning process: Knowledge goals for Forum programs.

The goal of this two-year series was to focus the emerging public discussion about Cleveland's lakefront (fig. 2) and connecting waterways on a vision for the future. We wanted to educate the public about significant planning initiatives (who was proposing what), create connections among the various plans and proposals, build capacity to participate more effectively in the city's public processes, and provide an opportunity for decision makers to explain their mandates, authority, and purposes. Whenever possible, the Forum events were designed not only to elicit opinions about the issues, but also to encourage dialogue-oriented to problem-solving that would provide input to any future planning decisions by the city. Figure 3 presents these broadly defined educational goals of the Forum events.

Over the many Forum events, opportunities were provided for interaction among stakeholders and citizens who would not interact under routine circumstances. Our underlying premise was that if this interaction occurred earlier in the public process rather than later, as was so often the case in Cleveland, public values could be identified early on, conflicts could be addressed, a minimum level of trust would be created, and the result would be, simply, a better plan. During the course of the Forum Waterways Series, more than 1,700 people attended eight events. Sessions focused on land use, transportation, ecological issues, utilities, the regional impact of the city, the nexus of the lakefront and the river, and the opportunities and constraints to remaking the waterfront. These events were attended by representatives from environmental regulatory agencies, planning agencies, the private development sector, non-profit organizations, faith-based organizations, students, citizens, and elected officials from across the region. Citizens had an opportunity to hear decision makers and stakeholder organizations, and decision makers and stakeholders heard from each other – some for the first time.

After the first event, the positive response from the community gave the university the credibility to have a seat at the table as the City began its own lakefront planning process, enabling us to secure additional community partners and begin to shape the dialogue about the lakefront and the river, all of which extended the role of the university from knowledge generation and dissemination to being a more active partner in framing the planning issues and the process. The university, through the Forum Program, joined other voices calling for an authentic city-sponsored public involvement in the lakefront planning process. At the first Waterways Forum, the newly-elected mayor announced that the City would begin a lakefront planning process and an update of its citywide plan, both of which would involve the public.

One month after the first Forum event, two local foundations agreed to fund development of a lakefront master plan by the City of Cleveland. Funds were to be used to pay for staff, consultants, public meetings, economic analysis, and engineering studies. The foundations requested that a new partnership be formed called the Lakefront Partners to oversee the lakefront plan. The partners consisted of the City of Cleveland, Cleveland Tomorrow (leaders in the business community), the Growth Association (the chamber of commerce), Cleveland Neighborhood Development Corporation (representing community development corporations and neighborhood groups), and Project BLUE (an ad hoc organization representing a coalition of citizen and environmental organizations).

College partnership with the Lakefront Partners

The creation of the Lakefront Partners prompted us to rethink our strategy for implementing the remaining components of the two-year Forum Waterways Series. Although the city was legal-

ly responsible for and was leading the planning process, the Lakefront Partners controlled the funding for planning and engineering studies. We had worked hard to engage civic leaders in an ongoing dialogue with the hope that this, in turn, would increase the transparency of public decision making and encourage them to use the knowledge generated at the university and other institutions to inform the planning process. We continued to advocate for a collaborative effort between the city and the university, for a process that would raise the level of public participation towards active involvement in problem solving. However, the city was now not our only partner. An issue that emerged from our discussions with the new partners was the "appropriate" role for the university in the planning process. All agreed that, as an educational institution, we had a role to play in informing the public debate and discussion, but did our role extend further? For example, would the university-based research that was part of our background work for the first Waterways Forum be helpful to the City? Could the university, with the extensive planning expertise of its faculty and professional staff, particularly in the area of public involvement, serve as a consultant to the Lakefront Partners in developing its plan? While city planners were supportive of an expanded consulting role for the university, the idea was rejected by the other Lakefront Partners. They were interested, however, in a continued educational role for the college and agreed to fund a series of four additional public forums on key lakefront land-use issues. The Lakefront Partners also provided funding to archive these Forum events. Archived material includes video recordings of each forum, speaker presentation material and handouts, a detailed written summary of the proceedings, a summary report intended for widespread public distribution, and a CD-ROM that includes a complete audio-video archive of the panel presentations, the full report, and the summary document (HEXTER, 2002).

Outcomes of the College role

The College was involved in a full spectrum of civic education activities in relation to planning for Cleveland's waterways. These activities ranged from the more traditional role of creating and disseminating research results to the more complex role of shaping decision making and the planning process through partnership with a public entity. For the university, the Forum Waterways Series and our subsequent work with the city and the other Lakefront Partners prepared us to undertake the more complex role of moving knowledge to action (FRIEDMANN, 1987). We worked in partnership with decision makers to jointly frame the agenda and public involvement process. The process was a classic example of university and community interaction in the urban university model, as described by Ruch and Trani (1995):

... [The] university plans and delivers programs and activities that contribute to the improvement of the urban environment in which it resides. Through its many interactions with the community, the metropolitan university seeks to contribute to and ultimately improve the quality of life in the metropolitan area while enhancing its primary mission of knowledge generation and dissemination. Three characteristics identify the particular nature of the interactions between the metropolitan university and its environment: interaction is mutually reinforcing – both the institution and the environment are richer for the participation; interaction is guided by institutional choice and strategy (mission driven); the university values and prizes the interactions, rewarding participants and building such interactions into the ongoing life of the institution (p. 232).

This process included all aspects of our mission: information dissemination (summaries of the sessions were posted on the Forum Program website), enhanced student learning (through classes and attendance at the Forum events), enhanced research and analysis brought to bear on public issues (the anal-

ysis of the plans and their proponents), and collaboration among stakeholders and decision makers (in planning the Forum events). Our students, faculty, and staff gained knowledge about the planning processes and the role of stakeholders through their participation in Forum events and their role in organizing the Forum Waterways Series and subsequent events. The collaboration between faculty and professional research staff is a model for the rest of the university.

The effect of the Forum Program on community knowledge and capacity

The overall effect of the Levin College Forum Program was to educate the community and inform the planning process through broad-based community dialogue. The college programs joined with others in the community to increase citizen awareness of waterfront planning issues, provided opportunities for citizens to articulate their vision of the waterfront, generated interest in the lakefront planning process, and offered opportunities for the public and decision makers to interact through presentations and workshop sessions. Our work enhanced the capacity of citizens to play a more active role in the planning process. The archived Forum events (<http://urban.csuohio.edu/forum/waterways/index.htm>) expanded the opportunities for citizens who missed the public events to learn about the planning issues and introduced the potential for creation of an electronically-based community dialogue about the city's future (CRANG, 2000).

The University's involvement in lakefront planning activities also helped shape the decision making and planning process through its partnership with the city. The mayor had committed to public involvement in the planning process, but the strategies for involving the public were honed in discussions between the Forum leadership and City Planning Commission staff. The college and the city agreed to incorporate the issue forums into the city's planning process, using college-organized events as transition points to initiate new phases of the city's planning process. This partnership gave the university the "agency" it inherently lacks. Bartelt suggests that creating genuine partnerships with organizations whose first interest is the community itself offers real opportunities for metropolitan universities to address a host of urban issues (BARTELT, 1995, p.15). This was certainly the case in Cleveland.

E-mail survey

In the spring of 2004, the Forum Program conducted a survey of citizens who had previously attended one or more Forum events in the past. The survey was conducted in order to gauge the public's perceptions about the Forum Program as well as its effectiveness in terms of raising awareness and encouraging involvement in civic issues. The survey was administered via electronic mail, using addresses that participants had supplied when attending a Forum event. Participants were sent an e-mail of the survey and asked to respond. Two weeks later the survey was sent again. Of the 1,189 questionnaires sent out, 92 responses were received, a response rate of 8 percent.

Most respondents were from Cuyahoga County, the metropolitan Cleveland area (including 27 residents of the city of Cleveland, 31 from the inner suburbs, and 17 from Cleveland's outer suburbs). One-third of the respondents had attended the initial Forum event, a forum on the future of the lakefront airport, or a forum on best practices for waterfront redevelopment from other cities in the United States and around the world. Most of the respondents had attended between one and three of the eight events, with nearly 20 attending four or more. Table 2 summarizes the survey responses. Of the 92 respondents, nearly 55 percent had subsequently attended between one and five of the city's public meetings about the lakefront.

Nearly half of the participants considered themselves to be

very well-informed about civic issues in general and were at the Forum events to become better educated on the lakefront issues. They also saw the Forum events as an opportunity to participate in the planning process.

They overwhelmingly stated their appreciation for the university's efforts to plan and present the lakefront issues to the citizens, with 96 percent agreeing that the educational forums were an appropriate activity for the University. However, only 38 respondents considered the college to be a "neutral" convener, with others concerned that the college was biased toward Cleveland and the inner ring of suburbs since that is where it is located.

A majority of respondents, 79 percent, thought it was "very important" that the city develop a plan for the lakefront. A slight majority of the respondents felt the Forum events changed their perspective on the city and its future, stating that the examples from other cities were valuable, particularly in the *Best Practices* Forum. Respondents said that attending the forums improved their outlook on city government and city planners and that they had learned about planning and lakefront issues. A considerable proportion (26 percent) of the respondents felt their perspective was not changed as a result of attending the forum events. There were concerns that the Forums would not influence the city, and that the city would not "take the risks necessary to try something new."

Stakeholder Interviews

In addition to the e-mail survey, the college also conducted telephone interviews with 14 key stakeholders in the community whose agencies or organizations would likely influence planning and implementation of lakefront redevelopment, including public planning agencies, journalists, private and nonprofit organizations. These individuals had participated in most of the Forum events. Of the 14 people interviewed, 9 had attended at least 5 Forum events.

Interviews were conducted during the spring of 2004 after the Waterways Series had concluded and the city had hosted three rounds of public meetings for its lakefront plan. Interviewees were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with a set of statements on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree) with the opportunity to state why or why not or in what way. Table 3 summarizes these responses.

● **The Levin College is a convener of community dialogue:** With an average rating of 8.25, the overwhelming majority of those interviewed agreed that the convening role is an appropriate and important role for the college. Many viewed the college as a neutral, non-threatening place where the community can speak freely, perceiving that the college does not have a political or programmatic agenda and therefore the information it provides is objective and honest. Respondents noted, "Universities are, by their very nature, a safe place for the community to exchange information." They applauded the way the Levin College organized the Forum Waterways Series, noting, "no one else is approaching these issues and no other university (in town) is doing this" and "the atrium (the location where all the forums are held) is the public square of planning discussion. [The Levin College] did a good job and the forums provided great discussion." Another noted of the college that "[T]his is what it should be doing. The forums are invaluable to the city. They provided a common baseline of information so everyone is now able to work off the same set of facts. The college proved it ... can be honest. No one questions the college's objectivity because every other entity has an agenda."

Only one interviewee voiced strong opposition to the college being a convener of community dialogue, stating that "institutions are in charge of community issues but only the elected officials have the power and duty to run those dialogues."

Table 2
Survey questions and responses

Questions and responses	no.	%
Live in Cuyahoga County (metropolitan Cleveland)	74	80
Attended 1-3 Forum events	72	78
Considered themselves "very well" informed on civic issues in general	43	47
Felt educational forums appropriate activity for College	88	96
Thought university a reliable source of information	88	96
Consider college a neutral convener for important community discussions	38	41
Though college Forum programs changed their perspective on city	47	51
Attended 1-5 city meetings on lakefront	55	60
Thought it was "very important" that the city develop plan for lakefront	79	86

Table 3
Stakeholder interviews: Results of Likert Scale² questions (1-10)

The Levin College	Mean
is a convener of community dialogue	8.25
is a resource for information on planning and economic issues	8.38
is a resource for civic education	8.35
should stick to educating students and stay out of civic issues	1.5

• **The Levin College is a resource for information on planning and economic issues:** There was a strong consensus (8.38) among stakeholders that the college is a resource for information on planning and economic issues. Even before the Forum Program was created, the college, its faculty, professional research staff, and students had a track record of conducting high-quality applied research and was looked to as a resource in the community on planning and economic issues. One respondent noted, "[I]t is definitely a resource. It is a major factor in the community of Cleveland." One respondent, however, commented on the lack of consistency or coordination in the research produced by faculty of the college: "The College has a good reputation in the nation and the region. It is a great resource to provide information on planning and economic issues. But, the planning and economic staffs within the College must collaborate on studies to get a balance. For example, a recent lakefront study [by someone at the college] suggests 10,000 people in Greater Cleveland would be willing to purchase housing on the lakefront – more housing on the lakefront would increase the city's tax base and can stimulate the economy. The main question should be, however, how does new housing on the lakefront diminish true public access for everyone to the lakefront?"

This is an interesting comment in that it seems to suggest that the university should have a unified message and that all university-based research should be coordinated. On the contrary, the purpose of the university in society is to preserve the variety of ideas (BOWEN and SCHWARTZ, n.d.). The Forum was created to give voice to the variety of ideas coming from the university as well as from the community and to generate just this type of discussion and debate.

One respondent suggested that the college could do a better job of marketing its resources, especially communicating information on which faculty or professional staff has particular expertise on issues. Another suggestion was that the College create a public memory of this process. (In fact, all information is recorded and archived in various media – print, digital, video, audio).

• **The Levin College is a resource for civic education:** As part of a larger university, the Levin College is viewed as the

place where the community goes to be educated (8.35). One respondent mentioned that, because the Forum events address urban issues, the college is teaching the next generation to advance the city. This respondent viewed the college as a place to work between disciplines such as planning and economics. Another respondent raised the issue of neutrality and cautioned that while it is appropriate for the Forum Program to seek to educate, it must always remain neutral and not try to set policy or even recommend it – certain individuals, if called upon, can offer opinions, but the university would be overstepping if it tried to persuade or make decisions regarding specific policy recommendations.

• **The Levin College should stick to educating students and stay out of civic issues:** The majority of stakeholders disagreed with this statement (1.5) and shared the view that "exposing students to civic issues is part of their education." One noted, "[T]he broader community needs to have an opportunity to participate in a dialogue. Who better to (provide this opportunity) than educators? The program is well-run and well-organized." Another added, "the college is not just for tuition-paying students – it is for the community as a whole."

What has been the impact of the Forum?

In an effort to assess the impact of the Forum Waterways Series, respondents were asked a set of open-ended questions regarding their perceptions of the college and the Forum Program. Three themes summarize their comments: opening up possibilities, broadening the base of participation, and valuing planning. These are explored further below.

Opening up possibilities

Nine respondents said that their perceptions about what was possible along the lakefront had changed as a result of the Forum events. As one noted, "detailed information on existing land use and infrastructure allowed the public to better understand the possibilities." Another added that the "factual information provided a common basis for the community to engage

in discussions about issues ... Now ... people have a common understanding from which to work." Others who were more informed about the lakefront from the start felt that the Forum events added some realism to the timeline and funding issues involved with lakefront planning. One noted a shift in tone at the city's meetings toward a more collaborative process since the Forum events were held and was impressed by the "city's willingness to change based on public input."

The majority of interviewees felt the Forums made a significant difference in raising awareness of key civic issues, including environmental issues, and that citizens would be better informed as a result of attending the Forum events. "The Forum was able to attract some new people because it was not the city putting on this program. It provided the community with a framework for what we are dealing with. The forums provided an opportunity for us to dream about all the possibilities." As one respondent commented, "more people became interested who may not have been otherwise. The city got requests for follow-up presentations and that created a web, which involves more and more people."

Broadening the base of participation

It is difficult to separate out the direct effects of the Forum events from the effects of the city's own public meetings, which were held in part at the same time. However, as one respondent noted, the benefit of the Forum events expanded the number of people involved: "There were two processes going on at the same time – the city's public planning process and these forums. The two were complementary and allowed for new people to be brought into the discussion. Those that may not have come to the city's meetings may have come to the forums and vice versa."

Valuing planning

In addition to educating the public about the lakefront planning process specifically, the Forum events were also intended to educate people about the value of planning in general. Greater Cleveland has not traditionally been a community that "valued" planning for the future. The majority of respondents felt the Forum events made a significant difference in terms of educating the community about planning issues. As one respondent noted, "the forums raised awareness of the complexity of planning." Another noted that "the Forum plants seeds and then those who attend can apply what they learn to other issues." Still another added, "There wouldn't be a sense of community (about the lakefront) without the forums."

Summary: Challenges and lessons

As an actor that helps define, articulate, and shape knowledge, the university's role can be critical in urban governance. Local authorities today have to collaborate with an ever-widening set of stakeholders and agencies, including organized business elites (BASSETT, GRIFFITHS and SMITH, 2002). Cleveland's history of waterfront development projects mirrors those in European and other North American cities where a large-scale transformation of the waterfront is proposed and carried out through "public-private" partnerships (LOGAN and MOLOTCH, 1987; SQUIRES, 1991). As we sought to become more actively engaged in this process, the challenge was to carry out the university's mission to educate citizens for democratic participation while at the same time drawing on the university's resources and expertise to inform and bring alternative conceptualizations of the city to the public discourse (HEALY, 2002). We remain convinced that such engagement is a key role for an urban university.

As the process evolved, our participation was not with the city

government alone, but with partners who are the key representatives of organized business elites and other stakeholders. This reality was brought to the forefront when the Lakefront Partners, which included the City Planning Commission, were funded to organize the planning process. In this way, the private sector maintains its strong influence on the public planning process in Cleveland.

One challenge in working with the Lakefront Partners related to who would set the agenda for the public participation and information exchange. We were working not with one partner but with four, and there was not agreement among the partners on many fundamental issues, including the role of the university in the planning process. In framing the agenda, the closer we came to the politics of planning, the greater the challenges. At the core of agenda-setting is the power to control information. In any planning process, knowledge is power. While the research and educational roles of the university were not challenged, there were times when the framing of the information communicated to the public and its dissemination was challenged.

The Lakefront Partners reluctantly agreed to provide funding for the four lakefront planning issue forums, acknowledging the college's unique educational role. But the story offers a good example of how the issue of information control played out. There was conceptual agreement on two important items: the topics for the issue forums would be drawn from comments elicited in the breakout sessions of the college's initial waterways forum and the city's lakefront planning public meetings, and the panelists had to possess expertise that was relevant to the themes of the issue forums. However, finalizing the four topics was a challenge as the other Lakefront Partners attempted to exclude issues, such as environmental quality and neighborhood equity, that they perceived as peripheral to their economic development goals. Similarly, once we had agreed on the topics, the politics of the planning effort became dominant. Every detail of each forum was subject to scrutiny, including selecting moderators and rejecting and substituting panelists, often at the last minute. It seemed to be an effort to control the information and message that would be brought to the public.

This provides a good lesson on the politics of planning. We had encouraged the city planners to broaden their scope and to integrate planning for the lakefront with the river and the area near the lake, as the proximity, changing economies, and transportation systems integrate them in function. Yet the mayor needed tangible accomplishments relatively quickly, and there was a sense that expanding the scope to include the river would further complicate what was already a complex planning process. The risk in such partnerships with public entities, particularly those that are somewhat captured by the private sector as we see in Cleveland, is that it might compromise the mission of the university as the steward of the variety of ideas and its obligation to bring this variety of ideas to the public through its outreach programs. The university must safeguard this aspect of its mission, while recognizing that partnerships generate processes that can be structured and facilitated, but the outcome cannot be controlled.

The challenge remaining for the city, the university and others committed to meaningful public involvement in the planning process is twofold.

- On the one hand, the private sector, which was used to controlling planning decisions, had to be convinced of the value of making the process more public.
- On the other hand, citizens, who have seen too many plans emerge fully developed from corporate boardrooms, had to be convinced that they could play a meaningful role in planning and had to be given the tools with which to do this.

It appears that progress was made on both of these fronts. For

the private sector, an early concern was the value of public meetings and the perceived risks of opening the process to public scrutiny and involvement. In the end, however, the Lakefront Partners (the business community representatives) helped sponsor the issue forums and their documentation. Our advocacy of an open planning process that involved the public was based on two rationales: it would result in a better plan (one that would reflect public priorities and values), and it ultimately was the *only* strategy that would lead to implementation.

The main source of tension between the perceived "public" interests and the "private" interests throughout Cleveland's lakefront planning process can be boiled down to one question: For whom are we planning the lakefront, the people who live here or tourists? We suspect that the Lakefront Partners at some point recognized that making Cleveland a better place for the people who live here by redeveloping the lakefront to create more recreational and open space would also make it attractive for tourists, conventions, and other revenue-generating activities. At the same time, the citizenry has embraced the new, more open planning and political culture fostered by the Forum Program and the mayor and the City Planning Commission. The public continues to turn out in record numbers for public forums.

The final lakefront plan was presented to the public in the fall of 2004. It is a comprehensive, long-term plan that connects Cleveland's neighborhoods with its lakefront and was developed with unprecedented public involvement. While not everyone is happy with every part of the plan, based on the high level of public involvement in the process we would expect to see a higher level of public support for and engagement with the implementation of the plan over the next decade than we have seen in the past. In an editorial, the *Plain Dealer* celebrated the high level of public involvement with the planning process, "Anyone whose voice hasn't been heard since Mayor Jane Campbell initiated the conversation in April 2002 hasn't tried to be heard ... And they (the city planning director and staff) listened. As this plan has evolved, the public's impact has been evident." (*The Plain Dealer*, editorial, "Finally, a plan," November 14, 2004).

We will remain engaged in the process to continue to build capacity among the public to be more effective advocates in the lakefront planning process in Cleveland. We fulfill our mission as an urban university in this way through efforts to foster more effective citizenship through participation in public decision-making processes. We will continue to provide opportunities for dialogue, convening stakeholders, decision makers and the public, and slowly but surely broadening the base of people who are knowledgeable about the planning process, who understand the issues, and who are well prepared to take the serious public and private actions that will bring about change.

Notes

1. Enacted by the Ohio General Assembly in 1979, the Ohio Urban University Program mobilizes the research, technical assistance, and outreach resources and expertise of Ohio's eight urban universities to enhance the vitality of Ohio and its metropolitan regions. This 25-year partnership with legislators, cities, and urban universities is unique to the state and nation.
2. The Likert Scale is commonly used in social science research on surveys and questionnaires. It is a rating scale measuring the strength of agreement, often on a five point scale, by the respondent with a clear statement. Thus a total numerical value can be calculated from all the responses. Typical scales include responses of "Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, Strongly Disagree" or "Very Important, Important, Moderately Important, Of Little Importance, Unimportant," etc. Many examples of the use of a Likert Scale can be found through a search "likert scale" on www.google.com or other search engines.

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