

New Webinar Series Tackles “Re-sizing Cities”

MSU Center for Community and Economic Development: Controversial topic is essential for current economic climate discussion

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For Immediate Release

LANSING, Mich. – Michigan State University’s Center for Community and Economic Development is hosting a series of webinars May 17-31, entitled “***Re-sizing Michigan Communities in a Just and Equitable Manner.***”

Many Michigan and Midwest communities are struggling to confront declining populations, double-digit unemployment rates, concentrated poverty, widespread vacant properties, and deteriorating infrastructures. As a result, local officials are faced with the significant challenge of devising plans that focus on providing essential services to largely dispersed and distressed populations. Meanwhile, drastic decreases in tax bases and investments in public infrastructure have resulted in escalating budget deficits and steep declines in public revenues leading to deep cuts in public expenditures.

Appropriate and effective methods of re-sizing, or shrinking, communities remain unclear. Residents, scholars, practitioners, and others have acknowledged that potentially discriminatory and unfair consequences may result from the right-sizing process. In order to begin the process of transformational change, community leaders must develop and adopt innovative strategies that effectively address these complex problems, which threaten the sustainability of communities and potentially undermine residents’ quality of life.

“Higher education has a unique role in our society to provide informed insight on what appear to be controversial ideas. Bringing together practitioners, community leaders, and scholars during these webinars will encourage a collaborative, and hopefully, a realistic process for change,” said Rex LaMore, Director of the Center.

Presenters during the webinar series include: Carol Coletta, CEOs for Cities; Angela Uttke, Department of Urban Design and Urban Development at the University of Technology, Berlin; Hunter Morrison, Youngstown State University; Flint Mayor Dayne Walling; and other notable leaders.



University Outreach and Engagement

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During the series, participants will investigate what is known about re-sizing from previous cases, informed practitioners, and scholars from around the world, and will carefully examine the social, economic and equity issues embedded in this process. One such example is described by Angela Uttke, professor at the Institute for City and Regional Planning at the University of Technology Berlin: “With reunification East Germany faced a population decline not seen before. After a long period of construction Germany is entering a time of reconstruction and urban renewal where changes have to be made without growth. The main task in East German communities is first to search for their unique vocation/talent in their building stock and in their people. And secondly to use the vocation to direct shrinking and redevelopment processes.”

Participants will learn the potential positive and negative impacts associated with re-sizing communities, and what actions might be taken to insure that re-sizing is done in a socially just and equitable manner.

The 2011 Annual Institute Webinar Series is offered May 17-31, Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3:00-5:00 p.m., and is free.

Pre-registration is available by sending name, e-mail, address, and company affiliation to CED@msu.edu.

Flyers are available, visit <http://www.ced.msu.edu/> for more information.

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The mission of the Michigan State University Center for Community and Economic Development is to advance MSU’s land-grant mission by creating, disseminating and applying knowledge to improve the quality of life in distressed communities.

Michigan State University has been advancing knowledge and transforming lives through innovative teaching, research and outreach for more than 150 years. MSU is known internationally as a major public university with global reach and extraordinary impact. Its 17 degree-granting colleges attract scholars worldwide who are interested in combining education with practical problem solving.