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Research Article

COPING WITH CONFLICTS IN VISIONS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND LIVABLE COMMUNITIES

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ABSTRACT
Twenty- first century land use planning faces both an opportunity and a threat. On the one hand, it is widely counted on and expected to deliver both sustainable development and livable communities. On the other hand, it must cope with serious conflicts in the values related to these two beguiling visions, which represent the big visionary ideas of contemporary urban planning. The future of land use planning may well depend on how it resolves these conflicts and creates settlement patterns that are both livable and sustainable. What is the nature of these conflicts? Can we construct a tool- a lensor filter- to help communities identify and understand them? Do today's popular planning approaches adequately uphold the values and resolve the conflicts? If not, what can land use planners do to remedy the situation? These are important questions for the future of land use planning if the resulting participatory processes, planning proposals, and urban places are to satisfy the needs and desires of present and future residents.

Keywords: *Livable Communities, Sustainable Development, Smart Growth*

INTRODUCTION
Value Conflicts in Sustainable Development
Land use planning in the U.S and abroad at the turn of this century is energized by the challenges of planning for sustainable development. At the same time it reaches out to incorporate new visions of livable communities, exemplified by two movements, New Urbanism and Smart Growth. Advocates of these three distinct but related normative visions (cousins from the same intellectual family) dominate contemporary planning discourse.

Today's planners are defining and testing the visions of sustainable development, New Urbanism, and Smart Growth and in the process are exposing and tackling their inherent tensions.

Like acrobats without a net, land use planners are working on the frontiers of sustainability and livability practice, without benefit of a profession- wide consensus on standards and methods. These are exciting times.

Sustainable development seeks to reconcile the conflicts among economic development, ecological preservation, and intergenerational equity, as reflected in the familiar definition from the report Our Common Future (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987): "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"(p:8). As its United Nations origin attests, sustainable development is a global vision, although it has been taken up by planners in the U.S. and other developed countries (Krizek and Power, 1996).

Its central value can be boiled down to a balance among the three "E"s: environment, economy, equity (Breke, 2002).

While this balance is beguiling in theory, efforts to manage the conflicts arising from the separate thrusts of environment, economy, and equity have often met with limited success, as noted by Ownes and Cowell (2002),

In practice land use lining proved to be one of the most important arenas in which conceptions of sustainable development are contested.

Here, more than anywhere else, it has become clear that trying to turn the broad consensual principles into policies, procedures, and decisions tends not to resolve conflicts, but to expose tensions inherent in the idea of sustainable development itself (p.28).

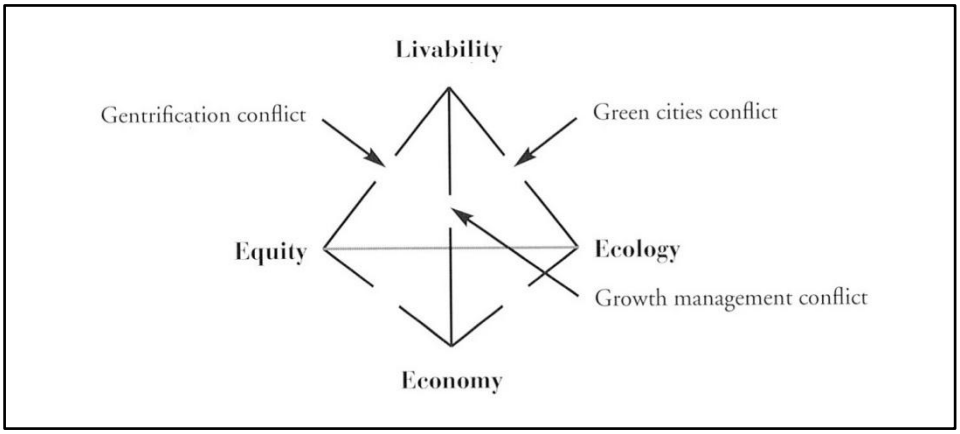

Figure 1: Conflicts among sustainable development values (adapted from Campbell, 1996)

The contradictions among the goals of sustainable development have been highlighted in a penetrating critique by Campbell (1996), who illustrated them as a triangle with a goal at each point and conflicts occurring along the axes as a result of contradictions between them (see Figure 1). The "property conflict" between economic growth and equitable sharing of opportunities arises from competing claims on uses of property as both a private resource and a public good. The "resource conflicts" between economic and ecological utility arises from competing claims on the consumption of natural resources and the preservation of their ability to reproduce, exemplified by the sustain yield concept. The "development conflict" between social equity and environmental preservation arises from competing needs to improve the lot of poor people through economic growth while protecting the environment through growth management. These three conflicts create discontinuities or gaps that block the integration of pairs of opposing goals.

Value Conflicts in Livable Communities

The vision of Livable communities constitutes a second important arena for land use planning. Although it does not come packaged in a single accepted definition, the vision of livability is espoused by a number of prominent advocates. Livability operates at the level of the everyday physical environment and focuses on place making (Bohl, 2002). Within the livability arena are both the two- dimensional conceptual aspects emphasized by sustainable development (economy, ecology, and equity) and the three-dimensional aspects of public space, movement systems, and building design. In other words, the livability vision expands the sustainability mix to include land use design aspects, ranging down to the micro scale of the block, street, and building, as well as up to the macro scale of the city, metropolis, and region. Two main, sometimes competing, approaches fall under the livability concept: New Urbanism and Smart Growth.

New Urbanism is an urban design movement committed to reestablishing the relationship between the art of building and the making of community, through citizen based participatory planning and design. Six architects incorporated the movement as a nonprofit organization the Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU) to address the social and economic implications of design decisions. Its members adopted a charter in 1996 (Leccese and McCormick, 2000), which states:

We stand for the restoration of existing urban centers and towns within coherent metropolitan regions, the reconfiguration of sprawling suburbs into communities of real neighborhoods and diverse districts, the conservation of natural environments, and the preservation of our built legacy. We recognize that physical solutions by themselves will not solve social and economic vitality, community stability, and environmental health be sustained without a coherent and supportive physical frame work (p.v).

The charter of the New Urbanism lays out 27 principles for three scales of development (Calthorpe and Fulton, 2015): (1) region, metropolis, city, and town; (2) neighborhood, district and corridor: and (3) block, street, and building. For example, the charter states that communities should be designed for the pedestrian and for public transit as well as the car; that cities and towns should be shaped by physically

defined and universally accessible public spaces and community institutions; and that urban places should be framed by architecture and landscape design that celebrate local history, climate, ecology and building practice. While CNU members include public officials as well as designers, its charter is basically a design manifesto. As Calthorpe and Fulton (2001) state in their argument against sprawl, "The issue is not density, but design, the quality of place, its scale, mix, and connections" (p.274).
Others bluntly place some of the blame sprawl on the planning profession. For example, Duany and Talen (2002) state, "Planning rigidly regulates out good (sustainable) urban form in its implementation devices-the separation and spatial scattering of land uses that is endemic to the vast majority of zoning ordinances and subdivision regulations imposed throughout the U.S." (p.246).

Cities of New Urbanism have charged that is Charter masks some important internal value conflicts. Beatley and Manning (1997) note that "the New Urbanism is not particularly urban" (p.21) and that most of its projects are located in suburban or exurban areas where they do not address land use and development patterns within their larger municipalities and regions.

They also state that "the New Urbanism is not strongly environmental in orientation" (p.21), and that most of its project are not designed to reduce the ecological footprint or environmental impact of the development, leaving environmental sustainability as at best an afterthought and at worst a marketing ploy.

Smart Growth, is a sister movement, is rooted more broadly in urban planning and public policy principles, though it also includes some urban design principles. This movement evolved from statewide growth management initiatives and drew its name from legislation and programs developed by the state of Maryland, including its 1997 Smart Growth Areas Act (Godshalk, 2000).

While Smart Growth's central concern has been to reform state growth management legislation (Meck, 2002; Salkin, 1999), its concepts have also influenced local plans and been endorsed in the policy statements of professional and business interest groups, such as the American Planning Association, the National Association of Homebuilders, and the Urban Land Institute. Its tenets are promoted by the Smart Growth Network and Sustainable Communities Network.

Definition of Smart Growth consists of desired types of planning and regulatory processes, as well as urban form outcomes. As Avin and Holden (2000) have shown, there is considerable overlap among the definitions espoused by various interest groups, although each one tends to highlight characteristics of most concern to its members. For example, planners seek compact urban patterns, revitalization, infill development, and less automobile dependence. Homebuilders want to avoid a shortage of developable land, unfair development costs, and limits to providing housing types desired by homebuyers.

Smart Growth's value conflicts arise from the various ways that is defined. Development- oriented interest groups emphasize procedures and incentives such as expedited project reviews, flexible design standards, and density bonuses that facilitate development for their market- oriented constituents. Environmental groups define Smart Growth primarily in terms of air and water quality, resource preservation, open space protection, green prints, environmental justice, and the like. Planners and public officials define Smart Growth in terms of its cost savings in providing infrastructure to compact cities and its opportunities for revitalizing older urban areas.

Because Smart Growth is an umbrella term, its meaning tend to be in the eye of the beholder. Thus, there may be as many internal conflicts as there are beholders, unless the various stakeholders agree on a definition, priorities, and implementation strategies.

Even so, the visions of New Urbanism and Smart Growth included under livability tend to have fewer internal conflicts than the sustainability vision, since the former are defined as unitary sets of characteristics rather than the integration of opposing value streams (as in Hawken *et al.*, 1999). However, as we shall see by assessing them together, despite some serious conflicts with the values of sustainability. To understand these tensions, we need a conceptual framework or tool that enables us to assess interactions of the sustainability and livability values at the same time.

Constructing a Sustainability/ Livability Prism

If you agree that sustainable development's three F,s alone are not sufficient to guide best practices in contemporary land use planning without considering livable community values, then we need a new way of considering the interactions among the various values. By adding livability to the sustainable development triangle, we can create a three- dimensional figure- the sustainability/ livability prism (see figure 2). The points of the prism represent the primary values of equity, economy, ecology, and livability.

The connecting axes represent interaction of the four primary values. At the prism's heart lies the elusive, perhaps utopian, perfectly realized sustainable and livable urban area. Not only does the prism remind us that land use planning must deal with a three- dimensional spatial world, it also offers a structure for identifying and dealing with value conflicts inherent in the different visions, which result in a gap on each axis.

In addition to the development, resource, and property conflicts shown in Figure I, value conflicts between livability and sustainability visions arise on each new axis of the prism. Tensions between livability and economic growth result in the "growth management conflict," which arises from competing beliefs in the extent to which unmanaged development, beholden only to market principles, can provide high- quality living environments.

This is the debate over the content of and avenues toward the American Dream (Ewing, 1997; Gordon and Richardson, 1997). Tensions between livability and ecology result in the "green cities conflict," which arises from competing beliefs in the primacy of the natural versus the built environment (see Duany *et al.*, 2000; versus Beatley, 2000; Beatley and Manning, 1997).

Tensions between livability and equity result in the "gentrification conflict," which arises from competing beliefs in preservation of poorer urban neighborhoods for the benefit of their present populations versus their redevelopment and upgrading in order to attract middle- and upper- class populations back to central city (Smith, 1996; Bragado *et al.*, 2001).

Looking at sustainability, New Urbanism, and Smart Growth through the prism reveals that none of them responds to all four goals or attempts to resolve all six of the value conflicts to the same degree. While there is considerable variety in the plans produced under each of the three approaches, we can infer some central tendencies from the published descriptions and critiques (see Table I).

Sustainable development values appear high for ecology, economy, and equity, but tend to be more focused on ecology and on resolving the resource conflict between economy and ecology (see Figure I).

New Urbanism's highest value appears to be livability, with a focus on resolving the growth management conflict. Smart Growth's highest value also is livability, though it focuses on resolving both the growth management and the green cities conflicts (see Figure 2).

While the differences in values tend to be matters of degree rather than absolutes, they do influence planning and development values and the ensuring politics.

For example, all of the approaches oppose sprawl, the common enemy, but they call for different planning responses to it. Thus, sustainable development tends to see the environment as most threatened by sprawl resulting from economic growth and therefore most in need of governmental intervention to protect ecological systems.

New Urbanism argues that attractive spaces for everyday life are the best defense against sprawl and that the remaining values will fall in line once a compact urban form and attractive public spaces are created through urban design.

Finally, Smart Growth advocates combating sprawl through a restructuring of growth management legislation that reforms the decision- making processes of state and local governments to guide choices on plan making, public facilities and infrastructure provision, and land development regulation.

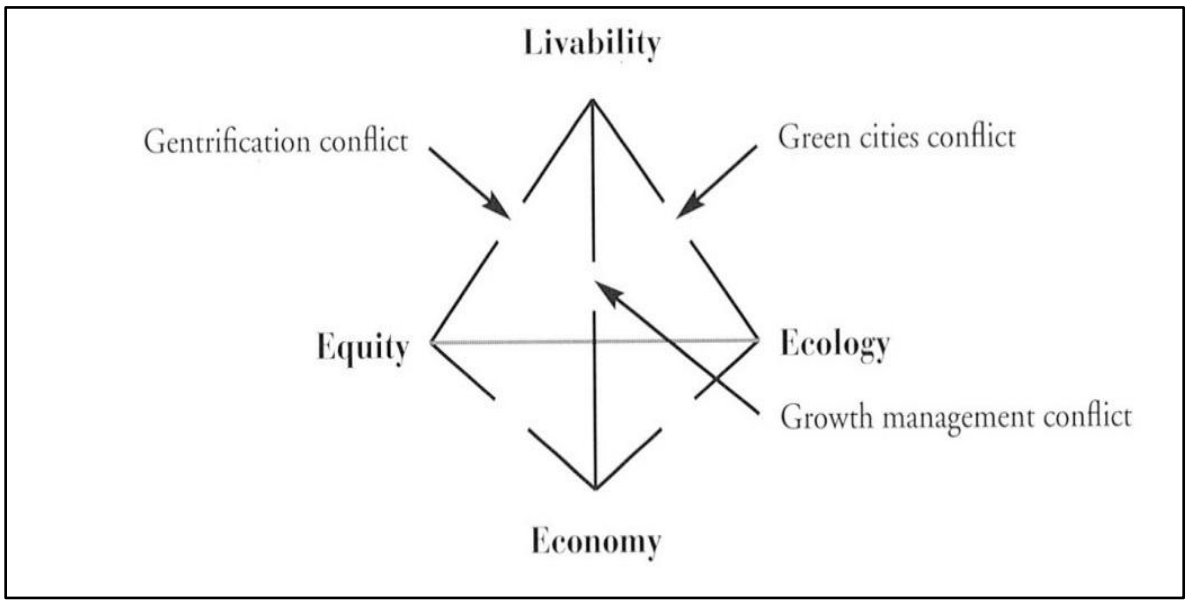

Figure 2: The sustainability/ livability prism: Value conflicts and gaps.

Scale is a critical factor in assessing these value conflicts. Seen through the prism, regional scale issues are quite different from similar scale issues at the neighborhood scale. For example, the gentrification conflict at the regional scale is a matter of wealthy suburbs excluding versus admitting poorer households, while at the neighborhood scale the gentrification issue is a matter of maintaining small areas of lower-income households within the city versus redeveloping and up scaling them for higher- income households. As the scale changes, the planning tools change.

For example, public participation processes at the regional scale are more defuse than those at the city and neighborhood scales. And regional land and infrastructure planning must turn to negotiation to contend with multijurisdictional decision- making structures. As effective way to manage the scale aspects of these value conflicts is to prepare plans at each relevant scale, coordinating them with each other but designing them to stand alone as well. It is possible to think of the interdependent patterns of relationships among people, plans, and places as ecology of plans. 4 within such an ecology are the inputs to planning (community values), the planning process (plan making), and the land use pattern outcomes (sustainable and livable places).On the input side, the values for planning are derived from interactions whit citizens and interest groups who translate popular visions into situation specific wants and needs.

In the center, the land use planning program prepares plans and development management programs at the area-wide, community, and small-area scales, creating a sequence of plans and implementation devices that build on each other over time while reflection the different needs of larger and smaller geographic and demographic aggregations.

On the outcome side are sustainable and livable places that reflect a balance among environmental, economic, equity, and livability values.

Applying the Prism to Denver's Planning Ecology

The case of Denver, Colorado, illustrates viewing ecology of plans through the sustainability/livability prism. Rather than creating a single comprehensive plan, Denver area planners have prepared a coordinated set of plans ranging from the small-area or project scale to the city scale to the regional scale. Taken, these constitute ecology of plans, each with a functional purpose that is related to, and dependent on, the other plans.

The plans encompass a mix of sustainable development, new urbanism, and smart growth principles. As adopted over time, the sum of the Denver area's planning efforts is an integrated framework of regional, city, and small-area plans for land use, economic development, housing, transportation, and the environment (see figure 3).

Denver's City Center

Planning visions	Primary values	Secondary values	Primary conflicts addressed
Sustainable development	Ecology Economy	Equity	Resource conflict
Livable communities			
New Urbanism	Livability	Economy	Growth management conflict
Smart Growth	Livability	Ecology Economy	Green cities conflict Growth management conflict

Table 1: Values and conflicts addressed by sustainable development, New Urbanism, and Smart Growth

Strategies for Three Levels

Regional Level Two initiatives comprise regional level planning by the Denver regional council of governments (DRCOG): the metro vision 2020 plan (DRCOG, 2000a) and the mile high compact (DRCOG, 2000b). Metro vision 2020, adopted in 1997, is the long-range regional strategy for guiding local growth decisions. It includes six elements: a regional urban growth boundary surrounding 747 square miles in 9 counties and 50 cities; mixed-use, high-density urban centers that support transit, housing, and jobs within the urban growth area; free- standing communities; a balanced, multimodal transportation system; open-space lands outside the urban growth area to serve as community separators, views, parks, and habitats; and water quality and floodplain conservation within the urban growth area, along with open-apace networks.

The mile high compact was established in 2000 as a voluntary regional growth control agreement in which participating local governments must create comprehensive plans that align with the core elements of the metro vision 2020 plan.

Under state statutes on intergovernmental agreements, local governments that sign the agreement and do not abide by the core elements can be sued by neighboring jurisdictions. Participating counties and cities comprise nearly 80% of the region's population. However, three of the fastest growing counties declined to sign due to fears about the effect of the compact on private property rights.

City Level. Two plans operate at city level: the Denver comprehensive plan (City and county of Denver, 2000) and blueprint Denver (City and county of Denver, 2002). The Denver comprehensive plan, adopted in 2000, recognized the need to "manage growth and change through effective land use policies to sustain Denver's high quality of life" (p.1). The plan includes four core sustain-ability goals: economic opportunity, environmental stewardship of valued natural resources, equity in opportunity for high quality of life, and engagement to build collaborative partnerships.

It sees traffic congestion and air pollution due to unbridled sprawl as the main threats to Denver's high quality of life.

It recommends of an integrated land use and transportation plan and revision of the city's 50-year-old conventional zoning ordinance.

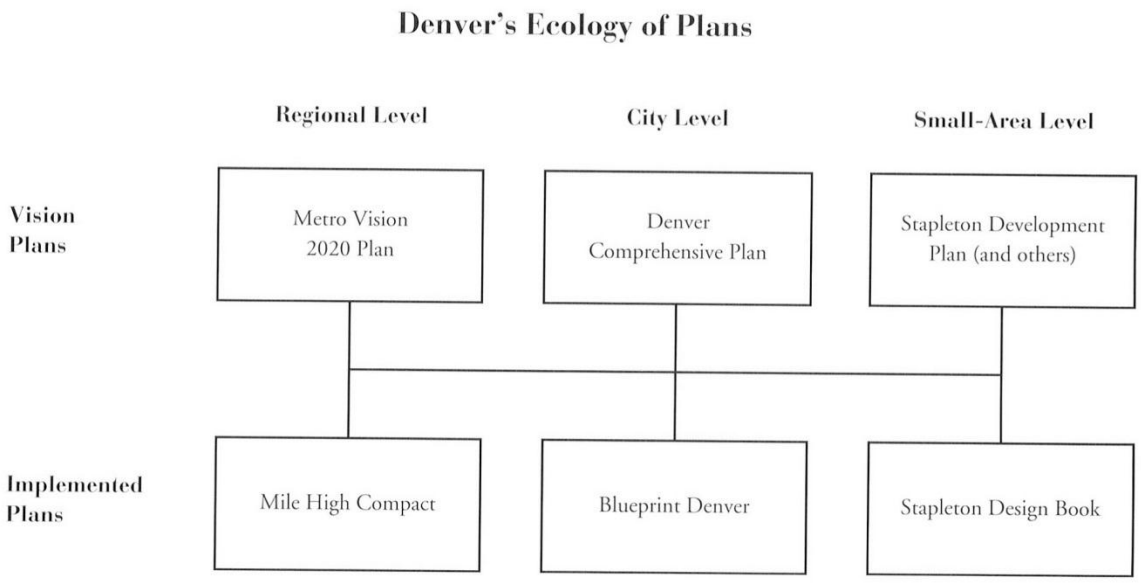

Figure 3: An Illustrative ecology of plans for the Denver metropolitan region.

Figuer 4: Denver's city center

Blueprint Denver, adopted in 2002, specifies a process for revising and streamlining out-of- date zoning regulation. The plan divides the city into "areas of stability" (established residential neighborhoods) and "areas of change" (vacant and deteriorated infill sites). Stable areas will be processed, while projected growth of 132000 residents by 2025 will be directed to areas of change. Future development is too coordinated with Denver's growing light rail transit system. Although Denver does not control transit,

which is managed by the Regional Transportation District, it has created a new Transit Mixed Use zoning category for transit- oriented developments.

Small- Area Level. Three types of small- area plans were created to implement regional and city plans: district, corridor, and neighborhood. For example, the Stapleton Development Plan (Stapleton Redevelopment Foundation, 1995) for the abandoned Stapleton International Airport site in Denver is a district plan to support 30000 jobs and 25000 residents over a 30 year period. The plan conforms closely to New Urbanism design principles with the goal of "integrating jobs, environment, and community" (p.I). The Stapleton Design Book (forest City Stapleton Inc., 2000) requires builders to work in a variety of historic styles based on detailed standards for New Urban developments, down to the street, block, and building level. Another good example is the district plan for the redevelopment of the 1866- acre Lowry Air Force Base, home to 40000 residents, 7000 jobs, 6 schools, and a park system (Leceese and McCormick, 2003). Other small- area plans of various types could also be cited.

Varying Levels of Success in Resolving Conflicts

To what extend do the Denver- area plans satisfy the sustainability/ livability ideals? Even without conducting a full case study, we can illustrate the usefulness of the prism in assessing responsiveness to the three sustainability conflicts.

Growth Management Conflicts. Denver appears to be better at resolving the growth management conflict at the city and small- area scales than at the regional scale. By designing citywide areas of stability and areas of change, Denver has provided the development market with information about where growth will be welcomed and where it will be restrained. Through its proposals for transportation building blocks that include designing streets not only for cars, pedestrians, public transit, and bicyclists, but also relating streets to adjacent land use types (e.g., residential collectors) and designing locations of transit- oriented developments, Blueprint Denver has provided strong transportation and land use guidance to developers. By entering into a public/ private partnership for the Stapleton project, Denver has negotiated clear terms for the construction of a major new- town- in town (Perloff, 1973) aimed at inner- city modernization and revitalization. But at the regional level, growth management in the Denver area is limited by the reluctance of three local governments to formally surrender some of their land use authority to the Mile High Compact, even though Council of Government officials assert that these governments are essentially conforming with the established urban growth boundary (W. Johnston, personal communication, July 25, 2003). Efforts to provide compact regional growth also are thwarted by a new circumferential highway (C-470 and its extensions) that opens large areas of outlying land to development.

Green Cities Conflict. In some terms of the green cities conflict, Denver again appears to have been most effective in protecting its natural systems at the city and small- area scales. At the city scale, Denver maintains a large parks system, has converted the Rocky Mountain Arsenal to a National Wildlife Area, and is seeking to create a wildlife refuge at the Rocky Flats plutonium plant. At Stapleton, more than one third of the site will be managed for parks, recreation, and open space, and original high plains land spaces will be reintroduced. As a regional employment center, Stapleton will encourage "green" business seeking to reduce consumption of natural resources. But sprawl remains a regional problem, where only 6% of the region's 5076 square miles is in locally protected open space (although an additional 20% of the area is in state and federal lands). Three large central counties have not signed onto the Mile High Compact, and coordination of regional land use and highway planning is relatively weak.

Gentrification Conflict. Denver city and small- area plans employ a number of strategies to deal with the gentrification conflict as Denver seeks to accommodate 132000 residents through infill development by 2025. Many of the city's large downtown infill projects, such as the Central Pelatte Valley, Lower Downtown, Riverfront Park, and Prospect Place Village, are on previously nonresidential lands, within designated areas of change. Another is a new transit village on the site of the Gates Rubber Plant South of downtown on interstate 25 and between two public transit lines. Thus these infill projects do not appear to displace large numbers of poorer residents. Stapleton, at 47000 acres one of the larger urban infill projects in the nation, is on a former airport site. To meet the affordable housing need, Stapleton will provide 20% of its 4000 rental apartments to residents earning 60% or below of the area median income. Big

challenges remain. Denver has not yet solved the regional coordination problem. The State of Colorado hasNot provided supporting growth management legislation; a statewide growth management amendment to the constitution was defeated in November 2000. Social equity applications are largely limited to provisions for citizen participation and affordable housing.

Water supply also remains a major sustainability issue. But there heartening progress on many important fronts, and the growth management, green cities, and gentrification conflicts are recognized, if not fully resolved, in Denver's ecology of plans.

Final Thoughts

To return to the questions that I posed at the start I believe that we can identify several critical value conflicts inherent in the big ideas of contemporary land use planning, and we can conclude that none of the major planning approaches deals with all of them adequately. Despite the claims of some new urbanism advocates, some smart growth advocates and some sustainable development advocates that their system alone is the ultimate answer, it is clear that planning must encompass a more comprehensive set of concerns than any one of these approaches provides. However, we can apply a conceptual tool the sustainability livability prism to assess the conflicts and locate the gaps at various scales within each metropolitan area's planning ecology. And once identified, we can selectively pick elements from sustainable communities, new urbanism, and smart growth approaches to fill the gaps, as Denver has done. The beauty of the sustainability livability prism is that it subsumes the strengths of each approach, at the same time that it reminds us that implementing metropolitan development plans requires continuous conflict resolution and consensus building to maintain the problematic relationships within the ecology of plans. Kaiser and Godschalk (1995) highlighted in our earlier JAPA article on the stalwart family tree of 20^{th}-century land use planning, the field evolved away from its earliest roots in design during the last century and moved toward a focus on policy and planning. Now the pendulum is swinging back: Design is once again a central source of land use planning visions and concepts. Despite the new conflicts introduced by more ambitious of visions of sustainability and livability, I believe that durable land use family tree will accommodate the new challenges and in the process will enrich our understanding of equitable place making, motivate more citizens to participate in the planning process, and lead to more livable and sustainable communities. I am optimistic that resourceful land use planners will find creative ways to cope with the conflicts underlying these heightened expectations.

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