Name: Elizabeth Reaves

Department: Community Development and Applied Economics

Advisor: Jane Kolondinsky

Email: ereaves@uvm.edu

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Title: Community-based participation and the development of smart growth indicators: A case study of four Vermont towns

The mechanical tools for reshaping the growth patterns of America's cities, towns, and villages lie firmly in the hands of city and regional planners and local governments. Land use decisions may have long-term unknown positive or negative externalities on community quality of life. Policy makers need to be able to better quantify mange and recognize interactions in a complex community system?

One way to address this issue is through the use of indicator systems. Indicator systems can serve as a valuable knowledge management tool to help measure and facilitate progress towards a more integrated and informed approach to planning; capturing a broad range of social, economic, and environmental goals.

Until recently, indicator use has been viewed as having little relevance and few benefits to end users (Innes and Booher 2000)due in part to a lack of community participation in indicator. The indicator community has identified that there is a need for a hybrid approach to indicator use that is both expert-led and community driven. This presentation will examine a hybrid indicator collection process developed to measure the health of Vermont's downtowns. It will outline the role that community participation plays in effective indicator use and expand on the role that indicators can play in informing greater community understanding of smart growth planning and as a tool for both community goal setting and for generating new knowledge and understanding about the system being measured.

Innes, J. E. and D. E. Booher (2000). "Indicators for Sustainable Communities: A Strategy Building on Complexity Theory and Distributed Intelligence." Planning Theory & Practice **1**(2): 173-186.