



PM MAGAZINE

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Smart Growth: The Opportunity for Managers to Lead

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Rick Cole, Ventura, California.

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The December 2007 issue of PM magazine will continue the special section on swimming pools that are owned and operated by local governments.

If you serve in a community that provides a public pool for its citizens and your community pool has not already been featured in the magazine—or if the pool has been updated since it was featured—and if the pool is distinctive in style, structure, operation, location, cost, or other management aspect, share this information in PM.

Send a 250- to 500-word description of why your pool is distinctive to PM Editor, ICMA, 777 N. Capitol Street, N.E., Suite 500, Washington, D.C. 20002-4201; e-mail is preferred, at bpayne@icma.org. Electronic photo files in high-resolution PDF format are welcome. The deadline for submitting article copy is September 14, 2007.

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PM MAGAZINE

COVER STORY

Smart Growth: The Opportunity for Managers to Lead

by Rick Cole

We are living at a time of cataclysmic global change. For the first time in human history, a majority of the world's people now live in cities. America passed that same milestone a century ago, during a time of tumultuous urban change that gave birth to the local government management profession.

Local managers in America today don't directly confront the profound economic, political, and environmental challenges of cities like Nairobi, Jakarta, Shanghai, or Baghdad. But our generation's legacy will be the model we set for the rest of the planet.

For the global population to live the way we do in the United States, for example, the world would have to produce 500 percent more energy. The world would have to add another two billion cars to the billion already on the road for the rest of humanity to get around the way we do. The world would have to plan and build another Atlanta metro area from scratch every month of every year for developing nations to use land the way we do.

When Herbert Stein was chair of the Council of Economic Advisers, he pointed out the inescapable: "Things that are unsustainable always come to a stop."

The Implications

How we manage our communities can no longer be measured in strictly local terms. How we grow in and around Seattle or Virginia Beach or El Paso affects more than the quality of life of local residents. It influences more than just the bottom line for local economies. It has implications beyond the environmental impacts on local watersheds. Our decisions shape the future of the human race at a time when the population of the world's cities is increasing by more than 150,000 people every single day.

So what are Americans doing about the way we live? The critique of suburban sprawl is as familiar to us as traffic jams and high gas prices. The spread of placeless sprawl, the disinvestment in central cities, increasing separation by race and income, environmental deterioration, loss of farmland and wilderness, and the erosion of society's built heritage are called "one interrelated community-building challenge" in the preamble of the charter of the New Urbanism (www.cnu.org/charter). Public officials, planners, architects, environmentalists, developers, public health professionals, and advocates for urban vitality are increasingly embracing smart growth.

There are also powerful countervailing forces. Free market and property rights advocates condemn smart growth as government interference in the marketplace. Many local residents resist such elements of smart growth as mixing land uses, building transit, increasing densities, or changing conventional zoning codes.

As managers, we should be at the center of the smart growth debate. But not as political advocates, which is antithetical to all our professional instincts and ethics; instead, we have the opportunity to live up to what the ICMA Code of Ethics calls our "deep sense of social responsibility" by embracing the opportunity to be community builders.

If we were simply managers charged with overseeing day-to-day operations of local services, we could defer to elected policymakers to chart the future evolution of America's communities. We could cede responsibility to implement their plans and policies to our planners and community development professionals. But managers have always had a higher calling, forged from the urban

Ventura Commits to Smart Growth
Like most California coastal communities, Ventura (population 106,000) has struggled with a variety of opinions among its citizens about the subject of growth. In 1998, the city council launched a citizen-driven vision process that culminated in 2000 in a consensus around a 10-point strategic vision. The council then directed that

crisis that created our profession.

In the early days of our profession, communities led the world in industrial production and dynamic innovation, but they were also chaotic, corrupt, and unhealthy. Lincoln Steffens's book, *The Shame of the Cities*, shocked the nation and opened the door to professional managers applying what the ICMA code calls "a constructive, creative, and practical attitude" to the stark challenges of that time. We inherit that legacy of courageous engagement.

We can lead again. Here are seven ways that local government managers can introduce and implement best practices for smart growth in their communities:

1. START WITH A STRATEGIC VISION.

Steven Covey wisely advises to "start with the end in mind." The world is becoming "flatter"—making it easier for the rest of the world to directly compete with American communities. This will put a premium on what urbanist Joel Kotkin calls "a unique identity and sense of place." If talented people and investment can flow freely, places that build on their strengths will have a competitive advantage over generic cities and suburbs. Fostering such a distinctive brand comes from a broad and deep consensus that can only come from an intentional and concerted effort to define a vision and work collaboratively to achieve that vision over the long term.

2. THINK AND ACT HOLISTICALLY.

Too often, smart growth is seen as simply a planning or a community development concern, instead of as a communitywide goal. Take streets. Making them work starts with width and design—and that means public works and the fire department working collaboratively with the planners. But great streets are clean, safe, and attractive so police and public works are again integral. Managers are in a unique position to foster shared goals across department and specialty silos.

3. REWRITE THE RULES.

When planners refer to "Euclidean zoning" they don't mean that zoning was invented by the Greek mathematician. "Euclid" was the name of the 1920s Supreme Court case legalizing zoning. The court upheld "excluding from residential areas the confusion and danger of fire, contagion, and disorder, which in greater or less degree attach to the location of stores, shops, and factories."

Our rigid segregation of complementary daily functions into zones that must be connected by auto trips is programmed into virtually every line of every existing zoning code and public works standard. This means you can't create or re-create great places until you completely rewrite or replace those codes and standards. It would be tedious work if there weren't promising models to adopt and adapt. Challenge your planners and public works officials to pursue emerging best practices for form-based codes and balanced street, parking, and fire safety standards.

4. ALIGN THE WAY YOU DO BUSINESS.

Too often, even a far-sighted strategic vision report sits on the shelf with other long-range and technical plans. The strategic vision should set clear goals. Then it's our job as managers to establish clear measures to keep us on track and accountable for achieving those goals. In turn, we must organize our staffs and prioritize our budgets around our goals. By making smart growth the centerpiece of how we do business, everyone knows what success looks like and works together to achieve it.

the 1989 comprehensive plan be updated to reflect a commitment to smart growth.

But the process bogged down until 2004 when a decision was made to completely rewrite the old plan and replace it with one anchored in the citizen vision document. The new general plan ("Achieving the Vision") was adopted unanimously by the council in 2005.

A commitment to smart growth infuses the entire plan, particularly the chapter called "Our Well-Planned and Designed Community . . . Our goal is to protect our hillsides, farmlands, and open spaces; enhance Ventura's historic and cultural resources; respect our diverse neighborhoods; reinvest in older areas of our community; and make great places by insisting on the highest standards in architecture, landscaping, and urban design."

The overall vision has been translated into a new downtown specific plan that has led to new housing, office, and retail infill in the historic city center and draft form-based codes for major transit corridors.

Conventional subdivision and apartment complex projects have been redesigned with narrower streets, a mix of housing types, alleys, front porches, ample parks, and other hallmarks of traditional neighborhoods.

The new life in an older community led the *Ventura County Star* to praise the "forward thinking of the Ventura City Council" for "pushing urbanist, smart growth principles from the drawing boards to the streets and neighborhoods of Ventura."

Smart Growth Resources
Smart Growth Network: www.smartgrowth.org
Congress for the New Urbanism: www.cnu.org
Form-Based Codes Institute: www.formbasedcodes.org
ICMA (Smart Growth): icma.org/smartgrowth
Local Government Commission: www.lgc.org/center
Smart Growth America:

5. CREATE MODELS.

Nothing is more powerful than tangible examples of "smarter" growth. It might be a new neighborhood with a centrally located park, rear alleys and ample sidewalks to improve walkability, and a mix of different kinds and prices of homes. It might be corridor streetscape improvements that foster more transit and pedestrian usage. It might be revitalizing an older neighborhood with a sensitive infill project. It might be forcing an auto-oriented retailer to change its site design to put the front door on the street instead of the parking lot. But in this transitional period, it is important not to let the "perfect" be the enemy of the good. When people begin to see better examples of growth, it can

www.smartgrowthamerica.org
U.S. EPA (Smart Growth):
www.epa.gov/smartgrowth
U.S. Green Building Council:
www.usgbc.org

ease their apprehensions and expedite the next project.

6. LEARN AS YOU GO.

A smart growth approach is not static. Tours, conference attendance, and in-house training, as well as evaluations of projects and processes after they are completed, contribute to a tone of continuous improvement. During the past 60 years, we've been building a landscape for cars. We need to rediscover old traditions for human-scale places. But we also need to reinvent current practices to accommodate the world we live in today—and the world we want to live in tomorrow. This doesn't mean banning cars. Instead, it means using them in ways that promote, not destroy, the urban fabric. Creating great places is hard and challenging work—and textbook answers are less valuable than real life experience.

7. THINK GLOBALLY AND REGIONALLY, ACT LOCALLY.

As local government managers, we are tempted to define our world by our jurisdictional borders. But these lines artificially divide far more important linkages of regional economies, watersheds, commuter patterns, and demographics. Smart growth is by its nature comparative and contextual. Participating in regional institutions and processes provides participants with comparisons that enrich their understanding of local context.

A residential tower might make a great deal of sense above a subway stop in Manhattan or San Francisco. It is mindlessly out of place next to a freeway off-ramp surrounded by low-density suburbia. Smart growth should be all about "a place for everything and everything in its place." This can come about only when people have not only a sophisticated understanding of regional context but also a collaborative framework for coordinating how neighboring jurisdictions grow.

Think Globally, Be a Local Model
The ancient Athenians administered an oath to new citizens of their city-state that seems especially relevant as urban places become the dominant habitat for humanity: "We will ever strive for the ideals and sacred things of the city, both alone and with many. We will unceasingly seek to quicken the sense of public duty." "We will transmit this city not only not less, but greater, better, and more beautiful than it was transmitted to us." <p style="text-align: right;">—Athenian Oath</p>

By the same standard, in any but the smallest hamlet, there is no one size that fits all—each intervention should be carefully calibrated to the local context. Rear alleys, front porches, and traditional architecture don't make a smart growth or new urbanist project if the housing is built far from transit, jobs, stores, and schools. Reinforce the global and regional framework and insist on finding the right fit for the local context.

Managers have broad responsibilities—and varying expectations from the elected officials and communities they serve. Our core competencies for providing efficient services also embrace making great places. We shortchange ourselves and our profession if we hold ourselves aloof from the central issues of our times, especially as they play out in local governments around the world.

"Building great communities is ultimately what our job is about," Palo Alto, California, City Manager Frank Benest notes. "Smart growth is one of the few overarching concepts that touches every aspect of achieving that goal. It may seem like a softer and fuzzier framework than, say, performance measurement, yet it has a powerful tangible impact in expanding a community's economic base, increasing local government revenue, reducing infrastructure costs, and bringing diverse interests together around not only an improved standard of living, but a far healthier quality of life."

The world is changing. We can lead or we can follow. We can't hide. Finding creative and practical local solutions is what we are all about.

We have hard work ahead. We can all take heart from the legacy of public service enunciated by President Kennedy when he declared, "I do not shrink from this responsibility, I welcome it. The energy, the faith, the devotion we bring to this cause will light our country and all who serve it. And the glow from that fire can truly light the world."

Smart Growth Principles
The Smart Growth Network (www.smartgrowth.org/about/principles) provides this list of smart growth principles:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mix land uses. 2. Take advantage of compact building design. 3. Create a range of housing opportunities and choices. 4. Create walkable neighborhoods. 5. Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place. 6. Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas. 7. Strengthen and direct development toward existing communities. 8. Provide a variety of transportation choices. 9. Make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost effective. 10. Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions.

Rick Cole is city manager, Ventura, California (RCole@ci.ventura.ca.us).

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Ethics

Practical Advice for the Political Season

Here is a quick primer on how to keep your ethical radar operating during the political season.

1. Your cousin is running for the state legislature in another state and has asked you for a financial contribution.

Answer: Decline politely and explain that the ICMA Code of Ethics has a guideline that makes it clear that you cannot give a financial contribution to any candidate—even to your favorite cousin.

2. The mayor had bought a ticket to attend the “Barbecue for Governor Bob,” but at the last minute she can’t go. She asks if you would go in her place.

Answer: Tell the mayor that you can’t stand in for her because your profession has a code of ethics that prohibits your attendance at fund-raising events for political candidates. Perhaps another one of the councilmembers will be able to attend.

3. The county council has endorsed a school bond issue and wants you to speak about it at community meetings.

Answer: The guideline on “Presentation of Issues” allows you to assist the governing body in explaining the issues involved in referenda and the county council’s position to support it.

4. Can I vote in the Democratic or Republican primary? Everyone on the council is a Republican, but I am interested in voting in the Democratic primary.

Answer: Yes, ICMA members can vote in primaries. ICMA members have the right and responsibility to vote just as every citizen does. Some ICMA members choose to register as Independents to avoid any appearance of partisanship.

5. I feel strongly about a state ballot measure that addresses an important human rights issue. Can I speak at public forums to advocate my views on this issue?

Answer: Members have the right to voice their opinions on public issues. At the same time, they need to be careful if this is an issue that is not supported by their governing body. Equally important, members should not use their official title, public time, or public resources when advocating for a personal cause.

6. There is a vacancy on the school board, and I’ve been asked to run. School board members are elected on a nonpartisan basis. I live in the town where the school board is located but work for town government in the neighboring community.

Answer: The guideline on elections does not permit active ICMA members to run for any office, including nonpartisan elections.

7. I retired two months ago after serving as city manager for 20 years. Now I want to run for the city council. Is this allowed?

Answer: Members who are retired may run for office. They are required to support Tenets 1 and 3 of the ICMA Code of Ethics, which outline the member’s responsibility to support democratic local government and to maintain the highest ideals of honor and integrity. Running for city council soon after retiring as the manager can sometimes raise issues for the profession.

To read more ICMA ethics advice on political activity, go to <http://icma.org>, click on “ethics,” and select the ethics resource pages.

—Elizabeth Kellar
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Ethics advice is a popular service provided to ICMA members. The ICMA Executive Board members who serve on the Committee on Professional Conduct review the inquiries and advice published in PM magazine. ICMA members who have questions about their obligations under the ICMA Code of Ethics are encouraged to call Martha Perego at 202/962-3668 or Elizabeth Kellar at 202/962-3611.

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Exhibitors at ICMA's 93rd Annual Conference

Here are the companies exhibiting at ICMA's October 7-10, 2007, conference in Pittsburgh/Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, as of June 18, 2007.

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Adjusters International	Federal Geographic Data Committee	NEOGOV, Inc.
All Traffic Solutions	Finrock Design-Manufacture- Construct, Inc.	OfficeMax
American City & County Magazine	First Southwest Company	The PAR Group - Paul A. Reaume, Ltd.
American Legal Publishing Corporation	General Code	Pennsylvania Governor's Center for Local Government Services
Ameristar Fence Products	Government Outreach, Inc.	Performance Logic, Inc.
APCO International, Inc.	GovOffice Web Solutions	Plan-It CIP Software by Strategic Insights, Inc.
Asphalt Pavement Alliance	GovPartner	Portable Sanitation Association International
AURALOG	Granicus, Inc.	Public Entity Risk Institute (PERI)
Badger Meter, Inc.	Hansen Information Technologies	Public Service Research Foundation
Billy Casper Golf	Harvard University - Kennedy School of Government	Public Technology Institute
Bobcat Company	Human Resource Development Incorporated	QScend Technologies, Inc.
Bolton & Menk, Inc.	IBM Maximo	Red Oak Consulting, a division of Malcolm Pirnie
Brigham Young University - Romney Institute of Public Management	ICMA-RC	Redflex Traffic Systems, Inc.
Brim Healthcare	ICSC - International Council of Shopping Centers	Residential Fire Safety Institute
Brother International Corporation	ImageNow by Perceptive Software, Inc.	REVERSE 911®
CALEA - Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies	The Innovation Groups	Rosetta Stone
Cardiac Science Corporation	Intelligent Products, Inc.	Sallie Mae Business Office Solutions
CDM	International Code Council - BHM District Office	SEI Program - University of Virginia
CGI Communications, Inc.	International Institute of Municipal Clerks	SIRE Technologies, Inc.
CH2M HILL OMI	International Sign Association	Southern Nevada Water Authority
CIGNA	InTouch Software	Springsted, Incorporated
City-County Communications & Marketing Association - 3CMA	Johnson Controls, Inc.	Standard & Poor's
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Comcast	Keep America Beautiful	Tele-Works, Inc.
Comcate, Inc.	Koker Goodwin & Associates	TischlerBise, Inc.
Complus Data Innovations, Inc.	Laserfiche	Travelers
Connect-CTY,™ a service of The NTI Group, Inc.	Law Enforcement Against Prohibition (LEAP)	Turning Technologies, LLC
CPS Human Resource Services	Library Systems & Services, LLC	Uni-Bell PVC Pipe Association
CRW Systems, Inc.	MapInfo Corporation	United States Golf Association
Daystar Computer Systems, Inc.	Matrix Consulting Group	University of Pittsburgh - Graduate School of Public & International Affairs
Department of Homeland Security - Assistance to Firefighters Grant	McGrath Consulting Group, Inc.	Upper Iowa University
Dome Corporation of North America	The Mercer Group, Inc.	URS
Duncan Solutions, Inc.	MGT of America	U.S. Census Bureau
E-Gov Link	Microsoft Corporation	USDOJ-COPS
Earth Tech, Inc.	Miller & Van Eaton, P.L.L.C.	Vision Internet
eCivis, Inc.	Mill Street Design	VolunteerHub
EMA, Inc.	Municipal Code Corporation / MCC Innovations	Waste Management, Inc.
Emergency Communications Network, Inc.	Municipal Resources, Inc.	The Waters Consulting Group, Inc.
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DEPARTMENTS

Profile



Peter Burchard is city manager of Naperville, Illinois.

Pulling the Strings: What Do You Know About Who Runs Your City?

Naperville's burgeoning population and robust commercial landscape suggest that people tend to view this city as a well-managed, desirable place to live and do business, a general feeling that has been supported by third-party sources like *Money* and *Chicago* magazines, both of which have featured recent articles and rankings pointing to Naperville as an area on the move.

And while the city does possess some specific characteristics to warrant such laudatory media notice and widespread sense of well-being among the citizenry, a key general attribute for any successful metropolitan area is an effective local government. In other words, you can drop a Riverwalk into every neighborhood in town, but if the day-to-day things don't get done—and done well—you probably don't have much of a working city on your hands.

Yet, as Naperville residents head to the polls for another round of mayoral and council elections this month [April 2007], many may not actually realize how their local government is configured or how it operates. As important as it is to the quality of life in Naperville, the concept of civic infrastructure likely never comes up provided things continue to run smoothly, owing perhaps to the old adage about sausage—folks generally don't care to know how it's made as long as it tastes good.

A QUICK CIVIC LESSON

But a big part of the reason that Naperville is such a model of efficient city management owes to its very civic structure, and the man at the helm of that structure. While the perpetually smiling face of mayoral fixture George Pradel may represent the beginning and end of what most residents and outsiders know about Naperville government, the less conspicuous figure through which most city finances and services flow is actually City Manager Peter Burchard.

The office of city manager in Naperville was created in 1969 when the city began operating under the council-manager form of government per Illinois state law. Under this system, Burchard's post is a nonpolitical appointment

made by the city council, and is responsible for the administration of all city services, including law enforcement, budgetary management, human resources, risk management, urban planning, transportation, public works, and information technology. Despite the hefty workload and the seemingly overwhelming breadth of responsibility, Burchard is a strong proponent of this form of local government.

"The council-manager form of local government is now the most common form of local government in the United States," he says. "City managers exist today in part because ordinary citizens were tired of the old-style patronage government that didn't do its job delivering basic services such as police, fire, decent roads, and safe buildings."

MEET THE MANAGER

As city manager, Burchard essentially has acted as the CEO of Naperville since 1998. Given the broad range of responsibilities associated with the position, Burchard's background includes not only similar management roles in towns like Woodridge and Hoffman Estates but diverse professional administrative experience in areas such as education and health care as well. His understanding of a variety of disciplines makes him equipped to handle the range of challenges associated with a growing city like Naperville.

Since the city manager is an appointed position, however, residents might question whether their best interests are being served by a non-elected official. Burchard is quick to point out that the appointment itself comes directly from the elected city council, and that for the most part, he is merely carrying out the policies and mandates handed down by the council and the mayor. More importantly, however, he feels that a lack of political agenda is actually a refreshing change that tends to make for a better administrator.

"An ethical local government will blend the political insights and responsiveness of elected officials with the professionalism of its staff," he says. And Burchard tends to get very specific when he defines a commonly used but oft-misunderstood term like "professionalism."

"Among other things, professionalism means hiring people based on merit rather than who they know, entering into contracts for services and projects based on price and experience, and providing city services in an equitable and consistent manner to all residents and businesses regardless of who they are," he explains, with particular emphasis on his last point. "Favoritism is an administrative evil."

Burchard counts on the professionalism of his staff to help manage the enormous task of moving a city with the size and complexity of Naperville ever forward. From police and fire department staffing to utilities to development, the city manager's office has a hand in almost every vital aspect of what makes Naperville run. But these day-to-day tasks are but one facet of Burchard's job—he also has a major say in what the city will look like in years to come. Planning for Naperville's future is one of the responsibilities that excites Burchard the most. After all, the city isn't just his job—it's his home as well.

"One of my favorite responsibilities is working with our elected officials to continuously move in the direction of our mission and vision for Naperville, and building coalitions around what's important" he says. "And doing the police chief's annual review, of course," he adds with a laugh.

One of Burchard's proudest points of emphasis over his nearly 10 years in the city manager position has been transforming Naperville into a great place to do business, a goal that has had a profound impact on the city. "I really have a strong commitment to making Naperville a place that large companies want to call home," he explains. "It really elevates the entire community—when businesses thrive, a lot of other good things happen."

But even as Burchard points to the bustling downtown area as an example of Naperville's overall community health, he refuses to let the city rest on its laurels.

"We have an enormously prosperous downtown area," he acknowledges, "but the moment we take that for granted, it will reverse itself. So we need to continually develop appropriate and aggressive policies to ensure that downtown doesn't lose its luster."

FORWARD THINKING

It's this attitude of always striving to make the best even better that guides Burchard as he looks to the future of Naperville. Currently, part of his focus is on trying to convince the State of Illinois how important infrastructure can be to the quality of life of citizens.

"The state really needs to step up and meet its obligations on roads and ground transportation," he points out. "So we'll be working with state officials to try and get money to tackle the widening of Route 58 through our area, for example."

It's just another big project on a long list of big projects for Burchard. But when he looks at the progress the city has made in his tenure as city manager, he welcomes the new challenges and believes that Naperville is ready for them.

"We just have to keep hiring great employees and working closely with the city council to make sure we continue to be a city that provides great services for residents and businesses," he says. "That's why people want to be here."

—Mark Loehrke
Contributing Writer

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