

PLANNERS NETWORK

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Campus/Community Partnerships in the 90s

by *Kenneth M. Reardon and Thomas P. Shields*

Structural changes in the U.S. economy caused by ongoing technological innovation, communication and transportation improvements, integration of capital markets and increased international competition have fostered great uncertainty regarding the future of our economy. Nowhere are the impacts of these changes more dramatic than in the residential neighborhoods of our nation's older central cities.

The challenges of the global restructuring have combined with the long-standing problems of suburban competition, manufacturing decline, rising poverty, municipal overburden, and middle-class flight to undermine the stability of our cities' older residential neighborhoods. Citizen leaders and municipal officials from cities such as Bridgeport, Camden, Benton Harbor, East St. Louis, Detroit, and South Central Los Angeles are becoming increasingly concerned about the future viability of their communities. This crisis of confidence has led to new criticism of the urban planning profession for its failure to develop policies, programs and plans to stabilize and revitalize our most distressed neighborhoods.

The failure of university-trained planners to provide workable solutions to the problems confronting our declining inner city neighborhoods has generated new criticism of our nation's colleges and universities; they are

coming under increasing public scrutiny for pursuing research that does not appear to address society's most pressing environmental, economic and social problems and for being inattentive to the educational needs of today's undergraduate students. The efforts of California's Governor Pete Wilson and New York's Governor George Pataki to gain greater control over their state university

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systems, along with proposed cutbacks in Federal funding for university-based Cooperative Education Services, reveal the depth of the public's disenchantment with higher education.

These criticisms of our nation's colleges and universities threaten to undermine the basic social compact that

has existed between higher education and civil society in the Post-Sputnik era. Throughout the Post World War II period, the state, supplemented by private and corporate philanthropy, supported the research, education and service missions of the university while allowing faculty and administrators to determine educational policies and programs with little accountability. Colleges and universities, in return, produced basic and applied research and graduates who were capable of maintaining U.S. economic, political and military power in the highly polarized context of the Cold War. The disintegration of the Soviet Union, which

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