

# PREFACE

Citizens, nonprofit organizations, and local public officials, in increasing numbers, are restoring nature as a vehicle to improve their downtowns, as well as to enhance general economic conditions within their communities. Public officials especially are learning that they can plant the seeds of urban renewal and, at the same time, restore nature. Not only do they renew their neighborhoods and downtowns, but they also attract tourists as well as private investment. The return-to-nature movement is becoming a fact of life in our communities as our nation and its cities enter the 21st century.

The types of investment in nature that are taking place in our cities and towns include those projects and programs related to creating, protecting, preserving, and restoring nature. The major projects and programs described in this volume in each of these categories are highlighted below.

- “Creation” projects include the development of computer models to prevent urban sprawl, the establishment of open spaces to improve downtown living, and the purposeful networking of inner-city greenways and trails.
- “Protection” programs include maintaining local climate patterns, positively impacting the environment through proper planning techniques to guide development, and ways to safeguard animals from the automobile.
- “Preservation” efforts include maintaining existing urban corridors, wildlife refuges, open spaces, and nature areas.
- “Restoration” initiatives encompass both

water-related and downtown-oriented programs. Water-related programs include rivers, watershed areas, and beaches. Downtown-oriented projects include restoring public parks, plazas, open spaces, and greenways.

This new type of community renewal process represents the efforts of citizens and local public officials to invest wisely in their downtowns and neighborhoods with the goal of revitalizing them through nature, and to bring citizens back downtown in record numbers. This volume focuses exclusively on local government and nonprofit organization revitalization efforts that emphasize those public works projects to create, protect, preserve, and restore nature in America’s cities and towns.

The realities of modern economic life have shown us that, when investment focuses on enhancing the natural aspects of our communities, business, commerce, and tourism will follow shortly thereafter. A new eclectic economic development model is evolving that is beginning to work in a number of politically, economically, racially, and culturally diverse communities. An investment in “nature” now yields positive community-wide benefits, both tangible and intangible—for residents and tourists alike.

This volume is broken down into four sections for ease of reference. The first section introduces the reader to this new subject, “cities and nature.” The second section, and by design the longest, includes numerous case studies, or best practices, on how cities and towns are investing in nature

to stimulate downtown and neighborhood revitalization. The next section focuses on the future of this "back-to-nature" movement as our nation enters the 21st century. Several appendices included in the last portion of this volume provide important information in this new subject area. Based on this conceptual schema, the four primary sections of this volume are highlighted below.

- **Cities and Nature.** Chapters in this section describe new approaches to managing urban growth, evolving environmental management systems, and the movement to create "new" Main Streets in our cities and towns. The last chapter describes the economic benefits of creating parks and open spaces.
- **The Best Practices.** The cities and towns examined in this volume, including the states in which they are located, are listed below categorically in alphabetical order. The case studies represent an important effort to obtain a body of knowledge on the best practices available in this dynamic new, and still evolving, field.
  - ...**Cities:** Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Cambridge, Camden, Charlottesville, Chattanooga, Chicago, Denver, Fairfield, Fort Collins, Gainesville, Grand Forks, Hampton, Harmony, Hartford, Irvine, Lafayette, Lake Worth, Lancaster, Mattituck, Miami Beach, Minneapolis, New York City, Petaluma, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Port Aransas, Portland, Riverhead, Saint Louis Park, Saint Paul, San Francisco, San Jose, San Rafael, Silver Spring, and West Des Moines.
  - ...**States:** Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Indiana, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and Washington.
- **The Future.** This section examines the likely future of the "back-to-nature"

movement in our nation's cities and towns. Chapters included in this portion of this reference work focus on the ecological revolution taking place in America, the trend to search for economic growth that does not bring destruction to nature in the process, the importance of placing landscaping in the urban man-made environment, and the return of urban parks and public plazas to our inner-city areas. The concluding chapter examines the impact of nature on the human spirit, and how important nature is to our "living" environment. These readings reflect the fact that initiatives related to the creation, protection, preservation, and restoration of nature to man's urban environment are here to stay.

- **Appendices.** Several appendices are included in this volume. They include a regional resource directory of all of the cities and towns included in "The Best Practices" section of this volume, and a national resource directory of all major professional associations and research organizations in fields related to "cities and nature." Lastly a comprehensive bibliography on this new subject is provided, with listings under the headings of books, monographs, articles, and other sources.

The case studies in this volume represent state-of-the-art practices on how citizens, nonprofit organizations, and local public officials alike are using various aspects of nature to promote neighborhood and community renewal. All of these projects related to nature now represent a new discipline within the traditional field of municipal economic development. The term "nature" in this volume is used in its broadest sense, and is meant to include those improvements to land and water that encompass the creation, protection, preservation, and restoration of nature in the very core of our communities. The case studies selected for this work fall under this definition.

The practices reflected in the case

studies contained in this volume are typically applied in a piecemeal and incremental fashion in cities and towns throughout America. For the most part, citizens, non-profit organizations, and local public officials are busy doing their own thing within their own communities. They do not have the time to find out what other neighboring cities and towns are doing in this area, let alone what other communities are doing in far away places located throughout the nation. For this reason, the case studies selected for this reference volume represent an important codification of knowledge in this rapidly evolving field.

This reference work assembles, for the first time, materials based on a national literature search, and makes this information available to citizens and public officials throughout the United States. The goal of

this volume is to help educate the public on how to best use aspects of nature as an economic stimulus for downtown and neighborhood revitalization. If additional information is desired to follow-up on any specific case study in this volume, every city, town, county, special district, and nonprofit organization listed for each case study is included in the Regional Resource Directory. Additional information can easily be obtained from this directory by contacting individuals at those sources listed. Important state, regional, and national resources are also brought together for the first time to help readers become more informed about the new field of "cities and nature."

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