

## **National League of Cities Conference in November 2013**

*Key Findings by Alder Anita Weier (web links follow text)*

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Much emphasis was placed on partnerships – be it between community colleges and businesses to train people for actual jobs or between police departments sharing resources.

The Washington cities of Kenmore and Shoreline, for instance, saved money by sharing supervisory personnel when those in the other city are off-duty. And South Seattle Community College has collaborated with Vigor Industries to train low-income workers to be welders, who are placed in actual jobs with a starting wage averaging \$52,000.

Yet another important collaboration suggested was among U.S. cities – close or far away -- with similar focuses, so that they can compete effectively against other nations. And cities east of Seattle are collaborating on a light-rail system and developing senior housing at their borders near park and rides.

Another major focus was the significance of community members – residents and businesses – starting redevelopment from the ground up, instead of the city going top down. In fact, Seattle's Department of Neighborhoods began as a volunteer collaboration that was so successful that the city formalized it. Bellevue has a Citizens Advisory Committee on new developments.

Major redevelopment of deteriorated areas has also occurred along the city's light-rail line, which follows a route planned for that purpose. That process involved years of work by Community Cornerstones, a federal grant-funded program that focuses on equitable transit-oriented development. The community, multiple city department, financial institutions and developers worked together. Transit-oriented development acquisition loans helped housing developers purchase up to four vacant properties near light rail stations for mixed-use projects and include affordable and market-rate housing and commercial space. A multicultural business district and multicultural community center are part of the plan that is revitalizing several communities in Southeast Seattle.

The Democratic Municipal Officials organization also is working on behalf of cities around the country, especially about fighting or trying to remove state measures that pre-empt local control, a trend we are certainly aware of in Madison. The organization stressed the importance of publicizing what is happening and educating citizens about such efforts. Organizing grassroots support and demonstrations was one suggestion, as is unmasking the source of such measures by following the money. Cooperating with small businesses, which may fear control by large corporations, was another suggestion.

One person suggested using the facts that cities are corporations, and thus people, legally – as other corporations do.

Regarding extreme weather events and adaptive infrastructure, speakers suggest that cities continue to update mitigation measures in county Natural Hazard Mitigation Plans.

I also voted on Madison's behalf as a delegate at the annual business meeting, a responsibility given by the mayor that I appreciated. However, the process was not as democratic as I expected. No objections were made to individual resolutions, and board members were elected without allowing nominations from the floor.

Most policies and resolutions were renewed. However, new resolutions included calling on the President's Administration and the U.S. Supreme Court to reject any law that disenfranchised individuals from their constitutional right to vote.

Another new resolution supported local, state and federal incentives that promote job creation in the digital media field, stemming the loss of employment to foreign locations. Another resolution called for a comprehensive multi-modal approach to federal surface transportation programs that provide a greater role for local governments in funding decisions.

A policy change asked for support to cities and towns by the federal government in the event of pandemics, as well as urging the federal government to develop effective measures to prevent animal to human disease transmissions.

<http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/impacts-adaptation/midwest.html>

<http://www.aarp.org/livable-communities>

<http://www.progressiveagenda.org/local>