



Western Lands and Communities

*A Joint Program of the
Lincoln Institute of Land Policy and Sonoran Institute*

Western Lands and Communities, a joint program of the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy and Sonoran Institute established in 2003, takes a long-term, strategic perspective in the Intermountain West on:

Shaping Growth

Sustaining Cities

Protecting Resources

Empowering Communities

PROGRAM VISION

The shared vision of the Western Lands and Communities partnership is to shape the future of the Intermountain West by informing land use and related natural resources policy.

We achieve this vision through regional land use planning that effectively improves the management of public and state lands, and integrates land use planning with conservation values, open space networks, transportation, water, and energy infrastructure.

Western Lands and Communities efforts are organized into four major thematic areas:

- Urban Form and Smart Growth Research
- Visioning and Planning Tools
- State Trust Land Management
- Western Land, Water, Energy and Climate Policy Linkages

Through a combination of research and education, tool development, technical assistance, demonstration projects, and training, Western Lands and Communities addresses key land use issues facing the West and finds approaches that fit the needs of our partners. We also share lessons learned across the region through publications, the internet, and other media to inform decisions at local, regional, and national levels.



Shaping the Future of the West



Focus Areas

Urban Form and Smart Growth Research

This program area focuses on research related to smart growth planning and policies that will lead to more sustainable urban form patterns in the West. Communities face the challenge of managing impacts from population growth, development activity, and economic and climate insecurity while estimating corresponding potential impacts, anticipating future conditions, and developing new strategies for adaptation. Our leading-edge exploratory scenario planning efforts disseminate tools for communities to use in developing resilient land and natural resource policies in the context of an increasingly uncertain and complex future. We recently developed a methodology for eliciting key determinants of change in the Intermountain West and subsequently employed that methodology in a workshop setting.

Our multi-year Reshaping Development Patterns effort culminated in the 2014 Policy Focus Report *Arrested Developments: Combating Zombie Subdivisions and Other Excess Entitlements*. The report identifies and addresses key land ownership, market, planning, and fiscal consequences that excess development entitlements and distressed subdivisions present for local communities, landowners, and the real estate industry.

Visioning and Planning Tools

Planners and community leaders need affordable and accessible tools and resources that highlight best practices to envision and manage the future of their communities. This program area works to develop tools and applications that will promote smart growth and improve sustainability and urban form in western communities. Western Lands and Communities continues the development and application of planning tools for conservation priority setting, creating growth projections, and community visioning and scenario development. We have lead the Open Planning Tools Group in creating open source products to expand access to these important tools and developing curriculum to educate young planners in the use of these tools. Recent Western Lands and Communities scenario planning demonstration projects include visioning for the 275 square mile Superstition Vistas state trust land parcel in Arizona. Additionally, best practices and resources geared for western communities are available on Successful Communities Online Toolkit information exchange (SCOTie), a growing multi-partner effort.

State Trust Land Management

State trust land management, the principal focus area of Western Lands and Communities program during the first four years, remains significant due to the extensive state trust land holdings and their importance for sustainable resource use and urban form patterns throughout the Intermountain West. Many of the lessons learned from demonstration projects and research efforts conducted on state trust land are more generally applicable to other public and private lands throughout the Intermountain West.





STRATEGY & COMMITMENT

Early Western Lands and Communities research resulted in a seminal Policy Focus Report, *State Trust Lands in the West: Fiduciary Duty in a Changing Landscape*. Current areas of focus include research on ecosystem services markets and frameworks, economic analysis of the “contributory value” of preserved lands to adjacent lands, asset management strategies, and solar energy development on public lands. This work will be disseminated through ongoing working papers and a Policy Focus Report slated for publication in January 2015 on conservation strategies for state trust lands. Western Lands and Communities works to inform the Western State Land Commissioners Association of innovative practices in planning, disposition, and management of state trust lands throughout the West.

Western Land, Water, Energy, and Climate Linkages

Land use and policy, water resources, and energy production are highly interrelated and critical to a sustainable economy for the Intermountain West. The highly variable climate of the West and potential influence of global climate change will greatly impact our land and natural resources, and highlight the need to address interactions between land policy and natural resources. Water supplies and electric utility infrastructure are two key western resources that are also influenced by climatic variability. Our 2010 Policy Focus Report, *Planning for Climate Change in the West*, highlighted the role of local governments in addressing climate change challenges and implementing effective policies. Our current work is focused on developing tools that communities can use to increase their resilience to climate impacts; developing training for incorporating uncertainty and scenario planning into planning efforts; advancing development of renewable energy; and engaging a broader civic dialogue on land and natural resource policy.

This joint program between the Sonoran Institute and the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy combines the hands on, community focused efforts at which Sonoran Institute excels with the land policy expertise and strategic, long-term perspective of the Lincoln Institute.

Western Lands and Communities’ focus areas are planned in three-year cycles, which allows for stability, building key partnerships and capacity, and a strategic investment of time and energy from project conceptualization through implementation and dissemination of lessons learned. The Lincoln Institute’s long-term financial commitment and ongoing engagement facilitates the identification and achievement of both short and long term goals, and adaptive responses to new challenges, opportunities, and ideas. The Lincoln Institute, as a private operating foundation, is both the program funder and an active partner with policy expertise and staff dedicated to working alongside Sonoran Institute staff to guide program efforts and provide support. This follow-through and high level of commitment on the part of both organizations creates a unique and valuable program well suited to helping shape the future of the Intermountain West.



Current Initiatives

Successful Communities Online Toolkit information exchange

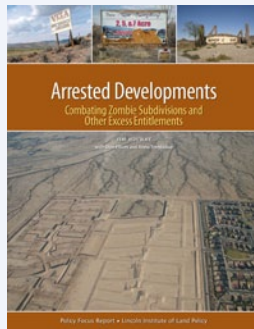


Across the West communities are struggling to find practical ways to be more sustainable and resilient—and succeeding. Western Lands and Communities has compiled

examples of policy and design best practices into an online searchable database - SCOTie. The case studies fall into eight category areas and can be sorted and searched by category, state, and community type, including rural, amenity, and urban. Additionally, the Resilient Communities Starter Kit that provides guidelines for communities ready to build resilience to the impacts of climate change will be available in late 2014. To view the site visit www.scotie.org.

Arrested Developments

Our 2014 Policy Focus Report, *Arrested Developments: Combating Zombie Subdivisions and Other Excess Entitlements* is available online. Visit <http://tinyurl.com/zombie-subdivisions> for working papers on: lessons learned in Teton County, Idaho; a state by state analysis of enabling authority and case law; an overview of planning frameworks for addressing premature subdivisions; and a historical perspective on the evolution of land markets and conservation development practices. We also provide links to best practices for addressing development entitlements throughout the west and to the results from a series of expert convenings and local workshops.



Exploratory Scenario Planning

We have developed an exploratory scenario planning (XSP) methodology in response to the challenges communities face in the long term planning process. XSP helps communities account for future potential impacts from key drivers of change including: population, economy, and climate. Workshops, featuring experts on the emerging practice of exploratory scenario planning, will be scheduled throughout 2014 and 2015.

For more information on these and other current initiatives, visit us at www.westernlandsandcommunities.org.

Sign Up for Our Newsletters

Building Trust - latest information regarding state trust land management issues in the West; contact mstier@sonoraninstitute.org

Fetch - SCOTie newsletter highlighting best planning practices in the Intermountain West; contact holiver@sonoraninstitute.org

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The Lincoln Institute of Land Policy is a leading resource for key issues concerning the use, regulation, and taxation of land. Providing high-quality education and research, the Institute strives to improve public dialogue and decisions about land policy.

LINCOLN INSTITUTE
OF LAND POLICY

The Sonoran Institute inspires and enables community decisions and public policies that respect the land and people of Western North America.



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