



# URBAN AFFAIRS CENTER



## 2011 Year in Review

### **Dr. Neil Reid**

Director

### **Sue Wuest**

Assistant Director

### **Paula Ross**

Research Associate

### **Jeanette Eckert**

Research Assistant  
Manager, Survey Research Center

### **Sophia Fisher**

Executive Manager,  
NW Ohio Solar Hub

### **Martin Fitts**

Community Development  
Coordinator, NW Ohio Solar Hub

### **Gregg Rice**

UAC Webmaster

### **Mike Moore**

Graduate Research Assistant

### **Lauren Hersch**

Graduate Research Assistant

Urban Affairs Center  
University of Toledo  
2801 Bancroft, Mail Stop 218  
Toledo, OH 43606  
<http://uac.utoledo.edu>

## From the Director...

*Neil Reid, PhD*

Since our last newsletter, the Urban Affairs Center has relocated to a new home in the Clean and Alternative Energy Incubator. The Incubator is located on Dorr Street at the southeast corner of UT's main campus. While we have less physical space than we have had at any of our previous locations, the quality of the space is certainly the best that we have ever occupied. With the work that the UAC has done (and continues to do) in local economic development it is nice to share this space with a number of entities that have a common interest in seeing the northwest Ohio economy strengthen and expand. These include the Intermodal Transportation Institute, University of Toledo Innovation Enterprises, Rocket Ventures, and Incubator businesses such as Dovetail Solar and Wind, SuGanit Systems and ADS Biotechnology.

Given that our new home is in a business incubator it seems appropriate that the UAC successfully incubated a number of entities during 2011. The first of these is the UAC Press which after nine years of being affiliated with the Center became the University of Toledo Press (see story elsewhere in this newsletter). We also "set free" the Maumee Valley Growers Association (MVGA). Formed as a 501(c)6 in 2007 the MVGA is an association of greenhouses that work collaboratively to identify and address economic challenges facing their industry. The association had received significant support from the UAC as part of a USDA grant administered by the Center. The intention had always been for the MVGA to stand on its own two feet and 2011 was the year that this happened. I have no doubt that both the UT Press and the MVGA will be successful going forward.

I hope that you enjoy this newsletter. However, the contents only represent a sample and a snapshot of UAC activities. For a more comprehensive overview I invite you to visit our website (<http://uac.utoledo.edu>). I wish everyone a successful 2012. If you think that the UAC can help contribute to that success I ask that you either contact either me or a member of the UAC staff.

# 2011 an Inspiring Year for Local Food Systems Work

2011 saw the Toledo area community coming together to further lay the groundwork for a strong and engaged local food system. The UAC has been working closely with noted food system researcher Ken Meter, of [Crossroads Resource Center](#), to look at the economic implications of our food production and consumption both statewide and regionally. For example, Meter's [research](#) found that Ohio consumers buy \$29 billion of food each year, but about \$26 billion of this food is sourced outside of the state. The full report can be found on our website.

The UAC in 2011 also has helped to lay the foundations of an emerging Northwest Ohio Food Council. While the council is still taking shape, the primary goals as identified by participants so far include strengthening existing connections, making new connections where they are missing, and identifying ways that by working together producers, consumers, and policy-makers can build a better food system and increase access to healthy food for all members of our community. Look for more exciting progress on the emerging food council in 2012.

The UAC also organized several successful events to bring members of the community together to learn more about opportunities in our local food system. We welcomed several speakers to Toledo in 2011, including author [Jonathan Bloom](#), who spoke in March to an audience of 100 people at Augsburg Lutheran Church on the topic of wasted food in the US. David Eson, from [Isidore Foods](#) in Pennsylvania, gave a presentation at the UAC about his successful business model for delivering fresh foods from local producers to customers including faculty and staff at the University of Pittsburgh and an expanding client list that now includes Cleveland and Columbus. In partnership with the Maumee Valley Growers Association and others, the UAC hosted Luc Peeters, from the [Mechelen](#) produce auction in Belgium. Peeters presented the successful model of the Mechelen Auction to Northwest Ohio growers, and toured several local greenhouses. Mary Donnell gave an inspiring presentation on the [Green City Growers Cooperative](#), a worker-owned greenhouse that will produce fresh food in the heart of Cleveland. We also welcomed Shoshanah Inwood from The Ohio State University [Center for Farmland Policy Innovation](#), who gave a presentation on creating healthy corner stores.

On April 15<sup>th</sup>, we hosted our first community local food summit, titled Local Food: Strategies for Jobs and Health. Thanks to a low registration fee and several great cosponsors, attendees included a wide range of community members, and the summit featured Ken Meter as keynote speaker and Phillip Cooley, from [Slows](#)

[Barbeque](#) in Detroit, as our lunch presenter. Panel speakers included several nationally recognized experts in food systems research.

The UAC also organized a summer film series. Beginning in May, the film series, titled "Film for Thought", brought together diverse audiences of students, faculty, local food system advocates, and the community to view documentaries about how we produce, market, and consume food. Films that were screened included *King Corn*, *McLibel*, *Ingredients*, *Vanishing of the Bees*, and *Truck Farm*. If you are interested in showing these or other food-related documentaries to your students or organization, please contact the UAC as many are available for loan.

Over the summer of 2011, local residents who receive SNAP (food stamp) benefits were able to double those benefits when they used them at the [Toledo Farmers Market](#) to purchase locally-grown product. The UAC partnered with the Fair Food Network to bring the Double Up Food Bucks program to Toledo and helped facilitate a committee of local community organizations who contributed matching funds and in-kind support. The program was wildly successful and resulted in hundreds of new visitors to the market and thousands of additional dollars for local farmers.

To further engage students on the topic of our local food system, the UAC sponsored a visit from the staff of the [Real Food Challenge](#), which included sessions with interested students to empower them to participate in the decisions involving food purchases on campus in an effort to demand more local, sustainable food sources. We also participated in Earth Fest, sponsored annually by the UT Society for Environmental Education, by displaying an informational table and speaking on the connection between our food system and environmental sustainability. On October 24<sup>th</sup>, the UAC participated in the newly resurrected national [Food Day](#) with a food drive to benefit [Toledo Area Ministries](#) and informational displays at the Sanger and Main branches of the Toledo-Lucas County Public Library.

Our work in the local foods arena has been funded primarily by a grant from the USDA.

*If you are interested in more information on any of our local food initiatives, please contact Paula Ross at [paula.ross@utoledo.edu](mailto:paula.ross@utoledo.edu). You can also follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).*



# 2010 Conference Generates Publications, Collaboration

In August of 2010, the UAC, in partnership with the International Geographic Union Commission on the Dynamics of Economic Spaces, hosted a three-day conference on Local Food Systems in Old Industrial Regions. The conference attracted over 50 scholars and practitioners from across the United States who presented their research on a variety of aspects of local food systems. The conference also presented attendees with several opportunities to enjoy Toledo's many cultural activities, including a jazz concert at the Toledo Botanical Gardens, wine tasting at the Toledo Museum of Art, and a sunset cruise on the Sandpiper. Attendees also visited a local greenhouse and toured community gardens with Toledo GROWS.

The findings resulting from the conference were published in a special issue of *Applied Geography* (Volume 31, Issue 4), and a book, *Local Food Systems in Old Industrial Regions: Spatial Context and Local Practice*, due to be published in 2012 by Ashgate Publishing.

# Inaugural Season for Riehm Farms CSA at UT a Success

In late 2010, the UAC conducted a survey of UT faculty and staff to measure interest in a fresh foods buying club on campus, inspired by the [Isidore Foods](#) model in Pennsylvania. The survey revealed strong support for purchasing fresh, local produce on campus. Riehm Farms, a family owned operation located in Tiffin, Ohio, encouraged by the positive results of this survey, began taking signups for a CSA (community supported agriculture) that would deliver fresh, local produce to members on the UT campus every Tuesday. Our survey of the 50 families who were 2011 members showed a positive experience, with this being the first time the majority of them had participated in a CSA. Nearly all participants reported eating more vegetables and trying new ones because of the CSA.

Based on the success of the first season, Riehm Farms is looking forward to expanding the number of members for 2012. In addition, they have added new sites for 2012, including Promedica's Toledo Hospital campus and Maritz Research in Maumee. If you are interested in the convenience of having fresh local produce delivered to you at work weekly throughout the summer, signups for 2012 are currently open on the farm's website, [funacres.net](http://funacres.net). You do not need to be a UT employee or student to take advantage of the pickup location. For a list of other area farmers and CSAs, visit <http://maumeevalleyfood.org>.

**UAC Welcomes New Staff**

In 2011, the UAC welcomed two new staff members and two interns. We are pleased to have joining us Sophia Fisher as the Northwest Ohio Solar Hub Manager, and Martin Fitts as the Community Development Coordinator for the Solar Hub project. The Northwest Ohio Solar Hub focuses on promoting entrepreneurship, economic development and commercialization in the solar industry by bringing together top solar researchers, entrepreneurs, manufacturers, education institutions, trade associations and training providers.

We also were happy to have two graduate students working with us in 2011. Michael Moore, a graduate student in the Geography and Planning Department, and Lauren Hersch, a graduate student in the Political Science and Public Administration Department, provided a valuable service to the UAC. Both will continue working with us in the spring of 2012.

# UAC Director Appointed NARSC Executive Director

UAC Director Dr. Neil Reid has been appointed as the next Executive Director of the [North American Regional Science Council](#) (NARSC). NARSC is an interdisciplinary organization whose mission is focused on promoting the scholarly exchange of ideas and knowledge that applies to understanding the functioning of urban and regional economies in North America and across the globe. The Council organizes an annual international conference that provides a forum for interaction and discussion. Dr. Reid learned of his appointment at the annual NARSC meeting that was held in Miami, Florida this past November. He will assume his responsibilities on January 1, 2013.

# Solar Hub Project Promotes Industry in Northwest Ohio

The Northwest Ohio Solar Hub was created to facilitate the interaction and engagement of existing Ohio solar manufacturing and supply chain companies, research institutions, economic development agencies and other solar stakeholders, with the goal of helping create the most economically viable solar cluster in the United States. The Northwest Ohio Solar Hub is located at the University of Toledo’s Clean and Advanced Energy Incubator, and is funded by an Ohio Department of Development grant along with financial partners Bowling Green State University and the University of Toledo.

The Solar Hub is focused on leveraging the solar industry via research and development, cutting-edge manufacturing technology and processes, entrepreneurship and commercialization. The Solar Hub supports economic development efforts leading to job creation and retention and attraction of capital investment. Additionally, the Solar Hub enhances economic development efforts through the branding of Ohio solar initiatives via promotion and product application. The Solar Hub serves to catalyze the formation of new companies in the region, as well as Ohio’s current solar supply chain companies.

The Solar Hub staff (Sophia Fisher and Marty Fitts) was in place by July. The Solar Hub’s focus in the second half of 2011 has been introducing the Hub and industry cluster concept to numerous solar-related businesses; creating a “solar brand” for the Northwest Ohio solar cluster; and preparing a white paper on the “business case” for state investment and policy support for the solar industry.

## UAC Press is now UT Press

In 2002, the UAC provided a grant for the creation of a publishing outlet for community authors. With a focus on titles intended for general readers as opposed to a purely academic audience, the UAC Press has published over 13,000 copies of 28 titles. 2011 saw the UAC Press transition into the UT Press, now successful and profitable without financial assistance from the UAC. True to our mission, we are proud to have assisted this project in getting off the ground and are pleased to see it flourishing on its own. We look forward to more interesting titles in the years to come.

### Recent UAC Publications & Reports

**2011:**

Beazley, M., Wilkowski, K., Eckert, J. and Wuest, S. (2011). A state of inequity in Ohio: Funding and service disparities between municipalities and townships in Montgomery County, Ohio ([PDF](#))

Eckert, J. and Shetty, S. (2011). Food systems, planning and quantifying access: Using GIS to plan for food retail. *Applied Geography*. 31(4), 1216-1223

Gatrell, J., Reid, N. and Ross, P. (2011). Local food systems, deserts, and maps: The spatial dynamics and policy implications of food geography. *Applied Geography*. 31(4), 1195-1196.

Meter, K. (2011). Ohio's food systems – Farms at the heart of it all ([PDF](#))

**2012:**

Calzonetti, F., Miller, D. and Reid, N. (2012). Building both technology-intensive and technology-limited clusters by emerging research universities: The Toledo example. *Applied Geography*, 34, 265-273.

Eckert, J. and Shetty, S. (2012). Urban food deserts: Policy issues, access, and planning for a community food system. In Neil Reid, Jay Gatrell, and Paula Ross (Eds.), *Local food systems in old industrial regions: Spatial context and local practices* (in press). Ashgate Publishing

Gatrell, J., Reid, N. and Ross, P. (2012). Local food systems in old industrial regions. In Neil Reid, Jay Gatrell, and Paula Ross (Eds.), *Local food systems in old industrial regions: Spatial context and local practices* (in press). Ashgate Publishing

Gatrell, J., Reid, N. and Ross, P. (2012). Toward a relational geography of local food systems: Or wicked food problems without quick spatial fixes. In Neil Reid, Jay Gatrell, and Paula Ross (Eds.), *Local food systems in old industrial regions: Spatial context and local practices* (in press). Ashgate Publishing

Reid, N., Gatrell, J. and Ross, P. (Eds.) (2012). *Local food systems in old industrial regions: Spatial context and local practices* (in press). Ashgate Publishing

Reid, N. and Smith, B. (2012). Assessing the success of an industrial cluster. *International Journal of Applied Geospatial Research* (in press)

Steiger, T., Eckert, J., Gatrell, J., Reid, N. and Ross, P. (2012). Cultivating narratives: Cultivating successors. *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development*. (Winter, in press)

# MVGA Transition to Sustainability

After several years of incubation, the Maumee Valley Growers Association (MVGA) is now standing on its own. The MVGA is the result of a project that originated in 2003 with the goal of assessing and addressing the competitive challenges facing northwest Ohio's greenhouse nursery industry. The project team included researchers from the UAC as well as Bowling Green State University, Indiana State University and the Ohio State University. The project was funded by the United States Department of Agriculture with the support of Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur.

Over the years, much effort was focused around organizing northwest Ohio's greenhouse industry as an industrial cluster. The objective was to encourage individual growers to work with each other and with academic, government, and community partners to collaboratively solve problems and address challenges facing the industry.

As the project developed, several important accomplishments resulted that created a strong base for future sustainability. Northwest Ohio greenhouse growers branded their effort collaboration under the umbrella of the MVGA. The organization received 501(C)6 non-profit status and began operating as a small business entity establishing bylaws, setting up a Board structure and scheduling regular meetings for all growers to attend.

Developing additional income streams was vital for the MVGA to achieve self-sustainability. One such new income stream was generated through their energy program involving the purchase of both natural gas and electricity. This pooling initiative has expanded regionally, saving growers significant dollars with discounts not normally available to them as individual businesses. At year end, the energy program had grown its membership to approximately 145 companies.

Using the energy program as model, a similar program was established that generates organizational income by promoting the purchase of select greenhouse supplies from one of the area vendors. The more supplies that are purchased, the greater the commission dollars can be contributed to MVGA.

Another valuable program is the marketing purchasing program resulting in up to 70% discounts to participating growers. Again, pooled purchasing, nonprofit rate status and no marketer commissions create a recipe of savings for each participant.

In a 2009 survey almost 60% of the greenhouse growers in northwest Ohio indicated they were optimistic about the future of their business. They attributed this optimism directly to their participation in the Maumee Valley Growers Association.

At least 15 greenhouse businesses/families which actively participate in the organization include family members under 50 years of age who have stayed in the business or returned to the area.

Insight gained through collaboration with research partners at the university, USDA and other organizations remains important. Working closely with the Toledo Area Flower and Vegetable Growers Association (TAFVGA), MVGA continues to promote educational programs offering practical and profitable solutions to the betterment of their operations and the community.

The Maumee Valley Growers Association officially transitioned into a non-grant funded organization as of September 1, 2011. Joe Perlaky was hired as MVGA's consultant to assist the organization through its transition period and beyond. Perlaky previously served as the MVGA project manager.

Initial discussions are underway for a future construction and operation of a new state of the art greenhouse / administration facility to be located on the grounds of TBG.

As MVGA continues through 2012, the organization will continue to fine tune its operation and search for even more value added services to share with its members. There are currently more than 80 retailers, wholesalers and suppliers belonging to the MVGA. To find a local greenhouse and support our local growers, please visit [maumeevalleygrowers.com](http://maumeevalleygrowers.com).

# UAC Studies Inequities in County Service Delivery

In 2002, the UAC conducted a study of funding and service disparities between incorporated and unincorporated areas within Lucas County. In 2010, the Greater Dayton Area Mayors and Managers Association contracted with the UAC to conduct a similar study for Montgomery County, Ohio. Both studies are available on our website.

The Montgomery County study, like the original Lucas County study, concluded that township residents receive an annual subsidy from the State, County and

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incorporated areas of many millions of dollars per year. The identification of that subsidy answers the question: *How is it possible that Montgomery County townships are able to provide services without taxing the incomes of their residents?*

The subsidy results primarily from the simple fact that under current Ohio law, municipalities must provide certain local services while townships are not required to do the same. Such a system leaves the State or County to step in to provide or subsidize basic public services when a township does not. Municipalities do not receive such a subsidy. While it may be admirable for townships or any community to seek to keep tax rates and expenses low, it is unjustifiable to maintain those lower tax rates through subsidization by taxpayers in neighboring communities. The UAC research uncovered no rationalization for continuing this system.

Our research found that Ohio's statutory structure for townships is rare compared to other states in the U.S. While many states use the term "township" to describe certain local government subdivisions, in most states, townships either operate similarly to municipalities with specific responsibilities and duties, or as a subdivision of the county in which they are located. Ohio townships do not have such obligations and rarely have a specific duty to provide service.

The Montgomery County report contains recommendations for changes of policies and practices that result in the subsidization of the unincorporated areas. The recommendations, which are summarized in the first issue of UAC [Policy Points](#), identify specific statutory, organizational, and/or administrative changes at both the County and State levels. As a result of the Montgomery County study the UAC has been asked to update the original Lucas County report and to help Lucas County officials partner with Montgomery County officials to propose changes to state policy.

## UAC Helps Agencies Plan for the Future

Several years ago, the Director of the Lucas County Department of Job and Family Services, Deborah Ortiz Flores, asked UAC Assistant Director Sue Wuest to help design and facilitate a strategic planning process for the agency. Funding changes as well as other local issues interrupted that planning process, but the planning effort began anew in 2011 with an additional charge to develop a merger plan for the Lucas County Department of Child

and Family Services and the Lucas County Child Support Enforcement Agency.

The UAC brought Sandra Simon from the UT Labor Management Center onto the project team. The merger and strategic planning process began with discussion and exercises aimed at merging the cultures of each organization into an ideal working culture for the newly merged organization. This effort was led by Simon, who is certified to employ survey instruments and processes developed by [Human Synergistics International](#) (HSI). (HSI has highly effective instruments to measure and address issues related to organizational culture and behavioral styles related to work culture.) This effort resulted in identifying existing work cultures within each agency, gaps and overlaps, and a worker defined ideal organizational culture. The results of those exercises provide the foundation for the merger planning which began in November and will continue throughout 2012 with facilitation assistance provided by Wuest.

## Green Energy Ohio & UAC Assess Local Renewable Energy Sector

[Green Energy Ohio](#) (GEO) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting environmentally and economically sustainable energy policies and practices in Ohio. In 2011, GEO contracted with Oberlin College on a Department of Energy funded project. The overall goal of the project was to assess job growth and creation potential within the solar and wind industries in Northern Ohio (roughly defined as the area contained in the ninth congressional district, prior to the recent redistricting).

GEO contracted with the UAC to identify and inventory firms that are currently involved in or have the potential to participate in the solar (including PV, photochemical and solar thermal) and wind energy supply chains. This inventory includes contact information, products, services, and other information that may be helpful to GEO or any other entity interested in understanding the current and potential participation by Northern Ohio firms in advanced and renewable energy sectors. The UAC's, Michael Moore, an intern from the Department of Geography and Planning, did an excellent job of mining existing business databases and assembling a local database that is rich with information about those firms. In addition Moore put this data into a mapping program that allows the user to view the data within a spatial context. Another aspect of the project included a survey of firms to learn more about their capacity and interest in entering those supply chains.