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## Extension Engagement with Urban Communities: Editors' Introduction to the Urban-Themed Issue of JHSE

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### Acknowledgments

This themed issue of the JHSE was made possible through the vision and contributions of the authors, reviewers, JHSE editorial team, and National Urban Extension Leaders (NUEL). In addition to the electronic version, a limited quantity of this special edition was printed with support from The Ohio State University College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences, Ohio State University Extension, Washington State University Extension, the Western Center for Metropolitan Extension and Research, and Mississippi State University. Copies were distributed at the 2022 National Urban Extension Conference. The editors thank Michelle Gaston, Project Coordinator at The Ohio State University, for her assistance in organizing the manuscript review and revision process, communicating with authors and reviewers, formatting and editing articles, and checking references. The editors also thank Haley Stark, Graduate Assistant at MSU, and Tia Gregory, Data Management Coordinator at MSU, for their assistance in preparing this issue for publication.

## **Extension Engagement with Urban Communities: Editors' Introduction to the Urban-Themed Issue of *JHSE***

*This introductory article for the special issue of the Journal of Human Sciences and Extension (JHSE) highlights respectful Extension research and engagement with dynamic urban communities. Like the 2017 urban-themed issue of JHSE, the intent is not to diminish the importance of rural and suburban Extension engagement but to better understand unique experiences of Extension in urban communities. The 35 contributing authors represent a range of geographic and programmatic viewpoints. Insights shared*

- *demonstrate that diversity in our cities is multidimensional;*
- *reinforce the importance of culturally relevant engagement;*
- *address issues of access, equity, inclusion, and a sense of belonging;*
- *highlight the impact of Extension investment in urban partnerships and communities;*
- *underscore the complexity in metropolitan areas; and*
- *emphasize the value and potential of our national networks.*

*Content in the introductory section indicates national support for urban Extension and presents perspective on diversity. The second section includes seven articles on Extension engagement with urban communities across the country. A few Extension leaders share what they are learning through book and media reviews. Article authors in the final section discuss a sense of belonging and practices to create the future of urban Extension. Articles provide food for thought, opportunities for practical replication or local adaptation, and ideas to keep the dialogue on urban Extension moving forward.*

Urban influence in the United States compelled Extension to connect the Land-Grant University mission with metropolitan communities where significant diversity and challenging complexities require relevant Extension commitments. The urban conversation is not new to Extension, but continuity and commitment are stronger than ever. Invited articles build upon

- National Urban Extension Leader resources,
- Western Center for Metropolitan Extension and Research (WCMER) projects,
- National Urban Extension Conferences,
- Epsilon Sigma Phi's affinity group for urban and culturally diverse audiences,
- Joint Council of Extension Professional (JCEP) urban interest groups,
- Extension Foundation urban initiatives,
- Extension Committee on Organization and Policy (ECOP) urban explorations, and

- JHSE's 2017 urban-themed issue that added to the national conversation on urban Extension through a distinct collection of articles for decision-makers.

The 2022 urban-themed issue of JHSE begins with an introductory section to provide context related to national urban Extension networks and perspective on diversity in urban communities. The seven urban Extension in Action articles demonstrate innovation and impacts across all regions of the United States. Three national Extension leaders share book and media reviews, providing glimpses into resources that can benefit urban Extension professionals. The closing section explores two important topics, beginning with how Extension can create a sense of belonging for clientele, personnel, volunteers, and partners and finishing with a focus on shaping the future of urban Extension together. Authors were invited to represent programmatic, geographic, and author diversity. The term urban is contextual throughout this issue, referring to populations ranging from approximately 50,000 to more than 8 million. While diversity and complexity are common in all urban environments, every area of the country reflects local context, unique history, current conditions, and vision of the community.

### **Invited Articles: Introductory Section**

- In the Foreword, current and incoming chairs of the National Urban Extension Leaders (NUEL) recognize the need to continue addressing shifting demographics, the progress of national urban Extension networks, and the goals outlined in the NUEL Implementation Plan.
- This article on Extension engagement with urban communities summarizes the purpose, content, and reflection on the urban-themed issue of JHSE, reinforcing the journal's commitment to bridging research and practice.
- Acknowledging that diversity at state and county levels can be abstract, the authors of *Visualizing Diversity*, Krohn, Davis-Manigaulte, Fulcher, and Tiffany, demonstrate how spatial data can be better understood to improve urban community engagement. They recognize that data tell the story of people and encourage readers to mindfully access meaningful datasets and maps to deepen perspective, move beyond broad generalizations, and relevantly address local priorities.

### **Invited Articles: Urban Extension in Action Section**

- Through a case study approach to a familiar issue of food systems, Cuite and Errickson illustrate the multidimensional reality of the terms urban and diversity, emphasizing the value of engaging various specific community members and partners in meaningful ways in the design, implementation, and evaluation of programs, as opposed to offering programs strictly *by* Extension *for* the community. They convincingly conclude that there is no single "urban community," but rather, each one has distinct needs.

- Data science, resident voice, and partnerships are also essential in advancing health equity and well-being in urban America. These and other recommendations in Cooperative Extension's National Framework for Health Equity and Well Being come to life through examples of urban Extension engagement throughout the country thanks to Burton, O'Neal, Yelland, Stluka, and Rennekamp.
- Moncloa and Rodriguez effectively made a case for intercultural competence as a fundamental capacity for urban Extension professionals. Their qualitative research addressed the influence of immigrant youth, the impact of culturally responsive mentoring, and the value of cultural brokers, trust, and cultural belonging when engaging with youth and families.
- Research on belongingness was explored through a study with urban Latinx youth who identify as LGBTQ+. Guided by intersectionality and minority stress frameworks, authenticity, and indicators of belonging, Gonzalez, Reese, and Connaughton-Espino build upon 4-H's practices for inclusion of individuals of all genders and sexual orientations.
- Urban communities are fertile ground for programs that use gardens and nature-based activities to improve personal and community well-being. Jepsen, Akgerman, Funkenbusch, Calero, and Kelejian share experiences from four states that integrate Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA) into urban agriculture programming, including community gardens, farm markets, and agritourism venues. In this article, they include a wealth of resources for Extension professionals to engage with clientele with differing abilities.
- With a focus on Somali youth living in the Minneapolis metro area, Tzenis demonstrates the value of engaging with youth, families, and trusted community partners in culturally responsive program design. Other Extension considerations included an asset-based approach, a sociocultural lens, collaborative community engagement strategies, and prioritizing relationships with youth and families through personalized communication and natural interactions that build trust. Her own personal reflection included examining the cultural, political, and social origins of her own perspective.
- Understanding linkages between Extension and faith-based organizations was the focus of Young and Jones as they explored the value of these relationships in urban communities. Readers will better understand six types of faith-based groups and opportunities to bring together the resources of the university and the social capital of these trusted community organizations.

### **Invited Articles: Book/Media Reviews**

Book and media reviews are included in this special issue of JHSE to share critical analysis of resources relevant to urban Extension professionals. With an increasing number of books,

videos, blogs, podcasts, and other media, the exchange of ideas with diverse perspectives can expand perspective, stimulate dialogue, and create meaning when applied in the urban context.

- As Extension navigates beyond the pandemic, this first media review offers timely insights. Killian, an advisory board member with the Western Center for Metropolitan Extension and Research (WCMER) and University of Nevada Cooperative Extension Southern Area Director, shared his insights from the book *The Art of Being Indispensable at Work: Win Influence, Beat Overcommitment, and Get the Right Things Done*. He provides leadership to more than 120 faculty and staff and eight offices in three counties. With the scale of opportunities in urban communities, he reinforces the value of beginning with a focus on the right things and avoiding overcommitting.
- Urban community development often begins with a focus on economic advancements, sustainability, urban planning, social justice, and other important interests. Kelly, board member and treasurer for the Joint Council of Extension Professionals (JCEP) and North Central District Extension Director for North Carolina Extension, reflected on Extension's role in urban community revitalization and the documentary *Julian Price – Envisioning Community. Investing in People*. This authentic approach to community is inspiring.
- Innovation is apparent in urban communities and in Extension. Immendorf, Design Strategist for the Extension Foundation, links principles from the book *Lean Impact: How to Innovate for Radically Greater Social Good* with Extension Impact Collaborative methodologies. She includes examples from seven urban Extension teams that participated in Impact Collaborative Summits to go further faster to make local, meaningful impact.

### **Invited Articles: Closing Section**

- A sense of belonging in urban Extension is a common theme woven through many of the articles in this issue of JHSE. It is an essential topic in urban communities as Extension engages with diverse internal and external stakeholders. Authors Madhosingh-Hector and Seals draw upon numerous Extension initiatives that share a common commitment to diversity, equity, access, and inclusion. Through interviews with urban Extension professionals, they explore current practices, challenges, and opportunities. They acknowledge Extension is making progress, and they recognize the need for shared strategies and techniques to support long-term engagement with measurable impacts.
- The article on futuring perspectives and practices for urban Extension brings together two authors – Garner, a graduate student new to the urban Extension experience, and Fox, a seasoned urban Extension professional. They recognize that for more than a century, university leaders have explored the future of Extension but never has the

degree of uncertainty, urgency, and complexity so profoundly challenged current plans and future forecasts. Garner and Fox assert that the future of urban Extension improves through developing futuring literacy; experimenting with innovative futuring approaches; managing decision making as Extension creates the future, and entrepreneurially addressing change throughout the futuring process.

### **Conclusion**

Connecting urban communities with Land-Grant Universities emerges through authentic relationships with people who live and work in neighborhoods throughout metropolitan areas. This people-centered approach, combined with the elements of the national urban Extension framework, advances Extension positioning, programs, personnel, and partnerships. Articles in this urban-themed issue shed light on progress and opportunity for relevance, access, equity, inclusion, and belonging with Extension.

This collection of articles, along with the 2022 National Urban Extension Conference, provides opportunities to keep the urban Extension conversation going through local, state, regional, and national networks. Even with varying social, political, environmental, economic, and historical contexts across the country, shared commitment unites Extension professionals who address the complexity, diversity, and urban-suburban-rural flows in densely populated communities. Extension innovation is alive and well along the rural-urban continuum. In service of the Extension mission, faculty, staff, students, and community volunteers join efforts to address the complex issues and advance well-being in dynamic urban communities.

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### Resources

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*Western Center for Metropolitan Extension and Research (WCMER) Projects.*

<https://metroextension.wsu.edu/projects>