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***New Metropolis* Films Ignite Community Dialogs Across Nation**

Stories of renewal offer hope to communities

The New Metropolis, a recently released two-part documentary series which explores issues facing the nation's aging suburban communities, is sparking dialogues in communities across the country.

From Los Angeles to Long Island City, Miami to Detroit, in town halls, business board rooms and church basements, the films are getting communities talking about issues hitting every middle aged community in America - decaying infrastructure, tax policies that don't work, competition between communities for shrinking dollars, and changing demographics.

"The issues raised in the films are *exactly* the ones we're dealing with in my town," said Linwood, New Jersey Mayor Frank DeLucca. "And they give us new ideas, and hope."

The films are being used by a wide range of organizations and public officials to get more community members engaged in participating in land use policy issues. And it seems to be working. Dozens of screenings have taken place with municipal leaders, regional planning commissions, chambers of commerce, community organizations, schools, universities and policy forums.

"The films provide a new and creative way to discuss the connections between land use policy, revitalization, sprawl, race, and transportation all in one," says Liz Blume, Director of the Community Building Institute at Xavier University. "The films are very powerful and give traction to the issues."

"These films capture a story and asks the difficult question that all older communities are facing: how do we revitalize and reinvent ourselves in the 21st century?" said Jonathan Schmidt, Founder of the S.E. Pennsylvania First Suburbs Project.

PBS Stations Join *The New Metropolis* Outreach Effort

The films, which are currently airing on PBS stations by region around the country through 2012, have also been a hit with public television audiences.

Because of the groundswell of interest, some PBS stations are airing the documentaries and then hosting follow-up programs and town hall meetings with public officials, community groups, and citizens to address local issues.

Thomas Davison, of American Public Television, the films' public television programmer noted: "The program has inspired a number of public television stations to commit to holding local events in partnership with community groups...providing a forum to bring together civic and community leaders – not just to discuss – but to search for solutions to critical issues that are impacting the daily life of citizens in their cities and towns."

Pittsburgh's PBS-affiliate WQED Multimedia hosted *Building Community Connections: A film screening and community/civic engagement dialogue about revitalizing our core communities*. The event was sponsored in partnership with local governments and community members to target next-step strategies for regional revitalization. "The screening and discussion brought people together who often don't talk to each other about these issues and got them talking," noted Grant Ervin of 10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania.

Turning Films into Community Action

But these events aren't just about seeing a film and talking. They are leading to some interesting outcomes. Several communities have actually begun to implement some of the strategies outlined in the films. Local governments in the Pittsburgh region are forging ahead to create more efficient regional governance strategies. In Cincinnati, an intentional integration workshop was held to help communities replicate some of the strategies seen in Episode Two: The New Neighbors.

Following the Cincinnati workshop, attendee Patti Webb stated: "As a resident of my community, I felt powerless...But today I feel like I'm not powerless, and we're not powerless – that we can do something."

To ensure that the community events and dialogues meet their goals, filmmaker Andrea Torrice and her production company Torrice Productions launched **The New Metropolis Community Engagement Project**. The Project offers a range of services to organizations and stations who want to host community events around the films. An updated and content rich website - www.thenewmetropolis.com - offers news about upcoming broadcasts and screenings, a community action toolkit with a viewer's guide, event planning tips, web videos from events, and social networking opportunities.

According to Project Director Andrea Torrice, "It's been really exciting to see all the different ways communities are using the films to start taking concrete steps towards revitalization. We invite anyone interested in learning more about the films or starting a dialogue of their own to visit our site, use the materials, ask us questions, and share with us what your community is doing. We all need to work towards building a new metropolis together."

For more information about the Community Engagement Project visit the website:
www.thenewmetropolis.com

To find out air dates in your region, check local PBS listings by finding your local PBS station at www.pbs.org/stationfinder/

To purchase a copy of the films contact Bullfrog Films at:
www.bullfrogfilms.com/thenewmetropolis.org

The New Metropolis Community Engagement Project was made possible with the generous support of the Ford, Surdna, Annie E. Casey, Greater Cincinnati, and William Penn Foundations, and is a project of the Center for Independent Documentary. For information on the series, events and broadcasts visit www.thenewmetropolis.com

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