Welcome to quick notes

If you're reading this, at some time or another, you subscribed to our more-or-less monthly news notes at www.useful-community-development.org. Ambition got the best of us, so we have been unable to keep a regular schedule—until now. Take a peek at our content. We are one of the few places on the web where you get really candid, conversational advice about how things really work in the community development world.

Unlike the website, these notes are really quick reads. We'll rotate which community type comes first in these newsletters. This month, the order is: cities, suburbs, rural.

Medical Centers, Hospitals, Universities Can Anchor Portions of Your City

Smart neighborhoods and cities are learning that major players, notably large medical institutions and universities, can help to rebuild a portion of a large or small city that otherwise would suffer from lack of market demand. Large cultural and religious organizations can perform the same function.

While many community development leaders have been aware of this potential for decades, we are now seeing that occasional episodes of cooperation can become more effective with a more ongoing, continuous compact between anchor institutions and cities or neighborhoods.

Several think tank organizations have cooperated under the banner of the National Resource Network to produce this thought-provoking report about ways to build a more comprehensive approach to partnerships.

Below: Tulane medical school, LSU medical school, Ochsner Medical Center in close proximity to one another and to the Mercedes-Benz Superdome in New Orleans. Scale is appropriate to vicinity.
It's Spring, But Any Season Works for a Clean-Up

At least in the northern hemisphere, spring is here, and volunteers in your suburb or urban neighborhood will be eager to work outside to clean up the place. We would especially urge you to look at cleaning up your neighborhood park when that park interfaces closely with a residential area, as in the left photo.
below. In suburbs, these close relationships between parks and residences are very common.

Another great project is a stream clean-up, as all manner of crazy stuff found its way into your creek, river, lake, or drainage facility over the winter. Look what we saw (below right) in the first minute of taking a look locally!

Cooperate Across Boundaries for Best Rural Areas

The U.S Department of Agriculture is now touting its SECD (Strategic Economic and Community Development) program. The department just announced set-asides in several of its grant programs to reward what they call multi-jurisdiction implementation of joint plans. Participating grant programs include both rural economic development and infrastructure facilities (such as water and sewer lines).

Your first step is to talk to your state office about any multi-jurisdictional planning you may have done, to see if it will qualify.

Typically rural communities don't like anything that smacks of planning. But you can form your own "multi-jurisdiction" partnerships to work together on very specific types of plans. Partners could be several villages, county government, university extension, churches, and non-profits.