

WISCONSIN ALLIANCE OF CITIES

June 30, 2010, newsletter

July 29-30 in Racine

City leaders gathering for last-ever Alliance of Cities meeting

By Rich Eggleston

The Wisconsin Alliance of Cities holds its last meeting in Racine July 29-30, with business to include adoption of rules and priority issues for the new Urban Alliance, an arm of the League of Wisconsin Municipalities. In October, the Urban Alliance will meet in Middleton in conjunction with the League's annual meeting.

"The consolidation of the League and the Alliance was no small matter and the next session will bring new ideas and new energy. I have total confidence in the future of our cities. A paradigm has shifted and with it comes a stronger voice to represent you in the state Capitol," Alliance executive director Ed Huck said in a memo to city leaders.

The Alliance was created in 1969 with fifteen cities: Appleton, Beloit, Eau Claire, Fond du Lac, Green Bay, Janesville, Kenosha, Madison, Manitowoc, Milwaukee, Neenah, Oshkosh, Racine, Sheboygan, and Wausau. The first executive director served part-time and was the former mayor of Racine, William Beyer, who had been defeated that spring by a young Kenneth L. Huck. West Allis joined shortly after the organization was started.

Early on, the organization focused on two issues: changing the revenue sharing formula, which was then a return-to-origin system, and tax incremental financing. More than four decades later, revenue sharing remains one of the biggest issues for Wisconsin's urban communities, and TIF is not far behind. But there remain a myriad of issues that concern urban communities and their often fractured — and sometimes fractious — relationship with state government.



Curt Witynski & Ed Huck at a Capitol hearing

Ed and Curt Witynski, who will become executive director of the new Urban Alliance on Jan. 1, visited Alliance members across the state over a period of six weeks this spring to see where the new Alliance's priorities should focus. They came back with a list of about five dozen issues, ranging from the regional economic development incentive developed by the Alliance and its allies, to regional cooperation, a more level playing field for collective bargaining, fewer state mandates on local government and a fairer state and local tax system.

Members are ranking the issues in importance, and will analyze and select issues to recommend to the League board of directors.

Reserve now for July 29-30

The July 29-30 Alliance meeting will be at the Radisson Racine Harbourwalk, downtown at 223 Gaslight Circle. **The Alliance rate will be \$92 per night. The number for reservations: 1-800-395-7046 or (262) 632-7777.**

Since this will be the last meeting of the Alliance of Cities as an organization, we want to make it special. Dinner Thursday night at Wingspread, the home built for the Johnson family that is now a conference center, will be pretty extraordinary!



The Wingspread Conference Center



Racine Harbourwalk Hotel

The Finance Directors meeting Thursday afternoon will feature a discussion of GASB 54, fund balance reporting and Fund Type definitions. We've already heard concerns about how those could affect ERP and levy limits.

Mark Neumann, and possibly his primary opponent, Scott Walker, will appear at Friday's general membership meeting to discuss their visions for urban Wisconsin. And members will get to act on three pages of rules proposed for the new Urban Alliance.

Recycling is part of Alliance's history

In 1987, the state started to seriously talk about mandatory recycling for Wisconsin. The Alliance took the lead on the issue, working on funding and the program itself. The concept of an effective recycling program and landfill bans evolved as a result of dialogues between lawmakers, the Alliance and others.

Initial funding of \$29 million was based on language that we added to the initial program that passed the Legislature. Since then, local recycling costs have gone up, but state money to support the program has declined.



Alliance led the way with Wisconsin Metropatterns

In 2001, the Wisconsin Alliance of Cities, through its 501 (c) (3) arm, received a grant from the Joyce Foundation to produce a study that compared tax capacity, poverty, urban problems and suburban sprawl in six of Wisconsin’s metro areas, and present its findings in brilliantly colored maps.

The resulting report, *Wisconsin Metropatterns*, found that residents of the towns of Grand Chute and Algoma — just to cite one example — had twice the capacity to finance government services as residents of the neighboring cities of Appleton and Oshkosh. See that map [here](#). We held a Feb. 8, 2002 conference on the findings, summarized [here](#).

Another map, of the Janesville-Beloit area:

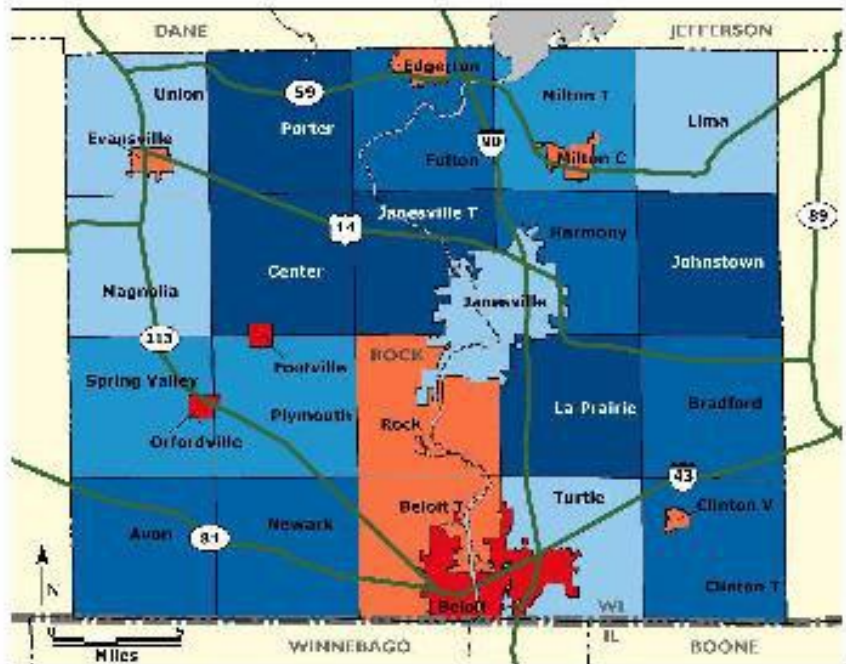


JANESVILLE-BELOIT REGION:

Tax Capacity per Household by Municipality, 1999



C - City
T - Township
V - Village



Data Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue.

Myron Orfield’s Metropolitan Area Research Corp. (MARC) chose the color scheme, but urban theorist David Rusk built on the income disparity the colors indicated: royal blue for the rich and reds and oranges for citizens who are living in the red. And the Alliance of Cities first showed the implications to policymakers and Wisconsin citizens. (A selection of maps from the study is [here](#).)

If you haven't already...

RSVP for Alliance's last meetings in Racine July 29-30

We know you're tired of these reminders, but if you can attend the meetings, please e-mail this form to Ed at ed@wiscities.org to RSVP for the Alliance meetings at the Racine Harbourview Hotel. (map [here.](#))

Name/City _____

___ Yes, I will attend the 1:30 p.m. Finance Directors meeting.

___ Yes, I will attend the 3 p.m. board meeting

___ Yes, I will dine with city leaders and guests at Wingspread, 33 East Four Mile Road,
Racine, Wisconsin 53402. (map [here.](#))

No. of people for dinner _____.

Attendees: _____

More information on Alliance meeting: ed@wiscities.org