

Our work to publish this special *eJournal of Public Affairs* issue during the Independence Day season brought focus on our responsibilities as citizens. Separately, we may each have a private or professional identity – a merchant, a medical or legal practitioner, sales or management, for example – but we also each find ourselves functioning as citizens of a particular place. That locality is only a place until we accept responsibility for engaging in the work to preserve and improve it, and then it becomes a true community for us. Our shared civic responsibility, however, increasingly seems to be weighed down and complicated by the shared frustrations of public life, particularly at the state or national level where partisan politics dominates even our best intentions. Yet, the local level remains remarkably available to individuals who desire to solve the problems they have in common as a community. This is an issue about just such effort, and we are proud to elevate it.

Colleges and universities, like individuals, also work to balance their professional roles – scholarship, education, training -- with the role the institution plays in the civic and communal life of their bricks-and-mortars place in the world. This has often been simply referred to as part of the “town-gown” relationship. To explore this special relationship with a focus on local solutions to local problems, we are fortunate that Greg Burris committed his expertise, experience, and time as Guest Editor for this issue. After retiring from Missouri State University, Greg accepted the work and responsibility of City Manager in Springfield, where the university is located. In this capacity he implemented an approach that reflected well MSU’s mission for public affairs. After ten years in city management, Greg “retired” again, this time into his current role as President & CEO, United Way of the Ozarks. It is impossible to overstate how much the final product of this issue has benefitted from his across-the-board experience.

Greg Burris embodies the energy and wisdom of public-spirited individuals who take on the responsibility of community life with purpose, expressing with his own commitments the issue’s theme of *community ownership*. As Guest Editor, Greg recruited articles from individuals involved in projects that offer examples of impact and success within a community. We hope this special issue can amplify our call to the privilege of opportunity and responsibility as citizens.

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