

***Land Value Taxation  
Promoted by Common  
Ground-USA Delegates at  
Habitat II In Istanbul***

*by Mary Rose Kaczorowski and Judith  
Vidaver, Ft. Bragg, CA*

In June 1996, the United Nations Habitat II Conference on Human Settlements in Istanbul Turkey was attended by Common Ground-USA delegates Mary Rose Kaczorowski and Judith Vidaver.

The themes and goals of the Conference were: Sustainable Human Settlements Development in an Urbanizing World" and "Adequate Shelter for All." The Habitat II conference was called because of the urgent need to address

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the problems now manifesting in a world of increasing urbanization.

According to current projections, by the turn of the century, more than 3 billion people — one-half of the world's population — will live and work in urban areas. The most serious problems confronting cities and towns and their inhabitants include inadequate financial resources, lack of employment opportunities, spreading homelessness and expansion of squatter settlements, increased poverty and a widening gap between rich and poor, growing insecurity and rising crime rates, inadequate and deteriorating building stock, services and infrastructure, lack of health and educational facilities, improper land use, insecure land tenure, rising traffic congestion, increasing pollution, lack of green spaces, inadequate water supply and sanitation, uncoordinated urban development and an increasing vulnerability to disaster.

The Habitat II Agenda is a Global Plan of Action to reverse the negative impacts of our past and present planning decisions. It sets standards to be strived for by all nations, states, counties, cities, towns and communities. It is further a commitment by all participants to implement the goals and principles outlined in the Agenda in their own communities.

More than 14,000 delegates attended from 180 countries representing national and government officials, non-governmental and community-based organizations, and private sector experts in housing, construction, finance, urban planning, the environment, and community development.

"Our mission in going to Habitat II," according to Kaczorowski, "was three-fold: (1) to represent Common Ground-USA; (2) to present the Mendocino County Resolution supporting the goals and principles of Habitat II; and (3) to learn what other groups were doing in the realms of planning, housing, sustainability and land issues."

Kaczorowski and Vidaver partici-

pated in Orientation Sessions that were hosted by NGO (Non-Governmental Organizations) and Caucuses to familiarize Habitat II NGO delegates with how to maximize their participation at Habitat II. Then they moved on to work with various caucuses on NGO input on the Habitat II Agenda, "Global Plan of Action" text. Armed with their Common Ground-USA Position Paper (also see Habitat II articles in 1996 GroundSwell issues of Jan.-Feb., May-June, & July-Aug.), Kaczorowski and Vidaver began lobbying various key coalitions, individuals and country delegations to keep language in the document that related to equitable and equal access to land and the "utilization of land based and other forms of taxation including land value taxation" in mobilizing financial resources for service provision by local authorities.

These two Common Ground-USA delegates also joined in collaboration with the International Union of Land Value Taxation, represented by Alanna Hartzok, in successfully networking at this conference. "People at this conference were very receptive to our message," according to Vidaver, "and we worked hard to cover a lot of ground. It was quite exciting to hear the idea of land value taxation being discussed in U.N. sessions during the negotiations. The U.S.A. initially recommended the inclusion of 'land value taxation' in the text. The E.U. (European Union) backed the U.S.A. on this language, The G77 countries voiced opposition. The compromise was to leave out the words 'land value taxation' without compromising the paragraph and to include such 'utilization of land-based and other forms of taxation' in relation to public finance revenues."

During the conference and negotiations on the Habitat II Agenda text, the United States promoted three overall priorities: Sustainability, Enablement, and Partnership.

Sustainability: a sustainable approach to community development that entails balanced consideration of the

economic, social and environmental aspects of building communities for the 21st century. Past experience in the U.S.A. has demonstrated all too plainly that the lack of a sustainable approach to solving shelter and other problems contributes to the deterioration of housing stock and infrastructure and to urban flight (or urban sprawl) and to environmental degradation.

Enablement. The U.S. strongly supports the concept of Enablement, whereby governments create conditions to empower communities and individuals to meet local needs as has been embraced by the great majority of countries. Enablement requires a transparent policy development process and the opportunity for full and meaningful participation in the decision-making by all stakeholders. The U.S. went further to affirm that leadership and participation of women at all decision-making levels are essential.

Partnership. The U.S. proposed and upholds the partnership of public and private sectors, as well as partnership among national, state and local governments, so that communities and individuals become genuine stakeholders in their communities. Individuals and communities are most capable of making human settlement decisions for themselves if they are enabled to do so. Those who live the problem must be involved in planning and implementation of the solution.

The following is from the U.S. Statement at the opening plenary of the U.N. Habitat II conference:

"Experience has taught us that working alone, the public sector cannot address the challenges of affordable planning, economic development, public health and safety or environmental protection. We have found at home and in our international work that partnerships with private businesses, community based organizations, and non-governmental organizations are absolutely essential.

"Some have suggested that rather

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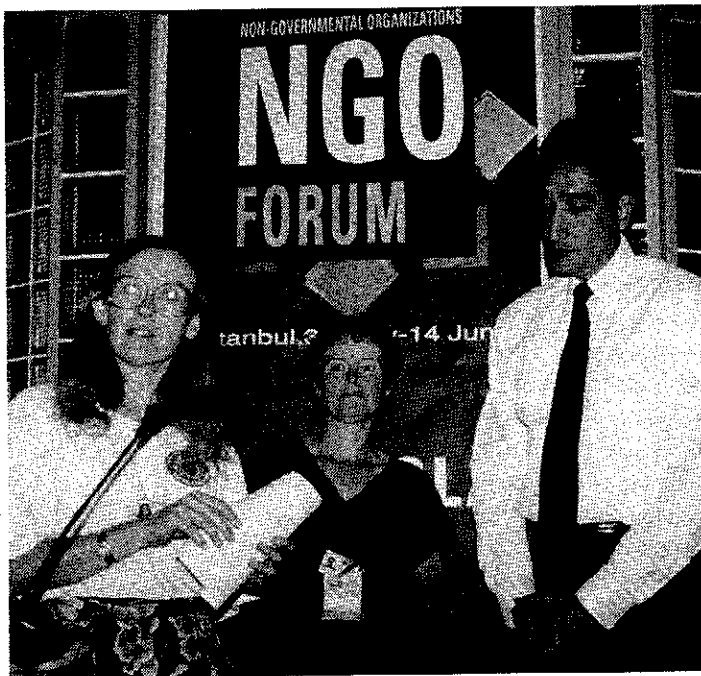
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and Vidaver will be presenting a program and slide show for the community: "From Global to Local...From Istanbul to Mendocino County." According to Vidaver, "We are bringing home the Habitat II Agenda, a voluntary plan of action, to share as a blueprint for creating a sustainable future for community." The program starts with a social hour of music and displays from 6 to 7 PM. The speakers, presentation and slide show segment of the program runs from 7 PM to 9:30 PM. Some of the speakers include Henry Holmes from the U.S. Network for Habitat II Northern California Area and Mayor Patti Campbell.

The slide show will also include some highlights from Kaczorowski's and Vidaver's travels through Turkey. Included is their 3-day visit to the forest region of Duzce co-hosted by the Turkish Forest Administration and S.O.S. Environmental Group who are both working together on creating a national park and other forest issues. Duzce is located above the Black Sea and is very similar to Northern California terrain.

Kaczorowski, who is the Outreach Director for the Henry George School of Northern California, is currently working on obtaining further information from the Mathare 4A Development Project in Kenya, Africa, a community of 25,000 that owns the land and incorporates a land rent for finance of infrastructure. Kaczorowski will be creating a website on the Internet for the Henry George School and should be on-line by late October. For access to the Habitat II Global Plan of Action (advanced unedited version) visit the Habitat II website on the Internet, or contact Mary Rose Kaczorowski, the Henry George School of Northern California, P.O. Box 2856, Fort Bragg, CA 95437.



Mary Rose Kaczorowski, Judith Vidaver,  
U.S. H.U.D. Secretary Henry Cisneros  
(Photo by James Willis, Chicago, IL)

## Resolution of the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors In Support Of Habitat II -- The Second United Nations Conference of Human Settlements To Be Held On June 3-14, 1996, in Istanbul Turkey

Whereas, the United States will be joining 180 other countries at Habitat II, a conference fostering the goals of sustainable human development and adequate shelter for all,

Whereas, more than 25,000 political and social leaders and experts in housing, construction, finance, urban planning, the environment, and community development will be representing those 180 countries, and

Whereas, the United States representatives will have the opportunity to share experiences and learn from other countries, so they may improve housing and urban conditions at home while raising the national awareness of the problems of growing urbanization and the important role of cities and towns as centers of major social, cultural, and economic activity, which need to be sustained, and

Whereas, a unique feature of the Habitat II Conference is the building of partnerships by active participation of local governments, the private sector, non-governmental and community-based organizations and the scientific and academic communities, and

Whereas, Mendocino County has already shown its leadership and support for building of partnerships with efforts such as its Mendocino County Living Communities Conference, where citizens, government, and the private sector met to begin to develop a common vision for this County's future calling for sustainable use of our resources, protection of agricultural lands, development of sustainable businesses and preservation of our community based cultures and way of life,

Now, therefore be it resolved, that the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors wishes to state its support of the Habitat II conference and to indicate that Mendocino County is a place dedicated to preserving its resources for future generations and to working together for solutions that sustain long-term economic growth while protecting and improving our living environment, and

Be it further resolved, that the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors is pleased that this Resolution will be hand carried to the Habitat II Conference by two County residents, Mary Rose Kaczorowski and Judith Vidaver, and presented with the Board's best wishes.