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Planning for Inclusion

Planning for Inclusion:
The Case of Child Care

by Mildred E. Warner

Summary: This paper challenges planners to incorporate child care into local economic development, land use, and transportation planning. For too long, child care has been ignored, but that is changing. The paper highlights innovative roles planners can play in facilitating new community approaches that promote inclusion of families with children.

Children are expensive. Housing, recreation, schooling, and child care are all expensive services that families need and local communities must provide. In some communities, zoning ordinances restrict affordable family housing so the tax benefits of new development can be enjoyed without the burden of new demand for services. This is why inclusive zoning is so critical. If planners are to be socially responsible and promote inclusion, we must challenge regulatory barriers to serving children and family needs. Increasingly we are recognizing that children are an investment in our collective future and that communities should share with parents the burden of care. Planning for communities that support children and families is a critical inclusion challenge for planners. It is easy to use the planning process to restrict services and access. It is harder, and more expensive in the short term, to use the planning process to build a better child care infrastructure for families. There are political risks to doing so, but planners across the country are taking that risk.

Planners are beginning to recognize child care as part of the social infrastructure for community development. Around the country more than 75 state and local teams of business, economic development, local government, and planners have formed in the last five years to study the economic impact of child care on the regional economy (Warner 2006a). This creates new opportunities to include attention to women, children, and family issues in local planning.

These teams have recognized the challenges of spatial mismatch in the location of child care services and the families who need such care (Covington 2006). They have worked to measure the size of the child care sector, its labor needs, and its impact on parental labor force supply for the broader economy. They have found the sector is severely undercounted in economic data (Warner 2006a). They also have looked at price and the challenges of affordability for families who can spend from 9 percent to 25 percent of their income on child care alone (Kimmel 2006). A study of child care in Vermont developed a basic needs budget that showed families spend as much on child care as on housing (Hoffer 2002).

Traditionally land-use and economic development planning have ignored child care, but that is changing. The focus is expanding not only because there is increasing recognition given to the importance of including children's well-being in our planning practice, but also because child care is seen as a critical support for working parents and their employers. The sector itself also is becoming more important in the regional economy (Warner and Liu 2005, Pratt and Kay 2006). This paper outlines some of the ways planners have helped broaden the debate to include attention to child care, and apply traditional land-use and economic development planning tools to strengthen the sector and make communities more supportive and inclusive of families. Practices in economic development planning, transportation, housing and zoning are discussed, along with continuing challenges that socially responsible planning faces in working toward inclusion of child care in local planning.

Including Child Care in the Planning Process

A recent *PAS Memo* called for planners to play a key facilitating role in building dialogue between economic developers and child care leaders to ensure the needs and concerns of families where heard in planning debates (Warner 2006b). To help planners do so, the Linking Economic Development and Child Care project[1] has developed methodology guides for conducting regional economic analysis of the sector (Ribiero and Warner 2004), strategy guides on economic development and business policy options (Warner et al. 2004, Shellenback 2004), and critical evaluative reviews of impact, voice and process among the community partnership teams (Stoney 2004a). These teams of local planners, business leaders, and child care advocates are challenging traditional land-use, transportation, and economic development planning to better incorporate the needs of children and working parents in the planning process (Adriance et al. 2007). The project also has supported venture grants to seed innovative practice at the local level.

Traditionally planning has tended to focus on the physical — roads and infrastructure. While increased attention has been given to citizen participation in planning processes, the subject of those processes is primarily infrastructure for economic development, housing, and transportation. Specific attention to social needs often takes a back seat to physical planning deemed critical to economic development. Indeed, the public participation process actually can serve as a barrier to addressing social needs, as the traffic and noise associated with child care centers has caused them to be subject to NIMBYism (Anderson 2006). So the challenge for planners concerned with social and economic equity is: How can we use the planning process to enhance equity rather than undermine it?

In 1997 APA published a policy guide on provision of child care that specifically called for family care to be exempt from zoning controls, and land-use planning to take a more friendly view of center care as well. This work built in part from an early legislative initiative in New York State that exempted family child care from local zoning. Work since that time has shown considerable progress. In California, small child care homes are exempt, but not large ones. Reforms have proceeded on a county-by-county basis (NEDLC 2002). The Local Investment in Child Care (LINCC) project has worked in numerous counties to craft zoning rules that do not restrict child care. Although there are still problems with child care centers being challenged by exclusive zoning rules, efforts to promote more inclusive zoning are on planners' agendas. For example, in Orange County, California, the United Way has received a venture grant to partner with affordable housing developers, child care organizations, and municipalities to develop inclusionary zoning ordinances for child care facilities and affordable housing. This may provide a model for other communities. Some California counties have gone further and instituted impact fees on new developments to help finance child care infrastructure (Anderson, 2006: Appendix G). Because development pressures are intense, such impact fees are possible. Elsewhere in the country where development pressures are not as great, impact fees have proved infeasible.

Just as roads, sewer, and water are needed for housing and business development, so too is child care. Increasingly planners, economic developers, and housing developers are turning their attention toward child care and using finance mechanisms common in these fields to support child care as well. For example in Wisconsin, child care is often built as part of industrial parks. In Auburn, New York (a small city south of Syracuse), an economic development planner is using state Empire Zone tax credits for child care (Cornell 2006a). She is not alone. A 2006 survey of economic developers across New York State found six municipalities using Empire tax credits for child care (Cornell 2006b). Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), Hope VI, USDA Rural Development, and New Markets Tax Credits all can be used for child care. The same survey found eight communities successfully used CDBG funds for child care. These often involve partnerships with banks or community development financial institutions. For example, in Ithaca, New York, a drop-in children's center for low-income working mothers expanded its infant services and built a new wing with support from CDBG and the local planner.

To make the link between child care and economic development requires data. In Vermont in 2003, child care was made a mandatory component of economic development planning. Regional planning commissions and municipalities are now required to plan for affordable, available child care, and provide business assistance and workforce development for child care providers. This has encouraged new collaborations between planners and child care leaders. Planners realized that standard economic data did not include basic information like parental demand for child care or even accurate information on child care supply (Pratt 2005). Although most communities face a shortage of quality child care, most also lack the basic data needed to assess that demand. Through new collaborations, planners in Vermont are working with child care leaders to address these data deficits (Stoney 2005).

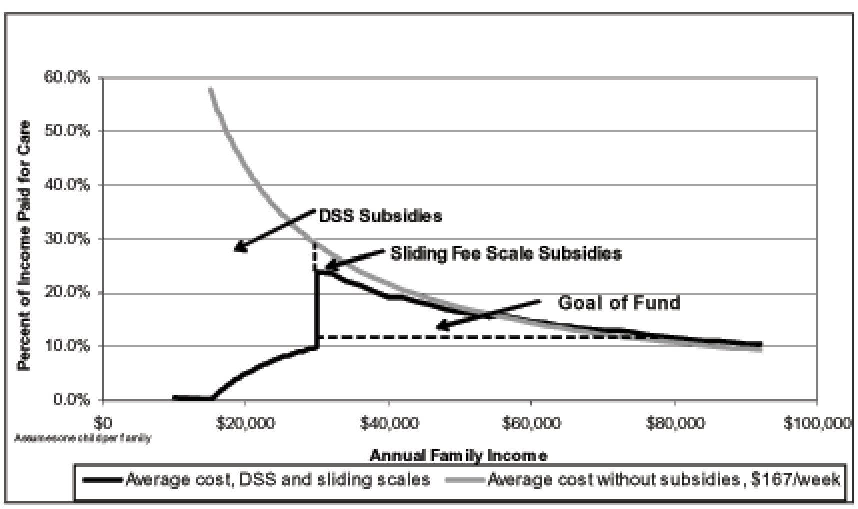
There has been some progress in linking child care to transportation. Planners now recognize that the journey to work is actually a journey to child care, then work for many parents (Rosenbloom 2005). Transportation dollars can be used to fund child care planning and construction. The LINCC project in California used a venture grant to meet with transportation and land-use leaders, and publish a white paper and bibliography on findings (Dektar 2005). In Butte County, California, a team used transportation funding to incorporate child care into local planning efforts. In San Jose, California, the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority pooled federal and state transportation funds to finance the Tamien Child Care Centers adjacent to a multimodal (train, light rail, and bus) station. Across the country, bus routes have been redesigned to recognize the actual trip-chaining needs of parents. Job Area Reverse Commute (JARC) funds have been used in Rochester, New York, and other cities to better align child care and worker transportation needs (Cornell 2006c). Increasingly planners are recognizing the dual roles parents play (Gornick and Meyers 2005) and creating transportation infrastructure that meets those dual needs.

From Private Problem to Public Concern

A few years ago, planners and economic developers had trouble seeing child care as part of the purview of planning. Child care traditionally has been seen as the private problem of families, especially women, and not a public concern (Harrington 1999). With the advent of welfare reform and increased subsidies for child care for low-income working parents, local governments became significant buyers of child care (through parental voucher programs) and keenly aware of the lack of quality, affordable child care supply. Although subsidies for low-income working parents have tripled under welfare reform, estimates still suggest only one-sixth to one-third of eligible families are served (Mezey et al. 2002).

Access and affordability are not simply the problem of low-income parents, however. Middle-income families, for whom there is no public subsidy support, face the highest child care costs as a percentage of their income. While experts recommend families spend no more than 10 percent of income on child care (Helburn and Bergman 2002), the reality is many families spend much more, or are forced to exit the regulated care system (Kimmel 2006). For example, in Tompkins County, New York, the chamber of commerce led a communitywide effort to study the economic impact of the child care sector. It identified a gap in service for middle-income working parents whose incomes were too high for public DSS subsidies but too low to access the licensed child care system (see Figure 1). The chamber created a coalition of business, government, and social welfare leaders to create a community scholarship fund that would make quality child care affordable to all parents.

Figure 1. Goal of Fund: Remove Cliff Effect for Middle-Income Families
(So They Too Can Access to Child Care At 12 Percent of Family Income or Less)



Source:
Warner, M.E., Rosaria Ribeiro, and Amy Erica Smith. 2003. "Addressing the Affordability Gap: Framing Child Care as Economic Development." *Journal of Affordable Housing and Community Development Law*, 12, no. 3: 294-313, p. 301.

Even for high-income parents, access to quality child care is a problem. Problems with child care and work life balance have led some young mothers to exit the labor force (The Case… 2004). Business leaders have begun to recognize that inadequate child care undermines employee recruitment and retention. Although some businesses are large enough to provide on-site child care, the majority of businesses are not, and thus need a collaborative communitywide approach to address child care supply (Shellenback 2004). This is where planners and economic developers can play a critical role. A 2005 survey of members of the Wisconsin Economic Development Association found almost half felt child care should be part of economic development strategy, but many felt this awareness was not shared by their local communities (Nacker 2005). A 2006 survey of Chamber of Commerce leaders and economic developers in New York State found more than 80 percent thought child care should be part of local economic development planning and more than half did not have an adequate supply of child care in their community (Cornell University 2006b). When key community leaders begin to recognize a problem, this can create momentum for change.

San Antonio, Texas, assessed the economic impact of child care subsidies and argued they were an economic development investment for the city, not merely a welfare support (Hockenyos 1999). Milwaukee, Wisconsin, performed a similar study after welfare reform and gave specific emphasis to labor shortages in the child care sector itself (Fendt 2002). Most of the state and local teams have taken a broader view, beyond the needs of low-income mothers, and argued child care is part of the social infrastructure for economic development in general. For example, the Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce in New York initiated a comprehensive, communitywide response that advocated for expanded public subsidies and used human resource staff in local firms to advertise public subsidies to eligible employees, encouraged a large business to develop a child care subsidy program for its employees, and worked with a local credit union to expand parental take up of New York's refundable child care tax credit (Warner et al. 2003). Elmira, New York, has a similar initiative promoted with support from the community foundation. Buffalo, New York, has developed a consortium with the hospital, union, and downtown developers to ensure child care infrastructure is built along with new housing to help address the child care needs of downtown residents and hospital staff (Cornell 2006d).

Such comprehensive community approaches are becoming more common. Planners can play a key facilitating role by ensuring a broader view that includes the needs of parents and children are included in local planning processes. They also know how traditional planning and economic development tools can be applied to a new sector such as child care.

Promoting Innovation with Venture Grants

Innovation is risky; so is work that crosses boundaries and builds new collaborations. Often the seed funding for such initiatives is hard to find because they fall outside traditional funding parameters of local foundations and government funding sources. But if a group can receive support to explore and test a new idea, then traditional funders will begin to invest. A venture grant program, launched with support from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, is promoting innovation at the community level (Stoney 2005). Pilot funding was given to six projects (out of 27 applicants) in 2004. The second funding round in spring 2006 received 138 applications from planners, economic developers, and child care leaders in 38 states. Priority was given to proposals that were innovative, made new contributions to the fields of child care or economic development, reached communities of color, and were sponsored by organizations or coalitions with the capacity to implement and market the plan. Many of the 16 newly funded projects are addressing the business challenges faced by the child care sector.

- The Mission Economic Development Agency of San Francisco is providing business development support to inner-city family child care providers in Hispanic neighborhoods of Mission and Excelsior districts.

- In rural Kentucky, North Carolina, and Vermont, economic development organizations are partnering with child care leaders to ensure child care is part of regional economic development planning.

- Cooperative strategies to reach economies of scale among child care centers in inner-city Detroit, Minneapolis, and Seattle aim to strengthen the viability of centers and their ability to serve their low-income, minority communities.

- Strategies to reach economies of scale in financial management for centers are being supported in Long Island, New Jersey, and rural Maine.

- Unionization strategies to enhance access to health insurance for child care workers are being explored in Wisconsin and Washington.

What each of these projects demonstrates is a collaboration between economic developers, child care providers, and policy leaders. They are exploring new ideas and testing new models. "The venture grant program is designed to encourage organizations to try out new ideas. We really wanted to encourage bold, new thinking," said Louise Stoney of the Alliance for Early Childhood Finance. "In addition to the grants, we are providing technical assistance and bringing grantees and applicants together to share ideas and foster peer-to-peer learning."

Continuing Challenges: Voice, Complexity, Gender

As child care organizations reach out to traditional economic development and planning organizations, challenges in collaboration arise. Differences in language and expertise, if not respected, can lead to dominance by planning and economic development leaders over the child care leaders (Warner 2006). Collaborations must strive to create "power with" child care leaders so it is a collaboration of equals. Many of the 75 state and local teams have championed male business leaders as spokespersons. It is not uncommon for such collaborations to be dominated by business and economic development leaders who wield significant power in the community. This heightens public and media attention to the issue (Stoney 2004a, Adriance et al. 2007). However, when such leaders have "power over" their child care partners, important insights may go unheard, and resulting program designs will be less inclusive.

It also runs the risk of giving leadership and voice to people who lack expertise in the issues. Child care is a very complicated field. It involves market-based care (centers, family homes, public preschool), and informal and family care that are especially critical for middle- and lower-income families. Efforts to strengthen the sector must address each of these components. Too often leaders search for the easy target and ignore the broader complexity. This is the problem with the narrow focus on part-day preschool in most states today (Stoney et al. 2006, Morrissey and Warner 2007).

While business and economic development leaders are more likely to be white, upper income, and male, child care leaders are more likely to be women, people of color, and low income. Many of the local teams have painted the child care issue as a broader community issue, hoping to move it from the private problem of women to a public problem, and therefore a target for public planning. But in doing so, care must be taken to remember the differential impacts on women and address them. If not, the effort to include child care in planning may ignore the special needs of women (Adriance et al. 2007).

Child care challenges affect all families. Inclusion in child care should not be focused only on the poor or single moms. The universality of the problem requires a universal response. U.S. experience with social policy shows that inclusion is better supported when policies are universal (Skocpol 1995). Targeting programs often marginalizes them, and in the early care and education field typically further undermines access for the working class (Barnett, Brown, and Shore 2004). The goal of inclusion is to make child care everyone's issue. By putting it on planners' agendas, we have the potential to broaden and build public responsibility for care. This will alleviate the heavy burden on families (Halpern 2004) and make our communities more socially inclusive places to live.

The challenges are not just operational. They also are conceptual. Care work has been largely invisible to economic developers because it has been primarily provided by families, outside the market (Folbre

2006). As more care work moves into the market, recognition of the importance of local service employment has increased. But local services have traditionally been ignored by economic development policy; the focus has been on supporting exporting industries as drivers for the regional economy (Warner and Liu 2005, Kay, Pratt and Warner 2007). The fact that child care providers tend to be small businesses or microenterprises makes the economic development challenge greater (Warner et al. 2004).

The United States underinvests in child care. Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD 2005) comparisons of advanced industrialized countries show U.S. expenditures on the full range of early care and education services are less than 0.5 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). By comparison, other OECD countries spend 1.1 percent to 6 percent of GDP on early care services. They also have a greater degree of public provision. Quebec, Canada, for example, provides child care at $5 per day for all families. In Canada, child care is viewed as a critical component of policies to promote economic development, human development and gender equality for women (Prentice 2004). In New Zealand, for example, child care is seen as part of an integrated system that supports human development, labor force participation, and job opportunities for women (EPOCC 2006). The United States does not have such a comprehensive view. National policy addresses child care subsidies. State policy looks at preschool (Barnett et al. 2005) and sets quality standards for licensed care (Stoney 2004b). But the United States lacks workforce policy, or policy that bridges the intersection between family care and market care (Gornick and Meyers 2003).

Lack of comprehensiveness at the national level is not possible at the local level. Communities are where families live, and planners must design communities to recognize the dual roles of parents as carers and earners (Meyers and Jordan 2006). This is the challenge of inclusion that socially responsible planners face. Planning tools are not sufficient to address the myriad challenges of the child care sector, but they do represent a concrete place to start. Land-use and zoning regulations, transportation planning, and economic development policy all can contribute to strengthen our market-based system of care and promote wider access for all.

Mildred E. Warner is an associate professor in the Department of City and Regional Planning at Cornell University. Her work focuses primarily on local government service delivery and new community development models for addressing human services. Warner's research explores the impact of privatization and devolution on local government, and the role of human services as part of the social infrastructure for economic development. Her work shows potential for market-based solutions in public service delivery but also raises cautions about the uneven incidence of market approaches in depressed inner city and rural areas.

Warner has a Ph.D. in development sociology, a master's in agricultural economics from Cornell University, and a bachelor's degree in history from Oberlin College. She is the author of numerous articles and book chapters, and has received major research grants from the U.S. Department of Agriculture National Research Initiative and Hatch program to look at the impact of devolution and privatization on local government service delivery, and grants from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Rauch, and Kellogg foundations to explore the links between economic development and child care. Warner has a strong extension orientation and consults widely with local government and union leaders on local government reform, and with child care policy makers and business leaders on economic development strategies to support social infrastructure. Recent work has taken her to Spain, England, New Zealand, Australia, Ecuador, and Bulgaria. She also has served as a research associate with the Economic Policy Institute in Washington, D.C., where she spent her sabbatical in 2005. Prior to her appointment at Cornell, she served as a program officer with the Ford Foundation for three years and associate director of Cornell's Community and Rural Development Institute where she brought policy makers, community development practitioners, and academics together to explore new approaches to community development.

Recent articles and research may be found at her website: http://government.cce.cornell.edu .

Notes

1. A consortium effort of Cornell University's Department of City and Regional Planning, The Alliance for Early Education Finance, Smart Start's National Technical Assistance Project and the Institute for

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