...might sound like a new reality show, but NAC is one of the best serious but non-academic urban policy and planning journals around. It has recently relaunched, replacing the print edition with what might be called Next American Journalism Model: they are supplementing the daily online content with one very in-depth feature per week, which you can buy for $2, or you get all 50 per year for $18. Are people ready to pay for their internet content after print newspapers go the way of the dinosaurs? That's what NAC is betting on.

In the meantime, it's worth your while to check it out. This week Ben Adler has an in-depth look at the Obama Administration's urban policy — or what some critics might call the lack thereof. It's unfair in my view to criticize the administration for not focusing more on urban policy and planning issues: dealing with the implosion of the national and world economy, reforming health care, and regulating the financial sector are quite enough for anyone's plate (and he also made student loans cheaper, repealed DADT, put in a host of new climate regs, and moved forward with important education reforms).

Yet underneath the surface of apparent inaction has been an important change in how the federal government delivers change. Both major and minor policy changes often run aground because of "silo management", i.e. the inability of agencies to communicate with each other and work together. Nowhere is this more true than in urban planning, where real change must occur in a host of land use, transportation, energy, housing, environmental, and urban economic issues.

The Obama Administration has worked hard at reforming this muddle. In particular the structure of grant-making has changed so that agencies on federal, state and local levels have powerful incentives to collaborate. The White House's Domestic Policy Council and its two signature efforts — the Partnership for Sustainable Communities and the Sustainable Communities Initiative — have, in Adler's words, pushed one overarching philosophy, viz. "integration at every level of government and helping communities shape their own fate":

> Historically, problems and federal attempts at solutions have been treated separately. Nowhere is this more apparent than in cities, which demand integrated approaches to housing, transportation, criminal justice, education and environmental remediation. In the past, a community needing federal resources for development would have to address HUD to build public housing, the DOT to build roads and transit systems, and the

> Environmental Protection Agency to help with urban brownfields. Sometimes these projects would overlap, other times they'd conflict. The end result? Inefficiencies that simply can't be afforded in today's fiscally constrained times.
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> What the Obama team realized is that cities need policies that encourage holistic improvement. Every Obama administration initiative is thus focused on using inter-agency coordination to aid cities in pursuing their own goals, rather than offering one-size-fits-all funds or operations.

This isn't particularly sexy politically, but it is crucial: "A lot of folks may not have appreciated how extraordinary it actually is for cabinet departments to sign up to talk to each other," says Sarah Kline, policy director at Reconnecting America. "The fact that they ran a joint grant program and reviewed each others programs is a sea change." Adler concludes that the administration has a lot of good ideas and has implemented its agenda well, but it is far too small to make substantial changes. As they say, read the whole thing.

And note well: the only way that this kind of in-depth reporting gets done is because journals like *NAC* are willing to invest the resources to pay reporters to uncover it. It's all too easy to reprint politicians' press releases — an activity that appears to encompass most political journalists' job descriptions. In order to get quality journalism, we have to pay for it, and at $18 a year, it's a bargain. So check it out.