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LAND USE PLANNING IN NORTH CAROLINA

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North Carolina can still be considered a rural state, although the trend toward urbanization continues. Our largest city, Charlotte, ranks only seventy-third in size among the nation's cities. About 55 percent of North Carolina's population live in rural areas.

Agriculture continues to play a major role in the state's economy, although it is declining in relative importance. Industrialization continues throughout the state in response to readily available labor (though relatively unskilled), low wages, generally good personnel attitudes, and overall attractiveness as a place to live. North Carolina ranks among the top ten nationally in manufacturing employment.

Industrialization and urbanization pressures are greatest in the Piedmont, which contains the bulk of the state's population and industry. Suburbanization may be a relatively new phenomenon in North Carolina, but the problems associated with development in the urban fringe and deterioration in the city centers are very real. Among the key problems are leapfrog and strip developments which give rise to excessively high cost of services, deterioration of air and water quality, conflicts between existing farm activities and residents of new subdivisions, solid waste disposal, sedimentation of streams and reservoirs from urban development and failure of individual family septic tanks.

Although population in our coastal and mountain areas is not growing as rapidly as in the major cities of the Piedmont, the extreme concentration of growth on the more fragile lands along the water's edge and in the mountains creates problems that are perhaps more severe. At least partially as a result of development in the coastal area, thousands of acres of shellfish grounds have been closed because of water quality deterioration. Septic tanks placed on unsuitable lands fail and contaminate drinking water. On the coast there is concern that fresh water for drinking will be in short supply. And in general there is a concern for maintaining the type of environmental quality that made these areas attractive initially.

ORIENTATION, OBJECTIVES, AND ORGANIZATION

The land use planning program in North Carolina is oriented toward providing an educational program rather than a service program and presenting alternative policy issues rather than single solutions. Our efforts focus initially on materials preparation and leader training which will enable county extension agents and county rural development panels to conduct local programs related to local problems.

In addition to being scientifically more appealing, the "alternative solutions" approach provides for a better understanding of the decision-making process and enables local leaders to tailor programs to their local situations. To have the state specialist conduct the programs, tailoring them to local conditions, would be time consuming because of the number of local areas requiring specific treatment.

The specific objectives of our land use planning effort are to create citizen awareness of the changes occurring in North Carolina and the problems associated with these changes, to create understanding of the land use planning process and the need to systematically analyze the impacts of alternative policy decisions, and to develop understanding of alternative land use planning methods and tools.

With the Agricultural Extension Service providing primary leadership, the North Carolina program operates primarily through the State Rural Development Committee, its three Task Forces on Rural Environment, Health, and Housing, and the rural development panels in each county. A parallel layer of voluntary citizen groups and development associations at the state and local levels along with the seventeen multi-county planning regions complete the organizational structure.

The North Carolina Rural Development Committee has always sought to involve and participate with state governmental agencies rather than operate as a small U.S. Department of Agriculture committee. This involvement has led to relatively close cooperation between state and USDA agencies and institutions of higher education.

Membership on the State Rural Development Committee consists of representatives from state government, land-grant universities, the USDA, two youth groups, and the multi-county planning districts. Immediately following the organization of the state committee, county extension chairmen were requested to convene local county development panels to serve as a focal point for plan-

ning and implementation at the local level. The county panels have broadened their membership to an average of 16 members, including local representatives of USDA agencies, education, labor, social services, health, and planning boards, local government, and other groups directly involved in rural development.

The state committee, kept small by design, is basically a steering committee. Task forces have been formed to assist the committee in identifying specific problems, in suggesting strategies, and in planning and implementing programs.

The Task Force on Rural Environment includes about 50 representatives from private business, citizens' groups, public policy making bodies, and governmental agencies at all levels. It assists the state committee in identifying environmental problems; developing and disseminating information on alternative approaches and the educational, financial, and technical assistance available; developing and conducting training programs; and fostering better interagency cooperation and understanding. Its efforts are organized under four work groups: recycling, animal waste management, rural solid waste management, and land use planning.

North Carolina has nine area development associations (groups of counties) within which there are county community development councils. Community development clubs and civic, service, and social groups complete the structural picture. With information and guidance from county extension agents and state extension specialists, they utilize program materials prepared by the Rural Development Committee and its task forces in their own programs and also provide inputs to the problem identification process.

The organizational structure is perhaps the key to any success we have had in our land use planning program, because direct lines of communication have been established between citizens and state and federal agencies.

STEPS IN THE LAND USE PLANNING PROGRAM

The process is begun through the activities of the county rural development panels and the area development associations. There the citizens can and do express their concerns. The county rural development panels and area development associations pass on this information to their agency state-level counterparts who, in the case of the panels, sit on the land use planning work group of the Task Force on Rural Environment. This, combined with direct citizen participation on the work group, enables the work group to identify the priority problems. The remaining steps in the land use planning program, including the approach to be taken, the de-

velopment of information and materials required, the development and conducting of training programs and whatever else is required, are then undertaken by the task force. Extension specialists provide the major leadership.

THE PROGRAM EXPERIENCE

The original land use planning program in North Carolina began in 1969 with the first five regional training workshops for county agricultural extension agents. In 1973 four regional environmental quality workshops were planned and conducted by the Task Force on Rural Environment for county rural development panels.

To ensure follow-up efforts at the local level, a packet of materials has been widely distributed to county panels and other local and interested leaders. The packet includes a script for the slide-tape set "Planning for Tomorrow's Communities"; an issue of *Tar Heel Economist* on "Land Use Planning"; and five leaflets titled "Planning for Tomorrow's Communities," "Land Use Planning: A Tool in Guiding Community Growth," "Legal Aspects of Land Use Planning," "Citizen Participation in Land Use Planning," and "New Approaches in Land Use Planning." Local meetings are held continuously throughout the state utilizing these materials as well as material from individual state specialists on subjects such as soil capabilities, waste management, and water quality.

Extensive educational programs have also been developed to assist in the implementation of the Sedimentation Pollution Control Act of 1974 and other legislation related to land use planning—the North Carolina Land Use Policy Act, a Coastal Area Management Act, and a farm land taxation act. Major emphasis is now being placed on coastal area management. Meetings have been held involving citizen leaders in the coastal zone, members of the land use planning work group of the State Task Force on Rural Environment, and the state agencies responsible for administering the legislation. Materials are in preparation. A workshop has been held for county extension chairmen to discuss coastal zone planning. Additional workshops and training sessions are planned.