Richard J. Reeder

Nonmetro Governments Becoming More Self-Reliant

Nonmetro local governments increased their real per capita spending by 4 percent from 1977-82, despite reduced Federal and State aid. Financing that growth in spending required greater efforts to raise local revenues, mostly from nontraditional sources. Nonmetro governments became more self-reliant fiscally and their revenue bases more balanced, both of which are positive developments. However, for many nonmetro areas, these developments have contributed to increased fiscal stress for their local governments. Nonmetro government debt also increased, adding to the fiscal pressure on nonmetro communities. A continuation of these trends may make it increasingly difficult for rural communities to keep taxes and public services at levels compatible with economic development.

Nonmetro spending grew mostly for utilities and other local government expenditures: health, hospitals, sewage, sanitation, interest payments, jails, and "other" general expenditures. (These increases may be overestimated because, while the price deflator I used here to adjust for inflation reflects the general rise in prices of State and local government purchases of goods and services, costs for utilities and "other" expenditures are believed to have risen more than average.) Only education, among the remaining categories, showed much of a real decline. It fell $23 per capita in nonmetro areas and $62 per capita (in real expenditures) in metro areas (fig. 1).

While nonmetro local governments increased spending, their Federal and State aid receipts declined. Real direct Federal aid declined the most, $13 per capita (an 18-percent reduction); real State aid declined only slightly, $4 per capita (a 1-percent reduction). This led to greater fiscal decentralization in the Federal system. One beneficial result of this trend is that local governments are becoming less dependent on Federal and State aid. However, most nonmetro governments still obtain over a third of their revenues from Federal and State sources, mostly State. Reliance on State aid is greatest for totally rural nonmetro counties and nonmetro counties adjacent to a metro county (fig. 2).

Greater self-reliance, however, means that governments have to raise more revenues locally. For many nonmetro governments, this may have contributed to local fiscal stress. "Revenue effort" is a widely used measure of fiscal pressure. It is defined here as the percentage of local resident personal income raised by local taxes and user charges, excluding utility and liquor store revenues. The average nonmetro county increased its revenue effort from

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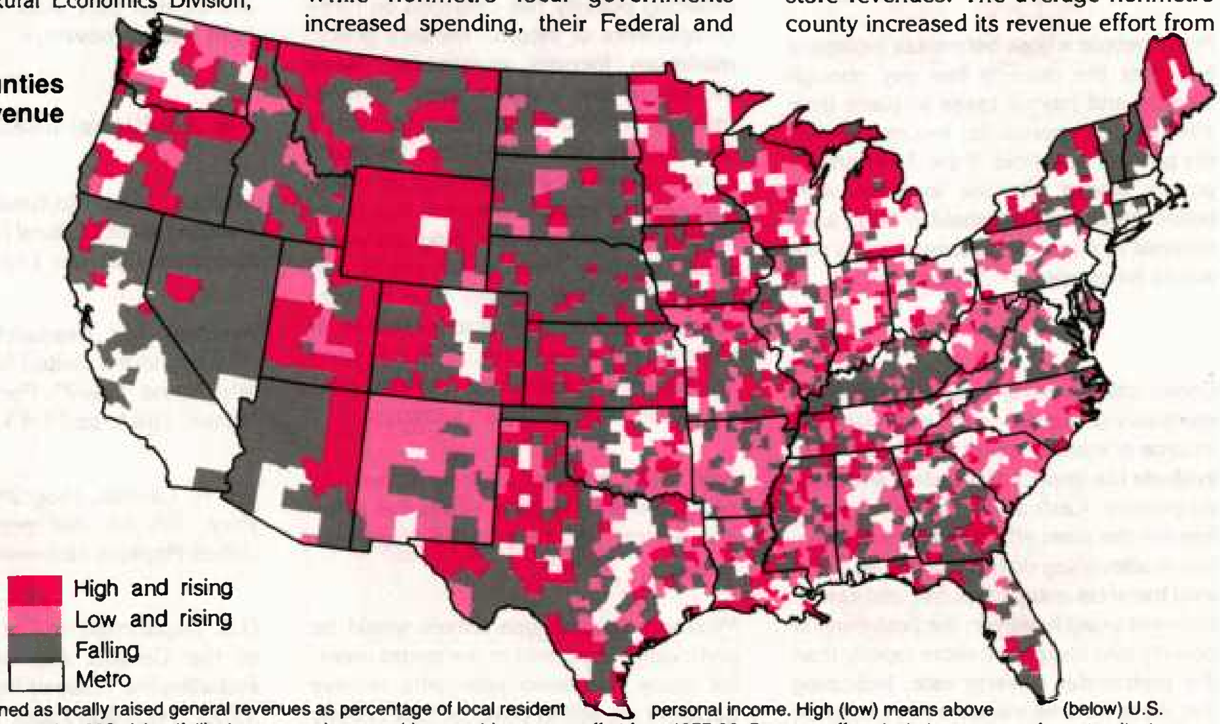
Nonmetro counties with rising revenue efforts

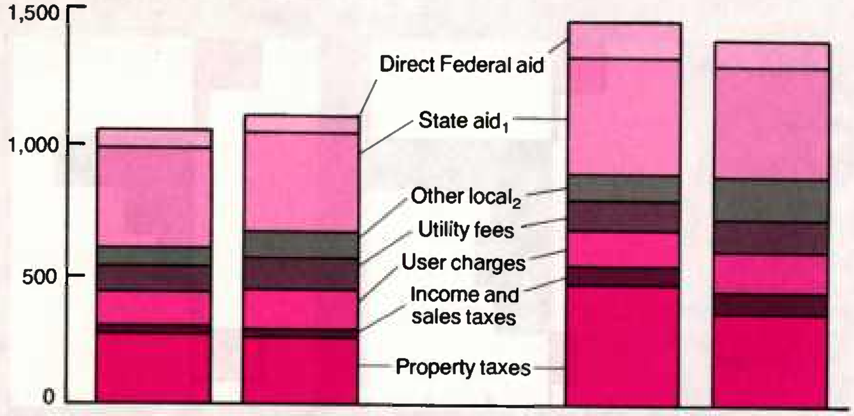


Revenue effort is defined as locally raised general revenues as percentage of local resident personal income. High (low) means above (below) U.S. average for nonmetro areas in 1982; rising (falling) means an increase (decrease) in revenue effort from 1977-82. Revenue efforts include revenues of county, city, town, township, special district, and school district governments. Source: Bureau of the Census, Bureau of Economic Analysis.

Figure 1

Nontraditional revenues helped local governments stay solvent as Federal and State aid and local property taxes declined

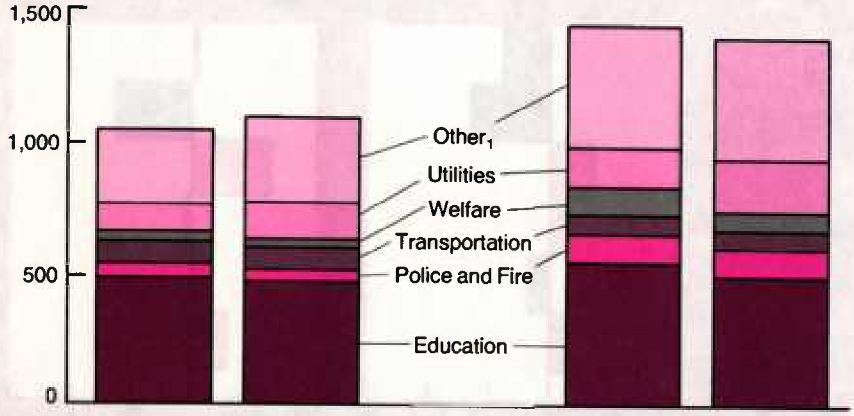
Per capita 1982 constant dollars



[1]Includes Federal aid passed through State governments.
[2]Includes interest earnings, special assessments, selective sales and gross receipts taxes, and other revenues.

Nonmetro spending rose while metro spending declined

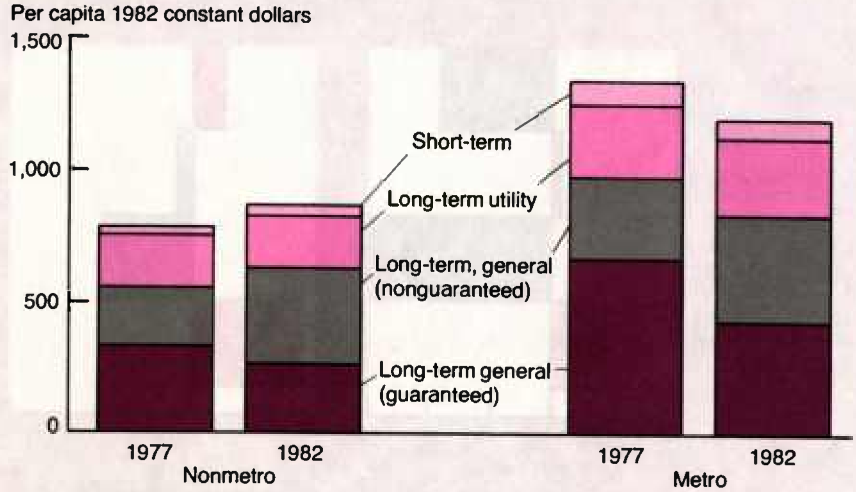
Per capita 1982 constant dollars



[1]Other includes sewage, sanitation, health, hospitals, parks, recreation, interest payments, libraries, correction, general administration, natural resources, urban renewal, and miscellaneous general spending.

Nonmetro debt rose as metro debt declined

Per capita 1982 constant dollars



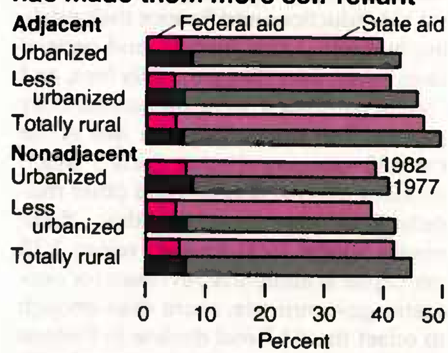
Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census and Bureau of Economic Analysis.

6.3 percent of income in 1977 to 6.6 percent of income in 1982. Revenue efforts went up in 56 percent of nonmetro counties.

Many nonmetro counties had high (above the 1982 nonmetro average) and rising revenue efforts. This combination of high and rising efforts—indicating fiscal stress—is widely scattered across the country. However, the incidence of such fiscal stress is greatest in parts of the Sun Belt (California, Texas, and Florida) and in a wide band crossing the northern and central United States, from Oregon to Illinois (fig. 3). It is greatest in the East North Central States and least in New England (see map).

Figure 2

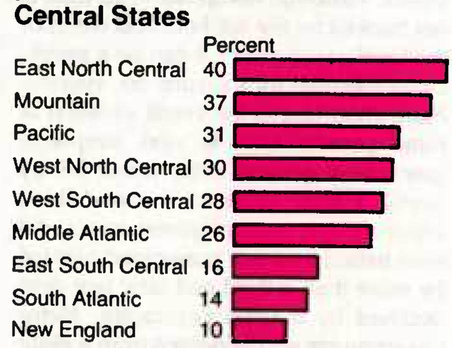
Less Federal and State aid to nonmetro counties since 1977 has made them more self-reliant



Totally rural = fewer than 2,500 urban residents.
Less urbanized = 2,500 - 19,999 urban residents
Urbanized = 20,000 - 50,000 urban residents
Fiscal year data. Adjacent refers to proximity to metro area. State aid includes that portion of Federal aid which passes through State governments.
Source: Bureau of the Census.

Figure 3

Fiscal stress on nonmetro local governments least prevalent in New England and most prevalent in the East North Central States



A county had fiscal stress if its local government revenue efforts (local taxes and user fees per dollar of local income) exceeded the average for nonmetro counties and increased during 1977-82.
Sources: Bureau of the Census and Bureau of Economic Analysis.

While fiscal pressure was going up for most nonmetro areas, this was not generally true for metro areas. In the average metro county, locally raised revenues took up 5.6 percent of income in 1982, the same as in 1977. Roughly the same number of metro areas had rising efforts as had falling efforts.

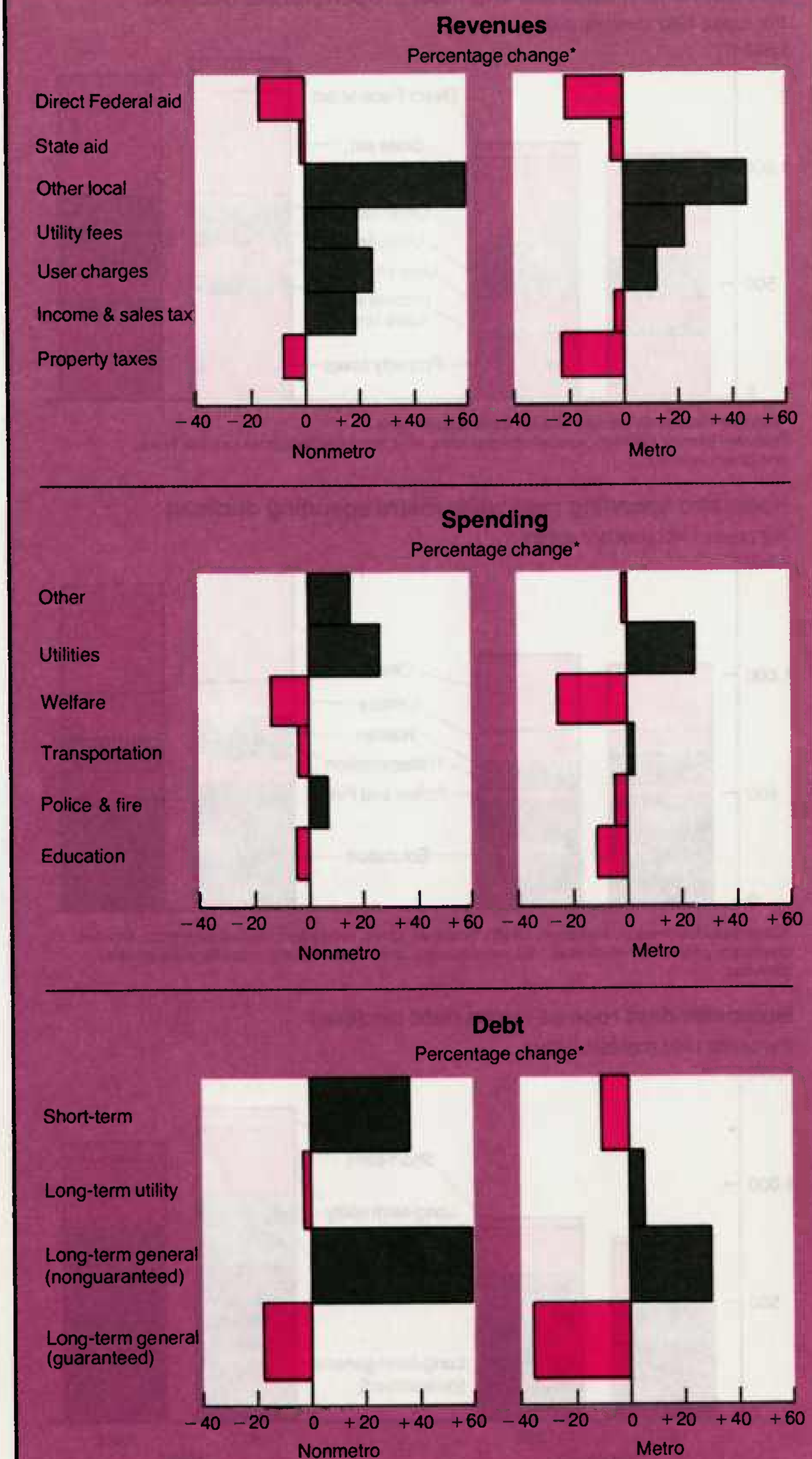
Although metro governments also faced declining Federal and State aid in the early 1980's, they reduced their real per capita spending, reversing previous trends. Reducing real spending helped metro governments to avoid raising their revenue efforts.

California's passage of Proposition 13 in 1978 ushered in a new era of limitations on the use of traditional property taxes for much of the country. With many taxpayers unwilling to increase property taxes, nonmetro governments turned to nontraditional sources of revenues to offset aid reductions and finance their growing budgets. Local income and general sales taxes, user charges, utility fees, and "other" revenues went up substantially (fig. 3). The largest increase was in the catchall category ("other local") which includes interest receipts and other miscellaneous revenues. Together, these nontraditional local sources raised $38 per capita in additional revenues for nonmetro governments, more than enough to offset the $17 real decline in Federal and State aid and the $14 real decline in property taxes.

Nonmetro local government debt burdens (real debt outstanding, per capita) rose by 10 percent from 1977-82 (fig. 4). Rising debt burdens were fueled by rapid growth in long-term, general, nonguaranteed debt, which includes much debt issued for private purposes, such as industrial revenue bonds and mortgage revenue bonds. Although nonguaranteed debt is not backed by the full faith and credit of the local government, it can be a significant obligation for the rural community. More important to the credit situation of rural governments is real long-term guaranteed general debt, which fell by nearly a fifth. While this was a fiscal improvement, metro governments did even better; their real guaranteed debt fell by more than a third and total real debt declined by a tenth per capita. Metro governments also benefited from a slight decline in real short-term debt per capita. Nonmetro short-term debt increased by nearly two fifths, indicating increased short-term fiscal stress.

Figure 4

Changes since 1977 in revenues, spending, and debt highlight differences in nonmetro, metro responses to tight budgets



*Based on changes in per capita 1982 constant dollars. See fig. 1 for footnotes and source.

RETHINKING THE FEDERAL LANDS

Sterling Brubaker, Editor. Washington, DC, Resources for the Future, Inc., 1984. 306 pages. Index. $39.00, hardcover; $14.95, paperback.

Reviewed by Norman Wengert

The diverse views presented in this book by 12 authors seek to provide an intellectual basis for, or at least an explanation of, the "Sage Brush Rebellion." The "Rebellion" began in Nevada toward the end of the Carter administration in the form of a legislative resolution calling for the disposal of Federal lands through sale, gift, and grants to the States. A number of other State legislatures followed Nevada's lead, and the movement seemed to peak in a Salt Lake City conference (generously financed by mining and other economic interests) early in the Reagan administration. James Watt, President Reagan's first Secretary of the Interior, frequently indicated his support for the policies espoused by the Sage Brush Rebels; that is, disposal of Government lands, particularly those held by Interior's Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Agriculture's Forest Service.

Every chapter discusses changes in how the public lands might be approached. Although not all contributors would support the more extreme proposals of the Sage Brush Rebellion, they generally support efforts to give or sell private or Federal lands to the States. The ideas and proposals are not tightly integrated, but cover a wide range of reforms.

On the positive side, I rate the chapters by Clawson, Sax, and Leshy as particularly insightful and useful in shaping present-day policies. These three authors seem to have recognized best the interrelationships among public domain policies and events in the economy generally. In a sense, their prescriptions are more tentative but by that very characteristic more adaptable to the changing realities of the larger situation in which mineral, timber, grazing, and other land-use policies must be developed. It is disappointing, however, that these chapters, as well as all the rest, fail to deal with the highly subsidized character of American agriculture, as well as of other sectors of the economy related to or affected by public domain policies. More emphasis should be placed on economic, political, and social interrelationships when shaping public domain policies.

On the negative side were the issues and problems not dealt with, as well as inconsistencies and logical flaws among the several authors and sometimes within a single chapter. In describing timber-harvesting practices in the national forests, for example, some contributors asserted that prices charged by the U.S. Forest Service were too low (although the law requires a bidding procedure), while others stressed that a larger harvest would result if timber lands were in private ownership. It seems obvious that if prices were raised, the amount of the harvest would be reduced. In a similar vein, some contributors suggested that grazing fees charged by BLM and Forest Service were too low (a claim going back to the turn of the century by opponents of Government control of grazing). Yet almost no analysis was given to the possible land-use, market, or distributive consequences of higher fees. A common premise of most authors was that the various recommendations moving toward private or State ownership and a free market would increase Federal government receipts. No one explored in a rigorous way the alternative of a glut in the products of the Federal lands and in the lands themselves resulting in their general unmarketability. A few reservations were expressed about the more drastic proposals.

The book is an outgrowth of a 1982 workshop sponsored by Resources for the Future. Much has happened since then to challenge the premises and proposals advanced by some of the authors in favor of privatization of public lands.

Oil and gas prices have plummeted so that bids on public oil and gas lands have virtually halted; copper, coal, and other minerals are in surplus and exploration for new sources on public as well as on private lands has practically ceased. A surplus of timber and timberlands is reflected in the protectionism which led President Reagan to impose tariffs on Canadian shingles and soft woods. Bankruptcies in natural resource industries are increasing, so that sale of Federal lands to developers is probably unattractive. With respect to grazing rights, the dismal farm price situation would seem to preclude most beef and sheep ranchers from purchasing Federal lands. State acquisition of Federal lands seems equally unlikely, because few of the Western States could take on the administrative costs involved, even if the lands were granted to them at no cost. In the present economic climate in agriculture, in forestry, and in mineral development, any significant or sensible program of privatization of Federal lands seems unlikely to succeed. While some acres would undoubtedly be transferred to private or State ownership, most of the lands would remain in the public domain, more fragmented, more difficult to access, and likely more costly to protect and administer. The best thing to come from the issues raised in this book might be a continuing and continuous "rethinking of the Federal lands" in the context of not only land and its very specific uses, but of the entire American economy. Resources for the Future deserves credit for sponsoring the workshop that led to the book. Its challenge now is to continue its support for research and analysis of the issues and problems associated with a third of the Nation's land.

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GROWTH MANAGEMENT IN COUNTRYFIED CITIES

Volume I: Change and Response; Volume II: Six Perspectives. J.C. Doherty. Alexandria, Va., Vert Milon Press, 1984. Vol. I, 103 pages, $6.95; Vol. II, 158 pages, $7.95; both volumes for $14.00.

Reviewed by Richard W. Long

The planning profession has taken some serious knocks in the last decade. The decade began with celebrations of the private sector, the market, and individualism; development was "in," government intrusion was "out." Following explosive rural growth in the previous decade, these value trends have made life unpleasant for those with a planner's vision of growth management. Doherty argues that the fight for planning is not over.

This slim, very well written argument for more effective rural planning and the accompanying set of six case studies successfully bridge the gap between a "one-shot" case study and aggregate data. Doherty is clearly familiar with demographic trends and uses case studies of several rural areas as concrete examples of those trends.

The second volume is a fascinating and perceptive description of development in rural communities in six States, and the politics and planning that surround it. It is a useful reminder of the diversity of rural areas to all of us who are inclined too often to generalize from our own limited, narrow, and often outdated rural experience.

It is in the first volume that Doherty makes his case in a thoughtful and understated argument for local planning. Obviously appalled by sprawl, he is objective enough to understand the forces producing it and to recognize that rural people benefit from those forces, especially the mobility the automobile has given us. He describes what he calls "the countryfied city" as "a kind of spontaneous, do-it-yourself expression of the garden city ideal, mingling town and country, fashioning an area of work, play, and living that is simultaneously urban and rural." That is an attractive goal and one many rural residents think they are achieving. So why manage development?

Doherty makes the strongest case possible for preserving prime farmland from encroaching development; not a strong case in the final analysis. But his real objection is that the countryfied city is an aesthetic disaster. That is clear, to most outsiders at least. But support for planning to preserve the city dwellers' vision of a pastoral ideal—something on the order of the popular image of a Tuscan village, for example—is very shallow in rural areas.

What Doherty wants is a neat delineation of town and country. Acknowledging that such crisp distinction is not possible in the United States, he still sees a few things that can be done: malls should be rejected with disdain and derelict business districts revivified. In short, small towns and the areas that surround them should be made more picturesque.

That argument appeals to outsiders by definition; it may be good economics for small towns in the few cases where aesthetics can be made to pay. But the supply of picturesque tourist villages is reaching the saturation point. Other things being equal, the mall has its virtues, people like them and find them convenient. The much greater driving range that produced more choices, cheaper prices, and more convenient parking, things that killed many small town business districts, still exists.

Almost every page tells the reader that Doherty knows he is in an uphill fight for better aesthetic planning. He offers suggestions for oblique means of planning and controlling growth on many pages. In fact the first volume is almost a well-reasoned and sophisticated manual for "guerrilla" planning for those determined to pursue the planning vision in the face of overwhelming opposition. As such, it is not only a useful tool for those who wish to carry on the fight, but an excellent statement of the current political fortunes of planning on local, State, and Federal levels.

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THE WEALTH OF STATES: POLICIES FOR A DYNAMIC ECONOMY

Robert Vaughn, Robert Pollard, and Barbara Dyer. Washington, DC, Council of State Planning Agencies, 1985. 154 pages. $16.95.

Reviewed by Molly Sizer Killian

This optimistic book argues that State and local governments can promote economic development, "the process through which wealth is created," but they need to explore a new way of thinking about it. Thus, the development strategies presented emphasize creating wealth, rather than redistributing it.

New wealth is created, the authors say, mainly through entrepreneurial innovations. These innovations can take the form of developing new goods or services, producing existing goods or services at a lower cost, or opening new markets for existing goods or services. The authors contend that States and local areas can promote the creation of new wealth (without "beggaring" other areas of the country) by providing an environment conducive to entrepreneurial activities.

The first section of the book states that local opportunities for and investments in entrepreneurs (either as individuals or organizations) can help expand a State's economy from within, not only through specific economic development programs, but also through the government's "taxing, expenditure, regulatory, and enforcement activities" (p. 24). The authors claim that the traditional development emphases on creating jobs, targeting particular industries, and recruiting industries from outside the State have caused officials to overlook local development opportunities and sometimes to adopt policies that discourage local entrepreneurs.

Two critical elements in developing an "environment for entrepreneurship" are the opportunity to compete and incentives for taking risks. Many public policies and regulations, including those established to

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protect the consumer and those that limit entrance to occupations and businesses, act as barriers to entrepreneurial activities. In addition, public programs designed to shelter people from the consequences of structural change (like subsidies for declining industries) reduce the incentives for taking the risks of entrepreneurship. The authors contend that development officials should closely examine all aspects of State policies and regulations to reduce such barriers to competition and to provide more incentives for entrepreneurial investments.

The second section in the book focuses on how States can promote wise investments in innovation, human capital, and public capital. Innovation can be promoted by policy initiatives such as the repeal of usury laws, the removal of restrictions on bank branching, and the development of private insurance for commercial and industrial loans. Such actions will give riskier borrowers better access to loans. Improved investments in human capital, a key element of development strategies, can be accomplished by providing better access to information about the performance of educational institutions (for example, data on the placement and earnings of postgraduates) and by funding individuals (through loans, grants, and vouchers) rather than institutions. Investments in public infrastructure (highways and bridges, water supply and waste disposal systems, public buildings) are constrained by tight budgets in many States. The authors suggest more use of private enterprise, arguing that, in many cases, "services and facilities could be built and operated more cheaply by private enterprise" (p. 112).

The final section of the book addresses the politics of the proposed entrepreneurial strategy, emphasizing the conflicting demands of different constituencies. The main issues are how to build a set of development initiatives that represent a well-integrated package and how to build strong public support for that package.

While there is much to like about this broadly defined wealth-creating approach to economic development, there are some notable drawbacks for rural development. First, the authors explicitly state that they are focusing on economic issues, not social equity. Nevertheless, many of the policies proposed in the book will have adverse distributional effects. For example, removing support from declining rural industries will have a direct impact on the workers employed in those industries. These anticipated effects can be taken into account in the development strategy package. Other distributional effects may not be so easily anticipated, however, and may work against the goals of rural development. For example, poor rural States with high levels of unemployment may lack sufficient public and private capital within the State to invest in innovation, human capital, and public works. If the money for these investments is borrowed from other States, then a large part of the returns on those investments will be lost to the State.

A second concern is that the authors tend to gloss over the impact of national and international trends and events on rural and urban economies. Early in the book, the authors acknowledge that a State's economy is often dominated by forces outside its control, thereby significantly limiting the role that State policies and programs can play in economic development (p. 5). The rest of the book, however, leaves the impression that the health of a State's economy is relatively independent of national and international forces. More needs to be known about the direct and indirect effects of the linkages between local, national, and international economies before those effects can be safely left out of the equation. Despite these drawbacks, the book is thoughtful, well written, and well worth reading.

Compiled by Thomas A. McDonald

Building Main Street Retail Sales

Regional malls seem to have grown at the expense of rural main street businesses. North Dakota's Cooperative Extension Service reports that after the opening of a new regional mall in Sioux City, IA, total retail sales in the surrounding four rural counties declined, while the county with the mall enjoyed a substantial increase in total sales, despite no growth in that county's population.

What can small communities do about it? Brian Wansink (Stanford University) and Ralph Utermoehlen (Kansas State University) put forth the following suggestions at a workshop conducted at a Mid-America and Its Future Conference.

1. Clean up the backyard. Make sure the town offers a browsing and relaxing atmosphere that contributes to a total shopping experience. Clean building facades, plant trees, provide sidewalk planters, help merchants with signs and merchandising.

2. Make sure merchants cooperate on promotions. That goes beyond coordinating on special sale days and includes some uniformity of retail hours when most stores are open.

3. Foster the appearance of merchant cohesiveness through logos and slogans. This point is emphasized time and again by successful towns. The town logo should be shown in all ads and billboards, on store and chamber of commerce letterhead, displayed in stores and store windows, imprinted on shopping bags, and used with postal meters.

(Excerpted from *Rural Development News,* North Central Regional Center for Rural Development, Dec. 1985.)

Local Shoppers Directory Also Helps Build Local Sales

Businesses around Chesterfield, MA, have bolstered sales with a community business directory making it easy for local residents to find and purchase what they need without going out of the area. A $20 fee buys a business a dual listing (by town and by product or service). The fee is comparable with charges for advertisements in the local yellow pages. The last printing of the directory listed more than 400 merchants in 70 pages and was distributed to about 10,000 area households. For more information, contact the Hilltown Community Development Corporation, P.O. Box 17, Chesterfield, MA 01012, (413) 296-4363.

(Excerpted from *Capsules,* October 1986, Southern Rural Development Center.)

Convert Wastewater Sludge to—BIOBRICKS

Providing potable water supplies is only one part of the job (see the article by Clifford Rossi beginning on p. 21). The other part is removing the waste and treating the water. Here are a couple of approaches.

Even after wastewater is treated, sludge remains. What to do with it? Prince George's County, MD, has found one use for some of it: making bricks. Officials insist that, once fired and used in construction, the biobricks "don't smell, they don't sprout little green things, they don't get soft when they're wet. Biobricks don't do anything strange."

The water commission is sold on the idea of biobricks, so much so it has already used them for one of its buildings (with another on the way), and two smaller structures: a pavilion and a children's playhouse in public parks. Because sludge burns, putting it in the bricks (13-33 percent sludge) means that the biobricks can bake at a lower temperature than normal bricks, thereby saving some manufacturing costs.

(Excerpted from Prince George's County Journal)

More on Wastewater

Touching All the Bases: A Financial Management Handbook for Your Wastewater Project (by James Joseph, Paul Shinn, and Joseph Kelly) explains how to manage a community's finances during the planning and construction of a wastewater treatment system. Copies and price information are available from the Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Municipal Pollution Control, Municipal Facilities Division (WH-595), Washington, DC 20460.

Private Sector Development Organizations

Here are two recent publications about private sector development organizations.

Private Sector Development Organizations: A Directory lists 50 PSDO's that have been in existence for more than a year. Gives names, addresses, contacts, telephone numbers and facts about each organization's membership, funding, objectives, strategy, results, and publications. The 50 organizations serve small and large cities, groups of counties, and entire States. Cost is $10.

Establishing and Operating Private Sector Development Organizations: A Technical Guide Based on Model Approaches focuses on organizations like chambers of commerce, industrial foundations, and statewide business development councils. Tells how to establish a PSDO and provides case studies of 12 such organizations operating in different regions of the country. Provides details on origins, organizational structure, staffing, funding, tax status, legal status, and governmental relations. Cost is $15.

Both books can be purchased from the National Council for Urban Economic Development, 1730 K Street, NW., Suite 1009, Washington, DC 20006.

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Farm Sector Financial Problems—Another Perspective

We have run several articles over the past year that focused on the financial problems of farmers. John E. Lee, Jr., administrator of USDA's Economic Research Service talks about the farm problem this way, "Agriculture does not have an income problem today as much as it has a problem of absorbing large capital losses."

Lee points out:

- While many farmers are in financial difficulty, others are sound, and still others see this as a time for investment and growth.
- Returns to farming have remained relatively stable in recent decades, while returns to investing in farm assets, especially land, reflect boom and bust conditions.
- Indicators of financial flow (income and returns) for farmers in 1978-85 were more favorable than in 1973-78 and in current dollars, actual income levels are now higher.

"The farm sector's problems," says Lee, "center on capital losses and are particularly painful to farmers whose investment debt is threatened by declining equity values, especially as farmland values decline."

A fuller development of Lee's views is in *Farm Sector Financial Problems: Another Perspective*, AIB-499. Copies are free from ERS Publications, room 208/sm, 1301 New York Ave., NW., Washington, DC 20005-4788; telephone (202) 786-1512.

Needs of Rural Illinois

After 4 months of talking, listening, and holding hearings, Illinois Gov. Thompson's 25-member Task Force on the Future of Rural Illinois settled on the three most pressing issues:

- A need for a central body to serve as an advocate for rural interests.
- A perceived lack of a fair share of State service and program dollars for rural areas.
- A need for the State to take the lead in promoting economic development in smaller towns.

The task force said the Illinois Department of Agriculture needed a new Bureau of Agricultural Development to help farmers and others develop additional farm businesses and value-added products. The Department of Commerce and Community Affairs, according to the task force, should have a new Office of Rural Community Development to give marketing assistance to small businesses in rural areas. By January 1987, the task force was to have recommendations to deal with farm financing and declining land values.

Unusual Revenue Sources

Rick Reeder's "Rural Indicators" in this issue talks about how small towns are relying more and more on "nontraditional sources of revenue." Paralleling Rick's discussion is a recent article from another magazine that offers some specific ideas how government officials can tap into unusual revenue streams.

Here's a sampler:

- Sell leaves, trees, solid waste, and sewage as firewood, mulch fertilizer, or fuel for steam-generating incinerators.
- Hold garage sales to turn a profit on outdated and unused equipment.
- Publish wish books in the hope that local citizens will donate some of the items listed.
- Rent out vacant buildings and rooms as offices or apartments.
- Buy used equipment.
- Contract with neighboring towns and locales for municipal services rather than duplicating equipment and personnel.

From "Townships Can Stretch Budgets with These Cost-Cutting Ideas" in *Pennsylvania Township News* (Nov. 1985).

Nurse Practitioners and Physician Assistants in Rural Areas

Nurse practitioners and physician assistants can help broaden the availability of health care at low cost. But they seem not to be helping much in rural areas, according to a Purdue study of 12 Midwest States.

The study observes that nurse practitioners and physician assistants could probably help improve primary health care in many rural areas, but concludes that they "are not moving to rural areas in large numbers. They prefer urban practice to a rural setting, and often reject rural settings because supervisory physicians and support facilities are scarce."

See *Nurse Practitioners and Physician Assistants in the North Central Region: Their Status and Role in Rural Primary Health Care,* by Charles A. Sargent; published by Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN 47907. (Excerpted from *Rural Development News,* Nov. 1986, published by North Central Regional Center for Rural Development).

Troubled Times for Black Farmers?

The number of black farms in the United States dropped from more than 900,000 in 1920 to only about 33,000 in 1982. The average black-operated farm has about 104 acres, one-fourth the size of the average U.S. farm, is located in a slow-growth southern county, and is more likely than other farms to rely on tobacco as a principal source of income. Nearly a third of all black farmers were more than 65 years old.

Two new reports by USDA's Economic Research Service flesh out those details and more using data from the Censuses of Agriculture. Both are available from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402. *Black Farmers and Their Farms* (by Vera J. Banks, 36 pages, $2.00, 001-019-00449-5) and *Social and Economic Environment of Black Farmers* (Robert A. Hoppe, Herman Bluestone, and Virginia K. Getz, 24 pages, $1.25, 001-019-00463-1).