FARMERS and URBAN EXPANSION

A Study of a Michigan Township

ERS-59

Farm Economics Division Economic Research Service
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

in cooperation with Institute for Community Development and Services
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The interviewing for the study reported was done by Rodger Rice, who has also been of assistance at other stages of the project. The authors wish also to acknowledge the assistance of Mel Avery, Ingham County agricultural extension agent; Glen Watkins, Alaiedon Township supervisor, and Mrs. Watkins; Charles Adrian, Walter Freeman, and J. F. Thaden of the Institute for Community Development at Michigan State University; and William H. Heneberry, Farm Economics Division, Economic Research Service, stationed at Michigan State University.

Washington, D. C. May 1962

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SUMMARY

In the last decade, more than a million acres of farmland per year has been taken over for urban and industrial uses. Although this has not seriously affected the total supply of farmland, it has posed serious problems for farmers who were in the path of this rapid urbanization.

This report describes the situation in a rural township on the edge of the Lansing, Mich., metropolitan area. The township has been relatively isolated, but the building of a freeway across part of it is expected to mean rapid urbanization of the area.

The operator or operator's spouse was interviewed on all farms of 20 acres or more in the township to obtain data on attitudes toward the problems that urbanization would cause for farmers and for township government. Socio-demographic data were also collected.

Respondents were placed in four groups: Full-time operators operating more than 125 acres each (commercial farmers), full-time farmers operating 20 to 125 acres each (semiretired farmers), operators holding full-time off-farm jobs and operating more than 125 acres each (part-time commercial farmers), and operators holding full-time off-farm jobs and operating 20 to 125 acres each (suburban farmers).

The full-time commercial farmers were found to be most active in community affairs in the township. As would be expected, farmers with off-farm jobs were less active except for matters affecting their children, such as schools and 4-H Clubs. In addition, farmers with full-time off-farm jobs tended to do their retail shopping, attend church, and obtain medical services in the metropolis or its suburbs rather than in nearby rural trade centers.

Although the general level of knowledge about local government activities was low, full-time farmers had a higher level of knowledge about township activities than did part-time farmers. Full-time farmers were also more active in township affairs and occupied all major township offices. There is some indication that the township government, its community hall, and the party caucus that nominated its officials were the organizations that integrated the commercial farm group. The suburban farmers were relatively less familiar than other groups with township government and its officials. Their participation was greatest in school affairs and in voting at general elections.

Farmers who were born in the township and those resident there longest were least likely to believe that urbanization would come very soon. Farmers with off-farm jobs felt that urbanization would come sooner than did the other farmers. For example, 41 percent of the suburban farmers believed that urbanization would occur within 10 years, compared with 16 percent of the next highest group, the commercial farmers.

Apparently, the farmers in all the groups expected urbanization to come slowly from the edge of the city as in a wave; they did not visualize the leap-frog kind of development that has occurred in the adjoining township and in most metropolitan areas. When the new freeway is completed in 1963, downtown Lansing will be only about 15 minutes travel time from the center of the township, but most farmers did not recognize the implications of this fact.

Less than 10 percent of all farmers reported any change in farming operations as a result of possible urbanization. More than 20 percent had expanded farming operations, and many others reported plans to do so.

More than 80 percent, however, indicated that if land values, assessments, and taxes were to rise sharply as a result of urbanization, they would probably not be able to afford to continue farming operations.

Among the short-range problems caused by urbanization, the most frequently mentioned were increased taxes, sewage or drainage difficulties, crowded schools, and

unsightly buildings. The increase in school taxes in recent years because of expansion and improvement of facilities has brought the problem of rising taxes to the attention of most Alaiedon farm owners, but it raises an issue that potentially divides farmers according to type. Two-thirds of the semi-retired farmers felt that school taxes were already too high, and 40 percent of the part-time commercial and full-time commercial groups agreed. However, only 15 percent of the suburban farmers believed school costs to be too high, and 7 percent suggested that they were too low.

More than three-fourths of the career farmers (all except the suburban farmers) said there should be tax reductions on land kept in agricultural production, but only 56 percent of the suburban farmers agreed to this.

There was general agreement that the present township zoning requirements would be helpful to farmers, but 50 percent of the full-time commercial farmers thought the township government should be given more zoning powers. In general, they seemed to want a zoning ordinance that would permit farming to continue for another 10 to 20 years and would make possible an orderly transition from rural to urban land use while preserving the beauty and value of the area.

All the groups favored the annexation of urbanizing areas to nearby cities. They showed little awareness that if this were done, they might lose their opportunity to participate in key decisions affecting future urbanization of the township, which typically would be made by the cities without prior consultation with township officials.

Understandably, many farmers have made no plans for the day when they might need to sell their lands because of urbanization. However, about 40 percent of the career farmers and 50 percent of the suburban farmers said they would leave farming. Most of the rest would try to find another farm nearby. Only a small proportion of the commercial farm group were prepared to leave the county or State in search of another farm. There is some doubt that within the limits of Ingham County all those remaining could find land similar in quality to the acreages they now have. Their search for land could be expected to raise the price of farm real estate elsewhere.

Although the full-time commercial farmers controlled the township government, they were least likely to anticipate urbanization in the near future. As a result, the one group in position to guide effectively the urbanization of the township felt no immediate need for action. Experience in areas that have become urbanized indicates that unless this attitude can be changed, uncontrolled development will increase the problems with which farmers must cope as urban areas surround farmland.

THE BACKGROUND

The rapid expansion of metropolitan areas in the last two decades has brought great changes to the surrounding countryside. However, little is known about the situation in rural areas as the process of urbanization occurs.

How does the farmer in a rural area on the edge of suburbanization view urbanization? What problems does he foresee for himself and his farm neighbors? What role in meeting these problems does he see for his local government? What alternatives has he considered? What possibilities do farmers have of providing cohesive leadership of the rural community at this stage in the process of urbanization?

The study reported was undertaken in an attempt to answer some of these questions. It describes the situation in a rural township on the edge of an expanding metropolitan area before any of the more serious problems of urbanization had arisen. Nevertheless, the problem had already arisen in adjoining areas. Under the headline, "FARMERS 'VANISHING' NEAR CITY," a news report of an East Lansing Capitol Grange meeting quotes the speaker, a real estate broker, as saying:

> "Farming has little chance to survive a heavy residential building up throughout the Greater Lansing Area." Urban growth, according to the speaker, has caused an increase in property value and taxation prohibitive to the farmer and his continued operation. He added that "agriculture can be expected to be pushed farther and farther away from Lansing."[1]

The area chosen for the study was Alaiedon Township[2] near the city of Lansing, Mich. (fig. 1). It is on the edge of a metropolitan cluster of 300,000 persons,

[1] Lansing State Journal, April 4, 1960.

[2] Alaiedon was a name coined by Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, the collector of Hiawatha legends. By inventing such combinations of Latin, Arabic, and Indian phrases, he hoped to preserve old Indian words. It is said to mean, "The hill land for a fair and excellent living."

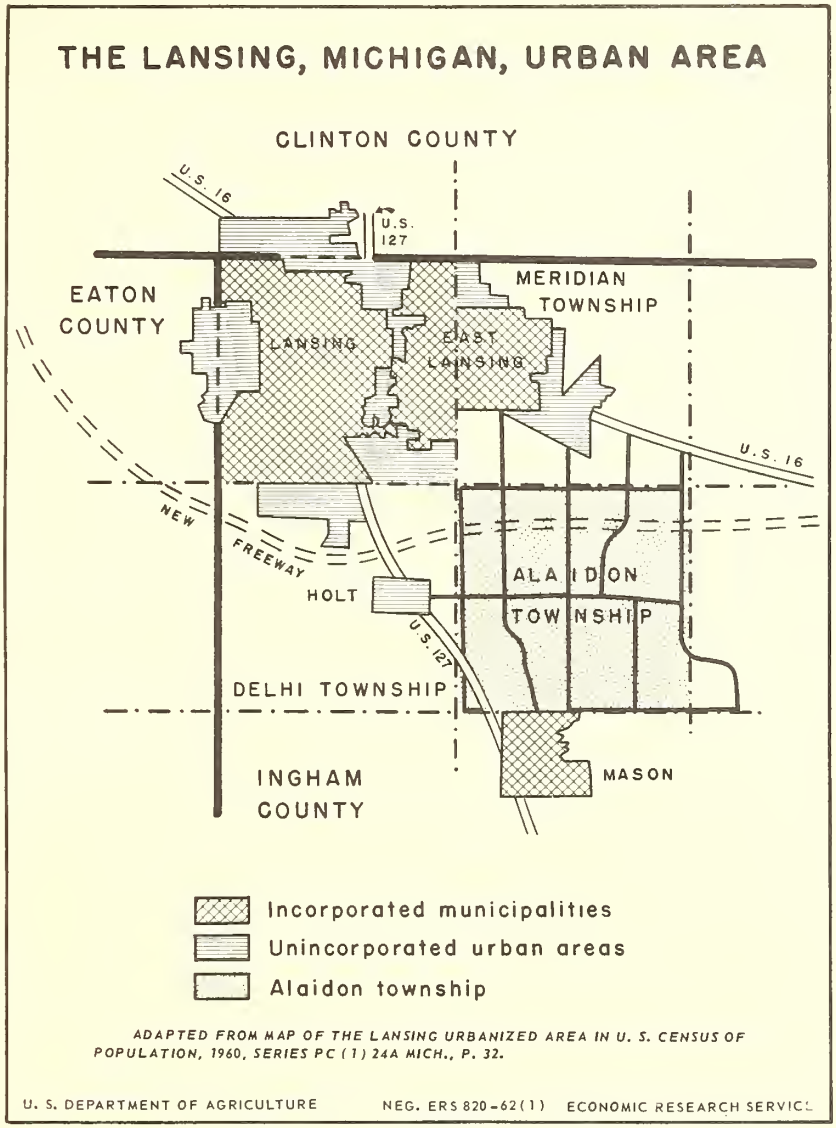

Figure 1

110,000 of whom live in the central city. Although it lies along the urbanized edge of the Lansing metropolitan area, Alaiedon Township has considerable farming. It is the third fastest growing township in Ingham County. Between 1940 and 1960, its population increased by 83 percent.

The township lies in the dairy and general farming area of south-central Michigan. In 1959, there were 167 farms in the township; the number had declined since 1945, as shown below:

Number of Farms in Alaiedon Township

Year	Farms (number)
1930	217
1935	241
1940	181
1945	206
1950	191
1954	184
1959	167

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Agriculture Division.

The total assessed value of property in the township in 1960 was $2,259,000, of which $2,109,700 was real estate and $149,400 was personal property. The proportion between farm property and residential and commercial property is not known. The tax per acre on farms was approximately $3.50, considerably higher than the $2.10 per acre in Michigan and the $1.20 per acre national average for 1960.

The township has no village community within its boundaries. It lies directly north of Mason, the county seat, and directly south of East Lansing and the Michigan State University campus. To the northwest, less than 10 miles from any point in the township, is the city of Lansing, an industrial community specializing in automotive manufacturing.

Alaiedon Township has been relatively isolated. A major north-south highway connecting Lansing, Mason, and Jackson cuts across the most southwesterly of its 36 sections. A restaurant is located in this part of the township. This area, which also contains the New York Central railroad tracks, is to some degree cut off from the rest of the township because of the arrangement of the roads. In effect, this creates an added buffer zone at a major point where urbanization has touched the township. The main east-west highway in the Lansing area is U. S. 16, which connects Detroit, Lansing, Grand Rapids, and Muskegon. It passes through East Lansing 3 to 4 miles to the north of Alaiedon Township.

This condition of comparative isolation will change rapidly within the next few years. By 1963, an interstate freeway replacing U. S. 16 is to be built across the top tier of sections in Alaiedon Township. Plans call for at least one interchange within the township. As the effects of the freeway cannot be accurately forecast, Alaiedon Township farmers thus face an uncertain future. If it follows the pattern of earlier freeways, however, rapid commercial and residential development can be expected.

Already some persons have recognized that the township is conveniently located in relation to Lansing and East Lansing. Most of the best roads in Alaiedon Township run north and south, connecting Mason with East Lansing or other Lansing suburbs. Where there are good blacktop roads, there is scattered suburban construction, with some subdivision development on a modest scale. The number of suburbanites is already

TABLE 1.--Population of Alaiedon Township, Ingham County, Mich., selected years, 1880 to 1960

Year	Total	Rural-farm	Nonfarm	Rural-farm population as percentage of total population
	Number	Number	Number	Percent
1880.....	1,474	--	--	--
1890.....	1,287	--	--	--
1900.....	1,172	--	--	--
1910.....	955	--	--	--
1920.....	896	--	--	--
1930.....	1,011	936	75	93
1940.....	1,132	751	381	66
1950.....	1,486	1,056	430	71
1960.....	2,071	[1] 924	[1] 1,147	[1] 45

[1] Estimated.

Source: U. S. Bureau of the Census. The 1950 figures are from photostats of unpublished U. S. Census data in the files of Michigan State University.

large. Actually, farmers are a minority, although few residents seem consciously to recognize the fact. Table 1 shows the pattern of urbanization; slow before 1930, and more rapid since that year.

From 1880 through 1930, the trend was toward extensive farming, as indicated by the steady decline in the population of the township through 1920. From 1930 on, two countertrends developed. The first was the increase in the number of rural nonfarm residents. The largest increases occurred during the depression of the 1930's and following World War II. The second trend was an increase in number of farmers. This trend began in the 1940's. The population data do not reveal the cause of this rise except that they suggest some movement from extensive to intensive farming. The survey data to be reported later reveal that the trend can be explained by the large increase in the number of part-time farmers, which began after World War II. These "suburban" farmers engage in small-scale farming but receive most of their income from city jobs. This type of back-to-the-farm movement is probably characteristic of what is happening in many urban areas. It could only occur after development of the automobile and good roads made such a way of life possible.

Census data reveal that by 1960, nonfarmers were a majority in Alaiedon Township. Nevertheless, the six major township officials in 1960 were full-time commercial farmers, as were five of the nine minor officials (justices, constable, and members of the zoning board and board of appeals).

Most of the urbanization was in scattered residences on the southern fringes of East Lansing, along one east-west road in the center of the township, and along the northern border of Mason. These were the only east-west blacktop roads. Most of the land area was still farmland, and casual observers might tend to underestimate the degree to which the nonfarm population exceeded the rural farm population.

The influx of population, however, had brought about some changes. A zoning act was adopted in 1954. The township supervisor believes that the 1960 census reports will show that the population is large enough to require two voting precincts. In 1961, the township voted to change from caucus nominations to a primary election. The number of trustees on the township board is expected to be increased soon from two to four, the number permitted for the larger townships.

Considering the location of the new freeway and the accessibility of the township area to Lansing and East Lansing (including the Michigan State University campus), it seems that urbanization might be markedly accelerated within the next 5 to 10 years. During this period, important decisions that will affect the future of farming in this community will be made. For this reason, Alaiedon Township in 1960 seemed a particularly appropriate place and point in time for a study of farmers near a metropolis and their attitudes toward urbanization.

FARMERS ON THE EDGE OF A METROPOLITAN AREA

The 1959 Census of Agriculture reported 167 farms in Alaiedon Township, 17 less than in 1954. The husband or the wife in 107 of these farm families was interviewed. This is virtually all of the families operating farms of 20 acres or more. Because the study was concerned with the attitudes of farmers toward urbanization, no nonfarm rural residents were interviewed.

For the survey, farmers in the township were divided on the basis of two criteria: Size of farm and whether or not they devoted full time to farming. The dividing line between large and small farming operations was set at 125 acres. A full-time farmer was defined as one who did not hold a full-time off-farm job.[3]

Because our interest was in the views of urbanization held by farm people, it was decided to interview the operator or his spouse in the following groups: all full-time farmers, and all part-time farmers who operated more than 20 acres.

The criteria used--size of farm and the devotion of full time to farming--placed all interviewees in one of four groups. In the rest of the report, the following headings are used to describe each group of respondents:

Commercial farmers: full-time, operating more than 125 acres

Semiretired farmers: full-time, operating less than 125 acres

Part-time commercial farmers: part-time, operating more than 125 acres

[3] The basic list of full-time and part-time farmers was provided by the Ingham County extension agent, Mr. Mel Avery. It was augmented by several methods, including asking interviewees which of their neighbors were full-time farmers. A very small proportion (5 of 72) of the full-time farmers reported that they also held part-time off-farm jobs.

Suburban farmers: part-time, operating less than 125 acres

The distribution of these types of farmers in the total township population, the township population of farmers, and the survey sample was as follows:

Type of farmer	Percentage distribution of farmers and nonfarm residents in -			Farmers in sample
	Total population[1]	Township	Sample	
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Number
Commercial farmers.....	12	28	42	45
Semiretired farmers.....	8	17	25	27
Part-time commercial farmers.....	2	3	8	8
Suburban farmers.....	23	52	25	27
All farmers.....	45	100	100	107
Nonfarm residents.....	55	0	0	0
Total.....	100	100	100	107

[1] Estimated.

The first three types of farmers are referred to occasionally in this report as "career farmers" because their lives are oriented essentially toward farming as a vocation, while the suburban farmers are oriented mainly toward off-farm jobs. Each of the four categories of farmers is briefly described, with characteristics revealed by survey answers used to sketch in major details. Tables 2 and 3 illustrate some of the major differences among types of farmers.

Characteristics of Farmers in Alaiedon Township

Commercial farmers.--These were farmers whose entire incomes depended upon successful large-scale farming. They devoted full time to their jobs and tended to look upon farming as a thriving commercial venture. They were of the type traditionally regarded as full-time farmers.

These farmers operated an average of 255 acres but owned only 150 acres. Only one leased out land - 80 acres to his son. More than two-thirds leased land from others. Thus, they put funds into equipment and expansion of operations rather than into land alone. The success of most of them depended upon being able to use land other than the land they owned. Most of them received more than half their incomes from their farming operations. More than half owned their farms outright.

Most of the farmers in this group classified themselves as old residents; nearly two-thirds had lived in Alaiedon Township for 10 or more years. About three-fourths were members of one of the large farm organizations, and 42 percent were or had been officers of the organization. Most of them had frequent contacts with the county agent and were listed by name on the county agent's annual farm census. Three-fifths were high school graduates, and 15 percent had had some college training.

Commercial farmers provided most of the leadership in Alaiedon activities. In 1960, all of the major and roughly half of the minor township offices were held by commercial farmers, even though these farmers made up less than 10 percent of the total population and less than 30 percent of all Alaiedon farmers. This group might be described as made up of established citizens. One indicator of this firm establishment was the fact that almost two-thirds said they expected their farms to remain in their families, as opposed to less than 40 percent with such expectations in the other groups.

In some respects, however, the commercial farmer group was not as homogeneous as the other three groups. The range in age was wider; 71 percent were between the ages of 30 and 60 and only 25 percent were over 60. Of the group, 18 farmed more than 250 acres and 8 of these farmers owned less than 125 acres.

These data suggest that the commercial farmer group contained both established farmers and younger men who were similar to the part-time commercial group described below, except that they were working to increase their assets by concentrating exclusively on farming operations.

Two breakdowns were made to test this hypothesis - one between those farmers who farmed more and those who farmed less than 250 acres. These farmers were then classified by age. The second breakdown was between those who owned more and those who owned less than 125 acres, classified by age, as shown in the following tabulation:

Age group	Commercial farmers		
	Number of farmers	Farming more than 250 acres	Owning more than 125 acres
		Percent	Percent
Under 40.....	17	59	69
Over 40.....	28	29	64

The tabulation shows that commercial farmers under 40 years of age were twice as likely to cultivate large acreages. This suggests the presence of a young group trying to build up their net worths. At the same time, these younger commercial farmers were as likely to own land as were the commercial farmers over 40. It is probable, therefore, that younger farmers who devoted full time to farming were those who had been provided a farm or capital with which to buy acreage through family connections. Like the part-time commercial farmers, however, they farmed large acreages, leasing much of the land operated, possibly because they needed to pay back loans or to pay off mortgages.

Semiretired Farmers.--This group farmed an average of 71 acres each but owned an average of 99 acres. None was found to lease land from anyone else, while nearly a third leased out land to others.

This group was made up of the older farmers, who had lived longest in Alaiedon Township. About two-thirds were 65 years of age or over, and 96 percent were over 50. More than 80 percent had had a grade school education only. Almost 60 percent had lived in Alaiedon for 20 years or more, and 93 percent had lived there for more than 10 years. As might be expected, four-fifths of these farmers owned their farms free of debt.

Most were full-time farmers who were beginning to think of retirement; in some instances, they were in process of gradual retirement. Only 15 percent had more than two persons in the family unit; only one had a child who attended school living with the family. If they were forced to move, most of them said they would move off the farm into a rural nonfarm area or into a nearby rural village or city.

There is little question, however, that this group was made up of career farmers. Less than a fourth made as much as 40 percent of their income from sources other than farming (including pensions). At the same time, their ties to career farming were relatively weak; only 37 percent belonged to a farm organization, and the group had relatively few contacts with the county extension agent.

On the series of questions regarding plans to improve land or farm buildings, or to purchase equipment, this group, as might be anticipated, ranked lowest.

Part-time Commercial Farmers.--This is the smallest group of farmers in the township, and considering the requirements for the role, this is not surprising. Of the 167 farmers in the township, only 8 fell into this category, and each of the 8 was interviewed. Their distinguishing

characteristics are clear enough and similar enough that they may be described as a distinct group.

Each farmed more than 125 acres; they averaged 166 acres each. At the same time, all of them held down full-time off-farm jobs. Their reported income was the highest for any group of farmers living in the township. Six of the eight were less than 40 years old; all were under 50.

On the average, these part-time commercial farmers owned 113 acres each; only two owned more than 140 acres. Five of the owners were paying off mortgages. Only one leased all the land he farmed. Apparently, building up enough capital to become full-time farmers was the aim of this group.

That these operators were farm-oriented is clear from the responses. They chose the farm occupation over the city job. Most were members of one of the large farm organizations and, as was true of commercial farmers, they had frequent contacts with the county agent. They had the largest proportion of any group reporting that they had had some agricultural training, that they had made some land improvements in the last 2 years, and that if they were forced to move, they would move to other farms.

This group was made up of those without sufficient capital to buy the land needed. But they had managed to start farming with small acreages, leasing more land as the opportunity arose. Most were new Alaiedon residents; two-thirds had lived there for less than 10 years. Unlike the suburban farmers, more than 50 percent had fewer than two children. Most were high school graduates, and some had had a little college training.

Off-farm jobs had all the characteristics of steppingstones for men who were determined to be successful farmers. About three-fourths worked at blue collar occupations. About half had worked at their off-farm jobs less than 5 years and only 25 percent had worked at such jobs more than 10 years. Their jobs tended to be nearer home (fewer in the city of Lansing) than those of the suburban farmers. About 10 percent also had working wives.

As shown later in the analysis, the responses by this group tended consistently to be stated in traditional rural terms. To cite only two examples, this was the group that rejected by the largest proportion the idea of incorporating Alaiedon as a city but favored separate incorporation of the more urbanized parts of the township. The group was also most in favor of zoning designed to preserve part of the land area of the township for exclusive agricultural use.

Overall, the picture that emerges from the data is that of young men determined to make a successful career in farming, using city jobs as a means of building up capital.

Suburban Farmers.--Numerically, this was the largest group in the farm population. They farmed less than 125 acres each and held full-time city jobs. Those who farmed the largest acreages (20 or more) were interviewed. Three-fourths of the household heads were born on farms, and all indicators suggested that many of them were persons who would like to be farmers but felt that they could not afford to be. Thus they worked full time in the city and farmed small acreages (an average of 58 acres for the sample respondents). Responses to the question as to whether they would choose farm or city occupations if they had to select only one, showed that 44 percent would keep the city jobs. However, side comments indicated that many who chose the farm gave personal preference rather than the practical choice they would make. Most of those who chose the city jobs gave reasons such as "I have to make a living" or "I can't afford the investment to buy enough land so I could make a living out of farming."

Half of the suburban farmers worked at blue collar jobs, while the rest held white collar jobs. About one-fourth had had some education beyond high school. The college-educated among them included a sprinkling of college professors from the State university, but most were salesmen or held clerical jobs. In a third of these families, the wives had also worked at off-farm jobs for more than 5 years, while the same percentage of the husbands had worked in the city for 10 years or more. Indications were that the kind of life chosen was likely to continue until retirement.

The ties of the suburban farmers to commercial farming were weak. Only 3 in 10 said that more than 10 percent of their income was derived from their farming operations. As might be anticipated, farmers of this group had few contacts with the county agent, and only about 25 percent belonged to a farm organization. About a third leased land from others.

More than half of the suburban farmers were under 50 years of age and each

respondent in the sample had children; in fact, more than half had more than three children. Only one in the group leased out land. Almost two-thirds were paying off mortgages. Although the data do not substantiate the hypothesis, this suggests that these people moved to Alaiedon partly because they felt that a rural atmosphere was good for the family. Some may have had the idea that land values might rise in time, but only one person in the sample specifically commented that, because he expected land values to go up, he chose to stay on the farm even though he worked in the city.

In general, this group consisted of those who had arrived in the township relatively recently. Of all farm types, the suburban farmer group had the lowest proportion of Michigan-born members; they visited relatives less frequently than members of other groups; and this group had the smallest proportion who considered themselves old residents--most had moved to Alaiedon after World War II. This was also the group having the smallest proportion born on farms, though even so, the number was close to three-fourths of all household heads. The group also had the smallest proportion with relatives who had lived on their farms before them.

The movement of these people to the township is one of the causes of the rise in farm population from 1940 to 1950. Because farm population has declined since 1950, it may be suspected that the migration of suburban farmers to the township has largely stopped in the last few years. The sample shows that 80 percent of this group moved to the township between 1940 and 1955. Most of those moving to Alaiedon in the 1950's were probably rural residents, none of whom was interviewed for this study.

Overall, the data on suburban farmers substantiate the picture of urban workers with farm backgrounds who like living on small acreages partly because they believe that it is a good place to live and raise a family, and also because they can add to their incomes. It is possible also that the price of urban housing may have had something to do with the choice. If they could do as they wished, without too great a change in their standards of living, probably they would like to be full-time farmers.

Comparisons Among Types of Farmers.--The previous sections described the four types of farmers used in the analysis in the rest of this report. This section presents comparisons among the four groups. Table 2 shows data concerning the characteristics that may be roughly categorized as relating to farming as a career.

The commercial farmer group was most likely to score high on those factors generally related to the successful career farmer, including such indexes as membership in a farm organization and receiving more than half their income from farming operations. The suburban farmers had the lowest percentage with these career characteristics, while the semiretired and part-time commercial groups ranked between the other groups.

Table 3 compares the four groups with regard to characteristics related to the degree to which farm residents were established members of the community, and their age and income status.

These data revealed distinct differences among the groups of farmers. The commercial and semiretired farmers had resided longest in the township and were most likely to regard themselves as old residents. They were also more likely to own their farms outright. In terms of income, however, those who had full-time jobs in the city ranked highest. The semiretired farmers had the lowest incomes of any group, by a large margin. Thus, there was a divergence between status based on length of residence and land ownership and status based on income. The groups also revealed differing family compositions. Finally, the part-time commercial farmers were younger, while the semiretired were in the older age groups. The commercial and suburban farmers tended to be closer to a cross section of the community, with most farmers in the 40 to 64 age group.

The descriptions of the various types of farmers and the comparisons among them indicate that each group was relatively cohesive and differed from other types of farmers in important ways. Each reveals a distinct pattern of living in relation to farming operations. Taken together, they form a description of the major groups of farmers in a township on the fringes of this metropolitan area.

This fourfold classification of farmers in the township, however, does not include all types of farmers who may exist on the fringes of metropolitan areas. The gentleman farmer, for example, might fall into one or another of the classifications, depending upon the size of his farming operations and the extent of his business affiliations in the city. There may be unusual types of farmers who defy classification

TABLE 2.--Factors relating to land ownership and farm operations, Alaiedon Township, Ingham County, Mich.

Factor	Suburban (N = 27)	Semiretired (N = 27)	Part-time commercial (N = 8)	Commercial (N = 45)
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
Farms less than 50 acres..	41	22	0	0
Farms more than 200 acres.	0	0	12	61
Owns more than 150 acres..	4	4	25	49
Leases land from others...	30	0	75	69
Leases land to others.....	4	30	12	2
Expects farm to remain in family.....	44	22	38	62
Belongs to farm organization.....	26	37	63	73
City job more important than farm.....	44	--	12	--
More than 50 percent of income from farming operations.....	7	12	63	98
Owns farm without mortgage	37	81	38	53

according to this scheme. The main types of farmers in the study township, however, are described by the fourfold classification. It should be noted that income was not one of the factors used in the classification.

The section that follows examines the degree to which these four types of farm residents in Alaiedon Township form an agricultural community.

THE FARM COMMUNITY

To Thomas Jefferson, the self-sufficient agrarian community was ideally suited to local self-government. A sense of community was presumed to develop from frequent social contact and from the sharing of common values. The township system of Michigan, under which each unit has its own representative on the county board of supervisors, was an attempt to create a State filled with such miniature republics. Unlike the New England town, however, boundaries were set by surveyor's lines, so that each unit has 6 square miles. The outlines of natural communities were sometimes disregarded, and the legal unit resulting may be an artificial socio-economic entity.

Because local action with respect to problems such as those posed by urbanization may depend upon the extent to which a cohesive community already exists, this study attempted to determine whether one existed among the farmers of Alaiedon Township. The findings suggest that the active, large-scale farmers, such as the commercial group, form a relatively cohesive unit. Although they are a small minority of the township residents, they hold most of the township offices. Thus, they are in a key position to take any action needed to cope with the problems of urbanization. The semiretired farmers were more isolated and less active in the community. The suburban farmers were also less active except with regard to matters affecting their children, such as schools and 4-H activities. The part-time commercial group, as might be expected, had little time for community activities.

Because this study was focused on the township government, it sheds little light on the relation of farmers to the school district and the county, but the findings indicate that these two units of government

TABLE 3.--Factors relating to residence, family characteristics, and income, farmers in Alaiedon Township, Ingham County, Mich.

Factor	Suburban (N = 27)	Semiretired (N = 27)	Part-time commercial (N = 8)	Commercial (N = 45)
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
Resident less than 5 years	11	0	13	6
Resident more than 10 years	48	93	38	65
Considers self old resident	33	67	38	67
Husband or wife born in Ingham County	52	63	87	73
Under 40 years of age	33	0	75	38
Between 40 and 64 years	59	37	25	53
65 years or over	8	63	0	9
2 or less in family at home	15	85	25	38
5 or more in family	37	4	50	37
Income less than $4,000	18	90	0	55
Income $4,000 to $7,499	37	5	50	38
Income over $7,500	45	5	50	7

will become increasingly important as urbanization progresses.

Until 1940 at least, Alaiedon Township had some characteristics that encouraged the development of a self-contained unit. It was a farming area ringed by urban settlements and major highways. This resulted in a measure of isolation, a condition in which rural democracy might flourish. But the township lacked a village center and had no commercial development, churches, or community newspaper. Only the township hall, located geographically toward the township's center, served as a focus for community activities. In 1957, a new modern hall was built; it is used for community and recreational activities. Alaiedon residents have had to leave the township for all purchases, whether of foods, drugs, or gasoline. They get their news items about township events from the Mason newspaper or the Holt shopping news. Near each side of the township is a rural city or village, with Mason, the county seat, directly to the south. During most of Alaiedon Township's history, Mason has served as the main commercial and community center for its rural residents. Alaiedon's ties to this unit were recently strengthened through school-district consolidation; a consolidation which residents report was favored because nearby communities had announced that they would no longer accept Alaiedon residents as tuition students in their high schools.

Pattern of Shopping and Visiting.--One would anticipate then that for most needs farmers would visit nearby rural centers rather than Lansing or its suburbs. The degree to which visits to the city and its suburbs are preferred may be taken as a rough measure of the decline of the agricultural community.

Nearby rural centers were still important to Alaiedon Township farmers, but these centers did not dominate shopping patterns as they may once have done, as shown in the tabulation that follows:

Service	Percentage preferring a rural center for service			
	Suburban	Part-time commercial	Semiretired	Commercial
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
Drug store.....	74	62	74	92
Doctor.....	57	74	77	80
Dentist.....	62	49	70	76
Library.....	59	49	92	85
Church.....	49	75	59	78
Groceries.....	52	49	74	61
Hospital.....	38	59	59	73
Clothes.....	19	0	37	25
Furniture.....	11	13	16	25

A full-time job in the city encouraged farmers to use the facilities and services found in Lansing. The suburban farmers used Lansing to an important degree for family health needs and church membership. The part-time commercial farmers also bypassed the rural centers for shopping, possibly on the basis of price and style. The rural center's best customers for all services were the commercial and semiretired farmers.

The pattern conforms to what would be expected in a rural community. The separation of residence and workplace encourages a loosening of the bonds of a closely knit community. The commercial and the semiretired farmers are the most locally oriented of all farmer groups.

One might expect this process to be encouraged when there are no family kinship ties to the rural community. The percentage of each farm group in which either husband or wife was born locally is shown in the tabulation that follows:

Group	Husband or wife born in -		
	Alaiedon Township	Ingham County	Michigan
	Percent	Percent	Percent
Suburban.....	7	52	85
Semiretired.....	33	63	90
Part-time commercial.	38	87	100
Commercial.....	38	73	96

The replies to a question about the proportion of visits made to relatives and to friends varied little among the groups. Most significant from the standpoint of community identification was that while visiting of relatives was reported to be almost as frequent for suburban farmers as for other groups, a greater proportion of such relatives lived outside Alaiedon Township and outside Ingham County. Once more, attachments of the suburban farmer led him outside the community, in this case for social contact.

Alaiedon Community Activities

Do those with city jobs enter less into community life? Respondents were asked whether they participated in any of 11 common types of activities with friends in Alaiedon Township. These activities were further broadly classified as: mutual aid (lending tools, baby sitting exchange), family neighboring (evening visits, coffee parties, playing cards), and community functions involving a number of families. The average number of reported activities for each type of farmer was as follows:

	Activities			
	Community functions	Family neighboring	Mutual aid	Total
Suburban.....	0.5	1.6	1.8	3.9
Semiretired.....	.3	1.2	1.1	2.6
Part-time commercial....	.5	1.7	.9	3.1
Commercial.....	.8	1.6	1.5	3.9

As might be anticipated in a rural and suburban environment, the amount of neighboring and other contacts among residents was relatively high per family unit for all types of farmers. These data suggested that a fairly unified community of farm families could exist despite the greater contact of some members of the farm community with the metropolis.

At the same time, Alaiedon farmers may be split into two or more segments. The data on participation in community affairs lent support to the latter view since the extra margin of participation of commercial farmers was accounted for by attendance at local farm organization functions. It will be recalled that three-fourths of the commercial farmers in contrast to one-fourth of the suburban farmers were members of the locally dominant farm organization. This organization leads to contact among career farmers (commercial, semiretired, and part-time commercial) from which other farmers are excluded on their own initiative.

At one time, the Alaiedon Farmers Club was an important local organization holding monthly meetings. One person interviewed had a printed program of the year's meetings scheduled for 1923. One of the facts revealed was the existence on the old membership rolls of a number of names still prominent among commercial farmer families. By the time of the depression, the club had been replaced by an affiliate of a national farm group. This organization occasionally holds townshipwide functions in the town hall and monthly meetings of smaller groups in homes. Thus even this group has been decentralized by geographic area.

Participation in other organizations tended to follow the pattern of division between suburban farmers and the other groups. Perhaps the division is best revealed by the most widespread organizational activity--church membership. No one church or denomination included more than a minority of the farmers within its membership. The table below indicates that membership in one of three Protestant churches was most likely to be held by groups associated with farming as a career. Churches of these denominations are located in nearby rural centers, while those of the other religious groups are in Lansing or its suburbs. Attendance at other churches was highest among the suburban farmers. Church attendance was highest among suburban farmers and commercial farmers.

With respect to participation in other organizations, suburban farmers tended to participate in more varied organizational activities than the other groups. Because this group of farmers is now numerically the largest and in recent years has grown more rapidly than other groups, the variation between it and the other groups would seem to indicate that the farm community is becoming less cohesive.

This tendency was illustrated by the responses of those participating in

Type of farmer	Church membership			
	Methodist	Presbyterian or Baptist	Other	No church
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
Suburban.....	19	22	48	11
Semiretired.....	37	26	22	15
Part-time commercial....	25	75	0	0
Commercial.....	40	31	16	13

organizations when asked which organization was most important to them. The potential activity divisions among farmers appear to be accentuated by their preferences. Those with city jobs are more inclined toward groups not associated with farming. The group considered most important by respondent follows:

Type of farmer	Percentage of those responding[1]				
	Farm	Union	Veteran or lodge	Church	Other
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
Suburban.....	27	0	11	31	31
Semiretired.....	70	0	15	15	0
Part-time commercial.....	38	0	38	24	0
Commercial.....	66	0	10	12	12

[1] The percentage of respondents in each group is: suburban, 82 percent; semiretired, 44 percent; part-time commercial, 100 percent; and commercial, 74 percent.

The data on group membership, however, do not suggest complete activity barriers between types of farmers. For example, the data on participation in 4-H and Homemakers Club activities suggest that those members of suburban farm families who were not so completely torn between city and farm (wives and children) helped to bridge the gap between themselves and other farm families. The extent of participation in 4-H and Homemakers activities by families of this group suggests the possibility that these activities are regarded as an important part of their idea of the farm as a good place to live. Percentage of families reporting attendance at 4-H or Homemakers Club is shown as follows:

Type of farmer	4-H Club	Homemakers Club	Neither	Percentage of families with grade or high school children reporting 4-H activity
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
Suburban.....	30	18	52	43
Semiretired.....	11	11	78	100
Part-time commercial.	25	13	62	40
Commercial.....	[1] 23	[1] 26	58	51

[1] Families having both 4-H and Homemaker members in some instances.

In summary, then, while the degree of participation in various activities within the township was relatively high, there were indications that the suburban farmers were somewhat separated organizationally from the other farm groups. This separation was encouraged by the urban ties resulting from their city job. The possibility of a well-knit community of all farmers seems to be limited. Instead, there are patterns of community and organizational participation that reflect the different groups of farmers.

TOWNSHIP GOVERNMENT

The hypothesis that commercial farmers, even though they make up only a small minority of the population, are in a key position to control events in the rural portion of metropolitan areas tends to be substantiated by the fact that in Alaiedon Township, these farmers appear to be a cohesive, well-organized group. If in addition, they are the primary force in township government, the hypothesis is further substantiated.

Because the suburban farmers are more numerous than other types of farmers and tend to be a distinct group in the community, it would seem that this division might form the basis of competition for control over township government. In addition, the even more numerous suburban residents of the township not included in the study would appear to be potential rivals of farmers in township affairs.

Nevertheless, as noted earlier, commercial farmers occupy all major township offices and five of the nine minor offices. Prior to 1961, it had been many years since any slate of candidates had been nominated to oppose the nominees of the locally dominant party caucus. When an opposition slate materialized in 1961, it consisted of full-time farmers or their wives. Apparently, the suburban farmers and the rural residents are unwilling or unable to use their numerical superiority to control the township government. They may, of course, be uninterested in doing so.

A partial explanation is provided when the attitudes of farm residents toward the importance of township government are studied. Less than 39 percent of any group said that the activities of the township government made any material difference so far as they personally were concerned. In part, this evaluation may be explained by the traditional rural attitude that the less governmental activity there is, the better. But judging from the side comments of respondents as noted by the interviewer, it seems more likely that township government is viewed as having little potential significance.

An additional factor contributing to the apparent lack of interest in township government is that ordinarily Alaiedon, like many other townships in Michigan, has no property tax levy. Michigan shares its sales tax and intangibles tax revenues with the local units of government, and the amount received from this source is usually large enough to pay the expenses of township activities in Alaiedon. Only when some unusual activity is projected, such as the building of the new township hall and improvement of the adjacent recreation grounds, is a property tax levy generally necessary.

Because the study concentrated on attitudes toward township government, the data do not indicate whether the activities of some other local unit of government, such as the county or the school district, would be regarded as more important than those of the township. In Michigan, the township retains some important functions, but other activities of importance to rural residents are now performed by the county. The survey, however, revealed some confusion in the minds of some residents as to the duties of the various units of government and a general unawareness of local government activities.

The township performs such functions as assessment, zoning, provision of recreation facilities, regulation of liquor sales, and initiation of special road-construction projects. Among the activities performed by the county are the provision of roads, police protection, drainage, sanitation inspection, agricultural extension programs, and activities related to transfers of property, such as registration of deeds and mortgages. It seems possible that local residents might regard the county activities as more important than those of the township, but the study did not investigate directly attitudes toward county governmental activities.

In Michigan, however, the township supervisor is a member of the county board and hence provides the only direct representation of township residents in county affairs. He often serves as the intermediary between township residents and county officials in matters relating to highways or drainage, although county officials may also be approached directly. If local residents were highly concerned about county governmental problems, their concern could be expected to be reflected in interest in township government and particularly in the activities of the township supervisor. The lack of interest in township government shown by most Alaiedon farmers may suggest an equal lack of interest in county governmental activities.

Full-time farmers had a more positive attitude toward the importance of township government; this attitude was reflected in a higher level of knowledge about and participation in township government affairs.

Suburban farmers showed a proportionately high interest and participation only with regard to school affairs and voting in general elections. This suggests that this group of part-time farmers reacted toward local government in much the same way as the average suburban rural resident might react. Because the sample included only farmers, this assumption cannot be tested with present data. However, the data on participation in table 4 show that career farmers were more active in township government affairs than suburban farmers.

All groups had some interest in local affairs, and there was at least some degree of contact between citizens and local government. In fact, over the last decade, township government might be viewed as fairly responsive to the demands of local citizens. It adopted a zoning ordinance, built a new township hall and recreation area, and changed from the caucus to the primary system of nominations for local office. Thus it seems to have responded to the demands articulated by residents during the last few years.

Clearly, however, participation was greatest by the commercial farmers, probably because they were tied economically to the locality, were in the prime of life, had time for such duties, and were traditionally expected to take a hand in local self-government. The suburban farmers, who are somewhat like other suburbanites, sensed their civic duties but were relatively less familiar with township government or its officials.

Informal conversation with residents indicated that the township government, its community hall, and the party caucus that nominated its officials were the organizations that integrated the commercial farm group. If this is true, the loss of township offices might be regarded as a signal of the gradual disintegration of the commercial farming group in the Alaiedon area.

Whether the appearance of a slate of opposing party candidates in the 1961 township elections portends any such major shift is a question for the future. As noted previously, both parties had only commercial farmers

TABLE 4.--Index of participation in local government

Index of participation	Type of farmer			
	Suburban	Semiretired	Part-time commercial	Commercial
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
Could name supervisor..	56	78	50	73
Could name all 4 trustees.....	0	0	0	24
Could name one or more trustees.....	48	59	75	84
Said voted in 1959 township election.....	67	52	50	64
Reported contact township official[1].....	41	26	62	47
Reported attendance at meeting[1] of:				
Township Board.....	15	4	25	38
School Board.....	22	7	13	18

[1]Within the last 2 years.

or their wives as nominees, indicating that this group is still dominant in local politics. In its campaign literature, the opposition slate appealed to the nonfarm vote by identifying some of its candidates as, for instance, "farmer and garage owner," "farmer and trucker," and "farmer and factory worker."

The general tenor of the campaign literature of the opposition slate was "It's time for a change," calling attention to dangers of the caucus system and one-party rule. A proposal to change from the caucus to the primary system was on the ballot.

In addition, the opposition slate emphasized some substantive activities of township government as issues that would be of concern to the voters. Among the items stressed were property zoning, building inspection, highway planning, recreational facilities, fire and police protection, and encouraging business activities to locate in the township.

URBANIZATION AND ALAIEDON TOWNSHIP

A question facing all township residents is how soon, if at all, the area will be urbanized. The belief held by each resident about the correct answer will influence his attitude toward whether any action is needed to anticipate and control urbanization, and, if so, what kind of action is needed.

The township has one restaurant, another restaurant catering only to parties, a fishing resort, and a few businesses conducted from homes as its only commercial development. There is residential strip development along each blacktop road, and in some areas, these roads are lined on both sides with continuous development of this type. There are also five relatively small subdivisions, none of which contain more than 10 houses. One of these subdivisions adjoins the county seat of Mason along the southern edge of the township. While this may seem to be relatively little urban development, it should be remembered that the nonfarm population of the township increased substantially between 1950 and 1960, and that the rural farm percentage of the total population dropped accordingly in 1960. While mass urbanization has not yet occurred, the township is no longer rural.

As noted earlier, a new interstate freeway across the northern part of the township is scheduled for construction and opening to traffic by 1963. In other metropolitan areas, experience has been that

industrial, commercial, and residential development mushrooms along such freeways.

Urbanization and subdivision are difficult to define. To some people, they mean row upon row of ranchhouses without break. Some old-time Alaiedon residents, however, consider the township to be urbanized now. For purposes of this study, urbanization was defined as a condition under which very little commercial farming is carried on. An example familiar to Alaiedon residents is the urban development in Meridian Township, which adjoins Alaiedon to the north. In 1945, Meridian Township had 209 farms; in 1954, it had 66; and in 1960, the county agent reported that fewer than 5 commercial farms were in operation. Large-scale residential construction has occurred in two villages, along the borders of East Lansing, and at scattered other locations in the township. Some of the residential development has been annexed to East Lansing. Nevertheless, there are still some large open spaces in Meridian Township, although little of this area is used for farming. In 1960, the township outside the city of East Lansing had 13,884 residents. In interviewing Alaiedon Township residents, the rapid shift from agricultural to suburban land use in Meridian Township was used as an example of subdivision and urbanization.

Against this background of urbanization of a neighboring rural area, farmers in Alaiedon Township were asked how soon they thought their land would be subdivided. The results are tabulated below.

Type of farmer	Estimates of when land will be subdivided[1]			
	Less than 10 years	10 to 19.9 years	Over 20 years	Never
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
Suburban.....	41	34	25	0
Semiretired.....	10	37	37	16
Part-time commercial....	0	50	37	13
Commercial.....	16	43	30	11

[1] Percentage of each group expressing no opinion: suburban, 11 percent; semiretired, 30 percent; part-time commercial, none; commercial, 2 percent.

Place of birth and length of residence influenced farmers' expectations of subdivision. Those born in Alaiedon or a neighboring rural community on the average expected subdivision within 15.4 years, while those who were born elsewhere estimated 9.3 years. Those with more than 15 years residence in Alaiedon estimated 16.5 years; those with fewer years of residence estimated 9.7 years. Again, the opinion that subdivision would occur within a shorter period of time was more likely to be held by persons less well established as farmers.

The full-time commercial farmers, who are usually regarded as the backbone of the farm community, were least likely to anticipate rapid subdivision.

In interpreting the data, account needs to be taken of the physical location of various types of farmers. The suburban farmers tended to be located more in the northern part of the township closer to Lansing, while the commercial farmers were frequently in the southern end of the township. Thus location may account for most of the difference. To test this possibility, farmers were classified according to closeness of residence to the major east-west roads and were then grouped by two different methods (table 5). In computing averages, "never" responses were treated as "20 years."

As anticipated, response was found to be related to distance of residence from the Lansing urbanized area. For all except the part-time commercial group, those living in the path of the proposed interstate expressway anticipated fairly rapid subdivision. At the same time, within groupings

TABLE 5.--Estimated number of years before subdivision will occur, by distance from roads, by type of farmer[1]

Item	Residence nearest-					
	Northern		Middle		Southern	
	2 roads	3 roads	3 roads	Road	2 roads	3 roads
	Years	Years	Years	Years	Years	Years
Farmers reporting estimated time subdivision will occur -						
Suburban	6.5	6.6	10.7	10.0	15.0	15.0
Semiretired	8.7	12.1	18.0	26.0	14.1	15.5
Part-time commercial	15.0	15.0	14.0	15.0	20.0	20.0
Commercial	8.2	11.1	13.0	10.4	15.0	26.7
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
Distribution of farmers reporting -						
Suburban	33	48	41	15	26	37
Semiretired	30	41	44	19	26	40
Part-time commercial	25	25	62	25	13	50
Commercial	11	36	60	16	29	45

[1]An alternative method of grouping the roads yields substantially similar results:

Northern 3 roads	6.6 (48%)	12.1 (41%)	15.0 (25%)	11.1 (36%)
Middle road	10.0 (15%)	20.0 (19%)	15.0((25%)	10.4 (16%)
Southern 3 roads	15.0 (37%)	15.5 (40%)	20.0 (50%)	26.7 (48%)
Total	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)

equidistant from the Lansing metropolitan area, the suburban farmers generally felt that subdivision was more imminent.

Among the farmers who operated more than 125 acres (commercial farmers and part-time commercial), subdivision was assumed to be nearer in time by those who seemed to be less firmly established in farming operations - those who leased from others, those who owned less than 125 acres, and those who were not members of a farm organization.

Officials, planners, and realtors disagree as to how rapidly urbanization may occur in the southern part of Alaiedon Township, but most agree that within 5 years, growth in the northern section near the highway interchange will be rapid. It is agreed that three factors have thus far limited suburban growth: (1) The Michigan State campus, which lies due north of the township and to some extent blocks complete access to East Lansing and other suburban areas and limits the providing of services from urban centers to the north; (2) a swampy territory lying somewhat to the west of Alaiedon, which has limited the number of rural roads cutting through to the southern fringes of Lansing; and (3) doubt about the concentrated use of septic tanks in the rich clay soil. The use of package plants or the as yet untried lagoon system may allow greater subdividing than is now permitted by the county sanitarian.

Realtors operating throughout the Lansing suburbs expect fairly rapid urbanization, but some who deal in farm property in the Mason area are more conservative. The latter point out that up to the time of the survey period, at any rate, farm property was not subject to widespread speculation for residential building. The metropolitan

realtors argue, however, that Alaiedon is one of the last low-priced land masses on the outskirts of Lansing. Farmland sells for $150 to $300 an acre, but some highway rights-of-way were bought for $500 an acre, and at least one land-locked 40 near the path of the expressway sold for $1,000 an acre. (Interviewers heard rumors of prices up to $5,000 an acre.)

In addition, nearby Meridian Township is taking action that will increase the cost of land there and will presumably make Alaiedon Township look more attractive to builders seeking lower cost land. Meridian Township has adopted requirements of large lots for areas to be served by septic tanks and is planning a sewage system. As one local observer has stated, "People seem to flee from sewage systems in the hopes of finding a cheap area for settlement." If this is correct, the low land costs in Alaiedon Township may bring more rapid settlement.

These factors, among others, suggest that large-scale farming in Alaiedon Township may disappear almost as rapidly as it did in Meridian Township - within 10 years - despite the fact that 40 percent or more of the career farmers (commercial, part-time commercial, and semiretired) do not expect this to happen for more than 20 years.

Analysis of the side comments and statements gathered in further discussion with farm residents suggests a basic problem about their view of urbanization. Farmers seemed to expect urbanization to come like a wave, expanding slowly outward from Lansing. In general, they did not visualize the possibility of a leap frog kind of development, despite examples in Meridian Township. They were accustomed to looking at large masses of agricultural land and assumed that these masses would act as a kind of buffer between them and urbanization. In measuring distance to the city, they tended to think in terms of miles rather than of travel time. Even now, any of the north-south routes, which are reasonably good blacktop roads, will take one from the middle of the township to East Lansing within 10 minutes, to the outskirts of Lansing within 13 minutes, and to downtown Lansing in less than half an hour. When the interstate highway is built, the travel time to downtown Lansing will probably be 15, or at the most, 20 minutes. At present, only the northernmost, southernmost, and central east-west roads are blacktop and therefore really suitable for urban development. However, construction of the additional 24 miles of blacktop required does not appear to be an insurmountable barrier. Plans have been made for an extension of the road on the township's southern boundary.

An indication of the degree to which farmers reject the idea of rapid urbanization is reflected in their day-to-day farming operations and future plans. Less than 10 percent of any of the types of farmers reported having made any changes in farming operations as a result of the possibility of urbanization. The changes reported were those of not planning to expand, changing to poultry, and reducing numbers of cattle because pastureland was too expensive. A fifth of the commercial farmers had expanded their land holdings in the last 5 years to increase farm acreage. In addition, farmers were going ahead with improvements they regarded as necessary for the type of farming or the residential living patterns that characterized their present existence. Below is a tabulation of the percentage who had made or were planning specific types of improvements.

Type of farmer	Improvements made within last few years or planned for next few years					
	Bought additional land	Have made improvements		Plan improvements		
		House	Farm buildings	Land	House	Farm buildings
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
Suburban.....	7	63	37	48	30	26
Semiretired.....	7	15	23	19	33	19
Part-time commercial.	0	63	51	38	38	26
Commercial.....	20	42	68	40	36	48

Commercial farmers and part-time commercial farmers give little indication from recent performance or in stating future plans that they expect farm operation to be discontinued in the immediate future. Only the semiretired had not made or did not plan to make extensive improvements. Even the group that anticipated subdivision as relatively near, the suburban farmers, had made improvements in their farm operations and planned even more. From these data, it seems safe to assume that the farming community expected farming as an occupation to continue in Alaiedon for some time to come and was willing to plan and act on this premise.

About the same number of farmers of all types reported selling land in recent years; less than 15 percent of each group so reported. Most of the selling was for residential lots, often to a relative or friend. From half to two-thirds of those in the three groups of career farmers knew someone who had sold off land for residential lots or subdivisions. Only 44 percent of the suburban farmers reported this knowledge. On the other hand, the same percentage reported having a realtor visit them or that neighbors had suggested subdivision. Less than a third of the commercial or semiretired farmers reported that this occurred.

Long- and Short-Range Effects of Urbanization

The major long-range problem that urbanization poses for farmers is that usually it makes farming as an occupation difficult or impossible. In the opinion of most Alaiedon farmers, this might occur through a drastic rise in local taxes. Their experience in the township during the last 20 to 30 years makes them especially aware of rising taxes. For example, one farmer's land was assessed at $7,700 in 1940, and his taxes were $81.24. In 1960, the assessment on the property was $7,900 and the taxes were $389.87, an increase of well over 400 percent in his tax bill. An examination of the tax records of land owned by individuals in each group of farmers in the study indicates that this example is typical of the trend of taxes in the township.

The question, "Do you feel that property taxes may force farmers to sell their land for subdivision?" was answered affirmatively by 80 percent or more of the career farmers. Another set of questions concerning a hypothetical annexation of the township land area into a nearby city asked about the quality and number of services that would result, as well as the level of the tax rate. There was considerable uncertainty concerning the amount and quality of services that would result. In regard to taxes, however, from 75 to 93 percent of the farmers in the four groups answered that they thought taxes would go up. Clearly one of the agreed upon results of urbanization was a rising tax rate. Most farmers believed that urbanization would also cause the value of land to rise; they suggested that this is already occurring in Alaiedon Township. Change in value of Alaiedon farmland in the last 5 years and reason for change follows:

Type of farmer	Value going down	Don't know	Value the same	Value of land has risen because of-		
				Urbanization	Agricultural needs	Don't know
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
Suburban.....	0	11	0	66	19	4
Semiretired.....	0	15	26	26	22	11
Part-time commercial.....	0	0	0	100	0	0
Commercial.....	0	7	13	53	20	7

The semiretired farmers were less certain that urbanization had affected land values. When the "don't know" responses are omitted, from 61 to 100 percent of the other groups of farmers said that values had increased because of urbanization. Thus, a long-range problem farmers see in urbanization is that if land values, assessments, and taxes rise sharply, they will not be able to afford to continue farming operations.

The short-range problems were of another type. The question was asked, "As you know, many urban residents have been moving into township areas in recent years. Is this likely to cause problems here in Alaiedon Township? If yes, what kinds of problems?" The tabulation below records the answers to problems created by Alaiedon urbanization.

Type of farmer	No problems	One or more problems	Don't know
	Percent	Percent	Percent
Suburban.....	52	44	4
Semiretired...	44	45	11
Part-time commercial.....	13	87	0
Commercial....	4	94	2

Those who farmed large holdings were the most likely to note problems caused by urban migrants, possibly because they believed that these residents interfered with efficient farm operation. An additional explanation might be that the semiretired were more indifferent to the changes and were therefore less likely to voice complaints, while the suburban farmers considered themselves part of the urbanization movement and were therefore less likely to be critical of it. The comments of those voicing complaints suggested that elements of both explanations were involved. According to farmers, suburbanites got in the way of large farming operations. One farmer said that he could not work in the fields in the morning because his neighbors complained that he woke them up. Another had received complaints from suburbanites that his cattle got onto their lawns. Some farmers were concerned about children playing in the roads. Another problem listed was that a young man could not get the land needed to farm without either working in the city or inheriting it. One respondent reported that within the last 10 years, 4-H leaders were difficult to recruit and meetings were difficult to schedule because so many young farmers felt it necessary to work in the city to increase their earnings.

A problem frequently mentioned was the need for schools for the children of the township and the high taxes resulting from this need. The suburban farmers were less likely to regard this as a problem than were the other groups of farmers, suggesting that they may view school expenditures as desirable. It seems possible that in this they resemble their suburban neighbors more than they do the other farm groups.

The tabulation below shows the major problems reported. As some respondents made as many as four complaints, the totals do not add to 100. All comments were volunteered in response to an open-end question.

Type of farmer	Percentage of farmers mentioning each major problem created by urbanization						
	Crowded schools	Increased taxes	Sewage or drainage difficulties	Unsightly buildings	Loss of agricultural lands	Rising land values	Congestion
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
Suburban.....	30	15	11	15	4	4	4
Semiretired....	26	33	30	11	4	0	0
Part-time commercial.....	50	50	25	12	12	12	0
Commercial.....	58	53	33	13	20	11	11

A glance at the comments indicates that, along with the other groups, the suburban farmers mentioned the overcrowding found in the one-room schools. They were less concerned than other groups about school taxes, partly perhaps because they had children and desired this service and also possibly because their greater familiarity with urban living inclined them to acceptance of the larger suburban schools. For the career farmers, the most noticeable impact of urbanization has been the rise in school taxes. A few months after the survey was taken, construction was begun on a new school to be centrally located in the township. This will mean the closing of the township's five one-room schools. A number of farmers commented adversely on the disappearance of the "little red schoolhouse." The career farmers also frequently linked school problems with tax problems. Some typical comments were "the young folks move out here with kids and the farmer pays for the schools." "School taxes rise but there's no more income from the farm."

In an earlier study of a neighboring area, Moore and Barlow suggested that consolidation and improvement of schools is a factor in attracting new rural (suburban) residents.[4] If this hypothesis is correct, the new school in Alaiedon Township may be expected to draw additional nonfarm residents into the area.

The second most important problem noted by career farmers was drainage and problems resulting from the use of septic tanks.

The other comments were about minor irritants that were considered byproducts of urbanization. The most frequent of these concerned "trailers, shacks, and the dump." The latter was a particularly sore point with some residents. At one time, township officials hoped that the dump would be sold to be used for another purpose, but the prospective purchaser decided that the price was too high. Also frequently noted was the presence of renters in abandoned farm homesteads. Besides the statement that such persons had children who helped to crowd the schools while they paid no property taxes, the comment was made that some of them "take apart cars and leave the parts all over the front yard."

Commercial farmers were most likely to point out that urbanization was taking land out of agricultural use, or that lots sold along roads tended to "cut up farmland." Such comments were occasionally associated with those who noted a rise in land values.

The concern about increased congestion was voiced in a number of ways. One suburban farmer's wife said, "We came here with the intention of freedom." A commercial farmer said, "The telephone party line is always overloaded." Others noted only that there were "too many people around."

FARMERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD PROBLEMS CREATED BY URBANIZATION

As noted earlier, Alaiedon farmers saw taxation as the most serious problem associated with urbanization. They feared that a steady rise in taxes might make it impossible for them to continue farming. The increase in school taxes in recent years because of expansion and improvement of facilities has brought this problem to the attention of most Alaiedon farm owners, but it raises an issue that potentially divides farmers according to type. No more than 15 percent of any farmer group felt that services received from the township were not worth the money spent. However, a question about whether school taxes were at about the proper levels, too high, or too low revealed divisions within the farm community. Two-thirds of the semiretired farmers, a group that on the whole had few schoolchildren, had lower incomes, and were elderly, felt that the school costs were too high. Around 40 percent of the part-time commercial and commercial farmers agreed. Only 19 percent of the suburban farmers felt that such taxes were too high, and 7 percent of this group argued that they were too low. Thus the suburban farmers reacted more like other suburbanites, who are said characteristically to desire a high level of services, than like other farmer groups.

Keeping Land in Agricultural Use

One way of dealing with the problems caused by high taxes on farm real estate would be to provide for tax reductions on land kept in agricultural production. More than three-fourths of the career farmer groups agreed that there should be tax reductions on land kept in agricultural production, while only 56 percent of the suburban farmers favored this proposal.

[4] Moore, E. H., and Barlowe, Raleigh. Effects of Suburbanization Upon Rural Land Use. Mich. Agr. Expt. Sta. Tech. Bul. 253, 1955, p. 26.

Another method of accomplishing the same ends would be to assess farmland at a lower level than other real estate. The suburban farmers joined the other groups in favoring some means by which assessments of farmland could be kept low. Three-fourths or more of each group of farmers having an opinion [5] favored assessing farmland at the same levels at which farmland in other more rural parts of the county was assessed. All groups agreed that farmland should be assessed according to its value for agricultural use rather than its value for urban uses. This question was asked in such a way as to permit several alternatives to be chosen or a different choice might be volunteered. The alternatives included deferring a part of the taxes until the farm was sold, deferring all property taxes until the farm was sold, or allowing taxes to go up as land values rose. None of these alternatives received more than a scattering of favorable responses.

Zoning

In regard to zoning, except for the part-time commercial group, farmers of all classes were about evenly divided on the question of whether they favored zoning that would require a large portion of Alaiedon Township land to remain agricultural. Three-fourths of the part-time commercial farmers favored this action, perhaps because they were just getting established in a farming career. The fact that only 50 percent of the commercial farmers favored permanent agricultural land use may seem logically inconsistent with their attitude on taxes. However, it may be explained by the fact that farmers expect land values and taxes to continue to rise and urbanization to continue despite their personal preferences. Given this condition, they may feel justified in profiting somewhat by this rise. The real fear expressed by 80 percent of the career farmers was that because of taxation they would be forced to sell their farms prematurely for subdivision. The difficulty they foresaw was that although land values had risen, they were not at the maximum levels they would reach as urbanization continued.

The opinions expressed on zoning were somewhat vague. This is not surprising, because the township has had a zoning ordinance only since 1954, and residents have had no experience with the kinds of zoning problems that arise when demand for land for urban uses becomes intense. The bulk of the township was zoned rural residential, which permits both agricultural uses and residences on large lots. To date, neither the zoning board nor the citizens of the township have had a request from any landowner to rezone any sizable area for commercial or industrial use. Neither have there been any requests for rezoning for large-scale residential development. No strip commercial development has yet appeared on the highways of the township. Because no major zoning problems have yet arisen, it is not surprising that farmers in the township have not crystallized their opinions about zoning.

The attitudes that were expressed varied with the acreage of land farmed. More than 80 percent of all farmers felt that present zoning was not too strict. While 90 percent of the suburban farmers expected that future subdivision development would be orderly, less than two-thirds of the farmers in the other groups agreed. The career farmers did not choose the alternative answer that development would be haphazard; instead, they answered that they did not know. Most respondents felt reasonably certain that the present subdivision regulations were more likely to favor the farmer than the subdivider. Almost 50 percent of the commercial and 40 percent of the part-time commercial farmers, however, agreed that giving the township government more zoning powers would be a good idea, while less than a fourth of the other groups saw this as desirable.

Thus, there was a general feeling that the present township zoning requirements would be helpful to farmers, but some farmers thought that the requirements did not go far enough. Some of the irritations felt by older residents about new buildings and residents in the township were noted earlier; such feelings no doubt contributed to the unsureness about present zoning regulations. In general, the responses suggested that what at least half of the Alaiedon farmers desired in a zoning ordinance was not a system that would preserve farming operations forever, but one that would permit farming to continue for another 10 to 20 years and would make an orderly transition from rural to suburban land use while preserving the beauty and value of the area.

[5] More than 40 percent of the semiretired farmers expressed no opinion about methods of assessment, and these "don't know" responses were eliminated from this tabulation.

The Future Role of Township Government

We have noted that commercial farmers were the ones most likely to contact township officials. For all types of farmers, the subject most frequently causing such contact was building code and zoning problems, usually relating to building permits and inspections. Second in importance were problems relating to assessment. The same pattern of response occurred when residents were asked which township services were most important to them. Aside from zoning and assessment, most frequently mentioned were the town hall, the cemetery, and the holding of elections.

Thus it can be argued that township government at least attempts to deal with some of the problems considered important by farm residents. However, there is a certain ambivalence in farmers' attitudes as to how much township government can do, which may perhaps be traced at least in part to a general distrust of governmental activity and a preference for each person caring for his own needs when possible. Yet farm residents who favor reduction of local services are faced with the possibility of unregulated suburban development. Increasing the powers of local government seems to some the only hope of achieving the ends they desire.

We have noted that many township residents do not consider the actual activities of township government important. A further question asked about what township government could do to handle the problems of urbanization in many instances brought the response, particularly from commercial farmers, that township government was weak because of interference from the State and county governments. County drainage regulations were particularly objected to. The State regulation of assessment procedures and the setting of State-equalized valuation on which all local taxes are levied brought forth strong objections. In addition, there were a few general objections to the strengthening of other levels of government. The survey did not ask a direct question about county or State government activity. Nevertheless, enough such comments were volunteered to indicate that many farmers felt that one cause of the weakness of township government was the increasing number of ways in which its activities were regulated by higher levels of government. Apparently, there was little perception that some problems in Alaiedon Township might have countywide or Statewide implications.

Few dissatisfactions with township government were expressed. Only 5 percent felt that it had too many powers. A sizable proportion of members of all groups - about half the suburban farmers, 40 percent of the semiretired and part-time commercial farmers, and 22 percent of the commercial farmers - expressed no opinion. The commercial farmers most desired the strengthening of township government in order to solve the problems of urbanization. However, concrete suggestions for specific increases in functions were few. Around 20 percent of the commercial farmers agreed that some changes might be made in zoning powers. A like number, which includes some of the same persons, suggested increasing township powers over local tax assessment and reducing State power in this area.

What Should be Done With Urbanized Parts of the Township?

There was little enthusiasm for separate incorporation of all or parts of Alaiedon Township within the next 5 or 10 years so far as part-time commercial and commercial farmers were concerned. More than 70 percent of these groups opposed the idea, while more than half of each of the other two groups also opposed the idea. Less than 10 percent of any group favored incorporation. There seems to be a feeling that the Alaiedon area (with no commercial development) could not easily support a separate city government, but the idea was not completely dismissed by the suburban farmers.

This viewpoint is borne out by responses to the question of annexing parts of Alaiedon to nearby municipalities (East Lansing, Mason, and several unincorporated villages). The commercial, part-time commercial, and suburban farmer groups were more favorable than opposed to this suggestion. However, there was less than a clear majority for such annexations, as 15 percent of the members of these groups expressed no opinion. More than half of the semiretired farmer group also expressed no opinion.

Thus the data show a block of opinion favoring annexation of urban areas to nearby cities. Some of the comments of commercial farmers, especially, suggest that they would welcome separating urban from farm residents. Apparently, they were unaware that in doing so they would forfeit much of their opportunity to participate in key decisions

affecting future urbanization of the township, which typically would be made by the cities without prior consultation with township officials.

Farmers' Plans if Urbanization Forces Them to Sell

The responses to this question were answers to a hypothetical problem, one that most career farmers regard as a remote prospect. Nevertheless, a surprising number of farmers - half of the suburban farmers and 40 percent of the career farmers - said they would not move to other farms.

Urbanization would reduce the number of career farmers by 2 in 5 if these intentions are carried out. Two of the remaining three commercial farmers would try to stay in Ingham County. It can be anticipated that these farmers would have difficulty in finding a supply of suitable farmland. The other commercial farmers would look elsewhere for farms.

In the case of the suburban farmers, the sale of their farms would result in some moving to Lansing or its suburbs. The rest hoped to find other small farm plots within Ingham County. It can be assumed that some farmers who gave a "no opinion" response would stay where they were, reduce their part-time farming operations, perhaps sell some of their land, and become suburbanites.

FINDINGS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS

One of the major findings of the study reported is that the commercial farmers - those devoting full time to farming and operating the larger acreages - are in a key position with respect to potential local government action in Alaiedon Township. Despite the fact that commercial farm families make up only about 28 percent of the farm population of the township and only 12 percent of the total population, they dominate the township offices. In addition, one of their number is township supervisor. Hence he can provide the connecting link between township and county through his membership on the county board of supervisors. Thus the commercial farmers are in position to have an effective voice in the shaping of local government policies dealing with urbanization.

A second major finding, however, is that this capacity for leadership is considerably blunted by the fact that, more than any other group in the area, commercial farmers view urbanization as something that will happen in the far distant future. Because of this view of urbanization, the need for early action to provide for orderly development is considered to be least urgent by the one group with the power and organization to initiate the needed action. In Alaiedon Township, this tendency is reinforced by the fact that most of the commercial farmers are in the part of the township least likely to be affected soon by urban development.

Even in this part of the township, however, early signs of urban development exist. For example, three city dairies make deliveries to both farm and nonfarm residents of the area, a situation that farm residents said they would have considered virtually impossible only 10 years ago. Also, in adjoining townships, the provision of consolidated school facilities has been an incentive for an additional influx of nonfarm residents, and a new centralized elementary school is now under construction near the center of Alaiedon Township. Finally, this southern portion of the township adjoins the county seat of Mason, which has been growing and will probably grow more rapidly in the future.

It may be that the estimate of commercial farmers of when urbanization will occur is affected by the fact that the arrival of suburban development will present them with difficult personal decisions about continuing in farming. The active, large-scale, full-time farmers will have relatively little choice if they want to continue to farm. Increasing assessments and increased taxes on their property, and the restrictions imposed on their operations by urbanization, would require them to sell their farms and try to find others of equal quality farther out from the city. It is difficult to leave a farm that one has operated a long time, and it is understandable that farmers would prefer to believe that urbanization is a long way off.

Still another obstacle to recognition of early signs indicating that rural areas may soon be urbanized is that so little information is available about the early stages of urbanization. If no one can describe the early signs of urbanization, rural residents cannot be expected to recognize them.

Still another finding of the study is that the policies favored by farmers to deal with problems of urbanization when it does occur are (1) assessment of farmland according to its value for agricultural use only, and

(2) to a lesser degree, zoning to reserve the land for agricultural use.

Both of these devices provide for continuation of farming until the land is actually needed for urban uses. In Alaiedon Township, at any rate, farmers did not wish - or perhaps felt that they could not hope - to block urban development permanently. They wished only to continue farming until they could sell at a top price. They did not see the need for a middleman-speculator coming between them and the developer who would ultimately buy their land for urban development.

The farmers anticipated that the crucial problem for them would be an increase in taxes to the point at which returns from farming operations would no longer be profitable, and experience in other metropolitan areas suggests that in this they are correct. Taxes in Alaiedon Township have already gone up because of construction of new schools, which were needed partly because of the urbanization that has already occurred. Apparently, further urbanization, the need for more services and facilities, and increased tax rates can be expected. In addition, assessments on the land in the township will probably increase to keep pace with, or to anticipate, the sale value for urban uses. The combination of increased assessments and higher tax rates has made farming unprofitable in other rural-urban fringe areas, and the expectation that it will happen in Alaiedon Township seems correct.

The two kinds of government action favored by farmers to deal with this problem - assessment on the value of land for agricultural use only, and exclusive agricultural zoning - have also been tried extensively elsewhere. While study of these devices is continuing, preliminary evidence indicates that neither has been particularly effective in keeping the land in agricultural use or in providing for orderly development from rural to urban uses.[6] Where they have been effective, indications are that it was because the devices were used by an effective leadership group which knew the kind of urban development it wanted and had the courage to enforce the regulations until orderly development was assured. So far, the indications in Alaiedon Township are that commercial farmers have not decided that any positive action is needed at this stage of development, nor has any other leadership group arisen with which the farmers might cooperate in providing for orderly urban development.

Because our study was concentrated on farmers, it provides no data on the suburban residents now in Alaiedon Township, except the inference from the key position of commercial farmers in local government that suburban residents are not especially active in local government affairs. They may possibly be more active in school affairs, an area on which we have no data.

A third finding of the study is that the suburban farmers, who presumably are a transition group between farming and other occupational careers, arrived in the township relatively late. They were people with farm backgrounds who apparently moved from other areas to Lansing to take off-farm jobs during World War II, then bought acreage in Alaiedon Township to farm while they continued working at their off-farm jobs. Indications are that they hold many of the traditional rural values but that some of these values are being modified because of their urban jobs and because some of their interests - for example, improved schools for their children - are similar to those of nonfarm rural residents. Although the suburban farmers have been a numerical majority of the farmers of the township since shortly after their arrival, they do not play a very active role in local government affairs.

The last finding is that at least 40 percent of the present farmers in the township do not plan to continue farming if their present farmland is taken for urban uses. There are indications that perhaps more of them would continue to farm if they had sufficient capital and if they could get from farming operations the equivalent of their present incomes from off-farm jobs.

Few farmers have made plans for what they consider to be the remote time when they will be obliged to sell their land. Of those who intend to stay in farming, most would attempt to find other farms in the same county.

Taken together, the findings suggest that urbanization will be fairly far advanced before those township residents who might wish to guide the process become aware of the problem or take steps to deal with it. Yet the opportunity for farmers to influence the development of the land use pattern is present from the beginning. Judging from the

[6] Solberg, E. D., The Why and How of Rural Zoning, U. S. Dept. Agr. Agr. Inform. Bul. 196, 1958, and Talks on Rural Zoning, U. S. Agr. Res. Serv., Farm Econ. Res. Div., 1960; House, P. W., Preferential Assessment of Farmland in the Rural-Urban Fringe of Maryland, U. S. Econ. Res. Serv., ERS 8, 1961, and State Action Relating to Taxation of Farmland on the Rural-Urban Fringe, U. S. Econ. Res. Serv., ERS 13, 1961.

Alaiedon experience, their influence on local government extends appreciably beyond the point at which they can be outvoted. This suggests that any program for orderly development of the rural-urban fringe area would be more effective if it could enlist the support of the commercial farmer group.

For most farmers, the findings of the study suggest the need for more awareness of the rapidity with which urbanization can advance in metropolitan areas, and greater consideration of possible alternative courses of action for those in the path of urbanization. While farmers are in a relatively strong position through both ownership of land and their key position in local government, the position might possibly be strengthened by incorporation of the rural portion of the township, as was done by some California farmers in Dairy Valley, Artesia, and Dairyland. In Michigan and many other States, however, present statutory requirements do not permit incorporation of lightly populated rural areas. Another possibility would be to work more closely with the urban interests concerned with furthering planning and zoning, in order to develop a program that will provide the maximum benefits for both urban and rural interests in urban development.

Urban development will continue in the foreseeable future, and there is need for accommodation of both rural and urban interests in our metropolitan areas. As the study reported shows, farmers are in a key position to contribute both to the establishment of objectives for this urban development and to the action needed to achieve these objectives.

Growth Through Agricultural Progress