

Growth Management and Environmental Quality

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Spring 1994

ABSTRACT

As Doug Porter, President of the Growth Management Institute, asserts, "In virtually every metropolitan area in the country, one or more communities is undergoing rapid change." These changes are occurring in response to many different economic trends that have dramatic effect on the patterns of new development. Communities should recognize the need to plan ahead and establish appropriate ways to guide growth. Growth which is unplanned and poorly managed creates major problems for the built environment such as inefficient transportation patterns, excessive infrastructure costs, and reduced productivity in the workplace (for which new communications tools are a stopgap, not a solution). Directing growth can avoid the problems of uncoordinated development, as well as capitalize on the positive opportunities of growth.

Typically, the goal of growth management programs is to improve the overall development process while also fulfilling public objectives for community growth and change. Failing to adequately address these forces of growth and change in an area will have devastating impacts on its environmental quality and the quality of life residents have come to enjoy and expect. Businesses and public institutions need to establish their built environments in stable, socially balanced, cost effective communities. Future professionals will have to understand these challenges and be prepared to seek solutions as part of larger teams.

Many communities in southeastern Wisconsin are at a critical juncture as growth continues and the negative consequences of sprawl become more evident. Communities in Kenosha County are especially experiencing such pressures driven in large part from rapid growth in Northern Illinois. These communities are grappling with an array of decisions regarding the type and amount of development to allow, coping with the impacts of new development and preservation of prime agricultural lands.

In the Spring of 1994, the Institute worked with graduate students in the Master of Urban Planning program at the School of Architecture and Urban Planning to assist Kenosha County in their growth management efforts. The Applied Planning Workshop is a final semester course undertaken by Master's Degree candidates. Its aim is to provide a capstone experience to the curriculum. The workshop demands teamwork to address a real community planning project and, at the same time, provides a forum for students to make a contribution

to the community. This applied workshop instructional format is the foundation of the Institute's approach to professional education.

Students were asked to research existing growth management techniques, define basic principles of growth management, provide examples of effective solutions and assess their applicability to different community settings in Kenosha County. This document is an interim report of their work and is organized around four primary substantive areas:

- County-wide Coordination and Planning
- Local Intergovernmental Coordination
- Impact Analyses and Fees
- Regulating Plans for New Development

This study was undertaken in conjunction with the office of the Kenosha County Executive. The project was partially funded by the Johnson Controls Institute.

The assistance of the following people in providing background information and participating in student presentations is gratefully acknowledged:

John Collins, Kenosha County Executive

George Melcher, Director of Planning for Kenosha County

Ray Forgianni, Director of Planning for the City of Kenosha

John Bechler, Director, Kenosha Area Development Corporation

Pat Meehan, President, Meehan and Company

Jerry Emrick, Planner, SEWRPC

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