

The Durham Cooperative Planning Initiative

A Case Study of Intergovernmental Management in Local Government Planning

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This article explores an intergovernmental management (IGM) endeavor in which the city of Durham and Durham County, North Carolina, developed and entered into a cooperative planning arrangement. The article describes the atmosphere, events, and dynamics of the Durham cooperative planning initiative and attempts to identify the combination of process and contextual factors which led to its success. The paper on which this article is based received the Donald and Alice Stone Student Paper Award in 1989, conferred annually by the Section on Intergovernmental Administration and Management of the American Society for Public Administration.

Introduction

Local governments often undertake *intergovernmental management* (IGM) initiatives in direct response to issues which defy resolution on a strictly local basis. The scope or complexity of these issues transcend local political boundaries, requiring a management approach of equivalent scale (e.g., pollution control and wetlands preservation). Local governments use IGM processes and mechanisms to bridge their functional and geographic limitations, collectively and cooperatively expanding the scope of their efforts to better manage their multijurisdictional needs. IGM mechanisms range from simple informal cooperative agreements (e.g., a handshake agreement between two city managers to advise each other on possible spillover problems from their respective jurisdictions) to more formal arrangements such as interlocal contracts or joint service agreements.

This article begins by presenting a conceptual framework to better understand the issues, motivations, and strategies used; then describes the events and dynamics of the cooperative planning initiative; and concludes with an examination of the cooperative planning endeavor within the context of IGM principles and concepts, highlighting elements of the situation and processes that may have contributed to the success of the effort. Data for the article were collected through personal interviews with key participants, and a review of local news articles, planning documents, reports, and the final interlocal agreement.

A Conceptual Framework

The Durham City and County cooperative planning effort may be best understood within the broader context of the local government *functional assignment debate* and the emerging field of intergovernmental management. The functional assignment debate centers on the question, what form (or level) of local governance is best suited to local

government functional responsibilities? There are three schools of thought on this subject: (1) the ultralocalists, (2) the regionalists and/or metropolitan government advocates, and (3) the proportionalists.

Ultralocalism is a term used to describe the public choice perspective on local government functional responsibilities as espoused by Vincent Ostrom, Charles Tiebout, and Robert Warren. Ultralocalists argue that polycentric or multinucleated political systems--systems comprising many units of government that often overlap jurisdictions and are perhaps inefficient economically--are most responsive to citizens' demands and, as such, the best service delivery approach (Henry 1986: 330). Responsiveness and accountability are the watchwords of the ultralocalist perspective, where multiple service providers afford some measure of assurance that when one provider is not doing an adequate job, another is available to meet citizen needs.

Regionalists or *metropolitan reformists* are polar opposites to the ultralocalists. They argue that the multiplicity of local government jurisdictions in metropolitan areas result in fragmentary, inefficient, and inconsistent service delivery. Regionalists advocate consolidation of local governments or creation of a metropolitan government as the best means of eliminating overlaps and omissions in service delivery, obtaining economies of scale, and providing consistent, quality service at the least cost to the taxpayer (see National Research Council 1975; Committee for Economic Development 1970; and the National Commission on Urban Problems 1968).

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The *proportionalist* perspective is something of a compromise between the ultralocalist and metropolitan viewpoints. It sees virtue in ultralocalist and regionalist perspectives and their associated values (i.e., responsiveness and efficiency). Proportionalists argue, however, that local government functional responsibilities should be assigned in proportion to the scale of government most appropriate or best suited to provide the service. In short, functional responsibilities that require quick, responsive, and personal reactions from government should be delivered on a strictly local basis (e.g., police patrols, licensing, and zoning). Whereas, functional responsibilities that transcend local boundaries, that can be centralized, and that allow economies of scale to be achieved should be assigned to a greater-than-local governmental system (e.g., mass transit, water/sewer, and pollution abatement) (ACIR 1976: 68; National Commission on Urban Problems, Report No. 2 1968: 11-12; and Henry 1986: 335).

The primary problem of the proportionalist perspective is in obtaining consensus on which functions are more appropriately managed at a local versus a greater-than-local scale. Land use planning provides a useful example. Some experts argue that it should remain primarily an independent local government function because of its impacts on property rights and community development (i.e., the importance of self-determination of land uses within a community). Others argue that property rights will not be obscured by a greater-than-local functional assignment and that such an approach is necessary in order to adequately address multijurisdictional planning issues (e.g., environmental protection and exclusionary zoning) (National Commission on Urban Problems 1968: 7-12). There simply is no clear consensus as to what form or style of local governance is most appropriate for this functional area.

Normative to Descriptive

The reality of the situation is that metropolitan or regional consolidation of local governments is, on the one hand, an increasingly unlikely phenomenon given the growing popularity of home rule and capacity building at the local level. But, on the other hand, local governments appear to be equally dissatisfied with the status quo of fragmentary, uncoordinated policy making and service delivery in the multijurisdictional policy arena. Thus, local governments are relying increasingly on ad hoc, cooperative, incremental measures to address their regional welfare concerns, developing creative solutions that can address their greater-than-local concerns, while safeguarding local autonomy (ACIR 1982: 333). Glendenning and Reeves' corroborate this development within the broader context of intergovernmental relations:

The most dominant pattern emerging in intergovernmental change is that of pragmatic IGR within the federal system--a constantly evolving, problem-solving at-

tempt to work out solutions to major problems on an issue-by-issue basis, resulting in modifications of the federal and intergovernmental systems (Glendenning and Reeves 1977: 21).

This trend may be best described as a *modified proportionalist approach*, where localities cooperatively bridge their fiscal, administrative, and/or geographic functional limitations without yielding full control of those functional responsibilities. The distinguishing criteria are (1) an incremental approach (i.e., issue or task-oriented), using (2) cooperative arrangements which achieve greater-than-local functional objectives *without* (3) sacrificing local autonomy. A good way to visualize this trend is within a continuum of functional assignment philosophies. Thus the modified proportionalist or intergovernmental management (IGM) approach would fall somewhere between the ultralocalist and proportionalists schools of thought (ACIR 1982: 334).

The term intergovernmental management was introduced in the preceding paragraph as synonymous or interchangeable with the concept of the modified proportionalist approach for good reason--the development and implementation of such cooperative arrangements are the natural products of IGM processes. IGM processes and solutions do not lead to any substantial realignments in our federal system, but focus on "getting things done" in an operational manner (Agranoff 1986: 2). By definition, IGM has three special characteristics (Wright 1988: 450 & Agranoff 1986: 5):

1. *A Mutual Problem Solving Focus.* Relevant actors clarify common interests and differences, communicate accurate information, and develop a foundation of mutual respect and trust. The actors flexibly explore alternatives and the potential for mutual benefit, and choose alternatives that maximize gains for both parties (Brown 1983: 51). Within this synergistic framework, differences of opinion provide an opportunity for sharing information and clarifying issues so that the valuable assets of each position can be integrated into the final solution (Hoh 1981:54).
2. *Coping Capabilities.* Parties to the process acknowledge and respect the autonomy of others and accept current institutional arrangements as a given. With this understanding, actors attempt to craft a solution with a distinctive nonhierarchical, nonsystematic, nonsuperior-subordinate character (Walker 1974: 30).
3. *Communication Networks and Contacts.* Ultimately, efforts to resolve mutual problems or issues must occur through intensive interaction and negotiation at both the political and technical levels, both formally and informally, using a joint task orientation.

Perhaps the most current, definitive work in the area of IGM is Robert J. Agranoff's study, *Intergovernmental Management: Human Services Problem-Solving in Six Met-*

ropolitan Areas. From these exploratory, case study analyses, Agranoff proposes a set of research-based conclusions on the nature of IGM. According to Agranoff, IGM appears to be a process requiring: "(1) Large interactive investments, which can (2) cumulate by cementing relationships, with (3) heavy amounts of jurisdictional accommodation, (4) pursued through open, but conditioned agendas, (5) involving top level officials, (6) engaged in formal and informal processes that (7) recognize and respect differences, while (8) confronting questions systematically, (9) considering and accommodating law, jurisdiction, politics and technical details, and (10) executing by mutual and simultaneous action with heavy emphasis on product solutions that focus on resolution of concrete issues" (Agranoff 1988: 186).

All of those elements were present in the Durham County cooperative planning initiative and, in many instances, appear to be the hallmarks of successful cooperative planning initiatives.

The City of Durham -- Durham County Cooperative Planning Initiative

Precursors to the Initiative

The idea of jointly sharing or consolidating services in Durham County was not a new one. Prior to the 1986-88 cooperative planning initiative, the issue of near total city-county government consolidation was brought before the voters on three separate occasions with the measure being rejected in each instance (Horton, Interview 11/14/88). Some local observers, who wished to remain anonymous, speculated that those consolidation efforts failed in large part because they were viewed by many voters as either a direct attempt or an incremental step toward school district consolidation, a highly controversial local topic fraught with equity, equality, and distributional issues.

Despite the considerable political turmoil that the consolidation issue had raised, it appears as though certain aspects of consolidation must have had a strong intuitive appeal to many in the community. When the cooperative planning proposal came to public hearings in 1988, few voiced opposition to it. An alternative interpretation to the surprising ease of adoption is that the cooperative planning effort was managed so tactfully that there were no reasons for opposition to develop.

Origins

In 1985 the Government Affairs Subcommittee of the Durham Chamber of Commerce undertook a study to explore the feasibility of consolidating city and county planning and tax collection functions. Following this effort, the subcommittee passed its findings on to the chamber's board of directors who, upon review, endorsed the concept and passed a resolution in early 1986 requesting

that both the city and county explore this functional consolidation (*Durham Herald* 10/08/87: C-12). After about five months of deliberation within the respective governing bodies, and through the standing City-County Coordinating Committee, the city and county governing boards determined that a Citizens Study Committee should be formed to explore the issue in greater detail. To ensure that the issue did not flounder and fade away, County Board Chairman William Bell set a deadline of July 1988 for either obtaining agreement or dropping the issue (Horton, Interview 11/14/88). The deadline was chosen so it would not coincide with elections, thereby avoiding undue and potentially harmful political controversy. The community's largest newspaper, a consistently outspoken proponent of consolidation, disapproved of the city and county decision to create a citizens study committee. In an editorial shortly following this announcement, it stated:

It should not be the responsibility of a group of non-elected special interest representatives to amble in and reinvent the wheel of government . . . just have the City and County managers draw up a plan, negotiate, hold public hearings and do it (*Durham Herald*, editorial 9/9/86).

In retrospect, if this outspoken sentiment had been heeded, cooperative efforts might have quickly floundered.

Discussions with participants in the process revealed several explicit and implicit motivations for establishing a citizens study committee. Obviously there was a genuine interest in determining the true advantages and disadvantages of cooperative planning arrangements and the feasibility of such an endeavor between the city of Durham and Durham County. Less obviously, but equally important from an IGM standpoint, the committee served as a political buffer for the governing bodies. If the cooperative planning arrangement became too controversial an issue, the governing bodies could easily distance themselves from the study committee. Pressman and Agranoff note that such *pseudo-arenas* are common in the realm of IGM.

By definition, the study committee was an exploratory body, so this was also a logical choice from a joint task or problem-solving perspective. Further, from an implementation standpoint, the study committee provided a forum where the issue could gain credibility and be legitimized through the interaction of citizens and government officials. The Joint City/County Planning Study Committee was formed in December of 1986.

The Pseudo-Arena in Action

The Joint City/County Planning Study Committee consisted of eleven members appointed by both the city and county governing boards. A number of local interests were represented on this committee, including the Committee on the Affairs of Black People, the Durham Chamber of Commerce, the Inter-Neighborhood Council, the People's

Alliance, the League of Women Voters, the Durham Voter's Alliance, and the Jaycees. Local leaders spent considerable time in making these appointments. They wanted to ensure broad coverage of all community interests and selected highly credible and respected individuals from within the community. Additionally, both the city and county managers (Orville W. Powell and John P. Bond, respectively), were made ex-officio members on the committee and served as cochairs. Powell and Bond had an excellent professional rapport and played a significant role in this process. The fact that Powell and Bond had worked together in Winston-Salem, N.C., where a joint planning program had been operating successfully since 1948, was an added bonus to the effort (Powell, Interview 11/08/88).

The study committee was given the following charge from the city and county:

1. Determine the objectives of planning in Durham County, within and without the corporate limits of the city and its extraterritorial jurisdiction.
2. Examine the methods currently used to influence and control development in both jurisdictions.
3. Determine the differences and similarities in procedures of county and city planning boards and support staffs, including enforcement procedures, and conduct feasibility studies of consolidation.
4. Investigate methods used in other North Carolina counties and cities where joint endeavors exist.
5. Examine legal authority to operate a merged county-city planning function.
6. Determine planning staff capacity needed to serve a combined city-county planning and enforcement activity, including administrative systems of reporting, and lines of authority to county and city managers' offices.
7. Make recommendations on organization of planning staff and proper personnel policies dealing with transfer of employees from one governmental unit to another; if applicable, insuring that no employee is adversely affected by merger.
8. Examine alternative funding arrangements in use in combined planning operations and recommend a proper cost-sharing formula.
9. Recommend a structure ensuring adequate citizen participation in the public hearing process for zoning and subdivision regulation with final decision making reserved to appropriate governing body.
10. Report study committee findings and recommendations to the respective governing bodies upon completion of the work.

It was apparent from the start that some staff support was going to be needed if the effort was ever to move beyond the study stage. Neither the city nor the county had enough excess staff time to commit to the effort, so they jointly hired a consultant to help research, organize, and provide

staff support for the study committee process. Phin Horton, a public management consultant with an extensive background in city management and intergovernmental relations, was the unanimous choice for the position.

Horton, who also had experience working in a local jurisdiction with a cooperative planning arrangement, fully understood how important it would be to maintain an unbiased, impartial role in the problem-solving process. Any hint or remark on his part which inferred a predisposition for a particular approach (or other expressions of opinion) could seriously damage the problem-solving process and undermine the credibility of the study committee findings and recommendations. To avoid such problems he both literally and physically went out of his way to avoid Miles' Law--"where you stand depends on where you sit." He alternately changed the use of the terms "city-county" and "county-city" in conversations and written documents, he did not use the term "merger," he maintained offices in both the city hall and county court house, and he divided his time as equally as possible between the two offices.

The study committee took the charges from the city and county to task, and with the assistance of Horton, undertook an intensive study effort to master the issues at hand. This educational process included:

1. A study of operations of both the city and county planning departments.
2. Visits to Winston-Salem-Forsyth County and Fayetteville-Cumberland County, N.C., to study their city-county joint planning operations.
3. An interview with the director of the Joint Charlotte-Mecklenburg County, N.C., planning department.
4. A study of the merger and later dissolution of the Wilmington-New Hanover County, N.C., planning department.
5. Discussions with representatives of the Institute of Government about merged planning operations in North Carolina (Study Committee Report, 3).

By mid-February there was a strong consensus on the general concept of a merged city-county planning operation. Seeing this as an important step, Horton and Powell suggested a vote to endorse the concept with the explicit recognition that important and controversial issues remained to be determined. The study commission did so, and a resolution to endorse a joint city-county planning operation passed unanimously (*Durham Herald* 2/25/87). According to Horton and Powell, this proved, retrospectively, to be a politically adroit move because they each believed the proposal might never have come to fruition through the difficult debates on specific details in the following months. The early vote of confidence served as a driving force which prevented impasses in the problem-solving process (Horton, Interview 11/14/88; Powell, Interview 11/08/88).

Over the next several months, the study committee revised numerous drafts of an interlocal agreement that

would detail the specifics of the cooperative planning endeavor. The interview with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg County planning director seemed to have had a major impact on the study committee because of the pride exhibited by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg staff members and the logic of their operation. For example, Charlotte-Mecklenburg's new planning commissioners must serve on the planning subcommittee to learn about long-range and communitywide goals and objectives before serving on the zoning subcommittee which advises on specific development proposals and rezonings (Horton, Interview, 11/14/88). As a result, much of the Durham City-County consolidated planning proposal was modeled after the Charlotte-Mecklenburg operation.

Spirited debate characterized the study committee's meetings, which, at times, required compromise. Sometimes that took the form of an agreement to include a minority opinion or policy alternative in the final report. Powell and Horton noted that overall the study committee worked exceptionally well together--they listened intently to both minority and majority concerns, allowed for inclusion of minority opinions in the final recommendations, and obtained consensus on most measures. In June 1987, the study committee completed its report and a draft inter-local agreement stipulating the provisions of the proposed joint planning arrangement, and submitted them to the city and county governments.

Each local government took about two months to consider the report. In September 1987 it became apparent that many of the issues that had resulted in minority opinions in the study committee still needed to be resolved.

The Intergovernmental Board in Action

Political posturing and turf guarding developed after the study committee submitted its findings and recommendations. The Durham County Commissioners made it explicitly clear that they would oppose merging the planning functions of the city and county if the city would not yield its authority over the extraterritorial jurisdiction (*Durham Herald* 9/1/87). A minority of county commissioners opposed the allocation of representation on the new planning commission, arguing that it disproportionately favored the city due to residency requirements (*Durham Herald* 10/03/87). City council members also had reservations about certain aspects of the proposal. Several city council members voiced concerns that a consolidated planning commission and staff would detract from important city projects. Others worried that recently improved development codes would be watered down through the joint effort (*Durham Herald* 10/16/87 & 10/20/87).

In an effort to address those concerns, the city and county remanded the proposal to their standing intergovernmental coordination committee, referred to as the City/County Committee (CCC), for negotiations to iron out differences

Summary of Citizens Study Committee Recommendations

1. The interlocal agreement would establish one Planning and Zoning Commission and one Planning Staff to serve both the City of Durham and Durham County. Recommendations from the consolidated Planning and Zoning Commission would go to either the City Council or County Commission, depending on jurisdiction, for final action.
2. The new Planning Commission would be known as the Durham Planning Commission.
3. The Durham Planning Commission would consist of 14 members appointed from districts. The City and County would each appoint seven members with at least one of the County's appointments residing in the City limits. The current members of the City and County Planning Commissions would comprise the new Durham Planning Commission for at least the first full year of operation to insure smooth transition.
4. The new Planning Commission would be organized into two standing Committees of seven members each--A Planning Committee and a Zoning Committee. This structure allows the new Planning Commission to give adequate time to the actual planning function while handling both the City and County Zoning case work.
5. Establishment of a Durham Planning Agency, consisting of a director and subordinate employees.
6. The head of the Durham Planning Agency, the Planning Director, would be hired and/or terminated by a unanimous vote of the City Manager, the County Manager, and the Chairperson of the Planning Commission.
7. Both the personnel and financial procedures of the City would govern the operation of the Durham Planning Commission.
8. The funding of the Durham Planning Commission Budget would be pro-rated in the same manner as the local option sales tax revenues are distributed by the N.C. Department of Revenue (To be phased in over a two year period).

In addition to these specific structural recommendations the study commission recommended:

- a. Current County employees should be transferred to the City without loss of pay or benefits. Any staff reductions due to merger should occur through attrition.
- b. The governing bodies should direct the new Planning Commission to develop strategies for obtaining public input into the planning process.
- c. The governing bodies should consider merging the membership of any other boards, commissions or staff functions that have a common purpose or objective to be logically consistent with a joint planning commission (e.g., Zoning Board of Adjustment, Historic District Commission, Greenways Commission, and staff functions like Inspection and Engineering).
- d. A thorough evaluation should be conducted of the Planning Commission after two years operation to allow for early detection and correction of any operational or procedural problems with the new system and determine proper staffing level for the Agency.

Note: Items 3, 4, 6, and 8 are minority opinions which the study committee chose to include in the final recommendations.

and provide reassurance to uncertain local officials. The CCC consisted of three city council members, three county commissioners, and the city and county managers. The CCC and local governing bodies were eventually able to find common ground and mutual agreement. Three of the more interesting issues addressed through this intergovernmental board are described below.

The Extraterritorial Jurisdiction

In 1972 Durham County granted the City of Durham extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) for zoning and planning purposes in certain areas adjacent to the municipal limits, in the expectation that this land would one day be annexed to the city. Over the years, county commissioners became increasingly dissatisfied with the ETJ because of complaints from constituents living within the ETJ who were unhappy with city-imposed zoning policies. The crux of the matter was that county residents residing within the ETJ had no means to affect land use regulations imposed by the city because they could not vote in city elections. While North Carolina statutes require ETJ representation on the appropriate municipal planning commission, residents have no voting rights within the municipal limits to affect the composition of the city council--their final land use decision makers. The city wanted to retain the ETJ to ensure continuity and compatibility in development practices and patterns in planned annexation areas.

Movement toward compromise occurred when city legal staff pointed out that the county could unilaterally initiate proceedings to negate the ETJ at any time. A compromise was struck that satisfied both sides--the city would yield the ETJ, provided the county agreed to continue to use the city's land use plan and development code until the new planning agency could develop a new comprehensive city-county land use plan, and city-county land use regulations could be brought into substantial conformance. Moreover, a provision would be included in the agreement that would return the ETJ to the city in the event the cooperative planning agreement was terminated.

Planning Commission Representation

While a planning commission's role in land use decision making is primarily advisory, its role in agenda setting, determining short- and long-range planning priorities, revising development regulations, and making recommen-

dations to the respective governing body can have a strong influence on the future growth, development, and character of a community. Thus, representation on the planning commission can become a serious power-status issue with distinct images of winners and losers.

The arrangement that received the most support from the city and county was a fourteen-member planning commission with seven members appointed from the city council and seven appointed by the county commission (for the first year the commission would consist of the existing planning commission members). Three of the county's seven appointees must reside within the city of Durham.

Some county commissioners felt that this arrangement would result in overrepresentation of city interests. But after some spirited discussion and County Chairman Bell's public statement that "the county represents everyone in Durham County both inside and outside municipal limits,"

the dissenting commissioners acquiesced to the representation formula as proposed (*Durham Herald* 10/3/87).

Personnel

A common theme throughout the various consolidation proposals was the protection of existing planning staff jobs, pay scale, and position. There were three reasons why this precondition made sense. First, there was the issue of fairness and local protectionism. Both governing bodies were happy with their personnel and the service they had provided over the years.

The idea of throwing many of these individuals and their families into turmoil and uncertainty did not mesh well with their values of fairness. Second, there was the issue of practicality. Both the city and county planning staffs could lobby effectively either for or against the proposed functional merger. One of the best ways to get them to buy into the process was to safeguard their jobs. Third, there was the issue of need. Given the expanded scope and number of tasks needed to be completed, every staff person on both the city and county planning departments would be needed to assist in developing the new city-county comprehensive plan, revising the city-county development codes to bring them into substantial conformance, and continuing existing projects and planning tasks. In the long run, it was predicted that changes would occur and economies of scale achieved, but short term needs had to be dealt with first (Horton, Interview 11/4/88). That did not, however, play well with the local press. A *Durham Herald* editorial had



Planners review the Durham County Zoning Plan.

this to say on the matter:

They want all jobs protected--and state that Durham should brace for slightly higher planning costs. That's bureaucratic nonsense. Government ought not be in the business of protecting government jobs. Its job is to provide the taxpayers with the best possible efficiency at the lowest possible cost. Considering merger without considering the possibility of reducing jobs, particularly if there are duplications of services, is no advantage at all (*Durham Herald* 3/4/88).

Despite the paper's criticism, the "no harm to jobs" provision remained in effect. Other personnel matters that were amicably resolved included the method of hiring the planning staff director, transfer of employee benefits, creation of a city-county special projects coordinator position, and other personnel administration specifics.

Numerous other issues were resolved through this negotiation-problem-solving forum between October 1987 and June 1988. In mid-June 1988, the city of Durham and Durham County had an interlocal agreement which both could accept. On June 20 and June 13, respectively, the city and county committed to a merged planning arrangement.

Institutionalizing IGM

The interlocal agreement's opening policy statement, which describes the rationale for the cooperative endeavor, clearly underscores the importance the localities attribute to IGM and their enlightened perspective on interlocal cooperation in general:

... interlocal cooperation for comprehensive planning is a necessity . . . allowing for orderly and coordinated growth . . . (and) . . . consistent analysis of planning issues across political boundaries . . . (providing) . . . a more sound basis for policy decisions which affect both political entities (1-2).

The consolidated planning staff and joint planning commission stand by themselves as examples of formalized IGM in the planning functional area, but this is also evident in other provisions of the interlocal agreement. For example, the planning commission is empowered to advise and cooperate with units of local, state, and national government on any matters within its purview and to establish citizen's advisory sub-committees. Perhaps the most definitive example, however, was the creation of the Joint

A View from Inside

Bob Paterson's article, *The Durham County Cooperative Planning Initiative*, contains a number of insightful observations concerning the atmosphere, process and key factors contributing to the decision to merge city and county planning efforts.

The general "atmosphere" in Durham during the period leading up to the planning merger discussions cannot be underestimated as a contributing factor. Durham County is a relatively small 300 square miles, and the city of Durham is a relatively large 70 square miles, containing almost three-fourths of Durham County's 180,000 population. With a few exceptions, the citizenry, the development community, and the special interest groups interacting with both governments are the same. The city and county have a history of intergovernmental cooperation as evidenced by projects concerning utility expansion, watershed protection, public facilities, downtown development, and affordable housing. Finally, if the issues involving merger of the city and county school districts can be resolved, there is the widespread perception that total merger of city and county government is a probability. Selective merger of city and county departmental operations seems quite plausible given this atmosphere.

Merging city and county planning, at least in the perception of the general public, seemed like merging mom and apple pie. The remaining question was whether the major clients of planning (developers, citizen groups, environmental groups and elected officials) would agree. In my opinion, the process for studying the merger was the key action that helped make it happen. That was not my initial thought--I feared that the conscious effort to structure the study committee with representation from various groups was overly political and would detract from a rational study process or would recommend a planning structure that would turn out to be unworkable. As it turned out, the diverse parties on the committee saw the benefits in merger from both a communitywide perspective and their own group's perspective. They worked effectively as a group to put together the overall structure for a merger. The result was a plan that the two elected bodies could then tackle with the confidence that the concept and specifics before them were externally acceptable.

At that point, the major hurdles for the elected officials were the extraterritorial area, representation on the planning commission, financing the combined operation, and, to some degree, the process for appointing or dismissing the planning director. As the article pointed out, the existing City-County Committee was a key mechanism in resolving conflicts in most of those areas. Both elected bodies agreed with a city council member who thought that the two managers alone should agree on the selection of the director, as opposed to including an appointed planning commission chair in that decision as the study committee had suggested. Added to those issues was the staff's concern about how decisions on planning issues involving both bodies would be coordinated; thus the provision for a Joint City-County Planning Committee, made up of three elected officials from both bodies, was added to the proposed Interlocal Agreement.

City-County Planning Committee, styled after the standing City-County Coordinating Committee. Composed of three members from each governing body, the planning director, city and county managers, and chairperson of the planning commission, the committee is responsible for troubleshooting any problems that may arise through the joint planning arrangement and developing consensus on planning issues requiring coordination between the city and county governing boards.

Implementation, Operations, and Predictions

The interlocal agreement became effective July 1, 1988. One of the most important and often most difficult implementation issues for a consolidated planning endeavor was resolved the week before the agreement officially went into effect. That was the designation of the new planning director. Often the difficulty of this task is directly proportional to the number of planning agencies which must be consolidated. The reason is straightforward. There are more existing planning directors to choose among for the new director position.

This difficult decision was greatly simplified in Durham

County's case. The Durham County Planning Director, Deryl Bateman, decided to retire. County Manager John Bond had determined he wanted to retain Bateman's expertise, but in a new position within county government; however, after twenty-two years with the Durham County government, Deryl Bateman stated "he had no axe to grind," and was ready to do other things with his life (*Durham Herald* 6/29/88). Thus, Paul Norby, the city of Durham's planning director, was the clear choice of the city and county managers to head the new planning agency.

Norby noted that luckily the most difficult implementation problems encountered were finding and moving into the new office facilities. It was difficult finding large enough facilities to house the new agency in the downtown and getting the space ready quickly. Overall, many felt that the first phase of implementation and initial operations went very smoothly (Norby, Interview 10/25/88; Powell, Interview 11/8/88). Norby predicted that the largest challenges for the future would be consolidation of the city and county comprehensive plans, and revising the city and county development codes so to obtain a measure of uniformity and consistency (Norby, Interview 10/25/88).

The article refers to an early commitment to retain all jobs as a key element in avoiding subterfuge by the two planning staffs. Since there was no negative lobbying to my knowledge by the staff, job security may have been a factor; however, I must say that I did not hear much concern about it before that time from staff members. What I did hear were concerns about the mechanics of the merger, what new complexities would be added to each person's job, and how we could combine two significantly different operations and processes into an efficient one and keep our two "masters" happy. While some parties, like the newspaper, expected merger to bring efficiencies that in turn would reduce the need for staff, the expectations and desires of both governments for more and wider-ranging planning has, if anything, resulted in staff increases since the merger.

Experience since the merger has had its high and low spots, but has been generally positive. The Interlocal Agreement proved to be a useful document in providing guidance to staff, elected officials, and the new planning commission on roles, agendas and processes. Administratively, the mechanics of combining the two staffs, setting up day-to-day operating procedures, distributing and managing workload, and other details has worked reasonably well. The Joint City-County Planning Committee had some success in developing consensus between the two elected bodies on the work program, budget, user fees, merger of zoning ordinances, major planning issues and the like. But much more remains to be done in that area.

Probably the rockiest experience in the initial year was with the new planning commission. In that year it had an extremely heavy planning workload (added to by new items assigned to it for review by the Interlocal Agreement). The planning commission was a large and diverse group large that was suddenly thrown together and expected to deal with complex issues. Complicating this was the fact that the staff, in addition to providing support to the planning commission, also provided support to over two dozen other formal boards, commissions, or committees which came along into the process by their association with one or the other pre-merger planning staffs. Time had to be divided; the staff was ultimately accountable to the managers, elected bodies and work program, therefore, the roles between staff and appointed boards became fuzzy at times. This, too, is working out, but is a slower process.

Beyond these additional observations, I think Mr. Paterson put his finger on the key ingredients in our IGM experience with planning in Durham. A history of intergovernmental cooperation between the city and county helped; however, communities who want to have their governments work together in a more formal manner should follow the elements of the model described in Mr. Paterson's article.

-- *A. Paul Norby, AICP*
Planning Director, Durham

City and county officials are very optimistic about other consolidation possibilities because of the excellent early results of the cooperative planning endeavor. City Manager Powell predicted that the city and county would probably explore merger of other functional areas, such as purchasing and personnel, in the not too distant future.

Lessons Learned

Clearly, Agranoff's ten essential characteristics of IGM process were met in the city of Durham and Durham County cooperative planning initiative. Large interactive investments paid off in greater understanding and trust. Jurisdictional accommodation was forthcoming from both sides, especially when top level decision makers on both sides became involved and exerted their influence. Technical and legal expertise were just as important in the problem-solving process as was the informal political bargaining. Issues were managed systematically, leaving adequate room for innovation and adaptation. And, the final product was a shared, cooperative venture.

Certain aspects or conditions which appear to be important factors in the success of such a cooperative endeavor are illustrated by the Durham case, including:

1. *The Extent and Form of Government in Durham County.* The fact that there were only two local government jurisdictions in Durham County greatly simplified the cooperative planning endeavor. A study by Vincent L. Marando suggests that localities which have council-manager forms of government, as do the city of Durham and Durham County, appear to be more prone to initiate cooperative or joint arrangements. Professional contacts between managers seem to provide a basis for developing cooperative arrangements (Marando 1968: 185-200).
2. *A Strong Professional Rapport between City and County Personnel.* The fact that both City Manager Powell and County Manager Bond had a good working relationship and had worked together in Winston-Salem, where a cooperative planning program had been in operation since 1948, may have been a very significant factor in this effort. This is also suggested in the Marando study noted above. The managers and their staffs appeared to have a very good working and professional relationship prior to the endeavor.
3. *A History and Understanding of Intergovernmental Coordination.* The fact that complete city-county government consolidation made its way to the ballot box on three separate occasions is evidence of some strong interests in the community and government in this issue area. Moreover, the fact that a standing City-County Coordinating Committee existed acknowledges a progressive orientation, political strength, and concern in the area of intergovernmental coordination.
4. *The Use of a Pseudo-Arena to Establish Credibility, Legitimize the Endeavor, and Resolve Impasses.*

The Citizen Study Committee and City-County Coordinating Committee were effectively used to develop credibility, legitimize the initiative, create an effective political buffer, and serve as effective forums for creative problem-solving.

5. *Committed Government Leadership.* The city and county managers, chairman of the county commission, mayor, and other elected officials remained committed to the notion of cooperative planning throughout the problem-solving effort, and on several occasions, used their professional or political power to help move the process along.
6. *Strong Technical and Political Support from Staff.* The "no harm to jobs" provision for planning staff members may have been instrumental in preventing the planning staffs from becoming an opposition force. This may also have been true of the existing planning commissions. Throughout the process the city and county were able to rely on their staff expertise to clarify technical issues in law, planning, personnel, and finance.
7. *Support from Local Media.* The local media can be an effective tool in shaping public opinion and, particularly in controversial settings, could make or break a cooperative effort. Perhaps overly critical at times of techniques employed, the local press provided good coverage of the cooperative endeavor and endorsed the measure wholeheartedly in the end.
8. *Building on Others Successes and Failures.* The Durham City-County cooperative planning initiative clearly benefitted from having other successful models nearby to learn about past mistakes and the latest ideas or innovations. They discovered a model they were most comfortable with and then made improvements to suit their area-specific needs.
9. *A Willingness to Work Together and Compromise.* This is probably the most important aspect of any cooperative endeavor. Cooperative planning arrangements are voluntary in nature. If participants do not enter the problem-solving effort in good faith and give the process an opportunity to work, there is probably very little chance of success. There must be good faith and a willingness to work out interjurisdictional differences.

Note

The city of Durham and Durham County are located in the Piedmont region of North Carolina and are part of the Raleigh-Durham Metropolitan Statistical Area. The city of Durham is the only municipal jurisdiction within Durham County. Durham County is governed by a five-member board of county commissioners, all of whom are elected at large. County commissioners appoint the chairman from among themselves. The city of Durham is governed by a thirteen-member city council which includes a popularly elected mayor. Six representatives of the city council are elected at large and the other six are elected from established wards. Both the city and county government are administered by professional managers, appointed by their respective governing bodies.

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