

Planning In Missouri -- A Primer

Robert J. Bevins, associate professor
of agricultural economics, department
of agricultural economics

Frederick Culver, director, community
and public sector programs

Introduction

The emergence regional planning in Missouri has gained much attention. As a result, people are asking questions about the nature and potential of public planning at all levels. The purpose of this brochure is to deal briefly, in a nontechnical way, with these questions.

The Framework Of Decision And Action

Sometimes we classify the decisions in which each of us participate. There are those we make as individuals, and those we make as members of a group. The group may be the family or it may be something larger—anything from the club or church to the federal government.

Another way we label decisions is to say they are public or private. By this we usually mean that private decisions do not involve the government, and public decisions are made within the framework of government.

Some decisions are a mixture and do not fit neatly into any of these categories. So it is with public planning. There is the danger that public planning, since it involves some public decisions, may be thought of as the planning of government activity by government. Public planning is more than this. It is an attempt by government to develop the means by which both governmental activity and much private activity can be meshed so they can work together to create the kind of situation which will be in the best interest of the people. Planning, in a nutshell, is the systematic development of procedures, logical in both content and sequence, to facilitate a community's becoming what it wishes and has the ability to become. **Planning then means planning!**

Need For Planning

The competitive economic world in which we live necessitates a thorough study of private decision making—whether these decisions are made by individuals or by corporations. Many, perhaps most, private decisions are made on a logical basis only after the facts have been assembled, weighed, and alternative methods of action have been considered.

In contrast, too many of our public decisions have not been made by planning ahead, but merely respond to the stimuli of some unanticipated and onrushing trend. The stimuli might, for example, result from the migration of people in large numbers to our metropolitan centers. We know this migration has brought about many problems in cities, problems which we are now trying to meet. If the consequences had been carefully considered before our metropolitan communities were bursting at the seams with new residents, it would have been possible to anticipate some of the problems which we are now encountering and to make plans to prevent their becoming as serious as they are today. In short, we need to learn how to **act** and thus avoid some of the necessity for **reaction**. Planning can help us do this.

Thus, there is growing recognition that we need more of the same careful process in making public decisions that we have been accustomed to in making private decisions. First, we need a more thorough study of the situation. Second, we need consideration of the ways in which we might be able to meet the problem. Third, we need to decide on the best alternative, and take steps to implement it. Public planning is a means to achieve this kind of careful decision making in which there is a deliberate attempt to anticipate problems and then logically to develop plans for dealing with them.

Why Plan In Missouri?

Now, let us turn more specifically to the Missouri situation. Missouri is changing. Some communities are gaining population, others are losing population. Commerce and industry are increasing in importance. Farming systems are also changing. Change, of course, is not new, but its pace seems faster. This brings both problems and opportunities. It intensifies the need for the intelligent forethought which can guide change in ways the people feel are desirable.

Most Missourians welcome economic growth which will enrich the state and give adequate employment to more of our people. We want good places to live and good places to work, now and in the future.

We sometimes regard the influences which are bringing about rapid change as forces much like the natural forces of tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, or earthquakes. Yet, the influences which bring about change are not natural forces. They are man-made. Since they are man-made, man can modify them, sometimes reverse their direction, or channel them in desired directions.

Channeling growth and change to provide what we want is not easy and seldom does it “just happen.” It requires the creative partnership of private citizens, government, and business interests, both farm and nonfarm. It requires planning.

Is Planning Something New?

The idea of mapping out the future we hope to achieve is *not* new. It is done by the home owner, the merchant on Main Street, the financial institution, the manufacturer, and the farmer. They all find it necessary to develop a map of where they are going and what they want to accomplish. So it is with communities. They are finding they need some blueprint for the future. They are discovering that they need to think about what their goals are and about how best to achieve them.

It is, of course, much harder to plan for a whole community than it is to plan as an individual or to plan for a single business. Enough people in the community must be involved so that the plan represents their wants and meets their needs, rather than simply being a plan drawn for the community by an outsider. When it comes time to do the things which are needed to put the plan into effect, it requires the support of the people of the community. Therefore, the people must have been involved in formulating the plan. This is the only way that the community planning process can result in the change desired by the citizens.

Preplanning Or Replanning?

It is difficult and expensive to rectify the results of poor planning or a complete lack of planning. It makes sense to carefully guide the development and avoid the conflicts of badly mixed land usage. It isn't easy to bring order to a residential neighborhood or a farming community sprinkled with junk yards, noxious industry, dusk to dawn night clubs. Witness how much easier it is to provide for a 60 ft. right-of-way in a new development than to widen a 30 ft. right-of-way to 60 feet—when the road is in a developed area with a number of roadside trees. The money saved and the elimination of inconvenience to residence or business makes advance planning a wiser choice.

Who Is Interested In Planning?

The process of urbanization is of concern to the farmer who does not want to be relocated or surrounded by urban development. Factory location is of concern to home owners. The type and location of development are of concern to taxpayers and to governmental units which must ultimately provide such public services as roads, fire and police protection, sewerage and water systems, and schools.

The rapid increase in communications and transportation speed seems to have shrunk both time and miles. Today we need to be concerned, not only with our own town, but with the town next to us, not only with our own county, but with the adjoining county, because what happens there can directly affect our own neighborhood. Many of the future problems we must meet with planning, such as air pollution and water pollution, pay no attention to city boundaries or to county lines. This is one of the principal reasons for the legislation which makes it possible to plan together in regions of more than one county. Many of our plans must be made jointly, with our neighbors.

The increasing interest in the future and its challenges has led to laws which provide a framework within which communities may guide growth in accordance with the desires of the people. The blueprint is called a **comprehensive plan** and the process by which it is developed is called **comprehensive planning**.

What Is Comprehensive Planning?

Not just any planning activity may be termed comprehensive. To be comprehensive it must deal simultaneously with a broad range of concern and concentrate on developing understanding of the relationships among the elements of the plan. A typical comprehensive plan might include:

1. Study and analysis of such factors as economic conditions, population, the physical geography of an area, land use, natural resources, street and road networks, public facilities, and utilities.
2. Preparation of a development plan that includes a statement of objectives, a land use and roadway plan, and a plan for public facilities.
3. Estimates of the costs of major public expenditure together with an inventory of the revenue sources available and/or needed.
4. Preparation of programs to implement the comprehensive development plan including such items as zoning, control over development of land, protection of roadway facilities, and programs or priorities for public improvements.
5. Coordination and administration of planning activities with local, state, and federal agencies, including the application of planning principles in day-to-day

community problems, keeping information current, and updating the comprehensive development plan.

This kind of planning is truly comprehensive because it deals with a broad range of community concern and because it involves a broad spectrum of people, both lay and government, in the process on a continuing basis. As such, the planning process and its output becomes important to local government, to residents, and to those who invest money in the community.

It helps local government to insure adequate services and facilities, an adequate roadway system, and harmonious uses of various sections of the area. This should lead to more efficient use of tax money.

To the resident, comprehensive planning helps insure the stability of areas and values so that the individual can plan for the future with reasonable certainty in respect to his residence or his business.

For the investor, local or foreign, the planning process sets the framework for development and helps him know what standards he must meet as well as what standards he can expect from the rest of the community.

Comprehensive planning may also be utilized to maintain the agricultural economy of an area, that is, to maintain land in its highest productivity. Planning can help this aim by preventing premature urbanization of rural areas which would result in increased demands for urban services and facilities, and the need for higher taxes to support these facilities and services.

When Is Comprehensive Planning Helpful?

It is easy to see the usefulness of comprehensive planning for large communities experiencing rapid growth and change. Its usefulness to smaller communities is less obvious. Thus, there is a tendency to assume comprehensive planning is relevant only when there are large population concentrations and/or substantial population growth expected. Such is not the case. Comprehensive planning can be useful to any community—if it is done correctly. For correct planning, the plan and the means to implement it must be realistic, and it should be based on communication with and participation by the people. In addition, it must be a continuing process. No plan can remain relevant unless it is revised as conditions and problems change.

The importance of comprehensive planning is emphasized by the press of needs and the limited resources of money and leadership available to meet these needs. The planning process, broadly conceived, offers a way to make plans, set priorities, and channel resources to deal effectively with community concerns. It may also, in many instances, be the key to making more resources available to the community. Many federal aid programs require substantial planning activity as a prerequisite to the allocation of funds for projects which the people may wish to initiate.

How Do People Plan Under Missouri Law?

Public planning requires that people establish communication with each other on a systematic basis. To make this possible, the Missouri Legislature has passed laws to provide the means for planning at the state, regional, county, and city levels.

While the procedure for planning is not precisely the same for each level, there is a common format:

1. The governing body or bodies decide to engage in planning.
2. An advisory planning group is established,
3. The planning group makes studies of the area (city, county, region) and produces a plan for the development of the area.
4. The adopting authority rejects, revises, or adopts the plan, but adoption takes place only after public hearings.
5. Authority for zoning and other regulations for implementing the plan remains with the county or city.

Evaluation And Caution

Planning activities can be fruitful or useless. The outcome depends on the people involved. Missouri law offers people a tool which, if used with concern and intelligence, can help mold the future to the best interests of the people. Planning is not a magic formula. It offers no escape from the work necessary. It does offer a framework within which to organize the work necessary to make an area what the people of the area want it to be.

* * * *

If you want additional information or a short course in planning, contact your local University Extension Center. Your University Extension Center has access to the full resources of the University of Missouri.

The authors wish to express thanks to Robert Simonds, planning specialist in the department of political science, and to Paul Lutz, community development specialist, Mid Missouri, for their helpful suggestions.



Issued in furtherance of cooperative extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture. Carl N. Scheneman, Vice-President for Extension, Co-operative Extension Service, University of Missouri, Columbia, Mo. 65201. The University of Missouri-Columbia is an equal educational opportunity institution.