1-1-1968

Comprehensive Planning in Indiana

Charles A. Sargent

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Comprehensive Planning in Indiana

An organizational guide for community leaders and officials

Cooperative Extension Service, PURDUE UNIVERSITY, Lafayette, Indiana
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Prepared by
Charles A. Sargent
Department of Agricultural Economics
To community leaders and officials: a word about comprehensive planning

Comprehensive planning is the first step in the planning-zoning process now being used by two-thirds of our counties to guide their future physical development. Citizens are directing growth in urban and rural areas across the state, using this process to influence both public and private investments in their communities. They view comprehensive planning as a means of stretching the tax dollar, reducing conflicts in land use, maintaining property values, and controlling ugly urban sprawl.

Comprehensive planning is relatively new in Indiana. It started in the large cities, is now being used for entire counties, and will soon be used for multi-county regions. And the scope and content of comprehensive plans continue to change as more complex problems call for more sophisticated and expensive solutions. Area-wide problems are being approached on a larger geographical scale than in the past. This necessarily involves more agencies and governmental units in planning and it creates difficult organizational problems.

Official planning agencies in your county must increasingly deal with issues that cut across political, geographical and jurisdictional boundaries. Local planning often involves broad issues, such as transportation, sanitation, public facilities, and similar concerns not confined to one city or township. Expanding urbanization plus a growing and mobile population enlarge the dimensions of these problems.

Not only does size of the problems call for cooperation across larger areas, but the number and kinds of planning agencies are increasing. We now have six different kinds of plan commissions in Indiana. Within Lake County, for example, there are 14 city and town plan commissions, a county plan commission and, over all of them, a regional plan commission.

In addition, other municipal or county agencies are involved in planning, such as park boards, sanitation and health boards, rural water and sewer corporations, watershed and drainage boards. State and federal agencies also have an interest in comprehensive planning and need to be brought into important planning decisions. Because of the nature of the problems and the many agencies and boards working on them, inter-local cooperation is essential.

However, arguments for autonomy and independence are often voiced -- independence of the city from the country, of the school board from the city council, of the county from state or national government. Each unit wants to do its own planning with a minimum of "interference" from either a coordinating body or competing agencies. Each unit believes it is in the best position "to know the needs of its clientele" and best represent their "interest."

As a community leader, you recognize valid arguments on both sides of the "cooperation vs. independence" controversy. But in community planning, conflicting interests and viewpoints must be reconciled into policies that reflect the majority interest without violating the individuals' and organizations' basic rights.
The planning of your community's future development can be done by individuals or governmental units, separately or by team effort. But planning as a community management function cannot be avoided. To dodge it or postpone it means that changes in your community will take place without benefit of organized public influence.

**Purpose of this publication**

This publication is designed to serve as a guide to community leaders and local officials who are interested in setting up alternative planning organizations to solve problems that cut across city and county boundaries. This guide was prepared in response to many requests for specific "how to do it" information and analysis of practical problems encountered.

The rather complicated process of community action required, legal steps, and organization are described in some detail. However, to gain a broader understanding of the issues involved, this guide should be used in conjunction with the following materials:

1. **The 1957 Area Planning Act, Chapter 138**. Throughout this publication reference is made to specific articles and sections of the 1957 act and subsequent amendments. You may also want to refer to the **1947 Acts, Chapter 174**, on county, city and town plan commissions, and the **1967 Regional Planning Act**. Copies available from: Planning Division, Indiana Department of Commerce, 336 State House, Indianapolis.

2. **Answers to Your Questions about Planning and Zoning in Indiana, EC-208** (1967), Cooperative Extension Service, Purdue University. This is a general discussion of planning and zoning with emphasis on the work of area plan commissions. Copies available from Agricultural Publications Office, AES Building, Purdue University, Lafayette.

Other helpful references are:

1. **Here is Your Indiana Government**, (1965), Indiana State Chamber of Commerce.

2. **Services of Indiana State Agencies Relevant to Local and Regional Planning**, (1965), Division of Community Planning, Indiana University.


Consultation services and advice can be obtained from these sources:

Division of Planning, Indiana Department of Commerce, 336 State House, Indianapolis. (This agency also administers federal cost-sharing funds)

Indiana Farm Bureau, Inc., 130 E. Washington Street, Indianapolis.

Indiana State Chamber of Commerce, Board of Trade Building, Indianapolis.
Cooperative Extension Service, at the local County Extension Office or at Purdue University, Lafayette.

Legal and technical counsel can be obtained from county and city attorneys, plan commission directors and private planning consultants.

Types of planning organizations found in Indiana

The kind of planning discussed earlier is largely done by legal agencies called "plan commissions" or "planning departments." These groups, established by county and city government, formulate policies on land use; develop requirements in improvements, zoning and related matters; then recommend these to elected officials for their action.

Plan commissions are authorized by the Indiana Legislature through a series of enabling acts dating back to 1947. Today, all but 22 counties have such planning agencies. Every city over 10,000 population and many smaller cities and towns, have some kind of planning board as well as a board of zoning appeals.

Through legislation passed in 1947, 1957 and 1967, six kinds of plan commissions are permitted and now operate in Indiana. Also, special cooperative arrangements exist between city, town and county governments, which give city plan commissions jurisdiction over rural lands, or which give county-wide plan commissions jurisdiction over incorporated areas. Let's look briefly at each type of planning group.

1. County Plan Commission. This unit of government, established under acts of 1947, has jurisdiction over all unincorporated areas of a county. No professional staff is required by law.

2. Area Plan Commission. This agency, established under the 1957 acts, has jurisdiction in both incorporated and unincorporated areas of a county and may serve as the single planning board in a county. An "area planning department" consists of the plan commission, board of zoning appeals and a professional planning staff.

3. Metropolitan Plan Commission. Similar to an area plan commission, this unit is set up by special legislation for a few highly-urbanized counties to create one planning agency for the entire county.

4. Regional Planning Commission. A 1967 regional planning act provided for comprehensive planning in Lake and Porter counties only. New multi-county agencies are discussed in the section on regional and state planning, page 18.

5. City Plan Commission. This planning agency, set up under 1947 and earlier state acts, has jurisdiction within city limits and possible the 2-mile fringe around a city, if allowed by the county.

6. Town Plan Commission. This agency, set up under 1947 and earlier acts, has jurisdiction within town corporate limits and the 2-mile fringe, if allowed by the county.

Regional plan commissions can overlap geographically, any of the other five types, but all others operate in separate jurisdictional areas. In some cases, small towns and a few cities agree to have the county plan commission assume planning and zoning functions within their corporate limits.

COUNTY-WIDE AND MULTI-COUNTY COMMISSIONS

Figure 1 shows three types of county-wide plan commissions (county, area and
Figure 1. County-wide plan commissions in Indiana -- 1967
metropolitan) and one multi-county (regional) plan commission. Most of these have been set up since 1947 and are active. Since the early 1960’s, new commissions have been established at the rate of 6 to 8 per year, with nine new ones in 1966. A 1967 survey reveals the following number and types of plan commissions now operating in Indiana.

- County PCs: 52 counties
- Area PCs: 16 counties
- Metropolitan PCs: 3 counties
- Regional PC: 2 counties

CITY AND TOWN PLAN COMMISSIONS

The 1960 census listed 111 cities and 432 incorporated towns in Indiana -- a total of 543. In 1967, over half (107 cities and approximately 175 towns) had some kind of plan commission. Not all plan commissions are active at any one time.

Hoosier cities use four different kinds of planning organization (Table 1). Most common is the separate city plan commission. But in the future, more cities will enter into county-wide organizations and regional arrangements. Although data on number and kinds of town plan commission arrangements are incomplete, it appears that about 125 towns are cooperating with county-wide planning organizations, while 50 have their own separate town commissions.

Cities and towns in Lake and Porter counties are also involved in their regional plan commission. Clark and Floyd counties have entered into a special arrangement with the Louisville metropolitan area. And communities in Dearborn and Ohio counties are cooperating with the Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana (OKI) Regional Planning Authority.

Status of comprehensive planning in Indiana

Official planning agencies work on a wide range of problems considered part of

Table 1. Types of plan commissions in 111 Indiana cities, 1967.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indiana cities by population class</th>
<th>Metropolitan P.C.</th>
<th>Area P.C.</th>
<th>Separate city P.C.</th>
<th>Participating with county P.C.</th>
<th>No P.C.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First class (250,000 + pop.)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 city</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second class (35,000-250,000)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 cities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third class (20,000-35,000)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 cities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth class (10,000-20,000)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 cities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth class (1,500-10,000)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67 cities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTALS</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td><strong>82</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
"comprehensive planning". Such a term is difficult to define precisely. One reason is that the major elements of a comprehensive, master or development plan for one county or city may not even appear in another's plan. A second reason is that the scope and detail of these plans grow and change every year. Nevertheless the concept "comprehensive planning" usually includes:

1. Preparation of general physical plans dealing with the pattern and intensity of land use and provision of public facilities, including transportation.

2. Programming of capital improvements and their financing.

3. Coordination of related plans of other departments, agencies and governmental units.

4. Preparation of regulatory and administrative measures concerning physical improvements on the land.

As a rule, plan commissions in Indiana deal initially with land use planning and zoning controls. Then, over time, they develop specific use requirements, such as building size regulations and site restrictions, before proceeding with transportation planning, public facilities planning, urban redevelopment, planned unit developments and capital improvements programs.

Some plan commissions have not gone beyond the land use planning stage. Local needs also vary a great deal. In areas of little change, in sparsely populated areas, or in areas of slow growth, very little guidance has been needed.

A review of current comprehensive plans and zoning regulations developed by the various county-wide plan commissions in Indiana does reveal what these groups consider to be part of their work. The following provisions were commonly found in plans, whether developed by the local professional staff or with the aid of consulting firms.

ELEMENTS FOUND IN COMPREHENSIVE PLANS AND CONTROLS

1. Land Use. Primary uses determined by directing location of new development into particular districts or zones, labeled residential, industrial, business (commercial), agricultural, forestry and minerals, flood plain, greenbelts, open space, and recreation.

2. Specific Requirements on Individual Improvements. These include (a) regulations on building size and height; (b) lot and building site restrictions; (c) accessory uses, such as parking, loading zone, entrances and buffering; (d) health and safety regulations, such as water and air pollution, glare, heat, vibration, noise, fire and explosion hazards, and air space control; (e) mobile home controls; and (f) control of unsightly developments like junkyards and signs.

3. New, Planned Unit Developments (Privately Owned). Included are residential subdivisions, town house developments, shopping centers, industrial parks, and mobile home parks.

4. Transportation Planning (Thoroughfare). Streets, highways, railroads, airports (heliports), parking areas, and pedestrian malls and sidewalks.

5. Urban Redevelopment. Renewal of central business district, slum clearance, and housing are examples.

6. Public Facilities Planning. This deals largely with location and includes schools, parks and other recreational areas, fire stations, police stations, disposal plants, dumps, and other public service buildings.

7. Capital Improvements Programs. Such aspects considered are budgeting for future public investments, and long-range capital improvements plans and timetables.

These comprehensive plans are being implemented using a variety of regulatory
tools including: (a) improvement location permits and site plans, (b) certificates of occupancy, (c) certificates of compliance, (d) subdivision plots, and (e) detailed unit development plans.

Urban counties plan and regulate more things than do rural counties, while rural areas within counties have even less regulation. The length of time planning agencies have existed also affects the "comprehensive-ness" of plans and controls.

EXTENT OF COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING IN INDIANA

This is hard to measure due to (1) difficulties in defining what constitutes comprehensive planning and (2) lack of reliable data on what has been done in the way of approved plans and controls. And little is known about the degree of enforcement, once regulations are adopted. However, the following estimates, based on a 1967 survey, do give some indication of the number of counties that have completed enough elements of plans and controls to say they currently have "comprehensive plans" for the jurisdictional areas covered by their plan commission.

1. Of the 52 counties with county plan commissions, 27 had comprehensive plans.

2. Of the 16 counties with area plan commissions, 12 had comprehensive plans.

3. Of the 3 counties with metropolitan plan commissions, all 3 had comprehensive plans.

The number of counties with complete comprehensive plans is increasing rapidly. Moreover, plans are constantly being revised and new plan elements studied and developed. Most major population centers have comprehensive planning and zoning, sometimes as a part of county-wide plans. Again, great variety is found in content and detail.

There is also a trend toward "unified zoning ordinances" to encourage consistency in county-wide comprehensive plans, but adoption of uniform county-wide controls lags behind plans. Since each governmental unit in a county can approve or reject separate elements of comprehensive plans and controls, this leads to variations even within plan commission jurisdictional areas.

Things to consider in organizing for county-wide planning

NEED FOR COOPERATION

Comprehensive planning across political boundaries often depends on the kind of planning structure created. The need for cooperative effort is summarized well in the 1957 Acts for Area Planning Departments (Article 1, Section 2):

"Expanding urbanization within the state has created many new problems involving streets and highways, transportation, drainage, water, land use, schools, and recreation, which are beyond the ability of a single city or county to solve. Therefore, it is the object of this legislation to encourage local units of government to cooperatively improve the health, safety, convenience, and the welfare of their citizens and to plan for the future development of their communities to the end that highway systems be more carefully planned, that new communities grow only with adequate street, utility, health, educational and recreational facilities; that the needs of agriculture, industry, and business be recognized in future growth, that residential areas provide healthy surroundings for family life; and that the growth of the community is commensurate with and protective of the efficient and economical use of public funds."
"To accomplish these objectives the General Assembly encourages and authorizes cities, towns, and counties to cooperatively establish single and unified planning and zoning agencies to deal with these problems on a county-wide basis."

UNIFIED OR SEPARATE AGENCIES?

Some "consequences" of a unified planning and zoning agency are these:

1. Duplication of effort by several plan commissions is eliminated.

2. A single planning agency is more economical than many agencies within a county.

3. Since many problems (like transportation, water and sanitation) require cooperation between cities and county and between municipalities, interdependence is increasing.

4. Confusion and conflict from different plans and varying land use controls set up by different plan commissions are minimized.

5. A planning agency representing all the people in a county is likely to receive more financial support and can better justify professional staff.

6. Increasingly, federal cost-sharing programs require a regional approach to planning in order to qualify for funds.

Here are some "consequences" of separate planning agencies within a county:

1. Planning needs and zoning requirements are different for cities than for rural areas and call for different controls. A single planning agency may not make this distinction.

2. Rural people may want their own plan commission to represent their interests.

City residents may feel the same about city land-use problems. Each may want to plan for themselves -- "local control." Also, since city and county officials act separately in approving or rejecting recommendations from a single plan commission, possibility of different regulations in different parts of the county exists despite unified planning.

3. Distrust and friction between city and rural residents as well as between different parts of the county may prevent formation of a unified planning agency.

4. Some benefits of a single planning agency can be obtained by separate plan commissions by: (a) hiring the same professional planning help, (b) sending advisory groups to meet with each other, (c) having the county-wide plan commission plan for the towns and cities.

5. Representation on a county-wide or regional commission, as prescribed by law, may put some residents at a disadvantage. For example, some counties have no cities, only towns; and not all the towns may have a voting member on an area plan commission. Therefore, residents from towns not represented may feel they have no voice in decisions.

"Consequences" of establishing any one of the various planning agencies need to be weighed carefully, but the trend in Indiana is toward area and regional planning and will likely continue.

INITIAL STEP IN ESTABLISHING A COUNTY-WIDE PLANNING ORGANIZATION

Since plan commissions are established by local legislative bodies and not by popular vote, the heads of these legislative groups need to agree fully on any course of action to be taken. County commissioners and city council members are the key local officials. Their action (or lack of it) must reflect public opinion.
Generally, the process of creating new planning institutions seems to follow these steps:

1. The heads of city and county government may meet informally. Included might be the mayor or mayors from principal cities, president of the county board of commissioners, president of the county council and city and county attorneys. This small group explores the idea and determines the degree of public concern. To move ahead, the county commissioners, county council and common council from at least one major city should tentatively commit themselves to the proposal. An outside resource person can bring helpful information to this group. More than one meeting may be needed.

2. If mutual interest develops, a meeting of all county commissioners, county council and common councils from the cities may be held, the proposal explained and discussed again.

3. In some cases, a committee may need to study the proposal in depth and report back to the official bodies. In other cases, officials may be ready to act immediately for or against creation of a single planning department. If active plan commissions already exist, these groups are often brought together for discussion. However, the final decision is entirely in the hands of elected officials.

4. Once the proposal is approved, city and county officials should begin thinking of the "best" people to appoint to the new commission. Several serve by virtue of office, but citizen members are also appointed by the three legislative bodies. Location in the county and party affiliation need to be considered.

SOME FACTORS AFFECTING ACTION BY OFFICIALS

Before and during the early discussion, influential citizens and groups play a big part in the process of public decision making and in encouraging and discouraging official action. Some of the most influential groups in cities are the Chamber of Commerce, League of Women Voters, and service clubs. In the rural areas, farm organizations and county Extension committees often affect the establishment of plan commissions.

Matters of "equal representation" among localities, proper balance between city and county representation, and relative amount of tax support from city vs. rural tax payers, are often issues. Political differences between city and county and different party control can also be roadblocks to interlocal cooperation.

ROLE OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL

Willingness of the county council to appropriate monies is an important factor in determining if and when a planning department is created. At times, the commissioners have appointed a plan commission but the county council has failed to provide funds for its operation. At other times, county councils have budgeted for plan commission operations, but county commissioners have not appointed the new agency. Both councilmen and commissioners must agree on the issue if there is to be positive action.

A special ordinance creating a plan commission would need to be passed before the end of July in order to include expenditures in new budgets for the next year. Timing is important.

Continued support or lack of support by the county council can help or hinder the work of an established commission throughout its life. The council controls all monies for professional planning assistance, administration of ordinances, and expenses of plan commission members. Since revenues must come from local property taxes (usually felt to be burdensome enough), the council often hesitates to approve large, new expenditures.
In this event, its willingness to use federal cost-sharing funds becomes a big factor in determining how much money will be available for planning services.

BUDGET AND FINANCE

Funds are appropriated for planning commissions just as for other county departments and in amounts related to department requests. Size of the budget depends largely on number of paid staff and/or consultant fees. A county whose planning is done by an outside firm will have a big expenditure when the comprehensive plan is completed but little expense when professional planners are not employed. Salaries for zoning administrators and others involved in enforcement are also related to county size and extent of regulations. Members of plan commissions and boards of zoning appeals receive no salary. Their per diem and expenses make up a relatively small part of a department's budget.

Guidelines as to what "should" be spent on planning and control are not easy to lay down, but costs have some relationship to population density, growth rate, and unique characteristics of the county. Records show that annual expenditures per capita have ranged from a few cents to $2.00, and even more in years of unusually heavy planning activity. However, many of planning programs analyzed included federal cost-sharing help. Actual local expenditures on a per capita basis did not exceed $1.00. Costs will likely go up instead of down in most counties.

The following is an approximate annual budget of an area planning department for a county of just under 100,000 population. Actual annual expenditures over the last 5 years have averaged about $28,000.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Salaries and Personal Services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Director, assistant director, technician help and secretary $22,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultant fees $3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attorney fees $800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total personal services $25,800</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other Expenses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Postage and telephone $500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel $850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printing $1,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dues and subscriptions $350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repairs $40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital improvements $50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office supplies $450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total other expenses $3,440</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

GRAND TOTAL $29,240

SOURCES OF FUNDS

The bulk of funds for planning departments comes from annual county appropriations, but other sources are available. Sale of improvement location permits and occupancy permits, sale of maps, plans and other documents -- all can bring in some income.

Another source of funds is the "701 Program", administered at the state level by the Division of Planning, Indiana Department of Commerce, and on the federal level by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Grants are made for development of comprehensive land-use plans and for special studies like thoroughfare planning and sewer and water plans. The decision to participate in this program is entirely a local one. Other federal agencies have money for planning, also. (See "Services of Federal Agencies", page 20.)
But probably the greatest contribution to a planning department comes from citizens who serve without pay on the commission, board of zoning appeals and advisory committees. The value of their voluntary service far exceeds the relatively small amount used from tax revenue.

Alternative organizations to accomplish county-wide planning

AREA AND METROPOLITAN PLANNING DEPARTMENTS -- STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONS

"Area and metropolitan" plan commissions are similar in structure but vary in details. They have enough similarity to discuss them here together.

Area planning departments, provided for under legislation passed in 1957, are usually found in counties with a smaller population. Metropolitan plan commissions, on the other hand, are established by a special act of the legislature for counties with large metropolitan centers. Thus far in Indiana only three counties have metropolitan planning operations and 16 have created area planning structures (see Figure 1). These 19 counties contain a third of the states population. Both types of commissions are special planning units of county government and have countywide jurisdiction and representation. But their recommendations are subject to approval by city and town as well as county legislative units.

Counties can take two routes toward realizing county-wide planning activity -- (1) establish an area or metropolitan plan commission as the first county-wide planning unit, or (2) combine existing county and city plan commissions into a single plan commission. In either case, the procedure is described in the 1957 Area Planning Act or in special legislation providing for the metropolitan setup.

An area or a metropolitan "planning department" consists of (1) an area or metropolitan plan commission, (2) a board of zoning appeals and (3) an executive director and possibly additional staff. Let's look briefly at each segment.

The Plan Commission

The plan commission is the policy-making unit of the planning department. It is responsible for all department activities and planning policy recommendations to the various governmental units. It does not have authority to implement plans without approval, by ordinance, of elected officials. On the other hand, elected officials should allow the plan commission to initiate planning policy and should rely on it for direction in policy decisions.

In doing community planning, the commission works with three other groups that should be involved in the planning process -- the public, elected officials, and professional planners.

Groups Involved

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Groups Involved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plans are based on public needs and available resources</td>
<td>The public votes for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act for public in approving plans and regulations</td>
<td>Elected officials who appoint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develops plans and regulations to submit to public and officials</td>
<td>A plan commission who hires or consults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides technical know-how to the commission</td>
<td>Professional staff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As you can see, the commission is ultimately responsible to the public and directly responsible to officials who created it. The commission makes recommendations based on the needs of the people in the county. To do a more expert job, they hire a professional planner, called an "executive director," and perhaps additional staff. The commission formulates plans and regulations but "uses" planners to do the complex, technical planning and draft regulations. They pass on the planners ideas and add their own judgment.

Proposals then go to public hearings and to officials. At the hearings, the proposals are not subject to vote but only to reactions. Public opinion is then reflected in the action taken by elected officials, who are responsive to the voters. The commission acts for the public in developing plans; the officials act for the public in approving or rejecting them. The "success" of a plan commission, therefore, is probably determined by its ability to blend the desires of the vocal public with the know-how of the professional planner and arrive at a package of plans and controls that will be approved by officials. It's not an easy task!

**The Board of Zoning Appeals**

The board of zoning appeals is created the same time as the plan commission or shortly thereafter and follows similar procedures in electing officers, adopting general rules and keeping minutes. This board does no planning or zoning but is the judicial branch within the department.

Generally, the powers and duties of the board of zoning appeals are as follows:

1. The board hears and decides upon appeals resulting from decisions made by the zoning administrator and based upon the ordinance itself. The board bases its decisions, not on what it thinks "should be done," but on how it objectively interprets "the spirit of the ordinance."

2. If, in the board's opinion, the provisions of a zoning ordinance are unclear, inadequate or unfair, the plan commission should be informed. Such conditions call for amendments to the ordinance itself, not liberal granting of variances. The job of amending an ordinance belongs to the plan commission and the local legislative body.

3. The board must keep complete records if it is to maintain consistency in its decisions. And consistency is essential in order to avoid charges of "you granted a similar variance to X; now you have to grant one to me." Furthermore, many courts, where the board's decisions can be appealed, insist upon complete records.

4. The board should also establish regular procedures for hearing requests for variances, make these procedures known to all petitioners, and follow them rigorously. There should be no question about what evidence is to be presented and considered, what kinds of objections will be listened to and what criteria will govern the board's decisions.

**Planning and Administrative Staff**

The number and kinds of paid staff working for an area or metropolitan plan commission vary with size of the county and amount of planning and enforcement done within the department. Counties with over 35,000 population must hire an executive director; counties with less than 35,000 may appoint a full-time director. He is the only paid staff member required by law.

A "typical" staff for a county of 50,000 to 100,000 might be: (1) an executive

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*This section is taken largely from the Indiana Community Planning Newsletter, Volume 1, No. 5, November 1965, Division of Community Planning, Indiana University.*
director, who is "qualified by training and experience in the field of planning and zoning," to supervise the department, appoint other employees and work closely with the plan commission; (2) an assistant director or senior planner to develop plans, draft ordinances and perform other technical jobs; (3) draftsmen and other technicians for specific jobs requiring particular skills; and (4) one or two secretaries.

This is probably a minimum staff for a large county but larger than most in rural counties, which depend more on outside professional planning services.

Some counties have another full or part-time employee who handles much of the enforcement work. He may issue improvement location permits, occupancy permits, collect fees, inspect building sites, subdivision plots and other matters involving administration of ordinances. He is called a "zoning administrator," "building inspector," or sometimes "building commissioner." In some counties, the executive director or an assistant performs all or some of these jobs. In other cases, enforcement is delegated to the county surveyor, city engineer, or similar officer.

Changing to a County-Wide Plan Commission

An area or metropolitan plan commission, when established, takes over all planning and zoning functions of the existing county plan commission and of the plan commissions in all participating cities and towns. A 1959 amendment to the area planning act, however, allows cities, towns and county to retain existing boards of zoning appeals. It is possible therefore to have a single plan commission but a number of boards of zoning appeals—one for each legislative body within the county. Creation of one area board to assume authority of the old boards is possible only if each local legislative body agrees to it.

In changing to a county-wide planning organization, the plans and ordinances already adopted by the participating city and county commissions automatically become part of the comprehensive plan of the new commission. Later, these plans and regulations may be superseded by ordinances adopted by the new commission and approved by city councils and county commissioners.

A non-participating city loses authority to exercise planning and zoning powers in the two-mile fringe outside its corporate limits after the area or metropolitan plan commission is established. But it can continue to function independently within its own city limits.

In every county, one person must be designated to fill the zoning administrator role once regulations are passed. Small counties (35,000 population or less) often hire a part-time person as zoning administrator and have no professional resident planner. Planning services are then purchased from a consulting firm which works intensively when comprehensive plans are being developed and perhaps later on a retainer basis for continuous planning help. Large counties also hire these firms to do special plans that supplement the work of the resident staff.

JOINT TOWN AND COUNTY PLAN COMMISSIONS

In Indiana, county plan commissions outnumber area or metropolitan planning agencies by three to one. Sometimes, many of the small towns and a few cities within a county will request that the county plan commission perform their planning and zoning operations. In a few cases, county officials have asked a large city planning agency to do planning for the rural parts of the county. A recent survey shows that about 85 towns and 11 cities cooperate with county plan commissions. The 1947 Planning Acts (Articles 25, 26 and 27) provides for this arrangement:

"The city council of any city (or town) located in a county having an established plan
commission may, by ordinance, designate such county commissioners as the city (or town) plan commission, ....

"The county plan commission shall have for that city all the powers and duties granted under this act to a city plan commission, .... Any city may contract annually to pay the county a proportionate part of the expense which is properly chargeable to the planning service rendered such city...."

Having one planning unit serving a town and the county usually saves money, time and effort. But another advantage is coordination of planning for the whole county. Frequently towns are simply too small to support an adequate planning unit. Under a joint town and county plan commission arrangement, professional planners can often include the town or city in their county-wide plans at little additional cost.

A possible disadvantage of this cooperative arrangement is the lack of official representation on the county plan commission for the participating city or town. This is probably why larger towns and cities seldom use this arrangement and lean more towards an area or metropolitan setup, where they have voting representation on the planning unit.

Other cooperative arrangements can be worked out between city and county or, in fact, between any local government units under the 1957 Inter-local Cooperation Act. Purpose of this legislation is to "permit local governmental units to make the most efficient use of their powers by enabling them to cooperate with other locations on a basis of mutual advantage and thereby to provide services and facilities in a manner and pursuant to forms of governmental organization that will accord best with geographic, economic, population and other factors influencing the needs and development of local communities." (Article 1, Chapter 118).

Any public agency can join with another to exercise powers jointly; each may appropriate funds and engage in "co-operative undertakings." So far, the setting up of co-operative planning under this act has been limited to only a few counties and for relatively a short period of time. One reason is a lack of knowledge of the enabling legislation on the part of many local officials; another is the tendency for public agencies to remain autonomous. A wide range of agreements can be worked out with almost unlimited flexibility.

Cooperating with other local agencies and boards on county-wide planning

Comprehensive planning, as a function of local government, directly affects almost every board and agency within a county. City and county government units involved are shown in Figure 2.

Law provides for ex-officio members on a plan commission who report the commission's activities to the agencies they represent. On area and metropolitan commissions, these include school superintendent, county extension agent, county surveyor, a county commissioner and a member of the county council. On city and town plan commissions, ex-officio members include the city engineer, a councilman, and members of the park board and board of public works and safety.

In addition to these built-in connections, advisory councils and committees from city and town government may sit with county-wide plan commissions, and conversely, county government people may meet with city and town plan commissions. The role of advisory members is spelled out in planning legislation.
Figure 2. Local government organizations related to planning and zoning
Joint planning is required continually between the plan commission and agencies who regularly make decisions on land use and location of improvements. For instance, a new or expanded park as planned by the park board requires plan commission action; when the school board begins thinking about the location of the new high school, the plan commission becomes involved; highway planning needs to be coordinated; public facilities built by various agencies require locational decisions.

It is a fact that, frequently, locational planning is done separately by these agencies until it is necessary to ask the plan commission to rezone an area or to request a variance from the established plan. And it is probably true that the greatest competition and conflict between independent agencies exist between those units that would benefit most from cooperative planning. Most agencies want to do maximum planning within their own organization, while at the same time the plan commission is projecting plans that affect everyone. Continuing communication and cooperation can minimize these conflicts. Both elected officials and citizens must insure that planning be carried on efficiently to serve the welfare of the total public.

![Regional and state planning](image)

Comprehensive planning on a multi-county basis is coming rapidly. Regional planning started in Lake and Porter counties in 1965, in Clark and Floyd counties as part of the Louisville "Council of Governments" metropolitan area in 1966, and in Dearborn County as part of the Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Planning Authority in 1965.

The need for planning across county lines in highly urbanized areas is recognized by state and federal government as well as local officials. In 1965 the Indiana General Assembly passed the Regional Transportation and Regional Planning Act, which was the first attempt to encourage multi-county planning. This act provided for counties to work jointly on transportation problems, but not on problems considered to be elements of "comprehensive planning." The Regional Planning Act of 1967, however, enabled Lake and Porter counties to set up a planning unit to work on a broad range of problems, much the same as county-wide plan commissions are doing now. Additional legislation will be needed if other counties are to organize for regional planning.

Some planning and control functions are best performed at the multi-county or state level in order to realize economies of size and to have jurisdiction over the area which will benefit from the service. These functions include transportation, water supply, sewage disposal, water and air pollution, refuse collection and disposal, and open space and greenbelts.

Other functions of local government might well remain largely local, such as street and road maintenance, police and fire protection, zoning powers, basic education and neighborhood-based recreation.

Indiana has 11 metropolitan areas surrounding principal cities of 50,000 or more, that are designated "Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas" (SMSAs) by the federal government (Figure 3). These areas are considered as units, since the population in and around the central cities form integrated social and economic systems. Cities, towns and counties within SMSAs may be required to participate in regional comprehensive planning to qualify for future federal grants.

Regional comprehensive planning is a new experience in Indiana, although several other states have been doing multi-county
Figure 3. Standard metropolitan statistical areas in Indiana -- 1967
planning for some time. While the form of regional planning organizations is still to be worked out, proposals call for representatives to be picked by mayors of the larger cities and by county commissioners and with veto power retained by all local units of government within the region.

Regional planning will soon be a reality and "state planning" is also developing rapidly. Some studies toward a future state plan are already underway by the Indiana Department of Commerce's Division of Planning. Under the 1965 Economic Development Acts (Section 12 (b), Chapter 262), this agency is responsible to "prepare and maintain a comprehensive plan for the physical, social, and economic development of the state". This work will have increasing impact on local planning efforts.

**Services of state and federal agencies to county-wide planning organizations**

Local planning officials can make use of many state and federal services to help them in comprehensive planning. Some of these services are discussed briefly here.

**SERVICES OF STATE AGENCIES**

Perhaps the most important agency at the state level is the Division of Planning of the Department of Commerce. This unit helps communities initiate planning programs and administers federal funds available for planning purposes. It is also in charge of developing a "state plan" for long-range physical, social and economic improvement and establishing regional plan commissions to undertake planning on an inter-county basis. Most counties, cities and towns cooperate with this agency when initial comprehensive plans are being developed.

The Indiana Cooperative Extension Service conducts educational programs and undertakes special research projects related to planning and zoning. County extension agents serve on county and area plan commissions and disseminate information on the subject as part of their public affairs education work.

Other units of state government closely related to planning are shown in Figure 4. The Indiana Legislature, for instance, passes enabling acts that permit planning and zoning in the community and that provide the legal framework within which planning is done. Many of the other agencies shown perform functions which also affect local planning decisions and administration of zoning ordinances. For example, the State Board of Health creates sanitation codes and other health controls which local zoning must recognize and accommodate. Continuous communication and cooperation between state and local agencies can keep responsibilities identified and reduce overlapping planning activity.

**SERVICES OF FEDERAL AGENCIES**

Federal assistance programs are usually concerned with guaranteeing minimum standards to all people by promoting programs of "general welfare." The federal government is in a unique position to encourage regional approaches to problems and to facilitate coordination between all levels of government. Increasingly, federal programs are "conditioned" upon the existence of area-wide comprehensive plans, formulated cooperatively at the community level. Frequently, a state agency acts as the administrator for federal assistance; therefore local officials work with the state agency rather than the federal.

Only a few federal agencies are directly involved in comprehensive county and
Figure 4. State government organizations related to planning

- Voter
  - State Legislature
    - Administrative Building Council
    - Aeronautics Commission
    - Air Pollution Control Board
    - Department of Natural Resources
    - Highway Commission
    - Ohio River Valley Commission
    - Public Service Commission
    - State Board of Health
    - Wabash Valley Interstate Commission
  - Governor
    - Indiana University
      - Division of Community Planning
    - Purdue University
      - Cooperative Extension Service
  - Lieutenant Governor
    - Department of Commerce
      - Division of Planning
      - Other Divisions

Regional planning. But most do give financial or technical assistance for the construction of facilities or for program development. The following cabinet-level departments have programs of assistance in comprehensive planning to local planning officials:

Department of Housing and Urban Development

Provides major planning help through the "701" or Urban Planning Assistance Program, which pays up to two-thirds of the cost of preparing comprehensive plans and ordinances. This program is administered by the Division of Planning, Indiana Department of Commerce, for counties with less than 50,000 population. Counties with over 50,000 population must be part of a metropolitan or area-wide planning agency and go direct to HUD for assistance.

Other planning assistance programs under HUD include:

1. "702" Project Planning Advances for planning public facilities, except public housing.
2. "701" Transportation Planning for urban transportation studies and planning.
3. Urban Renewal programs planning.
4. Public Housing program planning.
5. Community Sewer and Water Facilities planning.
6. Open Space Land Program planning.

Department of Agriculture

1. Provides grants for comprehensive sewer and water studies and plans for entire counties with emphasis on rural areas and small towns. Through the Farmers Home Administration, funds for planning "rural renewal" projects are available.
2. Land usage, land capability and mapping information are provided by the Soil Conservation Service. It also administers the small watershed planning work (Public Law 566).

Department of Commerce

Comprehensive Transportation Planning assistance is provided. Grants for planning public works, such as water and sewage systems, and for access roads to encourage private investment are available to designated redevelopment areas from the Economic Development Administration.

Department of Health, Education and Welfare

1. Assistance in planning health facilities and medical services is given by the Public Health Service and its state partner, the Indiana State Board of Health. "Comprehensive planning" is a new emphasis.

2. Planning for water and air pollution control and other aspects of environmental health is aided by the Public Health Service and special state agencies administering federal programs.

Department of Transportation

Highway landscaping and beautification planning assistance plus general highway and airport planning is now under this new department.

Department of Interior

1. Recreation and open space planning for development of outdoor recreation is done by the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation.

2. Resource surveys, technical reports, topographic mapping and geological studies by state and local units can be assisted through the U.S. Geological Survey.

Other federal agencies that plan commissions often work with are:

Corps of Engineers, which helps with planning, feasibility studies and improvements relating to water resources development in specific large scale projects.

Water Resources Council, which gives state and regional water resource planning assistance to local planning officials.

Working with citizens and citizen groups—why and how

All planning is done to improve the environment in which citizens live or to benefit the citizen personally. Planning is for people and can only be done with their needs in mind and their support. In a democratic society, people direct the planners and not vice versa. The planner must lead, but must also be responsive.

Getting citizens involved in the planning process is not easy. It is physically impossible to have all citizens fully informed and in constant communication with planners on all decisions that affect the general public. But people need to know what in general is being decided by their elected and appointed officials and to have access to those making public decisions.

Citizens who participate actively in planning and community betterment programs are usually better informed, more knowledgeable and more concerned about their community than non-participants. Participation in community planning and action is a superb
educational device. Further, people like to be associated with important projects and want to be in on the "big" decisions that are made.

Here are some suggestions for building and maintaining communication between the planning agency and the people it serves:

1. Use citizen advisory committees to develop recommendations on specific parts of a comprehensive plan. Make sure a cross section of special interest groups is represented -- businessmen, farmers, homemakers, professional people, low income people, laborers, etc. Advertise the fact that plan commission meetings are open to the public.

2. Use surveys and studies (perhaps conducted by citizens) to gauge public opinion on proposed plans and problems.

3. Use newspapers, radio and television to keep citizens informed on what is being done. The relationship between planners and the press is critical.

4. Publish and distribute plans, regulations and explanatory material in an attractive form people can understand. (Some planning agencies are reluctant to publicize or distribute copies of the comprehensive plan, then wonder why citizens don't support them in public hearings, on proposed plans.)

5. Display maps, models, photographs and sketches in the courthouse. Planning agencies usually have reams of visual materials that will interest adults and young people.

6. Offer to speak before service clubs, church groups, and other organizations to explain the work going on and problems encountered.

7. Treat the individual who comes to the agency with his problem with dignity, respect and a sensitivity to his needs. And give equal treatment to all without special favors.

Someone has said that good public relations consists of two things -- do a good job, and let the public know about it.

Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics
State of Indiana, Purdue University
and the United States Department of Agriculture Cooperating
H. G. Diesslin, Director, Lafayette, Indiana
Issued in furtherance of the Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914.