

CHAPTER IV
REGIONAL-LOCAL PLANNING RELATIONSHIPS

When the subject of multi-county regional planning is first discussed with a group of local governing and planning officials one question is almost inevitable. That question is "If we establish a regional planning commission we won't need to continue supporting our city (or county) planning, will we?". The answer to such a question must be a very emphatic "Yes, your local planning is still very necessary and must be supported". Such a response is unexpected and not often understood, and calls for considerable explanation.

A first principle which must be understood in this matter refers to the level of detail of planning on a regional as opposed to a local level. Regional planning is broad in scope and generalized in detail. It is concerned with public policy, and with assignment of growth areas and land uses in a generalized way. It is concerned with the overall nature, functioning and location of systems for transportation, water supply, sewage collection and disposal, solid waste collection and disposal, flood drainage, air and water pollution control, health services, and others of a similar nature. It is, of course, advisory only under existing regional planning law.

Local governments, on the other hand, need to plan for the same kinds of activity areas--but in detail rather than in generalities. Growth area and land use assignments become quite specific and are implemented by very specific zoning regulations, which only local governments may adopt. Capital improvement expenditures to construct their specific part of the generalized systems noted above require detailed planning, engineering and funding commitments by local governments. No one else has that responsibility or authority.

A second principle which must be understood is that regional planning is involved with only those interest areas which are of mutual concern to a number of local units of government. Some matters, notably land use controls, annexation, capital improvements, public building needs and fiscal decisions, are mostly matters of local concern, with only minor regional implications if any.

A third principle often overlooked is that the success of regional planning depends upon the manner in which and the extent to which local planning commissions and their governing bodies use the regional commissions. It is up to the local governments to assign to the regional commissions those kinds of activities and responsibilities which will be of greatest aid to the localities. It is up to the local governments to insist that the regional commission and the other local governments all work in concert to the benefit of the area. Regional planning commissions must not be allowed to work outside local government influence. The regional commissions must not be allowed to perform tasks that are essentially local studies applicable to a single local unit of government.

The regional planning commission can be viewed also as the second level in a three level hierarchy of planning. Each level is progressively more detailed than was the higher level. The diagram designated Appendix 0 is illustrative of the three levels--state, regional and local--and suggests the major planning activities performed at each level.

The diagram clearly indicates that each of the three levels is concerned with many of the same areas of interest. But each is concerned at a different level of generality. The state is concerned at a very general and very long range level; includes a very broad geographical area and restricts its

interests almost entirely to policy enunciation. The region's concern is somewhat more specific; somewhat shorter range; is in a very general sense program oriented; but still for the most part restricts itself to policy enunciation. The local government is concerned with details, with specific geographic locations and with specific sizes and costs; with implementation of plans and with action oriented programs and policies.

There can be no question that continued local planning after regional planning is established is truly essential. Regional planning which is performed without the assistance and cooperation of the local governments is largely an academic exercise. It becomes meaningful only when there is the proper input from local plans and proper guidance and direction from continuing strong local planning efforts.

