

## CHAPTER 5

### OBSERVATIONS

The idea behind the delineation of planning regions in Kansas was the coordination of all activities in physical, social and economic areas on a multi-county basis. Since that time much has been developed in terms of regionalism and regional planning in the state, yet little has been accomplished in the area of coordination.

Agencies such as Health Planning Councils, Agencies on Aging and Criminal Justice Regions at the state level, and numerous agencies at the federal level divide the state many different ways. And, even though some follow the larger designated planning regions, few follow those cooperative agencies of local government known as regional planning commissions or councils.

In the Executive Order delineating the regions it was suggested that the state "encourage local arrangements for the coordination of planning activity so as to avoid duplication of work." (See Appendix C) Yet, it would seem that the "local" level has been left out where regions have either been established or realigned.

A few observations have been made through working with regional planning commissions in establishing programs for their regions. These observations deal with areas which for the most part have either hindered efforts for coordination or have prohibited the economical operation of planning in Kansas. The examples used are merely for clarity and not meant as an attack on any particular agency. (NOTE: Appendix B contains Policy Positions of the National Governors' Conference 1974-1975 on Sub-state District Development.)

### COTERMINOUS BOUNDARIES

I. A system of uniform, coterminous boundaries is needed to enhance efforts for coordination and cooperation between planning agencies.

A. The basis for any planning is a data base of statistics describing the present status of the city, county or region being planned. With several different agencies collecting information, many dollars are wasted, especially when the same data is collected by two different agencies.

Coterminous boundaries would achieve a uniform basis for all agencies in data collection. Through cooperation between agencies, this information could be disseminated to all agencies and eliminate the need for individual agencies collecting their own data. Also, with such boundaries adopted, each agency would be planning for the same area, the same population and the same problems.

The Commission on Alcoholism has been requested by the administration to use the state's official planning regions in their programs. Therefore, the commission uses the designated regions for their fact gathering. However, because the planning end of their program concerns health facilities and services, plans and programs must be funded through the Areawide Comprehensive Planning Councils. Thus a reshuffling of data must take place to conform to the planning councils' boundaries before the plans can be implemented.

B. Because of the overlapping boundaries and the many different programs involved, some type of a coordinated system is needed to help solve duplication of effort in planning. Coterminous boundaries would provide an excellent basis for such a system in which each agency could review one another's plans and make necessary recommendations should conflict or duplication be present. (It should also be noted that such a system is needed now and could work even though boundaries presently overlap.)

The purpose of A-95 Review is to insure that any federal money being requested is either not duplicating the efforts of another agency or not being used for a project conflicting with existing plans. A system much like the A-95 system is being used by the Mid-America Regional Council and the Mid-America Comprehensive Health Planning Agency, Inc. Each is given the opportunity to review and give recommendations regarding the other's plans and programs.

C. On the whole, very few agencies, regional planning commissions and regional councils included, know very much about what other agencies are doing in terms of planning efforts within their area. If each agency could provide an ex-officio resource person to represent their agency at meetings of other planning bodies, an active communications system could be carried on between agencies for the promotion of less duplication and waste of money.

There are presently only a few organized regions which have any input to their organization through representatives from an outside agency. The North Central and Flint Hills Regional Planning Commissions both have representatives of the area's Resource Conservation and Development Project sitting on their commissions. In this way, both the commission and the RC&D know what the other agency is doing and can plan accordingly to avoid duplication.

#### ONE AGENCY

II. Coterminous boundaries are fine and a system of several different agencies trying to coordinate their efforts with one another could work. However, a more optimal solution lies in the establishment of a single agency responsible for the total coordination of all programs and activities in the region.

A. The most evident of all situations is that it is more economical to have one office with its own staff coordinating all activities than it is to have several staffed agencies doing individual work and then trying to coordinate the final results.

It is possible to use a number of different agencies, but in terms of extra office space, personnel and time, and the need for a system of coordination, it becomes very confusing and costly. The use of one agency in an area would provide for less confusion on the part of local government as to their role in the regional effort.

The Kansas Association of Regional Planning Commissions (KARPC) has recently adopted a policy which encourages the use of the organized umbrella or multifunctional planning commissions and councils of governments as the single coordinating agency in a given region. Along with that organization, both the National Governors' Conference (See Appendix B) and the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (ACIR) have also published similar recommendations.

B. At present, local officials are called upon to serve on several different bodies representing different agencies in the area. As each representative reports back to his policy body at the city or county level, there arises a misunderstanding as to what their role is and just who is planning for what. Unification into one agency would not only help local officials know what their role is in the region but also it means that less time would be required of them in attending numerous meetings.

A group of county commissioners can only do so much, especially in fulfilling their individual assignments. Therefore, in the case of counties in Northwest Kansas the problem has been somewhat solved. Greater Northwest Kansas, Incorporated and the Northwest Kansas Regional Planning and Development Commission combine their efforts in meeting together and providing members to each group. In this way, both groups understand where they are going and what their role is as well as saving time in attending meetings.

C. In terms of finances at the local level, many agencies require some type of funding from local units of governments either for membership or for funding of programs or both. Many cities and counties are presently paying twice, and sometimes three times, for services they would really only need to pay for once.

The counties in Region 04 are also involved in the South Central Kansas Economic Development District (SCKEDD). The individual regional planning commissions and SCKEDD both require membership dues to be paid by cities and counties desiring membership. If these organizations are not unified in their planning programs, these cities and counties will end up paying twice for the same services.

D. Local citizen participation is the key for good planning and its implementation. With several different agencies advocating diverse and sometimes conflicting programs, citizen participation is discouraged before it has a chance to develop.

Citizens representing different opinions and groups often side with the agency which sees their view and needs. So, for example, if one group sees new industry and increased industrial development as necessary for an area, another group may view programs such as housing, education or solid waste management as more important and the general citizenry is split. With one unified body establishing overall policies, citizen participation and input can best be felt and actions channeled accordingly.

E. Under the present system, local governments have little chance of being heard any higher than at the regional level, and in some cases that is not available. Through the use of one coordinated agency, local governments from one region could be provided with a means for a unified voice at the state level. Not only would the region be able

to express a unified input in policy matters at the state level, but the state would have only one agency or body to respond to or deal with in answering requests or in establishing statewide policies.

The nineteen counties in the Greater Southwest Regional Planning Commission recently passed a uniform resolution encouraging the construction of a four-lane highway through the region. Bluestem Regional Planning Commission on the other hand passed a similar resolution against the demolition and removal of a railroad line from Emporia to Moline which served the counties in that region. Both were then forwarded to the proper state authorities.

#### THE STATE ROLE

III. An active role on behalf of the state would help in the encouragement of a uniform, coordinated system of regional planning in Kansas.

A. The state legislature has aided greatly in the recent past in establishing new regional programs aligned with the boundaries of the eleven planning regions. However, it is no longer adequate just to align programs with the larger regional area and ignore the established local efforts. What is needed is a policy which will provide for the conforming of all state agencies to the boundaries of established cooperative planning bodies wherever possible.

Planning region 03 presently contains two separate regional planning commissions. However, the Agency on Aging covers the entire area known as region 03. The director of the Flint Hills Area on Aging is presently working with the Flint Hills Regional Planning Commission to develop programs for the aged in that region and it is likely that such efforts will soon begin with the Big Lakes Regional Planning Commission to do the same.

B. State programs are sometimes set up only to provide a single purpose or service to a specific area. Such programs tend to divide established regions and jurisdictions and only cause confusion and conflict with other agencies. It will be of no help to any governmental agency or unit if new state programs and policies or extensions of present ones are in conflict with those already established at the local level. State programs, when coordinated with the regions, would aid greatly in the coordination effort.

Early designations of Criminal Justice Regions were confusing and provided more for the urban populated areas with little concern for rural problems. However, the Governor's Committee on Criminal Administration now designated Criminal Justice Regions according to the regional planning commission boundaries as can be seen in the cases of Flint Hills, Southeast Kansas, Chikaskia-Indian Hills and Greater Southwest Regional Planning Commissions. In this way, not only the urbanized areas are provided for but also the less populated, rural areas as well.

C. A problem of interstate regions faces many states where large metropolitan areas overlap state boundaries. Kansas and Missouri share such a situation. Coordination between these two states would help strengthen planning in those areas of an interstate nature.

Both the Mid-America and the Mo-Kan Regional Councils felt that one of their greatest problems is the need for coordination and cooperation on the part of Kansas and Missouri in reference to their special roles as interstate regional councils.

---

With the establishment of the new Department of Planning and Research in the Office of Administration comes the opportunity to provide the necessary additional input at the state level for the encouragement of such coordination within the state and between states. Whatever the final outcome is, however, it is important that the local level of government be recognized as the level at which planning and implementation will eventually have its greatest effect. All efforts at coordination should be considered in light of any actions and recommendations which have been or will be made at the local level of government.

The State of Kansas has come a long way in the establishment of an effective system of regional planning. However, the goal is far from being reached. It will take cooperation on the parts of many agencies, their directors and staffs, state legislators, individual citizens and anyone concerned with regional planning in any way to reach that goal.