



SPECIAL FOCUS : MAKING SMART GROWTH WORK

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES TO SMART GROWTH

We are seeing Smart Growth projects, such as infill and mixed-use, pedestrian friendly developments appearing in various cities, from Los Angeles and San Jose to small communities like Davis. (See definition on page 3). However, these developments are still a tiny fraction of the annual homebuilding and commercial development. A major shift to Smart Growth will provide many benefits, including revitalization of downtowns and older neighborhoods, reduction in the average vehicle miles traveled per year and in the associated air pollution, and conservation of agricultural lands and open space. How does society get from A to B? We need to overcome a number of obstacles in local and state government procedures and policies, development financing, building industry capabilities, and neighborhood concerns. This is an urgent issue, since current demographics virtually ensure a large population increase in California over the next few decades and the state already has a very large housing shortage.

This article explores some of the key obstacles, possible ways to overcome them, and some examples of success. The two following articles focus on some additional issues for infill development and on the relationships between Smart Growth and the conservation of rural landscapes, agriculture and wildlife habitat.

Local Government Codes

Zoning and building codes of most jurisdictions require the conventional mode of separated uses, auto-dependent development. They do not allow a variety of Smart Growth approaches, such as mixed uses in individual buildings or a mix along a street block, shops fronting on sidewalks, narrower streets, second units for single family homes, or other features. Developers wishing to use these techniques must variances, often working with several government departments as well as the Planning Commission and elected officials. This is very time consuming and therefore expensive. Few developers will try to overcome the hurdles. The production builders, who construct most houses, apartments and commercial structures, will keep doing business as usual since they can only succeed with large volume and cost control.

Change requires new zoning and building codes. The simplest approach is to have parallel codes, so that both conventional and Smart Growth projects can obtain permits without long delays and requirements for variances. This will provide for the market of people wanting conventional projects and

the market of those wanting other options. The parallel code may apply just to certain areas. The City of Austin, Texas has taken this approach and also provides various incentives, including reductions in infrastructure costs for Smart Growth projects. (See (www.ci.austin.tx.us/smartgrowth)). The Congress for New Urbanism Web site (www.cnu.org) has a list of model codes and ordinances.

State governments can help by developing model codes for communities and adopting incentives or other policies to promote their adoption by local communities. Wisconsin required all counties with a population greater than 12,500 to adopt, by 2002, a Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) code. That state defined TND as “compact, mixed use neighborhoods where residential, commercial and civic buildings are within close proximity to each other.” Such state action / *continued on page 3*

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News from IEH

From Floods to Stewardship

The Institute for Ecological Health (IEH) is very involved in several state-wide and regional projects. For some time we participated actively in a wide variety of meetings surrounding the development of a draft Comprehensive Flood Control and Ecosystem Restoration study for the Sacramento and San Joaquin River Basins. This interagency project, led by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the California Reclamation Board, was an outcome of the 1997 floods. It outlines the future approach to both flood control and ecosystem restoration projects for these two river systems, with a goal of achieving system wide changes. It is part of a long process. The draft report was released in July and you will find it at www.compstudy.org. The next stage will probably be development of regional projects.

This year the state's Department of Water Resources started a state-wide Floodplain Management Task Force. IEH is represented in this multi-stakeholder group, which is charged with submitting floodplain management policy proposals to the governor in December 2002.

Another state-wide opportunity arose with passage of the federal Farm Bill early this year. The new law includes provision for development and funding of stewardship programs, such as those originated in Florida and outlined in the Fall 2001 issue of *Linkages*. A new state wide coalition is forming to obtain stewardship funding for California and promote the program in this state. It is spearheaded by the California Wilderness Coalition and the California Futures Network. The initial members include the California Cattlemen's Association. The California Association of Winegrape Growers, and IEH.

Publications Projects

We recently completed a report on the *Biological Resources and Conservation Needs* of the Sacramento region for the Green Valley Alliance. It is an educational publication for the general reader. You can download a copy from www.greenvalleyalliance.org. The report provides an overview of general biological issues for the six-county valley and foothill region, and also provides information on areas in the region that are managed for the conservation of biological diversity and on a variety of conservation programs.

County-scale conservation planning under state and federal laws (Habitat Conservation and Natural Community Conservation Planning) is taking place in more and more locales in central and northern California. We are assembling funding from a variety of sources, starting with a LEGACI grant awarded to IEH by the Great Valley Center, to prepare and publish a *Citizen's Guide to Conservation Planning* which will assist stakeholders and others participating in these planning efforts. The project is a collaboration with the Institute for Local Self-Government, a non-profit affiliate of the California League of Cities. We expect to publish the Guide in late spring or early summer of 2003.

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difficult to achieve in California. This year, the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) sponsored Senate Bill 1521, introduced by Senator Sheila Kuehl and supported by the governor. Initially, this bill required OPR to develop a model zoning ordinance that emphasized Smart Growth principles, including mixed use and pedestrian oriented development. A city or county that adopted the ordinance, or developed a similar one, would get preferential consideration for various state grants. The legislation was strongly opposed by development and local government interests. It was progressively watered down, changed from requiring development of a model ordinance to just the assembly of example practices and policies, and still failed to pass the Legislature.



City and County General Plans

These plans provide the basis for local government development decisions, including approval of individual projects and preparation of specific plans for large or small areas. A growing number of states have specific policies to influence local government decisions. These range from policy requirements, to delineation of geographic areas where the state wishes to see growth occur, to incentives encouraging appropriate development in appropriate areas. There are also land conservation measures to protect agricultural lands, wildlife habitat and hazard areas from urban and suburban development.

California is lagging in the national change over land use policies

Maryland has delineated development areas plus fiscal incentives, coupled with a rural lands conservation program. Oregon has a set of state policies and a city or metropolitan region urban limit line requirement. Washington has growth management rules that are advisory to local government, but there are mandatory requirements for fast-growing counties. It includes having counties, not cities, delineate urban boundaries.

Ten Principles define Smart Growth

- Mix land uses
- Take advantage of compact building design
- Create a range of housing opportunities and choices
- Create walkable neighborhoods
- Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place
- Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty and critical environmental areas
- Strengthen and direct development toward existing communities
- Provide a variety of transportation choices
- Make development decisions predictable, fair and cost-effective
- Encourage citizen and stakeholder participation in development decisions

source: The Smartgrowth Network

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Misuse of Term Smart Growth

Smart Growth, like any popular phrase, is misused. Two examples. A shopping mall sitting in a sea of parking asphalt is neither Smart Growth nor a Town Center. A large project with several separated uses is neither Smart Growth nor a Mixed-use Development.

California is lagging in this national change over land use policies. It requires cities and counties to adopt General Plans, to have a number of mandatory elements such as housing and traffic, to maintain consistency between the elements, and to update plans periodically. Local jurisdictions may amend General Plans up to four times a year. The only specific mandate is to provide the jurisdiction's fair share of housing, and even that is not effectively enforced. Otherwise local jurisdictions may do whatever they want, subject to following the California Environmental Quality Act and overcoming citizens lawsuits.

Furthermore, in many California localities major development decisions are the result of campaigns by large landowners rather than planning based on the future needs and aspirations of the community. In regions like the Central Valley there is a thriving business in buying cheap land that is outside General Plan development areas and zoned for agriculture, waiting some years, then campaigning for General Plan amendments to allow development. As the old saying goes, this is "no a way to run a railroad." It guarantees unnecessary suburban

sprawl, with major quality of life and economic problems over the long term, as well as extensive loss of farmland

and wildlife habitat.

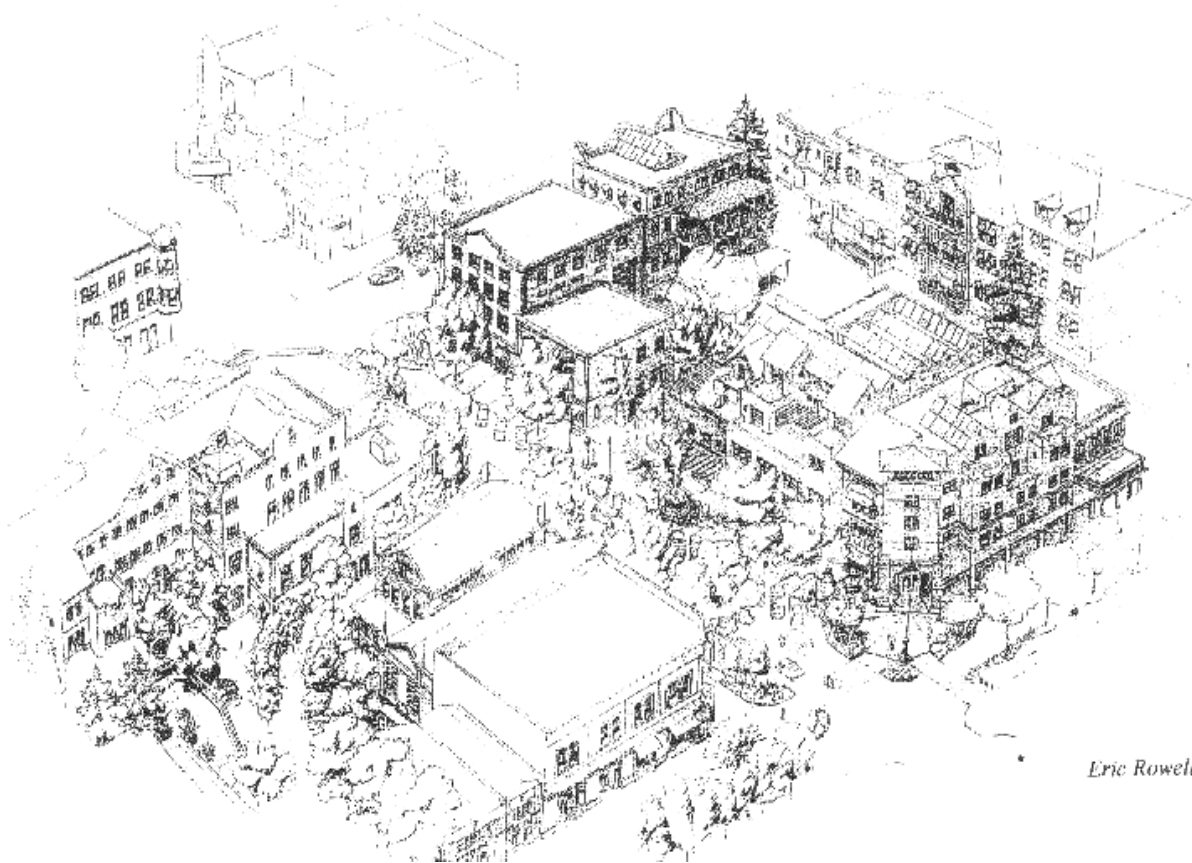
With this absence of state policies, citizens in a growing number of California jurisdictions are taking matters into their own hands by approving urban limit lines and other ballot measures for cities and counties. These measures usually require a vote of the people to approve a development beyond the urban limit line and are effective for a defined number of years. Communities in Ventura and Sonoma Counties have been the most active, but there are many other examples and more in the offing.

Some experts consider that a combination of state policies and incentives to local governments to adopt these policies will be sufficient. Unfortunately even that step is highly controversial. Key interests claim that an incentives system would force local governments to adopt the policies and so usurp local control, as shown in the debate over SB1521. In IEH's view, state incentives are essential, but will not be sufficient to ensure the extensive spread of Smart Growth and halt egregious sprawl. State policy mandates, such as urban limit line requirements, possibly through reform of General Plan Law, will most likely be necessary to ensure good planning and give to local governments the ability to "just say no".

Regionalism and Inter-regional Issues

The Los Angeles metropolitan area demonstrates the ultimate problem in shifting society from suburban sprawl to Smart Growth. This is a region with 177 cities plus developed but unincorporated areas that form a contiguous urban and suburban area. *Sprawl Hits the Wall*, a recent report by the Southern California Studies Center at the University of Southern California, provides a thoughtful analysis of this situation and offers a number of remedies. The fringe development of new suburbs is now far inland, in Riverside and San Bernardino and north-east Los Angeles Counties. There is a large, older, regional core that spreads across city and county boundaries and many of its mature cities are struggling economically. The core is fringed by more affluent, slow-growing, coastal and foothill communities, some of which are becoming new job centers.

Shifting resources to promote Smart Growth requires thinking in terms of multiple counties and their many cities from a regional perspective. One factor that will force this shift is that the region is running out of unbuilt land as fringe development runs into federally owned mountain and desert landscapes. For example, Orange County is running out of unbuilt land and will have to focus on infill.



Eric Rowell

In the San Francisco Bay area a different problem emerges. There is a severe jobs-housing imbalance and housing is extremely expensive, resulting in both people who cannot afford a Bay Area home and people who have sold a house for large sums. Both these factors are pushing homebuyers into the Central Valley and into Monterey and San Benito counties to the south. Many of these individuals now endure long commutes to Bay Area jobs - very inefficient use of land, people's time and gasoline. A huge focus on Smart Growth infill development is essential to ease the housing crunch in the Bay Area.

In the extensive flat lands of the Central Valley there are no strong physical boundaries such as mountains or ocean and no extensive federal lands to block sprawl. With cheap agricultural land around the growing cities, the stage is set for widespread sprawl up and down the Highway 99 corridor, across San Joaquin County to Altamont Pass and along sections of I-5. Actions to shift from sprawl to Smart Growth are imperative. Without more effective state policies, however, it will be very difficult for Central Valley communities to reign in sprawl development.

Infrastructure Location and Investment

There are many ways in which infrastructure spending and location, especially roads and sewers, promotes land intensive sprawl. For example, researchers at Florida State University found that while Tallahassee charged a flat \$6,000 fee for a home's sewer hookup, the actual cost was \$4,437 for an inner-city home and \$11,443 for a high-end home on the city's northern edge. The flat fee discourages infill and subsidizes sprawl. Conversely, the focus on providing infrastructure for fringe development starves existing communities of needed resources.

Local level approaches include tiered sewer hookup fees, as recently adopted by the Sacramento Regional Sanitation District, plans that shift financial resources to already developed areas, and avoidance of projects that promote unnecessary sprawl into rural lands beyond current development boundaries. Legislation can also set state policy for infrastructure spending and give existing developed areas priority.

In addition, the state can help by shifting some economic resources to existing developed areas. Phil Angelides, the current California State Treasurer, has carried out an ambitious program. It targeted over \$1.4 billion of low-interest California Local Economic Development Bank loans to help revitalize economically struggling communities and support sound environmental practices. The program also makes the priority for annual spending of \$1.6 billion in low cost financing the assistance of lower income communities and the support of sustainable

development. Also, the state's Public Employees Retirement System provided \$600 million for investments in businesses that locate or expand in under-served communities.

Financing Development Projects

Shifting toward a Smart Growth pattern requires companies to focus more on existing developed areas and to change the pattern of development from separated uses to walkable neighborhoods. But private companies will only do this if they can make money and obtain the initial financing. Concerns about whether products will sell increase the risk associated with a Smart Growth project, which makes both developers and investors less interested. Also the real estate investment business is organized around single-use development - investing in single family homes, shopping malls and so forth. It is just not set up to finance mixed use projects. Again, much of the production building industry is divided into companies that build one product only - such as single family homes or apartments or shopping centers. An additional problem is that much real estate investment is short term. Investors expect their money back within five years. Complex Smart Growth projects have a longer time frame than conventional projects, which raises yet another financing barrier.

The building industry is realizing that there is not a monolithic market of people wanting to buy single family homes on large lots in suburban subdivisions. Rather there is a variety of market sectors, including many people who want to live in more urban settings and who welcome walkable communities with many amenities. They include old people, young people, couples whose children have grown, and the many individuals who do not drive cars. This market varies from area to area but it seems that nationwide 30 to 50 percent of people are interested in living in more urban, mixed use neighborhoods. There are also varied financial capabilities - only a small segment of society can afford a large house on a large lot.

The recent success of infill projects in selected urban neighborhoods has shown the impact of the changing perceptions of market interest. In mid-town Sacramento, for example, there was little development until the huge success of the Metro Square infill housing project. It demonstrated that there was a strong market of willing

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buyers. Since that time there has been a large increase in construction of both residential and mixed use projects. New suburban development areas around the fringes of cities and metro areas are a more difficult challenge. Here developers often consider that the only market is for single family homes at 5 units to the acre or less, with a small amount of apartment units, together with separation of uses. IEH believes that Smart Growth projects can flourish here as well, and must do so if we are to curb sprawl and conserve rural lands. The University of California's Randall Fleming has suggested use of an urban village center approach, for example around a metro fringe transit stop, along existing commercial corridors, and in neighborhoods within 1.5 miles of community centers. Mixed use development and higher densities in the center give way to rings of housing with progressively lower densities. This approach will result in a much smaller development footprint, while 70 percent of the dwelling units are still single family houses.

With the key being successful demonstration projects to show builders their products will sell, for both infill in cities and older suburbs, as well as fringe development, private foundations can play a crucial role aiding initial projects to demonstrate a market. In downtown Albuquerque, New Mexico the McCune Charitable Trust provided the necessary long term \$6 million investment not available from conventional financial sources.

Pension funds are the single largest source of real estate investment funding and could shift their procedures to provide the longer term investment needed for Smart Growth projects. In 2001 the California Public Employees and Teachers Retirement Systems added over \$1 billion to real estate investment programs for urban neighborhoods.

Conclusion

Smart Growth is here is stay, and it is attracting a widening range of supporters. The next phase is to enact

the variety of state and local government changes that are needed to overcome the obstacles to many features of Smart Growth. Communities in California and other states need to refocus their approach to development, so that there is a much greater emphasis on infill and redevelopment. They also need to change design of metropolitan fringe projects, providing features such as mixed used, pedestrian oriented village or town centers, surrounded by very compact residential development that gives way to lower densities with distance from the centers. Model projects that show the market need and economic viability of such changes are especially urgent.

Further Resources

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DESIGN AND LOCATION : MAKING INFILL HAPPEN

Revitalization of existing communities, is a key part of Smart Growth. Currently we let many neighborhoods, amenities and infrastructure decline as they age. The legacy of dying shopping centers and lowering neighborhood property values encourages movement to newer suburbs. The result is an ever-expanding doughnut spreading out into farmland and wildlife habitat, with an enlarging hole of decay in the

center. It is similar to a frontier mentality - go find some new land rather than fixing up what we have. But obviously this cannot just go on and on - cities and even metropolitan areas collide and there is no place for those brand new subdivisions on last years farmland. We need to fix this problem now, not wait until the doughnut is vastly bigger.

The solution is to put more of our resources into existing urban cores and older neighborhoods. The potential is much greater than only building on vacant patches of land - the strict definition of infill - as there are a host of opportunities for reuse of existing buildings and refill or redevelopment.

We can recycle those decaying shopping centers into vibrant mixed used communities. We can reinvent those great lengths of tacky strip commercial as mixed use, transit and people friendly corridors. We can bring people back to downtowns by building apartments and condominiums, often as mixed use buildings. There should be a focus on development of lively urban villages along transit corridors. Single family residential streets should stay just that, with revision of building codes to allow construction of second units or cottages and to allow traditional neighborhood designs whenever a house is replaced.

These types of projects are happening around California & the nation. About 4,000 lofts are under construction in downtown Los Angeles. In LA's Farmer's Market area strip malls are giving way to a village of 1,300 town houses and apartments within walking distance of shops, jobs, parks and restaurants. Mixed use buildings like the 60 unit Borgata condominiums of Wilshire Boulevard, with housing above shops or offices, are appearing all over Los Angeles County. Planners in Orange County see tremendous potential in the hundreds of declining shopping centers - converting the large parking lots & single story retail to mixed use buildings and a parking structure for each center (but see box opposite for a key complexity with this approach)

There is similar activity in the Bay Area, as well as the construction of many infill apartment buildings in cities like San Jose. Some BART stations provide an example of good planning - the Millbrae station design in San Mateo County involves placing the transit station next to downtown and rezoning 116 acres of commercial-industrial land for offices, a hotel and high density residential.

Growing Pains

By Joanie Weber

We are heading in the right direction, one thinks, while driving around San Jose, California, happily surprised at the infill and the exuberant redevelopment occurring here. It's cutting edge, it's popular and it's the kind of development where everybody wins . . . or so I thought until I recently became personally involved with redevelopment. My mother received word that the shopping center where she has had her business for 38 years is to be torn down to make way for a beautiful project that would have mixed uses and higher housing densities and much less blacktop. All the right smart growth and infill features which I have supported, no urged, for 20 years and still do.

But the problems of the small business owner confronted with this new development model came sharply into focus when my mother began looking at her highly risky options for survival as she is forced from her present location. She could temporarily relocate her business until the new project is in place, an estimated 12 years. If she is still in business by that time, she could see if she can afford the high rents for the trendy, new, gorgeous spaces which will be two to three times the rent she now pays in the older, rundown shopping center. Most small retail stores like my mother's are replaced by Subways, Mail Boxes, Etc., big box anchor stores and other nationally supported operations which can afford the high rents and whose parent corporations, unlike my mother and her 12 employees, can absorb a year or two of losses while becoming established. My mother could relocate her store permanently, also a risky and expensive undertaking, or simply close for good. Most banks would classify a moving loan for a business under these circumstances as highly risky and not recommended.

Some possible solutions to the dilemma of the small business being replaced by redevelopment might be: cities/developers might provide money to carry businesses over to the new spot or create insurance policies that provide redevelopment relief for a small business. A city or county could sponsor upgrade loans or require automatic right of first refusal in the new development to tenants in good standing, with a grace period of one year to catch up on new, higher rents. Short-term rent control is another option. I have learned through the experience of my mother and her business neighbors that without some kind of help, many small, local businesses may not survive infill and commercial gentrification. This leaves us with a more homogenized retail environment, less choice and less variety for our goods and services and some very good businesses gone the way of the

Small towns can also carry out infill projects. Downtown Davis is slowly changing as three and four story mixed use appears, one building at a time. It is shown that certain neighborhoods are not static, but evolve over time.

Randall Fleming, at the University of California, Davis, has carried out an intensive study of mid-town Sacramento, with its mix of uses and grid-pattern streets. The neighborhood has 92 restaurants and a wide variety of service retail within an eleven-minute walk, as well as excellent public transport to downtown jobs. Most dwellings are within a two-minute walk of a variety of amenities. Over the last ten years 32 percent of the buildings have invested in improvements.

Certain neighborhoods are not static, but evolve over time.

Many of the obstacles discussed in the lead article are particularly relevant to infill. Obtaining financing, and the ability of projects to “pencil out” for developers who naturally need to make a profit, are particularly difficult. Long, convoluted approval processes are especially significant for infill. Some communities underwrite or subsidize initial infill housing developments in order to gain developer willingness to risk the project in the absence of good sales track records.

Keys to Success - Design, Neighbors and Specific Plans

There are many horror stories of infill projects that run into a barrage of neighborhood opposition, so that many developers will not build in existing communities. Traffic congestion, parking and property values are key concerns for existing residents. The best solution, especially for the long-term, is to work with local residents in designing projects. High quality design is critical. Attractive, compact infill development is an asset to the community & builds support for infill. Modern computer techniques assist this approach, as they allow demonstrations of the impact of infill and redevelopment proposals. The new *Smart Infill* publication by Greenbelt Alliance provides both hypothetical examples of change to a street and photographs of a variety of Bay Area infill projects.

Location is an important issue - support for revitalization of a declining commercial area or a transit oriented development project is a far easier proposition than infill in a purely residential area.

Development of a Specific Plan for an infill area allows extensive involvement of neighborhood residents and preparation of an agreed upon plan that developers must follow. The City of Albuquerque, New Mexico, has a plan for a downtown district that details what is wanted, shows what is not acceptable and provides a very rapid approval process (no more than five weeks) for projects that fit with the plan. The City of Mountain View in the Bay Area has infill Specific Plans that promote transit oriented development and downtown revitalization, while San Jose has seven plans that provide over 10,000 dwelling units.

Also, communities should develop infill policies, guidelines and targets for development over the next 10 to 20 years. These should include underutilized land and commercial areas in decline, not just vacant land. They should include the possibility for gradual replacement of individual buildings in existing retail, office and mixed use areas. In the future they should address additional opportunities that may not be feasible at this point. One such opportunity is the conversion of business parks to mixed use development. Many business parks are the antithesis of Smart Growth - a single use, with large expanses of parking lot and usually total automobile dependence. There are business parks where the parking asphalt can give way to mixed use developments plus parking structures, including residences, restaurants and some retail. Thoughtful planning over larger business park areas will allow development of viable public transit routes.

The Gentrification Issue

A major concern in many urban neighborhoods is that infill development will displace existing low and moderate income residents who cannot afford rents in the new market-rate dwellings, or the rents in remaining older buildings that increase in response to the influx of new residents. Here are two possible solutions to this. One is local government adoption of a city-wide inclusionary housing ordinance, that requires a certain percentage of units in development projects over a certain size to be affordable to low and moderate income residents. A number of cities have 10% to 20 % affordable housing requirements and in most California locations this provides for people with a wide variety of essential jobs such as teachers and firemen. In Sacramento for example, affordability income limits for a three person household are \$41,250 for low income and \$61,875 for moderate income. Another approach is for cities to require that redevelopment projects replace lost affordable units on a one-to-one basis.

Conclusion

Overcoming the obstacles to infill is a critical need in the next few years. Infill development offers the opportunity to provide a very significant fraction of housing needs in the coming decades, while also revitalizing existing downtowns and older neighborhoods and greatly improving quality of life. There is clearly a sizable market of future infill residents who seek nearby amenities and prefer this lifestyle to that of a new suburban housing subdivision. As newer suburbs age, their automobile-oriented shopping centers and strip commercial will likely decline economically and so become candidates for infill development and revitalization, expanding the infill potential still further.

Resources

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LINKAGES BETWEEN RURAL LAND CONSERVATION AND SMART GROWTH IN CITIES

In many parts of California important farm and range lands and wildlife habitat are threatened by urban sprawl. Different groups focus on different solutions. Some seek to establish stringent urban growth boundaries. Others point out that land is not protected until development rights are purchased by a land trust or similar entity, and so focus on open space conservation programs.

As usual, reality is more complicated. Both strategies are necessary but even together will be insufficient in many locales. They must be complemented by Smart Growth measures that change the pattern of development and also the long term commitment of voters and elected officials to protect rural lands from urban/suburban sprawl. State-level policies and additional programs, such as hazard avoidance, play additional roles.

There are three categories of agricultural land and wildlife habitat that citizens often wish to protect. Category I is land within the current General Plan areas of cities and counties that is designated for future development. This land may still be zoned agriculture or open space, but the local General Plan says "development" of some type.

Category II is land outside the current General Plan development areas but threatened by sprawl development. The most common scenario is that land developers purchase properties, wait a few years, then move aggressively to obtain city annexations and other General Plan changes. Very large areas can fall into this category.

Category III is land well away from growing cities and metropolitan areas. Land developers are probably not buying options or land in fee title. But rural development unrelated to agriculture may occur by lot-by-lot building on parcels ranging from an acre or two to 80 acres.

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Preservation of private land, by easement or outright purchase, requires willing sellers and reasonable prices. An open space conservation program will run into trouble on both issues in the absence of strong local government policies to curb sprawl.

An open space conservation program will run into trouble in the absence of strong local government policies to curb sprawl.

In Category I lands there are unlikely to be willing sellers and the prices will be very high. In consequence, land conservation only occurs either when an integral part of the overall development process, / *continued on page 11*

NEEDS OF NATURE

Large Scale Connectivity and Long-term Needs

Wildlife corridors have become a popular concept over the past few years. People usually think of small-scale situations - a corridor of a few miles or less connecting two habitat areas to allow mobile species to move between the two areas.

Very large scale connections also play important roles, particularly over very long time periods. The most important example in California is the Tehachapi Mountains-Grapevine region between the San Joaquin Valley and the Los Angeles Basin. This area is a huge ecotone where five major biological regions; Sierra Nevada, Central Valley, Mohave Desert, Transverse Range and the Los Angeles Basin; come together. It provides for species movement as climatic conditions change or other factors cause species to extend their ranges. Examples are movement of desert species into the southern San Joaquin Valley and of southern species from Mexico up into central and northern California - movements that have occurred in the past and will need to occur in the future.

The Tehachapi-Grapevine ecotone also provides for important medium-term connectivity needs. It is one of two connections between oak woodlands of the Sierra Nevada foothills and Coast Range, and also provides for movement of individual animals from the Sierra to the southern Californian and coastal mountain ranges.

Much of this region is federal land. However several key areas include extensive private lands. One is the Antelope Valley, a V-shaped valley separating the Liebre-Sawmill Mountains portion of the Angeles National Forest from the Tehachapi mountains. This valley broadens slowly from a point near the I-5 / Highway 138 junction to a wide connection with the Mohave Desert proper in the Lancaster-Rosamond area. A second is the Tehachapi Mountains, which include the huge Tejon Ranch. A third is the I-5 corridor over the Grapevine from the San Joaquin Valley to the Santa Clara River Valley .

Current and future land use planning in Los Angeles and Kern Counties must address the ecological needs of this ecotone. Otherwise we risk severing or degrading the connections between bioregions, with immense long-term consequences. For example, development along the Lancaster-Rosamond Highway 14 corridor or along with Highway 138 corridor in western Antelope Valley could block the connection between the Mohave Desert and the center of the ecotone. Development in the foothill areas that form the southern rim of the San Joaquin Valley or in critical spots along I-5 could also cause major long-term biological impairment.

Development pressures are building in this region, as the Los Angeles metropolitan area spills over onto the edge of the Mohave Desert and along the I-5 corridor into the southern San Joaquin Valley. At the end of August the Tejon Ranch Company, owner of 270,000 acres in the Tehachapi Mountains, filed plans to construct a 23,000 home new town in Los Angeles County. The proposed community of Centennial would be just east of I-5 on Highway 138 - about the center of the five bioregions ecotone area. Construction of Centennial could easily lead to further development along the Highway 138 corridor in Antelope Valley, the last remaining undeveloped valley in Los Angeles County. There are also proposed commercial tracts along I-5. It is noteworthy that Tejon Ranch, the largest single private landowner in the state, sold off all its cattle a year or so ago, and now leases its land to other ranchers.

County and city planners and development companies normally do not think about issues like long term movements between bioregions. But decisions made in Kern and Los Angeles Counties over the next few decades will have huge impacts for as long as our civilization, with its cities and highways, is present in California. This is a critical time to think about bioregional connectivity and plan for the Needs of Nature.

such as habitat conservation to protect rare species or provision of open space amenities for future residents.

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Willing sellers for conservation purposes are often hard to find in Category II lands as well. And usually land prices are inflated above their agricultural value by “speculative value”. The closer a parcel is to the General Plan development boundary, the higher that speculative value will be. Depending on the region of California, land conservation can and does occur. It may be possible to conserve strategic parcels, that shield additional neighboring land from development. Some larger parcels are protected because owners are committed to long-term preservation of their land. But land conservation in Category II areas is inevitably piecemeal. By itself, this approach will not protect large areas of rural lands from sprawl development.

Multi-faceted programs that achieve conservation of Category II lands are essential to overcome these problems. But even coupling of farmland and open space conservation programs with strong urban boundaries is not enough in many places. Considerable speculative value remains on rural lands close to voter-approved urban limit lines for example. Development oriented landowners may just wish to wait for expiration of the urban limit line, or a change in sentiment so that voters will approve urban expansion. This expectation that an urban limit line will not last makes adjacent land conservation extremely difficult.

Marin County, however, provides an example of successful coupling of land use policies and an easement purchase program. The County has a long term goal of preserving rural West Marin, a bucolic dairy farm landscape. Nearly all of this landscape is designated agriculture, with a 60- acre minimum parcel size plus stringent restrictions on what type of development is allowed, and limited to agricultural related structures. The County Board of Supervisors maintains these restrictions over the long term, with strong popular support for the measures. At the same time the Marin Agricultural Land Trust (MALT) has a long-term program to buy in-perpetuity agricultural easements on the dairy farms. So far MALT has protected perhaps 30% of the West Marin landscape. The blend of strong local government measures, popular support, and an active land trust is very effective.

But in most cases successful and large scale conservation of Category II lands requires measures in addition to voter controlled growth boundaries and easement acquisition programs. These elements are an effective Smart Growth program to change the pattern of development and remove the need for sprawl, voter understanding and support for the protection of rural lands, strong commitment by local

government, and programs to ensure the economic viability of the regional agricultural economy. The latter should include the option for farmers and ranchers to receive annual incentive payments in return for providing public benefits such as wildlife habitat - a way to help the economic viability of agriculture. Widespread land conservation can occur under these conditions because land speculation is far less worthwhile, and private ownership of agricultural land is economically viable and has a future.

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Category III lands usually have little speculative value, and it is often easier to find willing sellers of easements or land. So long-term land conservation is practical, but can seem unnecessary. However gradual rural development, with houses on parcels ranging from one to 40 or more acres, eventually will have a serious negative impact on both agriculture and wildlife.

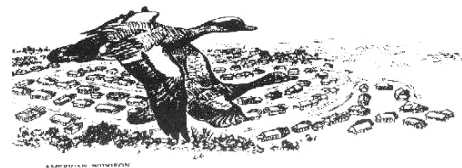
Protection of large tracts, such as large cattle ranches, is critical for the conservation of wildlife and protection of ecosystem health. A rural landscape that converts over time to a rural residential landscape will lose much of its wildlife value and ecological health.

An agricultural district that loses significant acreage to rural development will become less viable economically and will see growing conflicts between farming and the non-farm residents, factors that will eventually lead to the wholesale loss of agricultural operations.

An effective approach is to limit the rural residential development to some discrete areas, with the remaining rural lands not being available for this type of development. Sacramento County uses this method.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the success of rural land conservation will be extremely dependent on the success of Smart Growth in cities and suburbs, so that metropolitan areas drastically reduce their remorseless consumption of farms and ranches. But it will also require strong, lasting support for rural land conservation by both elected officials and area voters. We hope that as citizens and politicians will provide this support, especially as they see the multiple values of Smart Growth and realize that endless sprawl is neither necessary nor desirable.



SUSTAINING AGRICULTURE

New Farm Bill Expands Conservation Programs

When Congress passed the Farm Bill earlier this year most of the press focus was on the commodity support programs. But the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (H.R. 2646 - Public Law 107-171) also expanded the variety of conservation programs and increased the authorized funding levels of existing programs. (Note that each year Congress decides on the actual amount of money available for each program in an appropriations bill. An authorizing bill like the Farm Bill sets the funding ceiling for each program, but Congress may not appropriate the full amount.)

There are several U.S. Department of Agriculture programs (for an overview, see the Fall 2001 issue of *Linkages*). The popular Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) was increased from \$400 million in the current fiscal year to \$700 million in 2003, rising to \$1.3 billion by 2007.

The Farmland Protection Program (for purchase of agricultural easements to protect farmland from sprawling development) increases from \$50 million in 2002 to \$100 million in 2003.

Other programs also received increases. The large Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) use a nation-wide maximum enrolled acreage. The caps were increased by 2.8 million acres, to a total of 39.2 million acres, for the CRP and by 1.2 million acres, to a total of 2.275 million, for the WRP. The latter program is extensively used in California's Central Valley, but the CRP is little used even though it now covers a variety of benefits beyond the historic focus on soil conservation.

A major new initiative is the Conservation Security Program. This will provide conservation security payments to farmers and ranchers who implement agreed upon conservation plans on their property. It has a broader approach than the other programs such as CRP

and encourages development of a whole farm conservation plan. It remains to be seen whether this program will prove attractive in California, or whether low, nation-wide payment formulae make the program unappealing to California growers.

There are two components to a conservation security payment. The first is a base payment that is a small percentage of the nation-wide per acre rental rate. Since California irrigated farmlands have higher rental rates, this base payment is likely to be too low. The second payment component is a cost share for developing practices. This is based on the average county cost for those practices. Maximum total annual payments are low - \$20,000 for practices on part of the operation, and up to \$45,000 for a resource management system on the whole operation. Currently the U.S. Department of Agriculture is developing this program and there will be little funding in next year's appropriations.

The new Farm Bill also opens the door to development of stewardship programs. These are locally controlled programs that provide incentive payments for a wide range of public benefits. They are much more grower-friendly than traditional USDA programs, and so could attract widespread interest. In California a coalition of organizations, including the California Cattlemen's Association, the California Association of Winegrape Growers and IEH, is developing a state-wide stewardship program to obtain federal funding. The initial focus will be on a number of pilot projects scattered through the state. This coalition effort is led by the California Wilderness Coalition and the California Futures Network.

For overall information on Farm Bill conservation programs, start with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) website (www.nrcs.usda.gov) or contact your county NRCS office.

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

AB 857 - Assemblymember Wiggins and Senator Sher

This year, the California legislature passed a significant Smart Growth bill, AB 857. As we go to press, the legislation awaits the governor's signature. AB 857 defines the state planning priorities for California.

— a) “to promote infill development and equity by rehabilitation, maintaining and improving existing infrastructure that supports infill development and appropriate reuse and redevelopment of previously developed, underutilized land that is presently served by transit, streets, water, sewer, and other essential services, particularly in underserved areas, and to preserving cultural and historic resources.”

— b) “to protect environmental and agricultural resources by protecting, preserving and enhancing the state's most valuable natural resources, including working landscapes such as farm, range and forest lands, natural lands such as wetlands, watersheds, wildlife habitats, and other wildlands, recreation lands such as parks, trails, greenbelts, and other open space, and landscapes with locally unique features and areas identified by the state as deserving special protection.”

— c) “to encourage efficient development patterns by ensuring that any infrastructure associated with development that is not infill supports new development that uses land efficiently, is built adjacent to existing

developed land to the extent consistent with the priorities specified pursuant to subsection (b), is in an area appropriately planned for growth, is served by adequate transportation and other essential utilities and services, and minimizes ongoing costs to taxpayers.”

AB 857 also requires a new State Environmental Goals and Policy Report every four years that is consistent with the above three planning priorities. This Report, which has not been updated since Governor Jerry Brown's administration, will serve as a guide for state expenditures.

The legislation was supported by a wide variety of organizations, including the California Farm Bureau Federation, the California State Association of Counties, the League of California Cities, the Mexican-American Legal Defense and Education Fund, the Nonprofit Housing Association of Northern California and the Sierra Club. IEH supported the legislation and testified at an Assembly-Senate conference hearing during development of the bill.

SB 984 - Senator Costa

The legislature passed SB 984, the **Rangeland, Grazing Land, and Grassland Protection Act** and it awaits action by the governor. It earmarks \$19.2 million of Proposition 40 money for use by the Wildlife Conservation Board to purchase easements on rangelands. It is the first piece of legislation to specifically focus on ranching and rangelands.

REVIEW : LOCAL POLITICS OF GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY

The Local Politics of Global Sustainability

by Thomas Prugh, Robert Costanza, and Herman Daly
Island Press, 2001

Reviewed by Ron Bottorff

This is a visionary book by some of our nation's strongest ecological voices. I highly recommend it to everyone interested in the future of our species. Thomas Prugh, an energy analyst, is author of *Natural Capital and Human Economic Survival (1995)*; Robert Costanza is Director of the Institute for Ecological Economics at the University of Maryland; Herman Daly, former World Bank economist, is senior research scholar at the School of Public Affairs of the University of Maryland.

The basic theme of the book is that the major questions involved in transitioning to a sustainable global society are too complex to be left to scientists and ecological experts, and that they must be addressed by citizens through a

democratic process. The definition of sustainability from the 1987 Brundtland Commission Report remains one of the simplest: “Sustainable Development is ...development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” All concepts of sustainability involve something which endures, but even in such deceptively simple definitions as the above, all manner of ambiguities and difficulties come into play. How are sustainable economic systems to be organized? What qualifies as enduring - fifty years or five hundred? What should be produced - Lexus cars or lentils? Who gets it - and who decides? Can an economy be sustainable if it is “unfair” - that is, must it include a social justice dimension? Our needs are minimal, but what about our wants? The vast majority of economic output in rich nations goes toward satisfying wants. What will future generations need or want?

The authors argue that these questions are primarily not technical in nature, but instead concern values. They state

unequivocally in their introduction that “[These questions] cannot be answered by simply asking the experts. Sustainability will be achieved, if at all, not by engineers, agronomists, economists, and biotechnicians but by citizens.”

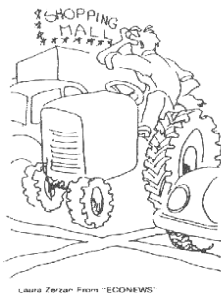
The sustainability problem starts with the fact that little political activity centered on ecological issues takes place where it matters most. The questions of sustainability are debated in some of the highest councils of government, but in everyday life hardly a word is said about the subject. There is nothing resembling a real “citizens discussion”, say, of global warming or any other sustainability issue.

The book’s first chapters deal with the minimum technical requirements of sustainability.

There are three simple rules: (1) Don’t use up all the resources; (2) Don’t undermine the delivery of ecological services; and (3) Don’t overwhelm the waste-absorption capacity. Ecological economics has as a basic principle that the ecosystem is (1) limited in size, (2) not growing, and (3) not receiving any new flows of materials, though fortunately it receives energy from the sun. Since no subsystem can outgrow its host, the economy cannot grow larger than the ecosystem. Thus, economic growth cannot continue indefinitely. The authors state that the likelihood of solving the sustainability problem through decentralization and voluntary simplicity seems remote, given humanity’s long history of solving problems through greater complexity.

In a chapter called “Aiming for Genutopia”, the authors take up the question of how certain utopian societies function, such as Plato’s “Republic” and B.F. Skinner’s “Walden Two.” They point out through convincing arguments that such societies, even if they existed, would not serve the goal of sustainability.

Further along, in “Prelude to Politics”, the authors discuss the many pitfalls of standard variety capitalism, pointing out that the real problem with this system is its dependence on perpetual economic growth, which is not possible in a finite world. They further decry alienation from the political process and the loss of public discourse



Laura Zeman From "ECONNEWS"

in the country, citing such shows as “Crossfire” and “Meet the Press” as poor substitutes for genuine debate. “Especially at the national level, the public sphere in its classical sense has ceased to exist.”

In the last three chapters, the authors turn to the main theme of the book, which argues that a new politics is needed if we are to eventually achieve sustainability. Since “sustainability issues are global in scale, staggeringly complex, and interactive, poorly understood, and riddled with uncertainties....science must become just one partner in a broad-based decision-making process [in which] essentially everyone is a stakeholder.” Their most compelling model for a politics of engagement is “strong democracy”, a “road not taken” in American political history, which chose instead a system advocated by federalists in which elected representatives take care of the public’s business. Examples of strong democracy are discussed, such as New England Town Meetings, Oregon Watershed Councils, and other such groups that have functioned well for certain limited purposes. The key process of strong democracy is talk among citizens: “the ongoing deliberation of issues that clarifies the issues themselves and the values that the community brings to bear on them.”

Many theorists have said such a system cannot work, that it is suited only to isolated, stable, small-scale communities whose time has gone. However, the authors cite a 1993 Brookings Institution “core cities study” which looked at the governing structure of five medium-sized U.S. cities: Birmingham, Dayton, Portland, St. Paul, and San Antonio. All launched reforms in the 1970s that decentralized government and distributed power to the neighborhoods. The results were generally positive and created a strong sense of community. Participants believed the system “reduced hostility ...and enhanced feelings of personal political power.” City officials “overwhelmingly felt that the benefits outweighed the costs.”

In the last chapter, the authors state that “involvement in community is one of the fundamental wellsprings of human happiness and fulfillment, as well as a key to sustainability.... People sense that something is missing, and this may create an openness to experiments designed to restore the loss.”

One has the overall sense that these authors are basically on the right track. The decisions we face regarding sustainability do involve values, and society can only move toward sustainability as citizens decide these issues through a political process, whether it be strong democracy or some derivation of it. If this is correct, the main questions from my perspective then become: First, do we have the time for such democratic processes to develop? And second, is there any chance that community groups will develop nationwide in sufficient numbers to create the needed national dialogue on sustainability?

Even the authors cite only limited examples of successful community groups. In California, the Collaborative Regional Initiative movement has sustainability as a theme, but even here the real emphasis is on getting the economic machine back in order. Moreover, since September 11, our nation has focused the lion's share of its attention on national security issues. While this is understandable, it seems questionable whether we have the luxury of working on sustainability issues after we have "solved" the terrorism

issue. Failure to address sustainability issues relatively soon will, in the view of many reputable scientists, put our civilization at serious risk of global ecological and economic decline.

Can a national dialogue on sustainability issues be created it time? The authors are hopeful that it can. Our fate and that of our progeny may well hinge on the answer.

Ron Bottorff is Secretary of IEH.

INFORMATION RESOURCES

National

Confronting Suburban Decline: Strategic Planning for Metropolitan Renewal

William Lucy and David Phillips. Island Press. (2000)

The decline of suburbs is a major problem that society must overcome in order to achieve Smart Growth. We cannot treat neighborhoods and whole communities as throw-aways, that sink into decline 30 to 50 years after construction while homeowners keep jumping to the newest homes at the metropolitan fringe.

This scholarly work provides an in-depth analysis of the decline of many post World War II suburbs. A major focus is the "tyranny of easy decisions" that leads to extensive development at the metropolitan fringe, insufficient reinvestment in already developed areas and increasing income disparities between local jurisdictions. Causal factors range from the low risk for fringe developers to the nature of infrastructure investments and metro spatial form.

Lucy and Phillips use their analysis to develop recommendations. There are six key items: reinvestment in existing housing and infill, transportation choices for all income and age groups, attractive places, compact regional development, equality of educational resources, and revenue sharing by jurisdictions within a region.

When City and Country Collide: Managing Growth in the Metropolitan Fringe

Tom Daniels. Island Press. (1999)

"The fringe is where America's struggles over population

growth and the development of open space are most visible and bitter" writes Tom Daniels. His book describes the nature of the problem, its origins, the forces promoting fringe development and obstacles to effective growth management. A chapter on the impacts of federal spending and regulation is particularly helpful, as the federal role in sprawl promotion is often recognized but rarely explained. It complements an overview of the more familiar state and local government factors.

A major part of this book explores various planning, design and growth management techniques. It includes a detailed look at growth boundaries and their issues, largely from a regional perspective. A useful feature is a number of model documents, including a model transfer of development rights ordinance. Daniels does not shy away from the difficulties in bringing about change and reminds us of the need for a shift in consumer taste and attitudes.

Solving Sprawl: Models of Smart Growth in Communities Across America

F. Kaid Benfield et. al.
Natural Resources Defense Council. (2001)

Examples of Smart Growth development are clearly a great help in promoting change, as they overcome stereotypes and misconceptions. F. Kaid Benfield and colleagues at the Natural Resources Defense Council have collected a wide variety of examples from around the nation. They address individual projects in urban areas, suburban redevelopment and a variety of land conservation efforts. Two suburban examples are particularly interesting - Orenco Station in Hillsboro, Oregon and the Reston Town Center in the sprawl of northern Virginia. Liberal use of high quality color photos helps to make the case that Smart Growth works

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California

Sprawl Hits the Wall: Confronting the Realities of Metropolitan Los Angeles.

Wolch, J et al. (2001). Southern California Studies Center, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA. <http://sc2.usc.edu/sg/atlas3.html>

This report is essential reading for all those concerned about the future of the greater Los Angeles Region. It

addresses population, demographic and key social and economic issues as well as land use and natural resources. The report provides an insightful overview of current conditions and trends and also their consequences, then uses this information to lay out a broad vision of the future.

Agricultural Easements : New Tool for Farmland Protection.

California Agriculture, Volume 56, No. 1 (Jan-Feb 2002)
Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources, University of California. <http://danr.ucop.edu/calag>

This special issue of California Agriculture includes a very informative set of articles about the nature of agricultural easements and their use across the state and the current status of agricultural land conservation. There is also the results of a landowner survey in Marin and Sonoma Counties that includes suggested improvements to easement programs.

Back Issues of *Linkages* Available

Most articles in each issue focus on a single topic. Past topics include *Ecological Benefits from Rural Land Stewardship*, *Water and Land Use* and *The Future of Rural Landscapes*. *Grappling with Growth* (Spring and Fall 1998 and Spring 1999) is a set of three issues dealing with the problems and solutions of metropolitan sprawl & the need for livable communities. Earlier issues address *Conservation Planning* (Fall 1997), *Flood Management* (Spring 1997), *The Sierra Foothills* (Fall 1996), and *The Central Valley* (Spring 1996.)

Single copies are \$2, free with payment of a new IEH membership. From: IEH, 409 Jardin Place, Davis, CA 95616.

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