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# Assessing Growth Impacts

## *Are You Asking the Right Questions?*

Norman L. Walker and Neil L. Meyer

This publication was developed to help elected and appointed officials and community citizens to assess growth impacts. Answering or seeking solutions to these questions should provide a basis for community decisions on growth.

Identified impacts should be translated into actual needs which could be met through assistance from government, from the developer or through their combined efforts. Needs should be defined as specifically as possible: for example, to provide for X number of new students, recognizing that sometimes an impact may have several alternative solutions — X number of new classrooms versus X number of buses to take children to a neighboring community with excess capacity.

### Assessing An Impact

Large developments or a series of small developments can change a community's way of life and way of doing business. A minimum assessment of the situation will provide the following information:

- How will changes in the community be distributed over time? The emphasis at this point is determining the length of different phases and not the exact construction date.
- The effect the development will have on employment and wages.
- Identification of community services, facilities and local characteristics that may be affected by change and their ability to accommodate change.
- Dates public costs will be incurred.
- Dates revenues will be available to meet public costs.

A community should seek help in preparing an impact study if it does not have the information, resources or staff to answer the preliminary questions. Detailed information may not be needed at this stage, but the community must achieve a basic understanding of its potential problems before it can bargain with a developer.

Specific questions should be asked once an overview of the project is achieved. A picture of specific areas of concern can be provided by answering the following questions:

### *Economic and Demographic*

What is the expected employment of the development and for how long?

How is this employment distributed between phases of the development and how long will each phase last?

What other employment will be generated as a result of the project?

How is production expected to change among major industrial sectors? Will the change require substantial public support facilities?

How will population change as a result of this increased employment?

What will be the characteristics of this new population . . . sex ratios, fertility rates, death rates?

Will the characteristics change the long-term population trends of the area?

How will the increased population be distributed geographically in the county, city, etc.?

### *Land Use*

What are the land types, existing land covers and current uses?

What land uses are suitable for the area, i.e., agriculture, forestry, mineral exploration and extraction? Is a map available indicating these suitable land uses?

### *Natural Resources*

What are the uses of:

- |           |             |                  |
|-----------|-------------|------------------|
| • waters  | • harbors   | • thermal waters |
| • forests | • fisheries | • beaches        |
| • range   | • wildlife  | • watersheds     |
| • soils   | • minerals  | • shorelines     |

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53  
E322  
no.478

## *Hazardous Areas*

What are the known hazards (floodplains, slide areas, etc.) of the area?

## *Solid Waste*

What solid waste storage, collection and disposal facilities are available?

Can the community's solid waste system expand to accommodate growth?

What are the current disposal practices? Will special wastes require special capacities of disposal facilities?

Can these methods/practices accommodate changes in type of waste?

Are land and conditions adequate and suitable for waste disposal?

Are private firms available to perform any of the functions?

## *Water Supply*

What is the current demand for water in the community?

What are the key characteristics of the water supply in terms of pressure, quality, consistency of flow, storage capacity?

What is the extent of current source(s) of water... rainfall, ground water, surface water? How much excess capacity exists, if any?

What additional sources may be available?

Where will the new connections be located?

Do current hook-up fees pay for line extensions, source expansion and operation of wells and lines?

Is there a chance of contamination from the development?

## *Water Waste Treatment*

Is the current form of waste water treatment adequate in terms of capacity and changes in waste characteristics for present and future water quality standards?

Can the present system be expanded? What are the financial, environmental and technical constraints on expansion?

If additional capacity will be needed, when will it be required?

What is the current hook-up cost for the sewage system? Will new users pay the full cost of acquiring the service and expanding capacity?

What are the key economic factors that influence the selection and sizing of a system?

- Land costs
- Availability of funding
- Industry cooperation
- Agricultural re-use
- Long-term operation and maintenance implications

What are the alternative sizing options?

What will be the implications of the different systems in terms of shaping the character of the new community?

- Location and timing of new development — (How close is it to existing system?)
- Average lot size
- Flexibility of development patterns
- Demand for increased centralized management capability

## *Health Care*

What are the current status and capacity of health care in the community?

- Physicians (other medical professions)/resident ratio:

- waiting times
- emergency services
- specialized services
- mental health services
- dental care services
- travel times and distances

Can these services be expanded?

Will numbers of health personnel be adequate?

What is the potential for volunteers?

What particular problems may be aggravated by development?

Will development create a demand for special health care services?

What will be the ability of new residents to afford health care services (insurance programs, etc.)?

How will development affect the general cost of health care in the community?

## *School and Education*

What is the extent of the cooperation and coordination between the school district, developers and other governmental units?

How many school-age children will enter the system as a result of development?

- What grade levels will be required?

What will be the special educational needs and day-care requirements of the newcomers?

Will the existing school facilities be adequate to provide required services to the new residents?

- What is the current space availability in the system?
- Will school support services be adequate to service the newcomers?
- Will increased funding or personnel be required to meet increased demands?

What will be the effect on the school transportation system?

- Will more buses be needed?
- What will happen to transportation costs?



5  
53  
E322  
no. 478

## Transportation

What is the current level of service?

- traffic flow
- congestion
- comfort
- cost
- travel time
- parking availability
- accident rates
- crime

What, if any, provisions exist for non-drivers?

- young
- elderly
- poor
- handicapped

What tools are available for traffic management?

- traffic lights
- police officers
- one-way streets
- fare structures on buses
- others

How will new workers and residents differ in terms of residential location?

- rate of automobile ownership
- commuting patterns
- economic levels

What transportation needs will the development create?

- materials and equipment delivery
- waste removal
- distance from supply centers
- varied work hours, such as night shifts

What impact does development have on road costs, i.e., unexpected maintenance and construction costs from heavy trucks used by a construction or mining operation.

## Police Protection

How many new people will be serviced by the police and sheriff's departments?

In whose jurisdiction (police or sheriff) will they be located?

Will the new residents be a higher crime-risk group than existing residents?

Will the new population create any law enforcement problems that would require special personnel to handle them? For example, an influx of a younger, transient population may require specially trained officers for drug violations, counseling or bad check investigations.

Does the jail/office complex meet necessary standards of construction and confinement for current and anticipated needs?

What will be the costs of new equipment and facilities?

- jail
- communication system
- new autos
- uniforms
- other equipment

## Fire Protection

Is the new development in an existing fire district?

How many new households will be in established fire service areas? How will they affect the response

time of the fire department?

Will new capital expenditures be necessary to service the added population?

- fire station
- pumper trucks
- communication systems

How will fire personnel be affected?

- Will new firemen need to be hired?
- Will more volunteers be needed?
- Do we switch from a volunteer department to a paid department?
- What are the added personnel costs?
- Will training and uniforms costs be higher?

How will development affect operating and maintenance costs of equipment?

What special problems will be created by development . . . multi-story buildings, petroleum products storage . . . these create needs for special equipment?

## Revenues

Will revenues keep pace with immediate needs for capital improvements?

Will future revenues be sufficient to cover the operating and maintenance costs of capital expenditures?

Are there any special provisions for revenue lags, i.e., service charges and development fees?

## Recreation

What public and private recreation opportunities are available?

- Is use limited by membership, cost, transit dependence or season?

Does a comprehensive parks recreation and open space plan exist? Does it include:

- community and city-wide parks
- neighborhood parks
- small areas or open spaces
- linear open space corridors
- special use areas
- city/county recreation programs
- opportunity for leisure activities

How may the development affect the quality of recreation facilities?

## Special Areas, Sites or Structures

Are developments required to set aside park areas or school sites?

How will development affect areas, sites or structures?

- historical
- archeological
- architectural
- ecological
- wildlife
- scenic

## *Housing*

What are current supply and occupancy rates of housing in the area?

- Low density
- Medium density residential
- High density residential
- Mobile home spaces
- What is the housing gap?
- How many existing residents occupy overcrowded or sub-standard housing?

Where is housing located in your community?

How will increased demand alter the existing market structure?

- How many additional units will be required?
- For what time period will the units be required?
- What size unit and what price ranges will be in demand?
- Will incoming employees vary significantly in the type of housing that they require?
- Will any type of additional public housing or welfare services be required because of scarcity or price impacts?

Will large-scale residential development be plausible if the community doubles or triples in size?

## *Community Design*

Does the project meet community design standards?

## *Social Considerations*

What types of stress will be placed on groups of individuals and families?

What stress will be placed on public agencies providing services?

- education
- physical and mental health care
- public safety
- fire protection
- social welfare

What impacts might be detrimental to important traditions or socially significant aspects of the natural or man-made environment?

What social impacts will be created by the size, composition and distribution of the economic, demographic, housing and fiscal impacts?

What social stresses will occur between impacted special districts and governmental jurisdictions?

## *Government*

Will local government be able to respond to identified community impacts?

What impacts will occur within local government, particularly with regard to its ability to carry out functions of planning, growth management and service delivery?

**THE AUTHORS** — Norman L. Walker is an Extension Agricultural Agent in Ada County and Neil L. Meyer is Extension Community Resource Development Specialist and Associate Extension Professor, Department of Agricultural Economics and Applied Statistics, University of Idaho, Moscow.

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