

Observations and Reflections on the 1101 Growth Planning Process in Blount County, Tennessee

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Background: The author was Director of Planning for Blount County, Tennessee during the process of formulating a growth plan under provisions of Public Chapter 1101, from September 1998 to July 2000. This paper presents observations and reflections on the process and the content of the growth plan during that time period. The observations and reflections are from a county planning perspective.

Public Chapter 1101 was made law by the state legislature in May of 1998. The law required that the county form a Coordinating Committee, and formulate at least a map showing Urban Growth Boundaries (UGBs), Planned Growth Area (PGA) and Rural Area (RA). Urban Growth Boundaries were to delimit areas around towns and cities where a reasonable person would expect to find a high level of urban infrastructure, and thus high density of development in the future. Planned Growth Area was to delimit area outside UGBs where a reasonable person would expect to find some higher level of infrastructure, and thus moderate to high density of development in the future. Rural Area was the remainder of land in the county where moderate to low density of development would be expected.

Although the law was primarily intended to address issues of annexation, some planning content was identified. The various UGBs, PGA and RA were to show some relation to projected population growth within a 20 year time frame. The boundaries and areas were also to benefit from analysis of the physical and development situation within the county, and consider plans for infrastructure improvements. Lastly, the overall plan was to take into consideration the effects of sprawl, and to address issues of preservation.

The growth plan process was intended to bring all governmental parties to the same table for a cooperative effort. Also included at the table were selected representatives from various interests, including school systems, utility providers, homeowners, developers, farmers and conservationists. The Coordinating Committee, made up of these members, was to formulate a growth plan for the county, to then be acted upon by each local legislative body within the county. Each legislative body had power of veto over the plan. In case of an impasse, with one or more legislative bodies vetoing the plan, a state level mechanism for mediation and arbitration was provided in the law.

Early Impressions: Public Chapter 1101 was heralded by the planning community in the state as landmark legislation. Local expectation within the County Government was that the law would place the County on a more equal footing in relation to towns and cities. This expectation was particularly relevant to provisions in the law for more predictable revenue streams to the County in the event of annexation. In addition, the County expected that cities and towns would be required to identify reasonable bases for areas of future annexation and extraterritorial planning.

The Major Players: Although other interests came to the table in the process, the major players were municipal and county governments. Blount County had a population of about 102,000, inclusive of municipalities. The largest city in the county was Maryville with a population of about 24,000. The next largest city was Alcoa with a population of about 8,000. There were four smaller towns as follows: Louisville – about 1,500 population; Friendsville – about 1,000 population; Rockford – about 800 population; and Townsend – about 450 population. About 35 percent of the total county population resided within corporate limits of municipalities.

Blount County had a land area of about 560 square miles. About 55 percent of land area was in valley terrain, and 45 percent was in mountain terrain. About ¼ of total land area was in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. About 47 square miles, or 8 percent of total land area was incorporated into municipalities.

Organization of the Coordinating Committee: The membership of the Coordinating Committee for the growth plan was mandated by statute. Each of the six municipalities within the county was represented by the chief executive or a designated representative. All municipalities initially chose to send a designated, usually non-elected representative. The cities of Maryville and Alcoa sent their City Manager and Assistant City Manager respectively. The smaller towns sent a representative from a town council (2), a town planning commission (1), and an interested private citizen (1). The County was represented by the County Executive, an elected representative.

The County Executive and the Mayor of the largest city, Maryville, were to select two representatives each from the categories of homeowner, builder/developer, and conservationist. The County Executive appointed one member from the Home Builders Association and one member from the Foothills Land Conservancy. The Mayor of Maryville selected a city council member and a member of the city planning commission. Note that the city planning commission member was also a non-elected representative, and also was a member of the Blount County Planning Commission based on a long standing intergovernmental agreement.

The largest municipal utility was represented by the Alcoa City Manager (city electric utility). The largest non-municipal utility representative was from the regional South Central Bell telephone company. Agricultural interests were represented by a member from the soil conservation service. The largest school system was represented by a member of the Blount County Board of Education. A member of the Blount County Chamber of Commerce was also on the Committee, and was elected as chairman. The planners for Alcoa, Maryville and Blount County (author) were informally accepted as support staff for the Committee.

The total membership of the Coordinating Committee was 16. Of this number, eight were directly associated with municipal governments - two from the largest city of Maryville, two from the next largest city of Alcoa, and four representing the four small towns. Only two members were directly associated with county government. The

Maryville appointment of the planning commission member may be seen as being associated with both city and county governments. The remainder were nominally independent. The county government was thus a distinct minority in representation on the Coordinating Committee.

Population Projections: One of the basic planning inputs required by Public Chapter 1101 was population projections. Projections were provided by the University of Tennessee (UT). The local governments were given the opportunity to contest the projections, and to provide alternative figures for the 1101 process.

The UT projections (all rounded to nearest 100) showed Blount County growing to 124,000 by the year 2020. The county contested the projections, supplying its own projected population of 136,000. The City of Alcoa was projected by UT to grow to 8,800 by the year 2020. The City of Alcoa also contested the UT projections, supplying its own projected population of 15,000. The other towns and cities accepted the UT projections as follows: Maryville – 32,600; Louisville – 1,800; Friendsville – 1,300; Rockford 1,000; and Townsend – 600. Based on locally accepted projections, the city proportion of population was expected to grow from about 35 percent in the year 2000 to about 38 percent in the year 2020.

Population Density: Population density was a major defining characteristic of the three growth plan areas, with Urban Growth Boundaries being projected high density development, Planned Growth Area being projected moderate to high density, and Rural Area being projected low to moderate density. Public Chapter 1101 did not provide guidance on how density would be applied at the local level. It was assumed that each locality would need to define density categories for local planning application.

There was no formal agreement on what high, moderate and low density development was in Blount County for the purpose of defining the three required areas. The general consensus held that areas of high density development would be defined by reference to a high level of urban services, most particularly sewer. The County offered its own analysis of density categories based on criteria for approval of subdivisions in the county planning commission.

High density was defined in relation to provision of sewer, which would allow subdivision densities greater than 1.5 units per acre. Note that under County regulations the maximum density on sewer was about 4.6 units per acre, under Maryville regulations the maximum density was 6.2 units per acre, and under Alcoa regulations the maximum density exceeded 12 units per acre.

Moderate density was defined as a range from one unit per three acres to 1.5 units per acre. This was based on informal observation that most non-mountainous development in the county on septic systems was within that density range. The standard for development on individual septic systems was similar across all jurisdictions, being a minimum lot size of between 20,000 to 25,000 square feet if on public water.

Low density was defined as any density less than one unit per three acres. This was the norm for development in the more remote and mountainous areas of the county where development constraints were most severe, sewer was not available, public water was often not available, and other public infrastructure such as roads were less accommodating.

Land Needed for Growth in the County: Identifying area needed for growth requires at a minimum a relation between density and projected demand. In the local 1101 process, the County ultimately accepted the density conversion factor of one household per acre for urban density (an average inclusive of all land uses and open space) as offered by the City of Maryville (see also below regarding the Maryville proposal for UGB). Projected demand was based on the population projections accepted by all participants.

The County assumed a projected population between 124,000 and 136,000 by the year 2020. This would give a projected population growth of between 22,000 and 32,000 persons over 20 years. Assuming a conversion of 2.5 persons per household, there would be a projected 8,800 to 12,800 new households in the county by the year 2020.

Using the conversion factor of one household per acre for average urban density, 14 to 20 square miles would be needed to accommodate future growth in the entire county if developed at urban density. This was used as one benchmark for judging the reasonableness of proposals for Urban Growth Boundaries.

Small Town Urban Growth Boundary Proposals: The four small towns had varying approaches to identifying Urban Growth Boundaries. None were able to rely on extension of sewer. This lack of basic urban infrastructure should have limited the identification of UGBs by the small towns. Such was not the case.

Louisville. The town of Louisville had a land area of about 10 square miles. With a population of 1,500, the population density was 150 persons per square mile, or about 0.1 households per acre. Most of the incorporated municipal area was characterized as rural. The representative on the Coordinating Committee initially requested that Louisville be declared a rural area in order to preserve the character of the town.

The town of Louisville had a history of conflict with the City of Alcoa. Louisville was incorporated in 1990 in reaction to moves by the City of Alcoa to extend regulation in its extraterritorial planning region and to annex far from the urban center. Citizens of the future town conducted a successful campaign to incorporate large areas of mainly rural land to stave off the inroads of the larger city. In the recent past, the two municipalities went to court to settle disputed annexations. Part of the legal settlement was a defined boundary beyond which Alcoa would not annex in the future. Louisville used that boundary as part of the justification for its Urban Growth Boundary proposal.

In addition, early maps of the UGB for Louisville identified a much larger area outside the agreements with Alcoa. Louisville and Friendsville informally joined in a strategy to

divide the northwest portion of the county between them. The County resisted this partition. The author visited the Louisville Planning Commission and made representation that such a large area of mainly rural land could not be justified under provisions of the 1101 law. Louisville abandoned their plan for this expanded area.

The final plan for the Louisville UGB relied mainly on the legal settlement with Alcoa. The area identified encompassed about 4 square miles. The County rejected the final plan for Louisville on several counts. First, projected population indicated a need for urban density development of less than one square mile. Second, the avowed goal of Louisville to encourage rural density development was not consistent with the provisions of the 1101 law, and there was a substantial amount of area within the present corporate limits that could accommodate the projected population increase. Third, the county was not a party to the agreement between the town and the City of Alcoa on annexation, and was thus not bound by that agreement. Lastly, and most importantly, Louisville did not have capability to provide sewer which was necessary to encourage high density urban growth. The County indicated that it would accept an Urban Growth Boundary encompassing only 1.3 square miles.

Friendsville. The town of Friendsville had a land area of about 3 square miles. With a population of 1,000, the population density was 333 persons per square mile, or about 0.2 households per acre. Friendsville could be characterized as an older town cluster surrounded by rural density development, and a potential commercial corridor along a major highway.

The town of Friendsville had a recent history of concern with expansion by the City of Maryville. The two municipalities met at a line along a major highway. The representatives from Friendsville indicated that one of their main concerns in identifying an Urban Growth Boundary was to forestall Maryville annexing around parts of the town.

In addition, as noted above, Friendsville and Louisville came to an early informal agreement to partition the northwest portion of the county between themselves. The county resisted this move in similar fashion as with Louisville. The plan for a greatly expanded UGB was dropped by the town.

The area identified as the Friendsville UGB encompassed about 2 square miles. The County rejected the final plan for Friendsville on two main counts. First, projected population indicated a need for urban density development of less than one square mile. Second, and most importantly, Friendsville did not have capability to provide sewer that was necessary to encourage high density urban growth. The County indicated that it would accept an Urban Growth Boundary encompassing only 0.7 square miles.

Rockford. The town of Rockford had a land area of about 3 square miles. With a population of 800, the population density was 267 persons per square mile, or about 0.17 households per acre. Rockford could be characterized as an older town cluster surrounded by rural density development, and with a potential development corridor along a minor arterial road.

The town of Rockford had a recent history of conflict with the City of Alcoa. In the recent past, the two municipalities went to court to settle disputed annexations. Part of the legal settlement was a defined boundary beyond which Alcoa would not annex in the future. Rockford used that boundary as part of the justification for its Urban Growth Boundary proposal.

Rockford proposed a modest Urban Growth Boundary encompassing less than 2 square miles. While the County recognized that there was little justification for true urban type of growth without the provision of sewer, the County accepted that the town did not try to identify an overly large area. In addition, there was some provision of sewer by an outside utility into part of the proposed UGB, and some possibility for extension of sewer in the future. The County accepted the Rockford proposal as reasonable.

Townsend. The town of Townsend had a land area of about 1 square mile at the beginning of the 1101 process. With a population of 450, the population density was 450 persons per square mile, or about 0.28 households per acre. Townsend could be characterized as a town cluster surrounded by a mix of tourist development and rural density development. The tourist development centered on a major highway, and was related to the gateway status of the town to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

During the process of 1101 deliberations, the town annexed a little less than 1 square mile. This area was part of the town's initial identification of an UGB. The remainder of the initial UGB amounted to about another 1 square mile. All of the area was centered on the major highway that identified a present and potential commercial corridor for tourist oriented development. The County accepted this corridor based UGB, even though the town could not provide sewer service.

There were some confusing messages from the Townsend representatives as the 1101 process progressed. At first, there was an indication that the modest corridor UGB would be acceptable. About mid-way through the process, the mayor indicated that an expanded UGB was being considered. This was never presented formally to the Coordinating Committee. At the last meeting of the Coordinating Committee, after formal action had already been taken on the final growth plan for the county, a new representative for the town announced that a much expanded UGB should have been presented. The County indicated that such an expanded area was not acceptable. The Coordinating Committee did not accept the late proposal.

The City of Alcoa Urban Growth Boundary Proposal: The City of Alcoa had a land area of about 13.5 square miles. With a population of 8,000, the population density was 592 persons per square mile, or about 0.37 households per acre. Alcoa could be characterized as a major commercial and industrial center of the county, centering on major highway routes into and out of the county. The proportion of commercial to residential land was skewed to commercial when compared to other municipalities. The city had substantial areas of buffer land around the major industry of the Aluminum

Company of America (ALCOA), had substantial land held vacant by the ALCOA, and had recently annexed a large prospective commercial area which was not yet developed.

The City of Alcoa had an extraterritorial planning region of long standing. The city had been exercising subdivision regulations for about three decades within the planning region, and had instituted zoning in the early 1990's. The town of Louisville had annexed substantial portions of the western section of the planning region since the early 1990's, leaving an extraterritorial area of about 18 square miles. Within that region, the city had annexed extensively along roads, railroads, and waterways. The city had also extended sewer on its own initiative into the more developed portions of the planning region, particularly in the commercializing area around a new interstate highway linking the town with the large City Knoxville to the north in adjacent Knox County.

The City of Alcoa identified an area of about 16 square miles as its Urban Growth Boundary. This area was the old planning region not disturbed by annexations of Louisville and not subject to a separate legal agreement with the city of Louisville limiting annexations between the two municipalities.

The County accepted that Alcoa was capable of providing sewer over the long term within much of its proposed Urban Growth Boundary, and that it had shown appropriate initiative in extending sewer to new high density development within its planning region in the recent past. Based on acceptance of population projections supplied by the city and using the conversion of one household per acre on average for urban density growth, the County calculated that Alcoa would need about 4 square miles for an Urban Growth Boundary area. The County took two approaches in identifying an area larger than this base minimum.

First, the County reduced the proposed 16 square mile UGB by excluding specific areas where provision of sewer was either not feasible in the 20 year time horizon of the 1101 law, or was not appropriate given other considerations. One area of about 2.5 square miles was of such rugged terrain that sewer within the 20 year time horizon was not considered feasible. Another area of about 1 square mile was oriented to the Little River and was not considered as appropriate for high density development. Another area of about 0.5 square miles had limited infrastructure, particularly roads, and was considered as more appropriate for rural designation. The last area was a unique regional asset in the McGhee Tyson Airport, owned and operated as a municipal airport by the City of Knoxville. The airport was considered as a self regulating entity and an extension of a separate governmental entity. The airport also generated a substantial amount of sales tax revenue for the County. The area of the airport was about 2 square miles.

Second, the County accepted that uncertainty in addressing market forces would require a "cushion" of area to more reasonably address growth. This was standard methodology for identifying such areas (see for example "Staying Inside the Lines" by V. Gail Easley, PAS 440, American Planning Association.) The county thus accepted an area of 9.7 square miles as an appropriate area for an Urban Growth Boundary for the City of Alcoa, being more than double the minimum based on population projections. This acceptance

of a generous market factor of greater than 100 percent went beyond what most of the planning literature indicated (see for example Easley in PAS 440, page 8). The County rejected the 16 square mile UGB proposal by the city and ultimately approved by the Coordinating Committee.

The City of Maryville Urban Growth Boundary Proposal: The City of Maryville had a land area of about 15.6 square miles. With a population of 24,000, the population density was 1,538 persons per square mile, or about 1 household per acre. Maryville could be characterized as the major residential center of the county, with also a major concentration of commercial and industrial activity.

The City of Maryville had an extraterritorial planning region of long standing. The city had been exercising subdivision regulations for about three decades within the planning region, and had instituted zoning in the early 1990's. Within the 40 square mile planning region, the city had annexed only modestly and compactly, an area of about 3 square miles in the last ten years. The city had extended sewer on its own initiative into very small portions of the planning region, with most sewer extension being at the initiative of developers as land became available for development. The existing sewer infrastructure in the planning region was actually introduced at the initiative of the County to serve schools and other county facilities.

Maryville provided the most extensive analysis in proposing its Urban Growth Boundary, in a 34 page report covering a financial analysis for extension of urban services, and a population analysis with projections. The County found flaws in the analysis.

First, the financial analysis for extension of urban services was based on average cost within the existing city limits, and not marginal cost of extension of services outside the city. This led to conclusions that may be characterized as "we could do it if we wanted to and we had the money". The analysis was weak on how the money would actually be generated, and was weak in addressing if the city actually wanted to expand urban infrastructure. The analysis ignored both economies and diseconomies of scale, and the problem of lumpy inputs such as schools.

Second, Maryville had accepted the UT projections and had identified the existing average density of 1 household per acre as a norm for calculating land area to be annexed in the next 20 years. Although buried in a multitude of tables, it was clear that the city expected to "grow" by annexation no more than about 6.6 square miles to the year 2020. However, the city initially identified an Urban Growth Boundary encompassing 69 square miles.

The County did not accept such a large UGB. The area of the UGB then became a moving target, as the city grappled with both the county objections and internal discussions within the city government on the role of growth for the city. The internal discussions were particularly instructive.

The city had undertaken a citizen participation based planning process in the recent past, which was ongoing during the 1101 process. Results of that general planning process indicated that most city residents did not want the city to grow too fast, and that keeping the small town character of the city was very important. One of the major concepts fueling the internal discussions was the wish to have only one high school. To do this with just expansion of the existing high school obviously limited the expectation for population growth. The city government also discussed how growth of the city would impact costs of expanding urban services. The conclusion was that the city should not grow at a rate that would overwhelm the ability to provide schools and other urban services. The city even considered a moratorium on annexation and a limit on new building permits for the near future.

Maryville began a process of chipping away at its initial 69 square mile UGB with a series of proposals which ultimately resulted in a UGB proposal encompassing about 32 square miles. The main argument for such an extensive UGB was that the “city would need to be there for development.”

The County recognized that Maryville would probably need to grow by about 5.3 square miles to account for expected population projections. The County accepted that uncertainty in addressing market forces would require a “cushion” of area to more reasonably address growth. The county thus accepted an area of 15.4 square miles as an appropriate area for an Urban Growth Boundary for the City of Maryville, being almost three times the minimum based on population projections. This acceptance of a generous market factor of greater than 100 percent went beyond what most of the planning literature indicated (see above under discussion for Alcoa). The County rejected the 32 square mile UGB proposal by the city and ultimately approved by the Coordinating Committee.

The County Proposals: The County was responsible for identifying Planned Growth Area (PGA) and Rural Area (RA) under provisions of Public Chapter 1101. The County utilized a range of analysis in identifying these areas, including analysis of population, population density, topography, slope, soils, geology, flood plains, roads, utilities, development history, and land use. Much of the analysis was the result of an ongoing planning process that predated the 1101 mandate.

The Planned Growth Area was identified mainly based on population density, land development patterns, and a plan for a by-pass road around the cities of Maryville and Alcoa. The PGA encompassed about 48 square miles around the two major cities. The PGA included land that was expected to be identified as Urban Growth Boundaries by the cities. The County initially did not accept any UGB for smaller towns. The remainder of the county outside of the PGA and municipal limits was considered as Rural Area.

As the municipalities made their first presentations for their Urban Growth Boundaries, the reaction by the County Legislative Body was to reject any UGB and to take an initial stance of no urban growth. The author and the County Executive argued that this was not a defensible position, and that some identification of a reasonable growth area was

necessary under provisions of the law. The County finally settled on a strategy of accepting the population projections provided by the municipalities and applying the conversion factor of 1 household per acre for average urban density as proposed by the City of Maryville. As indicated above, this led to an identification of 5.3 and 4 square miles of UGB for the cities of Maryville and Alcoa respectively, and very modest UGB areas for the smaller towns. The County proposed that the UGB areas for the two largest cities be confined within the proposed Planned Growth Area. In total, the initial identification by the County of UGB area needed by the municipalities was about 10 square miles, or about one half of the area needed for all growth in the county at assumed urban density over the next 20 years.

This was contrasted with initial municipal UGB proposals that exceeded 100 square miles. Maryville and some of the smaller towns began a process of scaling back their proposals after the County objected. Alcoa stood firm on its initial proposal. The final proposal approved by the Coordinating Committee identified a total UGB area of about 57 square miles, or almost triple the area needed for all growth in the county over the next 20 years at assumed average urban density of one household per acre. The County did not consider this to be reasonable, and the County formally rejected the first plan of Coordinating Committee.

For reconsideration of the plan by the Coordinating Committee, the County proposed an expanded version of UGBs with consideration for uncertainties and market factors. In summary, the County accepted modest UGBs for the small towns totaling about 5 square miles, accepted a market factor expanded UGB of 9.7 square miles for Alcoa, and a market factor expanded UGB of 15.4 square miles for Maryville. This encompassed a total final proposal from the County of about 30 square miles of UGB area, or about 150 percent of area needed for all projected growth in the county for the next 20 years at the assumed average urban density of 1 household per acre.

The final County proposal was not even considered by the Coordinating Committee, and the Committee reconfirmed its initial plan. The County Legislative Body considered the plan as unreasonable and formally rejected the plan in June of 2000, declaring an impasse.

County Planning and 1101 Planning: The State of Tennessee has an old set of planning enabling legislation (Tennessee Code Annotated Title 13, Chapters 3 and 4) which the County utilized in a planning process predating and separate from Public Chapter 1101. The County formally initiated the first county-wide planning process in more than 20 years with resolution and support of the County Legislative Body in April of 1996. The County pursued the process with population analysis, population projections, analysis of physical factors of development, analysis of development patterns, reliance on a process with strong citizen input, and participation by the County Commission as final decision makers.

In early 1997, the County undertook 17 citizen input workshops at different sites throughout the county, including three sites in the cities. About 250 citizens participated

in identifying an agenda for policy consideration by answering two basic questions: what is good about Blount County that should be preserved in the future, and what needs to be changed in Blount County to make a better future? The results of the first round of citizen input were reported back to the same 17 sites in late 1997, and about 450 citizens participated in refining a set of policy and implementation options. The policy options were further refined, with specific attention to implementation, by a select 11 member Citizen Advisory Committee from July of 1998 to January of 1999.

The results of all citizen input workshops and a report by the Advisory Committee were considered by the Blount County Planning Commission. The Planning Commission produced and approved a Blount County Policies Plan in June of 1999, with a 21 item implementation agenda. One of the implementation items was to formulate a growth plan as required by Public Chapter 1101.

The requirements of Public Chapter 1101 were known to the County about six months prior to the formal initiation of the 1101 process in September of 1998. Although the basic requirement of a growth plan was reflected in the Policies Plan of the County, the specifics of the 1101 mandate caused some uncertainty in the general planning process leading up to adoption of the Policies Plan and commencement of implementation activities. Note should be taken that formal consideration of the County Policies Plan by the Planning Commission overlapped by about six months the initial meetings of the 1101 Coordinating Committee during early 1999.

The 1101 law required conformity of County land use decisions with the 1101 growth plan. The County had expectations that the 1101 growth plan process would result in a more reasonable delineation of the planning regions of the two larger cities of Alcoa and Maryville. The County was disappointed by the initial discussions indicating a stand by the cities that they would not reduce their planning regions, and would possibly expand such regions under the 1101 law.

The Policies Plan assumed that extraterritorial zoning by the two cities would be superseded by County regulations as allowed by state statutes. The County made that assumption clear early in the 1101 process. The reaction of Maryville and Alcoa representatives on the Coordinating Committee was clearly in opposition to this assumption. This formed a continuing point of conflict between the County and the two largest cities.

The final 1101 growth plan included several provisions beyond just the identification of Urban Growth Boundaries, Planned Growth Area, and Rural Area. These provisions were oriented to the thinking of the two larger cities, and were seconded by the majority composed of mainly municipal representation. Two of the provisions were as follows: “the plan include a provision that any municipality having an existing regional planning commission administering zoning and subdivision regulations in that planning region, continue to provide for such as allowed by law”; and “the coordinating committee to function and be tasked to address several issues relative to well being of the participating

cities in Blount County and specifically work toward those various methods that encourage environmentally sound practice of ridgetop and watershed development.”

The County had initiated implementation activities leading to formulation of a zoning plan in July 1999. The process was to the point of an initial draft of zoning regulations and map by December of 1999. This was at the same time that the Coordinating Committee approved the first growth plan, including the provision for continued zoning authority by the two cities in their planning regions. This was seen as an attempt by the two cities to force the issue of extraterritorial zoning by requiring conformity of County decisions with the growth plan. The County objected to this provision in the growth plan, and made clear that it intended to pursue adoption of its own zoning plan which covered all area outside city limits. This formed another basis for the County rejecting the growth plan, in addition to objections relating to UGB areas.

The County continued activities in pursuit of implementing zoning up to final adoption of regulations in July 2000 (with effective date of September 1, 2000). This was at about the same time that the County formally rejected the second, unmodified growth plan of the Coordinating Committee and declared an impasse. The zoning plan of the County benefited from analysis based on the categories of Planned Growth Area and Rural Area. The approved zoning map was consistent with the delimitation of those areas by the County.

The other provision in the plan adopted by the Coordinating Committee, that the Committee itself continue to act as a planning body for the whole county in the future did not find favor with the County. One of the underlying assumption of that provision was that the County Policies Plan did not adequately address issues of watershed and ridgetop protection. The County rejected this attempt to supercede the legitimate function of its own Planning Commission, and saw the continued functioning of the Coordinating Committee to be only a pretense for continued dominance of municipal interests.

At the same time, the County offered to undertake bilateral and multilateral planning processes on any issues of common concern between the County and the municipalities. The County proposed that any such processes involve existing planning structures, embodied in county and municipal planning commissions, and processes enabled by existing state statutes on general planning. This was seen as compatible with the County Policies Plan and several implementation strategies within that plan.

Inclusion Within the 1101 Process: The County planning process, extending from 1996 and overlapping with the 1101 process, gave utmost importance to two principles. One was citizen input, and the other was direct and continued inclusion of County Commissioners as ultimate legislative decision makers. Neither of these principles were evident in the 1101 process.

The Coordinating Committee operated in a manner not conducive to citizen input. No effort was made by the Committee to formally involve the general citizenry in deliberations. The only points of citizen input were the required formal public hearings

on the separate plans of the county and municipalities, and the overall plan of the Coordinating Committee. These public hearings were not well attended, and in any event came after the plans were formulated.

In addition, some of the Committee members advocated that municipal and county legislators should not be involved in the early process. The reason given for this resistance to legislative inclusion was that positions needed to be flexible in the early stages of the process, and involvement of legislative representatives would lead to a hardening of positions and an infusion of unneeded politics. The County rejected this stance and included continuous consultation at several levels with County Commissioners – at the level of the whole Commission for both orientation and general discussion, at the level of committees of the Commission for more detailed and ongoing orientation and discussion, and at the level of a consultative committee including two members of the Commission along with the County Executive, the Director of Planning (author) and the two members of the Coordinating Committee appointed by the County Executive. Several of the Coordinating Committee meetings were also attended by a few members of the County Commission.

Sprawl and Urban Services: Although mainly focused on issues of annexation, Public Chapter 1101 also intended to address issues of sprawl and rational provision of urban services. Sprawl was a popular buzz-word in the planning profession at the time of adoption and implementation of the law. Many fine studies had been conducted, focusing on major metropolitan areas of the country and showing that sprawl has negative effects.

The concept of sprawl seems to have been incorporated into state legislation without definitive study of the issue in the context of Tennessee. The concept was applied to all counties in the state without regard to historical growth patterns and potential growth trajectories, particularly in regards to being within or without the influence area of a large MSA center city.

On their face, the areas of Urban Growth Boundaries proposed by the municipalities in Blount County were indicative of sprawl, with proposed area exceeding needed area for projected growth by factors of 300 to 500 percent. In addition, none of the municipal plans addressed development of vacant land within existing corporate limits, and did not address intensification of development in the cities where urban services already existed. This would indicate a status quo development pattern unconstrained by considerations of sprawl.

One of the main weaknesses of the 1101 process at the local level in Blount County was the lack of detailed analysis of the relationship between growth and the planned provision of urban services. One of the most basic foundations of plans for services was lacking – the capital improvements program and budget. Without constraint of budget and timed provision of services, municipalities were emboldened to identify unrealistic growth boundaries.

Conclusions: From the standpoint of Blount County, the Public Chapter 1101 process was less than satisfactory.

The membership of the Coordinating Committee mandated by the 1101 law was stacked in favor of municipal interests, to the distinct disadvantage in addressing legitimate County concerns.

The law did not provide a sound basis for judging the reasonableness of proposals for growth areas. The municipalities were thus not constrained by a consistently identifiable set of standards in identifying Urban Growth Boundaries.

The 1101 law put the County and the six municipalities into conflict over identifying territories. This was not conducive to cooperative and rational planning.

The 1101 law ignored existing planning legislation that could provide a more comprehensive approach to growth planning.

The 1101 process was not inclusive. There was little citizen input, and local legislative decision makers were not adequately included in deliberations.

The 1101 law did not have clear land use and development criteria for determining sprawl and appropriate development patterns. Status quo development patterns were projected into the future.

Recommendations: Public Chapter 1101 should be scaled back into a law addressing annexation issues. General planning issues should be considered using existing planning enabling legislation. The existing planning statutes could be modified to include explicit provisions for citizen participation, and explicit requirements and standards for considering issues of growth. Mechanisms for cooperative planning between counties and municipalities could be included in modified planning legislation, particularly provision for a county wide coordinating committee which would have limited powers of coordination over individual planning commissions. The existing planning legislation could be expanded to include specific provisions for capital improvement programs and budgets to address public services needed for growth. Studies of sprawl in the context of Tennessee should be conducted prior to focus on this issue in planning legislation. Particular attention should be given to the differences between MSA centered growth and non-MSA growth issues.

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