

JAMES A. GRAASKAMP COLLECTION OF TEACHING MATERIALS

V. INDUSTRY SEMINARS AND SPEECHES - SHORT TERM

I. Other Presentations In Which Either The Date And /  
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3. Development Topics

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## URBAN SPRAWL AND LAND USE REGULATION

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The key to sprawl at the urban fringe is the currency of land use control concepts in the central city. Until the early 1970's sprawl represented a net growth in population, household formation, and households with children - positive demand elements. These new households also enjoyed an increase in purchasing power with national assistance in terms of home financing programs from HUD, expressway programs, and tax laws which favored new construction in the suburbs. Not only did demand push to the suburbs, but supply was most easily accomplished because local planners directed growth with public capital investment in infrastructure, schools, and parks in advance of subdivision. Communities saw short-term benefits in annexation, and there were few existing residents to fight, to relocate or to appease. Cows did not fear change in the status quo or at least did not vote; sprawlers could make farmers wealthy and create value.

Since the mid 1970's sprawl has been largely due to negative demand factors - avoidance of aging neighborhoods, avoidance of old style expensive-to-operate homes, old schools, neglected streets, and over-developed planning procedures to delay development. The migration to the suburbs has leveled densities and Madison growth is negative as a result of relocation of household groups attempting to avoid the socially unstable, the high cost of the politically liberal, or the lack of suitable housing close-in, - downtown. People have learned to want what was available in the suburbs, but the Madison planners and inner-city residents are still hung up on stereotypes. And thus there is no alternative housing product in the center city.

The more people we can hold in the city, the less reason there would be to sprawl, but that means our downtown property owners and long-term planners must recognize the following observations which illustrate the fallacies in their thinking:

1. The belief that the isthmus is the center of town and that land value should be high in the center of town, is out of date. In fact, the Madison area has multiple nuclei - East Towne, West Towne, Hilldale, Monona - each a complete downtown. To have high land values implies the need to have high-density construction, i.e., high-rise or medium-rise apartments and offices. But demand prefers and cost levels require low-rise suburban styles. In Hilldale, the elderly prefer the high rise since the elevators provide moving corridors for tired feet, but the other popular units are low-rise residential garden apartments like Karen Arms and the Normandy with residential styling and lots of lawns and trees. Downtown Madison should be down zoned so the speculators would not continue to dream of fantasy profits. It is axiomatic in urban land economics that land values are the difference between investment value and construction cost; as construction costs and operating costs increase for high-rise construction, land values decline, so down zoning would just recognize the existing evaporation of land values in R-5 and R-6 areas.
2. The stereotype of downtown high rise means artificial extra costs for fire zone construction. Including underground parking at grade as a full floor penalizes the efficiency of a three-story building and leads to spindly architectural solutions like the Brittingham Apartments. Why not recognize that people who live downtown may want to own a car like folks in the suburbs? Why not low-rise office buildings with surface parking? Low rise is the only energy efficient construction, and we have more land downtown with public services in place than we do in the suburbs.
3. The stereotype that single-family neighborhoods of the big old style homes must remain as is means that big homes can't be subdivided into two- or three-unit condominiums. A modest increase in density

would make it unnecessary for empty-nesters, widows, or families on government salaries to move to the suburbs for housing they can afford to maintain.

4. The stereotype that downtown development is economic development and different from suburban residential development conceals the obvious strategy. Just as the planners lead growth <sup>in</sup> the suburbs with schools and master plans, the city planner should coordinate and lead downtown. The newest school with the best teachers should be built on the edge of downtown, say between Bedford and Regent Streets on the shore of Monona Bay. To finance it a couple of the suburban schools that are closed should be sold, and the city should pay the difference with an economic development loan.

5. The stereotype liberal believes that you can't bail out private land owners in trouble and thus tied the hands of downtown Madison redevelopment. Five years ago, the city should have built Penney's a new store between Manchester's and Woolworth's on top of underground parking in the place of Wisconsin Avenue between Dayton and Mifflin. The city should have paid to move the remaining retail on Main Street to Mifflin Street as part of the relocation of Penney's to recognize the need to concentrate retailing on one side of Capitol Square. Suburban shopping centers provide free parking, all-weather enclosed malls, and extra private security forces to minimize the impact of the socially disoriented—paid for by the merchants through their assessment and rental system. Successful centers don't waste their money on landscaping which must be cared for by expensive hand labor. In Madison, planners compete by removing the parking, failing to finance an enclosed mall with public funds, and executing a costly beautification plan that was not designed to support retailing. (Friedman said so point blank; he saw his job was to make the Square pretty, not to help the economic situation.)

6. Stereotype liberalism says the little people without development skills should build their own city with impotent development corporations which neutralize millions in block grants, housing authorities which allow federal commitments to lapse, and neighborhood planning groups which are more clever at frustrating any change than advancing positive change. The City Council frustrates long-term planning consistency by insisting on making every land use decision a conditional-use decision. Those who are paranoid because of economic suppression or political re-election seldom know who their friends are.

The discipline to carry out long-term plans requires a master plan created by those who are bold, imaginative, creative and caring. Only Professor Phil Lewis has been thinking consistently about the City of Madison as it might be twenty years from now. He has already done an inventory of the common elements that could integrate the Dane County region with the suburbs and the downtown. The common elements would be the railway corridors, the lakes and water systems, the greenways, the multiple retail-commercial nuclei, and the four-lane roads. A bold strong master plan would become the platform and benchmark of performance for mayors, the tutor of alterpersons, and the frustration of short-term opportunists. Without it the MATC opportunity has been squandered by rescinding opposition to ~~the~~ inferior concepts; there are no immediate plans to landbank and exploit the railyards of the bankrupt railroads; there is no consistent direction to the use of valuable tools such as economic development bonds, tax increment financing, down zoning or block rates, and therefore there

are no bargaining objectives or disciplines in dealing with downtown developers other than the trivia of brick colors, graphics, and store fronts. Without it, Capitol Center has become a collection of planning location errors-first the Firehouse, then the Federal Building, then the parking ramp and then the elderly housing. Madison's urban sprawl today is primarily people avoiding the politics, sterotype policies, and liberal fantasies about the tough discipline of city planning. A master plan for the central city for twenty years implemented by professional elite would control sprawl at the edges. Nine-tenths of what we call land-use control law is really just the ignorance, arrogance, or imagination of those who administer the planning process.