

GROWTH POLICY

AN MAPC SPECIAL REPORT

mapc Metropolitan Area Planning Council

November-December 1976

A GRASS ROOTS APPROACH TO PLAN STATE'S GROWTH

In late 1975 the Commonwealth of Massachusetts turned to its cities and towns with an unusual question: What do you envision as your future, and what would you like it to be? The state was asking its communities what to do, instead of telling them.

Growth Policy: An MAPC Special Report is a summary of the response from scores of the communities in the Boston metropolitan region.

This grass roots approach to planning began with the passage of the Growth Policy Development Act in December 1975. A detailed questionnaire was sent to all communities in February, and local growth policy committees, representative of each city and town, were formed to respond.

The questions addressed community attitudes toward a wide range of specific issues. Binding them together was the overall issue of growth; whether in housing, community services or the environment, population growth and shifts are major catalysts of change in a community. Change can mean loss as well as expansion; many urban areas have lost residents since 1950 while suburban and rural areas have grown (see chart page six).

By November 1976, more than 80 communities in the 101-community Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) district had responded with local growth policy statements. A number of the remaining expect to complete their statements in the near future, including the City of Boston.

There can be no clearer declaration by MAPC communities of their concern about growth and its effects on all facets of community life. A high response rate is particularly impressive since compliance with the law was voluntary and unfunded.

The MAPC Regional Report on Growth Policy is the next step in relaying this concern to the Commonwealth.

This is a detailed 250-page document specified in the law to provide the state with a summary of local growth policy statements plus a regional perspective on the issues raised locally. The state, acting through the Office of State Planning, also received original copies of the local statements.

The Special Report which follows is an eight-page summary of the full Regional Report. It discusses six major issues, one per page, followed by a regional statement on the back page. The issues include: Housing, Transportation, Natural Resources, Community Services, Economics and Government. On each page is a summary of local views followed by a summary of MAPC policies and programs in that area.

The Regional Report on Growth Policy is now in draft form, pending the response gathered at a series of six public hearings sponsored by the MAPC in late November and early December. For the convenience of the region's citizens, the hearings will be held at various locations throughout the 101 cities and towns (see schedule on this page). The final report, including all comments (both written and oral will be welcomed), will be forwarded to the Office of State Planning.

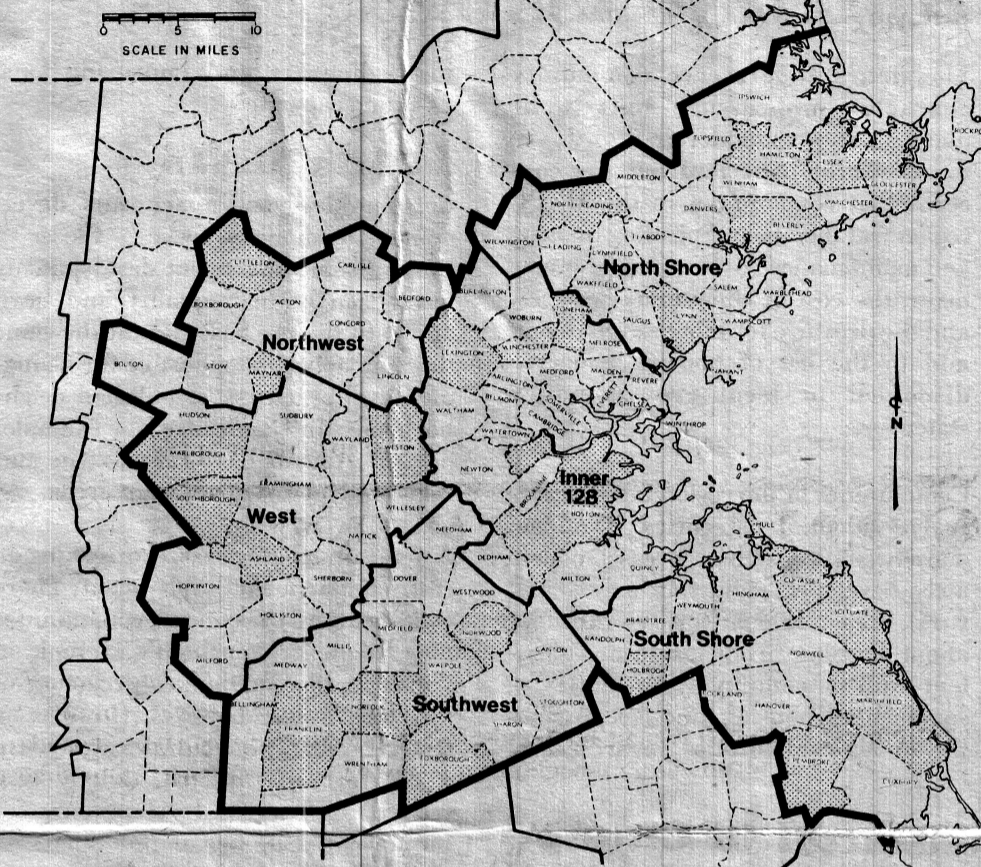
Copies of the full Regional Report have been sent to the following persons in each city and town:

- chief elected official
- growth policy committee chairperson
- MAPC representative

Call your city or town hall if you do not know who they are. They have been asked to make the report available to your community. But whether or not you have time to read it, plan to attend the MAPC-sponsored public hearing for your community. This is an opportunity to be heard!

For more copies of **Growth Policy: An MAPC Special Report** call or write the MAPC office at 44 School Street, Boston 02108. 617/523-2454. They are free of charge.

GROWTH POLICY AREAS
METROPOLITAN AREA PLANNING COUNCIL



Communities whose statements were not completed by the deadline for this Special Report are darkened. Many of the nonrespondents have since completed statement or plan to do so in the future. The entire region was divided geographically into six subregions for the sake of convenience while preparing summaries. As shown above they are referred to throughout the text of the report.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

A series of hearings to discuss the Metropolitan Area Planning Council's Preliminary Regional Report on Local Growth Policy.

NORTHWEST AREA

Communities: Acton, Bedford, Bolton, Boxborough, Carlisle, Concord, Lincoln, Littleton, Maynard and Stow

NOV. 30 7:30 pm

Alcott School
Laurel Street
Concord

WESTERN AREA

Communities: Ashland, Framingham, Holliston, Hopkinton, Hudson, Marlborough, Milford, Natick, Sherborn, Southborough, Sudbury, Wayland, Wellesley and Weston

DEC. 2 7:30 pm

Danforth Museum
Union Street
Framingham

SOUTHWEST AREA

Communities: Bellingham, Canton, Dover, Foxborough, Franklin, Medfield, Medway, Millis, Needham, Norfolk, Norwood, Sharon, Stoughton, Walpole, Westwood and Wrentham

DEC. 6 7:30 pm

Blackburne Hall
Main Street
Walpole

SOUTH SHORE AREA

Communities: Braintree, Cohasset, Duxbury, Hanover, Hingham, Holbrook, Hull, Marshfield, Norwell, Pembroke, Randolph, Rockland, Scituate and Weymouth

DEC. 9 7:30 pm

Norwell Town Hall
Main Street
Norwell

NORTH SHORE AREA

Communities: Beverly, Danvers, Essex, Gloucester, Hamilton, Ipswich, Lynn, Lynnfield, Manchester, Marblehead, Middleton, Nahant, North Reading, Peabody, Reading, Rockport, Salem, Saugus, Swampscott, Topsfield, Wakefield, Wenham and Wilmington

DEC. 14 7:30 pm

Danvers High School
Music Hall
60 Cabot Road
Danvers

INNER 128 AREA

Communities: Arlington, Belmont, Boston, Brookline, Burlington, Cambridge, Chelsea, Dedham, Everett, Lexington, Malden, Medford, Melrose, Milton, Newton, Quincy, Revere, Somerville, Stoneham, Waltham, Watertown, Winchester, Winthrop and Woburn

DEC. 15 7:30 pm

Brookline Town Hall
Selectmen's Meeting Room
333 Washington Street
Brookline



HOUSING

SLOW GROWTH STANCE UNDERLIES MOST HOUSING ISSUES

The desire to preserve community character and assure only well-planned, slow to moderate growth are the two most important housing concerns that communities in the MAPC region feel they face. Spiraling housing and maintenance costs, rising property taxes, the cost of community services, and the pressure for more development add to the list of housing concerns discussed in local growth policy statements.

Communities in the region fall into several residential categories — older, densely settled urban areas, moderately developed suburban areas, and rural areas. In many cases attitudes about housing problems seem consistent with community type. However, some general housing concerns are similar in all communities regardless of category.

CONTROL OF GROWTH

All communities agree that they would like slow to moderate growth that is carefully planned and controlled. Communities do not want the sort of rapid residential development which many experienced during the period of 1950 through 1970.

Virtually every city and town wants to preserve its existing character. However, preserving community character means different things to different communities. To densely settled, highly developed older cities like Somerville, Cambridge and Salem, it means maintaining aging housing stock and insuring neighborhood stability through rehabilitation and code enforcement. With little land available for development they note that they expect few major changes.

Many of the older communities fear that deterioration and possible disinvestment leading to neighborhood blight will result in population changes as families leave the communities to be replaced by transients, lower income groups, and students. In less densely developed, more affluent suburbs like Lincoln, Canton and Milton, insuring community character means selective, carefully controlled growth and preservation of open space and environmental quality.

Most communities regardless of type want to maintain the status quo. They are willing to accommodate selected, moderate change or growth only as long as it is consistent with existing community character. Many communities want to improve their ability to regulate and control quality of development, for example by revising and tightening zon-

ing ordinances and improving local planning capacities.

APARTMENTS

Communities view apartments developments with mixed feelings. Closer to Boston, some apartment developments have been of high quality and have added to the tax base, but at the same time, have been responsible for changing the character of established neighborhoods. In Cambridge, for example, new apartments have raised rents and real estate prices in adjacent areas.

A few suburban areas are seeking to restrict apartment development. There is indication that more communities may follow Framingham's example in voting to ban further construction of apartments and duplexes. However, a few suburban communities express a desire for some limited, strictly controlled apartment development, for example placing height limitations on apartment developments. Most suburban communities recognize the pressure for multi-family development.

HOUSING MIX

Many of the inner and older communities want to retain their present mix of housing and population, in particular to retain families. Some of the suburban communities want more diversity in population and housing mix; cluster and planned unit development are suggested as ways of doing this.

Many communities feel that they are working to meet the housing needs of elderly. Most, however, make no statement about meeting the needs of low and moderate income families, although a few express a desire to. These communities for the most part would like to serve local needs only.

A few communities state that subsidized housing has hurt them and seem opposed to further development of this type. Further, some communities state their opposition to the use of Chapter 774, the so-called "anti-snob zoning law." Several suggest repeal or fundamental modification of the law.

Several of the older communities that are presently providing a large proportion of the region's low and moderate income housing feel that other cities and towns should share in the responsibility.

REGION: MEETING THE NEED

Finding ways to meet the housing needs of all the region's citizens is an important area of planning for the MAPC. Its



Back Bay, Boston. Rehabilitation of existing housing stock is stressed by densely settled communities.

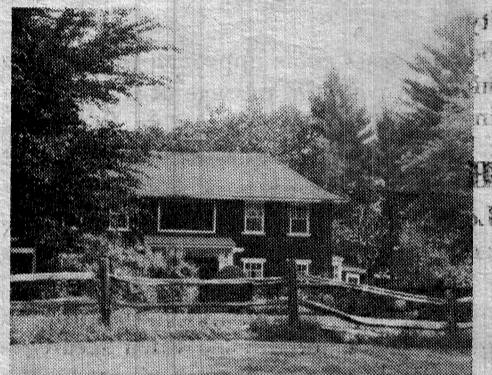
housing policy goals are divided into five major objectives discussed below.

The first goal calls for the maintenance and rehabilitation of existing housing and the preservation and revitalization of neighborhoods. This goal is entirely consistent with communities' views expressed in their growth policy statements. Communities that perceive problems of housing deterioration or neighborhood decline want to find solutions.

The second MAPC housing goal calls for sufficient housing production to eliminate the gap between the supply of existing housing and regional needs. An MAPC study indicates that there will be a severe housing shortage in the region unless the current level of housing production is more than doubled, even if the desired high level of rehabilitation is achieved. The new units will be needed particularly to replace those lost due to such things as fire and demolition, and to meet the needs of households formed by persons born during the 1945 to 1970 "baby boom" as well as the increasing number of elderly.

Most communities indicate that they are willing to absorb some additional housing units, so this goal is at least partially consistent with community desires. However, the slow to moderate rate of growth desired by virtually all communities may not be sufficient to meet the region's need for new housing, if these desires are reflected in restrictive regulation on housing. The stricter zoning and more open space preservation mentioned by many communities may also conflict, in some cases, with the provision of new housing.

The third goal calls for a range of densities, housing types, and prices in all communities of the region, consistent with sound planning and sensitive to environmental concerns. This goal is compatible with the desires of communities that want a mix of housing types.



Suburban towns want to preserve their community character and control growth.

Many other communities, however, do not deal with this issue in their growth policy statements; some express a preference for single-family, low density development. The degree of consistency between local and regional goals depends in large part on the extent to which a range of densities, housing types, and prices can be achieved without significantly altering a community's character.

The fourth goal calls for open communities receptive to all age, income, and minority groups. This goal is consistent with the wishes of many communities wanting a more diverse population, and with ones that want to provide low and moderate income and elderly housing. However, past actions of some of these communities have intentionally or unintentionally interfered with the provision of housing for all age, income, and minority groups. Strengthened zoning and open space preservation desired by most communities, although often well-intended and desirable, may in some cases make the provision of such housing more difficult.

The fifth goal calls for continuing efforts to reduce the cost of housing and effectively increase the amount of income available for housing. This goal conforms to the desires of communities that want to expand low and moderate income housing opportunities. However, decreased growth rates, strengthened zoning, and additional preservation of open space, which are desired by most communities and may be beneficial for other reasons, may conflict with this goal by increasing the cost of both new and existing housing.

TRANSPORTATION

REGION WANTS BETTER PUBLIC TRANSIT

Dismay over congested and poorly maintained local roads, linked with a desire for more and better public transit, are the most predominant themes among local growth policy statements on the issue of transportation.

In general, most communities do not seem to predict or desire radical changes in the existing transportation network. They stress a need for improvements to the present system of roads and public transit, while recognizing the relationship between mobility and growth. Everywhere there is a belief that careful transportation planning in the future is essential in managing overall growth.

HIGHWAYS

Local attitudes toward this relationship between transportation and population growth seem to hinge on a widespread dilemma. Major highway construction in the 1950s and 1960s, which greatly improved access and contributed to economic prosperity, also fostered tremendous suburban growth. This growth — some small towns grew more than 500 percent between 1950 and 1975 — brought acknowledged benefits but also created local traffic congestion, safety problems and in some cases unwanted strip development.

It is these negative effects of improved access which appear to concern MAPC communities today. Despite benefits in the past, few suggest that further highway construction is needed, and even the growth-stimulating effects of improving what already exist are questioned. A few isolated communities want a highway built or expanded, as in the examples of Salem desiring the proposed Beverly-Salem connector through Peabody, and Acton hoping for Route 2 improvements in Concord and Lincoln. But even there, opposition from nearby communities exists.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

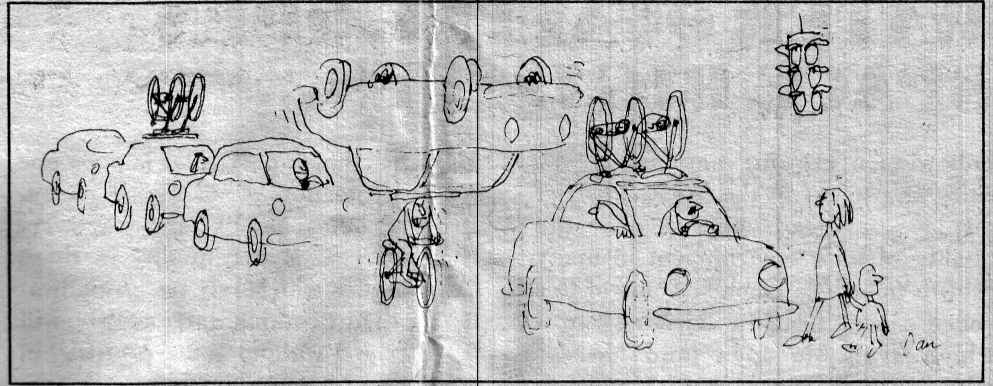
Inner communities and older cities generally do want substantial improvements in the public transit system, especially in bus routes, although they seem to recognize both good and bad effects of better access. Urban areas face the worst parking and congestion problems coupled with a dwindling tax base — a situation which many hope will be helped with an expanded transportation network.

Rapid transit extension — the MBTA Blue Line on the north and its Red Line to the west and south — are generally seen positively by the inner communities. For those farther away, rapid transit is not considered a big issue, and more emphasis is placed on bus service.

Yet public transit, including bus service, is generally untried in the suburbs. Commuter rail is long established but at present meets only limited commuting needs. Inter-community and intra-community bus service, which a few northwestern towns are experimenting with and more want to try, has not proven its economy in the dispersed suburbs. Seventy-nine communities pay MBTA assessments; many feel that service is not equivalent to cost.

Numerous situations are described in the reports where through traffic going to large regional facilities — Digital Corporation in Maynard and Hanscom Field in Bedford are but two examples — is considered a source of congestion on local roads in adjoining towns. The same situation plagues southwestern communities which possess access roads to interstate highways.

South shore communities in particular feel beset by transportation problems, a major reason for which is the lack of anything but crowded secondary roads east of Route 3. Communities report



Dan Rattiner, Dan's Papers, Bridgeport, New York.

that they expect growth to continue, but that they would like transportation to become a positive force in this growth instead of one that triggers multiple related problems.

Most communities desire to have in the future a better mix in transportation types, including non-motor vehicle alternatives. Occasionally in the growth statements future energy shortages are posed as another reason for developing alternatives. The south shore especially cites a need to develop alternatives to more highway construction.

Commuter rail is popular where it survives on the north shore and in the south and southwest areas. The problem is its cost, at least in the view of remote Cape Ann communities. Improvements are generally desired, although some communities are worried about parking and traffic problems around railroad stations if service is expanded.

A number of towns consider their particular transportation patterns — old railroad stations, quaint town centers, rural roads within a few miles of Boston — part of a traditional New England landscape. Increasing congestion on local roads and the deterioration of commuter rail are seen as potential hazards to this character.

Whatever the specific issues — public transit, internal road system improvements, airport expansion — it is generally agreed that transportation planning must be essentially regional. Communities need to work together, it is felt, otherwise strategies pursued by one may be rendered futile by its neighbors. The scale of cooperation need not be as broad as the entire MAPC region; many communities guard their independence from state intervention, and sometimes are at odds with their neighbors. They are concerned about having a more influential role in transportation planning conducted on regional and state levels.

REGION: SEEKING A BALANCE

Transportation planning for the MAPC region rests on the so-called "3C" process: cooperative, continuing, comprehensive. In concept, it is designed to incorporate local needs and prefer-

ences in regional and state transportation planning. The MAPC feels that its support of the "3C" process is generally consistent with the opinions expressed by local communities, although the MAPC recognizes that the manner in which priority is given to projects needs to be constantly evaluated to ensure that the results reflect the participation of local views — a concern expressed by many local governments.

Two major documents contain the principal regional transportation plans: the Regional Transportation Plan and the current Transportation Improvement Program. The Plan is a long-range outline of highway and transit projects under consideration by the MBTA and the Massachusetts Department of Public Works over approximately the next 20 years. In contrast, the Program lists specific projects expected over the next five years; any highway or transit project seeking funds within the first year must be included in the Program. The MAPC has endorsed the Regional Transportation Plan, believing that it is generally consistent with local transportation goals.

Most regional transportation planning is carried out by the Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS) located at 27 School Street in Boston. CTPS is a multi-disciplined professional staff whose policy direction is provided by the following agencies in a cooperative venture: the MAPC, the Mass. Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA), the Executive Office of Transportation and Construction, the Mass. Dept. of Public Works, Massport, and the MBTA Advisory Board.

The MAPC is the representative of local governments in the "3C" process. As such, it recognizes its responsibility to help them express their concerns to the appropriate state authorities. But the MAPC is also committed to balancing local interests. Numerous outlying suburban and rural communities criticize the emphasis on transit planning for the inner communities, but while the MAPC understands this concern, it feels that, given limited funds, major public transit needs should have priority over projects in the more affluent, less densely populated suburbs. This does not mean that suburban transportation needs will be neglected.



Storrow Drive, Boston. Congestion is an important concern in most communities.

NATURAL RESOURCES

WATER QUALITY, OPEN SPACE BIG ISSUES

Following a growing national trend, cities and towns in the MAPC district display increased concern over the quality of their environment in many growth policy statements. Some of this concern stems from the alarming rate at which available open land has diminished and from a growing concern over water quality. Many communities have translated their awareness into programs of action on environmental issues while others are still trying to determine appropriate approaches.

The rapid growth in population and development since 1950 is blamed for many of today's environmental problems. Some communities now wish to slow down growth to controllable rates in the hope of decreasing future problems. Among inner communities where land is the scarcest, governments are concentrating on upgrading existing open space and developing special efforts such as tree planting programs.

In communities with some available land, aggressive open space and conservation programs for recreation and the protection of water supplies are being developed, but are increasingly affected by rising land costs which put a huge burden on local funds. To be successful, many communities feel that it is essential that both government and the public strongly support future efforts to protect the environment.

WATER QUALITY

All communities are concerned about the quality of their water resources. One common source of pollution cited by communities in several areas is "non-point" sources coming from poorly maintained and sited septic tanks, storm water runoff, road salting and littering. In many areas inadequate sewerage and sewage treatment facilities are blamed, along with poorly designed and operated solid waste disposal systems. Northwestern communities are joined by those on the north shore and the west in expressing concern about pollution coming from sources beyond local control, such as new development in neighboring communities.

Communities acknowledge that water pollution often transcends local boundaries. They agree that solutions will involve cooperative efforts among different levels of government plus an infusion of money from sources outside local government. Nevertheless, communities are afraid that solutions to water quality problems such as new sewerage systems may foster more growth and result in a strain on town budgets for additional community services. Some communities would like control over their own water supply.

Many feel that of particular importance is the protection of all major rivers, streams, lakes, ponds, and water recharge areas. Water quality in those communities which rely on groundwater for their drinking water supply, will be damaged without some controls on growth and management of aquifer recharge areas and other related lands.

OPEN SPACE

Preservation of open space is a major priority among cities and towns in MAPC region. They are aware of the natural environment as a precious resource and they realize that there is a finite supply of open space which must be protected.

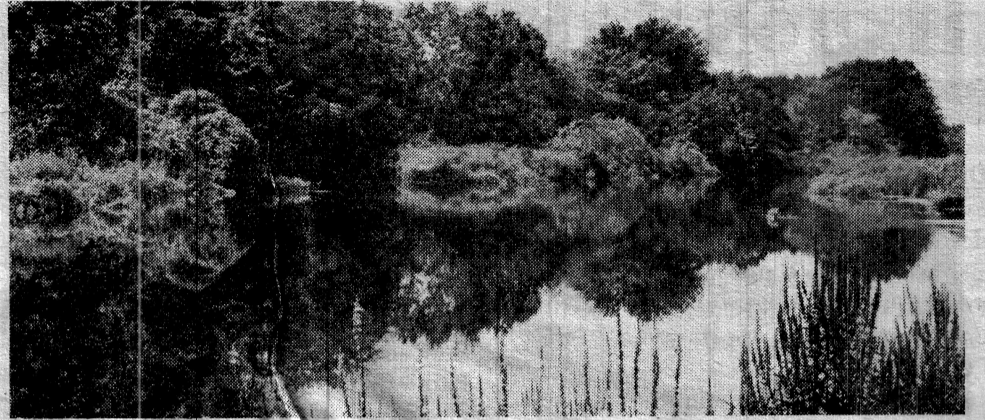
North shore communities express satisfaction with their present supply of open land, but most have open space and recreation plans outlining future policy and plans for acquisition. Although these communities agree that open space is a benefit in terms of quality of life, some fear that it will attract new residents and eventually alter the communities; others see open space acquisition as a means of controlling growth.

Despite problems of rising land costs, increased vandalism, littering and overcrowding, northwestern communities are fairly optimistic about open space conservation in the future because of increased environmental awareness and the growing authority and sophistication of conservation commissions. The communities generally agree that there will be a significant expansion in publicly owned or regulated recreational and conservation lands, aiding in the control of growth and protection of critical resources.

Communities in the more densely developed inner region, with less open land remaining, feel the most compelling need for new preservation projects and maintenance of existing open space and recreation areas. Communities closer to Route 128 see protection of the environment as a major common goal which can be reached by a continued reliance on conservation commissions and on tightened environmental regulations.

Numerous western and southwestern communities are concerned about preserving their "rural" character. Several state that imaginative zoning techniques should be used to avoid dull, similar streets without open space and with few recreational areas.

South shore communities express a common fear of unplanned, disorderly



Sudbury River. Scenes like this are increasingly rare.

growth. Environmental quality, according to most south shore communities, is significantly related to community character, and to that extent, towns wish to safeguard their natural resources.

The more rural south shore communities place a high value on maintaining large areas of open space. More densely populated ones also value open space, but as a balance to development that has already occurred.

AGRICULTURE

In general, the MAPC district is urban and suburban in character, not rural. Since 1950 there has been a staggering decrease in agricultural activity as farmers succumbed to high land values and development pressures — typical effects of population growth. By many communities, this loss is considered detrimental in both aesthetic and economic terms.

Most communities, including those within Route 128, have a desire to save existing farmland. However, because of soaring land costs, they feel powerless to deal with the issue on a local level. One notable exception is Lincoln, which has purchased 200 acres of local land for lease to local farmers.

Some tools communities would like to employ in the future to preserve agricultural land include special assessments for agriculture and pending state legislation with respect to the purchase of development rights.

Inner communities more than the others are concerned about air and noise pollution. Expressways and their associated traffic are considered a negative impact on air quality, and efforts have been made to restrict parking to discourage traffic in hopes of reducing air pollution. Noise pollution is a similar concern. Communities hope that improved air quality and noise abatement programs will alleviate the negative impact of these two problems.

REGION: NEW PROGRAMS, PLANS

The MAPC's established water quality policies have been developed through the preparation and adoption of a series of regional plans and programs on

open space and recreation, water supply and sewage treatment. More work is presently underway in connection with the preparation of a Comprehensive Regional Plan and a regional water quality management plan. In addition, the 1976 Regional Open Space Plan addresses itself, in part, to several questions about water quality.

Currently, the MAPC's major responsibility for developing programs and policies concerning water resources lies with its Water Quality Project. This is a federally funded, fully staffed program begun in 1975 in accordance with Section 208 of the Water Pollution Control Act Amendments of 1972. The fundamental concept of the Water Quality Project is consistent with local growth policy statements: local and regional land use decisions and development policies should precede and support plans and programs for the preservation or restoration of the quality of the region's surface and ground waters.

The MAPC's policies concerning water quality are consistent with the policies generated by the growth policy statements. Where there is a difference it tends to be in the area of technique, not final goals and objectives.

For example, the MAPC's policies tend to stress the need for regional cooperation to solve water quality problems, while cities and towns indicate a fear of large regional bureaucracies. However, necessity for such a regional mechanism can be lessened through cooperative action on the part of each of the region's communities, with the regional role being largely coordination and evaluation of the effectiveness of the activities in achieving previously agreed upon goals.

The regional policies in the MAPC's 1976 Regional Open Space Plan are consistent with the open space and agriculture policies in local growth policy statements. Probably in no other area of the MAPC's activities is the relationship of regional and local policies so consistent. This is the result of the MAPC's efforts to include local open space plans and policies in its regional plans.

COMMUNITY SERVICES

DEMAND FOR SERVICES OUTSTRIPS LOCAL TAX REVENUE

Just as growth is generally considered inevitable by all communities, a rise in the demand for improved community services is also anticipated as population grows. In every city and town, however, this rise is expected to remain consistent with local needs and budgetary constraints.

Many MAPC communities report in their growth policy statements that the demand for services is no longer in line with local budgets. Some communities point to increasing state involvement in local affairs as an added financial burden. Others feel that their local property taxes are inadequate to support community services and suggest finding other means of financing; a number of towns suggest that if funds were available to improve local planning capabilities, some of today's problems might be avoided in the future.

It is clear from many of the statements that growth can lead to changes in the character and needs of most communities. It can create specific problems in solid waste disposal, water supply, sewer service and schools. In more developed communities, growth may increase the need for improved or additional recreational facilities, public safety programs and traffic control.

Three services in particular, solid waste disposal, water supply and sewerage, are problems which MAPC communities seem to feel should be handled through regional cooperation. However, whether the approach is state, regional or local, all communities strongly prefer it to be voluntary and not mandated, to insure local autonomy.

SOLID WASTE

The largest concern expressed by nearly all communities is the lack of adequate solid waste disposal facilities. Reliance on sanitary landfills, coupled with continued growth and land scarcity, have forced communities to look beyond their boundaries for solutions. While all believe that regional cooperation is necessary to solve this problem, few communities, if any, have offered to "host" a regional facility even under strict local control.

WATER/SEWER

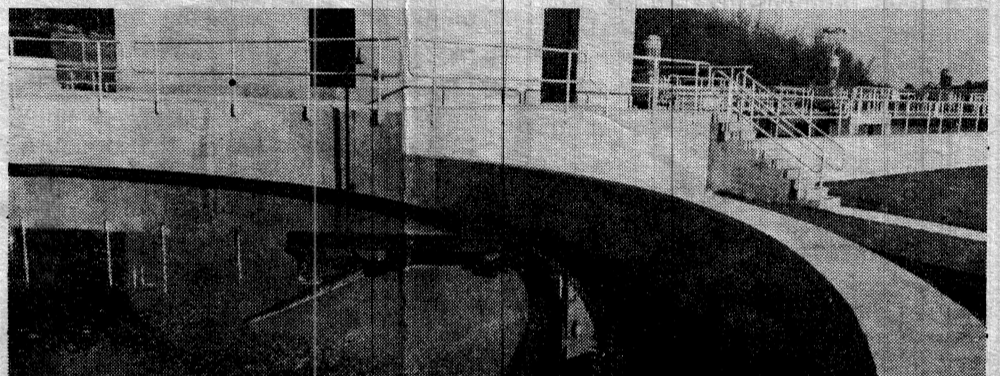
The issues of water supply and sewer service are seen by communities as having a profound effect on future growth and development. Some communities are concerned about meeting future demands for water and suggest inter-community cooperation to study the problem. North shore cities and towns are seriously looking for alternatives to their present membership in the Metropolitan District Commission (MDC) water district, while a few northwestern communities are reconsidering planned connections to the MDC in light of that agency's projected water supply shortage.

Many communities consider the demand for sewerage as a major community service liability; most desire financial assistance to cope. Many communities feel that a regional approach to this problem is a positive step and suggest joining with other nearby towns.

Those communities lacking municipal sewer service generally consider its absence an important advantage in their



Somerville recycling program may be the way of the future.



Marlborough sewage treatment plant. Water quality problems require sophisticated solutions.

opposition to growth; some use it as a reason to oppose construction of low and moderate income, multi-family housing. A number of communities feel that the introduction or expansion of sewer service would increase the prospects of massive development.

SCHOOLS

Many communities are concerned about their ability to meet future educational needs and at the same time keep local school expenditures under control. For some, educational financing represents well over 50 percent of total local expenditures. School overcrowding exists in a number of cities and towns, partly because of residential growth, though in others school expansion and dwindling enrollments have alleviated some problems.

Almost all communities express a strong desire to retain local control over their school systems. A few mention they would like to reduce the autonomy of local school boards, bringing school budgets under control of local government in order to check rising costs. A common criticism is aimed at state mandated but unfunded programs such as Chapter 766, special educational needs. For many towns this act has put a great financial strain on local budgets; some towns suggested that it be either eliminated or fully funded.

Some communities express a desire for regional vocational schools. Dover would like to see complete regionalization of its entire school system. Many communities suggest more cooperative relationships with other communities with respect to sharing programs and facilities. A few northwestern communities would like to explore ways in which inner city children can take part in local educational programs.

In general, most communities feel that police, fire, and library services are adequate and in need of only minor changes. However, crime is described as a major concern in inner communities, particularly vandalism of structures and open areas. These communities would like to see increased attention to the protection of people and property from the rise in crime.

The more densely populated communities cite a lack of adequate recreation facilities for the young and elderly and express a desire to upgrade existing structures. Several northwestern communities suggest using "land banking" as a means to control growth and to reserve space for future public services. A few more affluent communities feel that higher incomes and lower densities lessen the needs of the majority for developed recreation and social services.

REGION: COOPERATIVE ACTION

The three areas of regional concern — solid waste disposal, water supply and sewer service — are MAPC functional planning areas where, in addition to its technical assistance program, the MAPC is developing guidelines. For example, its Water Quality Project will be preparing plans for the improvement of water quality through both structural and nonstructural solutions throughout the region.

On many community services issues discussed in the local growth policy statements the MAPC has only limited policy positions. As a basic policy the MAPC encourages its member communities to initiate cooperative ventures. The MAPC's technical assistance staff is ready to provide aid to any cooperative venture among the region's cities and towns.



Water recreation provides relief on hot summer days.

ECONOMICS

TAXES, NOT JOBS, MAJOR ISSUE IN SOME AREAS

Without question, property tax reform appears to be the most important economic issue voiced among local growth policy statements across the MAPC region. Cities and towns alike name the tax as the largest single influence on growth patterns; without reform to stabilize the tax rate and shift its burden from homeowners, most communities feel they will not be able to effectively control future growth.

Yet despite its inequities, communities definitely want to keep the tax. As revenue that is locally raised and spent, the property tax represents a local taxing power which no community wishes to relinquish.

EMPLOYMENT

Employment appears to be less of an issue except in urban areas and in a few suburban towns. Where the latter feel more jobs are needed, they seek only enough to fill purely local needs. In contrast, traditional centers of employment — urban areas — want a substantial increase in job opportunities.

These urban areas have generally lost jobs since World War II, particularly in the industrial manufacturing sectors. There is a shortage of land for such development today, but despite this they feel they can offer substantial amounts of underutilized or deteriorating industrial areas to be revitalized for new uses. With both high property tax rates and expensive municipal services, many of the region's older cities desperately need a broader base source of revenue.

But new development frequently prefers the suburbs where taxes are lower, land and services usually cheaper. The conflict is that suburbs generally feel they don't want this development, except for some commercial/light industrial development in selected areas.



Wilson Farm, Lexington. Farming still thrives in some parts of the region, but farmland is under development pressure.



Liberty Tree Mall, Danvers. Large, regional shopping centers have boosted local economy and brought change.

TAXES

Suburban communities face a particular dilemma under current tax laws. Low taxes in the past (compared to urban areas) stimulated residential growth, which in turn demanded more municipal services. Today, the cost of such services is rising, pressuring communities to allow more development to pay for the services. The dilemma is that new development may only create larger demands for services, without fully compensating in tax revenue. Even when the development includes commercial and industrial growth, some towns feel that it costs more in services than it raises in revenues.

Rising property taxes in the suburbs, while generally lower than in the cities, also discourage young, elderly or low income residents from moving in. A dampening effect on growth would be attractive if it were less selective of certain economic groups; many communities are concerned that they are becoming homogenous populations.

Environmental and cultural characteristics are highly valued. Economic development, while it might broaden the tax base, is seen as a potential threat to the rural, small town atmosphere still found in many MAPC communities. They generally place character above development.

A few suburban communities are faring better, generally among those located along the Route 128 employment belt, and are less concerned. Yet even relatively satisfied communities are worried about maintaining their tax base and preventing disinvestment.

One concern that is practically unanimous among MAPC communities is the deterioration of local downtown areas. Large, regional shopping centers have attracted business away from traditional town centers, both in small towns and among the neighborhoods of larger cities. Needham and Sharon are examples of efforts to encourage downtown business by limiting outlying shopping centers. These efforts have been frustrated by shopping center construction in adjacent towns.

In general, there is a strong feeling that the condition of the economy statewide, which is governed by decisions beyond local control, will dictate economic improvement at the local level. Several western and southwestern towns want to encourage farming for both aesthetic and economic reasons, but even the survival of farming depends on the Commonwealth creating a better tax situation.

Tax reform is not outlined in detail in the local growth policy statements. User fees, tax relief for the elderly and "circuit breakers" to put a ceiling on taxes paid by low income groups are several suggestions made. It seems to be expected that the state must be the leader in working out specific tax reform law.

REGION: ECONOMIC PLANNING

Economic development planning is a major concern for the MAPC, reflecting the priorities set by its member communities in their growth policy statements.

Over the next year, a special MAPC Economic Development Committee, composed of representatives of local government and others, will be undertaking two important study and action programs. The first, the completion of a regional Overall Economic Development Plan (OEDP), will present a series of prioritized local economic projects and programs. The OEDP will, under federal regulations, permit increased levels of federal funding for local projects. The second task will involve ongoing studies of the regional economy to provide essential input to the MAPC's Comprehensive Regional Plan.

Since this work has only recently begun, specific policy recommendations cannot be listed here at this time. In general, MAPC regional economic policies in the issues peripheral to economics — housing, transportation, natural resources and others — are consistent with the local goals and objectives described elsewhere on this page.

In a time of slow to no growth at all, the MAPC is concerned that its member communities realize that difficult decisions must be made with respect to the location of new economic activity. As with other issues, the MAPC will work to balance local needs.

It is clear that local dependence on the property tax should be decreased. If state tax reform is proposed to do this, the MAPC urges from a regional perspective recognition of the plight of those communities that provide significant regional job and other opportunities. Frequently these cities and towns are not duly compensated for the resulting environmental damage and service costs.

POPULATION GROWTH IN MAPC REGION 1950 TO 1975

COMMUNITY	POPULATION		PERCENT CHANGE 1950-1975
	1950 U.S. CENSUS	1975 MASS STATE CENSUS*	
ACTON	3,510	18,209	+ 419
ARLINGTON	44,353	50,223	+ 13
ASHLAND	3,500	8,906	+ 155
BEDFORD	5,234	12,314	+ 135
BELLINGHAM	4,100	14,461	+ 253
BELMONT	27,381	27,660	+ 1
BEVERLY	28,884	37,382	+ 29
BOLTON	956	2,427	+ 154
BOSTON	801,444	637,986	- 20
BOXBOROUGH	439	2,642	+ 502
BRAINTREE	23,161	36,822	+ 59
BROOKLINE	57,589	53,150	- 8
BURLINGTON	3,250	24,306	+ 647
CAMBRIDGE	120,740	102,095	- 15
CANTON	7,465	18,144	+ 143
CARLISLE	876	3,178	+ 263
CHELSEA	38,912	25,066	- 36
COHASSET	3,731	7,785	+ 109
CONCORD	8,623	17,270	+ 100
DANVERS	15,720	25,007	+ 59
DEDHAM	18,487	26,924	+ 46
DOVER	1,722	4,923	+ 186
DUXBURY	3,167	10,601	+ 235
ESSEX	1,794	2,872	+ 60
EVERETT	45,982	39,713	- 14
FOXBOROUGH	7,030	14,690	+ 109
FRAMINGHAM	28,086	65,564	+ 133
FRANKLIN	8,037	18,379	+ 129
GLOUCESTER	25,167	27,209	+ 8
HAMILTON	2,764	6,675	+ 142
HANOVER	3,389	10,533	+ 211
HINGHAM	10,665	19,544	+ 83
HOLBROOK	4,004	11,849	+ 196
HOLLISTON	3,753	12,921	+ 244
HOPKINTON	3,486	6,405	+ 84
HUDSON	8,211	16,827	+ 105
HULL	3,379	10,572	+ 213
IPSWICH	6,895	11,551	+ 68
LEXINGTON	17,335	32,477	+ 87
LINCOLN	2,327	6,374	+ 163
LITTLETON	2,349	6,629	+ 182
LYNN	99,738	80,240	- 20
LYNNFIELD	3,927	12,009	+ 208
MALDEN	59,804	55,814	- 7
MANCHESTER	2,868	5,542	+ 93
MARBLEHEAD	13,765	21,574	+ 57
MARLBOROUGH	15,756	30,249	+ 92
MARSHFIELD	3,267	19,450	+ 495
MAYNARD	6,978	9,901	+ 42
MEDFIELD	4,549	10,031	+ 121
MEDFORD	66,113	60,702	- 8
MELWAY	3,744	8,166	+ 118
MEDROSE	26,988	32,213	+ 19
MIDDLETON	2,961	4,032	+ 38
MILFORD	15,442	23,366	+ 51
MILLIS	2,551	6,534	+ 156
MILTON	22,395	27,214	+ 22
NAHANT	2,679	4,229	+ 58
NATICK	19,838	31,102	+ 57
NEEDHAM	16,313	29,936	+ 84
NEWTON	81,994	89,183	+ 9
NORFOLK	2,702	5,960	+ 120
N. READING	4,402	12,125	+ 175
NORWELL	2,515	8,999	+ 258
NORWOOD	16,636	31,316	+ 88
PEABODY	22,645	45,503	+ 101
PEMBROKE	2,579	12,374	+ 380
QUINCY	83,835	91,487	+ 9
RANDOLPH	9,982	29,206	+ 193
READING	14,006	23,696	+ 69
REVERE	36,763	41,292	+ 12
ROCKLAND	8,960	17,028	+ 90
ROCKPORT	4,231	6,284	+ 49
SALEM	41,880	38,545	- 8
SAUGUS	17,162	24,716	+ 44
SCITUATE	5,993	17,829	+ 198
SHARON	4,847	13,592	+ 180
SHERBORN	1,245	4,116	+ 231
SOMERVILLE	102,351	80,596	- 21
SOUTHBOROUGH	2,760	6,326	+ 129
STONEHAM	13,229	21,564	+ 63
STOUGHTON	11,148	25,717	+ 131
STOW	1,700	4,688	+ 176
SUDBURY	2,596	14,951	+ 476
SWAMPSCOTT	11,580	14,329	+ 24
TOPSFIELD	1,412	5,913	+ 319
WAKEFIELD	19,633	26,041	+ 33
WALPOLE	9,104	18,504	+ 103
WALTHAM	47,187	56,757	+ 20
WATERTOWN	37,329	36,075	- 3
WAYLAND	4,407	13,282	+ 201
WELLESLEY	20,549	26,593	+ 29
WENHAM	1,644	3,359	+ 104
WESTON	5,026	11,478	+ 128
WESTWOOD	5,837	14,019	+ 140
WEYMOUTH	32,690	56,654	+ 74
WILMINGTON	7,039	17,656	+ 151
WINCHESTER	15,509	22,672	+ 46
WINTHROP	19,496	20,359	+ 4
WOBURN	20,492	35,329	+ 72
WRENTHAM	5,341	7,342	+ 37

*The Mass. State Census is not considered as accurate as the decennial U.S. Census

GOVERNMENT

PROTECT HOME RULE, LOCAL CHARACTER SAY COMMUNITIES

A call for stronger local government and the preservation of local character are themes voiced uniformly by cities and towns in the MAPC district responding to questions about governmental issues in their growth policy statements. A second rallying point is the increase in required but unfunded state programs which put a crippling burden on local treasuries.

Other common governmental concerns include the need to increase state aid, the need for some regional cooperation in solving problems such as solid waste disposal and sewage treatment, and the effective control of growth through zoning and land use regulations.

LOCAL

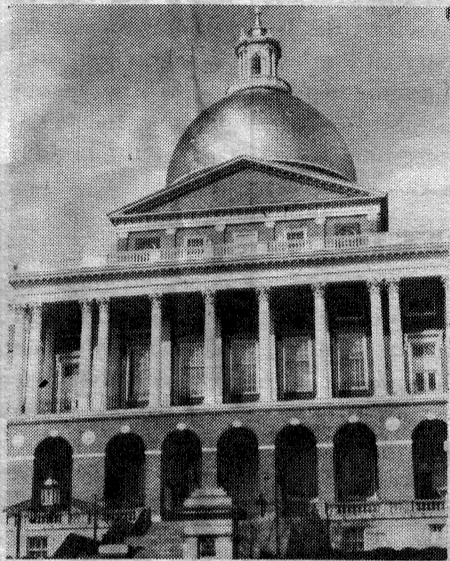
It is clear from the statements that cities and towns in the MAPC region like their present form of government, despite its shortcomings. This is especially true among towns which use the town meeting form of government.

Among north shore communities, statements reflect a strong feeling that there has been a detrimental erosion of local power. Communities envision more conflict between local autonomy and state and federal power in the future.

The increasing "impersonality" of town government appears to worry communities in the northwest. For them, state and federal interference is the principal intergovernmental problem in the area. They see the part-time, voluntary nature of town meeting government confronted by increasingly complex issues, and a demand for more and better services. The result is either inability to cope, or increased reliance on outside help, causing loss of local control. Other concerns in this vein include the difficulty of coordinating elected town boards and committees, a growing sense of alienation with local government in several towns and the view that the town meeting form of government is a "conservative" obstacle with respect to funding needed programs.

Among several inner communities, a lack of pride in local government and a general apathy are indicated as problems, while western communities express general satisfaction with their form of government.

Among south shore communities responding, all use the town meeting form of government. Although none want to abolish this form of representative democracy, none are totally satisfied that their present governmental structure



State House, Boston. Many communities look to the state for help but are wary of its threat to home rule privileges.

can adequately meet existing and future problems.

Some of the south shore complaints about town meeting include its slowness to identify and react to problems or issues as they occur, its unwieldiness, and its lack of public participation. Other communities say that public participation is both an asset and a liability. Despite these complaints, the town meeting is generally perceived as a continuing, viable institution which should be preserved and nurtured.

Because of the complex nature of today's community government, some communities are turning to hired professionals — town managers, planners, engineers, or special consultants — to handle town government. Other communities want to discourage this trend because of its effect on local authority.

Many communities in the region as a whole express complaints about the property tax and state aid formulas. Some would like to have direct control over school budgets. Communities immediately surrounding Boston in particular are concerned about the loss of tax revenue because of property owned by schools, hospitals and the state.

For the future, most communities desire strengthened and more effective home rule to combat increasing federal and state intervention.

STATE

The strongest criticism in most of the reports is directed at the state for requiring but not funding statewide programs which many communities consider inflexible. Specific criticism is aimed at Chapter 774 (anti-snob zoning) and 766 (special education); both are called unworkable and insensitive to local needs.

Most communities in the region feel that such state programs erode local authority, add to community financial burdens, and make it increasingly difficult for communities to accomplish sound fiscal planning.

State collective bargaining and assessments are also viewed unfavorably. Inner communities fault the state for lack of organization among agencies and various levels of government, and unreasonably high state expenditures and inequitable state aid formulas.

Communities on the south shore state a willingness to abide by and support state and federal programs when they perceive an overriding local objective, such as environmental protection. General acceptance of the state Wetlands Protection Act because it furthers local goals is an example of this.

REGIONAL

Most communities agree that regional cooperation is necessary for certain concerns such as sewer, water, solid waste disposal and transportation. Communities complain, however, that the level of regional services provided by the Metropolitan District Commission, MBTA and county government does not compare with the assessments paid. South shore towns are particularly critical of MBTA costs imposed without equivalent service. Several communities suggest that county government should either be used more effectively or abolished altogether. Some feel the 101-community MAPC is too big.

In the future, communities indicate that they would like to see flexible regional cooperation with community groupings determined on an issue-by-issue basis. This might ensure that local desires are respected. Also important is that regional cooperation impose costs on communities only for benefits actually provided.



MAPC encourages cooperation to solve mutual problems.

ZONING

Although all communities mention zoning at some point in their growth policy statements, north shore communities cite under governmental issues the lack of strong, effective zoning during periods of rapid development as the major governmental issue affecting growth. Because of this, they feel development occurred that is detrimental to the community although consistent with local land use regulations. Several communities in other areas agree with the north shore's desire to strengthen and revise zoning and land use regulations to control future growth.

REGION: HOME RULE SUPPORT

The MAPC has consistently recognized the value and tradition of home rule in the Boston area. Government on the local level is the most responsive and accountable to the people. Certain functions and services are more appropriately undertaken on a higher level due to economies of scale and spillover effects, a fact that most local statements attest to.

Required state programs which are inadequately funded are a fiscal anathema for localities. The MAPC agrees that programs stipulating costly community action should be sufficiently funded. State programs would also better serve the region if flexibility were allowed, where possible, to allow for differences among communities and their needs.

The communities and MAPC are in agreement on the need for control over local budgets. State programs, school budget autonomy and collective bargaining hinder the stabilization or reduction of local budgets. The MAPC also supports continued review of MBTA assessment formulas to reflect changes in service.

The MAPC's policy is consistent with local views of flexible community groupings. A recent MAPC report endorses the concept of sub-regional cooperation "to develop plans and coordinate the resolution of municipal problems which can better be dealt with by several municipalities cooperating together and for which solutions may reasonably differ between regions within the metropolitan area." In recent years, MAPC has been involved in sub-regional groupings for solid waste and transportation and expects to continue this involvement.

The MAPC has participated in analysis of potential reorganization of county government and will continue to be active in examination of this issue.

The MAPC strongly supports desires to augment local expertise. To this end, MAPC's technical assistance staff is working with communities to further local goals and objectives.

REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE

A UNIQUE AND VITAL PERSPECTIVE

A discussion of important local growth policy issues such as those on the inside pages of this report gives a broad picture of the 101 communities in the Metropolitan Area Planning Council region. But this picture is not complete without looking at the region as a whole. This is the unique perspective of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council.

PAST GROWTH

The pattern of land use throughout the MAPC region is typical of many metropolitan areas in the United States — an intensively developed urban core with development decreasing in density as distance from the core increases. Approximately 55 percent of the total land area is either developed or otherwise pre-empted from development.

Since 1950, the region's population has increased 25 percent, with the greatest increase from 1960 to 1970. During this period, population began shifting away from the urbanized center into newer suburban and rural areas.

Today, economic activity is generally centered in the immediate Boston area and in several other older industrial centers such as Lynn and Quincy. New highways, notably Route 128, are associated with the movement of some manufacturing and trade outward, resulting in both residential and employment growth in surrounding communities.

FUTURE GROWTH

What does the future look like to MAPC planners? Over the past year MAPC has developed future projections both as general input to the MAPC's Comprehensive Regional Plan and as a planning tool in the Water Quality Project.

This section briefly describes what these projections tell us about how the region might appear in the future, if present land use trends associated with industrial, residential and commercial activity continue.

- There will be ample space for new development through 1995, mostly in inner suburban and rural suburban areas.
- The region as a whole will experience only a 16 percent population increase over the 1970 to 1995 projection period, a considerably lower increase than that experienced over the previous 20-year period.
- Population trends of the 1950 to 1970 period will generally continue, with the rural suburbs continuing to grow fastest, and only the immediate Boston area showing a population decline.
- By 1995, overall employment in the region is expected to increase by a factor of 10 percent over 1970 levels, a relatively slow rate of growth. This reflects the established character of

the community as an intensely developed, urbanized area.

- Due to the age of the region's population, the number of households in the region will be increasing at a much faster rate than general population trends indicate. Given the age of much of the region's housing stock, current low levels of production, and significant obstacles to increasing production, the region may face a severe housing shortage by the middle 1980s.

REGIONALISM

Local governments, working together and with the cooperation of state and regional agencies, can effectively create plans and programs that will solve their common problems without interposing additional layers of government between communities and the state. This regional approach means that local communities which support regional services collectively control those services. The MAPC believes that member communities recognize their regional responsibility and the challenge it brings.

The MAPC, as coordinator of local action on regional issues, carries out its work in the following ways:

- Develops regional plans and data needed for regional and local planning efforts.
- Provides assistance to groups of communities and to individual communities.
- Acts as convenor-mediator on inter-community, local-state and local-federal issues.

- Serves as regional coordinator and clearinghouse for federal grant applications.
- Develops strategies to assist communities to meet regional goals and objectives.

DIALOGUE ON THE FUTURE

The local growth policy process presents the MAPC and its member communities with a unique opportunity to examine past and future growth on two levels — local and regional — and to carry the results to the state. Communities are able to assess their past and prepare for the future; the MAPC is able to feel the pulse of its members and receive vital input into MAPC programs.

But publication of this regional summary of issues is not the end of the process. It is the beginning of a continuing dialogue between the MAPC and its constituent communities on the future, starting with public hearings scheduled throughout the region in late November and early December to discuss MAPC's **Regional Report**. The report is the complete document on which this eight-page summary is based.

At the hearings (a schedule is on the front page), discussion will center on the **Regional Report** and list of some of the general questions resulting from MAPC's review of the local growth policy statements. Attend the public hearings and speak your views. The MAPC will be listening.

THESE ARE SOME OF THE QUESTIONS...

- Is local government in trouble?
- Can the property tax be improved?
- Is the cost of public transportation too high?
- Is your community going to have enough housing in the future?
- Will rehabilitation save our older communities?

- Do our natural resources need more protection?
- Is a regional approach the answer?
- Can your community control its own growth?
- Are state programs the solution, or part of the problem?
- What can you do?

... ATTEND MAPC PUBLIC MEETINGS ON GROWTH POLICY AND GIVE US SOME ANSWERS!



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MEMORANDUM

November 23, 1976

TO: Town/City Clerks, Public Libraries
FROM: James A. Miller, Acting Executive Director
SUBJ: Growth Policy: An MAPC Special Report

Enclosed please find copies of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council's Special Report on the Local Growth Policy process. This report is a brief, easy-to-read summary of the Council's 250-page Regional Report. It is intended for the general public.

We ask that the enclosed Special Reports be placed in a prominent area to insure the greatest visibility.

Town/City Clerks should put aside ten copies of the Special Report to be picked up by their community's Local Growth Policy Committee.

If you have any questions or are in need of extra copies, please call the Council's Public Information Office at 227-2515.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Enclosures

Comm. from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council relative to the MAPC Special Report on the Local Growth Policy process.

In City Council,
December 6, 1976

M/G/W

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