

# 40th Reunion of the Department of City and Regional Planning at UNC

## Carolina Planning Staff

The Department of City and Regional Planning at the University of North Carolina celebrated its fortieth anniversary with a three day reunion beginning on September 26. Seminars involving alumni as panelists were held to discuss state-of-the-art planning approaches and the role of the Department's current planning curriculum. Discussion topics included land use and environmental planning, economic and community development, state and federal planning, and planning in developing areas.

Francis Parker discussed the genesis in 1946 of the UNC planning program. At that time, Harvard and MIT's planning schools emphasized physical planning programs. Parker felt the establishment of the DCRP reflected a creative tension among four sets of issues: physical versus social planning; city versus regional planning; a design versus a policy orientation; and area specialization versus a more generalist approach. Parker discussed how these tensions were worked out in the early days of the DCRP. First



*Reunion group photo.*

Professor Edward Kaiser served as moderator of the panel discussions which took place during the welcoming session. This session, entitled "The First 40 Years—The Department's Contribution to Planning", provided an overview of the department's history. The panelists represented graduating classes from 1951 to 1978. They reminisced about their personal experiences, and provided insights into the political, social and economic climates which contributed to the trends in planning thought and practice during their respective eras.

there was the question of how a planning department should be organized — as a separate entity, or as part of a more traditional program (such as architecture, design or public administration). The faculty decided to establish a separate department. The nature of the program, and of the courses to be offered, was the next decision hurdle. Some early faculty members insisted on the importance of including the regional aspects of planning in the curriculum. Hence, "regional" was retained in the department's title. In resolving the "creative tension,"



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then, the new department decided on a physical-city-policy-area specialization orientation. Parker went on to note the influential role played by the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) in the formation of the UNC program. The Authority provided enormous assistance in terms of funding, faculty support, and serving as a valuable technical resource. Indeed, the program's original three faculty members came to UNC via the TVA.

Harold Glover described his class of 1972 as the first class with a proportionately large number of minorities. Out of 45 students, 16 were minorities. Disillusionment with urban renewal efforts—dubbed “urban removal”—contributed to the increasing involvement on the part of minorities in planning. They felt a need to become active participants. They pressured the faculty to “restructure and sensitize” the courses. The department shifted its focus to regional planning, in part because the enthusiasm over the new town movement of the 1960s was still strong. But many minorities rejected social planning courses. They were bent on harder disciplines such as land use and transportation planning. They wanted to be effective planners, and that meant influencing politicians, and “effecting knowledge and understanding towards the complex problem of urbanization.” They planned to dedicate themselves to working in southern communities (which, Glover explained, came later to mean anywhere south of Canada). They saw themselves as pioneers whose

duty it was to encourage other minorities to join UNC's planning program.

Cathy Meyerson Kleiman described her experience at Chapel Hill as a member of the class of 1978. According to Kleiman, it was a time to reevaluate the social, physical and economic aspects of planning. It was “a time of shifts.” People were moving back into the cities from the suburbs. This was due, in part, to downtown revitalization efforts, and the energy crisis. These shifts involved a new emphasis on rehabilitation and historic preservation rather than on urban design; a reevaluation of new towns; and an increase in public-private initiatives due to the transfer of governmental control from the federal to the local government level.

Michael Brooks, a member of the class of 1970, was assigned the role of devil's advocate. He questioned whether or not planning education and practice are evolving into separate entities. During the 1970s and 1980s planning programs grew rapidly nationwide. Programs cropped up at schools where scholarship was not a tradition. These schools hired scholars from other fields who had little sense of what planning entailed. This coupling of schools with scholars who were perhaps relatively uninformed about urban issues resulted in a gulf between planning education and practice. Brooks expressed the need for planning schools to seek out a larger cadre of teachers with transferable training and experience, as well as a real interest in planning. He encouraged more balance between the academic and practical approaches in order to “breathe new life into planning.”

### Land Use Panel Discussion

Professor David R. Godschalk served as moderator for the panel discussion concerning the land use curriculum and related issues. In his opening remarks, Godschalk stressed that the Department strives to provide the technical, analytical and interpersonal skills necessary in effective land use planning. The alumni panelists represented a broad range of professional occupations. Kathleen Blaha from Tallahassee, Florida works for the Trust for Public Lands; Nancy Jeton is Planning Director for Andover, Massachusetts; Dwight Merriam is an attorney practicing land use and environmental law in Hartford, Connecticut; and Charles Pattison is the Director of Planning, Building and Zoning in Munroe County, Florida.

Kathleen Blaha deals with a broad spectrum of issues and people in her work for the Trust for



Public Lands. Her work requires a range of technical and analytical skills: everything from assessing the ecological impacts and financial feasibility of a project, to identifying the positions of interest groups seeking to achieve certain ends. She emphasized the importance of a generalist planning education which gave her "enough of an expertise to deal with a large number of issues and groups effectively."

Nancy Jeton works in a more traditional capacity as Town Planning Director for Andover, Massachusetts. Her responsibilities, nonetheless, are just as diverse. The morning might be spent in court; the afternoon with real estate developers; and the evening with local citizen groups. Since the planner cannot be an expert in every field, he must be an expert in organizing, analyzing and publicizing needed information. Jeton stressed the importance of developing professional communication skills, and mentioned "Urban Development Guidance Systems" and "Urban Systems and Infrastructure" as courses particularly vital to the land use curriculum.

Dwight Merriam identified a number of areas in which a planner should be trained to work effectively in growth management. Because the field is still evolving, Merriam felt that the program should avoid offering growth management techniques by themselves. Merriam sees critical analysis as essential to planning education. He feels that, "We need to spend more time with planning students teaching them to be critics rather than proponents of planning methods. By being critics they will come to understand better the weaknesses of planning analysis." Essential tools for planners include instruction in quantitative analysis methods, statistics and computer skills. These skills will help to make planners better able to manage complex processes, to be effective organizers and directors of decision-making. Merriam also stressed the importance of familiarizing oneself with the language of site engineering and planning. He points out that, "If planners are to have credibility with the development community they have got to understand development plans and speak the jargon of civil engineers and site designers . . . Even planners who often work at the cutting edge of sophisticated growth management programs are going to have to occasionally participate in the day-to-day mud wrestling of project evaluation."

Charles Pattison works in a rapid growth area of the Florida Keys. He emphasized the importance of salesmanship and communication skills. Planners must be effective presenters and promoters. A plan

or program of action can only be useful if instituted. This requires expertise in marketing and lobbying skills, traditionally neglected areas in planning education. Pattison lauded the development of the professional communications skills course offered by the Department which utilizes modern techniques, such as videotaping, to enable planners to practice and improve their presentation skills.

### Community and Economic Development

Professor Edward Bergman focussed the panelists on a discussion of the UNC planning program's ambitions, and whether it is currently heading in the "right" direction.

Vernon George, from the class of 1963, brought a consultant's perspective to the discussion. He emphasized the importance of "deal-making" in the development process, and stated that deal-making need not be a pejorative term. In fact, it is an integral part of the planning process in which every planner (and planning student) must be proficient. George described several skills which he believed are essential to deal-making, and which should therefore be included in the curriculum.

The first skill is communication and interpretation of the written word. In addition to writing clearly and concisely, George included the ability to prepare graphic presentations and to interpret



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technical data. The ability to use the spoken word is another essential skill. George said effective speaking included preanalyzing the audience, addressing the text, and summing up the main points. The planner must be able to analyze a problem and express the crucial aspects of it cogently. Finally, working well with people is an essential skill. Negotiation grounded in a real understanding of alternative viewpoints is both necessary and useful in interpersonal relations. George stressed the importance of teaching the dynamics of deal-making in order to equip the planning student with flexibility and with the variety of skills needed for effective deal-making.

Diane Reid, from the class of 1977, is the Director of Operations for the Camden Economic Development Corporation. The CEDC was established to create jobs in Camden, New Jersey. She added that creativity is essential to deal-making, particularly in eliciting funding. Although its original capital came from Community Development Block Grant funds, the CEDC currently operates independently on a four million dollar base. The Camden Economic Development Corporation must constantly derive new sources of funding. Possibilities currently under consideration include a reinvestment fund and a community loan program.

Michael Redmond, from the class of 1978, analyzes local economies and populations and develops employment programs for the Private Industry Council in New York. He recommended two useful skills that the DCRP should incorporate in its program. The first is analytical skill, which is necessary for determining how local economies function; identifying populations at risk; and merging both with employment opportunities. The second, is persuasive writing and presentation skill. A "good idea" remains only that until a decisionmaker or funding source is made to realize the need for a program or policy to implement the idea.

Professor Bergman explained that in order to work effectively with public and private sector actors, the planning student must learn a basic set of techniques before choosing a specialization. More important than acquiring planning skills, however, is that the student not lose sight of his planning goals. The challenge DCRP faces is whether to focus on practical skills and their application — techniques to deal with today's world — or to emphasize a broad outlook so that the student will be able to deal with constantly changing political, economic and social trends.

## Real Estate Development Curriculum Panel Discussion

With Professor Emil Malizia acting as moderator, a panel of alumni spoke on their experiences in the real estate industry, and the DCRP's real estate program.

Professor Malizia began the discussion by summarizing the conceptual framework and central courses upon which the Department's real estate curriculum has traditionally been based. Real estate education, he stated, has been more of a complement to the student's general planning experience rather than a specialization in its own right. This is because it is rooted in core planning disciplines such as land use and site design. However, current students are interested in gaining expertise in real estate investment analysis in addition to learning the values, concepts and theories associated with a planning education. They seek this knowledge so that they may actively participate in the real estate field.

Robert Gladstone, President of Triangle Development, a private development company, categorized the development process into three broad phases: pre-construction, construction and post-construction. He then identified nine stages within these broad phases:

1. identification and analysis of opportunities, including feasibility studies
2. project development: identification of project users and their requirements
3. land or property acquisition
4. private/public interface
5. financing
6. marketing and promotion
7. project construction
8. property management
9. asset management

Gladstone thinks the Department has been successful in teaching stages 1,3,4 and 5. He feels that the Department could strengthen the real estate curriculum by teaching stages 2,6,7,8 and 9.

Sam Burns is currently working as a private developer in South Carolina and Florida. His public sector background enabled him to theorize on the planner's role in the development process. Burns feels that planners should infiltrate the decision-making process. He advocates direct participation in the real estate development process as the planner's means to achieving a better quality environment. By infiltrating the decision-making process, the planner is able to effect change "from the inside."



A planner can bring about positive changes more effectively by sharpening skills such as financial and market analysis; dispute resolution and negotiation; and by exercising the posture of being a reformist or a visionary. In dealing with development and developers, Burns warns that a planner must be careful not to forsake his sensitivity and values in exchange for the often tempting monetary rewards of private development. Although he agrees that educating planners about real estate is very important, he urged students not to "MBA their MRP."

### State and Federal Planning

Professor David Moreau was moderator of this section of the conference. Panelists were Mary Joan Pugh (1976), Planning Director of High Point, North Carolina, Gerald Emison (1974), of the United States Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Air Quality and Standards, and Professor Gorman Gilbert, Transportation Planning Commissioner of New York City.

Mary Joan Pugh began the panel discussion by asserting that local governments must adapt to redefined federal, state and local relations brought about by the Reagan Administration's New Federalism. "The federal government is dumping its problems on the states," explained Pugh, "but the states *ought* to have a greater role (in policy decisions)." Policy at the federal level will focus on regional problems and there should be a more effective mechanism to alert states in advance about policy shifts in order to facilitate state level responses.

By redefining the capabilities and responsibilities of each level of government, New Federalism has redefined public and private sector relationships also. Private sector involvement in policy formulation and decision-making is increasing due to an increased reliance on private sources of funding. Planning, therefore, must become a part of the policy management process. Pugh sees evidence of this in the current shifting of the planner's role away from that of technician, and towards that of facilitator of policy.

Gorman Gilbert described his current experience as a transportation planning commissioner in New York City. He has observed firsthand the need for and importance of the regulatory agency in local planning. Gilbert recognizes that the traditional role and limited power base of planners must be reexamined since the political process in many areas has allowed important infrastructure systems to deteriorate. He said that politics often influences

policy decisions to an extent as great as the best technical information available.

George Emison described federal and state relations as being fraught with "creative tension." He outlined how two federal programs were misinterpreted in their implementation by state planning agencies. Regional planning agencies tried to keep Section 208 politics-free. Emison explained that "In succeeding, they failed." Section 208 was planning-oriented, not regulatory or decision-oriented. The regional planning agencies viewed planning as a technical process. They emphasized state-of-the-art processes when they should have connected them to real-world feasibility. They approached 208 as a set of requirements they had to fulfill rather than as an outcome they wanted to obtain.

The State Implementation Plan (SIP) addressed air quality and management, and described air quality and management outcomes. Regulations described how these desired outcomes were to be attained. But in attempting to implement the Plan with the regulations, the authors were forced to make sacrifices because the desired outcomes were difficult to attain. Moreover, even some of the "science" upon which the plans were based was "squishy."

Environmental Protection Agency funding to states is changing. Direct monetary support is declining due to spending cuts and the increasing independent role of many states in addressing local problems. Rather than throwing money at a problem, the new EPA approach involves providing technical support and assistance to state and local actors to help them gain technical expertise in environmental issues. Professor Moreau agreed that the need for technical support is critical at the state level. He said that states, as masters in program innovation, have begun to share their expertise with localities.

### Planning in Developing Areas

Professor Dale Whittington acted as moderator of this session. Panelists were Ben Fisher (1967, 1977), Jim McCullough (1972, 1983), Professor Linda Lacey, and Mu Shinming, a DCRP PhD student.

The developing areas panel discussion included presentations by Jim McCullough and Ben Fisher. McCullough outlined what he believes to be some of the most important challenges confronting planning in developing areas:



*What's forty years between friends?*

1. Shelter assistance; defined as improving the existing situation in slums and squatter settlements, and developing housing programs that assist low income people to build their own homes.
2. Providing urban and regional transit.
3. Effective management and integration of programs on an urban level.
4. Expanding this management capability to the regional scale.
5. Establishing institutional delivery systems.
6. Land acquisition, especially helping municipal areas to assemble and control large amounts of land.
7. Cost recovery, including more effective pricing of infrastructure and establishing housing finance agencies.

With respect to adequately training professional planners for overseas work, McCullough stressed the importance of obtaining sound technical skills in conjunction with a conceptual understanding of issues affecting developing areas.

Ben Fisher indicated that roughly 20 percent of planning doctoral candidates are either from developing areas, or are interested in working in one. He stated that the majority of these people who return to their countries will enter professional practice at a very high level. They will be placed in charge of a large number of employees almost im-

mediately, and will be responsible for management, hiring and coordination of personnel, and budgeting. In fact, entry level employment for many foreign planners often involves greater responsibilities than many American planners can hope to attain in the whole of their careers.

Planning decisions and program implementation in many developing areas usually occurs more quickly than in the United States. Lengthy review procedures typically do not exist to check and balance decision-making. Consequently, a highly placed decision-maker is under a great deal of pressure to "get it right the first time." To help the planner get it right, Fisher feels that educators must beef-up training in management; scheduling; project implementation; and the understanding of how institutions and the various levels of government that exist in developing nations work. □