



Book Review

Refining the Waterfront, Alternative Energy Facility Siting Policies for Urban Coastal Areas. David Morell and Grace Singer, et. al. Oelgeschlager, Gunn & Hain, Publishers, Inc., Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1980. 309 pages. \$22.50.

Another conflict in a long line of officially recognized, but yet to be manifested, conflicting demands on our beleaguered coasts has come to the forefront: it is one between the growing interest in and revitalization of neglected urban waterfronts and the need to site a number of new energy facilities; many of them built or predicted in conjunction with Outer Continental oil and gas recovery. The conflict may be the greatest in the northeast; because the northeast is the major market for energy in the eastern United States, it is the region most often preferred for energy facility siting. However, there are quite a few factors, Coastal Zone Management policies among them, which direct development away from pristine or natural areas. As corporations attempt to locate energy facilities in northeastern urban areas, they are more and more unsuccessful--turned away by the efforts of the city's and region's citizens, newly interested in the possibilities and promises of their rediscovered waterfronts. David Morell and Grace Singer, principal authors of *Refining the Waterfront, Alternative Energy Facility Siting Policies for Urban Coastal Areas*, are convinced that siting strategies "could support, rather than contradict, the innovative redevelopment efforts now underway in many urban waterfronts." (p. 285) They maintain that an energy facility siting strategy must be made compatible with three "critical national priorities:" greater energy self sufficiency, urban revitalization, and protection of fragile rural coastlines.

Their book is a group effort; it is an attempt to forge a convergence of the research of several consulting firms and individuals on the issues raised by these conflicts, and, ultimately, on devising a means of resolution. Unfortunately, the book suffers somewhat from this format. The attempt at convergence is not quite successful; there is a lack of

cohesiveness. *Refining the Waterfront* is more than a collection of articles which just happen to deal with similar or related topics; but it is not a collaborative effort either, as it seems that the only two authors who had a clear conception of the volume as a whole are Morell and Singer. Had Morell and Singer woven stronger ties both between the separately-authored chapters and between the chapters and the objectives and conclusions of the book, the book might have been a more cohesive effort. Instead there is a lack of clearly stated purpose and direction. The principle authors do state broad objectives several different ways, but they are primarily to "determine mechanisms for finding sites for necessary new energy facilities that are compatible with the conflicting mandates of rural coastline preservation and the changing uses of urban waterfronts." (p. 2) This is an end point towards which the research is directed, but Morell and Singer do not adequately explain how the research they have commissioned aids in building towards their objectives.

Although both the title and the feeling transmitted throughout the Introduction stress "alternative" siting policies, the bulk of the volume is spent on explanations of the status quo. It is divided into four major parts, two of which are comprised almost entirely of case studies, surveys, and discussions of current siting concerns and issues. This is valuable and necessary background information, but the thoroughness of its coverage seems, in this case, to be somewhat at the expense of analysis and conclusions as to what this information can contribute to the formulation of alternative siting policies.

The first two sections of the book deal with, respectively, siting issues on the "older urban coast," and those on the Gulf

coast which represents an area of vast undeveloped coastline in sharp contrast to the northeastern urban coast. The issues involved in siting energy facilities differ considerably between the two types of coastal areas.

Singer's contribution to the first section is a well-written chapter on the reasons behind the successful rejection of five proposed facilities in five years in Hudson County, New Jersey. She includes valuable and thorough research into attitudes of the citizen activists responsible for rejecting the proposed facilities. There are no prefacing or concluding remarks to the first section, but closely read some primary issues emerge as important in facility siting on an older urban coast. The issues include public opposition growing in size and strength to the siting of such facilities, largely due to an increasing and renewed pride in revitalized urban waterfront areas; lack of space for these facilities, as many cities have already begun to turn previously vacant waterfront into parks and public access corridors; and lack of a base air quality sufficiently low to allow addition of often heavily polluting energy facilities. Most of the urban areas on the east coast are in fact "nonattainment" areas; they do not expect to reach levels of air quality mandated by the Clean Air Act by the date required.

Resource and Planning Consultants, Inc., wrote the three chapters which comprise Section II. Two of these chapters are descriptive case studies of siting on the Louisiana and Texas Gulf coasts, and the third is a discussion of the policy implications and regional distinctions highlighted by the case studies in contrast to those in Section I. Although, as mentioned previously, many corporations would prefer to locate their facilities on the northeast coast since that is where the greater part of their market is, all other factors tip the balance in favor of locating on the Gulf Coast. There is more land available, there are seldom any air quality constraints, and, perhaps most important, the people of this area welcome the facilities. As the authors sum it up, "In other areas of the country where the environment is approaching its absorptive capacity for further development, thus leading to increasingly adverse conflicts, residents analyze specific impacts to weigh the benefits associated with a particular facility. The people of Texas and Louisiana have not reached this point." (p. 175) They go on to caution, however, that perhaps the time when the people of these states do reach this point is not so far in the future.

The book's third major section is a corporate perspective of the economics involved in energy facility siting. It is written by another consulting firm--Energy and Environment

Analysis, Inc., who obtained the "corporate perspective" through interviews and surveys. The overall intent of the section is to "determine if the additional costs of innovative siting can be offset by reducing permit costs." (p. 183) The authors see two issues important to the extensive economic analysis which makes up much of these chapters: the economic impacts of the desirability of an investment in an energy facility, and the effect of the location selected for the facility on the permit process, thus on the investment economics. One particularly valuable chapter is devoted to the issue of location selection, specifically the choices between coastal vs. inland and urban vs. rural siting. The chapter discusses the advantages and disadvantages of siting in each location, as derived from interviews with companies that had proposed coastal refineries. This is a long and detailed section. The questions it sets out to answer are very important to the overall objectives of the book, and there is a wealth of information and discussion included with which to address these questions. However, like the book itself, the section lacks both a clear statement as to how the analysis presented addresses the vital questions posed and an adequate conclusion. Much of the material is lost to the reader through confusion as to how all the findings and scenarios fit together, or where they lead. Many of the conclusions and implications of these three sections do surface in the final chapter, in the guise of policy recommendations. Some sort of purposive or concluding statement would, nevertheless, be helpful.

The final section includes two chapters. One is, finally, an exploration of five alternative energy technologies which might, by requiring less land area and producing less pollution, be more appropriate for energy production within the urban coastal zone. The inclusion of a focus on alternative technologies is a valuable addition to the focus on alternative siting methods. Linda Kirschner, its author, does a good job of describing the technologies and discussing the problems--largely institutional--that will likely occur in any attempt at widespread implementation of these alternatives.

The final chapter is a list of forty policy recommendations based on the concepts and findings illuminated by the preceding research. They are designed, says Morell, "to alter the existing situation in which proposed new energy facilities often contradict with urban coastal revitalization." (p. 285) These "policy recommendations" do not always take that form. Some are statements of value: "In many economically depressed American urban centers, efforts at innovative redevelopment of vacant or poorly utilized land on or near the waterfront are the principal positive signs in a rather bleak over all situation."

(p. 290) Others--in fact, many--are statements of fact: "Some alternative energy technologies provide the opportunity to reduce siting tensions in urban areas by incorporating development and energy systems in tandem efforts at the same location." (p. 293) And still others are indeed recommendations, containing such words as "should" and "must." This chapter constitutes a reasonably complete summary and concluding statement for the rest of the book. It is, however, comparatively brief. It seems somehow regrettably unbalanced that so little time and space is spent in attempting to draw conclusions and implications from the large volume of information presented.

Refining the Waterfront is a timely book. It addresses a crucial conflict which is still in the early stages but which can only get more intense, and as such is potentially valuable to anyone involved in environmental, coastal, or energy planning. It is packed with information and insights derived from a thorough study of experiences with these conflicts. There are, in fact, a number of fertile ideas scattered throughout the chapters which become lost in the sheer volume of information presented. One such idea is that of regional waterfront planning. A chapter by Peter Denitz in the first section of the book explores some attitudes toward this concept and discusses some of its possibilities. This thread, however, is never again picked up in the rest of the book, even in the final section on policy recommendations, which concentrate on the balancing of local, state, and federal interests, recommendations on "Government Institutions and Public Participation in Energy Facility Siting."

The lack of a clearly drawn line between the many facts and concepts presented throughout the book and the final "Policy Recommendations" is a flaw that has already been discussed. Because of this deficiency, the burden falls on the final chapter to fulfill a number of functions: it must be a summary, an interpretation, and a conclusion in addition to its proposed role of advancing policy recommendations. Though these "recommendations" do comprise, as mentioned, a sort of summary in list form of most of the book's content and a sort of discussion and conclusion as to the import of these contents, the chapter falls short on several counts. First, a few seemingly important concepts found earlier in the book do not reappear. More important, though they are sound and well thought out, the recommendations are a bit tame and perhaps slightly too vague as to how they are to be implemented. Most of the ideas presented are difficult to argue with, but this works two ways. On one hand, it may make them more palatable and thus more likely to be heeded and perhaps worked into coastal zone management programs or energy policy. On the other hand, a question remains as to whether changes in the functions of existing agencies and admonitions to consider additional factors will be enough to meet the challenges of major conflicts such as those presented by the authors.

Georgiana Dix Blomberg
Ph.D. Candidate and Research Assistant
Department of City and Regional Planning
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

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