

A Note on NC 2000

NC 2000 is by now familiar to planners throughout North Carolina. This planning effort is designed extremely broadly to investigate and assess numerous factors affecting the quality of life in the state, and ultimately to generate new courses of action for a twenty year planning horizon. Underway since June 1981, the process is only slightly off schedule. The culminating conference is now targeted for November, with presentation of final recommendations to the governor by December of this year.

Several features of the NC 2000 effort are of particular interest to planners considering the desirability and feasibility of broad-based planning methods in one southeastern state. The various successes of NC 2000 to this date underscore a continuing popularity and potential strength for rational, problem-oriented, participant-rich planning on the state and sub-state levels. These strengths are particularly notable in the context of a federal administration inimical or downright hostile to long-range planning. NC 2000 may provide both lessons and encouragement for planners.

1. A strong proponent can still propel a planning effort a long way. Since instituting NC 2000 in mid-1981, Governor Hunt has managed to pull together some of the best thinkers and leaders in the state, all to focus their efforts on the state of the state twenty years down the road. These work efforts will show results in legislation to be drawn up by the NC 2000 Commission, and also sponsored by the governor.

2. State, regional, and local agencies can be effective partners in a broad-based planning effort. State agencies, councils of governments, city governments, universities, and 99 of the 100 counties have cooperated in providing information, work resources and guidance to the planning process.

3. There is great interest in and demand for citizen involvement in long-range planning. More than 10,000 citizens have actively participated in the local NC 2000 committees. More than 100,000 citizens filled out and submitted NC 2000 questionnaires on quality of life perceptions.

4. Planning induces major research efforts of intrinsic value. NC 2000 has commissioned university faculty, private sector specialists and public officials to research some 75 general topics. These include, for example, citizen involvement, criminal justice, and managed growth under the Community panel; skill training and business support, international trade potential, and technology's impact on the economy under the Economy panel; water resources, farm-

land, and hazardous waste under Natural Resources; and basic literacy, access to higher education, and environmental health under the People panel. Technical papers were completed in late April, and will be available this summer in a compendium published by the Editorial Committee. This research should be of long-term use and interest.

5. States and localities need not blindly follow federal trends in planning. NC 2000 is an excellent example of a strong planning effort going against the federal anti-planning trend.

According to Noel Dunivant, staff director and coordinator for NC 2000, planners have been involved in NC 2000 in at least three capacities:

- (1) as staff for the NC 2000 Commission. Planners and policy analysts from the state Department of Administration Office of Policy and Planning compose the Commission staff.
- (2) as technical experts. Planners have written a number of the research papers commissioned by the NC 2000 panels.
- (3) as local facilitators. City, county and regional planners throughout the state have been instrumental in generating interest, information and involvement in NC 2000 at the local level.

NC 2000 is a major planning effort, representing the commitment of the governor, the NC 2000 Commission and the people of the state to a rational planning process for North Carolina. In such a broad-based planning effort involving so many different interests, a key to the process now will be focusing the Commission's voluminous, sometimes conflicting or politically sensitive findings on some difficult and substantive courses of action available to the state. It is in the interest of the planning community to continue to encourage and foster the work of NC 2000 in identifying and debating creative, down-to-earth, implementable actions which effectively address the problems brought before the Commission, and which can favorably guide the state between now and the year 2000.

