

# carolina planning

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# Introduction

In describing the nature of this state or this region, the term 'rural' is somewhat less than illuminating. To the Census Bureau, places with less than 2,500 residents are rural. With the 'population turnaround' of non-urban growth across the nation, the 1980 Census may be interpreted to show a phenomenal rediscovery of rural living in North Carolina and elsewhere. Alternately, some observers interpret recent 'rural' growth as the latest stage in the nation's urban settlement pattern. They point out that good roads have opened up once-remote areas to commuter lifestyles, that sprawl and low-density settlement are today's urban development patterns, that farming and other traditional rural occupations continue to decline despite the rural population shift. With these conflicting characterizations and semantic warnings in mind, *carolina planning* presents this special issue on rural planning.

A number of authors contribute to a section on agricultural preservation. Leon Danielson provides an economist's perspective on some of the tools used by planners desiring to preserve agricultural lands. Bill McElyea deals with preservation strategies by laying out the experience of one community--Orange County--which has tried to assemble the whole range of agricultural preservation tools available to planners in North Carolina. For comparison, Timothy Beatley provides a brief overview of the agricultural preservation tools available to planners in the state of Oregon, often considered the leading state in this field.

Two articles briefly discuss special farming issues. Kathy Evers and Ginny Faust look at new strategies for farmers seeking alternatives to tobacco, and illuminate some ways local planners may help farmers make the switch. Jane Buckwalter provides a synthesis of recent studies on migrant farmworkers, pointing out the compelling need for public intervention in this area.

Several articles have a strong rural land use focus. Julie Shambaugh presents a brief synopsis of a complex water supply situation in Orange County: the proposed Cane Creek reservoir project. This case underscores some troubling urban-rural equity issues. In an article on the western Appalachian counties, Joanna Mack looks at the planning response to recreation-induced land use changes, trying to suggest some of the underlying causes of the patterns of response, and offering some suggestions for improvement.

Economic development has become a major planning issue for rural and small town areas. Emil Malizia and Sarah Rubin report the results of a seven-state survey of local economic development strategies. The study identifies locally controlled and based approaches to rural economic development through methods that may be effective without the infusion of federal aid.

This special issue of *carolina planning* has only touched on selected rural subjects of interest to planners. In a period of rapidly shifting demographics, a great need exists for a fuller appreciation of the nonmetropolitan resources of the southeast. Sensitive planning may enable new development to conserve those resources which should remain intact, and to enrich those rural resources which do change.

## *carolina planning*

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