

A Task Force Plan

By Bill Press
Special to The Bee

"Buy land," Will Rogers used to say. "Buy land. They ain't making any more of it."

That was in the 1930's. Today the reality of Rogers' jest is apparent, as pressure mounts on the State Legislature and the Brown administration to enact some form of land-use planning in California.

Two land-use bills already have been introduced in the legislature, and at least three more are in the drafting stages.

Now before the legislature are bills by Assemblyman Charles Warren D-Los Angeles, and by Sen. Howard Way, R-Tulare County.

Warren approaches the land-use question from the standpoint of the most immediate crisis: The world food shortage. Recognizing California's contribution to the world's food supply, Warren's proposal (AB 15) would require that our best, "prime" agricultural lands be kept in production and that farmers and ranchers receive a tax incentive for doing so.

Agricultural lands comprise 36 per cent of California's total land surface. Keeping this valuable soil in production is an important step — perhaps the most important first step — toward comprehensive land-use planning.

Sen. Way's bill, SB 620, appears to be more comprehensive. It addresses the overall land-use problem statewide, not just the agricultural issue. But it restricts the state's role to identifying and setting guidelines for development of certain limited areas of "critical state environmental concern."

This concept is a planners' nightmare, and suitable for states — unlike California — whose planning experience has yet to begin.

California has been identifying "areas of critical concern" for years — Lake Tahoe, San Francisco Bay, the coastline. Action in these limited areas may provide some direction, but it can never substitute for statewide planning.

SB 620 was introduced by Sen. Way for the California Chamber of Commerce, which sponsored similar legislation last year. Critics say it would lure the state into adopting the bottom rung of the planning ladder, thus

frustrating any more far-reaching programs.

Still on the drawing boards is a proposal to be set forth by the League of California Cities. The cities see state land-use planning not as a threat, but as a safeguard, to home rule — provided they can carve out a significant role for local government.

The league proposal assigns planning responsibilities to a state council, ten areawide councils and to cities. A state plan, combining the ten areawide plans, would indicate where new housing is to be built, which lands are to be dedicated for agriculture, and what lands are ecologically important and should be left intact.

A coalition of planning and planning-related organizations has contributed ideas for another proposal,

being assembled by Assemblyman Edwin Z'berg, D-Sacramento, chairman of the Assembly Committee on Natural Resources and Land-Use.

This task force is scheduled to complete its labors by the end of May, hopefully giving birth to a third land-use bill which can begin to work its way through the legislative process this spring.

The most ambitious land-use proposal is also the one with the most unusual constituency: The recommendations of the California Land-Use Task Force.

This group of conservationists and business representatives was organized in February 1974 by our Planning and Conservation Foundation. The goal: To attempt to identify areas of agreement on state land-use planning before both sides became engaged in open warfare over the issue in the legislature.

The task force report — presented to the governor and the legislature March 18 — calls for a strong state role in planning, backed up by a strong regional role and more clearly defined local planning powers.

It urges a planning process that will consider every acre of California land.

The task force membership ranges from the Sierra Club and the League of Women Voters to the Bank of America and Standard Oil of California.

The task force began its work by analyzing the performances of the many existing planning agencies — at state, regional and local levels.

The sheer number of land-use decision-makers is staggering. So is the fact that there is little, if any, coordination among them, and no overall policy or plan guiding their decisions.

The task force studied eight key planning issues: Cities, housing, agriculture, resources, energy, transportation, taxation, compensation. These quick studies proved that — while it may be possible to separate the various elements of land-use planning when defining the problem — it is impossible to separate the elements in defining a solution.

What happens in the suburbs influences what happens in the cities. What happens on agricultural lands helps to determine what happens on built-up lands. The land is a whole, and must be so addressed in any state plan.

The basic principles of the California Land-Use Task Force Plan are summarized in the report's final chapter:

- The state must decide not only what lands are suitable for preservation and conservation, but also what lands are suitable for development.

- Planning must be areawide as well as statewide and local.

- Controls must be guided by an articulate set of policies that make it clear what land-use patterns are desired and why.

- Plans must be binding, first of all, on the actions of state government.

- All parts of the state are interrelated, and policy should consider the state's entire land area, not just "critical areas"

- The legislature must appropriate the money necessary to make planning procedures work.

The task force report has been published in book form, "The California Land: Planning for People" (William Kaufmann, Los Altos, \$3.50). It is also being drafted as a legislative proposal.

From the Reader of the Conference on Alternative State & Local Public Policies held June 10-13, 1976 in Austin, Texas. The reader was edited and compiled by Derek Shearer, California Public Policy Center Los Angeles, California and Lee Webb, Professor of Public Policy, Goddard College Plainfield, Vermont.

This item was made available by the Cornell University Library.

From Collection #6756, Conference On Alternative State And Local Policies Records.

Copyright and Permissions

Most of the items included in the Reader on Alternative Public Policies were published without copyright notice and hence entered the public domain upon initial publication. Some of the items found in the Reader are still subject to copyright. In some cases, even after extensive research efforts, we were unable to identify a possible rightsholder. We have elected to place the items in the online collection as an exercise of fair use for strictly non-commercial educational uses.

The Cornell University Library provides access to these materials for educational and research purposes and makes no warranty with regard to their use for other purposes. Responsibility for making an independent legal assessment of an item and securing any necessary permissions ultimately rests with persons desiring to use the item. The written permission of the copyright owners and/or holders of other rights (such as publicity and/or privacy rights) is required for distribution, reproduction, or other use of protected items beyond that allowed by fair use or other statutory exemptions. There may be content that is protected as "works for hire" (copyright may be held by the party that commissioned the original work) and/or under the copyright or neighboring-rights laws of other nations.

The Cornell University Library would like to learn more about these materials and to hear from individuals or institutions having any additional information about rightsholders. Please contact the Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections in the Library at: <http://rmc.library.cornell.edu>.