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**LAND AND
HOUSING
POLICIES
IN EUROPE
AND
THE USA:**
*A Comparative
Analysis*

EDITED BY GRAHAM HALLETT



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Chapter Eight

LAND POLICY IN THE UNITED STATES

David E. Dowall

INTRODUCTION

Writing about the land policy of the United States is a trifle presumptuous. There is no de jure land policy. In fact, there have been only two periods in US history when the Federal government set out a clear land policy: the 1850s and 1860s (the Homestead Act of 1862), when the vast Western public lands were settled, by permitting settlers to claim ownership to land after occupying and using it for a period of time; and the 1920s, when the Federal government facilitated the adoption of land-use 'zoning' by local governments (deNeufville, 1981; Wolf, 1981).

On a more implicit level, the Federal government engaged in national planning during the Depression, developing Greenbelt towns and agricultural villages (for example through the National Resources Planning Board). In the late 1960s and early 1970s, concern over the failure of urban renewal, environmental degradation, and a seemingly imminent energy crisis fostered two serious attempts by the Federal government to promulgate national land-use policy - one by the Senate in 1976 during the Ford administration and one later by the Carter administration, both of which were short-lived (Hagman, 1980; Popper, 1981). Many local communities, however, imposed 'growth controls' on housing development. The Federal government has generally stayed out of the picture, leaving such matters to States, cities and counties. This reflects the separation of powers in a federal system and, more importantly, the long-term commitment to the marketplace as a means of allocating land resources.

In the 1980s the nation's attention has shifted to economic development, job creation and community revitalisation. Now many land-use planners are interested in promoting office centres, industrial parks and housing projects, not in using growth management to slow down development. Perhaps the most interesting current trend in land-use policy is the diversity of policy responses. In some depressed

central cities, expansive land development, including land banking, land write-downs (i.e. sales of land at below acquisition cost) and tax holidays are common. In others, stringent land-use regulations, such as growth controls, low-density limitations, and extensive open space requirements, are the norm. This diversity of land policy is the result of the growing disparity of urban development across the nation, and its differential impacts on communities. These differences are not purely sunbelt-frostbelt in character, as the growth of Boston and Philadelphia, and the decline of Houston, attest. In some cases, boom-and-bust examples abound within one metropolitan area, leading to conflicting or contradictory policies, given the absence of local government coordination.

In some instances, local land-use policy has inhibited community development; in others, a lack of coordination has caused growth problems - especially traffic congestion and lack of affordable housing. In fact, one of the major problems facing high-growth metropolitan areas is the unbalanced distribution of employment centres and residential areas. Some areas have large and growing job bases and little or no housing, while others are exclusively residential. Such patterns cause enormous traffic congestion problems, as people are forced to commute great distances, and as the scattered patterns of employment and residence make it much more difficult to design and implement effective transportation systems.

What is becoming quite clear to many US land-use planners is that planning tools effective in one town are no longer automatically effective in others. Planners across the nation are searching, on the one hand, for new ways to link land policy to economic development and, on the other, for more effective methods to regulate urban and suburban development (Committee on National Urban Policy, 1983).

This chapter provides a brief overview of land-use controls and land-use policy issues in growing and declining America. It begins by outlining the institutional context of land-use planning, covering Federal, State and local land-use policies. It then proceeds to outline the structural changes which are reshaping US cities and regions, their land-use impacts, and the policy implications.

PUTTING THE US SYSTEM OF LAND-USE CONTROLS INTO CONTEXT

In the United States, the development of land is determined by market forces and the regulatory power of a myriad Federal, State and local government entities. The Federal Government once owned huge areas in 'the West'. which have since been disposed of, and it still owns nearly one third of the land area of the USA, mostly forest or desert land; some

of this land consists of National Parks. Most land in the neighbourhood of cities, however, is privately owned, and most land transactions take place between individuals and private corporations. US cities have not followed the Germanic and Scandinavian approach of acquiring 'land banks'. The subject was widely discussed in the 1970s, but little action was taken.

There is a long-established right of 'eminent domain' (meaning 'highest authority') under which the Federal Government, or State Governments, may acquire land compulsorily (or 'condemn' it). There are differences in the laws of the various States but all provide for a right of 'eminent domain', provided that the land is to be used for a public purpose, and that fair compensation is paid. The right may be delegated to public agencies, local authorities, or even a private corporation. In general, the owner of land must be invited to sell it, and refuse the offer, before the power of eminent domain can be invoked. All condemnation proceedings call for court action. Compensation is decided by the courts, usually on the basis of 'fair market value'. Since the 1940s, it has been accepted in most States that land may be acquired for a purpose of public interest, rather than merely for 'public use', provided that the land is subsequently disposed of. In practice, however, 'eminent domain' is mainly used in connection with highways and similar 'public works'. It has on occasion been used to acquire old housing for urban renewal, but it is hardly ever used to acquire 'greenfield' sites for housing development.

Zoning

Although the Federal Government has made little attempt at promulgating a national land policy it did, in the late 1920s, assist in the development of the principal form of land-use control, known as 'zoning'. In 1928, the US Department of Commerce drafted a model ordinance of State legislation, permitting local zoning controls over land-use (National Commission on Urban Problems, 1968). By the 1930s, most states had adopted a version of this model ordinance, and local planning commissions became the principal regulators of land-use. The Federal Government should not be credited with 'giving birth' to US zoning, since many communities were zoning before the 1928 ordinance was drafted. It did, however, clearly facilitate the spread of zoning.

'Zoning' means that an area in which new development takes place can be divided into 'zones' specifying the type of development permitted, e.g. 'detached single family residences', 'multi-family residences', 'industrial development', 'commercial development' and various sub-categories. It is essentially a means of giving some order to development (and keeping undesired uses out of prime residential neighbour-

hoods); it does not involve any power to prohibit development as such. In most rural communities, there is virtually no means of preventing 'strip development', 'ranchlets' and other forms of 'scatteration'. Thus 'zoning' is a weak tool for protecting specified rural areas from development, or for concentrating development in 'balanced' communities, with provision for employment and recreation, and a range of types of housing. Zoning also has little relevance to the regeneration of decayed older urban areas.

Federal Policies

There have been several recent attempts to address urban and environmental problems, and these initiatives contain much on land policy. The Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, in a study released in 1968, triggered extensive discussions on the need for national growth policies (ACIR, 1968). The Commission observed that the nation's development patterns were the result of countless public and private land-use decisions, but that the Federal Government, by funding community infrastructure, deciding where to locate governmental and defence installations, and allocating procurement contracts, exerted great influence over patterns of land utilisation.

The debate over the appropriate federal role spawned the Urban Growth and New Communities Development Act of 1970. This act mandated the Executive Branch of the Federal Government to examine patterns of land-use and urban growth, publish a biennial report from the President to Congress analysing trends and problems, and recommend how the government and the private sector should respond to such problems.

The President's report on National Urban Policy was submitted to Congress in 1972, 1974 and 1976. During the Nixon administration (1968-74), the main thrust was to abolish categorical grants, set up six block grant programmes, and reorganise the Cabinet, creating four new 'super agencies' to handle domestic issues, one of which, the Department of Community Development, was to combine the functions and responsibilities of housing, transportation, commerce and agriculture. The plan threatened so many entrenched interests that it was not taken seriously, and the Watergate scandal finally killed it.

The Ford Administration (1974-76) adopted a traditional posture towards land and urban policy, advocating a national commitment to the preservation and restoration of central cities. It continued the Nixon Administration's program of replacing federal categorical grant programs with block grant programs.

It was with the Carter Administration that a new interest in urban policies emerged. The Carter Administration at-

tempted to develop fewer but more comprehensive programs for urban revitalisation. Policy 10 of the 1978 biennial report is sharply focused on land-use matters; 'Federal laws and programs will be amended to discourage sprawl' (The President's National Urban Policy Report, 1978). This was to be accomplished in three ways: by coordinating federal and state actions affecting land-use development, stimulating metropolitan-wide planning and development programs, and offering strong incentives for businesses to remain in central city areas.

The cornerstone of the Carter urban program was the urban impact assessment (UIA) (Glickman, 1980). This was to be conducted for any policy, program or funding award which might have deleterious effects on cities. One example was the use of Community Development Block Grant funds for the financing of infrastructure for suburban shopping centres, which allegedly siphoned retail and commercial activities from central cities to suburbs. Studies of at least a dozen shopping centre projects were made and, in one instance, federal funds were blocked (Teitz and Dowall, 1980).

This is not to say that UIAs were a failure, but rather that it is difficult to use a case-by-case approach to set national land-use policy goals. There were far too few opportunities for using the policy to shape patterns of development; the UIA was much less effective than the 'environmental impact statement' (EIS), used by the Federal and most State governments to evaluate projects. Thus, despite several attempts at adopting a national land policy, the nation has been left with little more than the 'zoning' system adopted in the 1920s.

With the Reagan Administration (1980), greater emphasis was placed on limiting the role of government in society. Accordingly, many domestic programs were eliminated or scaled down; the Carter 'Urban Policy Agenda' was scrapped. The Reagan agenda is designed to shift governmental programs to States and local governments, and this coincides with earlier efforts of environmentalists to establish strong land-use policies at the State level.

It should be mentioned that the vast majority of housing is in the private sector. Nearly two thirds of American households own their homes, which are mainly detached wood-framed 'houses'. In the more affluent areas there are also modern, privately rented apartment blocks, which cater mainly for singles. There is, however, a fiscal incentive to home ownership, in that mortgage interest payments (like all interest payments) are tax-deductible, while there is no tax on 'imputed rent'. In the run-down central city areas, the old apartment blocks are privately owned, and often neglected. The basic problem of these areas, however, is the concentration of poverty, unemployment and social breakdown. The Federal presence in the public housing area is declining, and

USA

public housing has become 'last resort' shelter; the median income of public housing tenants stands at 28 per cent of the national median income. Thus, as far as national housing policy goes, the US has decided to get out of the business of providing housing for those who need it but cannot afford it.

The Quiet Revolution in Land-use Controls

In the early 1970s, America woke up to the fact that it was rapidly destroying its stock of physical resources. Air and water pollution had become acute, and when the Federal Government adopted national standards for air quality, many metropolitan regions discovered that they failed to meet them. Erosion carried away sediment and raw sewage, while industrial waste poured into lakes and streams, killing fish and waterfowl. At one point, the Cuyahoga River in Cleveland became so polluted that it caught fire. Rapid suburbanisation had severe impacts on small towns and villages on the edges of metropolitan areas, causing traffic congestion and threatening the small-town quality of life that had attracted many in the first place.

Around 1970, public sentiment shifted, as citizens demanded stricter environmental controls at all levels of government (Reilly, 1973). The US Environmental Protection Agency stepped into action, promulgating stringent standards for pollution control. For many, the passage of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 marked a threshold in federal action. But the most important aspect of the environmental movement was the establishment of a State (as distinct from Federal) presence in land-use and environmental controls. As early as 1966, prominent planners were calling for the establishment of State agencies to control land development (Popper, 1981) and, later on, several public and quasi-public bodies echoed this call (National Commission on Urban Problems [1968], Rockefeller Brothers Fund Task Force [Reilly, 1973], and Ralph Nader's Study Group on Land Use in California [Fellmeth, 1973]). The two main professional bodies concerned with land-use issues, the American Bar Association and the American Planning Association, endorsed State-level land-use planning and policy-making. The American Bar Association went one step further: it developed a Model Land Development Code (American Law Institute, 1976). Governments in Florida, Hawaii, Colorado, California and Vermont enacted State planning controls.

By 1975, 27 of the 50 States had adopted new programs involving either State land-use planning or State review of local land-use decision-making. Most of the State-level land-use attention has focused on rural areas; few State-level efforts have had any effect on urban land-use issues in metropolitan areas. Leaders in State-level land-use planning -

Hawaii, Vermont, Florida, California, Oregon and North Carolina - enacted land-use controls because of second home development or expanding urban development onto agricultural lands (DeGrove, 1985).

Local Growth Controls

A parallel development to the spread of State-level land-use regulation was the proliferation of growth management programs in cities across the US. The interest in growth management is understandable, given the inability of zoning and general plans to control or modulate the temporal rate of development.

Most States require cities and counties to prepare and update community master or general plans (Kent, 1964). These plans outline anticipated population and economic growth, and designate which areas of the community are appropriate for development. These designations reflect not only potential growth and the resulting demand for land, but also the environmental capabilities of the land to support development. In most communities, zoning is the principal method of implementing the general plan. The zoning ordinance sets the permissible use and density of development, and development permission is normally denied if the proposed project is not consistent with the zoning. Thus zoning and general or master plans control the type and density, but not the rate at which development may occur.

In some communities the pace of development has been torrid, and citizens have pressed their planning commissions to limit it. Pinpointing exactly where this movement started is fairly easy. The cities of Ramapo, New York and Petaluma, California, in 1972 and 1974 respectively, questioned the prevailing wisdom of unbridled growth, and unilaterally imposed limits on the rate and level of residential development (Scott, 1975). After this bellwether event, numerous communities across the nation followed suit. At the height of the local growth control movement, over 200 cities and counties claimed to be actively limiting development (Dowall, 1980).

This early version of growth control focused exclusively on residential development, not commercial or industrial development. In virtually every case, the growth controls were imposed by suburban towns in close proximity to major central cities. There is a very good reason for these patterns. The suburban growth control community is usually inundated with residential development, but it does not need an economic base in order to flourish. It can 'borrow city size' by relying on the nearby central city for employment and business services (Alonso, 1973). The spread of local land-use controls was rapid, and in some regions the suburbs became bastions of growth control. Coupled with the peak

baby-boom housing demand, housing prices in many areas shot up, causing an acute housing affordability problem (Dowall, 1984).

As these local growth and restrictive land-use regulations proliferated, many critics claimed that they severely impaired the operation of the land and housing markets, pushing the costs of housing beyond the reach of young moderate-income households. Figure 8.1 illustrates the deterioration of housing affordability in the US over the 1970s. It charts the ratio of the mortgage, taxes and insurance payments necessary to purchase the median-priced house in the nation (new and existing) divided by 25 per cent of median family income. At the worst point, in 1978, the cost of purchasing the median-priced single family home was 2.45 times the amount which could be 'afforded' on the median family income. The housing affordability problem was most severe in rapidly growing areas with rising land costs. The monthly mortgage payment needed to purchase the average-priced home was highest in San Diego and lowest in Detroit.

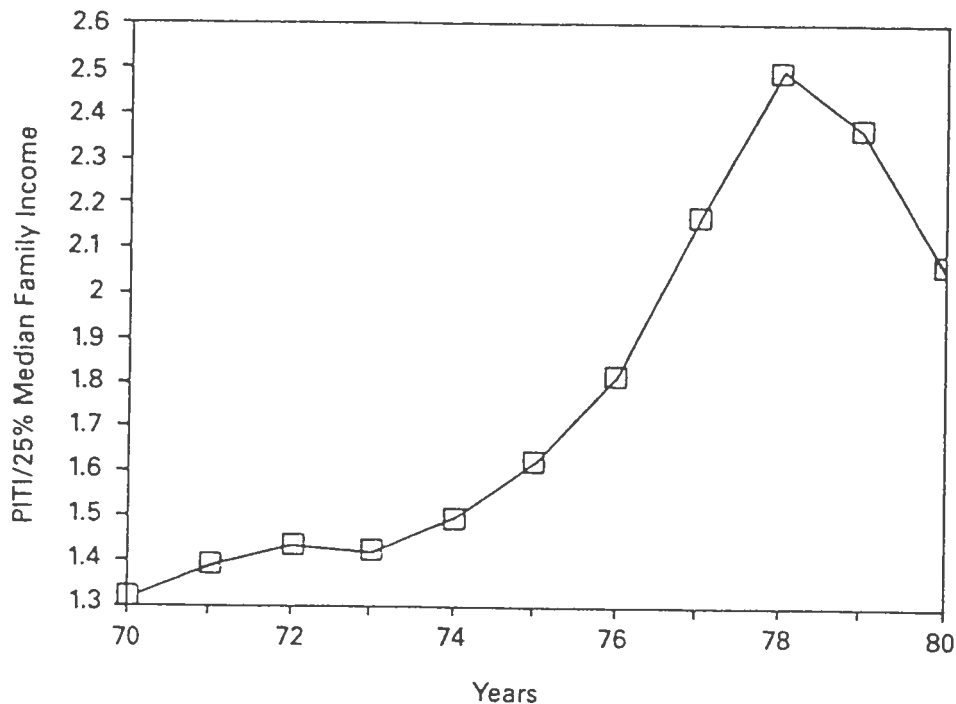
The arguments against too much restriction were compelling, at least to State and Federal Government planners, and in some states legislation was adopted to attempt to stem the application of restrictive land-use controls (Burchell, Beaton and Listokin, 1983). In the early 1980s, restrictive land-use and growth controls became a less important cause of the housing affordability problem, as interest rates rose above the 'psychological' barrier of 12 per cent, causing the demand for housing to fall. Housing starts dropped sharply, the construction industry collapsed, and the growth control debate faded. The industry came back to life in 1984, as interest rates eased, but the 'overheating' of the late 1970s, has not returned.

Land Taxation

At this point, we must mention the impact of land taxation. The most important tax on real property is the local Property Tax, and recent State legislation concerning it - notably Proposition 13 in California - has had a major impact on urban development. The Property Tax was originally the mainstay of local finance, and is still the most important local tax. In most communities, it is based on periodic assessments of the capital value of houses and other real estate, with the tax rate being determined by the local community. In the 1970s, the average property tax as a percentage of the value of single-family homes in the USA was around 2 per cent, compared with 1.5 per cent in 1962; the average tax per capita (in constant dollars) had risen by over a quarter.

Most economists conclude that the Property Tax has both virtues and weaknesses (Netzer, 1970). It is simple to collect, not easily evaded, and provides an independent source of

Fig. 8.1: Housing affordability index. 1.0 is 'affordable'



revenue to local communities. On the other hand, if it rises above a fairly low level, it can give rise to inequities, since the value of a home is not always proportionate to the owner's income. It may also bear more heavily on central city districts than on the suburbs. Most economists support the development of other taxes - or 'revenue sharing' of State taxes - in order to reduce local communities' dependence on the Property Tax. In the event, little was done in the 1960s and 1970s to provide other sources of local finance.

The dependence on the Property Tax, combined with rising home prices and administrative inertia, produced a taxpayer's revolt in California. Property taxes in California, and many other states, were calculated on the basis of current market value of the property, as reflected by sale prices of comparable property. With the advent of computer-based mass appraisal, local government assessments became extremely efficient, and in California, property valuations increased rapidly, reflecting the dynamic quality of the market. Increases in assessments do not automatically trigger increased taxes, since the levied tax is a product of both the assessed value and the Property Tax rate. Local elected officials, however, did not lower the tax rates. They left the rates unchanged, and reaped enormous windfalls as local government tax revenues skyrocketed.

This situation caused widespread concern, and provided a receptive climate for a conservative populist politician,

Howard Jarvis, who launched a ballot initiative to amend the State of California's constitution, to limit the amount of Property Tax which may be levied by a community. 'Proposition 13' gained sufficient support, and was implemented in 1978.

For properties purchased after the passage of Proposition 13, the tax is limited to one per cent of the purchase price. Thereafter, as long as the property is not resold, the tax levy can increase by no more than two per cent per year, regardless of the rate of property appreciation. When the property is sold, its market value is adjusted to the purchase price, and the tax can again increase by two per cent per year. For properties purchased before 1975, the tax is based on the property's 1975 market value. This value is increased by two per cent per year. (This figure has generally been well below the inflation rate, which peaked at 13 per cent in 1980; it fell to 2 per cent in 1986 but in 1987 was rising towards 4 per cent.)

The sponsors of Proposition 13 were concerned to limit not only the Property Tax, but all taxation - and thus curb 'wasteful' public expenditure. Proposition 13 therefore prohibited increases in other State or local taxes, unless authorised by two-thirds of the legislature or electorate, respectively. Some other States subsequently adopted comparable restrictions.

The passage of Proposition 13 has led to enormous changes in local government planning. First, since taxes may not increase rapidly unless there is turnover of property, communities are carefully considering the fiscal implications of permitting new development. Residential developments, for example, are 'undesirable' because they have low turnover rates and generate large demand for services, such as schools, police and fire protection. Second, with the revenue short-fall, communities are now considering new approaches to revenue enhancement, such as selling and leasing public property to private users, and contracting-out services. The privatisation of public services has become widespread and will grow as federal subventions to local governments decline.

But the biggest impact of the Property Tax revolt has been on the financing of infrastructure. Because local governments can no longer increase tax rates without a two-thirds approval of the voters, infrastructure cannot be financed through tax increases. Thus new techniques have evolved, such as 'benefit assessment districts', exactions, impact taxes, fees and user charges. Some of these techniques are a revival of 'special assessments', which have a long history going back to the 18th century; they involved levying a charge on landowners who benefited from local publicly-financed improvements, such as flood control. The creation of 'benefit assessment districts' involves levying a charge on all landowners in a specified district; 'exactions'

(known as 'planning gain' in the UK) are requirements on a developer to help finance public facilities in some way (Babcock, 1987). Some communities have imposed substantial fees on developers, or 'impact taxes' on development, such as a tax on every new bedroom built. Although all these techniques are different, they all attempt to shift the cost and financing of new infrastructure onto the developer or user. This has raised the costs of development, and it has been alleged that housing costs have been driven up as a consequence.

The infrastructure funding problem also extends to existing, especially old, infrastructure. In many cities, roads, sewer and water lines, and schools are in desperate need of repair, but (in States where Property Tax limitations have been adopted) it is extremely difficult to get voters to approve tax increases. In California, however, voters in Santa Clara and Alameda Counties have voted for increased taxes (on the sale of goods) to allow roadway improvements.

In Pittsburgh and Hawaii, the Property Tax is assessed on the value of the site rather than of the building (site value taxation). This system has enthusiastic supporters, who maintain that it has had highly beneficial effects; others, however, are unable to discern any significant benefits (Hagman and Mischynski, 1978, pp. 411ff).

Federal taxes can be summarised briefly. The USA has a tradition of treating capital gains as income, usually at reduced rates. Capital gains from real estate held for less than a year are taxed as income, the maximum rate being currently 38 per cent. If the receipts from real estate held for more than a year are re-invested in real property within two years, no capital gains tax is chargeable; thus most people selling and buying a house would not be taxed. Apart from this concession, the receipts from the sale of real estate held for more than a year will (under the 1986 Tax Reform Act) from 1988 onwards also be taxed as income. Since such gains will include 'paper profits', the new rates of Capital Gains Tax will be relatively high. There is no special tax on rises in land values, except in the State of Vermont, which has a tax on short-term gains.

New Concerns about Economic Development and a New Twist in Growth Control

Since 1982, land-use planners have shifted their attention from residential growth controls to economic development, infrastructure and financing issues. Many are now involved in partnerships linking private real-estate developers with public agencies (Levitt and Kirlin, 1985). Cities such as San Diego, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Oakland and St. Louis have provided land and low-cost tax-exempt financing to developers to build projects aimed at rejuvenating downtowns.

In some communities, office and commercial development has occurred rapidly, causing tremendous planning problems. San Francisco has adopted a growth control program for downtown commercial office buildings, while several suburban communities have imposed growth controls on commercial development (Kroll, 1985; Dowall, 1986). So have other cities including San Diego, Princeton, New Jersey and Tysons Corner in Virginia (Cervero, 1986). These new attempts at controls over commercial development are a marked departure from the residential-focused growth controls of the 1970s (Keating, 1986).

Land-use planning and policy-making are taking new twists in cities across the nation. Planning is much more connected with the private sector than it was five years ago, and new and sophisticated land policies have been implemented to respond to changing economic, social and physical conditions.

STRUCTURAL CHANGE AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF AMERICAN CITIES AND SUBURBS

The US, like Western Europe, is living through a virtual revolution, which is modifying the economic, social and spatial characteristics of our nation (Ebel, 1985; Noyelle and Stanback, 1984). The effects are felt daily: plants close, offices move to the suburbs, businesses relocate to the south and west, and technology displaces workers (Bluestone and Harrison 1982). Accelerating changes in technology, international trade, employment and resource utilisation are reshaping the patterns and processes of metropolitan development, and raising fundamental questions about the appropriateness of current local land-use planning policies and programs (Committee on National Urban Policy, 1983).

These trends are likely to continue. Further intensification of trans-Pacific trade will attract more financial and business-serving organisations to West Coast locations. Some cities will benefit from international trade - cities like Los Angeles, San Francisco and New York. On the other hand, Japan's penetration of West Coast steel markets has virtually eliminated large-scale steel production in California (Shapira, 1984). These trade shifts mean that some US firms will be hurt, and others will benefit greatly; over time there will be profound changes in the demand for commercial buildings. The loss of competitiveness in some industries and the growth in others is also likely to cause big shifts in labour markets, and indirectly affect the demand for housing. In some cases, housing demand will plummet as workers are laid off; in other cases housing demand will rise sharply, fuelled by rapidly expanding employment. Most often, these extremes occur in different sections of the nation, or in different portions of a

state. However, they sometimes coexist in the same city, when the economy is shifting from manufacturing to services and finance (Mullin, Armstrong and Kavanagh, 1986). Pittsburgh is an example; its steel and manufacturing industries are sloughing off jobs at the very same time that business and financial services are expanding. Unfortunately there is little cross-over between these two industries, and Pittsburgh experiences growing prosperity amid growing poverty.

Two fundamental questions for land policy are how the newly emerging technologies will change urban development patterns, and whether we can anticipate their effects. Office automation processes - optical scanning devices and microcomputers - certainly seem likely to reshape the demand for office space. One study suggests that, as more upper-level managers adopt microcomputers, armies of clerical workers and many middle-managers will be rendered redundant (Baran, 1985), which could cause the demand for office space to plummet. However, the application of office automation technology is beginning to alter the size pattern of firms. Small firms are increasing in number, and use more space per worker; this may offset the decline in the demand for space by larger firms (Dowall and Salkin, 1986).

These technological impacts go well beyond the demand for sheer space, profoundly altering the desired location of office projects. Modern telecommunications enable office functions to be conducted in remote locations. Large financial service companies have consolidated routine clerical functions in rural or outlying suburban areas, where both labour and building costs are low. (Office space in San Francisco's financial district costs five times as much as in nearby suburbs.) This decentralisation of office activity is not new, but the pace and extent of it is (Foley, 1957). In many suburban office nodes, the pace of development has created severe traffic congestion and housing inflation problems (Kroll, 1984; Lynch, 1983; Baldassare, 1986).

Changing demands for office space will affect the demand for transportation and housing. Metropolitan areas will become less monocentric. Suburban office concentrations such as Houston's Post Oak and Greenway Plaza, Phoenix's Camelback, Washington's Silver Spring, and Philadelphia's Valley Forge now compete with their respective CBDs (Central Business Districts) (Urban Land Institute, 1985). Transportation needs will change, challenging suppliers of transportation services to find alternative modes. As smaller office centres proliferate on the edges of metropolitan areas, commuting patterns will no longer be dictated by distance to the CBD. Commuting areas will continue to push outward, as people working in the suburbs choose to live in outlying rural areas.

Although these technological changes are only beginning, there are already signs of strong office decentralisation

(Schwartz, 1984). Even in slower growth areas such as Detroit, Philadelphia and Baltimore, office development in the suburbs is booming. In 1983, 59.3 per cent of office development in all metropolitan areas took place in suburban locations, although the percentages ranged from 84 in Atlanta to 9.5 in Hartford.

Perhaps the biggest question raised by this uneven development is whether government land and housing policy, alongside private industry, is capable of providing housing and infrastructure at prices people can afford, and at locations close to where they work. This combination is proving elusive in many metropolitan areas, particularly in the rapidly growing sunbelt cities of San Jose, Dallas, Los Angeles and, more recently, Phoenix. Prices are rising fast because employment is rising rapidly, and housing demand is outpacing the construction industry's ability to increase supply - sometimes because of local land-use and environmental controls. Communities are aggressively seeking commercial and high technology development, while limiting residential development. This strategy may work for one community, but when most communities in an area follow suit, housing need and job creation become unbalanced. In other areas, growth is so fast that the most well-conceived planning process, even when coupled with an aggressive building sector, cannot meet demand.

The housing price spiral causes other serious problems. If house prices are too high, new migrants will set their sights on more distant lower-priced homes. Ultimately, development patterns become 'imbalanced', with jobs concentrated in one area and affordable housing in another, resulting in severe transportation problems.

One of the profound problems confronting anyone who attempts to design a coherent national policy for the cities of this nation is the staggering diversity of growth patterns, and the associated problems and opportunities. Policies designed to respond to problems found in one city may be totally inappropriate for different problems in other cities.

EFFECTS OF THESE TRENDS ON LAND AND HOUSING

Fast-growing housing markets face problems of land-inflation, infrastructure constraints (especially traffic congestion), planning and regulatory backlash, and affordability. Declining markets face problems of housing market softness, neighbourhood decline and suburban over-development. This range of problems reflects the divergent nature of US metropolitan development. On average, growing areas increased their population by 33.9 per cent between 1970 and 1980, and 44.2 per cent between 1960 and 1970. Between 1960 and 1980, the growing metropolitan areas had growth rates of between 276

per cent (Fort Myers, Florida) and 23.5 per cent (Bridgeport, Connecticut). In absolute terms Houston was the biggest gainer, with an increase of 1,662,195 people. On the other hand, the declining and steady-state metros had a average growth of 11.2 per cent between 1960 and 1980, and only 0.8 per cent during the 1970s. The variation within each group was considerable, with Buffalo losing 5 per cent of its population between 1960 and 1980, while Memphis - although languishing in relation to other Sunbelt centres - grew by 26.5 per cent.

The pattern of housing production reflects the range of population growth and decline. The figures for housing stock (Table 8.1) reveal the tremendous rate at which housing is being added in the growing metropolitan areas located in the South and West. Atlanta, Houston, Phoenix and San Jose together added more than one million housing units to the nation's housing stock in the 1970s. In percentage terms, Fort Myers led the pack with a neck-breaking growth of 158 per cent. It was followed by Phoenix with 88 per cent, and Boise, Idaho with 82 per cent. Housing growth in the slow-growth metropolitan areas was much less, averaging about 14 per cent during the 1970s. Pittsfield, Massachusetts, had the greatest percentage increase - 26 per cent - while Buffalo had the lowest - 8.2 per cent. Growth rates thus vary enormously between metropolises, raising divergent land policy issues.

PROBLEMS IN RAPID GROWTH AREAS

Land Inflation

Land has become one of the most significant cost factors in housing construction. Between 1950 and 1980, land costs as a percentage of total housing costs increased from 10 per cent to 25 per cent. The President's Commission on Housing clearly illustrated the effects of substantial land inflation on the cost of new housing construction (President's Commission on Housing, 1982). Land costs increased by 248 per cent between 1970 and 1980 (Table 8.2). In high growth areas like California, Florida and the Front Range of Colorado, the land cost percentage now reaches 40 per cent. In the ultimate land-constrained markets of Tokyo, Hong Kong and Manhattan, the figures are 60-70 per cent.

Prices for land, (either raw acreage or finished residential lots) result from the interaction of demand factors such as employment growth, income, immigration and the availability of mortgage credit, and supply factors such as the amount of raw land zoned for residential development, the supply of residential lots, and the availability of infrastructure. In a study of land and housing markets in the San Francisco Bay Area, Dowall (1984), examined the 'land-price

Table 8.1: Metropolitan Housing Stock, 1960-80

Metropolitan Areas	1960	Housing Stock		1980	Percentage Change		
		1970	000		'60-'70	'70-'80	'60-'80
<u>Growing Metros</u>							
Bridgeport, CT	208,977	252,334		293,194	20.7	16.2	40.3
Poughkeepsie, NY	54,647	67,962		85,336	24.4	25.6	56.2
Bismarck, ND	16,402	19,300		30,056	17.7	55.7	83.3
Springfield, MO	48,033	59,619		83,441	24.1	39.9	73.7
Houston, TX	467,780	671,882		1,160,200	43.6	72.7	148.0
Atlanta, GA	353,567	514,761		768,209	45.6	49.2	117.3
Raleigh-Durham, NC	93,325	131,165		200,259	40.5	52.7	114.6
Austin, TX	85,079	121,922		215,739	43.3	76.9	153.6
Fort Myers, FL	21,032	42,074		108,598	100.0	158.1	416.4
Phoenix, AZ	211,865	316,989		596,049	49.6	88.0	181.3
San Jose, CA	199,922	336,192		473,500	68.2	40.8	136.8
Bolise, ID	30,782	37,145		67,785	20.7	82.5	120.2

Declining Metros

Pittsfield, MA	23,464	25,758	34,710	9.8	25.8	47.9
Pittsburg, PA	740,838	788,433	873,071	6.4	9.7	17.6
Buffalo, NY	409,765	433,183	471,805	5.7	8.2	15.1
Nassau County, NY	590,754	720,905	836,592	22.0	13.8	41.6
Sioux City, IA	39,169	39,264	45,117	0.2	12.9	15.2
Detroit, MI	1,219,938	1,393,896	1,588,119	14.3	12.2	30.2
Wichita, KS	127,278	134,371	162,676	5.6	17.4	27.8
Baltimore, MD	542,029	652,800	796,321	20.5	18.0	46.9
Memphis, TN	205,557	255,401	331,381	24.3	22.9	61.2
Birmingham, AL	225,296	253,816	324,891	12.7	21.9	44.2
Pueblo, CO	34,680	37,359	42,495	7.7	12.1	22.5
Great Falls, MT	24,086	27,131	31,885	12.6	14.9	32.4

Source: US Bureau of the Census. 1982. State and Metropolitan Area Data Book.

Table 8.2: Approximate Cost Breakdown for New Single-Family Homes

	1970		1980		Per cent change 1970-80
	Cost \$	Per cent	Cost \$	Per cent	
Land	4,450	19	15,500	24	248.3
On-site labour	4,500	19	10,350	16	130.0
Materials	8,650	37	22,000	34	154.3
Financing	1,600	7	7,700	12	381.3
Overhead, profit, other	4,200	18	9,050	14	115.5
Total	23,400	100	64,600	100	176.1

Source: President's Commission on Housing

residuals' for single-family new houses. The land-price residual technique estimates land values by deducting the cost of housing construction from the sales price of the housing, thus obtaining an estimate of land cost plus development profit. Over the period 1976 to 1979, increases in residual values ranged from 64 per cent for Concord to 1928 per cent (admittedly from an initial figure near zero) for Santa Rosa. Those communities with restrictive land-use regulations and strong demand had the greatest increase in land residuals.

Land constraints and rising land costs are not unique to California. A survey has been made of land prices for finished lots (10,000 sq. ft.) and raw acreage in thirty metropolitan areas (Hoben and Black, 1982). Real estate appraisers made valuations (for 1975, 1980 and 1985) for middle-income residential development located within 20 minutes of major employment centres. The range of lot prices was considerable; in 1985, from \$8,750 for Chattanooga, Tennessee, to \$70,000 for San Jose (Silicon Valley). Raw land prices showed even more variation; from \$3,000 per acre in Chattanooga to \$240,000 in San Jose, with an average of \$27,397.

In 1975-80 the prices of both types of land rose faster than inflation. The consumer price index rose by 51 per cent, whereas average lot prices rose by 81 per cent, and average raw land prices by 157 per cent. The largest increases were in Western metropolitan areas such as Salt Lake City, Seattle, Boulder, Portland, San Diego and San Jose. From 1980 to 1985, the rate of increase slowed considerably, averaging 38 per cent for lots and 27 per cent for raw land, as against retail inflation of 31 per cent. There were also cities in which

dollar prices remained constant, or even fell. Raw land prices remained constant in Miami, and fell in Portland and Salt Lake City. Although prices in real terms have, on average, been fairly stable in the 1980s, and have fallen in many cities, there are still pockets of rapid land price inflation, where the subject generates grave concern.

Infrastructure

During the past few years, the attention of policy makers has been riveted on the so-called infrastructure problem. The most widely cited study, America in Ruins, vividly portrays a serious and deepening crisis in the dilapidating condition of our nation's roads, bridges, sewer and water treatment, and distribution systems (Choate, 1981). The study concludes that it will cost upwards of one trillion dollars to correct these defects, and that such funding should be a national priority. Another study, by the Joint Economic Committee of Congress, Hard Choices, although less passionate, arrives at similar conclusions (1984). The Committee's price tag is more modest - \$1,157 billion for the year 2000 - but it estimates that the available public funds, \$714 billion, will fall far short of what is needed.

While much of the infrastructure problem is the result of dilapidation, the inadequate supply of new sewerage and transportation facilities poses a critical problem in growing regions. As the California Council for International Trade points out:

'These are generally considered the 'critical' facilities without which development is unlikely to occur and, conversely, which can be used to influence the nature, timing and location of development...Lack of these facilities may prevent an urban region or local jurisdiction from accommodating growth deemed by policy-makers to be publicly acceptable or desirable.' (CCIT, 1983, p. 2).

The cost of providing infrastructure has been increasing rapidly. The case of Irvine, California, is illustrative. Recently, its Facilities Funding Taskforce inventoried the major facilities needed for additional residential development - streets, parks, schools, flood control, civic and performing arts buildings, and libraries. The costs required to serve an additional 1,000 residents, or about 35 acres, were estimated to range from \$5.9 to \$8.5 million, or \$16,500 to \$23,800 per dwelling.

While it is arguable that the level of services provided to Irvine's residents is very high, reflecting the relative affluence of the community, infrastructure costs in lower-income areas can also be high. When a community has excess capacity

in infrastructure, the marginal cost is low, but ultimately the excess capacity gets up, and marginal cost rises. The San Jose area is almost out of sewer capacity; parts of San Bernardino need new schools; and some parts of Orange County have streets jammed with autos. New developments south of Sacramento need schools, fire stations and other facilities, but funds are not available.

Some States, like Kentucky, recognise that infrastructure availability is an important element of economic development planning, and spend considerable funds. Other States, like Alabama, are financially hard-pressed. California, still reeling from the impact of Proposition 13, estimates that it will need to spend \$80.5 billion on streets, transit, airports, and water between now and the end of the century. The anticipated revenues available are \$48.2 billion, leaving a shortfall of \$32.3 billion. Expenditure is needed for both repairs and new development; in the high-growth areas of California, the pressures come mainly from new development, as they do in similar areas of Texas, Arizona and Florida.

Inadequate expenditure on infrastructure has already caused a decline in the quality of life in high-growth areas. In Houston, where the population increased by 50 per cent during the 1970s, public service quality fell dramatically. A survey of Houstonians in 1979 revealed widespread dissatisfaction with public transportation, street maintenance, drainage and flood control, and parks and recreation facilities (The Rice Center, 1981). These citizen concerns have not gone unnoticed by the Mayor or the City Council. In 1984 the City broke ground on a new 10,500 acre park, and major plans for highway expansion are moving forward. The response by the city to problems ignored during Houston's growth phase underscores the inevitability of providing more infrastructure. The recent shift in planning and development policy, requiring building setbacks and sign (billboard) controls, also suggests that Houston's sole reliance on markets to achieve desirable patterns of development has not worked well.

Planning Backlash

In many fast-growth areas, citizen concern about the declining quality of life has (as we have indicated) led planners to implement highly restrictive land-use regulations. These controls have normally been implemented on a community-by-community basis and, where the number of 'no growth' communities is limited, little significant effect on housing markets has been registered. In some areas, however, enough towns and counties have enacted growth controls to create a 'critical mass' of regulation, which distorts land and housing markets - a phenomenon which has been called the 'suburban squeeze' (Dowall, 1984). In the San Francisco Bay Area, the combined

play of local land-use regulations, limited infrastructure, and environmental politics has increased the cost of new single-family housing by 20-30 per cent. While this situation is unparalleled nationally, there are other 'high-growth, big-backlash' areas. In Fairfield County, Connecticut, towns have adopted large-lot zoning ordinances, making it virtually impossible for moderately-priced housing to be built. This has also begun to happen in 'Silicon Valley', California, causing some firms to move their expanded operations to Texas.

Affordability

The combined play of these problems of land price inflation, infrastructure constraints, and planning backlash have driven up the price of housing in many parts of the country. As Table 8.3 illustrates, the price of new housing across the nation has risen dramatically, but especially in the North-East and the West. Unless the growth areas can respond better to the housing needs of moderate-income households, affordability problems will continue.

HOUSING MARKET PROBLEMS IN DECLINING AREAS

While the problems of the fast-growing areas are enormous, problems of housing abandonment and under-utilisation are gripping many areas of the nation. The roots of decline lie in the dynamics of demography, employment, and income and capital movements into and out of urban areas. As Downs points out, neighbourhood decline can be caused by both the large-scale in-migration of poor households into a neighbourhood, and by its cessation (Downs, 1981). If there is substantial in-migration into a metropolitan area - as happened in Houston in the 1970s - a rapid pace of suburban housing construction may not cause the deterioration of central city districts, since the people who leave for the suburbs will simply be replaced by newcomers. If, on the other hand, there is little in-migration to the metropolitan area, but large numbers of housing units are built in the suburbs, the relatively affluent will move out of the central city neighbourhoods, accentuating their decline. Two prime examples of this condition are Pittsburgh and Cleveland. There is, however, another side to the coin. If suburban housing is expanding slowly, the housing costs that the poor must pay in the central city will be higher. There is thus a dilemma. Should house prices be kept high, raising housing costs, or allowed to fall to very low levels, with the risk of dereliction?

Table 8.4 presents data on the population and housing market dynamics of growing and declining metropolitan areas. It reveals a pattern of suburban over-building and central

Table 8.3: Median Sales Price of New Privately-built Single-Family Units

Year	US Total \$	Northeast	Midwest	South \$	West
1967	22,700	25,400	25,100	19,400	24,100
1970	23,400	30,300	24,400	20,300	24,000
1975	39,300	44,000	39,600	37,300	40,600
1980	64,600	69,500	63,400	59,600	72,300
1985	84,300	103,300	80,300	75,000	92,600
1986*	89,600	119,500	89,500	79,800	95,500

* As of June, 1986

Source: US Bureau of the Census, various years

city population loss in declining metropolitan areas. In growing areas, central city populations are more stable.

LAND POLICY PRESCRIPTIONS

In the past five years, innumerable housing task forces have been convened to assess the housing crisis, and propose solutions (Urban Land Institute, 1982). The strategies they propose for local land-use planning should be seriously considered as a basis for reform. What reforms are needed?

First and foremost, zoning needs a complete overhaul. Cities and counties have used residential zoning to limit the incursion of obnoxious non-residential uses, and to protect the social and economic status of neighbourhoods. But such zoning can be used to exclude the poor, by making housing too expensive. While there is little that can be done to quell racial and economic prejudices, at least outside the courts, planners can make zoning more sensitive, and more appropriate to changing lifestyles.

The zoning system controls population density by limiting the number of dwelling units per acre. Some control is necessary to ensure that the need for public services can be met, but population density is not solely determined by the number of dwelling units, and herein lies an area for reform. In the 1950s and 1960s, planning standards were predicated on three to five persons per unit, and seven to eight units an acre, giving about thirty persons per acre. Recently, the number of persons per unit has fallen from the three-to-five

range to the two-to-three range. This implies that population density per acre is falling, and that more units could be built without exceeding historical density standards. Planning studies of neighbourhoods could be conducted to determine actual population densities. Then, a 'second unit potential' could be established for determining the number of new units that could be permitted (by redevelopment at slightly higher densities) without creating demands for local services likely to exceed the available capacity (Gellen, 1985).

A major concern for residents about 'second units' is the impact on parking. An obvious way around this problem is to require additional off-street parking, as has been done in California and on the East Coast (Popenoe, 1977). In some areas, however, there is an excess supply of curb-side parking space (Schoup, 1983).

In growing areas, the problems of the high cost of land could be tackled by adopting higher density development levels, coupled with the provision of infrastructure in targeted areas; this should help to provide an ample supply of land. This targeting could be designed to minimise the conversion of prime agricultural land, and the degradation of environmental resources. To make such plans work, there must be clear and effective coordination between local governments. Otherwise, parochial interests will continue to prevail, and local land-use plans will not effectively balance the needs of housing and commercial development.

In declining areas, the rate of suburban development should be moderated, to help shore up inner-city neighbourhoods. One proposed policy goal for State Governments and the Federal Government is to get households who leave the central city for the suburbs to pay the full social costs of coping with the poverty they leave behind. This principle has a bearing on the financing of infrastructure. Where infrastructure costs are high, and housing markets tight, the costs of infrastructure should be spread over the entire metropolitan area of the State. But in metropolitan areas with soft housing markets, households moving to the suburbs should bear the full costs of infrastructure (Downs, 1981). In such areas, a limitation on housing development in the suburbs can be beneficial (Scott, 1975). If all communities in the suburban ring of metropolitan areas of this type implemented growth controls, problems of suburban housing over-supply would disappear. Unfortunately, it would be extraordinarily difficult to generate unanimous support for such a program; land-use policy is a closely guarded local government power.

The directions for land policy in growing and declining areas are thus diametrically opposed. In growth areas, land policy needs to be expansive, if the problems of land-inflation are to be avoided. In declining areas, on the other hand,

Table 8.4: Housing Construction and Changes in Population and Households: Twenty Metropolitan Areas, 1970-75

Metropolitan area	¹ Population change Number %	² Household change Number %	³ New housing units	⁴ Ratio of 3 to 2	⁵ New housing in suburbs	⁶ Central city popu- lation change
<u>Losing population</u>						
New York	-412,627	-4.1	-58,215	-1.5	197,737	-
Cleveland	-97,004	-4.7	26,315	4.0	51,247	-
Pittsburgh	-79,138	-3.3	28,478	3.8	48,305	1.9
Newark	-58,443	-2.8	-978	-0.2	30,731	1.7
Los Angeles	-54,992	-0.8	109,511	4.5	208,874	-
St Louis	-44,342	-1.8	29,954	4.1	73,086	1.9
Buffalo	-22,363	-1.7	9,562	2.3	34,704	2.4
Seattle	-17,859	-1.3	42,985	9.1	44,554	3.6
Philadelphia	-17,109	-0.4	44,500	3.0	144,828	1.0
Paterson	-8,350	-1.8	4,900	1.1	16,882	3.2
Total						3.4
or average	-812,227	-2.3	237,012	3.0	850,948	3.6
					81.0	-9.5

Gaining population								
Houston	286,931	14.4	130,477	21.4	121,028	0.9	23.9	8.3
Orange County	278,433	19.6	144,711	33.2	142,540	1.0	80.9	16.4
Phoenix	251,989	26.0	139,456	46.1	146,853	1.1	57.4	12.9
San Diego	226,729	16.7	115,400	27.3	145,111	1.3	58.9	11.0
Atlanta	194,611	12.2	76,700	17.9	163,950	2.1	89.3	-11.9
Denver	173,841	14.0	97,562	24.9	144,377	1.5	78.1	-5.9
Miami	171,689	13.5	81,800	19.1	155,383	1.9	84.0	9.0
Dallas	149,601	6.3	97,533	19.8	140,894	1.4	62.8	-2.6
Orlando	129,394	28.5	43,756	32.6	75,250	1.7	81.0	14.1
Washington	112,446	3.9	100,833	11.2	163,393	1.6	95.9	-6.0
Total or average	1,975,664	15.5	1,028,228	25.3	1,399,049	1.4	71.2	4.5

Source: Downs, Neighborhoods and Urban Development

growth controls in the suburbs would help, not hurt, the central city.

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