The Marriage: Planners and Data

Part I: What do planners do?

Planning is a systematic and creative way to influence the future of a neighborhood, city, region, etc.

Planners respond to social, economic, and cultural challenges by...

- enhancing the quality of life
- protecting the environment
- promoting equity and equality
- guiding growth and development

To achieve these objectives, planners involve stakeholders in decision-making processes, assist communities in creating a vision for the future, analyze information to generate solutions to problems, and present recommendations to public officials and citizen groups.

Planners Are Information Stewards

- Practical guide for advancement of the city planning movement
- General understanding of city planning
- General acceptance of the desirability of having a city plan
- Cornell University, International Anthology of Conference Papers on Urban Planning 1794 - 1918

Frederick Law Olmsted, 1913 (Proceedings of the Fifth National Conference on City Planning, Boston)

The Evolving Definition of Planning

"...the working out in broad outline the things that need to be done and the methods for doing them to accomplish the purpose set for the enterprise." (Gulick, 1937).

"...deciding in advance what is to be done; that is, a plan is a projected course of action." (William, 1958).
"...a process; that is, a continuous activity taking place within a unit and requiring some input of resources and energy in order to be sustained."
(Yehezkel, 1963).

"...any activity centrally concerned with the linkage between knowledge and organized action." (Wright, 1980).

"...the art of organizing space, science integrating research and knowledge of various disciplines, and politics using available means to achieve specific aims." (Kozlowski, 1988).

**Planners Collect and Organize Data, then Communicate Information**

**Collect --- Reality --- Data**

- Primary data sources *(Field surveys, interviews, and questionnaires)*
- Secondary data sources *(US Census Bureau, Bureau of Labor Statistics, etc.)*

**Organize --- Information**

- Store and manipulate data *(SQL and Oracle)*
- Analyze data *(ArcView, ArcGIS, Spatial Analyst, SPSS, etc.)*

**Communicate --- Knowledge --- Action --- New Reality**

- To experts, publics, and clients *(Final critique)*
- Verbal, written, and graphic *(Project deliverables)*

**Part II: The Evolving Relationship**

- The Planner has changed *(from physical planning to organizing constituents and coordinating programs)*
- The Data have changed *(availability, format, content)*

**Focus on Democratic Involvement and Transparency**

- Bottom-up versus top-down approach to public participation *(involvement of CBOs and emphasis on local knowledge)*
- Technological advancements have had an impact on planning-related tools *(E-mail, GIS, and the WWW)*
• Efforts to integrate, represent and transmit local knowledge (neighborhood information systems)

Process persists...Reality --- Data --- Information --- Knowledge --- Action --- New Reality